

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
BURO STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21
No. W.S. 1,588

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 1588.....

Witness

Senator Seán T. Ruane,
Kiltimagh,
Co. Mayo.

Identity.

Organiser & Brigade Staff Officer
East Mayo Brigade.

Subject.

Kiltimagh Coy., Irish Vols.,
Co. Mayo, 1913-21.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil.

File No S.2902.....

Form B.S.M. 2

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No. W.S. 1,588

STATEMENT OF SENATOR S.T. RUANE,

Staff Officer, East Mayo Brigade, I.R.A.

I was born at Main St., Kiltimagh, Co. Mayo, on November 1st 1890, the eldest of a family of four brothers. My brothers' names were: Thomas, Patrick, and James Martin, the latter always known locally as Mattie or Jimmy. My father, a native of Carrindine, Kiltimagh, was a member of the Fenian organisation, and in his earlier years was intimately acquainted with the late P.W. Nally, who was imprisoned in Mountjoy because of his connection with what the Castle authorities termed the MAYO CONSPIRACY. He died while in prison, almost on the eve of the termination of his sentence of ten years. I often heard my father stating that Nally's brother, the late Dr. Nally, M.O., Balla, was denied permission to see his dying brother until he was unconscious. My mother's maiden name was Gurren, and she was a native of Kilkelly, Co. Mayo. We kept a general business - spirit, provision and grocery, and the bulk of our customers came from some of the congested areas adjacent to Kiltimagh and from townlands in the parish of Aughamore.

I was educated at the town national school, Kiltimagh, St. Aiden's Convent National School, and subsequently at Lisduff National School, Kiltimagh, where I was appointed a monitor in 1906. My term as monitor was for three years, but in 1908, on the suggestion of the principal teacher, the late Mr. Patrick Egan, I entered for what was then known as the King's Scholarship Examination and qualified for a call to the training

college for national teachers, St. Patrick's, Drumcondra, Dublin. One of the teaching staff of this college was the late Mr. M. Carolan, who was assassinated by English Crown Forces in 1920, where two prominent officers of the same forces were killed earlier the same night by two members of the Irish Volunteers who were staying at the time in Carolan's, to where they were shadowed by a Government agent. I finished my course for the teaching profession in July, 1910, and got an appointment in the Practising Schools, connected with the college, the same year. This appointment was as substitute for the Principal, a Mr. Browner, who was ill at the time. I remained in this position until the end of 1910, and in the following January moved to a permanent position in St. Laurence O'Toole's Parish, Seville Place. The school was St. Joseph's, situate at the East Wall, Dublin. The principal teacher there was the late Mr. John F. Homan. I resided for the most of my time in Dublin at 70, Seville Place, and became acquainted with another resident there, the late Mr. Charles Monahan, where a friendship was formed that lasted until his death, which took place under tragic circumstances on Good Friday or Easter Saturday night, 1916. He was one of the occupants of the motor car that went over the cliffs at Killorgan, Co. Kerry, while travelling on a historic errand on the occasion.

On the inauguration of the Irish Volunteer movement in 1913, I joined up and regularly attended exercises at the Gaelic League Rooms, Parnell Square, until I left Dublin in October, 1914. The officers of my company included the late Thomas McDonagh, and Michael O'Hanrahan, who was the Company Adjutant.

In August, 1914, I was offered a position as principal teacher of a school in my native parish, Kiltimagh. The offer was personally made by the manager at the time, the late Very Rev. Denis O'Hara, P.P., during a visit to Dublin. He was a member of the Congested Districts Board at the time and attended meetings of that body in Dublin every month. For certain reasons I did not take kindly to the offer. I was getting on to my satisfaction in Dublin, had many sincere friends there, where my identification with the Volunteer movement at the time would not be as embarrassing as I felt it would have to be in the West of Ireland, especially in Kiltimagh where the parish priest and school manager above referred to, being closely identified and associated with the Parliamentary Party, would naturally not take kindly to one of his teachers, and the ONLY ONE, being identified with the new movement. My two brothers, Tommy and Jimmy, were enthusiastic members of the local Volunteer Company which was formed early in 1914. When the late Mr. Redmond, Irish Party leader, demanded a voice in the Supreme Controlling Authority of the Volunteer movement, which he got for a time, conditions in Kiltimagh, as elsewhere, became less normal. The trouble came to a head after his address to a Volunteer mobilisation at, I think, Woodenbridge, Co. Wicklow, after the outbreak of the '14-'18 war. The split took place in Kiltimagh as elsewhere, and my brothers were prominent among the few who remained loyal to the original founders of the movement. Needless for me to state, though living in Dublin, I was kept in touch with events at home, and I am aware that I shared in the responsibility for these, because of my brothers' action.

