

FERMANAGH BRIGADE.

Report for purposes of Military Service Pensions Acts  
Capture of Tempo Police Barracks - 25 Oct. 1920.

Early in 1920 the possibility of capturing the Tempo R.I.C. Barracks was considered. It was thought that strangers to the area would be helpful and the Bundoran volunteers under Tom McShea were consulted but the plans did not materialise. In July 1920, the matter was again considered. Volunteers from several company areas met on different occasions and discussed the project with Comdts. Carney, Sheehan, Pat Cleary and others. These meetings took place in and around the Tempo area in the homes of local volunteers. At this time no friendly contact had been made with any of the R.I.C. and plans were formulated to capture an R.I.C. patrol and to secure admission to the barracks of volunteers dressed in the captured uniforms. These plans were practically completed when it was discovered there was a possibility of inside help. A constable O'Donnell (who appeared to be in Tempo on leave) proved friendly and through him the help of a Sergt. Rafferty was assured. Discussions between these two and the Tempo Battalion staff - Comdt. Breen, Vice Comdt. E. Gray, Adj. P. Mullarkey and Qmr. Phil Murphy and occasionally Dr. J. Carragher. It was finally arranged that the raid would take place whilst Sergt. Rafferty with a few constables were out on patrol. Constable O'Donnell would leave the gates leading into the back yard of the barracks unbolted and then take some of the garrison out for a drink. A storming party of five or six were then to enter and take the barrack. A second party would be in readiness to enter by the front door when the first party opened it. A scout would then bring along a waiting motor car, carrying petrol to burn the barracks and to take away the captured arms etc. to an outpost at the Green Gates (noted on sketch) on the Main Tempo - Clabby Road from whence they would be removed to safety. The arrangements also included the capture of Sergt. Rafferty's patrol and also Comt. O'Donnell and the police with him all of whom would be armed.

The stunt was fixed for the most opportune of the following dates - 11th, 13th or 18th of October 1920 and volunteers from the following companies were at their posts on each date:- Enniskillen, Tempo, Lisnaskea, Coa, Cavanacross, Trillick and Breagh. For various reasons the stunt did not materialise. On two occasions no motor car was available and on the other most of the garrison was absent and apart from the fact that few arms would be in the barracks there was great risk of exposing the part the friendly R.I.C. who were on duty were to play. Another attempt was made on 25th October 1920 and this was successful.

On this occasion volunteers from Enniskillen, Cavanacross and Lisnaskea mobilised at Doon Cross marked "C" on the sketch. A scout from Tempo Coy. was also present. Outposts from members of the Cavanacross company were placed at Shilmore Cross (marked D. on sketch) with orders to hold up all traffic and cut telegraph wires etc. This outpost included:-

Francis Breen, Mulnaskea, Enniskillen (or Water Street)  
Patrick McKenna, Cavanacarragh, Lisbellaw - both of these took a very active part in the subsequent hold-up and they were helped by:

John Dolan, deceased.  
Edward Dolan, Cavanacarragh, Lisbellaw,  
John McKervey, Cavanacross, Garvery.  
Patrick Cox, Mulnaskea, Garvery.  
James Naan, Cavanacarragh, Lisbellaw.  
Thomas Curran, Mulnaskea, Garvery.  
Andrew McAroe, Ballylucas, Enniskillen,  
and a few others not now identifiable with certainty.

The following volunteers proceeded to a meeting place in the village to await the all clear signal for the approach to the barracks:-

Comdt. James Smyth (now Collector of Taxes at Clones) and Comdt. James Reilly, Lisnaskea. These were in joint charge of the operation.

Joseph Smyth, Enniskillen (deceased).  
Wm. Watson, 5, Plunkett Barracks, Curragh Camp.  
John Leonard, Queen St., Enniskillen.  
Jack Meehan, Enniskillen.

In Tempo these were joined by:-

Joseph Slavin, North Sydney, Australia.  
Joseph Trainor, Tempo - shot during Civil War.  
Arthur Breen, Tempo.  
Patrick Mullarkey, Parochial Ho., Lisnaskea.  
Philip Murphy, G.N. Rly. Navan  
Edward Gray, 72 Calumar St., Mass., U.S.A. -

the three latter were the joining links between the different units engaged.

