

W.S. 1, 333
ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

BURO STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21

No. W.S. 1,333

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 1,333

Witness

Edward Lynch,
26 Bantry Road,
Dublin.

Identity.

Captain 'G' (Milltown Malbay) Coy.
4th Batt'n. Mid Clare Brigade.

Subject.

- (a) Irish national activities, London,
1911-1916;
 - (b) Milltown Malbay Company, 4th Battalion,
Mid Clare Brigade, 1918-1921.
- Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil

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ORIGINAL

STATEMENT OF EDWARD LYNCH

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
BUREAU STAIRS MILITARY 1913-21
NO. W.S. 1,333

26 Bantry Road, Dublin.

(formerly Captain G/Company (Miltown-Malbay)
4th Battalion, Mid Clare Brigade)

I was just over 15 years of age when I left my home in Miltown Malbay, Co. Clare, to take up a clerical post in the offices of the London Co. Council. Two elder brothers, Michael and Charles, were already working in London for a few years prior to my arrival in November 1908. I at once became a member of the Brian Boru Hurling Club in which I remained for a few years until I got a transfer to the Hibernians, a club mainly composed of Corkmen. The chairman of the Hibernians was Sam Maguire with whom I became very friendly. About this time, too, I made the acquaintance of Michael Collins. He was somewhat older than me and through our association with the G.A.A. and Gaelic League we became rather intimate with each other.

As I approached my 18th year I became a member of the I.R.B., having been sworn in by Sam Maguire. This ceremony took place outside a publichouse fairly late at night. I attended no I.R.B. meetings until a short time after the start of the Irish Volunteers in London towards the end of 1913 or early in 1914, when I recall having been present at one. Thereafter I have no recollection of any other I.R.B. gatherings in London.

I was enrolled in the Irish Volunteers on the first night of the launching of that organisation in London, being appointed a section commander on the same occasion. My section became so big in a short while that it was formed into a company or a half company and I was promoted to the rank of captain or first lieutenant, I forget which. We generally drilled on Saturdays, always without arms and at venues which often changed, but

mostly in fields in North Finchley and Wood Green.

In January 1916, it was obvious that I would soon be conscripted into the British army, so I returned home to Clare. A big number of Irishmen left London about that time for the same reason.

Being always fond of farming, I was soon busy helping on my father's land. There was then no unit of the Irish Volunteers in the Miltown Malbay district, nor did I make contact with any members of the I.R.B. there, at least at that stage.

It was not until February 1918 that I had anything to do with the Irish Volunteer movement in Ireland. A company was started in Miltown Malbay at that time. About 30 men joined up and they elected me as captain. David Murray was elected 1st lieutenant, John Moloney (Jicks) was 2nd lieutenant, and John Jones, intelligence officer. We drilled once a week. Nothing eventful happened throughout 1918. The R.I.C. from the local barracks, where a sergeant and 5 men were then stationed, occasionally came along to watch us drilling, but they never interfered with us otherwise.

In August 1918, James Kenny read at a public meeting in Miltown Malbay a proclamation which had been issued by the National Executive of Sinn Fein to every Sinn Fein Club in the country. For this he was arrested and sentenced to one year's imprisonment, as far as I can remember. Mr. Kenny, who was a K.C., lived on a large farm at Drumin, about two miles from Miltown Malbay. He was unmarried. During his absence in prison his neighbours decided to put their animals on his farm to graze. The Irish Volunteers in the district decided to take action to protect Kenny's interests, and our company, helped by the Glendine and Letterkelly companies, paraded to the farm,

rounded up the trespassing animals and drove them as far as Inagh, ten miles away.

A party of eight R.I.C. men witnessed the rounding up of the animals on Kenny's lands and followed the Volunteers part of the way to Inagh. Next day seven or eight of the Miltown and Glendine Volunteers were arrested and kept in custody for some days. I believe it was after this incident that a detachment of 25 soldiers occupied the Temperance Hall in Miltown Malbay, a post which they held until the British forces were withdrawn from the area after the signing of the Treaty.