When the late Fr. O'Hara offered me the position at home, he made no mention of either politics or Volunteers. I told him I could not go immediately to the new position, and he stated I could come at my own time if I accepted the position. He was more or less disappointed that I was not more enthusiastic about accepting it. I may say my parents were very anxious that I should accept the position, and after discussing the matter with my Dublin friends, who were aware of objections, I agreed to go about the middle of the following October. It was pointed out to me that if I went home, without continuing active association with the Volunteers I could be in a position to give very effective service otherwise. When in Dublin early in October, the late Fr. O'Hara again sent for me. On this occasion he queried me as to my association with the Volunteers etc., commented on the "reactionary action" of my brothers at home, etc., the fact that the vast majority of the parishioners were with the Irish Party, etc. I knew that he had been assured that if I came home to teach, I would be a source of great trouble and annoyance. I then stated to him that I could not accept the views of what he termed the majority, and that perhaps it would be more advisable for him, as it would be for me, to call the whole business off and let him get some other teacher for the position. He would not agree to this under any circumstance, but suggested that it might be better for me not to openly identify myself with any section or party. Having already made up my mind on this issue, I agreed, and commenced work as Principal in my new school, Craggagh, Balla, on October 14th 1914.

I would like to state here, in justice to the memory of a good and saintly pastor, that his views on the situation generally were absolutely sincere. As a young priest he was one of the very few that supported the late Michael Davitt in his fight against landlordism. He was 100% with Davitt in launching and implementing the plan of campaign. As a member of the Congested Districts Board, he was instrumental in getting incalculable benefits, not alone for the people of his own parish, but for every congested area in Ireland. He had great influence with the powers-that-were, which he used fully to benefit his country. He had the ear of every Lord Lieutenant, Chief and Under-Secretary during his time, and had access to files and documents in Dublin Castle, as I had many reasons to know, during his time. Our relations for a year or two were somewhat strained, but did not continue so I am happy to state. At one time during an intimate discussion he said to me: "When I was as young as you, I was just as extreme. Physical force, if pursued, can only bring misfortune to the country." Less than a year after that I reminded him of his opinion, needless to state. In January, 1916, he publicly accused me, at a meeting he called to reorganise the local dramatic club, known as the Kiltimagh Young Men's Society, "of being the prime mover of a secret society, for which the dramatic club was a cover." Some of the members of the club loved to refer to the monogram K.Y.M.S. as "keep your mouth shut". All were, of course, loyal Volunteers and very loyal to me as their president. I replied with some words to the effect that, while I did not mind what charges the imaginations of His Britannic Majesty's

servants in Kiltimagh made against me, his statement, coming from a person who, because of his identification with Dublin Castle, was really a member of the Government, was a very serious one for me, and that if my liberty was curtailed afterwards I would know the cause.

He expressed regret, and I must state that afterwards his attitude was more considerate and friendly. I remember, after the news of the famous Kilmichael ambush was published, he remarked to a friend and myself who were assisting at a Mission collection, "Poor fellows, what a pity they are not stronger". Another incident also showed his heart was in the right place. The details should go on record and here they are briefly.

In April, 1921, members of the British forces rounded up many civilians in the Market Square, Kiltimagh, in broad daylight, made them grovel in the gutter, marched them to an adjoining rivulet and made them jump in.

Fr. O'Hara was an eye-witness. He went to the Commanding Officer in Claremorris, a Colonel Tweedy, and protested.

Early on the following Saturday morning, a murder gang from the garrison raided his house. Not getting in, they fired several shots through the door at latch key height. Luckily he had escaped by the back entrance.

He reported the occurrence. A military party called on him that evening, when the officer in charge tried to convince him that the attacking party were Sinn Féiners. The insinuation made no impression on him. In justice to the memory of this revered pastor, I can truthfully state that any disapproval or opposition he gave to the Volunteer movement was due to the sincere conviction that the restoration of the nation's rights could be best secured by constitutional agitation.

Following the split occasioned by disagreement between representatives of the Parliamentary Party and those of the originators of the Volunteer Movement, Messrs Seán Corcoran, Thos. Ruane, James Ruane, B. McTigue (all deceased), John T. Walsh and M. Mooney reorganised those still loyal to the original executive. Drills were held from November, 1914, at first in public but, as enemy vigilance increased, afterwards in isolated districts. Funds were raised, not alone for the home company but to a considerable extent for the brigade, through the Kiltimagh Dramatic Club or the K.Y.M.S., of which I was president. This body also raised money for the Volunteers' Dependants' Fund after 1916 for the purchase of arms, and made contributions to organisations looking after the welfare of imprisoned volunteers. The plays produced by this body, mostly dealing with the 1798 period, viz "Michael Dwyer", "The Rebel Chief", "The West's Awake", etc., did much to keep alive militant nationalism. On more than one occasion from January, 1916, on, Crown Forces tried to proclaim some of these functions, without success.