The remainder from the Enniskillen area included Francis Corrigan, Waterford, Michael Smyth, Lisnaskea, Thomas Cox, Galway, James Donnelly, Enniskillen, and three others not identified with any certainty. These seven volunteers proceeded by the river bank to the open yard on the side of the main street opposits to the barracks - see sketch.

Preliminary arrangements were then complete. The R.I.C. patrol had left the barracks and Constable O'Donnell had taken four or five of the garrison to O'Rourke's Publichouse. When the volunteers were all in position, the first of the attacking party moved from their waiting place (Connolly's Publichouse) towards the Barrack and entered through the back gate about 8 p.m. As they entered, a dog in the yard of the barracks began barking and this to a certain extent spoiled the element of surprise. The only occupants of the barracks were Sergt. Lucas and the orderly Const. O'Brien (a tan). Joseph Smyth was the first to enter the barrack followed by Joseph Slavin, Jack Meehan and later James Smyth, Thomas Cox, Michael Smyth, John Leonard, Philip Murphy, James Donnelly and William Watson. Sergeant Lucas was not in the day room as expected but emerged from another room on the ground floor when the raiding party entered and confronted the volunteers in the hallway. He rushed at the volunteers two of whom (Joseph Smyth and Slavin) dodged past him and got to the day-room where they disarmed the orderly - Const. O'Brien. Meanwhile, Sergeant Lucas continued to resist in the hall where some shooting took place and Sergeant Lucas and Joseph Slavin were wounded - the latter was shot through the palm of one hand. Meanwhile, the second part of the attacking party under Comdt. Jim Smyth arrived at the front door of the barracks which they found closed with shooting going on inside. Unsuccessful attempts were made by Comdt. Smyth and Thos. Cox to blow the lock off the door. The party then proceeded to the rear of the barracks and entered. A scout Fras. Corrigan was despatched for the waiting car to Doon Cross Roads. When he emerged on the main street through the barrack front door which had been opened he was fired on from several angles by the local minister (whose house was only a short distance from the barrack) and some Ulster Volunteers. However, he got through and sent the car in but owing to the heavy firing the car was unable to stop and proceeded through the town taking with it the petrol that was needed to burn the barracks.

The position in the Barracks was now critical. There was no ready means of getting the arms away and no petrol to burn the place and worse still every minute's delay was increasing the danger that the Ulster Volunteers would succeed in cutting off all means of retreat. Sergeant Lucas was not yet subdued although he was slightly wounded and was being held down in the barrack yard by one volunteer - the late Joseph Traynor, Tempo.

He had succeeded in wounding Traynor with a pocket knife and soon afterwards he broke away from his guard and ran out into the main street through the rear gate and open entry. As he reached the street he was fired on and mortally wounded. The Minister who had kept up a continuous fire at the barracks (and who may indeed have shot the Sergeant - Comdt. Sheehan was told later by a doctor that the sergeant was killed by a rifle bullet which entered the sergeant's groin from the front) dragged the wounded sergeant into his hallway. Meanwhile the volunteers in the barracks were collecting the arms and ammunition and placed them in position for removal by hand. The volunteers were withdrawn from their posts in and around the barracks. Four of them were ordered to cover the retreat and the others heavily laden with arms &c. proceeded to Doon Cross which they reached without a casualty - although they were under heavy fire for part of the journey. The arms &c. captured included:-

8 Lee Enfield Rifles. 3 Police Carbines - two without bolts which could not be found in the barrack).  
 3 Revolvers (all that could be found).  
 Two boxes of .303 ammunition and one box of revolver ammunition. One box of Verkey Lights. Some small hand grenades. Handcuffs. Belts and a miscellaneous assortment of ammunition. Police day books and other documents.

The arms and ammunition were placed in a white Hupmobile car driven by Patrick Tracey of Clones (which was not of course intended to be used - the other car had failed) and the stuff was driven off following the route Tempo - Trasna - Gardiners Cross by Aughaneagh Church to Nutfield Cross and on back to Carntrane behind Comdt. Reilly's residence where it was dumped on the mountain on the land of James Fee. In the car were Comdts. Reilly and Smyth, Joe. Slavin (wounded in the hand at the entry to the barracks) and Michael Smyth Drumbrocas. Joseph Slavin was left at Fee's house for the night. The stuff was removed inside 48 hours to a Monaghan Battalion dump at Crossnagowan, and ultimately taken over by the Monaghan area. The stuff was lent by Comdt. Carney to Comdt. Matt Fitzpatrick but in spite of repeated efforts no portion of it was ever got back to the Fermanagh Brigade. Slavin the only casualty on our side apart from Comdt. Breen was taken from Fee's house on the following night across Lough Erne and safely attended to by a doctor in the Maguiresbridge Company area. Fee's house and land was raided by tans a few days later, and a servant boy named Burns (who was not a volunteer) was shot in the thigh.