In July 1919, I had my first experience in the use of firearms against British troops. Along with Ignatius O'Neill and Frank McKenna from the Miltown area I formed a party of about 15 men who took part in an attack on Connolly R.I.C. post. McKenna was a cousin of O'Neill's. He belonged to the New Zealand army and had come to Clare a short time previously. To the best of my recollection, only himself and O'Neill had rifles in this attack and the remainder of the party had shotguns.

The village of Connolly is about halfway between Miltown Malbay and Ennis along the road which passes through Kilmaley and Shanavogh. The R.I.C. garrison consisted of a sergeant named O'Shea and four men. The barracks was a stone-walled building and our main hope of capturing it was based on the effectiveness of a number of home-made bombs which were to come from the Cloona or Ennistymon districts.

The attack on the barracks began about 10.30 or 11 o'clock at night. After it was in progress for an hour or so, the home-made bombs had not arrived and O'Neill, who was in charge, realised that he had wasted enough valuable ammunition in trying

to force the police to surrender. He called off the attack about midnight. There were no casualties on either side, but the barracks was vacated shortly afterwards. It was immediately set on fire and destroyed.

During the latter end of 1919 we collected all arms which were held by the civilian population in the company area. Altogether we got about a dozen shotguns and two .45 revolvers, These guns were divided around among trustworthy Volunteers for safe custody and attention. The strength of the company had, by the spring of 1920, increased to about 50 men, but nothing had, so far, been requested from them except to attend weekly mobilisations for drill and to pay now and then small contributions. The vast majority of the people were by that time supporters of Sinn Fein. It became the general practice of these supporters in the village of Milltown to celebrate such events as election victories or the release of prisoners by lighting a bonfire.

In April 1920, a number of prisoners on hunger strike in Mountjoy Jail were released unconditionally. On the following evening, some of the more enthusiastic supporters of Sinn Fein decided to celebrate the event by lighting a tar barrel at Canada Cross in the village of Milltown Malbay. The crowd were good-humoured and were singing songs, but otherwise were orderly and in no way truculent towards anybody. I was 'on the run' at the time and took no part in the proceedings, but I was watching everything from Kinucane's shoemaker's shop about 100 yards away. In the midst of the celebrations a party of seven or eight armed soldiers came along from their post in the Temperance Hall, passed by the crowd and went on to the R.I.C. Barracks. After a short time the soldiers, accompanied by some R.I.C. men under Sergeant Hampson, left the barracks

and headed straight for the crowd. As soon as they reached the outskirts, Sergeant Hampson drew a revolver while the other policemen and soldiers took up firing positions about him. The sergeant called on the crowd to disperse and simultaneously fired from his revolver. The other police and soldiers also opened fire. People began falling all over the place and there was also a wild stampede. I saw a Volunteer named ^{John} Joe O'Loughlin fall within a few feet of the blazing tar barrel. Thinking that he might be burned in the flames, I rushed out of Kinucane's to his assistance. On the way I met Pat Maguire, a local blacksmith, and called upon him to help me to remove O'Loughlin. Though I was not aware of it at the time, Maguire himself had been wounded through the thigh, but nevertheless he helped me in carrying O'Loughlin up to Kinucane's. Poor O'Loughlin was unconscious. After uttering an Act of Contrition into his ear, another Volunteer named "Dido" Foudy had come along and I dispatched him for spiritual and medical aid. Foudy came back in a few minutes in a most excited state. On his way to the priest's house, he tripped over the dead body of another man who turned out to be Thomas O'Leary, a most inoffensive individual who belonged to no organisation. Foudy was again sent off to complete his errand which he did.

In the meantime, I heard that Patrick Hennessey, also a Volunteer, had been killed. I went to his home to which his corpse had just been taken and remained there until the early hours of the morning when I went off to O'Neill's in Ballard for a few hours' sleep. Seven or eight people were wounded as well.

For the next few days the enemy forces in Miltown Malbay were confined to barracks. The village was left entirely under the control of the Volunteers. The three men who had been killed received a military funeral attended by Volunteers from

all over Clare. The usual route to the graveyard was not taken and the coffins were borne past the R.I.C. Barracks and the military post. Outside the latter building and guard turned out and presented arms, but the police did not show their faces.

