

# The 1921 Millstreet Ambush

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While researching in the War Office files (in particular WO 35/88B) at the National Archives, Kew, for information on the Headford Junction ambush, I encountered a detailed file on a lesser known incident between Rathcool and Millstreet, just 15 miles away, which from a railway point of view was very interesting. The file gave the story from the British perspective but, with information from Peter Rigney, I was able to trace the Irish Volunteers' version of the event and present a balanced paper. It is interesting in that there are no contradictions between the two versions. A further file at the National Archives (WO 14) quotes most of a report from the Irish Volunteers to their Officer Commanding, summarising the event. The report appears to have been captured by the Crown Forces. Clearly no one informed the military or the Royal Irish Constabulary of the planned ambush, for to do so in Ireland at that time would have resulted in almost certain execution if detected.

On Tuesday 21 January 1919, at Soloheadbeg, within sight of Limerick Junction station, the first shots were fired in what some suggest was the beginning of the War of Independence. Two officers were shot dead. While most of the RIC personnel were Irish men carrying out their duties, they were increasingly seen as agents of the Crown, and this process accelerated when the RIC Special Reserve (better known as the 'Black & Tans') and the Auxiliary Division of the RIC (ADRIC), were formed to assist them. Some areas became very difficult for the Police and many were forced to live in their barracks, leaving only when on patrol. Some 500 RIC men were killed in the two years between 1919 and the signing of the Anglo-Irish Treaty on Tuesday 6 December 1921.

The Mallow-Tralee railway had more incidents than any other line in the country, ranging from bridge and track damage to ambushes, as well as theft and destruction of British goods en route by rail. The worst ambush in the War of Independence was that at Headford Junction on Monday 21 March 1921. The theft and destruction of British goods was referred to as the 'Belfast boycott', having originally started with the stealing of goods manufactured in Belfast, but soon extended to any goods manufactured or grown in Britain or the Belfast area. The goods would be taken, often at gun-point, and burned, or, in the case of seed and grain, scattered on the track. By the start of April 1921, damage to bridges and track resulted in the closure of the Millstreet-Tralee section, and within ten days, the entire route between Mallow and Tralee was closed.

## IRISH VOLUNTEERS' PLAN

In January, 1921, the Officers of B and E companies of the North Cork Brigade of the Irish Volunteers planned to attack and disarm one of the small parties of British military whom their Information Officers reported as travelling by train through the area. They had 164 men to carry out the proposed ambush. There were two suitable trains, the 6:10pm from Tralee and the 5:15pm from Cork, and these crossed at Millstreet in darkness. The plan involved finding a train with troops on board and then effecting the ambush. Each evening, a party of Volunteers were at a cutting 150 yards on the Tralee side of Mile Post 17½, in the townland of Drishanebeg, near Millstreet, National Grid

Reference: W 288 927. Both east and west of Millstreet, two Volunteers were delegated to find a party of British military and have the train carrying the troops stop at the planned ambush site. The two Volunteers at the western side were at Millstreet station observing the 6:10pm from Tralee. The two Volunteers at the Rathcool end took turns each evening, one to walk the  $4\frac{1}{2}$  miles from Rathcool to Banteer and travel back on the down train, while the second Volunteer was to be ready at Rathcool, with two revolvers, one for each. If there were troops on the train, both would board the locomotive and order the driver at gun-point to proceed. A mile before the ambush site, the driver was to be ordered to give two whistle blasts as an indication to the Volunteers lying in wait that there were troops on board and the train was to be ambushed. A lighted carbide cycle lamp was to be placed between the rails to indicate to the driver where exactly he was to bring the train to a halt. For illumination, torches made from dry sacking and kerosene oil were to be lit and thrown down the slopes of the embankment to give the attackers a clear view of the interior of the train. The Volunteers noted that the trains always seemed to be on time and were concerned that they only had a limited number of nights to find a train with British troops on board, otherwise the trains would be passing the ambush site in daylight and they would be easy targets for the military in a shoot out. In the report after the subsequent military enquiry, an appended drawing shows the ambush about a mile east of the actual site but the railway report in the GS&WR General Manager's files record it at MP17 $\frac{1}{2}$ . This is confirmed in Con Meaney's recollection of the incident in the Aubane Historical Society's papers. Some weeks later the bridge over the River Finnow, UB 32, 100 yards east of MP18, was destroyed by fire by a group of local Volunteers, and on 16 June a major ambush took place on a nearby road.

