

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
BURO STAIRE MILEATA 1913-21
No. W.S. 1700

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 1700.

Witness

Alphonsus J. O'Halloran,
7, The Crescent,
Limerick.

Identity.

2nd Lieutenant, Limerick City Regiment,
1916.

Subject.

Irish Volunteers, Limerick City.

1914 - 1921.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil.

File No. S. 2150.

STATEMENT BY LIAM FORDE,

Mill Road, Corbally, Limerick.

In addition to my own personal statement, which is now in process of compilation, I desire to make available to the Bureau of Military History the attached statement compiled by the late Alphonsus J. O'Halloran.

The latter was 1st Lieutenant of 'D' Company, 1st Battalion, Limerick City Regiment, Irish Volunteers, in 1916 and had personal experience of the happenings in Limerick at that period.

This statement was given me by Mr. O'Halloran's son and I believe it to be the additional statement which Mr. O'Halloran (as stated in his evidence already recorded in the Bureau of Military History as Document No. W.S.910) intended to transmit to the Bureau.

In any event, I certify it to have been compiled by Mr. O'Halloran and would like to add that, in my opinion, it is historically correct and that it coincides with my own recollection of events.

Signed: Liam Forde

Date: 6/11/59

Witness: J. J. McCarthy

(Investigator)

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BURO STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21

No. W.S. 1700

STATEMENT BY ALPHONSUS J. O'HALLORAN

76, The Crescent, Limerick

On the 14th December 1913, a conference was held in the Council Chamber, Town Hall, Limerick, to consider the advisability of inaugurating a corps of the Irish Volunteers in the city. It had been convened under the following circumstances: There were two organisations primarily interested in the project, the Irish Republican Brotherhood and the Ancient Order of Hibernians. The A.O.H., though but recently introduced locally, was numerically very strong, and was for several reasons regarded with jealous disfavour by many of the other societies. Realising this, the members felt that if they were to take the initiative, it would militate against the success of a movement which was intended to embrace all sections of the community, so, patriotically, they refrained from making the attempt. On the other hand, the I.R.B., comparatively weak in numbers, wielded disproportionate power, because, working sub-rosa, they exercised influence in many and unexpected quarters, but they also felt that if their open organisation, the Wolfe Tone Club, were to undertake the task, the Volunteers would come into existence with brand of intransigence, and, having regard to the timorous attitude of the people generally to anything that savoured of "Fenianism" it was not considered politic to launch the movement under its auspices. However, liaison was established between the two bodies, and arrangements made for a meeting on the day stated.

Informal invitations were conveyed to all cultural, friendly, political and labour societies in the city, but it was intimated that no delegate need be appointed, and that everyone who attended would do so in his individual capacity.

The meeting took place as arranged, and was characterised by the utmost harmony. Mr. James Ledden presided and Mr. C.C. Cregan acted as secretary. Amongst those who attended, as recorded in the original minutes in the possession of Mr. Cregan, were:

Messrs. John Dalton, B.C., High St.
 J.P. O'Connor, 17 Hartstonge St.
 Daniel Bourke, 47 Roxboro Road.
 Denis Curtin, 1 Bowman St.
 Joseph Halpin, Garryowen.
 Edward Fitzgibbon, 41 O'Connell St.
 Garrett O'Hanlon, Green Hill
 P. Whelan, 22 Mt. Pleasant Avenue
 Michael Brennan, Meelick Cross
 J.J. O'Beirne, 15 Emmet Place
 Thomas Ryan, 17 Patrick St.
 James Quigley do.
 J. Brouder do.
 James Gubbins, 17 Thomas St.
 Sean Ó Murthuile do.
 William O'Sullivan do.
 Peter McMahon, do.
 George Clancy do.
 Joseph Purcell do.
 John Wixted do.
 Thos. O'Donnell, 16 Arthur's Quay
 W.J. Fitzgerald, 8 Crescent Ave.
 A.J. Blake, King's Island
 C. Thompson, 63 Catherine St.
 J. Foley, 7 Sandmall
 M.J. O'Brien, 12 Rutland St.
 A.J. O'Halloran, 6 Sexton St.
 John Sheehan, Grattan Villas
 David Nolan, 87 Wolfe Tone St.
 James Dalton, Clare St.
 P. O'Halloran, William St.
 P. O'Sullivan
 John Lehane
 F. McNamara (City Technical Institute)
 Richard Hogan, 22 Bowman St.
 William Barton, 6 Lower Henry St.
 William Henry, 15 Emmet Place.
 Liam Forde, 2 Church St.
 David Benson, 19 Ellen St.
 Martin Fitzpatrick, 27 Charlotte Quay.
 Patrick Clarke, 33 David St.
 William Morris, 19 Roxboro Road
 John McCaull, 11 Caledonia Tce.
 Patrick O'Mara, 21 Mungret St.
 J. Harrison, 53 Athlunkard St.
 J. Thompson, 2 Little Newenham St.
 James Ledden, Thomas St.
 B. Collins, 14 Caledonia Place
 P. Killeen, 2 Myles St.
 John McMahon, 2 St. Joseph's Tce.
 George Benson, 19 Ellen St.
 Thomas Devanny, 35 Pennywell
 Joseph Dalton, Rutland St.
 C.C. Cregan, 40 Mill View Tce.

