

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

BURO STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21

NO. W.S. 983

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

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Witness

Thomas (Tomo) Tuohy,
Clonusker,
Scariff,
Co. Clare.

Identity.

O/C. Feakle Company Irish Volunteers;
Vice-O/C. 6th Battalion, East Clare
Brigade.

Subject.

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1915-1921.

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STATEMENT BY THOMAS (TOMO) TUOHY,

Clonusker, Scariff, Co. Clare,

formerly Vice O/C 6th Battalion, East Clare Brigade.

I was born at Laccaroe, Feakle, Co. Clare, on the 23rd November, 1898, and was the eldest of ten children - five boys and five girls. All the family went to Feakle National School where I did two years in the 6th Standard.

With my schooling completed I went to help my father, who was the owner of a small farm. He was a hard working and industrious kind of man but in his younger days was an active Land Leaguer and "Moonlighter". Other than this I am not aware that any of my predecessors had any connection with national movements of the past.

I was employed at home when the Irish Volunteers were started in the Feakle district early in 1915. I joined up at the outset along with about 50 others. Our Captain was Tadhg Kelly, East Feakle, and we were drilled by Daniel Honan, an ex-Irish Guardsman who had been bought out of the British Army a few years before. The unit drilled mostly on a flat stretch on the mountain between Feakle and Laccaroe, and consisted ^{drilling} ~~mostly~~ ^{mainly} of foot and extended order drill.

The first rifle which the Feakle Company acquired, a Winchester, was got from Dr. O'Halloran, Feakle, Justice of the Peace, but friendly towards the Irish Volunteers. It was given out for the benefit of the authorities at the time that a raid was made for the gun, but in reality

he handed it over to Tadhg Kelly, the Company Captain, soon after the Company was formed. The next gun we got did not come so peaceably. Some time later in 1915 while the Company was assembled on parade at Feakle they were being addressed by Kelly, who was quoting from some papers, and an R.I.C. man named Lawless attempted to seize the papers. A struggle ensued in which a number of the Volunteers participated. In addition to saving the papers the policeman's carbine was taken from him and kept. Kelly was arrested, fined £5, and bound to the peace for two years.

During the first year of its existence the Feakle Company got two more rifles which, so far as I could trace, were a legacy from the Fenian days. I cannot remember what make they were, but, due to want of suitable ammunition, they were never used afterwards. However, along with the other two rifles they were helpful in training the Company in musketry and aiming exercises.

During 1915, too, the Company got two .22 sporting rifles, for which plentiful supplies of ammunition were obtained from Limerick through Michael Brennan, afterwards O/C East Clare Brigade. Targets were set up in one of Kelly's fields outside the village of Feakle where practice was held every Sunday, each man being given three shots. By the beginning of April 1916 most members of the Feakle Company were fairly useful marksmen. The ammunition which was used at the targets was paid for by weekly subscriptions, as was also the instructor's fees. After 1916 he ceased to let us have his services, but by then a number of the Volunteers had become quite competent instructors themselves.

On Easter Saturday, 1916, the Company mobilised in Kelly's field, Feakle East. Around 50 men reported. They were told by the O/C to go back to their own districts and collect whatever arms and ammunition they could lay hands on and to bring them that night to the same assembly place; each man was also requested to bring two days' rations. Practically every man reported again that night, and the collection of weapons, including rifles, equipped over 30 men. Kelly read a despatch which he stated he had just received from G.H.Q., ordering all Volunteers to be ready to participate in armed insurrection against the British Government and stating that further instructions would be issued giving details of when and where to strike.

During Holy Saturday night the whole Company went into the outhouses attached to Kelly's farm where we were served with food by Mrs. Kelly and other members of her family. As it was expected that our first military objective would be the local R.I.C. barracks, which had a garrison of a sergeant and six men, plans were made to raid the barracks during Mass time ^{next day} when there would be only one man in the building. One of our men was to go up to the barracks and ask the constable on duty for a permit for blasting powder. When the policeman opened the door the rest of the ^{party} ~~attackers~~ would rush in and seize the building. Arrangements were also made to cut all phones between the barracks and outside.

The party remained in Kelly's place all day on Easter Sunday, though a despatch arrived during the day

cancelling the previous instructions and ordering the disbandment of the unit. Kelly considered it wiser that the men should remain under cover until after nightfall when they could proceed to their homes without exciting any comment and take the guns away without being seen. About 10 o'clock the Company dispersed, and nothing else happened for the remainder of that week.