### EXECUTING THE PLAN

From Friday 4 February, the plan was put in place each evening for a week. If no enemy forces travelled, then the Volunteers would withdraw to their homes and billets and regroup the following evening. On Saturday 5 February 1921, it was the turn of 25-year old Dan Coakley, Bolomore, Rathcool, to walk to Banteer and board the down train, on which he found five soldiers but decided to let them go their way. Finally, on Friday 11 February, Jack O'Keeffe walked to Banteer, while Dan Coakley was positioned at Rathcool with the firearms, ready to join his colleague and both board the locomotive if there were troops on board. O'Keeffe found 14 troops on the train and at Rathcool he alighted in the dark, on the off side, and joined Dan Coakley. They then jumped onto the footplate as the train was ready to depart and informed the engine driver that he was to carry out their instructions or his life was forfeit.

Acting on these instructions, the driver blew a whistle blast about a mile from the ambush position, a clear signal to the ambushers that there were enemy forces on the train. The ambush party then placed the lighted carbide cycle lamp between the rails at the point selected to have the locomotive stopped. The engine over ran the lamp by ten yards and the ambushing party had to adjust their position. The sacking and kerosene torches were then lit and thrown down the slopes of the embankment giving the attackers a clear view of the interior of the train and the military.

### VOLUNTEERS' VERSION OF SHOOT-OUT

The Volunteer Battalion Commandant called on the military to surrender, but the answer was a rifle shot from the train, which was immediately replied to by slug-loaded shot guns and limited rifle fire from the Volunteers. The Volunteers had only four regular Magazine .303 rifles and two single shot .303 rifles. The firing lasted seven or eight minutes when the military shouted "*We surrender*". The Commandant then ordered "*Stop firing*". Firing ceased, but after about 30 seconds another shot was fired from the train and the Volunteers immediately resumed their fire. In less than a minute, in response to a further shout of "*We surrender*" from the train, the Commandant again ordered the Volunteers to stop firing and the military were ordered to come out of the train and leave their arms. They then opened the doors on the southern side of the train and those not seriously wounded exited as ordered. A member was dying and one at least, a sergeant, was dead.

While the troops were emerging, a lieutenant, who was apparently in hiding near the rear of the train, fired a revolver shot at the Mallow end of the ambushers' position, opened the door of the carriage and leaped onto the ground. He was fired at, but although a diligent search was made under the train. He managed to escape in the darkness.

Coakley and O'Keeffe remained on the locomotive throughout the shooting, and after the ceasefire they joined the other Volunteers and collected the arms, ammunition and equipment belonging to the military. They administered first aid to the wounded military and helped them back on the train which departed to shouts from civilian passengers of "*Up the Republic*". The captured equipment was 14 rifles and 600 rounds of .303 ammunition and this haul was later used in a major road ambush at Clonbannin Cross, near Millstreet, on Saturday 5 March, in which Colonel Commandant H. R. Cumming, of the Kerry Brigade of the ADRIC, was killed.

### TROOP MOVEMENT

On the evening of the Friday 11 February 1921, Lieutenant C. H. W. Clarke, 1st Battalion Royal Fusiliers, was in charge of a party of four other ranks travelling by train from Buttevant to Killarney. At Mallow, ten other men of the same regiment, based in Cork, joined the party. According to the timetable of the day, the Buttevant group possibly travelled by the 1:48pm from Buttevant & Doneraile station to Mallow and arrived at Mallow at 2:03pm. There was a connection from Mallow almost immediately, but the party appears to have waited for the ten other men who travelled from Cork by the 5:15pm Cork-Tralee service. This train was due to leave Mallow at 6:30pm but departed 10 minutes late. The driver was Daniel Lynch, who lived at Railway Terrace, Tralee, accompanied by Fireman Maurice Hogan, residing at 14 Dispensary Lane, Boheree, Tralee. There was a second driver, Joseph Long, on the footplate learning the road. The guard on the train was James Flynn. The train had five carriages in total – three 3rd class vehicles behind the locomotive, a 1st/2nd composite, and a van in rear.

