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# *My role as an Intelligence Officer with the Third Tipperary Brigade (1919-1921)*

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By Sean Sharkey

## Editorial Introduction

*Readers of the 1994 Tipperary Historical Journal will recall the set of photographs of the Third Tipperary Brigade taken by a member of the Brigade, Sean Sharkey. Below is published a statement by the late Sean Sharkey (who died in 1959) to the defunct Military History Bureau. His family believe it dates from the period 1950-1952. Accordingly, references such as these in paragraphs 1 and 4 to "now" relate to that period. The Tipperary Historical Journal wishes to thank Sean Sharkey's son, Mr. Neil Sharkey of Galway, for permission to publish this statement.*

I was born in the year 1900 at Gladstone Street, Clonmel, where my father owned a fairly extensive jewellery premises which is now in my brother's possession. I attended the High School, Clonmel, until I was 12 years of age, when my father sent me to Ratcliffe College near Leicester in England, with the intention of having me educated with a view to my entering the Indian Civil Service. After 1½ years at Ratcliffe College I went to St. Joseph's De La Salle College, London. At the age of 16 years I passed with honours an entrance examination for Oxford University but, in view of my age, it was decided that I should remain at St. Joseph's for a further two years.

I returned home on holidays towards the end of 1918. The general election [campaign] of that year was then in full swing. Naturally I was not very well acquainted with the position of Irish politics at the time, but somehow or other I felt myself attracted to the Sinn Féin policy and I attended at the Sinn Féin Hall in Abbey Street, Clonmel, to render whatever assistance I could to the Sinn Féin candidate, who was the late Pierce McCan. I may have been influenced in this respect to some extent by conversations which I had with one of my father's employees who was an Irish Volunteer and who had been called out in 1916.

Pierce McCan, the Sinn Féin candidate, was successful in the election. He won the seat by a substantial majority. There was a general feeling of enthusiasm and subdued excitement all around Clonmel at the time. So much so, that I could not reconcile myself to the idea of returning to England to pursue my studies and leave it all behind, so I informed my father that I did not wish to go back to college and that I would like to join him in the family jewellery business in Clonmel. My father agreed, although I am sure he was sorely disappointed with my decision.

From my interest in the Sinn Féin movement to joining the Irish Volunteers was but a short step. On 1 April, 1919 I joined A/Company, 4th Battalion, South Tipperary Brigade. This was then the local company in Clonmel and it used the Sinn Féin Hall in Abbey Street for meetings, parades, etc. In a subsequent re-organisation of the battalion areas Clonmel and district became the 5th Battalion area, but my company retained its designation as A/Company. The O/C of A/Company at the time I joined was Thomas Halpin, now, I believe, a Lieutenant-Colonel in the Irish army.



The members of the company were practically all young men drawn principally from the shop assistant, tradesmen and workingmen class. In view, perhaps, of my somewhat different social position – it was then unusual, in Clonmel at any rate, for businessmen's sons to be associated with the Volunteer movement – Halpin told me that he considered it would be better for me not to be publicly associated with the company. He said that no one would suspect me of being a Volunteer and that, by keeping more or less under cover, I could possibly be of more assistance to the movement in the years ahead.

Shortly after I joined the company, but still in 1919, the late Sean Treacy, then Vice-Commandant of the South Tipperary Brigade, visited Clonmel. He attended a parade of A/Company which was held in the Sinn Féin Hall in Abbey Street and administered the oath of allegiance to the members of the company. I was present at that parade and took the oath of allegiance from him. From that time onwards we were members of the Irish Republican Army and rarely, if ever, used the term Irish Volunteer.

Some time in 1919 arrangements were being made to hold a collection on a Sunday morning outside the church gates in Clonmel in aid of the Irish Political Prisoners Dependents' Fund. I was one of those who volunteered to assist in taking up the collection and, on the Sunday morning appointed, I attended outside the local church with the late Sean Morrissey, where we received subscriptions for the fund.