In the week following the suppression of the Rising in Dublin a detachment of about 600 British soldiers occupied the workhouse in Tulla and a Company of the same regiment took over the courthouse and some adjoining houses in Tomgroney near Scariff. Accompanied by members of the R.I.C., detachments of military from Tulla arrested the following members of the Feakle Company shortly after the military occupation of Tulla:

Tadhg Kelly, Feakle East, Company Captain,
 Joe Tuohy, Dromore, Feakle,
 Tom Grady, Annagh, "
 Jack Malone, "
 Mitchell Dynan, ~~Aughnacree~~^{Annaghreal}, Feakle.

These men were deported to English prisons where they were detained until the following August. None of the guns held by the Feakle Company ~~was~~^{were} surrendered after the Rising.

During May and June 1916 there was no sign of any Volunteer activity round Feakle. On my own initiative I got the men from my part of the parish to recommence drilling, quietly of course, and in a short while the rest of the parish followed our example. A number of new members, probably over 20, were also recruited. When the men who had been deported to England

returned home in the following August the whole Company paraded, headed by the local fife and drum band, to welcome them. That night after the Company Captain, Tadhg Kelly, had been escorted to his own home he gave me orders to call a mobilisation of the Company within a week.

A full attendance - 73 men - of the Company turned up for this mobilisation. Kelly took charge and in an address said that the unit would have to be resworn and an election of officers held that night, mentioning also that they were G.H.Q.'s orders. He proposed Laurence Madden for the post of Company Captain and this was seconded by Pat Canny, Garrane, Feakle. I was also proposed and seconded for that post and on a vote I was elected by 70 votes to 3. Joseph Tuohy, Dromore, Feakle, and Joe Rochford, Feakle East, were unanimously elected 1st and 2nd Lieutenants respectively. After the elections Kelly, Madden and Canny left the parade ground and afterwards took no part in the Volunteer movement. I reswore the Company that night.

Subsequent to these elections the Feakle Company drilled and paraded every Sunday, and half Companies drilled also on one week night. In the interval between that and the general commencement of public drilling in August 1917, the Company paraded several times through Feakle village headed by the fife and drum band which, incidentally, was entirely composed of Volunteers. The R.I.C. never interfered.

In the East Clare by-election in July 1917

though the majority of the Volunteers had no votes every member of the Feakle Company took an active part in the election campaign, collecting money, canvassing and, on election day, driving voters in traps and outside cars to the polling booth. The band was away on many days at election meetings.

Nine men from the Feakle Company went to East Mayo in the general election campaign in December 1918 to help the Sinn Féin candidate, while detachments of from 20 to 30 men went with the band to South Galway every Sunday to support the Sinn Féin candidate in that constituency where the Volunteer organisation was in a poor shape..

Though, like all other Companies in County Clare, the Feakle Company drilled publicly from August 1917 onwards, under my command, not a single member of the unit was arrested - unlike what occurred elsewhere. I would attribute this to the fact that the local R.I.C. Sergeant, McBrien, was a man who wished to avoid trouble. The strength of the Company grew considerably from August 1917 to the end of that year, and did so to such an extent that five separate Companies had to be formed in the area formerly covered by the Feakle unit. Michael Brennan, O/C Clare Brigade at that time, personally attended the establishment of the Companies set up in Flagmount, Killaneana and Caher, while I formed the Company in Drumandoora.

County Clare for generations prior to the Irish Volunteer movement was always a hot centre of agrarian trouble, particularly East Clare where a lot of the best

land was owned by absentee landlords who used it solely for grazing. These landlords were, without exception, bitterly opposed to the idea of national independence and detested the Irish Volunteers, many of whom came from families who had been evicted from their farms in order to make room for the bullocks. There was a strong popular demand in the parishes of Bodyke and O'Callaghan's Mills for a number of years previously for the division of the estates of General Gore, outside Bodyke, and Dr. Sampson, Moynoe. Towards the end of 1917 the Volunteers in these districts decided to back up the popular demands.

At the request of the Captains of the Bodyke and O'Callaghan's Mills Companies I took men from the Feakle Company to assist in two or three cattle drives off the lands of General Gore and Dr. Sampson. We were unarmed and carried either hurleys or sticks. The drives took place early in the morning and consisted of turning the cattle off the lands and driving them a few miles along the public roads. Apart from fixing placards worded "The land for the people; the road for the bullocks" on the horns of some of the cattle, the animals were never maltreated. The Feakle Company ceased to have anything to do with agrarian trouble from early in 1918^{onwards}. Orders came from G.H.Q. forbidding such activities.

A branch of Sinn Féin was started in Feakle around September 1917. It was known as the Thomas Ashe Club. Though I represented the Club at a number of county conventions held in Ennis I did not have much to do with its affairs, nor had I any connection with the activities of the civil side of Dáil Éireann outside of

assisting in collecting subscriptions for the Dáil Loan in 1920. Along with Danny McInerney, Laccaroe, I collected £260 in the parish of Feakle for that loan and handed over the money to Canon O'Kennedy, St. Flannan's College, Ennis, one of the trustees for the county.