The railway staff gave no direction to the Military as to where to sit and the sergeant placed eight men in the compartment nearest the locomotive and six in the next compartment. Lieutenant Clarke gave orders to the sergeant to detail men to keep a look-out in the carriages before he took a seat in the first class compartment which was in the last carriage and away from the soldiers in his charge.

No mention is made of the stop at Lombardstown. The second stop was Banteer and several men, who appeared to be cattle drovers, detrained while a few people joined the train. Lieutenant Clarke looked out of the window at Banteer and saw nothing to arouse his suspicion. The train was allowed 3 minutes at the station to cater for the branch connection. The next scheduled stop was Rathcool (Mile Post 14 $\frac{3}{4}$ ) at 6:59pm, where on that dark February night, the Acting Station Master, Timothy Cavanagh, had lit five oil lamps about the time the train was due to leave Mallow but had not seen anybody on the platform before the train's arrival. The remnants of the short 248ft-platform can still be seen on the down (left-hand facing Tralee) side. Seven passengers left the train and the Station Master collected their tickets. There was no telegraph communication at Rathcool and any communication had to be by giving a message to the guard of a passing train and have it telegraphed from Banteer or Millstreet. After receiving some bills from the guard, the Station Master told him to close the carriage doors. As the train began to move two men, armed with revolvers, jumped onto the footplate on the right hand side and presented the revolvers to the heads of the crew. The three railway men made no effort to resist and the driver, fearing for his life, did not give three blows of the whistle to indicate to the guard that all was not well on the locomotive. Lieutenant Clarke looked out of the window at Rathcool and thought there were too many on the platform for the size of the station so he drew his revolver and laid it under a newspaper on the seat. The people on the platform were close together and near his carriage. Clarke feared the train might be fired on as it departed the station.

Meanwhile the armed men on the footplate ordered the driver to proceed and after a half a mile ordered the driver to give two blasts of the whistle. The driver was then ordered to proceed to where a white light was exhibited. The site was ideal for an ambush – a short cutting about a train length, with a steep side on the down side, from the top of which there was a clear view into the carriages. One of the armed men ordered the driver to stop opposite the white light, which he did. The two armed men ordered the driver not to move and they left the footplate. After about a minute, an attacking party, who was lining the top of the embankment on the left-hand side, opened fire. The three-man crew on the engine lay on the footplate to take cover and the driver observed the troops being disarmed. As the train was coming to a halt, Lieutenant Clarke looked out on the left hand side and saw a small bonfire and immediately fire was directed at his carriage but there was no shouting. There were two groups of men – one group opposite Clarke's carriage and the other opposite the carriage with the troops. The groups were at carriage level and Clarke reports flashes and hearing the reports as shots were fired into the carriages. He also found his carriage was being fired on from the right hand side and bullets were hitting the floor of his compartment. He fired on the attackers on the left side and when his revolver was empty he ducked down to reload it. While doing so he heard shouts of "*Come out the military*" and also "*Come out and fight*" and "*Put up your hands*". When he had reloaded his revolver he jumped out on the left-hand side onto the track despite the gunfire. The six or so men opposite his carriage were only three or four yards away and made a rush for him. He fired five rounds at them but there is no indication if he hit any of them. He then dived under the train and when he reached the other side of the train there were more civilians who opened fire on him. He then

tried to make his way along under the train to the carriages in which the troops were travelling. While doing so, he reloaded his revolver. When the Lieutenant was under the leading carriage he saw some of the troops on the track, on the left hand side, being disarmed while others were being pulled from the carriages by the attacking party. Meanwhile some gunfire continued. The bonfire lit the scene, while the rebels were carrying flash lamps and they also had a railway lamp.

The officer remained under the train and tried to make his way back to the rear of the train and into open countryside, but on reaching the back carriage he found members of the attacking party drawn up across the line. While he was moving along under the train, he heard the attacking party asking his men where the officer was. Using the flash lamps and the railway lamp, the attackers were searching the compartments of train and along the roof. The Lieutenant then went back under the middle carriage, climbed onto the axle and hid there. A man who appeared to be the leader of the rebels was heard to shout out *"Get the officer"*.

