

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

BURO STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21

NO. W.S. 1417

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 1417

Witness

Martin Ryan,
Kilcroan,
Kilsallagh,
Castlerea,
Co. Galway.

Identity.

Battalion Vice-Commandant.

Subject.

Activities of Ballymoe Company, Glenamaddy
Battalion, North Galway Brigade,
1917-1921.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil.

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No. W.S. 1417

STATEMENT BY MR. MARTIN RYAN

Kilcroan, Kilsallagh, Castlerea, Co. Galway.

I was born in the month of June 1889, at Kilcroan, Kilsallagh, Castlerea, Co. Galway, and was educated at Kilcroan National School until I reached the age of about 15 years. I attended the same school during winter months for a few years afterwards.

My first association with the Irish Volunteers was in the year 1917. I cannot be more exact with regard to the date. The place was Roscommon town. I remember that I got an invitation to attend a meeting there called for the purpose of reorganising the Volunteers. Accompanied by John Harte from my own locality and Owen O'Neill and Michael Hurley from the Glynsk area, I attended the meeting which was held on a Sunday in a hall in the town. The organisers, as far as I remember, were either Dublin men or they came to the meeting from Dublin. I remember distinctly that there was a force of about 20 R.I.C. outside the hall while the meeting was in progress. They did not interfere with us during or after the meeting, but of course they would know us again.

The Ballymoe company was formed soon after, and I became a member of it. It then belonged to Castlerea Battalion. I remember that at this time Ernie O'Malley was organising the Volunteers in South Roscommon and that I attended an officers' training class which he held at South Park, between Castlerea and Ballymoe. It lasted about a fortnight and I picked up a good deal of drill and some useful hints on the use of cover and other things which I now forget.

I remember hearing that shots were exchanged at this time

(1917) in the village of Ballymoe, between Ernie O'Malley and three R.I.C. men. O'Malley himself told me of the incident. It was on an occasion when I had the Ballymoe and Glynsk companies mobilised near the Parish Church at Glynsk for O'Malley to come and give them some drill exercises. He told me he was on his way from South Roscommon to do so and that in passing through the village of Ballymoe he was ordered by three R.I.C. men to halt and put his hands up. He left down his bicycle and drew a revolver. The three R.I.C., who had their rifles slung on their shoulders, ran and took cover. He fired in order to scatter them and get away. He could have killed them had he wanted to do so. He left his bicycle and got into a wood. They fired several rounds at him when out of range of his revolver. One of the three, named McHugh, was very anxious to hit him. O'Malley eventually got away, but did not come to Glynsk that night.

When I referred to the officers' training class held by Ernie O'Malley, I should have mentioned that part of my own training as an officer was the drilling of two companies (roughly about 100 men) in the village of Ballymoe, right opposite the entrance to the R.I.C. Barrack, under the supervision of O'Malley. I was nervous in case I would make a mistake in the words of command, but O'Malley stood by my side and prompted me when he thought I needed the prompt. I marched the men past the R.I.C. Barrack, gave them 'about turn', halted them outside the barrack door, gave them 'left or right turn, form fours, re-form two deep, left or right turn again, quick march' and repeated it all with three R.I.C. constables and a sergeant looking on. I remember that O'Malley told me to ignore them completely, which I did. The sergeant did not ignore me. When he got the chance he spoke to me, pointing out that I was violating the law and that it was a

serious matter. Again, O'Malley told me not to mind him and I carried on with the work. I remember very clearly on some of these occasions in Ballymoe that Jack Brennan, O/C. of the South Roscommon Brigade, sang "The Peeler and the Goat" for the benefit of the R.I.C. I shall never forget his imitation of the goat. He had a good voice and the song re-echoed throughout the woods. He wore uniform at the time - 1917 - I would say.

About this time we had many hand-to-hand fights with the R.I.C. in Ballymoe, and sometimes we pelted them with stones. I remember one night I was returning from O'Malley's Class at Southpark when I was held up by three R.I.C. near Ballymoe. I was on a bicycle and, just after I had passed them, they ordered me to halt. They were standing on the roadside with their rifles slung by their straps over their shoulders. I dismounted from the bicycle and pulled a revolver. I kept them covered, but did not speak. They made no move whatever and when I saw that they did not intend to do so, I mounted my bicycle and cycled home. I would say that they were a bit 'windy' from the time O'Malley fired on them.

