

W.S. 1,048

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

BURÓ STAIRÉ MILITIAIRÉ 1913-21

No. W.S. 1,048

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 1,048

Witness

Sean Murnane,
Stonehall,
Newmarket-on-Fergus,
Co. Clare.

Identity.

Q.M. East Clare Brigade;
O.C. 1st Batt'n. do.
Centre Newmarket-on-Fergus I.R.B.

Subject.

National activities, Newmarket-on-Fergus,
Co. Clare, 1911-1921.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil

File No. S.2369

Form B.S.M. 2

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
BURO STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21
NO. W.S. 1048

STATEMENT OF SEÁN MURNANE,

Stonehall, Newmarket-on-Fergus, Co. Clare.

(formerly O/C. 1st Battalion, East Clare
Brigade and Quartermaster of that Brigade.)

I am a farmer living at the above address and I also hold the post of Rate Collector for the Newmarket area. My farm consists of about 40 acres of fairly good land.

I inherited the farm from my father, who had a family of seven children of which I was the youngest. I went to Stonehall National School where I remained until I spent two years in the 6th Standard, being then about 14 or 15 years.

On leaving school I assisted on the farm at home and also worked as a general labourer around my own district.

My first connection with the national movement began in 1911 when I was enrolled in the I.R.B. by Tom Quinn, Leminagh, Newmarket-on-Fergus, a farmer. The enrolment ceremony took place in the middle of a field at night time and another man named James Hassett was sworn in the same night. Though I cannot now recall what business took place at the meetings, I am sure that in the ensuing twelve months or so meetings were held about once a quarter out in fields in remote parts of the locality.

I believe it was about 1913 that I attended an I.R.B. meeting in Limerick in the home of Ned Daly, one of the leaders executed after the 1916 Rising. The details of that meeting are very vague to me now, but I'm almost certain that it was on that occasion that I was appointed Centre for the Newmarket-on-Fergus area. The names of the other members of the ~~Centre~~ ^{Circle} are now forgotten by me except one man, Mick Murray, Newmarket.

It was the I.R.B. men who were behind the formation of the Irish Volunteers there towards the end of 1913 or early in 1914, particularly Mick Murray, who was very prominent in that connection.

The initial meeting of the Irish Volunteers in Newmarket was held in the old Creamery grounds in the village, and from the outset the membership was well over 50. Drilling took place on Sundays and the instructor was an ex-British army man named John Sweeney. He trained the unit in all branches of infantry drill and for musketry instruction used timber rifles. We were also able to procure two or three .22 sporting rifles and a good share of .22 ammunition. Such rifles and ammunition were obtained fairly easy in those days through any gun dealer and, as far as I can remember, we got the rifles in Mick Murray's father's shop in which hardware was sold. Practice in shooting with these rifles was part of the usual training programme on most Sundays.

The Redmondite split in August or September 1914, did not affect us in Newmarket-on-Fergus as we decided at first not to take sides until we'd see how things would go. Then at the end of about a month or so later and mainly because of local I.R.B. influence, the unit decided to adhere to the Irish Volunteer Executive. Practically all the members followed this course and drilling was continued as heretofore.

As Easter 1916 approached it became clear to me that military action against British rule was contemplated by the Irish Volunteer leaders. This was apparent from the speeches made by these leaders throughout the country and also from weekly papers which we received from Dublin. At that stage, Mick Murray was O/C. of the company. Some days prior to Easter Sunday, Paddy Brennan of Meelick visited me and told me that the Rising was planned to commence on Easter Sunday. He gave orders also to Murray to notify the Newmarket Volunteers to mobilise on that Sunday at a point near Bunnratty Bridge and to bring along whatever guns we could get our hands on.

Principally through the I.R.B. channels we were able

during the preceding year to collect from various local sources, such as the I.R.B. men of earlier days, and old "Moonlighters", six or seven revolvers, and between Paddy Brennan's visit and Easter Sunday up to a dozen shotguns were also collected from the local farmers and sportsmen.