I think it was around the end of 1918 ~~that~~ Battalions were first set up in the East Clare - ~~and~~ that the county was divided into three Brigade areas, East, Mid and West. Feakle became the area of the 6th Battalion. Henry O'Meara, Flagmount Company, ~~became~~ ^{was made} the Battalion O/C and I was appointed Vice O/C. The Companies which comprised the Battalion were: Feakle (A), Aughaneal (B), Killaneane (C), Flagmount (D), Cahir (E) and Drumondoora (F). The total strength of the Battalion was 460. I personally administered the Oath of Allegiance to Dáil Éireann to each man, taking Company after Company.

Towards the end of 1919 orders came from Brigade Headquarters to collect all arms held by the civilian population. In these raids the Battalion got 3 revolvers and about 20 serviceable shotguns, with a quantity of ammunition. No opposition was experienced in the collection of the guns.

The first military activity carried out in the Feakle area was an attack on the local R.I.C. Barracks on 1st June, 1920. The orders for the attack which came from Brigade Headquarters read: "All roads leading to Feakle to be well blocked and be firing on the barracks by 10 o'clock. The attack was intended

as a diversion as the real objective that night was Six Mile Bridge R.I.C. station. It was hoped to draw the military in Tully to Feakle and to keep their attention away from Six Mile Bridge. Though I directed operations the Battalion O/C, Henry O'Meara, was also present. The following is a list of the men who were under arms on the occasion.

Joe Nugent	Shotgun
Tom Tuohy, Garrane, Feakle	"
Edward Doyle, Laccaroe, Feakle	"
Tommy Mooney, " "	"
Peter Moroney, " "	"
William Doyle, " "	"
Denis Rochford, Feakle East	"
Tim Considine, Feakle	"
Michael O'Brien, "	"
Jim O'Dea, The Isle, Feakle	"
Jackie O'Dwyer, Magherabawn, Feakle	"
Bill O'Brien, " "	"
Jack Tuohy, Dromore, " "	"
Joseph Maloney, Furnacetown, " "	"
Tom Grady, Annagh, " "	"
Henry O'Meara, Flagmount	Revolver
Mick Tuohy, Laccaroe, " "	Rifle
Myself	"

The remainder of the Feakle Company were engaged in blocking roads, ~~and~~ felling trees and erecting stone barricades.

The barracks was built on its own grounds and was a two storey structure. On front was the main road. At the rear the ground began to rise about 20 yards from the building and at about 40 yards distant was a low stone wall about 3 feet high which ran parallel to the main road. My brother Mick who had a rifle, Henry O'Meara and another Volunteer ^{Joe Nugent} and myself took up positions behind this wall, while to our left and about 100 yards from the barracks were the remainder of the party - whose job it was to provide protection for our group.

We had around two dozen hand grenades (G.H.Q. type).

The attack began at 10 o'clock sharp. It opened with the hand grenades, eight of which were thrown on the barrack roof, all of them exploding. We then began firing on the windows with the rifles and kept up the fire for 10 minutes. Vigorous return fire came from two machine guns and rifles, which lasted actually until 6 o'clock next morning. We left our positions ten minutes after the attack began, rejoined the shot gun party and went to Rochford's yard in East Feakle where the arms were collected and all the men dispersed. Nobody was arrested over this attack and, incidentally, the Six Mile Bridge Barracks was not captured.

About the middle of September 1920 the Brigade O/C, Michael Brennan, sent me word that he intended to try to capture Scariff R.I.C. Barracks which was held by about 20 men. This building was situated on the bottom left-hand corner, facing north, of a square, in the centre of which was a piece of vacant ground which rose towards the houses on the opposite side so that at ground level they were higher than the top of the barrack roof, roughly 120 yards away. Adjoining the barracks on the right-hand side was a building of the same height. This was a public house owned by Stephen Duggan. Almost directly across the road was the last house on the left-hand side of the square - this was Pat Duggan's, a two storied drapery establishment. A narrow laneway connected the rear of Stephen Duggan's

with a street which ran into the centre of the south side of the square about 120 yards from the barracks.

Stephen Duggan's pub being next door to the R.I.C. was very much patronised by them. In good weather a number of them often sat at night on a seat in front of the pub. It was planned to begin the attack by sending a party of 5 or 6 men carrying small arms along the laneway leading into the back of Duggan's pub who would hold up and disarm the police in the bar and in the front of the house. In the meantime other sections would occupy Duggan's drapery and two houses on the north side of the square, Rodgers's on the north west corner and Conway's twenty yards to the right.