I cannot be sure of the date, but I think it was early in 1918 that Kilcroan Company, which afterwards became D/Coy. of the 2nd (Glenamaddy) Battalion, Tuam or North Galway Brigade was first formed. The organising work was done by Colm O'Gaora a native of Connemara. The strength was about 40 and the company officers were:- Captain, John Hanly; 1st Lieutenant, John Burke; 2nd Lieutenant, Michael O'Brien. Colm O'Gaora organised the Glenamaddy Battalion which consisted of the following companies:-

Kilcroan, with John Hanly captain all the time to the Truce. It was sometimes known as the Ballymoe Company.

Glenamaddy	- Captain - Frank Mahon to some time in 1920. Patrick Treacy from then to the Truce.	
Kilkerrin	- Captain - Brian Cunniffe	all the time.
Kilbegnet	- Captain - John McDonagh	do.
Glynsk	- Captain - Thomas Burke	do.
Williamstown	- Captain - Patrick Noonan	do.
Polredmond	- Captain - John Glennon	do.
Kiltevena	- Captain - Roger Rabbitte	do.
Dunmore	- Michael Ronan to early 1920. Thomas Mannion from then to Truce.	
Clonbern	- Captain - John Mahon	all the time.

The battalion staff were:- Commandant, James Moloney; Vice-Commandant, Martin Ryan (myself); Adjutant, Patrick Treacy and Martin Mannion. I cannot recall the dates. Q.M., John Knight; Medical Officer, Dr. Mangan, Dunmore; Police Officer and I.O., Thomas Concannon; Dentist; Liam Moran, Dunmore.

Brigade staff were:- Commandants - Michael Moran to his death in 1920; Con Fogarty to January or February 1921; Patrick Dunleavy from then to the Truce. Vice Commandant - none. Adjutant, Thomas Tarmey; Quartermaster, Patrick Conway; Engineer - Michael Joseph Ryan.

In the years 1917 and 1918 a good deal of organising work was done in the battalion area. Dispatch routes were especially organised. Arrangements were made for dispatches to Dublin through a guard of a train. He brought dispatches to Dublin from Dunamon railway station when the time came for such work, and continued to do so up to the Truce. An odd time we found a Volunteer who had some experience of drilling and made good use of the experience. For example, Volunteer John Harte had been in the R.I.C. and resigned from that force. He was a very good instructor.

There was a very strong Sinn Fein Club in the parish of Kilcroan. Almost every adult in the parish was a member. I was one of its two secretaries. The chairman was Thomas Keaveney, long since deceased. Meetings of the Club were held in the house of Bernard Mitchell of Ballyglass. The people of the parish were almost one hundred per cent in favour of the Sinn Fein candidate - Dr. Brian Cusack - in the General Election of 1918. I myself was one of the organisers of Sinn Fein in the Kilcroan and Ballymoe area. The task was easy as the great majority of the people were in our favour. It was easy to organise them and they did everything asked of them.

I think it was in 1919 that arms, shotguns mainly, were collected from their owners. Most people gave them cheerfully to the Volunteers. The job was done by each company captain in his own area. We got word from friendly people that the R.I.C. were about to collect their guns and the Volunteers moved in the matter before the R.I.C., who scarcely collected a gun in the battalion area. Company officers had orders to get the guns by peaceful means and to be courteous to the people.

I was a marked man by the R.I.C. from 1917, but it was not until 1919 that they started raiding my house to arrest me. I went every Sunday to Mass in Ballymoe, armed with a revolver. Fr. Peter Donnellan, Ballymoe, advised me not to go Mass. In spite of this advice I continued to go until one Sunday in 1919 the date of which I cannot remember. On that Sunday, when I was about to leave the church after Mass, one of the altar boys told me that Fr. Donnellan wanted to speak to me in the vestry. He told me also that Fr. Donnellan said I was not to go to the vestry from outside, but through the door leading to it from the sanctuary. When I entered the vestry, Fr. Donnellan told me that there was a force of armed R.I.C. waiting at the gate.

to arrest me and to leave by the gardens at the rear of the church. I did as he suggested and avoided arrest.

