

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
BURO STAIRE MILIATA 1913-21
No. W.S. 1517

ORIGINAL

U.A. 1517

ROINN



COSANTA.

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 1517.....

Witness

Pádraig Ó Fathaigh,
Teac Enda,
Tuillira,
Árdratháin,
Co. na Gaillimhe.

Identity.

District Justice, Republican Courts.

Subject.

Murder of Vols. Pat & Harry
Loughnane, Co. Galway.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil.

File No. S.160.....

Form B.S.M. 2

ORIGINAL

STATEMENT BY PADRAIG Ó FATHAIG,

Teach Enda, Tuillira, Ardrathain, Co. na Gaillimhe.

The Fate of the Brothers Loughnane, November, 1920.

Among the long list of Galway victims, there are no names which arouse such passionate sympathy as those of Pat and Harry Loughnane. These feelings are the outcome of their blameless lives and terrible deaths. Of gigantic stature, able pure-souled, lovable and intensely patriotic, the brothers lived a model life on a model farm with their widowed mother at Shanaglish, near Gort. They had another brother away in England, two sisters, national teachers in North Galway, and a brother and sister in U.S.A.

In every phase of human activity in the district, Pat took a prominent part, and was known and esteemed throughout South Galway and Clare. President of the Sinn Féin Club, a fearless soldier of the Beagh Company of the I.R.A., member of the Beagh Circle of the I.R.B., Beagh G.A.A. full back, he deeply regretted he took no part in the 1916 Struggle, being then a member of the U.I.L. "It grieves me to think that we stood by whilst others suffered, but if I only got the least inkling of the Rising, and what Sinn Féin stood for, I too would do my part", he often declared to the writer. He was a well-known figure in G.A.A. circles and shone out prominently in the seven-a-side contests: he invariably played full back, where he was a tower of strength and was the one hurler in all Galway that the giant hurler Gibbons of Ballinderreen could not tackle. Harry was also a member of the Beagh Company of the I.R.A., G.A.A. goal keeper and Secretary of the local Sinn Féin Club. Although he stood six foot two and a half inches in height; yet, beside his brother Pat, he was a mere stripling. He was not yet twenty-two years, and was of a gentle

retiring disposition. His ambition was to be a teacher but, his health breaking down, he rejoined his brother at farming. He was very religious: he helped his mother in the kitchen after the day's toil, and his leisure hours were spent in reading and in playing with children.

On the 26th November, 1920 (Friday) whilst the brothers were engaged in the peaceful occupation of threshing corn, a force of Auxiliaries and some R.I.C. surrounded the haggard and placed them under arrest. An Auxiliary officer known as Jock Burke was in charge of the raiding party. He was born in Hamilton, Glasgow. His full name was John Francis Ulic Burke. They were subjected to gross maltreatment on their way to Gort. There the R.I.C. surrendered them up to the Auxiliaries who, after commandeering eleven yards of rope at Mr. Coen's store, bore them away. On Monday night following a force of Auxiliaries called at Mrs. Loughnane's and said that her sons had escaped from Drumharsna Castle, Ardrahan, where a body of Auxiliaries were quartered. Their friends became anxious for their safety, and their sister Nora made a diligent but fruitless search, calling on military officers in Galway and elsewhere, but she feared the worst. One told her that eight prisoners, including her brothers, had escaped, that one was re-arrested and that the other seven were supposed to be 'running south'.

In the meantime, disquieting rumours were circulated to the effect that the Auxiliaries returned to Mr. Coen's with the rope, that a girl overheard the Auxiliaries conversing with an R.I.C. man, and that the latter asked what they did with the two prisoners, and the reply was, "Oh! we have killed them", that the brothers were made carry large stones and run before the lorries, the Crown Forces prodding them with bayonets until they fell exhausted, that they were

then tied to the lorries and dragged along the road, that four shots were fired in Moy O'Hynes' wood near Kinvara on Friday night, that men answering their description were seen in O'Hynes' wood dead or in a dying state on Saturday, that several saw Crown Forces in the wood on Sunday night, that shots were fired, and that the two men were taken away in a lorry, and that a fire was seen near Drimharsna and that the Loughnanes were burned to cinders.

Then contradictory rumours were widely and persistently circulated to the effect that the brothers were safe and well, and were actually seen chipping wood in Earl's Camp, Galway.