As a result of a jocose statement made in the Hibernian Bank, Kiltimagh, during the Insurrection, the late John Corcoran was arrested. On being searched, a copy of the I.R.B. oath was found in his possession. The late Fr. Denis O'Hara informed me that only for this he would be released, as was a Miss Gavin on his (the P.P.'s) intervention. Miss Gavin was a member of the staff of the post office. Owing to her expressed approval of the Insurrection to a commercial traveller named Alexander, a native of Belfast, who reported her to the local R.I.C., she was arrested, but released on

the P.P.'s intervention. But she lost her job. She has an Easter Week M.S. Pension, and resides at Castlebar, Co. Mayo.

In August, 1917, while in Dublin on holidays, I got five important communications from Michael Collins to deliver to the five Connaught counties. That for Mayo was to be given to Dick Walsh, Balla; the one for Sligo to Joe Bereen, Rinbane, Ballinacarrow, Co. Sligo, who was made responsible for the delivery of communication to Leitrim. The late Larry Lardiner, Athenry, got the communication for Galway, and M. Brennan for Roscommon. All documents, which had to do with the reorganisation of the Volunteers in the respective counties, reached their destinations safely. An all-Ireland order for a public mobilisation of Volunteers in every county on Sunday, November 4th, was issued. The order for Mayo synchronised with a Sinn Féin public meeting which was organised for Kiltimagh on the same day. To be frank, the arrangements for this meeting were availed of by the Mayo Brigade to comply with the H.Q. order. The speakers at this meeting were the late Wm. Sears, Seán Milroy (deceased), M. Lennon, now a District Justice, Conor McGuire, now High Court Judge. I recollect that some of these speakers, before the meeting, protested against it being used for a Volunteer mobilisation, since "Sinn Féin was a constitutional organisation". The mobilisation was, however, held before the meeting started. My brother, Tom, was secretary of the Sinn Féin branch, as well as being an officer of the Kiltimagh Volunteer Company.

After the meeting a delegation attended from an adjoining parish - Bohola - requesting Sinn Féin to handle a dispute with a landlord, the late Col. Jordan, with tenants on his estate at Tooromeen. We considered that the propaganda effect of Sinn Féin being identified with this dispute would be effective, since the Parliamentary Party had been handling it without effect for some time. The delegation was assured that the late Mr. Laurence Ginnell, M.P., would be sent down to deal with the matter. He came some weeks after and attended the Petty Sessions Court, to where the tenants were taken re non-payment of rents. The Sunday evening before the court day, the local Volunteer Company had a parade, taking in a road adjoining the landlord's residence on the march. They again mobilised in full strength on the court day. The late Resident Magistrate Milling was the presiding magistrate. After some confusion in the court, Mr. Ginnell asked the landlord, who was present, to come to an arbitration court which would be held in the Town Hall. The landlord at once agreed, marched with the Volunteers to the Town Hall, offered very favourable terms, which were accepted, and the incident closed. Both the Volunteer movement and Sinn Féin gained greatly in prestige and strength as a result. Some years afterwards, when Mr. de Valera and many others, including the late Seán Milroy, M. Lennon, T. MacSwiney, my brother Tom, and Seán Corcoran, were interned in Lincoln Jail, in connection with the bogus German Plot, the Tooromeen incident was a favourite topic for frequent discussion.

On Easter Sunday night, 1916, it was intended to raid for fourteen rifles which were in the custody of the late Dr. T. Madden, the Party (Irish) representative on the Volunteer Executive. The plan miscarried through latch-lock of a window not being left open by a maid, as was arranged.

On the following Sunday, the late Mr. T.S. Moclair and a Mr. T. Quinn from Castlebar came to collect these rifles. They were supposed to be handed over to a Volunteer force to be organised in Castlebar, to, I presume, help to arrest the spread of "disorder". The rifles were collected and left in a car unprotected while the occupants were having refreshment. Two youngsters, then in their teens, named Dan Sheehy and J.M. Ruane, my brother, now deceased, suspected the car contained goods of importance. They found out the contents were rifles. Neither of them could drive a motor car at the time. They met Miss Gavin, aforementioned and confided to her their intentions, viz. to get away with the car. She could not drive either, so the two cycled to Balla, five miles distant, anticipating that a call would be made there also by the occupants of the car. They notified Dick Walsh, who, with another and themselves, arranged to act if the opportunity presented itself. It did. The occupants of the car drove up to McEllin's Hotel. On their way out they were held up. The only arms used was a brass tap. The rifles were concealed, I believe, in the adjoining cemetery. Some days later, when the Rising finished, D. Walsh and a few other boys, one named Murphy, were arrested and lodged in Castlebar Jail. It was never suspected that the two boys from Kiltimagh were identified with the