To the best of my recollection the section detailed to enter Duggan's pub were under the command of Paddy Brennan, brother of the Brigade O/C. I was allocated to Rodgers's house, on the upper storey of which there were three windows. Tom McNamara and myself were at the centre window, while Michael Cleary, afterwards killed in Kerry during the Civil War, Tom Bleach of Scariff Company, Joe McNamara, Kilkishen, and Michael McCarthy of Mountshannon were posted at the other two windows. Tom Wall, Vice O/C 4th (Scariff) Battalion, was in charge of our post and each man had a rifle.

All the sections got into their positions without being observed by the R.I.C. and the attack opened about twilight. Due to the accidental discharge of an automatic by Mick Hehir, one of the men in Paddy Brennan's

section, just as they were about to enter the rear of Stephen's Duggan's bar, the R.I.C. were alerted and they instantly ran into the barracks. This upset all the plans. However, one of them was shot and badly wounded by Michael Brennan who had come from Paddy Duggan's shop, where he was in charge, to the street to keep an eye on developments. Another policeman who was up the town at the time was wounded as he was making his way to the barracks.

As soon as the shooting (begun by Mick Brennan) started we opened fire from our positions and the other sections also commenced blazing too. After a period of between twenty minutes to half an hour we were directed to keep our firing low as it had been decided to try to effect an entrance through the roof of the barrack. Two men, Joe Clancy and Martin McNamara, both ex-British soldiers and who belonged to Kilkishen, got ladders which enabled them to get astride the r i d g e on the roof of Stephen Duggan's. With the aid of heavy weights, I think they were 28 lbs. weights got in Duggan's shop and which were affixed to ropes that enabled them to swing the weights on to the slates of the barracks, they managed to break a hole through. They hurled 3 or 4 bombs into this hole but none of the bombs exploded. After that they called for petrol or paraffin oil but permission to use this was refused by Mick Brennan. It was about half-ten and the latter gave orders to cease fire and to assemble in Duggan's of Bridge Street. There was a check up there of personnel, when it was discovered that Joe Clancy, one

of the men who had been engaged in breaking through the barrack roof, was missing. Volunteers were called for to go back to search for him, and of those who responded ten or twelve men were selected. Of these four - Joe Rochford, Joe Tuohy, my brother Mick and myself - got instructions to re-open fire on the front of the barracks while the remainder were to make a search for Clancy at the back of Stephen Duggan's. He was found in the yard there where he had fallen while trying to get off the roof. They placed him on a hand-cart and took him away. My group, who had been firing at the barracks, then got word to rejoin the main party which then got orders to disperse.

Prior to the commencement of the attack, when the Column was about to move into Scariff Mick Brennan requested every man who had a rifle to examine the .303 ammunition and to discard any bullets marked "KN" or "ZZ". He explained that those bullets had been specially charged by the British so as to explode at the breach of the rifles and thus damage the gun and cause injury to the man using it. The British forces had thrown such bullets around different places in the hope that they would be picked up by us and used to our own detriment. I was engaged in examining my ammunition, about 50 rounds, when I noticed two youthful Volunteers who had been detailed to hold up all traffic bound for Scariff engaged in an argument with the occupants of an outside car who wanted to get through. I went up to them to adopt a more stern attitude towards the very persistent driver. As I was about to finish the examination of my ammunition orders were given to move off and I left the

job unfinished. I had placed all the checked stuff in one pocket of my coat and the unchecked stuff in the other pocket. As the attack progressed I used the checked rounds and then proceeded to use the ammunition in the other pocket. One of the bullets, as we had been warned, exploded, damaged the ejector of my rifle and slightly injured me in my right eye. This occurred while I was in Rodgers's house. I did not feel the effects of this injury very much at the time and when I went back later with the party who went in search of Clancy (for that purpose I got another rifle) I was able to fire at the barracks.

On returning home that night the eye was treated by members of the Cumann na mBan and though it continued to be a bit tender I did not bother going to a doctor. It never ceased to give me trouble and after some years became worse, until ultimately I lost the sight of that eye. When eventually I did receive medical treatment I was informed that the other eye was also affected and as I make this statement I am practically sightless.

A fortnight or so after the attack on Scariff R.I.C. barracks Michael Brennan and Michael Hehir came back into the Feakle area "on the run". Brennan was then the most wanted man in Clare and Hehir was also ^{wanted} ~~on the run~~. Orders had been issued to all units in the East Clare Brigade area that where Brennan was staying for the night an armed guard was to be provided. While attending to the arrangements for the guard I mentioned to these two officers that a party of 6 or 7 R.E.C. usually patrolled one or other of the five roads

which led into the village of Feakle; ~~and~~ Brennan decided to ambush them.