On Easter Sunday a total of 22 men of the Newmarket Company met at the appointed place. Every man had a gun of some sort and also some ammunition. We were joined at Bunratty by the Meelick Volunteers and remained there for some hours when a dispatch arrived from Limerick informing us that the Rising was called off; that we were to disperse to our homes, holding ourselves ready for action at moment's notice. The mobilised Volunteers complied with this order, but nothing more was heard from Limerick or anywhere else until the rebellion was quelled.

After the 1916 Rising Mick Murray and myself were arrested by a mixed force of R.I.C. and military who took both of us at our homes. It may be the case that others from the Newmarket area were also arrested, but if they were I do not now remember them. We were taken to Limerick Jail, detained for about a week and then released unconditionally.

In the period between the 1916 Rising and the next big event, the release of the leaders from English prisons, I believe that the Volunteer organisation in the Newmarket area held together fairly firmly and, so far as I can now recall, I am fairly certain that the company met fairly regularly for drill in out-of-the-way places.

Towards the end of June 1917, I remember having attended a convention in Ennis comprised of delegates from different parts of East Clare constituency at which Mr. Eamon de Valera was selected as the Sinn Féin candidate for the by-election caused by the death of Major William Redmond, the Irish Party M.P. for East Clare. The delegates, though mostly Volunteers, included people who were just staunch supporters of the Independence

movement, particularly clergymen. Mr. de Valera was, I believe, proposed by a priest whose name I now forget. I might as well be candid and say that, to me, the name of the candidate was unknown, and when I came back home our local supporters were all surprised to hear that they were going to be asked to back up a person bearing such a strange name. There were all kinds of attempts made to pronounce it and some unkindly comments were made about the people who were responsible for selecting the man who bore such a name.

The East Clare by-election made Newmarket-on-Fergus a particularly lively spot. Among our own crowd the candidate's name was forgotten and they threw themselves wholeheartedly behind the party which had chosen one of the survivors among the leaders of the Easter Rising as its nominee. There was an extraordinary outburst of enthusiasm in his support among the younger generation which infected the older element - the voters. No demand was too great on the services of the Volunteers in the area in order to secure the election of the Sinn Féin candidate. They were willing to do anything that would ensure his success. In the Newmarket area itself we had not to do much apart from the work that is associated with any normal by-election work, but in other parts of the constituency this was not the case.

The rival candidate - Mr. Paddy Lynch - the Irish Party choice, was a strong one. He was one of the leading members of the Irish Bar. He came from the county and from a stock that among Claremen was the hallmark of decent people who were sound in the days of the Land League. He was well-connected and as well was a good platform man with a biting tongue. He appealed especially to the supporters of the Irish Party who, in some areas of the constituency, were not alone strong, but aggressive and turbulent. Apart from these considerations, there were other factors in some parts of the constituency which called

for special efforts from the supporters of Mr. de Valera in order to ensure that the meetings in support of his campaign could be held without interference. The First World war was in progress at the time and from some parts of East Clare a big number of the menfolk had joined the British army. The relatives of these soldiers were in receipt of a generous separation allowance which caused them, for the time being, to have a warm feeling for Britain and consequently for the Irish Party on whose advice and appeal many of the men had found themselves fighting for England. A good percentage of this element were of the rowdy class and, encouraged by the exhortations of certain anti-Sinn Féin elements, they attacked speakers on the de Valera platform and also his supporters, sometimes with bottles, stones and whatever other missiles which were available. Whenever clashes occurred between the rival supporters the R.I.C. were inclined to avail of the occasion to use their batons with more than undue generosity on the Sinn Féin ^{sympathisers} than on the real transgressors of the peace.