It was unanimously decided to arrange for a public meeting at which the movement could be formally launched, and the following were appointed a provisional committee, with the power of co-option, to carry out the work:-

Messrs.	George Clancy	P. O'Halloran
	J.P. O'Connor	J. Brouder
	F. McNamara	James Dalton
	E. Fitzgibbon	A.J. O'Halloran
	M. Fitzpatrick	P. Clarke
	J. Quigley	P. Whelan
	P. O'Sullivan	James Ledden
	C.C. Cregan.	

Curiously enough, because probably not done of set purpose, representation on the committee was shared equally by the I.R.B. and the A.O.H.

The first meeting was held on 17th December 1913, when preliminary talks as to the proposed public meeting took place and the following were co-opted members:

Messrs.	M.P. Colivet, 2 Castle View Tce.
	M. Moore, O'Connell Ave.
	P. Kelly
	Thomas Devanny, Pennywell
	John McSweeney, Mungret St.
	T. Ryan, 17 Patrick St.

Quite informally, those present discussed the scenes that had taken place on 14th idem in Cork, when, at a public meeting held to establish a Volunteer Corps, the platform had been stormed by men stated in the Press to be members of the A.O.H., and the chairman, Mr. J.J. Walsh, and others brutally assaulted. It was considered that this outbreak had its origin in the hostility prevailing in the southern capital between the followers of William O'Brien and the adherents of the Irish Parliamentary Party under John Redmond, and holding no significance for Limerick.

The next meeting of the committee was held on the 22nd December and, at this, the members associated with the A.O.H. sprang a surprise by urging that, having regard to the turmoil in Cork, it would be well to await further developments before making definite arrangements for a public

meeting. This was strongly combatted by other members, and eventually it was decided to adjourn consideration to the next meeting. This was held early in the new year and, when the matter came up for discussion, two or three members of the A.O.H. supported the proposal to go on with the arrangements, and so the meeting was held.

It was ascertained later that the attitude of the A.O.H. was the outcome of a confidential circular which had been sent to all divisions of the Order counselling them to a certain course of action with regard to the movement, This was a most unwise proceeding, foreshadowing the disastrous effect of the attempt made by John Redmond at a later stage to capture control of the Volunteer organisation.

No fear of such a lamentable development crossed the mind of anyone present in the Athenaeum Hall on Sunday evening, 25th January 1914, when the Mayor, Alderman P. O'Donovan, presiding, a crowded audience cheered to the echo as Padraig Pearse and Roger Casement appealed to them to enlist in the Irish Volunteers. Elaborate arrangements had been made to deal with a possible disturbance, but these were not necessary because no more unanimous or enthusiastic meeting has ever been held in Limerick, and practically every man present "joined up".

Thereafter, the work of organising proceeded apace. Offices were opened at No. 1 Hartstonge St., where enrolments took place nightly. It had been decided to organise on a territorial basis, and the regiment was divided into eight companies corresponding to the eight wards into which the city was partitioned for the purpose of municipal government. Care was taken to file separately the application forms of those who had had service in the British army, with a view to establishing a section of drill instructors. Mr. John

Holland, who had been a member of a cadet corps, being appointed in charge, with the title of lieutenant.

At first, company drill was taught in a number of more or less unsuitable premises in different parts of the city, but eventually the use of the Butter Market Hall and the Corn Market was secured and proved ideal for the purposes of the regiment. There, every Sunday and on one evening in each week, parades were held, and the utmost enthusiasm and earnestness was displayed.

Co-options took place at almost every meeting of the committee, so that eventually it became rather an unwieldy body, but no attempt was ever made to "pack" it in the interests of any section. Yet, despite that fact, there was an undercurrent of dissatisfaction prevailing amongst the rank and file, though the committee had announced their intention of holding an election at an early date.

Almost from the beginning, the Provisional Committee had appointed a sub-committee which, as its name denotes, was intended to deal with matters of a purely military nature such as the procuring of equipment. The records of this committee's proceedings have been lost, but it became in effect an executive body, which would make decisions on matters of an urgent nature. The personnel was practically that of the original Provisional Committee.

The first conflict of opinion was manifested at a meeting of the Provisional Committee, held on the 26th May 1914, when some of the members commented strongly on the fact that no public parade of the regiment had been ordered for the previous day to celebrate the third passing of the Home Rule Bill in the House of Commons. A long discussion ensued, but ended amicably.

Elections for the different offices, and a Board of Management were held on 25th June when the following were declared elected:

President	- James Leddan
Commander	- John Holland
Recording Secretary	- R.P. O'Connor
Financial Secretary	- Liam Forde
Organising Secretary	- James Dalton
Hon. Treasurer	- P. O'Halloran
Trustees	- E. O'Toole & Wm. Ebrill
Committee	- George Clancy
	John Lehane
	Michael Hartigan
	M.P. Colivet
	John Grant
	C.P. Close

It has been found impossible to ascertain the total number in the regiment at that time; estimates vary from 1200 to 2000, but it was probably about 1400. Yet not even 500 exercised the franchise at that election. And still the fact remains that, although most of those elected had not hitherto identified themselves with any political party and only four of them were members of the I.R.B., the hostility that had manifested itself against the Provisional Committee was to be transferred to the Board of Management almost immediately after the election.