## Intelligence Duties

Towards the end of 1919 or early in 1920 I was appointed Intelligence Officer of the company. The first incident of note after my appointment as Company IO was when it was reported to me that a member of the company was receiving official letters from a British Government department. These letters were delivered to him regularly every Monday morning. It was decided to investigate the matter so, on the following Monday morning, Dick Dalton, Sean Cooney and myself held up the postman at the Old Bridge, Clonmel, and took all the letters he had from him.

We examined the letters during the course of the day and, as we found nothing of an incriminating nature, we re-posted the letters that evening in letter-boxes around the town. The particular official letter in which we were principally interested was harmless. It had something to do with the pension of a relative of the Volunteer to whom it was addressed.

The postman returned to the post office and reported the occurrence. As, however, he was in the habit of going to his home to have his breakfast during the time he should be delivering letters, he reported the hold-up as having taken place at a point about a mile further on on his route, so when the R.I.C. went out to investigate, they were conducting their inquiries at the wrong place.

On 7 April, 1920 the Income Tax Offices in Sarsfield Street, Clonmel, were raided by members of the company and all books and documents relating to income tax collection were seized, taken away and destroyed by burning. As I was supposed to be "under cover" and not to be prominently associated in I.R.A. activity, I was permitted by the O/C to have only an obscure part in this incident.

On 1 September, 1920 all companies in the battalion area carried out a general raid for arms in Clonmel and district. With two other members of the company I raided a farmer's house a few miles from the town, where we got one shotgun which was duly handed over to the battalion QM.

As the year 1920 wore on, I.R.A. activity in many parts of Ireland and in most parts of Co. Tipperary became intensified, but in the Clonmel area activity was more or least at a



standstill. A number of us, including Dick Dalton, Sean Morrissey, Sean Cooney and myself, often discussed the matter. We became very dissatisfied with the battalion officers whom we blamed for the inactivity in and around Clonmel, so we decided to act on our own.

Those of us who were dissatisfied with the way things were going were 11 in number, viz: Tommy Darren (then employed in P. J. O'Reilly's drapery establishment in Clonmel and now in the U.S.A.), Dick Dalton, Sean Cooney, Paddy Ryan, Sean Morrissey (now in Fethard), Theo English, Mick Patterson, "Buddy" Donoghue, Christy Riordan, Ned Dalton and myself. Amongst ourselves we were known as the "malcontents".

Our next problem was to select a suitable operation to carry out on our own. This problem was solved as follows: On a Sunday evening early in December 1920 Tommy Barron and Dick Dalton were cycling out to Lisronagh to re-organise the local Volunteer company there. On their way they met a patrol of four or five R.I.C. men who were going to Service in the Protestant Church at Rathronan.

They were part of a garrison at Lisronagh which is approximately two miles from Rathronan, and, to attend Protestant Service, they had to go to Rathronan where the nearest Protestant Church was situated. Tommy Darron remarked to Dalton: "I wonder does this happen every Sunday?" Discreet inquiries from the Volunteer at Lisronagh elicited the information that this was a regular church parade.

The following week was spent conceiving and perfecting a plan to attack this patrol. All eleven members of the "malcontents" were brought into the secret and all showed the greatest enthusiasm to bring off the attack on the following Sunday which, as far as I can recollect, was



*An old photograph of Sharkey's jewellery shop in Gladstone St., Clonmel (Photo: courtesy of Neil Sharkey, Galway).*



either the second or third Sunday in December 1920. Revolvers were very scarce at the time, but any deficiency was made up by Sean Cooney from the brigade dump, which was then under his control.