Three days after the interment the authorities decided to hold an inquest. The relatives of the deceased refused to agree to the exhumation of the bodies while any of the British forces, police or military, were present and only consented provided the I.R.A. did the job. The post-mortem examination was performed by Doctors Hillary, Miltown Malbay, and McClancy, *Miltown Malbay.* ~~Ennis~~ The jury brought in a verdict of wilful murder against Sergeant Hampson and the British forces who assisted him in the shooting. Of course, no punitive action was taken by the authorities against the culprits.

Public feeling against the enemy forces became very hostile following these murders in Miltown Malbay. Of their own accord, most of the local shopkeepers refused to supply them with food and drink. This boycott was called off after a few weeks because the enemy was able to obtain all his requirements from Ennistymon, nine miles away. A few ambushes were prepared on the road between Miltown and Ennistymon between May and August 1920, but nothing came of them as the enemy did not put in an appearance. Road blocking and destruction of bridges took place on a big scale from about May 1920 onwards to the Truce.

Late in the summer of 1920, it was noticed that a lorry or two of R.I.C. and Black and Tans began to travel every Wednesday morning between Ennistymon and Miltown Malbay, usually leaving the former town about 10.30. At a meeting of the Battalion Council of the 4th Battalion, Mid Clare Brigade, it was decided to attack these lorries, using only the personnel

of the battalion for the operation. After the site of the attack had been changed a few times, it was only on the morning of the attack, 22.9.1920, that a position at Rineen was selected. Rineen is three miles north of Miltown Malbay and six miles from Ennistymon. At that point a byroad runs westwards towards the sea and 100 yards further on in the direction of Ennistymon a laneway runs from the opposite side of the main road southwards diagonally across the steep slope, which rises from the main road, until it meets the railway line about 60 ft. above the main road. This lane is about 120 yards long.

The attacking party including unarmed scouts was about 40 strong. It was made up of nine riflemen and about 30 shotgun men. Four men with rifles were placed in groups of two in the fields on the Atlantic side of the main road, while the remainder of the armed party took up positions along the laneway. Scouts were posted on both flanks of the main party, some watching the road to Lahinch and Ennistymon, and the others the road to Miltown Malbay. The operation was under the command of Ignatius O'Neill, then O/C. 4th Battalion, who, so far as I can now recall, had not by that time fully recovered from wounds received by him earlier in the year during the course of a fight with R.I.C. at Crowe's Bridge.

Positions were occupied about 6 or 7 o'clock in the morning, I carried a shotgun and was one of the main party in the laneway. Around noon, the scouts reported that three lorries were coming from Ennistymon. O'Neill, on hearing this, decided to allow the lorries pass as he did not regard his force sufficiently well equipped to deal with a convoy of that size, nor had he his men disposed to meet more than one lorry. In a few minutes, an enemy tender containing only six policemen drove past us unmolested. There was no sign of the other two

vehicles. It transpired after inquiries that in relaying the original message from the outside scouts 'police lorry coming' one of the inner scouts mistook the word "police" for "three".

Naturally, there was a lot of disappointment over what had taken place. O'Neill decided to send a scout on a bike into Miltown Malbay to pick up whatever information he could regarding the intentions of the police who had escaped so easily. In the course of a couple of hours, the scout returned and reported that everything appeared to be normal in Miltown and that the tender was parked outside the R.I.C. Barracks facing the Ennistymon direction. The scout was not long back when the noise of the tender could be heard coming along from Miltown. As it passed the byroad, fire was opened from our positions and in a matter of a minute or two the fight was over. Two of the police got off the lorry into the fields on the Atlantic side of the road. One was killed almost as soon as he got into the field, while the other - who was evidently trying to make for Miltown - was shot dead about 150 yards from the lorry. All the rest of the police were dead, making the total six.

I went down to the tender with the rest of the attacking party. Six rifles and some revolvers were picked up and I was still around the vehicle when word came that enemy reinforcements were rushing out from Ennistymon. Orders were given to retreat. Sean and Tom Burke, Michael O'Keefe (Miko), Donal and Patrick Lehane and myself went off in the direction of the sea and got away without a shot being fired at us. Nearly all the rest of the attacking party retreated to the opposite direction, inland towards Ballyva. They were seen by the enemy reinforcements and subjected to intense fire. However, none of our men was killed or captured, but a few were wounded, including Ignatius O'Neill.