In the month of July the election of company officers took place, it being arranged that the first three heading the poll in each company would be provisionally selected as captain, 1st and 2nd Lieutenant, but would have to undergo one month's special training and probation before appointment. The results of this election are not available.

On the 10th August the Board of Management passed a resolution having reference to certain declarations made by Mr. John Redmond, and ending: "that we are intended for the rights and liberties of the people of Ireland, and not for the Crown or for the Empire, and if the conditions of service are considered by us to offend our national honour, dignity or self-respect, as Irishmen to whom Ireland comes

first, we shall decline to accept same". It was ordered that this should be sent to the Provisional Committee, Dublin, with a request that the position would be clarified.

Seemingly no comment on or even acknowledgment of this resolution was ever received. On 26th August, Sean McDermott was on a visit to Limerick and, being a member of the Provisional Committee, called to the Markets to witness the Volunteers on parade. The Board of Management took advantage of his presence to hold a special meeting in order to point out to him how the resolution had been ignored, but he stated that he could not throw any light on the matter as he had been away from Dublin for some time.

At the request of the Board, Sean McDermott consented to address the Volunteers at the finish of drill. Apart from complimenting the regiment on their smart turnout, and referring in glowing terms to the Volunteers who had received the guns at Howth, he said very little, but the fact that he was allowed to speak at the parade at all created umbrage amongst a certain section, because he was prominently identified with what was termed, in ignorance, the Sinn Féin movement.

On 18th September 1914, the Home Rule Bill received the Royal Assent, but with the proviso that it was not to come into operation for a minimum period of twelve months, or until the war was ended, and, at the parade on the following Sunday, 26th, a manifesto from the drill instructors, who were then acting as company commanders, was handed in. It expressed dissatisfaction with the refusal of the Board of Management to order a public parade through the city in celebration of that event, and also made certain demands connected with the general administration of the Board. At the parade held on Wednesday 23rd matters moved

to a climax; there was a regular mutiny and, for a little while, things looked dangerous. Eventually, the parade broke up in disorder, but without any violence being used. This was the parting of the ways. Those who believed in the wisdom of John Redmond's policy took one oath; those who adhered to the original constitution of the Irish Volunteers, the other.

Of the 1400, estimated, members of the regiment, how many remained Irish Volunteers? At the first parade after the split, about 250 mustered, but there were powerful factors at work against the organisation. The war fever had gripped Ireland through the cleverness of English propaganda, and probably more than 90% of the population regarded anyone who was not "pro-Ally" as a traitor. Hence, "pressure" in business and employment circles was brought to bear on the so-called "Sinn Féin Volunteers", with the result that the weak-kneed succumbed. From a Regimental Roll in the possession of Mr. M.P. Colivet, Commandant, it is obvious that there was an immediate falling off in numbers. At the first recorded parade which was held on the 4th October 1914, 208 were present, and exactly the same number attended on Sunday, the 11th, but never again, until the threat of conscription came to swell the ranks, were there as many Volunteers on parade. The average attendance was little more than 100.

Of the Board of Management, the following members severed their connection with the Irish Volunteers: Messrs, John Holland and C.F. Close; while, for business reasons, Mr. J. Lehane had to retire and, at some time subsequently, the following were co-opted members: Rev. Fr. Hennessy, O.S.A. and Michael O'Callaghan.

Before the split, a number of guns had been secured,

and these with some 20,000 rounds of .303 ammunition had been entrusted to the keeping of people who had remained faithful to the ideals of the Irish Volunteers, and arrangements were soon made to have them distributed amongst the rank and file. It is impossible to state now with exactitude how many were available, but the total number was probably about 130, most of them being Lee Enfields, and the remainder shotguns. Practically all the revolvers and automatic pistols carried by the officers were of small calibre.

Mr. M.P. Colivet, who had been adjutant of the regiment previous to the split, was appointed commandant, and thereafter the Volunteers took to the work, learning the soldier's trade with the greatest earnestness. While one night each week saw them muster at the "barracks" which was now transferred to the Fianna Hall, off Barrington Street, to receive instruction in various branches of military knowledge, practically every Sunday was devoted to long route-marches and field work. Then, at intervals, bivouacs or all-night marches were arranged.

As, with the exception of Mr. William Iawlor, all the military instructors had remained with the dissident majority, the Volunteers would have been somewhat handicapped were it not that Captain Robert Monteith of A/Company, Dublin Brigade, was deported from Dublin, and, on invitation, took up his residence in Limerick, where he acted as instructor and organiser both in the city and county. Having had long service, including war experience, in the British army, and having acted as instructor to the Dublin Brigade, he was an invaluable asset to the Limerick Volunteers.

No incident worthy of special mention occurred in connection with the battalion until Whit Sunday, May 23rd,

1915, when certain events took place in the city which most certainly for several reasons deserve to be put on record, but rather have been unaccountably ignored by writers dealing with this period.