On four different days and on four different roads ambush positions were taken up, but the police either failed to come out or if they did they patrolled a road other than that on which the ambush was planned. Only Volunteers from the Feakle district were asked to form the attacking party, which numbered, including Brennan, Hehir and myself, about 25 men. On one of these days the postman taking mails from Feakle Post Office to the R.I.C. barracks was held up by us and the mails were seized. Brennan and O'Hehir moved off after a week and went to O'Brien's Bridge where the former was wounded.

After the hold-up of the postman in Feakle the R.I.C. began to collect their own mail. I decided to attack this party and gave instructions to the Volunteers living in the Feakle village to keep the patrol under close observation, particularly as to the time on which it left the barracks and the formation in which ~~they~~ it moved.

On 6th October, 1920, while I was working at my own turf on Coolreagh bog, Joe Nugent, Feakle, the Battalion Quartermaster, came to me to report that on the two previous days six policemen had come on foot from the barracks to the Post Office for the mails round 10 o'clock in the morning and that they walked in pairs about 7 or 8 paces apart. On hearing this I instructed Nugent and my brother, Paddy, to notify certain picked men in the Feakle district to appear in Rochford's field, Feakle, after the circus which was to be held that night

in the village. All the men selected turned up and totalled around thirty. I sent half of them through the different townlands in the parish to collect arms and ammunition, and with the remainder I got into Tadhg Kelly's house, Feakle East, which had been vacated by himself and his family as he had heard of our intention to attack the police. About 2 p.m. all the men sent to collect the arms had completed their mission and rejoined us. All told we had 20 guns, 4 rifles, 15 shotguns and 1 automatic (short "Peter the Painter").

The distance from the R.I.C. barracks to the Post Office was about three quarters of a mile, the Post Office being situated outside the village almost opposite the graveyard on the road to Gort. On the village side of the Post Office and thirty yards or so away a road forks off to Tulla. At the junction of this road and the Gort road stands Keating's house, a small one-storied cottage. A few yards further on towards the Post Office and on the opposite side of the road is a good sized two-storied house owned by the Nugent family. The following is a list of the men who were assembled, how they were armed and the positions to which they were allocated:

Michael Tuohy, Laccarroe -	Rifle)
Tom Tuohy, Garrane -	Shotgun)
William Doyle, Laccarroe -	Rifle) Graveyard
Tom Considine, Feakle -	Shotgun)
<i>Joe Nugent.</i>	")
Pat Houlihan, Dooras, Caherfeakle -	Rifle)
Joseph Maloney, Furnacetown -	Shotgun)
Michael Lillis (Miko) Flagmount -	") Post Office
Tommy O'Meara	")

Joe ^{Tuohy} Nugent, Dromore, Feakle	-	Rifle)
Jack Tuohy, " "	-	Shotgun)
Tom Grady, Annagh, "	-	")
Denis McGrath, Aughaneale, Feakle	-	")
Denis Rochford, Feakle East	-	") Nugent's
Jack Slattery, Derinahighla	-	")
Jack Minogue, Gortavollagh	-	")
Mick Slattery, Derinahighla	-	Shotgun)
James Rochford (Jamo) Feakle East	-	") Keating's
Patrick Brody, Killaneane	-	")

I had the automatic and was with the group in Keating's. Another ^{man,} Patrick Brody, Garrane, Feakle, armed with a shotgun, occupied a position in a recess in the wall of the Gort road opposite the far corner of the churchyard and covering a laneway leading to Tadhg Kelly's house. My brother, Michael, was in charge of the group in the graveyard and Pat Houlihan & Joe Tuohy in the Post Office and Nugent's respectively.

I had anticipated that the first two policemen would be approaching the Post Office door when the next two would be passing Nugent's and the last pair opposite Keating's. This was explained to all the men, who were given strict orders to withhold their fire until I fired a warning shot.

About 9 o'clock in the morning I sent a scout, Martin Maloney, Killaneana, into the village to keep an eye on the police barracks until he saw the patrol leaving. After ascertaining their strength and formation he was to walk quickly in front of them and when he got to a behd on the road half a mile from Nugent's he was to sprint as quickly as he could to me with the information. Maloney was a champion sprinter at that time. While he was away I brought the party from Kelly's to the back of Nugent's. Maloney returned

after three-quarters of an hour and his report indicated that there was no change in the size and formation of the patrol. Each section then moved quickly into the positions which had been assigned to them.