Fr. Donnellan got his information about the R.I.C. waiting to arrest me from Sergeant O'Driscoll, R.I.C., Ballymoe. This O'Driscoll was a very gentlemanly and reserved type of man. He kept in touch with Fr. Donnellan all the time to the Truce and saved many in this way from arrest and perhaps from death. He warned me through Fr. Donnellan of a big round-up of the battalion area by British military and R.I.C. in the spring of 1921. I remember that a big number of farmers were ploughing at the time and many of them were taken from their work in the course of the round-up. No Volunteers were captured and this was mainly due to the work of Sergeant O'Driscoll and Fr. Donnellan, who, on receipt of the information from O'Driscoll, came to warn me at 2 a.m. Fr. Donnellan died about nine or ten years ago. I do not know what became of O'Driscoll, or where he was a native of. As I said, I was not able to go to Mass from 1919 to the Truce, but there was a priest in Glenamaddy who always invited men 'on the run' to his house and heard their confessions and gave them Holy Communion. I often availed of his invitation and always had breakfast with him after receiving the sacraments. He is now Most Rev. Dr. Fergus, Bishop of Achonry. At the time I speak of, he was C.C. in Glenamaddy.

From the time I was compelled to go 'on the run' in 1919 until the end of 1920, I spent my time going from company to company in the battalion. I organised them and gave them instruction in drill. I prevented people going into the British Courts of Law and settled disputes that would ordinarily have come before those Courts. I was invited into the Tuam Battalion area, as the officers of that battalion thought that I, a stranger to the people there, would have

more influence with them in the matter of settling their disputes. They asked me to reason with the disputants in the first instance and, in the event of their not being reasonable, to use threats. I travelled all over the brigade area settling disputes over fences, rights of way, turf banks, trespass, killing of sheep by dogs and many other types of cases that can occur in a rural area.

A little while before Easter 1920, I decided to capture Glenamaddy R.I.C. barrack in which there was a garrison of about six men at the time. I had information that some boxes of arms and ammunition had recently come there and I hoped to take them with the rest of the arms and ammunition, I planned the attack for a Sunday evening. I had very reliable information about the movements of the R.I.C. in the little town. It was obtained from Volunteers John Raftery, Frank Geraghty and Patrick Glynn, all of whom lived in the town. The information as regards the Sunday evening of the attack was that all the garrison, with the exception of one man, were outside the barrack. I even knew this man's name and reputation - a bad one. I knew also that two members of the garrison were in a publichouse and fairly drunk, and that three others had gone out patrolling the Creggs road. It was also known that the members of the garrison outside gained admittance on their return after two tips of the hand on the gable window.

A small party of Volunteers, armed with shotguns, under the command of John Knight, Battalion Q.M., was to deal with the R.I.C. who had gone out the Creggs road. Another officer was detailed to look after the R.I.C. in the publichouse. Thomas Tarmey, afterwards brigade adjutant, Dr. John Comer, University College Galway Company, and I were to give the

signal at the barrack window and enter. The three of us to enter the barrack were armed with revolvers. We had a number of shotgun men stationed in front of the barrack and throughout the town to deal with any party of R.I.C. or British military that might turn up unexpectedly. A motor car was ready waiting to remove the arms and ammunition we hoped to capture. We were on the point of entering the barrack when Brigade O/C., Con Fogarty, cycled into the town and inquired where I was. He told me that it would be much better to wait until the following Sunday, by which time he would have arrangements made to attack Glenamaddy, Clonbern, Kilkerrin and Williamstown barracks at the same time. He said he would have picked men from the two battalions (Tuam and Glenamaddy) with plenty of cars. I had no option but to carry out the orders of the brigade commandant and call off the attack, very reluctantly, I must admit. I had not consulted the brigadier beforehand. Martin Conlon, afterwards a member of Dáil Éireann, helped us with the planning for the attack. I think he was an organiser of the Volunteers at the time. He brought us an odd revolver. Dr. John Comer was a student at U.C.G. and was a very active member of the Volunteers at the time.

Before the following Sunday the R.I.C. had evacuated their barracks at Glenamaddy, Clonbern, Kilkerrin and Williamstown. I remember very well that a few days after the Glenamaddy attack being called off, I got a dispatch from one of the officers of the Glenamaddy Company telling me that the R.I.C. were evacuating their barrack there and going to Ballymoe. I cannot remember which of the officers sent the dispatch, but I do remember that it was brought by Volunteer Michael Geraghty, a brother of Volunteer Frank Geraghty, one of the three very energetic Volunteers of the

Glenamaddy Company whom I have already mentioned as having supplied very valuable information about R.I.C. movements in the town.