O'Keeffe and myself separated from the others at Freigh. O'Keeffe went home and I went to Clonbony. That night I slept in Cleary's in Leguard, the house of a teller in the National Bank. Unfortunately one of our group, Patrick Lehane, went into Lahinch that night. His charred body was found next day in the ruins of Michael Howard's house which had been burned as a reprisal by the British forces.

The reprisals which followed the Rineen ambush were probably the most savage and extensive that took place in any part of rural Ireland during the Black and Tan war. In Ennistymon seven houses were burned and two persons, Tom Connole and a boy named Patrick Linane were shot dead. Connole's body was thrown into his blazing home in the presence of his wife and children. In Lahinch, seven houses and the Town Hall were up in flames and Daniel Lehane was mortally wounded, and a holiday visitor named Sammon from East Clare was shot dead. In Miltown Malbay, seven houses were destroyed by fire, while in the vicinity of the ambush the homes of two farmers named Honan and O'Gorman met the same fate. An elderly man named Sean Keane, who was working at hay, was fired on and killed.

In addition to the six policemen who were killed in the ambush, it was often claimed afterwards that 15 or 16 other British troops were killed in the course of the subsequent fighting. I cannot vouch for the accuracy of the latter figures though I'm fairly sure that four or five were wounded, one mortally.

After Rineen, my home was raided several times by police and soldiers. I was keeping away from the place. During one such night raid, all our fodder and hay and oats, and an out-house were burned by the raiders. On 21st October 1920, I paid

a visit to my parents. I happened to go out to one of the fields where some men were working and was in conversation with them when a neighbouring girl arrived to tell us that two soldiers - members of the Royal Scottish Regiment - were in the vicinity looting some of the houses. Accompanied by my brothers, John and James, I left the field and went home. After a while the two soldiers arrived at the door where I met them and inquired for their business. The taller of the two men said they were raiding for arms and tried to push past me. I told him that there were no arms in the house and that they were acting without authority. The taller man again tried to force his way in. He carried what I first took to be a revolver but on closer scrutiny, noticed that it was only a glass one painted black, which I knew had been looted some time previously from Blake's pub in Milntown. As this soldier was persisting in entering the house, I hit a heavy punch on the right arm causing him to drop the 'shot of malt' as the toy gun was known to us locally, and it broke in pieces on the doorstep. Just as this happened, one of the neighbours arrived. He accused the soldiers of having stolen a £10 note from ^{him} ~~his house~~, whereupon the bigger soldier tried to break away. I tripped him and brought him to the ground. We searched him thoroughly, but though we recovered other articles which he had looted, we failed to find the £10 note.

The second soldier, who was less truculent, was also searched, but he offered no resistance. He asked my brother if there was any other way back to the military post and, on being shown it, he made off. We then released the bigger soldier who ran away through the fields until he got about two hundred yards from the house. There he dropped on one knee and, adopting a firing position towards us, began to shout what he would get done to us. He arrived at the military post just before his pal and told a story that as himself and his companion were out for a walk they were attacked by us with

pitchforks and that he escaped, but his companion was killed.

This taller soldier's name was McPherson. In no time, he accompanied a mixed party of military and R.I.C. from the village. They began firing in all directions wounding a farm labourer named O'Grady who was out working. They badly beat up members of a family called Corry who were of ex-British soldier stock and had no connection whatever with either the I.R.A. or Sinn Fein. Myself and my brothers left the house and there was then nobody about the place only my father and mother. The two of them were coming out of the haggard when McPherson and his gang arrived. Without warning, McPherson aimed his rifle at my father and, firing only one shot, sent a bullet through the old man's heart killing him outright. My father's name was Charles Lynch. This murder did not satisfy McPherson. He led his party for another mile into the country firing indiscriminately and raiding several houses. A neighbour of ours had a narrow escape. McPherson mistook him for my brother, John, and was about to shoot him when an R.I.C. man named Cooney intervened and saved an innocent life.

I had gone to Annagh about five miles from home and, though I heard that night that my father had been wounded, the truth did not reach me until next morning. I returned home at once and found the Volunteers in guard of the house and of the road coming out from Miltown Malbay. Notice had been served by the military on a brother-in-law of mine that my father was not to be buried until an inquest was held. The corpse was kept in the house until the following Sunday and, as no steps were taken regarding the inquest, burial took place on that day.