In the course of 10 minutes or so the patrol came along headed by Sergeant Doherty and Constable Stanley. As these two passed by Jack Tuohy at one of the windows in Nugent's position he fired at Stanley, contrary to orders. On the previous night he had been held up inside in the village when he got a bad beating from Stanley. The middle pair, Constables Murphy and McFadden, on hearing the shooting made for the fence opposite Keating's, while the last two did not enter the ambush position at all but retreated back to the barracks. Constables Murphy and McFadden, who dropped their rifles, got into the fields where, taking advantage of thick cover, they managed to remain concealed until we left. At a pre-arranged signal nine of the attacking party came out on the road where they collected 4 carbines, 1 .45 revolver, 300 rounds .303 and 24 rounds .45 ammunition and 1 Mills bomb. A coded message which was intended to be sent from the Post Office to R.I.C. Headquarters in Tulla was found on the Sergeant and this was forwarded to the Vice O/C of the Brigade, Tom McGrath. The enemy casualties were: Constable Stanley shot dead, Sergeant Doherty and Constable Murphy fatally wounded and Constable McFadden wounded. We sustained no loss.

The search for Constables Murphy and McFadden continued for about 20 minutes, when Fr. O'Reilly, C.C., Feakle, came on the scene to administer the last rites

of the Church to the police. He shouted to us from the road "The horsemen will be on top of you in a few minutes as a messenger had gone for them before I left the village". It later transpired that as soon as the other R.I.C. at the barracks heard the shooting two policemen were sent cycling to the military headquarters in Tulla six miles away, where there was a cavalry detachment among the garrison. I then gave orders to discontinue the search and we went off along the Scarriff road.

We had gone about half a mile when we saw cavalry and bloodhounds converging on the hills overlooking the ambush position. However, instead of pursuing us they followed the route taken by some of the Volunteers who had been standing by, unarmed, and who cleared off as soon as the attack was over. They failed to overtake these men. In any event I was not unduly worried. We were in good skirmishing country, every inch of which we were familiar with, and as we had now four more rifles at our disposal I felt that we could cope effectively with the forces that had been threatening us. We moved on to the townland of Coolnagree where we got food and rested.

In the evening I asked for reinforcements from O'Callaghan's Mills, Bodyke and Mountshannon as I expected reprisals and wanted to teach the enemy a lesson that this form of activity could be costly too. There was a fine response; over 40 men, including the Vice Brigadier, Tom McGrath, joined us. A consultation was held among the principal officers and it was decided

to occupy a number of houses in Feakle village that we expected to be burned that night. We were approaching the village about 8 O'clock, the leading section of the Column was only a quarter of a mile away, when flames were seen rising from three houses - Considine's, O'Brien's and Fr. O'Reilly's. Realising that we had been forestalled it was agreed right away to send back the reinforcements. I kept as many men from my own Battalion as I had arms for, about thirty altogether, on the Coolagree Hills for the ensuing three days, sleeping in the open and getting food from the houses round about, until a despatch arrived from the Brigade O/C ordering me to "refrain from further attacks as for certain reasons he did not want Feakle to be turned into a battleground".

After the Feakle ambush the local Parish Priest, Fr. Hayes, a violent imperialist who regularly entertained members of the enemy forces, strongly denounced the I.R.A. from the pulpit. He referred to us as a murder gang, and declared that any information which he could get would be readily passed on to the British authorities and that he would not desist until the last of the murderers was swung by the neck. This denunciation led to unpleasant consequences and for some time services at which he officiated were boycotted by most of the congregation.

He had in his employment as a housekeeper a woman named Johanna Slattery, a native of Tipperary and then aged about 50 years. This lady began to become very curious about the I.R.A., where they stayed, how they got food and who were in the ambush. Her position in

the house of such an avowed opponent of the national movement caused her to be regarded by us as a very dangerous person and every move and enquiry which she made was kept under close observation by the members of Cumann na mBan in the village. Ultimately it was decided that it would be safer for us to deport her from the district. One day, about 23rd October, 1920, as she was returning as a passenger in a motor car from Limerick the car was held up a few miles from Feakle by three or four of the local Volunteers, who made her a prisoner and took her off towards Scariff. That night she was conveyed by boat across the Shannon and left in her native county with a warning never to return. The Black and Tans and R.I.C. threatened several people in the district with death if she was not released immediately. A fortnight later she was brought back under a heavy escort of police, military and auxiliaries and left with the Parish Priest. From that time onwards she gave no more trouble and was not interfered with.

Following the attack on Scariff R.I.C. barracks a man named Martin Coughlin who lived in Feakle and who was employed as a process server and court crier came under the notice of the local Volunteers on account of remarks which he passed in public regarding some of the men whom he had seen returning from the attack early on the following morning. This caused us to keep an eye on him. After the Feakle ambush he became very busy visiting different areas where he thought active members of the I.R.A. were being

harboured and patrolling the roads around the village. After the ambush the local R.I.C. ceased to perform the latter duty. On his return from each of these journeys he visited the R.I.C. barracks, and on two occasions, once in Coolagree and once in Laccarroe, when prominent I.R.A. men were helping in threshing operations he was seen in the neighbourhood. On the morning after ^{such visits} each of these two townlands were surrounded and searched by large forces of military from Tulla and police from Feakle.