A/Company of the Dublin Brigade had arranged for a train excursion to Limerick on that day, when they proposed to parade in full equipment through the city. Naturally they pushed the sale of tickets amongst other companies of the brigade, with the result that the idea of an armed parade in the city of the Violated Treaty caught the imagination not only of Volunteers in the metropolis, but of those in Cork and elsewhere; and so Cork and Tipperary were also represented on that occasion. No attempt whatever was made by headquarters to make it a general parade, and it was learned that volunteer corps in other counties had felt aggrieved that no opportunity to participate had been afforded them.

Two special trains carrying some 600 Volunteers, with hundreds of sympathisers and others, arrived from Dublin. A special also ran from Cork with about 250 men, while Tipperary was represented by about 150, chiefly drawn from the famous Galtee Regiment. It is significant that another special from Dublin brought a battalion of British soldiers to augment the already strong garrison.

The arrangements for the day were as follow: The parade was to start from Pery Square at 1 p.m. and, after traversing the main arteries of Newtownpery, including O'Connell St., O'Connell Avenue, and Boherbhidhe, pass through the Irishtown and Englishtown, touch on Thomondgate by way of the Treaty Stone, and so back to the starting point through Sarsfield and O'Connell Streets. Incidentally, this was the route followed by all great religious and

political processions for almost a century. It was intended that on arrival at Pery Square, a review of the Volunteers would be held in the People's Park. Thereafter, it was arranged the visiting corps would proceed to the Fianna Hall where, if they so desired, they could stack their arms. The Mayor had given permission for this use of the park, but withdrew it subsequently and, for the first time in a generation, the park gates were kept locked on a Sunday.

Having regard to the state of public feeling at the time, it is questionable as to whether it was prudent to include the Boherbuidhe and Irishtown districts in the line of march, since a very large proportion of the inhabitants of both quarters were connected, either by ties of blood or friendship, with men serving in the British army. To make matters worse, the arrangements for the day's proceedings had been advertised in the local press, thus affording certain interested parties an opportunity of laying their plans accordingly.

Information to the effect that a hostile reception was being arranged was furnished by the Intelligence Staff of the Limerick Regiment, but it was not anticipated that it would assume a serious form. Indeed, it is morally certain that, left to themselves, any manifestation of ill-feeling on the part of the citizens would have been merely of a vocal nature; at all events, it would not have been possible at such a late stage to alter the proposed route of march without loss of prestige, and so it was decided to adhere to it.

Later in Whitsun Week, Limerick headquarters learned that from some mysterious source large sums of money had materialised to provide the dregs of the population with intoxicating drink on the day of the parade. The object

was patent. Take an unpopular cause and a few score rowdies primed with liquor, and no one can foretell what serious consequences may ensue. The plot failed, but the plotters could not blame their dupes; it was the wonderful discipline of the Irish Volunteers that foiled it. Certain specific instances of how the hidden hand worked might be given, but since many of the then dupes afterwards made noble amends, no useful purpose could be served by doing so.

Altogether, there were about 1,200 in the parade, which started according to schedule, and as, headed by the band of the Limerick Regiment, they passed through the streets of the city, they should have inspired the respect, if not the admiration, of the citizens. Yet, and it may be difficult for the present generation to realise the fact, they could not have been regarded with more hatred had they been to a man gaolbirds of the vilest type. This was the fruit of propaganda. Many of the Volunteers wore broken boots and shabby attire because their scanty earnings were devoted to paying for the guns they carried; but in the eyes of the populace they were traitors whose pockets were lined with German gold. Amongst the men who marched that day were Padraig Pearse, Tom Clarke, Willy Pearse, Liam Mellows, Sean McDermott, Ned Daly, Terence McSwiney, George Clancy, Thomas McCurtain and scores of others who were destined before long to make the supreme sacrifice for Ireland.

No incident of note occurred until the parade reached Wolfe Tone St. and here it was observed that the windows of the New (now Sarsfield) military barracks overlooking that thoroughfare were filled with British soldiers who, in their own inimitable lingo, jeered at the Volunteers. In view of the meticulous care that the British military authorities invariably took to secure that the rank and file did not

indulge in political manifestations, it seems significant that on this occasion they were permitted to do so unchecked.

The march along the Boherbuidhe district was through a barrage of abuse from thousands of excited females, who hurled at the Volunteers such taunts, jeers and reproaches as only the fertile wit of womankind can coin, but the men marched on with scarce a glance to right or left. It was not until the head of the column reached the Irishtown that signs of a more malignant hostility became apparent. Mungret Street, its chief thoroughfare, is one of the oldest streets in the city, and behind it on either side lie the slums areas of Watergate and Palmerstown, which were wont to furnish some of the finest fighting material of the famous Munster Fusiliers. The inhabitants, whose banked masses on either side of the street scarcely sufficed a passage for the marching men, were not content with verbal compliments, but brought bottles, stones and other missiles to reinforce them. They had been told that these men had cheered and gloated over every disaster that had befallen the Munsters in the war which was then raging, and so, their hearts were filled with bitter hatred of the pro-German Sinn Féiners, as they called the Irish Volunteers.