When the firing ceased, the fireman got off the locomotive to put on the injector of the engine, but he was told immediately by one of the attacking party to get back or he would *"put a bullet through him"*. When the attackers told the driver to *"Go on"*, he despatched the second driver, Joseph Long, to see if the guard was all right and for him to give a green signal to proceed. This Driver Long said he did and when the train started to move, he jumped into a compartment and subsequently left the train at Millstreet. However, the guard said he knew Long but did not see him on the night. The guard remained in the van throughout the firing and estimated five or six bullets entered the van. When the firing was over he heard someone shout *"Cease firing"* and went towards the door but before he reached it someone shouted to him *"Open the door"* which he did and was immediately confronted by about twelve armed civilians. Two or three rushed into the van and enquired what was in the parcels in the various parts of the van. After telling the rebels what was in the parcels, the guard said to some of the rebels *"There must be some soldiers wounded"* and they replied *"It would be alright about the soldiers"*. He also told the attacking party that the driver could not proceed without a green signal from the guard. He then walked towards the engine and saw the soldiers getting back onto the train. When he enquired where their officer was, they said they did not know. He spoke to the sergeant and asked if all his men were there and was told *"Yes"*. He then asked the sergeant about the officer's whereabouts and was informed *"If he is not here he must be taken"*. He agreed with the sergeant it was in order to proceed, whereupon he ran back from the soldiers' compartments to the van and exhibited a green signal to the driver who proceeded to depart.

#### THE OFFICER'S REMARKABLE JOURNEY

As Clarke lay across the axle, he heard the doors being closed and the ambushers then said to the guard *"Get on now"* and the train began to move. As the train moved off and the axle rotated, he fell off. He seized the cross bar of the brake, which is just behind the axle, and pulled himself up, half lying and half sat there. At this stage, he found he had been wounded in the leg. The officer in his evidence to the Enquiry said *"I was unable*

*to make myself heard at Millstreet where the train pulled up owing to the excitement and fuss that there was there – I was feeling very weak and tangled up and required help to get out”*. The train spent some minutes in Millstreet. The guard informed the Enquiry that he gave the soldiers a first aid set at Millstreet and another set was provided at Rathmore.

At Rathmore, Lieutenant Clarke managed to extricate himself from the position he was in and was helped up onto the platform by an RIC man. This must have been a hair-raising journey for Lieutenant Clarke who was holding on for his life – it would have taken about four minutes to reach Millstreet and the timetable of the day shows a 15-minute journey time onward to Rathmore. The carriages were wooden-frame 6-wheelers and the strengthening joists of the frame would have probably been used by Clarke to hold on to.

At Rathmore, the officer checked up on his men and was briefed by the driver on the events at Rathcool and the ambush site. He ordered the driver to proceed direct to Killarney as fast as he could and not stop at Headford Junction where there was a scheduled stop. The driver complied. However, the guard, in his evidence, said he left the train at Rathmore and informed the soldiers and a police sergeant that he was doing do. By now it must have been 9:00pm and it would have been highly unlikely that a replacement guard could have been found in Rathmore at short notice so the train may well have gone forward to Killarney without a guard. Guard Flynn told the enquiry there were marks of bullets on the front carriage in which the soldiers were travelling, but none in the second or third carriage. There were bullet marks on the composite carriage and the van. These bullet marks are all consistent with the evidence of the various people. He informed the enquiry, on sworn evidence, that he did not recognise any of the attacking party.

At the Enquiry Lieutenant Clarke estimated the attacking party to be about a hundred in number.