Everything went smoothly until on the Saturday evening a rumour went around Clonmel that there had been an ambush at Lisronagh that day. We wondered if our secret had leaked out and if we would have to abandon our cherished project. However, hectic inquiries established the fact that there had been no ambush, but that a Black and Tan on his way home from Clonmel and very much "under the weather" had accidentally discharged his revolver and shot himself in the foot. At a meeting that night in the Sinn Féin Hall in Abbey Street we came to the conclusion that the incident would prove more in the nature of a help than a hindrance to our projected plan of the morrow.

Next morning after Mass we met again in the Sinn Féin Hall. Word came that a large force of British military was converging on the hall. Hurriedly we made our exit and just barely got away before the military cordons were drawn across the street. In ones and twos we proceeded to the place selected for the ambush, which was near John Allsop's cottage about two miles from Clonmel on the road to Lisronagh. Here our first task was to remove portion of a stone ditch so as to give us easy access to the road.

We then divided and took up positions on each side of the road. Then began a period of waiting. An hour passed and still no sign of the patrol. Would they come, or had they got word that we were waiting for them? At last we heard the tread of heavy footsteps. We became tense and with guns in hand waited, ready to spring out on the road. Slowly the patrol came into view. It consisted of four Black and Tans marching, two in front and two behind.

When they came almost opposite our position we jumped out on to the road and shouted to them "Hands up, surrender". Sergeant Cooper, who was one of the two in front, remarked: "I'm damned if we do" and he opened fire. His resistance was soon overcome and the Black and Tan who was in front with him was quickly disarmed. The two Black and Tans who were in the rear turned and ran away, firing as they ran. They were pursued by a few members of our party, who exchanged shots with them. One of these two Black and Tans was wounded and surrendered. The other got clean away and made his way back to the barracks.

Having sent the three captured Black and Tans away we took to the fields in the direction of Ardgeeha, taking our captured booty with us. This consisted of three Lee Enfield rifles and three slings of .303 ammunition. I am not now exactly sure whether we got a revolver or not. At one point we narrowly escaped action with a force of British military, who apparently had heard the shooting and had come along to investigate.

Our next problem was to dump the captured arms and, in this respect, we were greatly indebted to a man named Christy McNamara who permitted us to store them in the attic of his cottage at Heywood, where they remained until we were able to remove them next night to the nearest dump. This attack, which was solely the work of the eleven "malcontents", paid good dividends, as it provided some of the rifles and ammunition required for the Hogan's column.

Pandemonium reigned in Clonmel that night. The local British garrison ran amok and unarmed civilians were held up and beaten up, all over the town. The next day, extraordinary to relate, British forces raided the homes and places of employment of every one of the 11 participants with the single exception of mine. Despite the closest scrutiny, none of the participants was recognised and no arrests were made.

As a result of the ambush at Lisronagh those of us who took part in it were more or less reprimanded by the battalion officers for acting without orders. This made us more dissatisfied still, and it was decided amongst ourselves that a deputation consisting of Sean Cooney and

myself should go to the Brigade Headquarters and ask the brigade O/C to remove our battalion commander from his position and to replace him by an active, capable man from another area.

Although we held no rank in the company, Sean Cooney was a man of great sincerity and integrity. He was an older man than most of us, and was well known to the Brigade O/C, Seamus Robinson, and the brigade staff, who placed the greatest reliance on him and who were always prepared to listen to any suggestion from him. Our mission (Cooney's and mine) to Brigade Headquarters resulted in the removal from office of the Battalion Commandant and the Battalion Vice-Commandant and their replacement by the late Denis Sadlier (afterwards accidentally killed in 1921) as Vice-Commandant.<sup>1</sup>

Denis Sadlier was then a member of the No. 1 (Denis Lacey's) flying column, and Sean Morrissey was a member of the No. 2 (Sean Hogan's) flying column. In or about the same time the Battalion Intelligence Officer, John Tynan, was arrested by British forces and I was appointed to replace him.