It was only a week after my father's murder that McPherson figured again in the local news. He had been put under arrest in Miltown Malbay in the meantime. He escaped from custody by

inducing a member of the guard to desert with him. Both soldiers were captured by the I.R.A. in the Connolly district. Word was sent to me to come to see the prisoners. At the time I was not aware of the identity of the soldier who had shot my father, so I went to see my mother in the matter. She had no doubt whatever that McPherson was the murderer, and mentioned to me for the first time that after he had fired the fatal shot he used scurrilous and abusive language. I went to Connolly and recognised McPherson straight away. I arranged with the local company officers to hold the prisoners until I consulted the battalion officers as to our next line of action, but before leaving, warned them to keep a sharp watch on McPherson as he was a dangerous man possessed of a quick mind and devoid of scruples. I made contact with the battalion commandant and a few others of his staff and together we returned to Connolly.

"McPherson escaped" was the first news which greeted us when we arrived there. At the time of his escape he was being guarded by a Volunteer named Hehir, a giant of a man; athletically built, but much too innocent for the character with whom he was dealing. Hehir was armed with a .45 British Bulldog revolver. It appears that Hehir was loading the gun under the eye of the prisoner who commented that Hehir had not the proper technique in handling a revolver. He offered to demonstrate the proper way to handle the gun which Hehir agreed to and handed the loaded weapon to the prisoner. The latter soon made his real intention known by promptly ordering his guard to put up his hands and then escaped from the house into the night. The only consolation which resulted from his capture was that the £10 which he had stolen from my neighbour was found on him and this was restored to its lawful owner. The other soldier was shot and buried in a bog in the Connolly area where the body still lies.

But we were not yet to see the end of McPherson. After escaping, he made his way back to the military post in Miltown. Within a day or two after his escape, he was guiding enemy forces through the houses in the Connolly area where he had been kept in custody. He was able to identify the houses in which he had been kept, but there were no reprisals nor were any of the people arrested.

In December 1920, I was among a large I.R.A. party which had mobilised to attack British forces outside Corofin. After waiting all day the party was disbanded as the enemy troops did not show up. I had not been at home for some time, and one of the party, Patrick O'Shea, a neighbour of mine, told me that my mother was unwell. I went home with him. I was at home only a few hours when a party of disguised Black and Tans accompanied by an R.I.C. man called Medell entered the house by the front and back doors. It was then after nightfall. I was entirely unarmed, as I had left my carbine outside the house. In the vilest of language all sorts of accusations were made against me and then I was ordered to come with them. As I got outside the door I turned in the direction of Miltown Malbay thinking I was going to be taken to the police barracks there. I was told to march in the opposite direction. Seeing the masks being worn and on learning that I was not being brought to the barracks, I sensed there was nothing nice in store for me. The R.I.C. men and a Black and Tan held me in firm grips.

Fortunately for me, my mother was not as ill as I was led to believe. She followed us out and began trying to convince the police that they had an innocent man in their hands. On finding that her pleas were falling on deaf ears, she tried to clutch me saying: "the bullet which will kill you will kill me". She made a bit of a scene which caused the other police to

gather round trying to pacify her. Her shouts attracted my brother John to the door. As soon as he appeared, Constable Medell released his hold on me and fired at my brother, the bullet splitting the jamb at his side. Quickly realising that I was being held by only one man and that the others were engaged with my mother, I swung the Tan who held me against a low wall and knocked him over it. I then dashed off along the road and had gone about 200 yards when I tripped over the shafts of a donkey cart which protruded a bit into the roadway. The police were firing after me and the fall may have saved my life. Though in the fall I had cut both knees rather badly I managed to get over the road fence where I had shelter from fire. The neighbours had heard the shooting and opened the doors to see what it was all about. The police came to the conclusion that I had run into one of the houses and immediately began to search them. This move gave me a chance to get further away and, finally, evade them. I managed to find a Volunteer to take word to my mother that I was all right, but she refused to believe it. I had to go home next day to convince her.

After that incident I kept away from my own district until the Truce. I stayed mostly around Inagh and Kilnamona where I assisted the local Volunteers in road cutting activities. I did not partake in any further attacks on the British forces.