It was calculated by the plotters that Mungret St., that street from which the women of 1690 had helped to hurl back the storm troops of William of Orange, would be the scene of an incident that would start a general conflagration. Some intoxicated rowdy would break through the ranks, some Volunteer would lose his head, shots would be fired, a general melee would ensue, and the tragedy of Bachelor's Walk would be repeated on a larger scale. Then what more simple? Irish public opinion, being what it was at the time, would not only demand but insist that the Volunteers should be

disarmed. One can only speculate as to what the ultimate result might have been. But the plotters failed to take into account the very important factor - the morale of the Volunteers - and so, as oblivious of missiles as of insults, the green-clad ranks swept through that hostile mob as if bouquets were being showered on them, and their lines remained unbroken.

The remainder of the parade passed to Pery Square without incident. Owing to the fact that the park gates had been kept specially locked on that day, it was not found feasible to hold the projected review.

The visitors marched to the Fianna Hall and, having stacked arms, proceeded to seek refreshments and to indulge in sightseeing. Now that the parade was over, it was considered that all danger of a disturbance had passed, and the Volunteers generally were inclined to take a humorous view of the day's proceedings. They felt convinced that time was on their side and that in a short space the people would be with them. But indications were soon forthcoming that the plotters had not yet abandoned the hope of achieving their object. Bands of intoxicated rowdies of both sexes roamed through the city attacking and maltreating not only the Volunteers but lady visitors, many of whom had no special sympathy with the "Sinn Feiners", but had simply taken advantage of the cheap rail excursions. Each of the four companies of the Limerick Regiment had taken turn in mounting guard over the arms stacked at the Fianna Hall, and it was found necessary, in consequence of reports arriving there, to dispatch detachments of Volunteers to protect the visitors from violence. In this connection it should be recorded that an officer of the Dublin Brigade, a Captain Eamon de Valera, on going to the assistance of some ladies who were attacked by a mob in Parnell St., was compelled to take refuge with them

in a nearby licensed premises, whence they were rescued by a squad of Limerick Volunteers. Let it also be recorded that it was not until the Volunteers had been ordered to fix bayonets and load rifles that the mob could be brought to see reason. And all this time a number of members of the R.I.C. stood by, either unable or unwilling to intervene!

In the meantime, the instigators of the disturbance took advantage of a trifling incident to inflame public feeling to fever heat. An inquisitive urchin had got into the line of fire when an enthusiastic "pro-Ally" hurled a bottle at a Volunteer, with the result that his head was badly gashed. Hundreds who had not witnessed the incident saw the boy, covered with blood, being rushed to hospital, and the story spread like wildfire that he had been shot by the "Sinn Feiners". Before another hour had passed, the boy had been metamorphosed into a score of men, women and children shot down in cold blood. The result was that thousands of decent men who, under ordinary circumstances, would never have countenanced an attack on the Volunteers, were stirred to frenzy, vowed vengeance on the "murderers" and thronged the approaches to the railway terminus with the idea of wreaking it on the departing visitors.

It was now realised by Commandant Colivet and the staff of the Limerick Regiment that the great problem was to get the Dublin, Cork and Tipperary Corps entrained without provoking a serious conflict. The tempers of the rank and file of the local Volunteers were sorely frayed, not on their own account, but that they bitterly resented the treatment meted out to their brothers-in-arms, and so perhaps an order to deal drastically with the perpetrators of the day's outrages would not have been unwelcome to them. For this reason, it was considered prudent to keep them standing to

arms at the Fianna Hall while the visiting troops were marched to the terminus. Soon a report arrived that, owing to the attitude of the mob, it would not be possible for them to entrain without resorting to violence. The Limerick Volunteers were rushed at the double towards the scene and had almost reached their objective when a messenger from Padraig Pearse intercepted them with word to the effect that all was well and that their services would not be required.

What had actually happened was that several of the local clergy, being apprised of the danger, hurried to the terminus and used their influence to quell the passions of the mob. Chief amongst them was the Rev. Fr. Mangan, C.S.S.R. who was then Director of the Arch-Confraternity of the Holy Family, and who, apart from the powerful influence he wielded by virtue of that position, was personally very popular with the people generally. Mounting on a sidecar, he appealed to such members of the Confraternity as were on the scene to help to secure the safe departure of the visitors. His appeal was successful and they co-operated with members of the R.I.C. who were present, under District Inspector Craig, in forming a passage through which the Volunteers and their friends entered the terminus. But even then, some of the hooligan element, ensconced behind the cordons, struck at and injured a number of the Volunteers and tore nine or ten rifles from their hands. These guns were subsequently recovered, through the influence, I think, of Father Mangan, and were returned to their owners.

The press of that time pictured more than a thousand Irish Volunteers flying in wild disorder before the women of Limerick and only being saved from utter rout by the efforts of the Royal Irish Constabulary, as anyone who cares to

consult the files of those journals may see, and that is why I think it advisable to tell the true story of the Whit Sunday riots, while some two score Limerick Volunteers who participated in that parade survive to bear testimony to the fact that I have strictly adhered to fact in its telling, and that if I have erred it has been on the side of moderation. In the years to follow, many of the men who paraded that day were to give evidence of their selfless love of country; of their courage and daring in the face of overwhelming odds, but on that day they gave absolute proof that they were disciplined soldiers, whose conduct and bearing under very great provocation could not have been surpassed by any body of veteran troops in the world.