Counihan's activities were discussed at a Brigade Council meeting held in Laccarroe in the middle of November 1920. The Vice Brigade O/C, Tom McGrath, presided. It was decided that Counihan should be arrested at the first convenient opportunity and courtmartialled. A week afterwards while four Volunteers were engaged digging potatoes at Annagh, Feakle, they noticed Counihan's pony coming towards them, apparently to take ^{a load} of turf from Ernagh bog. These Volunteers were : Jack and Joe Tuohy, Dromore, Eddie Fennessy, Coolgaree and my own brother Paddy. The pony was being driven by Counihan's daughter and sitting inside the creel with her was Counihan himself. Making masks out of the apron worn by a girl helping them at the potatoes they got on to the road and held up the cart. They removed Counihan despite a heroic resistance made by his daughter, who in her efforts tore the mask off Joe Tuohy's face. They marched Counihan to Coolreagh, sending word in the meantime to me of their capture. Miss Counihan returned

home and on her way reported the incident at the R.I.C. barracks.

In a short while the local R.I.C. and military from Tulla arrived in large numbers in the district and cordoning off a ^{big} large area began exhaustive searches. While these operations were in progress I and a Company Captain and two lieutenants were proceeding with Counihan's courtmartial. He admitted having given information to the R.I.C. about the I.R.A., adopted a defiant attitude and said he would whenever he got the chance again notify the police of anything he heard or saw concerning the I.R.A. He was sentenced to be shot and the sentence was carried out that night. I was in charge of the firing party. Though he received the contents of two shotgun cartridges and five .45 revolver bullets, two of these through the head, he managed to make his way to Bodyke, ~~6 or 7~~³ miles away, where he died.

Four houses were burned in the area as a reprisal for Counihan's shooting, Tuohy's, Dromore, Rochford's and Kelly's of Feakle and McNamara's in Laccarroe. A reward of £500 was offered by the R.I.C. for information which would lead to the capture of Joe and Jack Tuohy of Dromore.

The I.R.A. party who were concerned in the arrest and shooting of Counihan eluded the military cordon by using a boat provided and oared by Pgt and Michael Griffin to cross the Graney river outside the cordon.

Four days after the Feakle ambush I received a verbal message from Brigade Headquarters through the Vice Brigadier, Tom McGrath, requesting me to take over charge of the Battalion as a rumour had reached him that the O/C, Henry O'Meara, had cleared off to America. I knew the facts to be otherwise as I had been speaking to O'Meara on the previous night at the home of his fiancée, Miss ^{Purcell} ~~Walsh~~ of Baurae, Feakle. He was suffering at the time from a bad dose of facial itch and was lying quiet. In order to divert the attentions of the R.I.C. from his whereabouts I believe he purposely caused the rumour of his emigration to circulate. While I did not regard him as a man who had any heart for military activities, on account of his high education - he had been almost ordained a priest - I valued his services highly to deal with clerical work which I detested. I put these facts before the Vice Brigadier and asked that no change be made. We parted on the understanding that I would be deemed by Brigade Headquarters to be the senior officer, that I would receive all dispatches from the Brigade and then pass them to O'Meara for attention, and that I would be in charge of military operations in the area. This arrangement continued up to my arrest in December 1920.

In November 1920 I heard of a military lorry travelling frequently between Gort and Woodford in Co. Galway just over the northern boundary of my Battalion area. This part of Co. Galway was very badly organised and inactive so I decided to take on the job of attacking the lorry. I selected about 35 men from my

own Battalion for the purpose, and chose a spot near the village of Derrybrien for the ~~purpose~~^{attack}. We waited there for two days but the lorry did not appear. Each night we billeted on the houses outside the village. Most of the Column were fond of dances and, with the exception of two men, were strict T.T.s. On the second night after withdrawing from our positions a dance was arranged in one of the houses which was attended by all the Column except the two men who took a drink. They went into the village of Derrybrien with their guns and unfortunately had a drink too many there. About 11 o'clock as the dance was going well a number of rifle shots were heard. Henry O'Meara and myself went out to investigate. Some distance from the dance house we met the men who had gone to Derrybrien and they admitted having fired the shots. We disarmed both of them and placed them under open arrest. Feeling uneasy for the safety of the Column (as I thought the shots might cause the military in Gort or Woodford, each place was about 8 miles away, to learn of our presence) I withdrew the Column that night.