After the Truce, Co. Clare and part of Co. Galway were organised into the area of the 1st Western Division. A number of training camps were set up and I believe it was while I was attending one of the camps that I received orders from Divisional H.Q. to report to Dublin where I was to meet Michael Hogan, afterwards Major General in the National Army. I received from Austin Hannon, a member of the divisional staff, the sum of £30 to cover my expenses.

I met Hogan as arranged. He informed me that I had been selected to accompany him to London to purchase arms and ammunition for the 1st Western Division. He gave me £100 to be used for that purpose and impressed upon me that on reaching London I was to avoid at all costs two men - Michael Collins and Sam Maguire. Collins, of course, was over there in connection with the Treaty negotiations, and Maguire, who was then O/C. of the I.R.A. in Britain, was a close friend of Collins. Hogan also informed me that our mission had the approval of the Minister for Defence, Cathal Brugha, who was to forward us in due course the sum of £1000 for the purchase of a field service set *and arms*.

I did not like the idea of not being free to meet either Maguire or Collins as I was very friendly with both of them during the period I worked in London and naturally was looking forward to meeting them again in that city. However, I was acting under the orders of my superior officers and, as the mission which I was undertaking appealed particularly to me, I determined to comply strictly with my instructions.

Hogan had hurt his knee a few days previously and could not travel with me. I exchanged the Irish banknotes which he gave me for English notes and, purchasing a 3rd class RETURN ticket, with saloon on the boat, I left Dublin on a Saturday and arrived in London ~~that night~~ ^{next morning}. Hogan joined me on the following Tuesday.

On getting down to work we found that we had been sent on an errand which was much more difficult than had been anticipated. London, at that time we learned, was a happy hunting ground for a lot of others on similar errands. Arms had become scarce and the prices almost prohibitive. We did manage to buy a couple of automatic revolvers.

Michael Collins evidently got word of our presence in London because he sent a message to me inviting me to lunch at Hans Place. Before going to meet him I consulted Hogan and he agreed that as Collins was now aware of our presence in the city, it was as well that I should accept the invitation.

On meeting Collins, I found him very friendly. He soon inquired what my pal Hogan and myself were doing in London. I replied that we were on a holiday. However, I soon found that he was fully aware of what we had come for and said that if the Treaty negotiations broke down, G.H.Q. in Dublin would be able to supply all the arms and ammunition which we needed. He appealed to me to refrain from doing anything which would make matters difficult for them in their dealings with the British Government representatives. I gave such an assurance and we parted on the best of terms.

I repeated to Hogan the gist of my conversation with Collins, but he pointed out that we had come over from Ireland to buy arms with the approval of the Minister for Defence. We continued in our search for guns, but at the end of twelve days had not made much progress. Besides, the money promised by the Minister for Defence, £1000, had not arrived. The project looked like being an utter failure when, quite by accident, an incident happened which raised our hopes.

During our sojourn in London we had met an Irishman named Cooley who had been introduced to us as a man who might be useful. He and I were having a drink in a bar when we met two Irish Guards in uniform. The soldiers, whose names were Roche, a sergeant, and Rooney, a corporal, were both in good form and spoke very frankly as to their intentions in the event of a settlement not being reached between the British and Irish plenipotentiaries. We swapped a few drinks with them and then

began to sound them as to the prospect of getting arms. Roche would have given us Chelsea Barracks if we were in a position to take it. Instead, we made an appointment for the following night when we were to meet Roche.

In our hotel that night I told Hogan about our conversation with the Irish Guardsmen, but he was not a bit impressed. He considered that it was due to the effects of a few drinks that the soldiers had become so lavish in their offers, but he agreed to come with us the next night. Our appointment did not materialise, however, but Roche sent a note explaining that as he was unable to turn up he would meet us the next night at 9 o'clock in the same place.

At the postponed meeting Hogan told Roche bluntly of the consequences which would follow any double crossing on his part. I questioned Roche about Corporal Rooney and why he was not present on this occasion. Roche said that he was not acquainting Rooney about anything that we might arrange, although he was sure that Rooney was quite dependable. Roche then went on to explain that he was on loan to the Welsh Guards as a machine gun instructor at Chelsea Barracks where he was wellknown to the men on duty at the gate. He said he had all his plans ready to get guns for us out of Chelsea Barracks that night and requested us to hire a taxi.