operation, and they were not even suspected. Walsh and his comrades were subsequently identified. Because one of the relatives of the arrested men was in a position in which he could be victimised, the prisoners decided to give up the rifles, which they did, and they were released from custody. My late brother, J.M., was awarded an Easter Week medal because of his identification with the episode. I give these details as to what help would have been available to the men of Easter Week up and down the country if only they were partly armed.

I was in Cork City attending a national teachers' congress during Easter Week. I left for Cork on Easter Monday, heard of the Insurrection when we reached Charleville. I asked the stationmaster there, during a prolonged delay, was there any possibility of getting a train to Dublin. His reply was: "You are much better off where you are", or words to that effect. I commenced the return journey with a friend the following Sunday. We got as far as Ennis. From Ennis we went by motor car to Scariff, and from there to Portumna, where my friend had marriage relations, intending to get home by bicycles from there. All petrol was under control of the R.I.C. at Portumna. A young fellow, whose name I cannot recall now, heard me defending the action of the Rising when same was being adversely criticised by one of a party I was having a drink with. On my way out of the house, he called me aside and said: "I think you are a Sinn Féiner". My reply was evidently what he wanted, and he said, "I have a car and plenty of petrol. If you can get so-and-so to get a tin of petrol from the R.I.C. (with whom so-and-so was

very friendly), I'll drive you home wherever you have to go to". He drove us to Tuam the following Monday, where we arrived in time to get a train connection, and he refused to take any tip or fare for his long drive.

The Parish Priest, Fr. D. O'Hara, met me at the station, informed me of Seán Corcoran's arrest, of the I.R.B. oath being found on him, of Miss Gavin's removal from the post office, and cautioned or advised me to be very careful and discreet and that I would be all right. I felt he regretted his sweeping charge a little over three months before, and was anxious to repair the injury as far as he could.

Volunteers Corcoran and Ruane (Corcoran, Brigade O/C, T. Ruane, Vice Brigadier, a brother of mine) were arrested early in December, 1917, and charged with illegal assembly and being members of an illegal organisation. They were brought before Resident Magistrate Milling of Westport, refused to recognise the jurisdiction of the court as soldiers of the I.R.A., and sentenced to three months' imprisonment. They were taken by an armed escort of the R.I.C. to Sligo Jail. The local and adjoining Volunteer companies made the departure an occasion for a Volunteer mobilisation, which accompanied the prisoners to the railway station, under the command of Captain J.T. Walsh of Kiltimagh. Ruane and Corcoran went on hunger-strike on entering the jail. They were visited by the Mayor of Sligo, the late Dudley Hanley, and released after four or five days' strike. Their home-coming was made the occasion for another Volunteer mobilisation. Some three hundred Volunteers participated. The arrests in question, and

subsequent releases, were used to good effect by increasing the membership of the Volunteer organisation.

Towards the end of March, 1918, Corcoran and Ruane were again arrested in the early hours of a Friday morning and conveyed to Sligo Jail, where they again entered on hunger-strike, which was called off on direction of H.Q. from Sligo. They were transferred to Dundalk Jail. On the Sunday following the re-arrest, several hundred Volunteers, drawn from Balla, Bohola, Kilkelly etc., with the local company, assembled in Kiltimagh, occupied several vantage points and finally lined up for a route march. The parade O/C was an Irish teacher named Martin Thornton, a native of Spiddal, Co. Galway, whose help at the time was invaluable. The Castle authorities took serious notice of this assembly. The attention of the Parish Priest, during one of his subsequent visits to Dublin, was called to it by high placed officials there. I can also state that the Mayo Brigade Staff, or at least some of it, were more perturbed than pleased.