I decided to attack the R.I.C. on their way to Ballymoe and mobilised all the members of the Kilcroan Company who could, without delay, lay their hands on arms (shotguns). I also sent word to three officers from the Williamstown Company area. The point of assembly for the attack was Kilcroan National School, on the main Glenamaddy/Ballymoe Road. Before the Volunteers had reached the school, the R.I.C. had passed. There were six of them on bicycles and some of them seemed to be very drunk. I and one or two Volunteers were inside the fence of the road when they passed, but we were not strong enough to open an attack on them. The others were making their way across the fields but they were just a little too late. Those who mobilised on this occasion were Thomas Tarmay, afterwards brigade adjutant; Captain Patrick Noonan and Company Q.M. James Tarmay - all three from Williamstown Company. All the others were from Kilcroan Company. They were:- Captain John Hanly, Lieut. John Burke, 2nd Lieut. Michael O'Brien and Volunteers Patrick King, Michael Ward, John Melia and my brother, Volunteer William Ryan.

I took charge of the burning of Glenamaddy R.I.C. Barrack almost immediately after its evacuation. After the building had been saturated with petrol, my attention was drawn to a piece of piping in one of the upstairs rooms. I examined it and found that it was a metal downpipe about five feet long and filled with sand at both ends. I gave orders not to have it touched. I then questioned local scouts as to whether anybody had access to the building from the time the R.I.C. left, or whether any children could have put it there. I was

assured by the scouts that the building had been locked and that nobody had entered it. I had a suspicion from the time I saw the piping that it was a mine and that was why I made the inquiries.

I allowed no man into the building. I entered it alone and applied a lighted match. I lit a match and threw it on to the petrol-soaked stairs. The match went out when I threw it. I had to light a few before the explosion occurred. The explosion was very loud. It banged the doors closed, so that I found myself unable to get out. Either the doors locked or got jammed and I was unable to open it from the inside. Those outside soon smashed the door and I got out. I found that the explosion had blown the roof a good distance from the building. I was then convinced that the piece of piping was a powerful mine left by the R.I.C.

I have mentioned local scouts in connection with the burning of the barrack, and this reminds me of instructions we had to have the neighbourhood well scouted when burning evacuated R.I.C. barracks, to ensure that none of the enemy could surprise us from concealed positions. I believe that the instruction had been issued by G.H.Q. after a party of I.R.A. had been surprised by R.I.C. during the burning of Ballinlough R.I.C. Barrack in Co. Roscommon. I understood at the time that four of the I.R.A. party were shot, including a battalion commandant named Glynn. I heard, too, that the barrack was burned the day it was evacuated and that the R.I.C. expected the burning and remained concealed in the vicinity of the barrack and surprised the I.R.A. party.

In the year 1920 I carried out several raids on the mail-car between Castlerea and Ballymoe. I had to go into South Roscommon area to do this. I always had four or five men armed with shotguns with me. The driver of the mail-car

(a motor car) was friendly and, after a few raids, he always stopped his car, without being asked, the moment he caught sight of our heads inside the fence. Correspondence for the R.I.C. in Ballymoe or Dunmore was taken. Usually all the mails in the car were taken some distance, the correspondence for the R.I.C. was extracted and held, and the mailbags then left where they could be picked up by the mailcar. I cannot remember ever getting any worthwhile information as a result of those raids.

During 1920 I took a short Lee Enfield from company to company and gave lessons on mechanism, aiming and judging of distance. Volunteers in all the companies got some target practice with a .22 rifle. We had a good supply of .22 ammunition and two .22 rifles in the battalion.

The North Galway Brigade had been formed in the latter part of 1919 or the early part of 1920. It comprised two battalions - Tuam and Glenamaddy. Towards the end of 1920, there was a big number of officers 'on the run' and from those a brigade flying column was formed. It was about that time that instructions were received from G.H.Q. for the formation of a brigade flying column. There were then about seventeen serviceable rifles in the brigade, a fair share of them being Lee Enfields and carbines. The flying column began to function about February 1921. It was composed of the following officers and Volunteers:-

Patrick Dunleavy	- Brigade Commandant and Column Commander.	
Thomas Dunleavy	- Battalion Commandant, Tuam Battalion	
Timothy Dunleavy	- Captain, Barnaderg Coy.	do.
Patrick Conway	- Brigade Q.M.	
Thomas Ryan	- Battalion Q.M.	do.
Thomas Nohilly	- Adjutant	do.