Most of the party was armed with both rifles and revolvers and he noted two in military uniform, which he took to be the uniform of the IRA as it was darkish green. He saw four or five others dressed in service dress khaki. The demeanour of the guard during the attack struck him as being completely unconcerned and he could hear him talking to the attacking party. When he was told to proceed, they called him by his Christian name and also the demeanour of the engine driver at Rathmore was very unconcerned, as he did not seem to be at all excited considering what he had been through. He summarised the casualties inflicted on the party under his charge as:

Sergeant Boxold	killed
Private Hollyhome	died of wounds
Sergeant Sutton	gun shot wounds left shoulder and several

	minor wounds
Private Lloyd	gun shot wounds hand, arm and side
Private Hodge	wrist and side
Lieutenant	gun shot wounds
Clarke (self)	through the thigh

COURT OF ENQUIRY

A court of enquiry assembled at Victoria Barracks, Cork (now Cork Prison), on Tuesday 15 February 1921 by order of the General Officer Commanding, 6th Division, for the purpose of “*enquiring into the circumstances under which the 6:30pm train from Mallow to Killarney on 11 February 1921, was boarded by armed men and subsequently held up by a party of rebels, and to enquire generally into the circumstances attending the casualties inflicted on members of HM Forces who were travelling on the train in question*”. The President was Colonel Commandant E. H. Willis CB CMG with two members; Major J. W. Lloyd-Davies RE and Captain T. Hughes.

Lieutenant Sergeant J. Maxfield gave a graphic account of being stopped near Millstreet and upon looking out, seeing a fire burning but nothing to raise his suspicion. He looked out a second time and still did not observe anything unusual. Just after he resumed his seat one shot rang out. He immediately knelt by the window but as soon as he did a volley of shots rang out and three of the party rolled over wounded. He discharged fifteen rounds while at the same time the soldiers were imploring him to give in – seeing that further resistance would be useless, he did so. During this time the rebels were shouting “*Hands up. Come out*”. The wounded soldiers were taken out and placed on the railway embankment whereupon the rebels cleared away all the arms and equipment. When the equipment was cleared, the army were told to get the wounded men back in the carriage. Before the train moved off, Lieutenant Sergeant Maxfield appealed to the rebels and civilian passengers for rags or bandages to help dress the wounded but he did not get anything. However, a civilian travelling joined him in the compartment where Sergeant Boxold was just lying. After the train moved on, the civilian tore his white shirt to help make bandages. Sadly, Sergeant Boxold expired before reaching Killarney. The civilian, Harry Meagher, Commercial Hotel, Killarney, described as a hardware assistant, gave evidence to the Inquest Court.

The Court adjourned until Wednesday 16 February when Lieutenant Colonel J. Clerke of the Royal Army Medical Corps gave evidence of examining the body of Sergeant Boxold on removal from the train at about 9.30pm and finding life was extinct, as he had five wounds which appeared to be from pellets fired by a shot gun at close range. On the same evening Lt. Col. Clerke received into hospital – a temporary facility in the Great Southern Hotel – Private J. Hollyhome suffering from serious wound of the abdomen. The Surgical Specialist was called from Cork and arrived by special train at about 2.30am and performed an operation. Private Hollyhome died at 7.30am next morning. It would not have been easy to operate a special to Killarney at short notice at night. The Cork-Mallow section would have all cabins open round the clock, but the Mallow-



Killarney section, with six signal cabins and eight level crossings worked by gate keepers, must have required considerable organising.

### POLICE TELEGRAM

Despite the incident occurring on Friday 11 February, it was not until 10:35am on Monday 14 February that the RIC District Inspector at Macroom sent an OHMS [On His Majesty's Service] Telegram to the Army General at Cork where it was received at 11:45am.

*A Train Ambush near Millstreet on 11th inst. The following dead and wounded were taken off the train at Killarney. Killed Sergt F. Boxold, Wounded Lieut C. H. W. Clarke sergts A. Sutton and E. Blane field Lc Corpl King, Private J Hollyhome A. Hodge and E. Lloyd all of the 1st Royal Fusiliers Killarney. Other authorities informed.*

*D. I. Macroom*

### OPINION OF THE COURT

There was no material discrepancies disclosed in the evidence. The railway staff appears innocent of any act of complicity in the affair. The footplate crew seem to have been too frightened to do anything except obey the orders of the armed men. The evidence of the guard was unsatisfactory. His demeanour, while being examined, was such that in the opinion of the Court little credence can be placed on his statements. The Court did not believe that he spoke to Sergeant Maxfield and Lance-Corporal Buzzell before the train left the cutting.

The Court was unhappy that the railway did not allocate seats at intervals along the train to the troops.