The Volunteers decided to supply protection to Mr. de Valera's meetings and as a result, the Newmarket company sent men to meetings in Ennis, Cratloe, Kilkishen and Clarecastle. Some of the Volunteers were armed with revolvers and those who were not carried sticks. At Ennis, in Mill Street, there was a sharp encounter with Lynch's supporters who were largely made up of frenzied 'separation' women, but the Volunteers soon brought them under control. Only in Clarecastle was it necessary to show revolvers. As we were returning home one night from an election meeting a gang of 'Lynchites' attacked us outside the village with stones and bottles. On seeing the guns being produced they instantly ran away.

Along with providing protection for Mr. de Valera's meetings the Volunteers in the Newmarket district did most of the

canvassing for votes, collected funds and some of them were among the Volunteers who formed a guard around the Courthouse in Ennis when the ballot boxes were brought there on the night of the polling day. On polling day itself our company was busy on various jobs such as conveying voters to the polling booths and acting as personating agents.

De Valera's success in the by-election had immediate results in East Clare insofar as it caused a big influx into the ranks of the Volunteers. The Newmarket Company grew so large that it became necessary to form new companies in Ballycar, Carrigerry, Clonmoney and Quin. I assisted in the formation of these new companies in August or September 1917. Public drilling also started about this time and for this the O/C. of the Newmarket Company - Mick Murray - was arrested. I replaced him and in September I was also arrested by the R.I.C. and taken to Cork jail. In Cork I was tried before a military court on a charge of illegal drilling. I refused to recognise the Court and was sentenced to two years' imprisonment with hard labour. After my sentence I was transferred along with a number of other prisoners from Cork to Mountjoy Jail.

In Mountjoy I was in a cell between two Galway men named Fleming and Burke, but I cannot remember my cell number or in what wing I was housed. I was only there a few days when the big hunger strike started, which ended in the death of Thomas Ashe. The strike lasted 10 days during which I was forcibly fed each day, sometimes once and sometimes twice. The strike finished when our demand to be treated as prisoners of war was conceded. Soon afterwards I was one of a batch of prisoners who were shifted from Mountjoy to Dundalk Jail. In Dundalk the authorities began to treat us again as criminal prisoners. We retaliated by starting another hunger strike which lasted only a few days when I was released under

the "Cat and Mouse" Act.

After my release from Dundalk Jail I came home to Newmarket and at once resumed my connection with the Irish Volunteers. A special order had been issued in the meantime by G.H.Q. to discontinue the public drilling, but, of course, we drilled secretly on fixed nights once or twice a week.

In the next few months the conscription threat brought more recruits to the company which then included almost every man of military age in the locality. As arms could not be procured, orders were received that each Volunteer should equip himself with a pike. In our part the local blacksmiths - Ned Fitzgerald, Stonehall - forged pikeheads for us, and these were fitted to shafts about 6-ft. long. Each Volunteer had to provide his own shaft and fit it.

In the midst of the excitement over the conscription threat orders were received by the Newmarket Company to participate in cattle drives. On 24.2.1918, most of the company along with Volunteers from the neighbouring areas were mobilised to drive cattle off lands owned by people named McInerney in Manus about 5 miles from Ennis. As I was going towards Manus with a party from Newmarket the cattle had actually been driven off and they were then handed over to my control at Latoon Cross with instructions to drive them to Ballygreen about three miles from Manus. Assisted by 20 or 30 men I complied with this instruction and then marched home as directed. Others of the men who had assembled at Manus went on to Castlefergus, a mile or so south of Manus where they clashed with armed R.I.C. men who opened fire wounding three of the Volunteers, one of whom, John Ryan, Crussagh, Newmarket, died three or four days later. He was given a military funeral, but the firing party over his grave did not discharge their guns - revolvers as far as I remember - until all the people had left the graveyard. Co. Clare had been declared a special military area a few days before. The R.I.C. and military had been considerabl

reinforced and were very much on the alert for any display of military activity by the Volunteers. As far as my memory serves, I have an idea that there were a few lorries of soldiers and police at Ryan's funeral but they had gone before the firing party assembled. I was one of the firing party.