The imminence of conscription during 1918 led to increased preparations. An American citizen now deceased, not heretofore a member of the organisation, was selected in place of Seán Corcoran (deceased). John T. Walsh replaced Tom Ruane (deceased), in jail with Corcoran. R. Walsh frequently visited Kiltimagh as Brigade Adjutant during this and subsequent periods, conveying instructions as to resistance methods arranged in the event of conscription being enforced. A public meeting was held in the Town Hall in April of this year, on the eve of the Mansion House conference of that year. Volunteer members and others of the

Sinn Féin branch availed of the occasion to protest against the former pro British statements of certain supporters of the Parliamentary Party who were present. The Parish Priest, the Very Rev. D. O'Hara, aforementioned, was chairman. Because of the danger of meeting, called to unite all sections in face of the conscription menace, breaking up in confusion, I appealed to all to face the realities of the situation, that as Messrs. de Valera, Dillon, Healy and other leaders would without doubt come to a mutual understanding in Dublin next day, a similar understanding should be come to there. I am glad to state that was done. A committee, representative of opposing sections, was set up and arrangements made to take up the anti-conscription collection the following Sunday. I was unanimously appointed secretary, though the parish priest at the outset considered it foolish for a teacher to publicly identify himself with the matter. I stated that, "being of military age myself, I would like to share in the risk of resistance", or words to that effect. The Volunteer organisation set up different services. I was concerned with organisation of medical and surgical responsibilities. The movement generally went on with increasing efficiency; all the young people knew that if they had to take to the hills, they would have the sympathy and support of the civil population.

Volunteers Walsh, Jordan and others were arrested in May, 1918, but ordered to accept bail by H.Q. On the completion of their three months sentence in Dundalk, Corcoran and Ruane, now of brigade rank, were re-arrested outside the jail gates and deported to England, interned in Lincoln Jail and kept there until early in 1919, when

there was a general release of all the interned prisoners because of the German Plot fabrication. Their release was marked by a Volunteer mobilisation, numbers having more than trebled since they were deported.

A representative from H.Q. named Clarke came to Kiltimagh, I think in 1918. He was very favourably impressed with a signalling service of which my late brother, J.M. Ruane, was in charge. He had a staff trained in morse signalling, and gave a demonstration, by signalling over three miles distant, with an ordinary acetylene bicycle lamp. The messages were signalled, on Mr. Clarke's orders, and subsequently checked (reception). He was so impressed that he had J.M. Ruane, a brother of mine, appointed Brigade Chief of Signals, and on his return to Dublin he had two regulation electric battery signal lamps, with morse key etc., sent to the O/C signals. It is only fair to state that the O/C retained his captain's rank until he retired from the National Army to take over his father's business in Kiltimagh in 1925. That business house was repeatedly raided in 1919, 1920 and 1921, at all times of the day and night, to the annoyance and discomfort of the parents, but they never complained, and no documents, arms or equipment were ever discovered. It was a custom of the police and military to make big raids on fair days, when customers were cleared out. In November, 1920, on the fair day (Thursday) after "Bloody Sunday", the shop was closed and a closing notice displayed on the windows by the military responsible.

During 1919 the late Eamon Corbett of Galway came to our house. He was then 'on the run'. He

stayed with us a few days, but suffered from nerves. We got a comfortable billet for him some three miles from Kiltimagh, where he soon got back his old form and co-operated with the local Volunteer units in all their activities. My brother, Capt. Ruane, was intimately associated with him in most of these activities - raids on customs and excise offices, holding up of police patrols, relieving them of dispatches and getting information of covering addresses they had for their correspondence in Kiltimagh after the R.I.C. barracks there was closed. Capt. Ruane also managed to facilitate the desertion of some of the members of the military garrison at Claremorris, who handed over their arms, equipment and uniforms, he providing them with civilian attire, some of which I personally supplied.

In May, 1920, the order came from H.Q. to destroy all unoccupied police posts. The Kiltimagh Company arranged for the destruction of Bohola Barracks. The only occupants were the wife and family of a police sergeant. Seán Corcoran, however, decided to make the occasion serve the purpose of a big operation, into which several companies of Volunteers were taken. Road blocks were built by engineering units. I was present when details of operation were being worked out, and heard Comdt. John T. Walsh of the Kiltimagh Battalion advise that only paraffin oil should be used. He was overruled. The operation took place on the night of the eve of Ascension Thursday, May, 1920. Corcoran, with Volunteers Mooney and Carney, was engaged in sprinkling petrol over a wooden floor of a room in the barracks in which a fire was burning. There was an

explosion. Corcoran was able to get out, badly burned in the face and hands, but Mooney and Carney were left in. One Volunteer could see no better way of handling the situation than to suggest shooting the two Volunteers to put them out of pain. Vice Brigadier T. Ruane (deceased), however, managed to burst in the door (the window was barred), when Mooney and Carney were taken out, badly burned. Ruane then went back and, with Comdt. J.T. Walsh, saturated the rooms in paraffin, threw in a few bundles of straw and the building was in ruins in a few hours. Had the English garrison any intimation of the affair, there would be an appalling loss of life, because of the confusion occasioned by the incident. This operation had the effect of lessening the confidence of the rank and file in some of the officers responsible, and that lack of confidence had effects that were never overcome. This is about the most charitable way I can describe the incident. I prefer to let it rest with that. When the incident was reported to me, I took things in hand in the small hours of that morning. I got a motor car by stealth out of a garage adjoining a police sergeant's residence with the aid of John T. Walsh, whose father owned the car. The casualties, two of them, Mooney and Corcoran, were conveyed to a licensed premises whose owner was friendly with the R.I.C. He was cautioned as to the necessity for silence, and assured that the injured men would not be left very long with him. On the following day, I employed the same car to take me to Foxford. The reason I gave was to take Dr. Ferran (now deceased) to see my father. Dr. Ferran was at the time the family doctor. To cover my identity with the incident, I

