

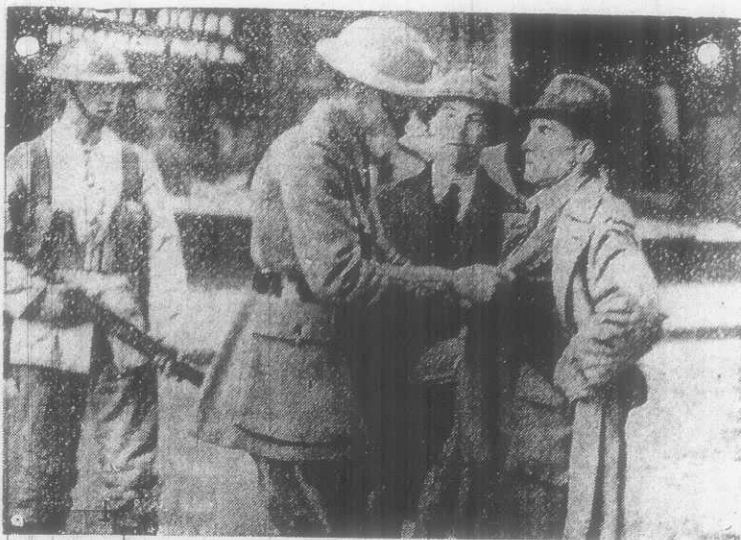
# Ambush interrupted by truce

# Freedom fight incidents recalled

## STATEMENT BY THE LATE AMOS REIDY

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A carefully planned ambush on the Newcastle West-Abbeyfeale Road that was averted by the intervention of the truce in the summer of 1921, is amongst the many stirring incidents during the War of Independence in West Limerick, recalled by a statement prepared by the late Amos Reidy, Rathine, Newcastle West.



Joining the freedom fighters as an engaged in deadly combat and another ambush would have joined the records of the struggle for independence, but the truce had just come into operation and the result was a handshake and, no doubt, an exchange of friendly compliments instead of a pitched battle that might well have cost many lives.

This is but one of the many episodes recounted by Amos Reidy in a review that goes back to 1917, when he became a member of the Fianna. Later that year he moved to employment as an apprentice carpenter in Galbally, where he joined the Volunteers. After losing his job because of his national activities he returned to Newcastle West, where he joined up with the local Volunteer company under Con O'Brien.

By the end of August, 1920, a very large number of men in the brigade area were on the run when the Brigade O/C formed an active service unit, which later became known as the Flying Column. By December the strength of the column had increased to 26 men and by this time the Tans had burned out the Reidy home at Newcastle West.

Early in 1921 a man named Kinsane, known locally as Captain Hand, arrived from I.R.A. Headquarters in Dublin to promote more activity in the area so as to draw some of the enemy pressure off the North Cork Brigade. Due to lack of arms and the terrain of West Limerick he did not succeed in making any great impression.

The statement also deals with the death of Brigade O/C Sean Finn at Ballynahill on 30th March, 1921. Earlier in the month, the West and East Limerick Columns had been amalgamated and on that fatal night the fighters were billeted over a wide area in the Ballynahill district.

Two lorry loads of military and tans were seen approaching from Newcastle West direction by the scouts on duty and the alarm was raised, and the riders opened fire. "It appears," the statement says,

"that when Finn, Hannigan, Jim Colbert, a man named Quane and another man named Jimmy Finn, who was from Ballylanders, heard the shooting they left the house in which they were billeted with the purpose of escaping. The enemy opened fire on the five men. Sean Finn was shot dead. Quane was wounded. By this time the two lorries had come to a halt. Jimmy Finn, when Sean Finn fell, ran back and collected Sean's rifle and succeeded in making his escape under heavy fire. As Jimmy picked up the rifle, Sean said to him: 'Carry on lads, I am finished.' Subsequently the enemy went into the field and collected Sean's body, put it in one of the lorries and returned the way they had come. Quane, who had a bullet wound in the mouth, and the others managed to escape. On the occasion I was billeted at the upper end of Ballynahill village, which was not in the direct route of the lorries. After the shooting we assembled at an old fort, where we waited until dark for instructions from Hannigan. He decided that night to leave Ballynahill immediately and took the column to the Athea area."