The "Irish Volunteer" of April 22nd, 1916, carried a series of "Notes from Headquarters" dealing with the projected Easter manoeuvres in which it was stressed that all units, even the smallest, should engage. It was specially emphasised that all Volunteers should parade with "full equipment", which meant full arms, ammunition and marching kit. However, the "notes" were so couched that no one could deduce from them that anything serious was afoot, but the secret "orders" sent to the different commands was that at 7 p.m. on Easter Sunday they were to proclaim the Irish Republic and to go into action against the British forces.

Commandant M.P. Colivet of the Limerick Command had eight battalions in his area, viz: one in the city; three in the county of Limerick, the latter including portion of Tipperary, and four in County Clare. But this must be qualified. A battalion comprises at the minimum 500 men, and the city battalion at its fullest strength never mustered more than 205. This applied more or less to the other seven battalions. With the exception of the city

battalion, all the others were most indifferently armed.
At Easter Week the officers of the battalion were as follow:

1st Batt. Limerick City Regiment

Hon. Colonel	- James Ledden.
Commandant	- M.P. Colivet
Vice Commandant	- George Clancy
Major	- J. McInerney

Staff

Engineers	Capt. John Grant
	Lieut. J. McNulty
Quartermaster	Capt. P. Walsh
Ambulance	Lieut. J. Kirby
Bandmaster	Lieut. T. Glynn

A. Coy.

Capt. S. Dineen
1st Lieut. J. Gubbins
2nd " J.E. Cashin

B. Coy.

Capt. J. O'Donnell
1st Lt. P. Whelan
2nd Lt. F. Fitzpatrick

C. Coy.

Capt. Liam Forde
1st Lieut. A. Johnson
2nd Lieut. J. McKeown

D. Coy.

Capt. A. Kivlehan
1st Lt. A.J. O'Halloran
2nd Lt. R. Slattery

Lieut. J.L. Connaughton (unattached).

Previous to the Easter Week period the plan of operations approved for this command was, briefly, to hold the line of the Shannon from the Clare side. Some three weeks before Easter the O/C. received orders to "hustle" things, and on the Tuesday of Holy Week Sean Fitzgibbon arrived with orders from Headquarters, to the effect that arms were to be landed in Kerry in a week or less; that Commandant Colivet was to arrange to have them received at Abbeyfeale, take what he required for his command, and have the remainder railed to Galway. Meantime the enemy positions in the city were to be attacked with a view to facilitating the transfer of the arms train onto the Clare line. Subsequent to this, the outlying battalions would converge on the city, and the attack on the enemy would be pressed home. If, and when, matters had been stabilised in his area, the O/C. was to move.

As these orders obviously clashed with previously approved plans, Fitzgibbon advised Colivet to contact headquarters personally. He accordingly did so, and Pdraig Pearse confirmed the orders brought by Fitzgibbon. On his return to Limerick the O/C. with the battalion staff drew up the following plans for carrying them into effect:-

Basic Plan prepared at Wednesday night's conference
at George Clancy's house, 19th April 1916.

The City Battalion was to move to Killonan on Sunday morning at ten, on an apparent two-day scheme of manoeuvres, and at seven p.m. attack was to be opened on police and military barracks in the city, after cutting all telephone and telegraph wires and demolishing rail connection with Limerick Junction and Dublin at Killonan and other suitable points. The objective was to keep the garrisons confined to barracks, without pressing home the attack, so as to enable the arms train from Kerry to go around the southern perimeter of the city by means of the railway loopline, and across the Longpavement railway bridge into Clare, without being noticed or interrupted by the enemy. Later, when we received the armed reinforcements, the attack was to be pressed home.

Meanwhile, Major McInerney would go to Newcastle West on the next day, take charge of all available units in West Limerick (rather poorly armed) - one party at Abbeyfeale to take over the train from the Kerry Command; another at Newcastle West to attack the police barracks and ensure that the arms train got safely through, and the remainder to attack and disarm all police units likely to interfere with the plan. Newcastle West was a terminus station where all trains, including the engines, had to be reversed when passing up or down. It was very necessary to ensure that the delay thus caused was not used by the enemy to upset our plans. No overt action was to take place before 7 p.m. on Sunday. This

proviso applied to all the operation plans for that day. As the train made its way up to Limerick every available Volunteer was to be armed and placed aboard, and at all stations a lookout was to be kept for such reinforcements.

The Galtee Battalion was to put Charleville railway junction out of action, attack and disarm all police units in their district, and then move in towards Limerick City to take part in the reduction of the enemy there.

The Tipperary Town Company was to act similarly with the Limerick Junction and the local police units, and then move towards Limerick City as soon as possible.

The Doon and Castleconnell units were to secure the lines Castleconnell-Killaloe and all the river crossings, demolish Birdhill Junction and link up with the City Battalion and the Clare units.