Hogan, Cooley and myself accompanied Roche in the taxi to the barracks into which we were admitted without any bother. The taxi was parked outside the armoury and, leaving our overcoats in the car, we all proceeded to the sergeants' mess, including the taxi driver. Roche introduced Hogan, Cooley and myself as Welshmen, giving my name as Franklin and Hogan's as Jones. Incidentally, on the same night the Welsh Guards were holding their annual dance in some hall in the city and, for

the purpose of giving a bit of colour to our pose as Welshmen we let it be known that we were bound for the dance after having a few drinks.

After a round or two of drinks, Roche excused himself and, on the plea that he was changing into mufti, returned after some time attired in civilian clothes. He inquired if we were now ready to leave and we all left the Mess. In the back seat of the Taxi were ten rifles and two machine guns covered by the overcoats. We drove back to the city to a big mansion off The Strand. The driver had no idea of what was going on and when he stopped the vehicle, I took him off to a bar to pay him and stand him a few drinks. In our absence the others had removed the guns and hid them somewhere in the grounds of the mansion with the connivance of the butler who, like his friend Mr. Cooley, was also an Irishman. When the driver and I came back the taxi was empty.

The army authorities missed the guns next day, Friday, but Sergeant Roche was not suspected. No account of the raid appeared in the papers. Though offered payment for his part in the raid, Roche refused to accept it.

On the Sunday following, after having to apply a great deal of persuasion, Sergeant Roche consented to raid the barracks of his own regiment at Windsor. His consent was given subject to his wife's approval of his conduct which also included his desertion from the British army to throw in his lot with the I.R.A. in Ireland. This meant a big sacrifice on his part. He had upwards of twelve years service in the British army, was in possession of the Distinguished Conduct Medal, and with his wife and two children enjoyed comfortable quarters in Windsor Barracks.

The approval of his wife was forthcoming and Roche managed

to get a duplicate key of the armoury in Windsor Barracks. He met us that night and said that we were going to do things in a big way and that a good sized van would be needed to take away the booty. Through the good offices of Frank Fitzgerald, a brother of Desmond Fitzgerald, then a prominent member of the First Dáil, we obtained a van driven by a trusted driver named Murphy, and left Hyde Park at about 10 o'clock on Monday night. Travelling in the van were Sergeant Roche, Hogan, Cooley and myself. London on that night was covered by one of its typical pea-soupers, and the 20 mile journey to Windsor was a slow and tedious one.

On arrival, the car was parked in a cul-de-sac while we got out to reconnoitre. Probably due to the lateness of the hour and the weather conditions, there was not a soul about, nor were there any sentries on duty at the barrack gate. Sergeant Roche scaled the barrack wall after warning the rest of us to keep close by so as to avoid creating suspicion in any person who might happen to pass. After waiting for what appeared to me to be a very long time, Roche returned and asked one of us to come in with him. Hogan removed his shoes and did so. During the course of another long wait we heard footsteps approaching the barrack gate. It was a policeman. He halted opposite the gate and stood there ^{for some time.} I was getting fearful of what might happen if our two comrades should return in the meantime. Eventually, Cooley agreed that the position was looking serious and we decided that the policeman should be overpowered and gagged. Some items for this job were obtained from the van. Cooley was to grasp the policeman's whistle while we pushed him into the doorway of a shop outside which he was standing. We began to approach him from different angles when we were saved further trouble. The policeman turned in Cooley's direction and walked off, bidding him

"Goodnight". I don't think I was ever so relieved.

We returned to our post at the barrack wall and soon Sergeant Roche appeared again asking for the inside assistance of a second man. I went inside this time and Cooley, on Roche's instructions, went off to get the van driven up to the barrack gate. I learned that the reason for the prolonged delay in getting out the guns was because a bayonet was fixed to each of the 40 rifles which had been secured. It was a slow job to remove the bayonets in the darkness, more especially as it had to be done so as not to awaken an N.C.O. who was sleeping on the other side of a curtain.