### Decoding R.I.C. Telegrams

Our intelligence service in Clonmel was at this time fairly well organised. It was based chiefly on information received through the post office. In this respect invaluable assistance was received from Mr. P. J. O'Connell, now Postmaster in Cork. He was then personal clerk to the Postmaster in Clonmel. Through him, I made arrangements whereby I received a copy of every telegram which passed through Clonmel Post Office on its way to the R.I.C.

The telegraph messenger in Clonmel at the time was a girl named Tynan, a sister of the former Battalion Intelligence Officer. When delivering telegrams to the R.I.C. barracks she had to pass by my father's premises in Gladstone Street, so on her way to the barracks she invariably delivered my copy of the telegram to me, so that I often was aware of the contents of the message before the R.I.C. themselves!

These telegrams were, of course, always in code; but, as I had a copy of the key to the code, it was quite easy to decode them. The codes were changed periodically, about once a month; but as the code for the following period was usually sent to me by Tom Carew, the Brigade I.O., well in advance, I was always in possession of the key in good time. On one occasion I received a copy of a telegram which when decoded read: "The rebels are in possession of our present code. Use this one instead". Then followed the new code to be used!

An example of the codes used by the British may be of interest. This one was, I think, the last code word used by them:

C U M B E R L A N D F G H  
Z Y X W V T S Q P O K I H

To decipher the message in the telegram you simply substituted the letters in the words of the message for those shown above or below them in the code. Having decoded the messages, the next thing to be done was get them to Brigade HQ as quickly as possible. For this purpose I organised a team of dispatch riders who used bicycles. My principal dispatch riders in Clonmel were two Fianna boys: Paddy O'Brien (often called "Mercury") and his brother Tommy.<sup>2</sup>

The Brigade HQ was situated in a dug-out in a field near Davin's house at Rathsallagh. We always referred to it as "No. 71", it being called after No. 71 Heytesbury Street, Dublin, which was the address of Seamus Robinson, the Brigade Commandant, before he came to South Tipperary.

The dispatch riders were not permitted to go to the Brigade HQ, nor were they familiar with its location. They brought the dispatches to a cowshed on a farm owned by people named

O'Donnell of Tilloon near Rockwell College. This cow-shed was situated about one mile from the main road; here the dispatches were collected each day by Sean O'Meara, the Brigade Q.M. The other seven battalions in the brigade used similar means of getting their dispatches to Brigade HQ, the same cow-shed being used by all.

Early in 1921 I received information from friendly assistants in the Post Office that the R.I.C. in Clonmel Divisional Headquarters sent monthly reports by post to the R.I.C. HQ in Dublin. I was anxious to get hold of these reports, as I knew they would be of considerable interest and value to the brigade staff. I made arrangements with the friendly post office assistants to be informed of the next occasion on which the monthly reports were posted by the R.I.C.

Meanwhile I made detailed plans to hold up the Post Office when the time came and to seize the reports before they left Clonmel. Here again Sean Cooney came to my assistance, as he managed to secure for me a few revolvers which I required for the party I had selected to carry out the hold-up.

In due course the R.I.C. again posted their monthly reports and I was tipped off by my friends in the Post Office that the reports would be there that night awaiting the next dispatch to Dublin. I had my party mobilised, about eight men in all, to meet at Abbey Street at about 8 p.m. Everything was in readiness to go ahead with the hold-up; each man knew his position and exactly what he was to do. But, before proceeding to the Post Office, I took the precaution of sending one man out to scout around Gladstone Street and the vicinity of the Post Office.

This man returned with the news that there was a strong force of R.I.C. and Black and Tans in the vicinity of the Post Office and that they were more or less hidden in all the shop doorways in Gladstone Street. I then went out to see the position for myself and found things exactly as the scout had reported them. It was perfectly clear that they (the R.I.C. and Black and Tans) had got wind of the proposed hold-up of the Post Office; so I called the job off.