Knowledge that the troops were on the 6.30pm train must have been conveyed to the ambush party in advance. The Railway telegraph from the original departure stations, Buttevant and Cork, may have been used for this purpose. The Court was of the firm opinion that the telegraph at Mallow or Banteer was not used as there was no communication, either telephone or telegraph, at Rathcool station, the first halt before the ambush.

Millstreet was the nearest telegraph station to the scene of the affair, 1½ miles distant. The information must have been conveyed to the ambushers prior to the train leaving Mallow as the run from Mallow to Banteer was 20 minutes and from there to Millstreet a further 35 minutes. The total of 55 minutes, would have been too short for the rebels to make their arrangements. It is more probable that they knew of the party being at Buttevant and with the wait at Mallow for the connection, gave time to organise the ambush.

The fire directed at the troops was accurate, but even if the rebels did not know the exact location of the compartments in which the military were, there could have been no difficulty for them to quickly discover their position as the men were in three adjoining compartments in the one coach which was lit by gas. The attackers, from their position on the embankment, could look directly into the compartments.



Fire does not seem to have been opened for some seconds after the train had pulled up, which points to the fact that the rebels had first to locate the position of the military before opening fire.

There was no evidence to show that the civilians travelling in the train did anything to assist the attackers. Their attitude throughout the whole occurrence was purely negative.

The Station Master at Rathcool could not be blamed for failing to see the armed men boarding the engine. The evidence proved that these men boarded the train immediately after it had left the platform when that Station Master would have been collecting the tickets from the seven passengers who left the train at his station.

Owing to the fact that no definite orders appear to have been issued to the troops regarding their disposition when travelling by train, the resistance offered by them was ineffective. They played into the attackers' hands by being together in one portion of the train instead of being in groups of three or four separated in different compartments along the length of the train. The Officer should not have been so far from his men or alone in his carriage.

No field dressings appear to have been carried in accordance with a Divisional Order of 1 August 1920 (Sunday).

No sentries were posted outside the carriages when the train halted at stations.

There was no evidence clearly indication of collusive action between any of the Railway Employees and the Rebels; undue subservience to the will of the Rebels was shown by individual employees through fear.

The Court cannot acquit the Engine Drivers or Fireman of reprehensible want of courage, nor is it satisfied that the conduct of the guard was not influenced by his actual sympathy with the Rebels. These men, whose employment involved such a heavy responsibility, should, in the opinion of the Court, have exhibited a greater degree of resource.

The two foolscap typed pages stating the OPINION OF THE COURT [sic] are signed by the President and the two members of the Court ,but there is a final page in the file with no heading signed by E. F. Strickland, Major-General, Commanding at Victoria Barracks and dated 17 February 1921 (Thursday). This page reads;

*I concur generally in the opinion of the Court.*

*I find it impossible to believe that such an attack could have been prepared without Railway Telegraph or Telephone having been made use of. It may have been in code, which should not have been allowed.*

*It is a clear fact that the affair was due to the Railwaymen on the engine being threatened by the armed men, they must have known that such an attack was on foot, and their compliance would risk the lives of the Military on the train.*

*How far a Railway Official should risk his own life to save those of his passengers is for consideration.*

*I personally do not for a moment consider that his life would have been in danger if he had given the three whistles ordered. The Rebels gambled on his compliance and won.*

*I consider the Officer in Command much to blame. He was not by his men.*

*Sentries did not watch the train at halts.*

*No instructions given, and steps taken to be ready to put lights out.*

*In fact the command of the party was not treated as a tactical one, with precautions, as is so often impressed on officers, but rather as a routine matter, with the result that we lost valuable life, also Arms and Ammunition which will be used against us.*

It is interesting to note the emphasis placed by the military authorities on the possible use of the railway telegraph whereas the Volunteers' plan did not require any telegraphic communication – they simply had a man walk daily from Rathcool to Banteer until a military party of sufficient size to warrant an ambush was found. Just seven trips sufficed.