In Clare, Captain Michael Brennan was to take charge of all Mid-Clare and East Clare units, take possession of Ennis and all stations up to Crusheen, attack and disarm all police units and then converge on the northern side of the river at the city so as to completely surround it and force an enemy surrender. All needed arms were to be got from the train at Longpavement or other suitable station, and the Galway share to be conveyed to that command at Crusheen. In West Clare, Captain Paddy Brennan was to take command, collect all available units at Kilrush or thereabouts on Sunday, and seize sufficient boats to get his party across the Shannon to Tarbert or Ballylongford whence he was to make for Listowel after making contact with the Kerry command, get on the arms train at Listowel or other suitable station, and come with it to Limerick. A good-sized party would be required to get the train past Newcastle West.

Lieut. McGee, of the Castleconnell Company, who was then stationmaster at Castleconnell, was not in "open" service at the time; he was acting in the "auxiliary" service. He was deputed to make all necessary contacts and arrangements with railway men to ensure the successful journey of the arms train.

When all was secured locally we could make for Dublin.

On Easter Saturday morning the "Cork Examiner" carried a report relative to the discovery of a collapsible boat, pistols, etc. at Ardfert Strand. Commandant Colivet dispatched Lieut. Whelan to Tralee to glean fuller information, and Sean Fitzgibbon hurried to Dublin for instructions in view of this development. He arranged to send a code message to the O/C. as to whether things were "on" or "off". Lieut. Whelan returned from Tralee with the news that Austin Stack and Con Collins had been arrested and that a ship, supposed to be carrying arms, had been sunk. Commandant Colivet sent Captain Forde and Lieut. Gubbins to Dublin with this information and, on Saturday night, not having received any further word from headquarters, dispatched orders to all outlying battalions cancelling previous ones, but arranging for the giving of fresh orders later.

On Sunday morning, The O'Rahilly arrived with written orders from Eoin MacNeill: "Volunteers completely deceived. All arrangements for tomorrow, Sunday, cancelled". The O'Rahilly informed Commandant Colivet that there was a serious cleavage of opinion at headquarters, mentioning the arrest of Bulmer Hobson, and that a meeting had taken place and that it had been decided to cancel arrangements.

The O/C. had requested Sean Fitzgibbon to have some lorries sent to Limerick, and Lieut. Gubbins returned on Sunday morning with two lorries which had been sent by Sean McDermott.

After a consultation with his staff, Commandant Colivet sent out orders to the other units in his command, cancelling arrangements, and took the City Battalion to Killonan as if for a routine bivouac.

At the parade on Holy Thursday evening, the O/C. had addressed the Volunteers, giving them to understand that the time was fast approaching when they might be called on to make the supreme sacrifice in defence of their principles, and ordered that every one of them should parade on Easter Sunday morning, fully armed and equipped, and carrying two days' rations, including those who, for one reason or another, had hitherto been exempted from publicly identifying themselves with the battalion. He furthermore ordered that any Volunteer finding himself unable to parade should hand over his rifle to his company officer. Articles of field equipment including First Aid outfits, were distributed.

About 130 Volunteers paraded at the Fianna Hall on that Sunday and the march to Killonan took place. Towards evening, as it was understood that the projected insurrection had been definitely abandoned, and as the weather turned wet and chilly, some 40 or 50 Volunteers were allowed to return to the city, with the result that only about 80 remained in camp.

On Sunday afternoon, a code message came from Fitzgibbon that things were "off".

At midnight on Sunday, Captain Liam Forde returned from Dublin with orders from Pearse cancelling all arrangements, but instructing the O/C. to be ready to receive further orders.

On Monday morning, Lieut. Whelan came from a second visit to Tralee and reported that he had met Captain Monteith, who told him "that no men were coming"; "that the arms sent for the Volunteers were gone"; "that the Germans were out for

cheap Irish blood", and "that the best thing to do was to try and bluff through".

Some time between 1.30 and 2.p.m. on Monday a message from Padraig Pearse was delivered by the Misses Agnes and Laura Daly to Commandant Colivet at the camp. It ran: "Dublin Brigade goes into action at noon today (Monday). Carry out your orders". Immediately on receipt of this he called a meeting of all the available officers who, having considered the message in the light of all the information at their disposal, decided that since the orders to the Limerick Command had been based on the arrival of the arms ship, these orders could not be carried out. Then, having regard to the contradictory orders and messages it was premised that only the Citizen Army and a small section of the Volunteers had gone into insurrection. It was also taken into account that all the outlying battalions had been demobilised and that only about 810 of the city battalions remained in the camp. Having reviewed all these circumstances, it was unanimously decided by all the officers present that nothing could be done. The Volunteers were accordingly marched back to the city and dismissed. As no one could anticipate what action the British authorities might take, condition^{-al}/absolution was given by Rev. Father Hennessy, O.S.A., who had hurried to the camp on hearing of the outbreak in Dublin, and the full store of .303 ammunition distributed amongst the men. However, the battalion marched back to the Fianna Hall through William and O'Connell Streets without incident, and, having been dismissed, returned to their homes carrying the rifles and ammunition.

On Tuesday, 25th April, Commandant Colivet convened a meeting of the Board of Management, the Battalion Staff company commanders, and all officers who had any knowledge

of the previous events, and it was decided by a majority of ten to six that nothing could be done.