At 2 a.m. next morning I awoke to loud and repeated knocking at our halldoor. At that time I lived with my family in Gladstone Street. I went downstairs, opened the hall door and was immediately confronted by quite a large force of R.I.C. men. They told me that they had come to arrest me and said that I was a member of the I.R.B. I indignantly replied that I knew nothing good, bad or indifferent about the I.R.B. or anything else either, and protested against being knocked up in such a manner at such an hour.

One party of the R.I.C. held me in the hall and questioned me, while the remainder of the party searched the house from top to bottom. While the search was going on, those who were questioning me told me to go and get ready to go with them. I made no move to do so, but continued to protest my innocence of having any hand, act or part in I.R.B. or I.R.A. activities.

At length the search party returned to the hall and reported that they had found nothing which would incriminate me. The R.I.C. man who had done most of the questioning then informed me that I was either the greatest fool or the greatest liar on earth. They took their departure, leaving me behind.

At the time of this raid I had in the house a Lee Enfield Service rifle which was hidden in a bricked-up chimney place, my short parabellum revolver which was hidden in a niche which I had chiselled out for it in one of the rafters, and a number of important documents which were hidden in the hollow of a marble base of a clock.

This clock was one which had been presented to the late Thomas Condon, MP by his admirers in the Irish Parliamentary Party or, as they were better known, John Redmond's party, and at the time it was in our repair workshop. It had a large marble base which, to the uninitiated, presented the appearance of a solid piece of marble.

After the Truce I learned from an R.I.C. sergeant who was a clerk in the District Inspector's

office at the time my home was raided that a discussion took place in the barracks and that, while some of those present suspected me, others did not, and that Detective Sergeant Stephenson's opinion was that a man with my background would have nothing to do with the I.R.A.

Eventually they decided to raid the house, and that if anything of an incriminating nature was found, I was to be arrested there and then. I also gathered from him that they were aware of the proposed hold-up of the post office; but I never succeeded in finding out by whom or in what way they were tipped off about it.

In addition to my contacts in the post office, I also had contacts amongst the employees in the various hotels in Clonmel. Some of these employees were members of the company; others were just friendly, but could be relied on. Generally speaking, the "boots" in the hotel was the best man for the job.

One morning the "boots" in Hearn's Hotel called in to me and told me that a British officer had slept in the hotel the night before and that when he (the "boots") brought up shaving-water to the room in the morning he saw the officer's attache case lying open on the bed, and that it contained a Webley revolver. He added that if anything was to be done it must be done quickly, as the officer was leaving at noon.

I got the number of the room from the "boots" and told him to return to the hotel and to make himself as conspicuous as possible until the officer had left. I then sent for Mr. Frank Murphy, who was a nephew of the proprietor of the hotel and who is now a solicitor practising in Clonmel.<sup>3</sup> Mr. Murphy was then a member of the company, but very few even of those in the company were aware of that fact.

I explained the position to him, gave him the number of the room and asked him to go to the hotel and, if possible, to get the officer's attache case and that I would be waiting in a lane just around a corner from the hotel to take it from him. He agreed to have a try.

Nobody took any notice of the proprietor's nephew entering the hotel and going upstairs. The officer was not in the room at the time. He had gone to the dining-room or to the toilet, so Murphy just took the case; down the stairs with him and out around the corner to where I was waiting. I had taken along a large empty attache case into which Murphy dropped the officer's case, and we both went our various ways. Except for the Webley revolver and six rounds of ammunition, the case contained nothing of value – just a pair of worn pyjamas and a shaving kit. I still have the attache case as a souvenir of those days.

### D.I. Potter's capture

In April 1921 District Inspector Potter of the R.I.C. was captured and held as a prisoner by No. 1 (Denis Lacey's) flying column. On or about 15 April, 1921 I received a dispatch from Tom Carew, the Brigade IO, to get a motor-car and send it out to a point near "71", the Brigade HQ. Almost at the same time as I received the dispatch, Tom Carew himself came in to see me.