These rumours disconcerted the search parties and, although one man found brain matter in Moy O'Hynes' wood when the men who were supposed to know all about the torture and murder of the Loughnanes were interviewed, they denied that they ever knew, heard, or told anybody anything about them. Further search seemed useless.

The discovery of their bodies came about in a remarkable manner. A comrade of the Loughnanes named Mickey Loughnane, who was aged about 18, often saw Pat in vision after his arrest by the Black and Tans. One night as he sat inside a stone-crusher van with his employer Mick Shaughnessy (Leahy) of Blackwater, Gort, the boy asked, "Why didn't you stay longer with Pat Loughnane?" And when his employer asked him if he was dreaming, the boy replied, "No, I surely saw Pat Loughnane with you, and he was leaning over his bicycle".

The boy could bear the suspense no longer. He returned to his home near Shanaglish Church on Saturday evening, the ninth day after the disappearance of his friends. He visited Shanaglish Church and prayed to the Sacred Heart to show him where the Loughnanes were,

and that night he dreamt he saw his beloved comrades in a pond at Dombriste, near Drimharsna. After hearing Mass at Gort on Sunday, the boy took a comrade with him, cycled to Dombriste, crossed a field to the pond, and there lay the brothers exactly as he saw them in the dream.

The boys told nobody of their discovery until they reached Kinvara. Over twenty men of the Kinvara Company of the I.R.A. immediately procured a horse and van and went with all haste to Dombriste. They were men 'on the run' and, on reaching the pond, they rushed into the water and taking the charred remains laid them side by side on the grass. The bodies were hideously mutilated. They were naked, not a particle of clothing remained, save one of Harry's boots. His once graceful figure was a mass of unsightly scars and gashes; two of his fingers were lopped off; his right arm was broken at the shoulder, being almost completely severed from the body; whilst of the face nothing remained save the chin and lips, and the skull was entirely blown away. The remains were badly charred. Patrick's body was not charred to the same extent as his brother's. His back and shoulders remained intact. The limbs of both were charred to such an extent that the bones were exposed, the flesh and sinews being completely burned away. Mock decorations in form of diamonds were cut along Pat's ribs and chest. Both his wrists were broken and also his right arm above the elbow. Patrick's face was completely lashed away, so as to be unrecognisable, and his skull was very much fractured.

Notwithstanding that they had been ten days dead, the bodies were in a wonderful state of preservation, without a sign of decomposition. After being taken out of the water, blood began to flow copiously from a wound in Harry's side. This bleeding was

again renewed when the bodies were laid in Hynes' barn, leaving a brilliant red stain on the linens.

Hundreds dipped their handkerchiefs in the martyrs' blood, which they treasured highly. Having recovered the bodies, the next problem was to get them away. The Auxiliary stronghold at Drimharsna was only a mile distant overlooking the pond and the Volunteers were 'wanted men'. Already a stranger cycled up and inquired casually where the bodies were being brought to. "To Ballinderreen Chapel" was the reply. The funeral had proceeded but a short distance when a lorry of Auxiliaries drove up and halted near the pond where the Auxiliaries remained searching for some time. They then proceeded to Kilcolgan, and in the meantime the funeral had turned on towards Kinvara. Not discovering anything in Kilcolgan, the lorry also moved on in the direction of Kinvara, but meeting two men on the road, the Auxiliaries believed one of them to be a 'much wanted man', and brought him back in triumph to Kilcolgan Barracks. By this time the funeral, augmented by large crowds that joined along the route, had reached Kinvara.

Whilst the coffins were being got ready, Mr. P. Hynes gave the use of his barn for the wake. It was the only habitation left to him, his house and out-offices being already burned down by the Crown Forces. This barn, together with the dwelling of the man who had charge of the funeral arrangements, were burned down by Auxiliaries a few days later.

The brothers, wrapped in linen cloths, were laid side by side on the floor. The Rosary was recited in Irish. The blood began to trickle from Harry's wounds, and the responses were interspersed with the sobs and wails of a grief-stricken people, whose handkerchiefs were dipped in the martyrs' blood.

Soon after Miss Nora Loughnane arrived. She bore the trying ordeal with spartan heroism. She insisted on seeing the corpses, and when several tried to dissuade her, she replied, "Their souls are in heaven, of that I am confident; and they died for Ireland, so it really doesn't matter how their bodies look. They were ready to make this sacrifice for their country's sake and, because I have the same idea of nationality that they had, I, too, can bear this ordeal".