Martin Mannion	-	Adjutant, Glenamaddy Battalion	
Thomas Mannion	-	Capt. Dunmore Coy. Glenamaddy Battn.	
Patrick Treacy	-	Captain, Glenamaddy Company	
Roger Rabbitte,	-	Captain, Kiltевна Coy. Glenamaddy Bn.	
Jack Knight	-	Q.M. Glenamaddy Battalion.	
Patrick Noonan	-	Captain, Williamstown Coy.	do.
Thomas Tarmay	-	Brigade adjutant.	
Brian Cunniffe	-	Captain, Kilkerrin Coy.	do.
Seamus Moloney	-	Commandant,	do.
Thomas Feerick	-	Captain, Milltown Coy. Tuam Battalion	
Peter Brennan	-	Volunteer, do.	do.
Martin Ryan	-	Vice-Comdt. Glenamaddy Bn. (myself).	

Patrick, Thomas and Timothy Dunleavy were brothers, as also were Martin and Thomas Mannion.

The first attempt made by the Flying Column to attack the enemy was on the Dunmore/Williamstown road at a place called Chequer Hill, about a quarter of a mile from Gortaleam Cross. It had been learned from observation that a lorry of R.I.C. passed that way regularly to pay the R.I.C. stationed at Ballymoe. The position was a good one and the only suitable place for an attack for miles. It was a sandhill at a bend on the road and fire could be brought to bear on the enemy head on as he approached. He would be under our fire from both sides of the road and would be fully exposed to our view no matter on which side of the road he tried to take cover. The range was from 30 to 50 yards. There were seventeen riflemen and about 15 to 20 shotgun men in position on both sides of the road. Men were detailed to block the road between Dunmore and our position when the lorry had passed. We did not fear that any enemy party would come from the other direction as there was no R.I.C. post in Williamstown, and

those stationed at Ballymoe had no transport. The position at Chequer Hill was held from daybreak to dark, but the enemy did not come. This would have been February, as I remember a few people had started ploughing. We could see them from our positions. Brigade O/C. Patrick Dunleavy was in charge.

Our next attempt to come in contact with the enemy was on the Tuam/Dunmore road about halfway between the two places. We occupied a house close to the road and put the family into another house with a guard over them. We had, roughly, the same number of men as we had at Chequer Hill, with Brigade Commandant Patrick Dunleavy in charge. We waited all day from daybreak to midnight, but nothing turned up. A lorry of two of R.I.C. passed that way almost every day. That was in March, as well as I remember. There was a conacre field being ploughed near our position and we held the ploughmen prisoners all day. On another occasion later in the year, positions were taken up near the same place. I learned afterwards that a lorry of R.I.C. was fired on. I was on some other job and could not be there. The time was about April or early May.

In April 1921, we made careful preparations for an attack on the enemy at Clonbern. We got Dunmore and Clonbern companies to drive the cattle off the lands of a landlord in Clonbern who was very friendly with the British authorities. We thought that the R.I.C. in Dunmore would help him to recover the cattle. We waited their arrival near the village of Clonbern from daybreak to dark, but they did not come. The full flying column was there and a big number of shotgun men from the local companies. The Galway Blazers were out that day and a man named Hannon was with them. I remember that Brigade Commandant Patrick Dunleavy, with some Volunteers, rounded up the huntsmen and kept them under guard in a big

house in the locality. While Dunleavy was absent I was in charge of a section stationed in a two-storey house near Clonbern Church. The house belonged to a family named Freaney. On Dunleavy's return he told me that Hannon had been 'on the run' from the I.R.A. for months and that it had been established that he had given information to the enemy which had led to the death of Commandant Michael Moran. Commandant Dunleavy also told me that Hannon had a gun in his possession which was taken from him. Commandant Dunleavy seemed to be annoyed because one of the huntsmen had said that if he had his revolver he would not have been taken prisoner. He was an ex-British officer. The brigadier told me he made an offer to this man that he would provide a messenger for him to send in a message to D.I. Healy in Dunmore telling the D.I. of his position, but that the offer was not accepted. Hannon was brought to one of the local priests at about 11 p.m. after which he was taken away and shot. He was labelled 'Spy'. The house we had occupied (Freaney's) was burned down by the R.I.C. in a day or two afterwards.