He told me that the car was required to take an envoy to Dublin with a message to the British authorities in Dublin Castle offering to release Potter, provided the British authorities agreed to reprieve a Volunteer named Thomas Traynor, who was then under sentence of death in Mountjoy Jail, and was to be hanged within a few days. In the event of the British persisting in hanging Traynor, Potter would be executed by our forces.

In those days neither Sean Cooney nor myself could drive a motor-car, so I sent a dispatch-rider to Sean Hogan's column with a message for Sean Morrissey (now of Fethard), who was a motor driver and motor mechanic and who was then with the column, telling him to come in



immediately to see me in Clonmel. As IO I always had information as to where the columns were billeted, so that I could contact them at any time.

Sean Morrissey came into Clonmel that night. I explained to him that we were to get a motor-car and that he was to take it to the point near Brigade HQ. With Sean Cooney, the two of us (Sean Morrissey and myself) then went to the house of a well-known loyalist named Minchon, who had a motor-car. Having masked our faces, we knocked Minchon up and made him open up his garage. Sean Morrissey drove the car away.

Except that I believe it was either Miss Kathleen or Miss Eileen Davin of Rathsallagh that went as envoy to Dublin, I cannot give much further information about that aspect of this incident. A few evenings later, however, Tom Carew again came into Clonmel to me. At this time he was a much-wanted man by the British, and as a disguise on this particular evening he came in driving a farm cart with a few milk churns on it and wearing an old tweed cap on the back of his head, looking exactly the part of a farmer in town for a few messages.

When I asked him what had brought him in, he said he would be waiting until the *Evening Herald* came in. He remained in our sitting-room until after 9 o'clock that night, when we got the *Evening Herald*. We saw the heading on the paper "Thomas Traynor hanged in Mountjoy Prison this morning". Tom then remarked: "Potter, I am sorry for you", took the *Evening Herald* with him and drove away in the horse and cart.

Potter was executed by our forces soon afterwards. Some time after the truce and at the request of his wife, we had his remains disinterred so as to satisfy an insurance company (against whom Mrs. Potter had a claim) of his actual death. Almost immediately after the execution of District Inspector Potter, Tom Carew was called to GHQ in Dublin and remained there until after the Truce in July of the same year. From the time he went to Dublin until the Truce, I acted as Brigade Intelligence Officer.

Early in the Summer of 1921 I went to keep an appointment with Denis Sadlier, Commandant of the 5th Battalion (whom I have previously referred to), and Maurice McGrath, Commandant of the 8th Battalion. The appointment was arranged for a place near Lord Ormond's lodge, about halfway between Clonmel and Carrick-on-Suir, and the object of our meeting was to define the boundary between the 5th and 8th Battalions. I met Maurice McGrath all right but, although we waited all the evening and some of the night, there was no sign of Denis Sadlier turning up, so we decided that he was unable to keep the appointment and we called it off.

Next day I learned to my sorrow that Denis Sadlier was accidentally killed when on his way to keep the appointment. He was a most sincere type of Irishman and, during the time I knew him, we had become close friends. He was succeeded by Patrick Dalton as Commandant of the 5th Battalion.

During those years, 1919 to 1921, I was very keen on photography and invariably carried a camera with me. After the 2nd Southern Division was formed in May or June 1921, Ernest O'Malley, who was the Division O/C, asked me to get him some good photographs of the Lawn Tennis Club in Clonmel. This club was frequented by British army officers and officers of the R.I.C., so I presumed he had in mind some plan such as capturing a number of them there. I took the photographs and gave them to him; but nothing came of it. Possibly the Truce, coming at the time it did, prevented the implementation of whatever idea he had in his mind.

Sean Cooney, whom I have previously mentioned, held the post of battalion engineer for some time prior to the Truce in 1921. With him I spent some pleasant days fishing with rod and line during the Summer of that year. Those fishing trips provided the cover under which we surveyed and measured the bridges spanning the rivers Anner and Suir in the 5th Battalion



area, so that arrangements for their demolition could be made at short notice should the necessity for such action arise.