ordered the driver to take the direct road to Foxford, though I knew that I could not get there that way because of a road block two miles from Kiltimagh. Nearing the curve where the road block was, I found a resident, a Land Commission engineer, in front of the car waving me to stop, which, of course, I intended to do. I thanked him for having prevented "a serious accident" and told him where I was going. He advised me to go round by Swinford, which, of course, I had intended to do. On reaching Swinford, I directed a doctor there, Dr. M. Staunton, to go to the house in which the third injured Volunteer was, and look after him. This was done without delay. I got Dr. Ferran and he came to Kiltimagh at Mass: time. I took him in by a back way through my parents' home to where Corcoran and Mooney were. He dressed their burns. On that night we had them conveyed to a house in the suburbs of Westport owned by Corcoran's sister, a Mrs. Kelly. There they were treated by Dr. Moran, Westport, and sent to the County Hospital, Castlebar, where the late Dr. McBride had them registered in their mothers' names; viz. Murphy and Deacy. There they remained, unknown to the enemy, until they were discharged fit and well. Mooney, however, since that suffers from stomach trouble, as a result of petrol fumes. Michael Collins was annoyed when he heard of the incident. My brother, Tom, however, through a feeling of loyalty to a comrade, never reported the details. Since then I often felt it was a pity he did not, because, as I stated, the incident had a bad effect on the personnel of the local companies, which was never overcome.

In August, 1919, after arriving in Dublin for a short holiday, Michael Collins sent for me. I met him at the National Aid Fund Rooms, and he asked me to collect a parcel on the following day which would be ready for me when I called to Messrs Ponsonbys and asked for a Mr. Hogan and told him who I was. Collins stated that it was imperative to have the parcel in Mayo (any place in Mayo) without delay. He relied on me to have that done. I called at Ponsonby's the following morning and asked for Mr. Hogan, gave him my name when he asked me, and where he would send the parcel for me. I told him to send it to the Galway Arms Hotel, Parnell Square, not to Egan's Hotel where I stayed the night before. The parcel was delivered about 3 p.m. I went to the Broadstone Station to enquire the time of the night train for Mayo. On my way there I met Miss N. Gavin (aforementioned), returning from the station. I thought she was after arriving from the West. Such was not so; she was actually enquiring about the train I wanted information about, as she was to return to Castlebar that night. I asked her to take the parcel. It would save me the journey and prevent a break in my short vacation. She gladly consented. We spent the remainder of the evening together. Some short time before the 7 p.m. train was due to leave, I got a taxi, handed the parcel into Miss Gavin, went with her to the station and saw her safely on the train. The following morning I received a telegram from her informing me of her safe arrival. I called over to see Collins, who remarked, "I thought you'd be in the West by this". I said, "Well, the parcel is, at Gavin's shop, Spencer St., Castlebar". "I suppose", he jocosely remarked,

"it's no use asking you how you managed to get it there so quickly". I said, "No, and I don't want any other such mission for the next few days". He stated that would be all right, or words to that effect.

The following October, two of these books (from parcel) were delivered by dispatch carried to Comdt. J.T. Walsh, Kiltimagh. I happened to be present when they arrived, and in one of the publications, which had to do with military matters, trench digging, explosives, etc., was a complete list of the contents of the parcel I got in Ponsonby's made out in my name. It might have gone elsewhere in Mayo, got lost, fall into enemy hands and cause interesting developments for me. It very evidently escaped Dick Walsh's attention, to whom the parcel was delivered. Needless to say, I destroyed the list there and then. Dick was amused when I informed him subsequently.

In the fall of 1920, information was given to my brother, the late Comdt. Thomas Ruane, by a friend in the local post office, that a supply of petrol was on the way by rail from Sligo to Claremorris, for the military stationed there. The information was got from the morse message heard in the Kiltimagh post office, passing over the "Ticker" morse instrument. There was very little time to make preparations, but a small party of the local centre I.R.B. assembled with my late brothers. A motor truck was requisitioned from a friend, driven to the railway station, where the signals were put against the train and the petrol taken off. The cost of same to indemnify the railway company was handed to the stationmaster, and the supply placed in a safe dump.