Shortly after Ryan's death, orders were received forbidding the Volunteers to take part in any form of agrarian trouble, including cattle drives. In the Newmarket area the order was generally observed. The remainder of 1918 was relatively quiet in the district, but despite the vigilance of the R.I.C. drilling proceeded regularly.

At the end of 1918 Clare, which until then comprised one brigade of Volunteers, was divided into three separate brigade areas - East, Mid and West. I was appointed the first brigade quartermaster of the East Clare Brigade, though only in an acting capacity. I attach the original letter, dated 16th January 1919, from the Brigade O/C., Michael J. Brennan, notifying me of this appointment. Subsequently this appointment was made substantive and I remained in the post until the Truce although I was also made O/C. 1st Battalion, East Clare Brigade in December 1920. In turn the brigade was divided into six battalions. No. 1 comprised the district around Newmarket-on-Fergus, from Clonmoney to Quin; No. 2 from Cratloe to Clonlara southwards to the river Shannon; No. 3 from Broadford to Ogonelloe; No. 4 from Caherhurley eastwards to Whitegate, including Scariff; No. 5 from Tulla and Kilkishen to Bodyke and Glendree; and No. 6 from Feakle northwards to the Galway border. I'm not sure now who the other members of the brigade staff were except that Mick Brennan of Meelick was O/C.

The first military operation in which I took an active part was the capture of Newmarket R.I.C. Barracks on 5th August 1919. This barracks was a two-storied building situated about midway on the right-hand side of the street going out the Ennis

road. It had a garrison of a sergeant and five men, One of the men, Constable Buckley, a Kerryman; became very friendly with one of the local curates who was a staunch supporter of the Volunteers and a close acquaintance of the brigade commandant. This trio between them arranged that Buckley would, on the night of the raid, leave the front door of the barracks on the latch which would enable the raiders to enter and then rush up the stairs where the whole garrison would be in bed. The sergeant, who was married, had his own married quarters, also upstairs.

The raiding party, which was under the control of the Brigade O/C., included the following: Jim Brennan (Carhoo), Joe Garvey, Jim Hassett, John Joe Hogan and myself, all from the Newmarket Battalion, and Martin McNamara and Pat Clancy who came along with the Brigade O/C. There may have been a few others whom I cannot now remember. The party met around midnight at the Convent Cross on the Limerick Road about a quarter of a mile from the barracks. I think we were armed with revolvers. We removed our boots and then proceeded up the street to the barracks the front door of which was opened by the O/C. He led us up the stairs and went into the sergeant's apartments while I led the other men into the room where all the constables were in bed. No resistance whatever was offered, the poor sergeant was taken completely unawares and was so badly upset that he attempted to take his own life a few days afterwards. His name was Porter.

We seized six police carbines, six .45 revolvers, a big quantity of .303 and .45 ammunition and also took possession of all the official papers, but did not destroy the building.

I should also have said that along the road leading to the village of Newmarket armed parties of Volunteers and scouts were posted to guard against surprise by R.I.C. and military from the surrounding posts and that the telephone line to the

barracks had been cut prior to the raid.

The next operation in which I was involved was the raid on Limerick Post Office on New Year's Day 1920. This job was also under the personal charge of the Brigade O/C., Michael Brennan, Altogether about 30 men took part in this raid and they were drawn from different parts of the brigade area. We mobilised at Moyle Hill, 7 miles or so from Limerick City, and cycled into the city where we arrived about 10 o'clock that night. Some of the men were placed in positions along the street outside the Post Office while about a dozen entered the building by the front door. Every man who left Moyle Hill was armed with a revolver and I was one of those who entered the premises.

The Post Office staff were engaged in dispatching money to the outlying sub-offices for the payment of Old Age Pensions when we arrived. They appeared to be taken completely by surprise but made no effort to resist our intrusion. The money was made up in packets and we took all we could lay our hands on. It was a considerable sum but I cannot say how much. We left the premises as quietly as we entered and the whole party returned to Moyle Hill where the money was handed over to the Brigade O/C.