During the Truce period I acted as assistant liaison officer in South Tipperary. Sean Fitzpatrick, now of the Irish Tourist Board, and then Adjutant of 3rd Tipperary Brigade, was liaison officer. One of two incidents which occurred during that period may be of interest.

One evening during Fitzpatrick's absence I received a message from the British authorities that a number of rifles had been taken by members of the I.R.A. from hutments near the military barracks in Tipperary town. I promised to have the matter investigated. I may mention here that even before I received the message from the British authorities I was aware, although I cannot now recall who told me, that the rifles had been taken and that it was what was known as a "bought" job, that is, that some British army NCOs had been bribed to assist in getting the rifles out of the hutments. I may also mention that I had no intention of assisting the British authorities to get the rifles back.

However, I went to Tipperary town, where I met Frank Thornton from GHQ in Dublin, who had also come to investigate the matter. Together we went to interview the commanding officer of the British forces in Tipperary military barracks. He was very indignant and received us curtly. He had no regard for our ranks and referred to us as Mr. Thornton and Mr. Sharkey. He claimed that the incident was a flagrant breach of the truce.

We inspected the broken lock at the end of the rack from which the rifles were taken, and the place where the barbed-wire entanglements which surrounded the hutments were cut to effect an entry and exit. All this was getting us nowhere, so Thornton suggested that perhaps the East Limerick Brigade might know something about it and he decided that I should go and see Donnchadh Hannigan, O/C of that brigade, find out if he could throw any light on the matter, and report back.

I then got a motor-car, went to East Limerick and saw Donnchadh Hannigan who, of course, had no knowledge of the affair. I returned to Tipperary town, told Frank Thornton the result of my trip and, leaving him to deal with the British authorities, I returned to Clonmel. I cannot say how he dealt with the matter subsequently; but I am certain that the British never got the rifles back!

Sometime about the second week in December 1921 a bomb was thrown at a passenger train just as it was about to enter the railway station in Thurles. The train was carrying a number of released political prisoners who were on their way home from various prisons and internment camps. One released prisoner named Declan Horton was killed by the bomb.

Sean Fitzpatrick and I went to Thurles to investigate the matter. Our information was that the bomb had been thrown by a Sergeant Enright of the R.I.C. and that it had been thrown from the bridge over the railway near Thurles railway station. It was late when we got to Thurles and the town was in complete darkness; not a light shone in a house. We went straight to the R.I.C. Barracks and, although we made it quite clear who we were and the business we were on, the police refused to open the door to us. The townspeople of Thurles appeared to be in a state of terror that night.

Seeking accommodation for the night, we knocked at the hotels and at some likely houses; but nowhere did we get an answer to our knocking. Eventually Sean Fitzpatrick and myself went to the railway station and got shelter for the night from a signal-man in the signal-man's cabin. Next day we returned to Clonmel. The investigation of this incident probably fizzled out, as the R.I.C. were disbanded shortly afterwards. At any rate, I have an idea that Sergeant Enright was shot dead at a coursing which he attended somewhere in North Tipperary within a few weeks of the bombing incident at Thurles Railway Station.<sup>4</sup>



## FOOTNOTES

1. See article by Dr. Joost Augesteijn in *THJ* 1996, pp 145-163 – Editor.
2. Tommy O'Brien the dispatch-rider later became Tommy O'Brien the popular RTE broadcaster of operatic records – Editor.
3. Frank Murphy, who died in the early 1990s, was a collateral descendant of Charles Kickham – Editor.
4. Sergt. Thomas Enright of Thurles RIC station was killed while attending a coursing meeting in Kilmallock, Co. Limerick on 21 December 1921. (War Office 35 Series, Military Courts of inquiry in lieu of inquests: PRO London; for this source I am indebted to Donal A. Murphy, Tyone, Nenagh – Editor.)