In the last few days of May or the first week of June 1921, the flying column had a very strenuous time. We lay in ambush positions for almost a whole week. First of all, we lay in position for two days and two nights on the Dunmore/Williamstown road at a place called Carraneeny in the Polredmond Company area. We expected two or three lorries of R.I.C. to go from Dunmore to Ballymoe with pay for the R.I.C. stationed in Ballymoe. There were about 40 shotgun men and 17 riflemen in charge of Brigade Commandant Patrick Dunleavy. The shotgun men were from Kilcroan, Williamstown and Polredmond Companies, the majority being from the latter company. The R.I.C. disappointed. At that time we had commenced to cut trenches six feet wide on the roads most commonly used by the

enemy to delay their movements. Before we left Carraneeny we got a number of local people to dig a trench on the main road under the supervision of local I.R.A. officers. A day or two later, the R.I.C. came along and commandeered the same people to refill the trench.

We travelled cross-country by night from Carraneeny to Park in the Kilkerrin Company area and took up ambush positions at Park before daybreak. None of the local Volunteers accompanied us from Carraneeny. During the day we held ambush positions at Park there were only three local Volunteers with the flying column. These were:- Lieutenant Peter Collins, Volunteer Martin Kilmartin and one other from Kilkerrin whose name I cannot recall. I cannot remember the reason we expected to contact the enemy at Park. They did not turn up there. Commandant Patrick Dunleavy, Brigade O/C. was in charge.

From Park we went to the village of Shankill. I remember it was dawn when we arrived there and the people got out of bed to let us rest. That was the first sleep in beds the column had for days. Next day, long before the people got up to go to early Mass, we passed through the fields close to the village of Moylough. Our intention was to attack a cycle patrol of R.I.C. that went to Church in Moylough from Mountbellew. The Mountbellew Battalion was outside our brigade area, but Brigade Commandant Patrick Dunleavy told me that he had permission from G.H.Q. to enter it. As far as I can remember, we had definite information that the R.I.C. cycling patrol went every Sunday morning from Mountbellew to church in Moylough. At this time, the R.I.C. had been withdrawn from Moylough and transferred to Mountbellew. It was customary for the married members of the former garrison to

visit their families which they had left behind them in Moylough, every Sunday evening. They did the journey on bicycles and in mufti. The area was quiet.

Our immediate concern that Sunday morning was to attack the cycling patrol going to church. I remember that we went for tea to two thatched cottages between Moylough and Mountbellew. Before we had finished tea, scouts reported to us that the patrol was on its way. We ran like hares to take up positions to attack them, but we were too late. We thought we were lucky that they had not seen us, as we could attack them on their return. There were 8 to 10 of them armed with rifles. Many people on their way to Mass saw us and ran back home as fast as they could. The R.I.C. cycling patrol did not return by the same route to Mountbellew.

We stayed in position and sent a few of the column into Moylough to try and contact any member of the R.I.C. who had gone there to visit his family. We had information that at least one R.I.C. man was in Moylough. I think it was Captain Patrick Treacy, Captain Thomas Feerick and Battalion Q.M. John Knight who were sent to Moylough. They were armed with revolvers. We hoped that if the R.I.C. in Moylough were attacked and disarmed, the garrison in Mountbellew would send help to them or at least go and investigate. Some while later two lorries of R.I.C. and a Crossley car passed in the direction of Moylough. They were not attacked. I cannot remember if the men who had been sent in to contact the R.I.C. had returned by that time. There were two reasons for not attacking them then. We felt almost certain that they would return and that they would very likely be drunk on the way back. We also thought that if they proved too strong for us, we would have a better chance to withdraw towards night than earlier in the evening.

We waited their return. Our position was poor. In fact, there was no good position in the four-mile stretch of road between Moylough and Mountbellew. Our line of retreat in the event of our being forced to withdraw was over level ground. Fortunately, as things turned out, we cut gaps in two or three fences behind our position, to enable us to get through without exposing ourselves to enemy fire in crossing the fences if we were forced to withdraw. The men whom we had sent to Moylough returned with news that one R.I.C. man there had been contacted and had been killed or badly wounded. Our position was along a fence about 80 yards long, running parallel to the road and about 50 yards distant from it.

The R.I.C. returned from Moylough about an hour and a half after they had passed our position on the way in. Two lorries and a Crossley car. They were about 40 yards apart. We let the first one pass. It was a caged lorry. We opened fire on the other two when the first of these two came to about the centre of our position. The R.I.C. rolled off the lorries very quickly and took cover in a dry trench at the far side of the road. It was a boggy area but very dry at that time. I would say that there were 10 or 12 men in each of the two lorries and about 10 in the Crossley. Against them there were about 17 riflemen in all under the command of Brigade Commandant Patrick Dunleavy. We were split into two sections, Dunleavy taking charge of one and I had charge of the other.