Bunratty R.I.C. Barracks which had been evacuated some short time previously was destroyed by units of the East Clare Brigade on Holy Saturday night 1920. The Brigade O/C. himself supervised its destruction by fire and I had some men from the Newmarket district with me at this operation. The roads around Bunratty were patrolled by scouts as a precautionary measure but there was no attempt at interception by the R.I.C. or military.

An attack was planned on Sixmilebridge R.I.C. Barracks early in June 1920. The attacking force, which comprised men from different parts of East Clare, met at Ballycasey Cross.

I cannot remember anyone from the 1st Battalion having been present ~~except myself~~. It was hoped to capture the building by the use of explosives - gelignite. The garrison there at the time had been very much increased and the building itself, like most of the other R.I.C. stations at the time, had its windows and doors sand-bagged and fitted with steel shutters so that a rifle or shotgun was of little use against it. However when everything was ready, it was learned that the men who had been preparing the gelignite had been ~~sunkered~~^{sickened} by the fumes given off by this material with the result that the attack had to be called off.

In the early part of 1920 practically every shotgun throughout the brigade area owned by the local farmers and sportsmen were seized by the I.R.A. In some instances, however it was not so easy to get hold of the guns of the landlord element as they were practically all hostile. I think it was in August or September 1920, before a favourable opportunity arose to take the guns from Lord Inchiquin at Drumoland Castle, Newmarket. His castle was then raided by a party of the local Volunteers and, to the best of my recollection, about a dozen shotguns and a big supply of cartridges taken from the place including the guns of his gamekeepers. There was no resistance offered in the castle or by the gamekeepers.

Early in September 1920, a supply of hand grenades manufactured in an I.R.A. bomb factory in Dublin came by train to Ballycar Station outside Newmarket for the East Clare Brigade. Their purchase had been arranged by the Brigade O/C. and we had heard a lot about their destructive powers. I fixed up with the railway staff to have the bombs removed to safe custody, and very soon after it was decided to use them in the attack on Scariff Barracks which was then a strong R.I.C. post.

In addition to hoping to capture this barracks by using the newly arrived bombs, it was also planned to resort to the

the element of surprise. The Intelligence Section had learned that the police in Scariff drank a good deal at night time in a publichouse next door to the barracks owned by people named Duggan. A party of seven or eight men would enter the publichouse through a laneway that led to the back door and thus take the police in the shop unawares. If this move were successful it was possible that half the R.I.C. garrison in Scariff might be put out of action before the attack proper started at all.

At least fourteen men left the No. 1 Battalion to take part in this attack. They were all armed either with rifles or shotguns and had to march about 25 miles by various back roads until they got to within half a mile of Scariff village. I was in charge of this detachment until then, but I was there separated from them and instructed to fall into the party which was to raid Duggan's pub. The rifle which I had/taken ^{was} from me and, in exchange, I was given a revolver like all the other members of ~~my~~ ^{this} party which was under the command of Paddy Brennan of Meelick, brother of the Brigade O/C.

Around 9 o'clock at night our party set off and got into the rere of the pub without mishap. There one of our men accidentally discharged a revolver shot. I do not know whether this alerted the police or not, or whether there were any police in the pub at all at the time, but in any event there was not a single one of them in there when we rushed in immediately after the shot going off. We made no delay in the place and after going out, got into positions from which we fired some shots at the windows of the barracks.

In the meantime, the men in the other positions had begun firing and a section battered a hole in the barrack roof through which they hurled a number of the bombs in which we had such confidence. None of the bombs exploded. It was then suggested by some of the men that petrol should be poured into the

building, but to this day I have not learned why this suggestion was not accepted.

~~After~~ The shooting had gone on for about an hour and a half, when a series of whistle blasts indicated that the attack was being called off. It was then close to midnight. The attackers reassembled on the outskirts of the village and got orders to disperse. I went back to my area with the men from No. 1 Battalion. I don't think there were any casualties on our side and I'm not able to remember now if there were any on the other side or not.