At the beginning of December 1920 the Brigade Headquarters sent me an order to loan all serviceable guns held by my Battalion as it was the intention to bring off a big operation at the other end of the Brigade area. I sent off 8 rifles, 1 automatic and some hand grenades. The Battalion, however, was kept very busy at road blocking activities, felling trees and cutting trenches to hamper the movements of enemy transport. This involved a lot of night work. On the 8th December

Fr. O'Reilly, C.C., Feakle, sent me word that he would like if all the men of the Battalion who participated in raids and ambushes would attend at Grady's, Rossanure, to receive the sacraments of Confession and Holy Communion. Myself and about eight others turned up. After Communion I accompanied ~~him~~^{the priest} as far as Coolreagh bog and then went home. I remained around the place all day and that night slept at the butt of a haycock in a field adjoining the river Grady about 300 yards from my home. On the following morning between 10 and 11 o'clock after waking I had a look round and saw my father outside the house. He did not appear to be in any way excited, and taking it for granted that the coast was clear I headed towards home to get a cup of tea. I had gone about 200 yards when I heard the shout "hands up". I ran back, jumped into the river and waded up to my waist to the other side. Here I got into a bohercen which gave me cover as far as Pat Minogue's house where I went into the yard. At this stage I saw two R.I.C. men about 150 yards behind me. I ran across a field over 200 yards wide and was just almost at the opposite fence when I was hit in the back by a bullet which passed through my groin. My leg became paralysed and I had to stay put with my hands up.

Three R.I.C. came along and after searching me marched me back to my home. One of them helped me until I came to a deep trench which I was made cross unaided. I could not do so and they pulled me across by the hair of my head. When I got as far as home my mother offered me a change of clothing which the

police refused to allow me to accept. Next I was brought as far as Pat Mooney's in Laccarroe where I was put on an outside car and driven to the ambush position at Feakle where I was closely questioned as to my part in it. I refused to admit having had anything to do with the affair. I was then taken to the R.I.C. barracks.

At the barracks I was asked if I would care to see a priest and when a Tan suggested Fr. Hayes, the Parish Priest, I told him I did not mind. No priest came but Dr. O'Halloran, Feakle, arrived after half an hour. He dressed my wound and my sister came in with a change of clothes which I was then allowed to put on.

After dressing the wound the doctor put me lying on a bed and warned the police that I was not to be moved. When he had gone a Tan came into the room and threw me out of the bed which, he said, was his. I was put back by a few other Tans but was again thrown out by the "owner of the bed". I was on the floor for some time when a military escort arrived from Tulla which took me to their barracks there. Next I was removed to the R.I.C. barracks in Tulla where I was twice attended by Dr. Scanlon. That evening I was put on a lorry and under a heavy escort driven to Limerick. At Rue, three miles from that city, the lorries halted and I was taken off the lorry, put into a drain and asked by an R.I.C. man if I cared to die. I replied that I was not too particular. A young military officer then intervened, and taking me back to a lorry, put me sitting beside himself. I was

driven to William St. barracks in Limerick and handed over again to R.I.C. and Black and Tans. At William St. barracks I was beaten up by a few R.I.C. men. After some time the Tulla military escort returned to William St. and brought me to Limerick jail where, owing to my condition, I was refused admittance. Next I was driven to the New Barracks where I was put into the military hospital.

In the military hospital my wound was treated without being anaesthetized. When the dressing was finished two orderlies caught me by the hands and two more by the feet and I was taken by them to the detention cells where I was placed in solitary confinement. My diet consisted for six weeks of dog biscuits and water. Twice each day I was taken on a stretcher to the military hospital. The Colonel in charge there, a brute, gave the orderlies instructions to handle me in the roughest manner possible and they did so. Ultimately I developed constipation and after unsuccessful treatment with some powders my condition became serious. An enema was then administered after which I improved.

I was still under medical treatment ~~when~~ I received a charge sheet accusing me of having seditious documents in my possession. At my courtmartial held in the New Barracks in Limerick, an R.I.C. Sergeant named Farrell was the principal witness. He admitted when cross-examined by me that the seditious documents - a military training handbook - was not found in my possession but was found on my father's lands. I was

sentenced to two years' hard labour. Of course I refused to recognise the court but reserved the right to cross-examine witnesses.

Two days after my trial I was transferred to the Limerick County Jail where I was put into a cell and my clothes were removed. In exchange I was given prison garb which I refused to wear. I was left lying naked in the cell for four days, then given back my other clothes, changed to the main body of the jail where there were eight other political prisoners. I remained in that jail until my release on 26th November, 1921.

Thomas Tuohy
 Signed: _____
 (Thomas Tuohy)
 Date: 27th July 1954.

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

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
BURO STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21
NO. W.S. <u>983</u>