My task inside was to remove the rifles from the armoury to the van at the barrack gate. In addition to the rifles, we seized six or seven machine guns. We managed to load all the guns in the van without further incident and drove back to the city. In London we contacted Frank Fitzgerald in a club near the Strand. He took us to his own (contractor's) yard in Leytonstone when the van was parked, and he then brought us to his private residence in Forest Gate where we had a champagne supper and a change of socks. At 5 o'clock in the morning we started off again and collected the stuff we had taken out of Chelsea barracks and drove to a railway yard in Shepherd's Bush where the guns were packed in boxes for shipment to Ireland. Again through Cooley's arrangements, the boxes had been provided by another friendly Irishman who was in charge of the railway yard. There was no other official on duty there at the time. I can't remember this man's name, as I'm not sure whether it was he or the butler was Kennedy.

With the guns safely packed away, young Murphy drove the van back to Fitzgerald's yard and Roche, Hogan, Cooley and

myself went to Cooley's digs where we held a consultation as to our next line of action. Roche agreed with Hogan's proposal that Roche and I should leave London by the 8.45 train from Euston that evening; that I should bring a dispatch to Cathal Brugha regarding his failure to forward £1000 as promised, and another dispatch from Hogan to de Valera's private secretary in Dublin. I was all against this proposal and urged that Roche should either go into hiding for a few weeks or be taken by taxi to Manchester and remain there until arrangements could be made to get him over to Ireland. A jibe by Roche that I was getting 'cold feet' and a remark by Hogan that he was making his proposal an order to me and I withdrew further opposition. We then retired to bed in Cooley's room.

Before we left for the evening train from Euston, it was arranged that Hogan and Cooley would see us off from the platform. On our way to the station my fears that we were acting unwisely again began to assail me, I told Roche to get a third class ticket with saloon on the boat and arranged that we would separate at the station and not meet until after the train started.

We had not much time left after arriving at the station. Roche got into the train and stood in the corridor while I remained on the platform keeping a sharp lookout for any developments. Suddenly I noticed Roche making a hurried movement and taking a seat at the window near the platform. Suspecting that he was in trouble, I went off and bought two evening papers and handed one of them to Roche just as two Scotland Yard men and an Irish Guards officer ordered him to come with them. I was questioned by a fourth individual regarding my friend, but denied him as such. He asked me if

it was a habit of mine to buy papers for strangers. I replied that I had met the man by chance at the booking office where I remarked that I wanted a paper and that he then asked me to get one for him also. It was lucky for me that my inquisitor did not ask me to show him my ticket. I had a return one.

I was now in a quandary as to what I should do. If I turned back to warn Hogan and Cooley, I felt I would be shadowed and most likely arrested. I was carrying two dispatches which most likely would involve others if captured by Scotland Yard, and I was also carrying one of the automatic revolvers which we had purchased during our trip. Hoping that Hogan would turn up at the last minute and meet Roche and his captors on the way out of the station, I decided that my best course was to proceed on the train.

I arrived safely in Dublin and delivered the dispatches at once. Cathal Brugha, whom I met at his place of business in Lalor's of Ormond Quay, was very upset on learning of the arrest of Roche. With regard to failing to forward the £1000, he said that ten persons in Clare had agreed to go as guarantors in the bank for the amount, but that only one person, James O'Regan, Killaloe, had abided by the undertaking. ^{Brugha,} ~~the money~~, however, informed me that out of other monies at his disposal ~~the money was not available.~~ he had advised payment of the amount on the previous day.

Subsequently, I learned that poor Roche was grilled in Scotland Yard until 3 a.m. the next morning when he broke down and turned King's evidence. The information given by him led to the arrest of Hogan and Cooley. The two of them were sentenced to terms of imprisonment, but were released soon after the Treaty being signed. Roche received a sentence of six months. I am not aware that he ever sought or was granted

any compensation for his part in this affair apart from the sum of £130 which Hogan gave him for his wife *and family*.

Sam Maguire, with whom I afterwards discussed the matter, told me that the rifles were got safely across to Ireland, but that all the machine guns were recovered by the British authorities.

Signed: *Edward Lynch*
(Edward Lynch)

Date: *28th December 1955*
28th December 1955.

Witness: *D. Griffin*
(D. Griffin)