The Brigadier, the late Seán Corcoran, was enthusiastic about the venture when informed. Later in the day, however, through the advice of an associate, he participated in the removal of the petrol to his friend's premises. The Volunteers who captured the petrol were incensed and instituted a search. Late that night they came across the petrol being distributed to hackney car owner who never did duty for the movement. It was intended for two owners - Messrs Pat Walsh and A. Clery - whose cars were always available for Volunteer work. This incident was just another damper on the ardour of the local company, which had excellent material.

In August, 1920, Eamon Corbett, aforementioned, contacted a friendly R.I.C. man named Breen who was stationed at Ballyvary Barracks. Part of the garrison there was from the Black and Tan formation. Arrangements were made for a raid on the barracks on Sunday, August 20th. Corcoran was asked to secure some bombs from the brigade supply. He arrived on the morning of the 20th without the munitions promised, and suggested the calling off of operation. Corbett refused. The barrack was raided without a shot being fired, snipers having been placed in advantageous positions in the vicinity. While Volunteers were actually in the barrack building, having the garrison lined up with their faces to the wall, a military party arrived on the main road from Castlebar, not 200 yards from the occupied building. The British officer in charge of the party dismounted and walked a few steps up the road. The situation was tense, but he boarded the tender again, which drove off. The entire supply of

rifles, small arms and other equipment was captured. On the day of the raid, an inter-county Gaelic championship match took place at Castlerea, and the transport activity usual on such occasions covered up the Volunteer preparations for the raid. Twelve years later, during the Eucharistic Congress in Dublin, I met ex R.I.C. man Breen, located his confederate Corbett, and left them to exchange reminiscences for the night. Corbett was staying in the Belvedere Hotel. Breen was in Barry's Hotel, where I have resided, when in Dublin, for over 30 years..

In December, 1920, information was conveyed to me that our house was listed for destruction by the Crown Forces. I had it insured against the risk. My parents paid £50 premium, cover for one month. The premium was paid to the manager of the Hibernian Bank at the time. His name was Murtagh.

Some weeks after the Ballyvary operation, a party of military and police surrounded the house of Mr. Pat Brennan, Main St., Kiltimagh, late at night, and some short time after my late brother, Capt. Jimmy Ruane, had arrived there, where a room was always available for his use. He noticed the activity in the street and got out the back door. When in the yard, he heard commotion at the rear gate, where a military party had held up Mr. Brennan, who was about to enter at the time. He took a deliberately long time to get his key and thus gave an opportunity to my brother to climb on to the roof, cross on the ridge tiles of that and three other houses, when he dropped exhausted into Mr. Mulhern's yard and was put up in the house for the night.

On Spy Wednesday, 1921, another daylight raid was made by the Crown Forces in Kiltimagh. Capt. Ruane had only time to cross over the wall into a neighbour's yard, where, dressed in woman's attire, he crossed the street, cordoned off the military, got into a house, left the disguise there and escaped the back way. On that occasion several of the local citizens were taken in charge and subjected to many humiliations, which were witnessed by the late P.P., Father O'Hara. He went to Claremorris that evening or the next day, and protested to the O/C, a Colonel Tweedy. Early on Holy Saturday morning following, his house was visited by British officers, plainly bent on murder. He, the priest, escaped by the back way and remained away for the rest of the morning until daybreak. On Saturday he telegraphed the details to Colonel Tweedy, and that evening a military party arrived from Swinford and took up quarters in Kiltimagh. The officer in charge visited the P.P. and tried to attribute the outrage to Sinn Féiners, but to no avail. The P.P. had no doubts as to origin of the outrage.

Towards the end of April, the late Seán Corcoran, with a Volunteer named Maurice Mullins, visited a district in the Aughamore Parish, Crossard. A British military party had come into the area earlier and hidden themselves. Evidently the Volunteers in the area, if there were any such, were poor scouts, for on Corcoran and his comrade entering that part of the road occupied by the military, they were ordered to put their "hands up". Mullins did. Corcoran, it is stated, went for his revolver, when he was shot dead. Mullins was arrested, got a bit of rough handling,

but was not otherwise injured. He is still alive.