During the week, the Mayor, Clr. James Quinn, sent for the O/C. and conveyed to him a demand for the surrender of the arms from Colonel Sir Anthony Weldon, commanding British forces in the district. A meeting of the combined Board and officers decided to refuse this demand, which was several times made through the Mayor, and as often rejected. Eventually, it was learned that the British were about to raid for the arms, and with a view to averting a useless effusion of blood, it was unanimously decided by the Board of Management and officers to surrender their arms, but with this stipulation, that each Volunteer was to hand his gun to Commandant Colivet, who would then give it into the keeping of the Mayor, thus signifying that the arms were being surrendered to the First Citizen of Limerick to save the city from terror and bloodshed. This was carried out in the Council Chamber, Town Hall, on Friday, 5th May 1916, the Mayor occupying the mayoral chair during the proceedings.

At daybreak on Thursday, 11th May, the following were arrested and removed to the Ordnance Barracks: John Dalton, B.C., James Dalton, Joseph Dalton, Edward O'Toole, John E. Cashin, James Kirby, Alphonsus Kivlehan, John Hurley, Michael P. Colivet, James Leddan, Edward Fitzgibbon, Patrick Whelan, James McInerney, John Troy, Martin Stapleton, George Clancy, Liam Forde, M.F. Fitzpatrick, James Gubbins, R.P. O'Connor, B.C., James McNulty, James L. Connaughton, Patrick Walsh, James O'Donnell, Patrick O'Halloran, F.J. O'Shaughnessy, A.J. O'Halloran.

Later in the day, Sir Anthony Weldon attended at the barracks and, as a result of an inquiry, discharged the following: John Troy, Martin Stapleton and Joseph Dalton.

All the others were removed to the County Gaol that evening. On Friday, Edward O'Toole was released. On subsequent dates Anthony Mackey, Castleconnell, Batt. Laffan, Dave Hennessy, Sean Carroll, P.J. O'Farrell, P. O'Sullivan, J. Ryan, Doon, and others were arrested, but, with the exception of Seán Ó'Murthuile and James L. Connaughton, all the prisoners were released unconditionally on the 15th May, and the latter two on the day following.

Almost immediately after these releases, the battalion resumed activities, but under cover, groups meeting at isolated places in the country districts surrounding the city, where company training, including rifle practice, was carried out.

Armed squads were sent to about ten of the polling stations at the East Clare Election in 1917. Soon after, open parades were again held, and uniforms worn.

There was an unfortunate development about this time. In May 1917, the Roger Casement Sinn Fein Club, in the Irishtown district, desired to form a company from amongst their own members, and applied to the authorities of the battalion for a drill instructor. This request was refused on the ground that a company already existed in that territory, with the result that it was decided to form a unit independent of the 1st Battalion. A little tact on both sides would have prevented the unhappy situation which came about.

Within a very short space of time, companies were organised in other districts and linked up together under the designation of the 2nd Battalion. It did not tend to improve matters that some of those who became prominent in this body had been bitter opponents of the 1st Battalion

since the split in the Volunteers, though indeed they were afterwards to give positive proof of their courage and loyalty to the Republic. There had been a certain amount of dissatisfaction amongst some members of the 1st Battalion because no action had been taken during Easter Week, and Lieut. A. Johnson and a small number of the rank and file seceded and joined the new body.

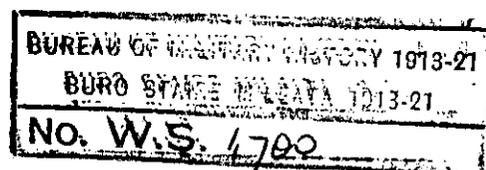
Thus there were two independent battalions existing in the city, each claiming to be in control, and though there was no real friction between them, relations were not good, since the spirit of co-operation was lacking. Captain Forde made repeated attempts to heal the breach, but without success.

Limerick was to play a distinguished part in the Anglo-Irish War, but it would probably have done much more, were it not for this unfortunate division.

Both battalions sent strong contingents to Waterford for the election in 1918, and both were active in preparing to meet the conscription crisis.

In 1919, Headquarters sent Mr. Richard Mulcahy to hold an inquiry as to the situation which obtained in the city, and, as a result of his report, the 1st Battalion was suspended. Training, however, continued as usual. At intervals, members of both battalions were arrested, charged with such offences as drilling, and imprisoned.

In May 1920, Captain Forde joined the staff of the 2nd Battalion and was subsequently appointed Brigadier, Mid-Limerick Brigade. In the autumn of that year, a flying column was started with which some of the officers and Volunteers of the 1st Battalion joined up, and in March 1921, the two battalions united.



SALESIAN COLLEGE,
PALLASKENRY,

CO. LIMERICK.

10th May, 1957.

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Dear Sir,

I beg to inform you that I have in my possession a document which covers the entire history of the Irish Vols. - Old I. R. A. in Limerick City 1913-21. This document was compiled by my late father, Mr. A. J. C'Heffernan, who played a prominent part ~~at~~ in "the movement". I am willing to lend it to the Bureau so that a copy (or copies) of it can be made for historical purposes.

Kindly let me know if
you are agreeable to this
course.

Yrs. sincerely,

Patrick A. O'Halloran

P.S. - My late father compiled
the documents at the request
of friends. He was a
sort of minor historian - P.O.H.