After the removal of the arms, scouts hastened to withdraw all outposts. A considerable volume of traffic had been held up at the Green Gates and Shilmore Cross outpost and this was released. The hold-up of the police patrol on the Tempo - Fivemilestown or Brookeboro Road (marked "A" on sketch) was almost as dangerous as the main operation. Those engaged here included:-

Henry Magee, Garda Siochana, Roscommon.  
 Sergt. D.B. McCaffrey, A.M.C. Baldonnell (No. 20668)  
 Bernard Monaghan, Tempo (recently deceased - leaving large family in poor circumstances).  
 Joseph Clifford, Tempo.  
 Francis McCaffrey, 567 East 158 Street Bronx, New York.  
 Owen McCaffrey now Ontario, Canada.

The two McCaffreys were later arrested and sentenced to death for their part in the stunt but were later reprieved. This party assembled at the Green Gates (marked B. on sketch) on the Tempo - Clabby Road where they received orders from the late Comdt. Phil Breen and Vice Comdt. Ed. Gray. The party proceeded across the estate of Sir Chas. Langham to his gate-house on the Tempo - Brookeboro Rd. to await the patrol consisting of Sergt. Rafferty and a Constable Rodgers.

Their capture had to be effected quietly so that no alarm would be given before the main operation opened. Denis McCaffrey and two others dealt effectively with the Sergeant but the constable endeavoured to draw his gun and was only overpowered and disarmed after some shots had been fired. The party then withdrew to the woods and awaited the all clear signal. Meanwhile the party of police who had left the barracks with Constable O'Donnell were held up in O'Rourke's publichouse by volunteers from Golan and Trillick Areas (Tyrone). Precise details of this part of the operation are not known to us. Details have, we are told, been furnished by their Brigade Committee. We may add, however, that the hold up and disarming were effectively done. The revolvers captured were, however, kept by the Tyrone Volunteers.

Traffic and pedestrian "hold-ups" were dangerous as they had to be carried out in the centres of hostile areas - as noted on the sketch. The main "hold-ups" were at Shelmore Cross and Greet Gates. Cavanacross Volunteers (names already given) had at least 30 persons held up at Shelmore Cross when the raid concluded. ~~At the Green Cross when the raid concluded.~~ At the Green Gates (marked "B" on sketch) the Tempo Volunteers did the work. They included Patrick and Bernard McQuaide, Cooleran, Tempo, Francis McCusker, Drumackin, Tempo Patrick Murphy, Kilculla, Tempo, James Swift, Brougher, Tempo. Most of the Tempo Coy. were mobilised at this point as it had been planned to take the captured arms here.

The withdrawal from the scene was successfully carried out. No portion of the arms was recaptured - due to the good work of Comdts. Smyth and O'Reilly - as already detailed above. The Enniskillen area volunteers also reached home safely. The thoroughness with the wirecutting and isolating of Tempo had been done is shewn by the fact that news of the operation did not reach Enniskillen or any other enemy post for more than four hours after the Volunteers had left Tempo.

The operation was marred by the death of the Comdt. of the Tempo Battalion Area - Philip Breen. It had been decided that he should as far as possible be in such a position during the actual stunt that the local hostile element would see him engaged on his normal work. After seeing that the arrangements at the Green Gates outpost were complete he returned to his father's publichouse and worked there during the stunt. At closing time - some hours after the operation had concluded - he went outside to put up the window shutters and he was shot. Two bullets were fired at him from the other side of the main street. There is little doubt that one of the murderers was an Ulster Volunteer - a postman - named Potters. After one attempt was made by the Volunteers to shoot him he was placed under close police protection and died shortly afterwards as the result of an accident. The other gunman was never definitely identified - although an Ulster Volunteer named Beatty was suspected.

The sketch plan of the area and outposts referred to in the foregoing has already been handed in.

The foregoing statement is true and correct to the best of our knowledge and belief.

*Sein Sheehan* } Verifying  
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*Blackrock* } Officers  


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*Thomas Cox*  


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Fermanagh Brigade Committee 21 July 1942.