### PRESS REPORTS

The ambush was reported on in three scripts in *The Kerryman* newspaper dated Saturday 19 February 1921. The main column and a secondary piece detailed the incident, adding that a lady passenger who detrained was slightly injured in the shoulder, but the attacking party dressed her wound and she rejoined the train. As the train departed, the crowd of between 100 and 200 raised cheers for the "*Irish Republic*". In the GS&WR General Manager's file on the incident, a Mr & Mrs Hallissey of Kenmare are recorded as having appeared to have sustained slight injuries by splinters. The file also records that some of the windows of the first-class compartment of compo No. 549, 3rd class carriage No. 663 and the guard's van were broken and some woodwork of the van damaged. Compo No. 549, built in 1883, was a 30ft, 6-wheel, 4-compartment, carriage with fourteen 1st class and twenty 2nd class seats. No. 663 was also a 30ft 6-wheeler seating 72 3rd class passengers in six compartments and was built in 1886.

While the military report quotes the RIC as attending at Rathmore, *The Kerryman* reports that a large number of Military and Police awaited the train at Killarney. Upon arrival in Tralee, the train was parked in the Bay Platform, as *The Kerryman* accurately refers to it. The following day many visited the platform to see the bullet holes in the carriage walls, the broken glass on the floor and large blood stains. The last paragraph in *The Kerryman* refers to the funeral of Sergeant Bloxwold [sic] to Killarney New Cemetery, as it is still called. This was at variance to the more usual practice of repatriating the mortal remains of British soldiers to their home towns. Killarney New Cemetery is a small burial ground beside the Tralee line on top of the embankment of the deep Kilcummin cutting at MP41. In the recent past, a headstone has been erected at Sergeant Boxold's grave.

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GREAT SOUTHERN HOTEL

The military authorities suddenly also took over the Great Southern Hotel at Killarney in July 1920 and converted it to a barracks. It was surrounded with barbed wire defences with sentries behind sandbags. This was in addition to the existing barracks behind the Franciscan Friary opposite the railway station entrance. The only reference in the GS&WR Board meeting minutes to the occupation of the hotel is on 23 July 1920 with a simple entry *Mr. Medcalf reported that the Killarney Hotel has been occupied by the Military.*

In conclusion I thank the staffs of the National Archives, Kew; Central Library, Manchester; Museum of the Royal Fusiliers, HM Tower of London; Killarney Public Library, Herbert Richards and Peter Rigney. For detailed checking and editing of the paper, I thank Kate Doyle and Stephen Hirsch. I also acknowledge information from the papers of the Aubane Historical Society, Millstreet.

Layout of the new station at Rathcool (occasionally spelled Rathcoole), Mile Post 14<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub>, between Banteer and Millstreet, opened on Friday 27 March 1914. A Board of Trade minute dated Wednesday 18 March instructed that the work was to be inspected but it was almost five months before this was done by Lieutenant Colonel von Donop RE whose report of Monday 10 August 1914 states that the single platform on the Down side was 240ft long with a minimum width of 12ft and had a waiting room and booking office. It was not a block post and no signals were provided, but a siding connection facing to Down trains was worked by a 1-lever ground frame locked by a key on the staff of the section. The siding had the required trap points and instead of showing a measurement for the usable length of the siding it states '6 wagons'. The only requirement by Lieutenant Colonel von Donop was that station names were required on the lamps and this the company agreed to. The 1933 *GSR Appendix to the Working Timetable* quotes the platform length as 248', perhaps this was the 'as built' length. In July 1914, the Board of the GS&WR, on their annual inspection of the system, stopped for three minutes at Rathcool to inspect the new works.

In 1866 a siding was to be laid here for coal traffic from Kanturk collieries and this was provided by 1869 when it is recorded that the railway company refused to open the siding to general traffic. The siding closed in 1889, being replaced by the Kanturk branch which opened on Monday 1 April of that year. The station closed from Monday 9 September 1963 except for sugar beet traffic. [*File: MT6/2342/10 National Archives, Kew*]



The cutting, just over 90 years later, Tuesday 8 March 2011, near MP17½, looking towards Millstreet where, on Friday 11 February 1921, the 5:15pm train from Cork to Tralee was ambushed.



3rd class 6-wheel carriage No. 663 at Tralee Bay platform, blood-stained and with bullet holes, Saturday 12 February 1921. (*Bottom*) The platform side of the same coach with substantial window damage. (Photos: *Museum of the Royal Fusiliers, HM Tower of London*)