My section was at the Mounfbellew end and nearest to the lorry we allowed to pass our position. The R.I.C. in this lorry played havoc with us. They began to creep up to out-flank us. I saw them plainly and my section had to fight very hard to keep them back. My section had to fight two fronts, those immediately in front of us and those to our right.

The R.I.C. fire was very accurate and very hot at times. The fight lasted two hours and it was almost dark by that time. Verey lights were thrown up by the garrison in Mountbellew close by and I could plainly see the R.I.C. from the first lorry trying to flank us. These were the men who did all the damage as far as we were concerned. At the start we had to let them pass our position, because if we had fired on them when they came opposite us, the men in the other lorry or in the Crossley might have outflanked us on the other side and hemmed us in between them and the R.I.C. barrack in Mountbellew. We had arranged beforehand that if we had to retreat, the signal would be one blast of a whistle for the retreat of No. 1 (Brigadier 'Dunleavy's) section, and two blasts when that section got to the appointed place to cover the retreat of my (No.2) section.

We retreated as arranged and succeeded in withdrawing without any casualty. We were very lucky that somebody had got the brainwave to cut the gaps in the fences, otherwise I fear that we would have had many casualties. At one stage in our retreat we had to crawl on our hands and knees for about 200 yards. The lesson learned in O'Malley's classes in Southpark, Roscommon, then stood me in good stead. It was the R.I.C. on our right whom we had allowed to pass that caused us most damage. They crossed the road and made things very hot for us. We had fairly silenced the men in the other cars and I think we would have got the better of them only for the men in the first car. I do not know the R.I.C. casualties, as we were not in official communication with the Mountbellew area; but the brigade commandant told me afterwards that there were nine coffins ordered by the R.I.C. from the Master of the Workhouse in Mountbellew that night. He said that the information came from the Master but not directly to himself.

The I.R.A. suffered no casualties. All the men of the column paid a tribute to the shooting of the R.I.C. The Brigade Q.M. - Patrick Conway - had a bullet through his jacket and a piece was taken out of the butt of my rifle by a bullet. We withdrew in the direction of Tuam and put up somewhere in the Barnaderg company area, as far as I can remember. We would have been surrounded there by British military carrying out a round-up of the area, but our scouts warned us in good time. We were in bed when the warning came. The two cottages in which he had the tea when we tried to intercept the cycling patrol were burned down in a day or two. All the members of the column took part in the Mountbellew fight, with the possible exception of Martin Mannion, adjutant of the Glenamaddy Battalion, who had been wounded about a month previously. He and the battalion commandant, Seamus Moloney, were surprised by a party of the enemy one night when returning from the Williamstown area after inspecting a suggested position for an ambush.

Shortly after the Mountbellew ambush, the flying column with about 30 shotgun men took up positions on the Dunmore/ Milltown road to attack a lorry of R.I.C. that passed that way fairly regularly. Brigade Commandant Patrick Dunleavy was in charge. The positions chosen were on one side of the road only and right inside the fence. The shotgun men were mainly from the Milltown Company. Two big lorries of R.I.C. followed by two lorries of British military passed. They were too strong for our party and we let them pass without attacking.

In June 1921, I took charge of the burning of Glenamaddy Workhouse. As far as I remember, it was an order from G.H.Q. and was intended to prevent the occupation of the building by British forces. The Workhouse was situated about half a mile from the village on the Creggs road. I placed armed parties of shotgun men at all approaches to the village to protect

the party carrying out the actual burning. It was a big job for which I drew on about 40 Volunteers from the Glenamaddy, Kilkerrin, Kilcroan, Glynsk and Kilbegnet Companies. There were about eight men from each company selected by the company captain in each case. The Workhouse buildings covered a big area and all were burned with the exception of the hospital and the fever hospital. Paupers, some of them cripples, had to be moved into the hospital where re-arrangements were necessary to find accommodation for them. Fortunately for us, we had the help and support of the Bon Secours Sisters under whose charge the hospital was and of Father Fergus, now Most Rev. Dr. Fergus, Bishop of Achonry. The Master of the Workhouse also assisted. We had to cut the roof of the Workhouse to save the chapel from the flames. It was part of the Workhouse building. The nuns and Fr. Fergus remarked favourably on the discipline and efficiency of the Volunteers.

