

23

# THE GRANGE AMBUSH

Harry Greensmyth.



In October of 1921, the East Limerick Flying Column was resting in the vicinity of Lough Gur and an area which was under the command of the Third Battalion East Limerick Brigade, I.R.A.

Grange was selected as a suitable place to ambush enemy forces. At a meeting in Bob Ryans house, captain of the Lough Gur Company, which included Donncadh O'Hannigan, column O/C, Sean Forde, Martin Conway, Holycross, David Cremmins, Eamonn Treacy, Seamus Maloney, Bruff Bob Ryan, Lough Gur, John Clifford, Fedamore, Dick O'Connell, Caherconlish and James Moloney, Kilcullane, the decision was taken to go ahead with the ambush.

On the night of November 8th. Donncadh O'Hannigan, paraded his men outside at the gate of Comte de Salis and set out for Grange. Other I.R.A. units had taken up positions away from Grange, to intercept reinforcements which might come from Hospital, Fedamore, Bruff or Limerick.

At noon the sound of military lorries could be heard and soon they were in the ambush positions. Bombs and gunfire greeted the military and in the consternation and din, Martin Conway, Jim Murnane and Seamus Maloney, lashed two command cars tied together with a ladder across the road, to prevent the lorries escaping.

One lorry capsized with soldiers tumbling out, some of them dead. An armoured car

arrived on the scene and blazed at the I.R.A. contingents.

From the Bruff direction a greater danger arose with the arrival of eight additional lorries. These included two armoured cars and about 200 well armed British soldiers with a Leavy machine gun mounted on a tripod.

O'Hannigan immediately ordered a retreat. The east offered the best line of retreat as an open bog lay to the west, enemy lorries to the south and the north was too dangerous to after the fate of the ambush had become known.

The I.R.A. withdrew safely to Lough Gur. They originally set out to ambush two lorries travelling from Limerick to Bruff, but finished up in combat with ten vehicles bound from Fermoy to Limerick.

The Grange engagement lifted the morale of the republican troops. The I.R.A. armament consisted of 21 rifles, 21 shotguns and some explosives.

Billy Burke and Tom Fogarty who were among the group which operated from Bulfins' house were wounded, the only two injured suffered by the attackers. They were conveyed to safety by the Grange Company.

The British casualty list was unknown, but it is doubtful if any occupants of the two lorries travelling from Bruff escaped. Their dead included Lieutenant Watling, who died later that evening in Bruff.