The next operation in which I was involved was the attack on an R.I.C. lorry at Cratloe in the second week in January 1921. The men for this were mostly from 1st and 2nd Battalions, East Clare Brigade; there were at least seven men from the 1st Battalion, and we got to Cratloe by taking a boat from Hasting's Point on the River Fergus to Punch's farm in Cratloe. The journey was made under cover of darkness. At Punch's, where we put up for the night, we met the men from the 2nd Battalion. Next morning we had to go only about a mile to get into the ambush position at Cratloe.

In this attack each man had a rifle and the R.I.C. lorry was travelling from Ennis to Limerick. I was assigned to a post at a window in the house of people called McInerney, which was on the main road, and of the others who were there with me I can only remember the names of two - Paddy Quin, Clenagh, and Paddy Reidy, Cerrigerry. Directly across the road was a stone wall behind which a section of the party was placed. The lorry came along some time later - at what hour I cannot remember - and as soon as it did fire was opened. One R.I.C. sergeant, who was shot dead, fell off the lorry which accelerated speed and got into Limerick. Nobody in the attacking party was hit and, owing to the lapse of time, I'm not able to say now if any more of the police were shot. The

attacking force did not delay long after the lorry got through and myself and the 1st Battalion representatives made our way home by a big detour through the mountains outside Sixmile-bridge, arriving at our destinations late in the evening.

From January or February 1921 onwards to the Truce the work of collecting the rates in Co. Clare fell on the I.R.A. Though the ratepayers generally responded well in the payment of the rates, at the same time, in view of the responsibilities carried by the officers of the I.R.A., this meant a lot of work. In the area of Newmarket-on-Fergus I had to give a lot of my time to it both in the actual collection of the moneys and in seeing that the Volunteer officers in the different companies did the job properly. The company officers handed over their collections to me and I had to lodge them with Trustees appointed by the Co. Council. On one occasion alone the total amount which I handed over to one of the Trustees was £2813.11.6. I attach ^{copy of} the receipt which I then got for that lodgment.

The collection of rates by the I.R.A. units in Clare was carried on until well after the Truce on 11.7.1921.

In April 1921, the O/C. of the East Clare Brigade was invited by the Brigade staff of the West Clare Brigade to assist in an attack on the British forces in Kilrush. West Clare was a relatively inactive area and the O/C. of that Brigade, who had only a very small column - I think less than a dozen men - was most anxious to make things lively around Kilrush. This town was held by Royal Marines, military, R.I.C. and Black and Tans in three separate barracks. I think the total garrison was in the neighbourhood of about 300 men.

The O/C. of our brigade responded to this invitation by gathering all the available rifles at his disposal and picking a column of between 50 and 60 men to go to Kilrush. The column assembled at Rineanna and under cover of darkness

embarked on two boats from Rineanna Point on the River Fergus and landed below Killadysert at Crovahan. There the column was met by guides from the West Clare Brigade who led us by back roads to Tullycrine, about 6 or 7 miles from Kilrush. It was late in the night or early next morning when we reached Tullycrine where we were billeted. There we met the West Clare officers, Bill Hough, Sean Liddy and Martin Chambers with eight or nine armed men.

After a good sleep and a day's rest the combined East and West Clare columns paraded that night. We were divided into sections and led into Kilrush by local Volunteers. The section to which I was allocated consisted of about six men of whom I can now only recall Pat Houlihan, Caherfeakle, and Jim Brennan, Carhoo. We were brought into a position at the gate of the R.I.C. Barracks about 100 yards away and on a prearranged signal opened fire on the barracks. Our job was to keep the police from coming out. None of them did venture out. Simultaneously firing began in several other parts of the town.

I'm not sure now whether the purpose of this visit to Kilrush was simply to make a demonstration of strength, or whether there was a particular objective in mind such as an attack on the night patrol. As far as I know a patrol was attacked and a few isolated soldiers were also fired at. I am certain that one R.I.C. man was killed and a couple of soldiers wounded. We had no casualties.