The last occasion before the Truce that the column tried to contact the enemy was at Carrantryla House quite close to Dunmore. There was an avenue about quarter of a mile long leading into the house. The column took up positions in the house and avenue, expecting a small party of R.I.C. to come to the house for fruit. They had called there a few times and we got to hear of it. They actually came as far as the gate leading to the avenue in a Crossley car, waited at the gate a few minutes and drove off. We had been in position from daybreak and had detained a number of people including a daughter of the caretaker whom we found trying to make her way to Dunmore to inform the R.I.C.

There are other incidents that are not so clear in my memory. For example, I remember that our column travelled a very long journey to the assistance of the South Mayo Column

which we heard were encircled at Tourmakeady. I cannot remember the route we took or very much about it as I was a long way from my own area. Brigade Commandant Patrick Dunleavy told me where we were going. I remember he got a dispatch to say that all was well and that we need not proceed any further. I remember, too, that the Brigade O/C. told me he got a dispatch to go to a big ambush that was expected to take place at Knockcroghery, Co. Roscommon, but it did not materialise.

There was no co-operation between our brigade and the adjoining South Roscommon Brigade except a mere suggestion that the two brigades should combine in an attack on Ballymoe R.I.C. barrack, which was just inside the border of the South Roscommon brigade area. I remember that, some time in 1921, members of the North Galway Brigade went into Ballymoe and dismantled the telegraph office there. After having dismantled the telegraph office we remained in the town all the same night hoping that the R.I.C. would come out on patrol, but they did not do so.

I was a member of the I.R.B., having been sworn in by Seamus Moloney, battalion commandant. I cannot remember the date. I attended one or two meetings of the I.R.B. at our battalion H.Q. at Ballinastack in the Glenamaddy Company area.

The Dáil Éireann Loan was well subscribed in the parish of Kilcroan. Every family paid one pound, but some of them paid more.⁹ The Cumann na mBan had not been organised in the Glenamaddy Battalion by 11th July 1921, but individual girls carried dispatches and acted as scouts and intelligence officers.

I organised the Dáil Éireann Courts in the parish of Kilcroan. The Justices were Thomas Burke of Kilsallagh and

Con Mahon of Turla, Ballymoe. There was a third, but I cannot remember his name. To encourage the others, I acted as Court Clerk until the procedure was well established. I have no documents relating to the Court. I handed them over to my successor whose name I now forget. The Court met in Kilcroan National School, the use of which was given to us by the Manager of the school. Fr. Donnellan of Ballymoe often came to the Court sittings. The cases heard during my time as Clerk of the Court were trivial. They were mainly cases of trespass. The more serious cases went to a higher Court at Glenamaddy.

I remember a case of cattle stealing with which the I.R.A. themselves dealt. The guilty parties in this case were deported to England. I remember well that we verified through Dublin that they had left the country. They have not returned since then, as far as I know.

The people of the Glenamaddy battalion area, with the exception of a few families, were very sympathetic and helped the I.R.A. in every possible manner. The exceptions were a few families that had one or maybe two members in the R.I.C. who persisted in remaining in that force to the bitter end. Such families were approached by the I.R.A. to try and get them to induce the member or members of the R.I.C. to resign. In some instances the I.R.A. were successful with families whom they approached with a view to R.I.C. resignations. Thomas Glennon from the Polredmond Company area resigned from the R.I.C. and joined the I.R.A. He was a good Volunteer. His brother was captain of the Polredmond Company. Patrick Finnegan from the Williamstown company area also resigned from the R.I.C. Constable John Costello, R.I.C., Ballymoe, resigned in 1920. Jeremiah Mee, who took part in the R.I.C. mutiny at Listowel, Co. Kerry, was a native of the Glenamaddy

battalion area. He had two brothers in the R.I.C. I remember getting instructions, through brigade, to warn the local Volunteers not to molest them if they came home on holidays. Their home near Glenamaddy was burned down by the R.I.C. in 1921.

Republican Police had been established in each company of the battalion before the Truce. They were Volunteers who were specially selected to do police duties. The battalion police officer was Thomas Concannon who has since died. He was a native of Stonetown, Glenamaddy, and was Battalion I.O. as well as battalion police officer. He was an ardent supporter of every aspect of the national movement, and an enthusiastic worker who never spared himself in organising inn Fein, the Irish Volunteers and the Republican Police. He attended all Battalion Council meetings. His home was always open to the men of the column and men 'on the run'. As well as supplying the immediate needs of the men on active service as regards meals, his people also supplied them with rations in a most generous and lavish manner.

Signed: Martin Ryan

Date: May 15 1956

Witness: C. Moyrhan