Later, after leaving Athea, Hannigan called the column together. He told them that West Limerick was not an area in which fighting against the enemy was possible owing to the flat nature of the country and the fact that the area was so well garrisoned. He then appealed for volunteers to accompany him back to East Limerick and seventeen of the men, including Amos Reidy, responded. Michael Colbert was put in charge of the seventeen men, who were: Michael Colbert, Jim Colbert, Jimmy Collins, Denis Collins, Patrick J. O'Neill, Amos Reidy, Owen McAuliffe, Jim Liston, Jack Cosgrave, Paddy Naughton, Brian O'Brady (Tarbert), Bill Fitzgerald (Askaton), Mick Murphy (do), Jack Nash (Rathkeale), Dan Neville (Croagh). After the death of Sean Finn, Garrett McAuliffe became Brigade O/C in West Limerick, and Ned Cregan, Q.M.

The seventeen West Limerick men joined the Mid and East Columns at the Galtee Mountains, where there was a total muster of approximately 80 men. They hadn't long to wait for action, as in May, 1921, there was plenty of excitement in

store and tragedy was waiting around the corner at Shrahala and Lickelly, but the story of these two historic engagements must wait until next week.

(To be continued).

## Crux in scholarship forms application

LIMERICK Co. Committee of Agriculture at its monthly meeting decided unanimously to ask the Department of Agriculture to allow a number of boys in Co. Limerick to sit for the agricultural scholarship examinations which probably will be held at the end of May.

The decision was arrived at as a result of a complaint by Mr. J. C. Barrett that two very responsible people who applied for agricultural scholarship forms were later informed that their applications had been too late.

The men concerned were Mr. J. J. Dore, Headmaster of St. Patrick's Secondary School, and Mr. Thomas McKeown, N.T. Unfortunately, they wrote to the County Council for the forms, but were sent on the wrong ones.

Mr. Barrett said that the crux arose when the matter was referred to Mr. Gleeson, the C.A.O., who informed the Co. Council that as the forms would have to be sent out on the 29th, the closing date, there was no point in doing so, as the completed forms could not be returned in time.

Mr. Barrett added that he did not wish to raise controversial matters, but he did not think that the applicants were treated fairly. There was now a possibility that some boys would be jeopardised, as far as their future was concerned.

Mr. Dore, Mr. Barrett went on, applied for four application forms on March 27 and the application was received on the 28th. The application was made to the Co. Council in error and, in addition, he received the wrong forms. These were returned with a letter of explanation and that letter was taken by messenger to Mr. Gleeson's office on the 29th, but no new forms were given to the messenger. Mr. McKeown made a similar mistake and he (Mr. Barrett) took up the matter with the Co. Council. The matter, however, was referred back to the County Council by Mr. Gleeson, who stated in his letter that as the application had been received on the 29th there was no point in giving out the forms in view of the fact that they could not be posted back in time.

Mr. Barrett said that he claimed that the applications were made in time, although to the wrong quarter, as a result of which wrong forms were given. Forms should be handed out, if necessary, on the final day because they could be filed in on the spot. He did not think the applicants had been treated fairly.

Mr. M. Gleeson, C.A.O., said that since he took up duty 25 years ago one of the principal ideas in his mind was to further education by every possible means. There were very few scholarships then, but these had now been increased from two or three to 25 each for boys and girls. The amount allocated for scholarships was £2,500, out of a total expenditure of £10,000. That was big money.

### REGULATIONS

He received a letter from Mr. Dore on April 1 and, in reply, informed Mr. Dore that it was not the practice to give out appli-



## ROOTS

use enough fertiliser on your POTATOES, SUGAR BEET, MANGELS AND TURNIPS