The firing lasted about an hour and a half when we got orders to retire. Outside the town our column reassembled and marched direct to Lissycasey and stayed there overnight. Next morning I was ordered to proceed to my own area with instructions to find billets for the column and to arrange for the posting of scouts along the banks of the River Fergus to warn the boats bringing back the East Clare column if British forces were lying in wait for them. If such danger was noticed at any point, the scouts were directed to light flares. The column reached its

destination in Rineanna without trouble about 10 o'clock that night, and after a rest the men were sent back to their own areas. I believe it was after the Kilrush attack that flying columns were formed in the East Clare Brigade area. I was not a member but, of course, whenever a column came into an area to bring off any activity, the Battalion O/C. of that area would be informed and assist when asked. At the end of June 1921, a column of about 20 men under the command of Jim Hannon of Quin came to Newmarket to ambush a patrol of R.I.C. and Black and Tans at Carrigoran on the outskirts of the village. I met the column and went into the ambush with them.

It had become the practice of the police to send a patrol each day through the demesne around Carrigoran House. They usually entered by the back entrance and went out the front gate. The column commander decided to take up positions outside the front gate. He had some local Volunteers acting as scouts. As the police approached the front entrance, due to some misunderstanding, the scouts came into the line of fire thus badly upsetting the column commander's plans. There was an exchange of shots, but the police rank back on their tracks and got away without loss. The column then pulled out and were marching off when at Craighalough, about $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles from Newmarket, a lorry of Tans and R.I.C. ran into them. This lorry came from Sixmilebridge, it is believed, in response to a wireless message which had been sent out from Newmarket. The column were then at Enright's farm in Craighalough and there was no time to take up proper positions. They got into the fields on the left hand side of the road facing Sixmilebridge and for a short while fought a rearguard action until the British forces retired to their lorry and drove off after having one constable wounded. It was an exceedingly warm day and in the course of the engagement one member of the column Tommy Healy of Tralee, Co. Kerry, collapsed and died. He was

an ex-R.I.C. man who had resigned and then joined the I.R.A. in Co. Clare.

The column moved off to Quin where they left Healy's body under the charge of John D. Moloney, a wellknown Volunteers and Sinn Féiner, and then pushed off into the hills outside Quin. This was the last fight against the army of occupation so far as I was concerned.

General Lucas, who had been captured by the Cork Volunteers near Fermoy, arrived in the East Clare area as a prisoner some weeks after his capture. While there he was frequently changed from place to place. To my own knowledge he was kept in Michael Brennan's of Smithstown, John Hastings of Tullyvaraga, as I did guard over him in both of these houses. I also know that he was held for a time in Edmond Corbett's of Bunratty.

I found the General a very nice type of man who never gave any trouble. I did not converse with him very much, but I do know that himself and the Brigade O/C. had several long interviews.

Although I was O/C. of the battalion area in which the man lived, I am not able to give any facts relating to the execution of John Reilly, Newmarket, as a spy on 23.4.1921. The event happened when I was out of the district with the East Clare Volunteers who went to Kilrush. I do remember though that he was said to have been associated in some way with the deaths of two young Volunteers in Co. Galway named Loughnane. I also know that he was a man who mixed a good deal with the R.I.C.

Signed: Sean Murnane

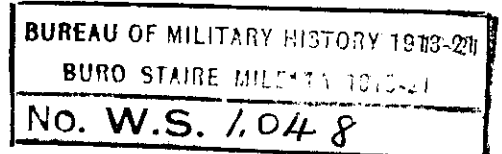
(Sean Murnane)

Date: 8th Dec. 1954

8th Dec. 1954.

Witness: D. Griffin

(D. Griffin)



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H.Q. E. Clare Bde.

16/1/'19.

To Capt. J. Murnane.

1. You are appointed Acting Q.M. of the E. Clare Bde. and will carry out all the duties of that office pending the sanction of the Brigade Council and G.H.Q.

By Order

M.J. Brennan

G.O.C.