For a moment the fearful sight almost unnerved her, and she trembled from hand to foot, but by a superhuman effort she braced herself together, and again she was calm and resigned. "Oh! poor Harry" she exclaimed as she beheld the mutilated features of her younger brother. She could not identify the elder brother except by his broad shoulders and his stature. A medical officer was also in attendance, and a number of I.R.A. officers held an investigation and ordered the verdict to be written on the breast-plates of the coffins. When a clergyman arrived the Rosary was again recited, and the bodies were placed in coffins and taken to Kinvara Church. The coffins were draped in Sinn Féin flags with the letters "I.R.A." and the breast-plates bore these inscriptions:

PADHRAIC Ó LOCHLAIN

A gabhadh, a marbhuiigheadh agus a doigheadh
leis na Sasanachaibh, Mí Samhna 1920
in aois a naoi mbliadhain is fice,
Dhia le n-a n-anam.

HANRAOI Ó LOCHNAIN

A gabhadh, a marbhuiigheadh agus a dóigheadh
leis na Sasanachaibh, Mí Samhna 1920
in aois dha bhliadhain is fice,
Dhia le n-a n-anam.

The I.R.A. kept guard during the night. A Requiem Mass was said on Monday, after which the cortege started for Shanaglish Churchyard, the family burying ground. The members of the I.R.A. marched in front of the procession.

Like their sisters, their mother bore up remarkably well. A British Government inquiry was held on the remains on Tuesday. The Beagh Parish Priest, Father Nagle, repeatedly asked the military and police officers to look at those bodies and to say if such an atrocity could be perpetrated in a civilised country. He had been Chaplain to the British Forces during the Boer War and had witnessed many unspeakable crimes but never, he declared, could he even imagine such a hideous barbarity. Then turning to the younger brother, and recognising his lips and chin, he wept bitterly, crying out, "And oh! poor Harry too, a saint of God." Ere six months had passed, this good, upright and lovable pastor was resting beside the friends whom he loved dearer than life.

Inured as the Galway people were to signs of woe, and steeled by ruthless repression yet, in this case, grief prevailed and there was scarcely an individual in that huge cortege who was not overwhelmed with sorrow. The people had heard of Mrs. Quinn, shot down while nursing her baby by the wayside; of Joe Howley shot in the back at the Broadstone, of Father Griffin lured out and murdered on a lonely moor and a long list of others too numerous to mention, yet they looked on in blank amazement. But this classic of atrocity was too much for them to bear. Strong men sobbed aloud, and women wailed piteously, and there was scarcely one dry eye, when the heroic brothers, gentle-souled, noble-hearted and lovable, were laid side by side in a laurel garlanded grave with the Sinn Féin flag they loved so well wrapt round their coffins.

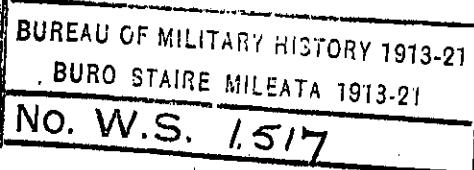
Pure-souled and gentle, true to God and Ireland, they loved their country and served her well. For her they suffered unparalleled torture, for her their bones were broken, their flesh torn to shreds and their bodies given to the flames. And this was the fate of the Loughnane brothers, but they were true sons of Ireland, and they bore it all for their dear Motherland.

Ar dheis dé go raibh said.

SIGNED: Dáimí Ó Faoisigh

DATE: An 23ú De Déireadh Fómáin '56

WITNESS: Seán Brennan Lieut.- Col.



APPENDIX "A".

PATRICK AND HARRY LOUGHNANE.

When shall we know, dear boys
The horrors of that night
You gave your souls to God
For Ireland's right?

Yes, who shall tell the tale
Of that grand victory
You snatched from hellish hosts
To make us free?

Who'll tell what you said
And how you prayed and bore
The awful pangs that pierced
Your sad heart's core?

Did angels weep to see
The bitter cup of woe
Presented to your lips
By Erin's foe?

Did Mary by you stand
That wicked dreadful night
And pour into your souls
Heaven's purest light?

Those queries of our hearts
To God and you are known
But sure we are you died
To save your own?

Your names to us, dear boys,
Are treasures evermore,
A light, a joy, a flame,
Within our shore.

Rev. Maurice Slattery, S.M.A.