In May, 1921, after the Carrowkennedy ambush, the column responsible were being surrounded by a large military party in the Skirdagh Mountain area (Newport). An S.O.S. reached Kiltimagh, and my brothers, Jimmy and Tom (now dead), contacted Eamon Corbett in Bohola, and with a few others, not more than half-a-dozen, including a John Byrne, I think, who is now a Civic Guard stationed at Drogheda, a trench was dug on Carrowgowan, Bohola, main road Castlebar to Swinford. From there the little party crossed the hills to Foxford in the dead of the night, took up a position outside the town and commenced a rapid fire (shotgun, rifle and revolver) on the military barracks there. The garrison, believing an assault was being made by a large force, sent a courier for assistance, and some hours afterwards lorry loads of military rushed to the scene, being held up for some time at Carrowgowan because of the trenches cut there. Thus the pressure on the West Mayo unit was removed. It is only right to state that Corbett and his pals at this time were not persona grata with the local Volunteers, who were plainly being restrained from activity by a curate in Bohola, now deceased, Fr. Michael O'Hara. The following Sunday he is reputed to have denounced from the altar those responsible for digging trenches in the parish at Carrowgowan, stating they were not official Volunteers, or words to that effect. Later that day a military officer called on him - a Capt. Grant of the Border Regiment - and questioned him as to the statement he made. Was he, Grant, to assume that the priest knew who the official Volunteers were? His Reverence was

in a spot of trouble, but he got out of it. As I stated earlier, the incompetence shown at the burning of the Bohola Barracks and the subsequent stealing of petrol, already referred to, as well as the non-co-operation in the Ballyvary raid, upset the morale of the active men in the areas Kiltimagh and Bohola, and indeed in the whole of East Mayo. Fr. Denis O'Hara, P.P., Kiltimagh, stated to a local merchant there, a Mr. M. Murphy, "I've got an assurance from so-and-so that there will be no trouble round Kiltimagh, but I can't say the same or trust Tom Ruane and this Seumas". (Seumas was the name Corbett was referred to by those who wanted to hide his identity).

This about finishes my account of the period. I have tried to be fair to everyone, especially to those now dead, most of whom were an honest, patriotic crowd. Some were saddled with responsibilities beyond their ability to handle. They were hasty and lost their lives as a result, without accomplishing anything worth while. May they rest in peace!

When I came home to teach in my native parish in October, 1914; there was one member of the R.I.C. who was friendly. He spoke Irish fluently and we had several meetings. The sergeant in charge of the station, Hogan, was very aggressive, and before I was long at home he made several reports as to my contacts, etc., particulars of which the friendly constable (John Dowd) gave me. The first report I had to answer was one concerned with my residence with my parents, on their spirit licensed premises, which was contrary to the rules of the Department of Education. Though at least

three other national teachers were similarly circumstanced for many years, only I was reported. I managed without much trouble to get over this, without leaving home, through getting a room nominally for a friend, in which I resided only one night. As Volunteer activities developed, the reports continued, but the District Inspector (McGarry), whom I never met, refused to consent to my arrest unless a definite charge was preferred. Sergt. Hogan's concern was my contacts with my brothers. He would like to punish them by victimising me. When the R.I.C. stations were closed and garrisons centralised, Dowd was sent to Swinford, from where he often visited Kiltimagh as a military guide, but never without sending word previously to suspects. When he did come he was very active, so active that he apparently deceived his superiors, who promoted him to Sergt. Subsequently he was not advised of military movements, because he apparently was suspect.

During the Truce, he called at my parents' home on the occasion of my brother Tom's return from a meeting in Dublin. I distinctly remember the details of that visit. His first question was: "Are we going to have peace, Tommy?" My brother Jimmy, Capt. Ruane, who was present, said: "Dowd, the people seem to have an awful dislike to you, and the man who would shoot you would be considered a hero". Dowd's reply was: "I don't mind what some of these think of me. I could have arrested John Corcoran on several occasions when I saw him in McDonagh's shop. If I did, he'd be alive now, and, I suppose, I would be dead. Those who were any good here know me. Before Capt. Grant was a week in

Swinford, he knew more about D.I. McGarry's police district than did McGarry after his many years residence in it. I know where some of the information came from, but I'll say nothing until peace comes, and when I talk you'll find out that Dowd was not what he's supposed to be", or words to that effect. On hearing that statement, my brother, Tom, warned Dowd that if he repeated it elsewhere it would be disastrous for him. Dowd said he'd be careful, but he apparently was not. He used to take a drink or two at the time. Within a few weeks, a party of masked men raided his home in Swinford. His wife was shot dead in his and the presence of his family. He was wounded severely but survived. He knew his assailants, but refused to identify them at trial, after being visited by a friend of theirs and apparently intimidated. His son, however, did identify some of those apprehended. He is at present a member of the Garda. I think it only fair to the dead that this should be recorded. Dowd has since died a natural death, but it is my firm belief that he was attacked, not because of anything he did while in the force, but because of much that he knew. None of his attackers gave any worth-while service during the War of Independence.

Signed: Sean T. Reane

Date: 18th Feb. 1957

Witness: [Signature]
(Investigator).

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