

mountcharles.  
 Monday  
 July 29<sup>th</sup> 21

Dear Mrs. McGuire,

Uncle Bernard recd your welcome letter today, but hasn't time to write to you himself until later owing to all we experienced thro' the reprisal which caused the tragic murder of my cousin May Harley R. I. P. I am now going to give you the full & proper account which Uncle Bernard wishes you to send to the Glasgow Observer. The ambush which resulted in the terrible reprisal occurred in the Glen Mitchels on Tuesday July 27<sup>th</sup> about the middle of the day the result being the death of Constable Satchwell a former policeman of Mitchels, and the wounding

5.  
 of strangers. One of the men dared to throw Susan over a wall but they escaped in their night attire with bullets flying around them. The language they were using was something awful & they would not give them time to get even a blanket. Their house & everything they possessed in this world was burnt to the ground but thank God they got their lives with them. They came out both to kill and burn. The next house they attacked was Uncle Bernard's. They burst in the door & smashed the windows threw petrol in thro' the rooms & on the stairs. Poor May jumped from her bed called to Uncle Bernard to fly for his life, the house was on fire & flew down thro' the flames in the middle of them & all of them were in

the Railway at the time. They of course had themselves disguised. They must have followed May as she was shot just outside at the gate in the yard in range with the stained glass window in the Railway. Uncle Bernard called to her to come into his room but poor soul flew on down the stairs so they surely saw her & shot her not accidentally either. Uncle Bernard shouted down to them to give him time to get his life with him. The only answer he got was a volley of shots sent up thro' the ceiling to kill him. He escaped thro' his bedroom window on to a flat cement roof over the kitchen & from thence to the ground. He cannot explain yet how he reached the ground but he hurt his side & is badly shaken. He looked down the

## Theme Six: The War of Independence

### DOCUMENT NO.12

#### Account of the killing of Mary (May) Harley, Mountcharles

29<sup>th</sup> February 1921

Courtesy of Peadar MacRory and the McGuire Family, Glasgow

This is an extract from a letter which provides a full account of the events leading up to the death of Mary (May) Harley in Mountcharles. The letter may be consulted in full by making an appointment with Donegal County Archives Service.

Mountcharles.

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Dear Mr McGuire,

Uncle Bernard rec'd your welcome letter today, but hasn't time to write to you himself until later owing to all we experienced thro the reprisal which caused the tragic murder of my cousin May Harley RIP. I am now going to give you the full & proper account which Uncle Bernard wishes you to send to the Glasgow Observer. The ambush which resulted in the terrible reprisal occurred in the Glen Mtcharles on Tuesday Feby 22nd about the middle of the day. The result being the death of Constable Satchwell, a former policeman of M'tcha's and the wounding

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#### Exercises:

1. Provide two details about the ambush on the 22<sup>nd</sup> February.
2. How did the attackers enter Uncle Bernard's house?
3. Where was May shot?
4. Was their house the only house attacked that evening? In your opinion, do you think there was a reason for attacking their house?
5. What do you think the family hoped to gain by asking Mr McGuire to send this letter to the Glasgow Observer?

(1)

Last letter from late Division Quarter Master Sean Larkin  
First Northern Division I. R. A. to his mother executed  
at Drumboe Castle Co. Donegal March 14<sup>th</sup> 1923.

Beloved Mother - What a contrast the contents  
of this letter are to the one I wrote you last  
night. What a change 24 hours can bring.  
But, Mother, surely this is the last news it  
would be possible for you to hear of me. I go  
tomorrow morning at 7 o'clock to meet my  
Redeemer and my Judge. Through the infinite  
mercy of Almighty God I hope to join my dear  
father + Dermot + all my deceased relatives +  
friends in Heaven. Yes, Mother, my hour has  
come, and I must obey the call. But Mother,  
I want you not to worry about me + I hope  
you will respect my wishes. You know that  
this is God's will + what further proof of His  
mercy could we have, in that he has given me  
such an opportunity of preparing my soul  
for Eternity. Yes I have a lot to be thankful to  
Almighty God for, when we consider the uncertainty  
of life and the certainty of death and the suddenness  
with which so many young Irishmen are being

(2)

called away. We had ample time to prepare. We  
were notified of our execution on tomorrow at four  
o'clock this evening + we had a long talk with the  
priest, Fr. McMillan after which he heard our  
confession + in the morning will say mass here +  
give us Holy Communion before we are executed,  
so you see we will be well prepared, better  
perhaps than we would ever be again. I know  
this must come as a great shock to you all  
after all the assurances Fr. James got. Now,  
Mother I hope you won't worry too much over  
this, but just think of the crown of glory I hope  
to receive in the morning. I know it will be a  
great blow to you all, but for the sake of the  
passion + death of Christ bear it patiently +  
Almighty God will surely reward you for this  
+ for all you have suffered for my sake.  
You have been a model Mother to me + to all  
of us + I know you would share your last  
breath with any of your children + ever since  
father's death it has been my one desire to make  
you happy, but now I am to have a real opportunity  
of making you + all the rest of my brothers and  
sisters as happy as it is the will of God. You should  
be, by my prayers on your behalf in company

(3)

with all the Saints and Angels in Heaven.  
Thank God I am happy and resigned to the Holy  
will of God + who knows but that our death  
may be the means of bringing to an end this  
horrible and unfortunate war. If this happens  
then our sacrifice will not have been made  
in vain. I am having a few masses said with  
the money you sent me + I suppose you will  
be able to have some said as well. I have  
nothing to say but praise for our treatment  
from the policemen who are in charge of us  
here, both from officers and men + especially  
from the policemen who are in charge of us.  
I am sending my things home. There are two pipes  
one for Fr. James and the other for Tom. I  
carved the small one myself + Tom can keep it  
as a souvenir; my razor + brush is for Tom.  
There is a small silver ring which I attempted  
to make + tried to scratch Eileen's initials on it.  
You can give it to her. There is a photo in my  
pocket book for yourself and another souvenir  
for James. I have some religious articles but I  
intend wearing them when being executed +  
I will try and make arrangements with Fr. McMillan  
to have them sent on to you + you can divide  
them amongst the family as souvenirs.

## Theme Eight: The Civil War

### DOCUMENT NO.16

#### Letter from Sean Larkin to his mother before his execution at Drumboe Castle

14<sup>th</sup> March 1923

© Donegal County Archives Service

This is an extract from the last letter of Sean Larkin to his mother. The letter may be consulted in full by making an appointment with Donegal County Archives Service.

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Last letter from late Division Quarter Master Sean Larkin First Northern Division I.R.A. to his Mother executed at Drumboe Castle Co. Donegal March 14<sup>th</sup> 1923.

Beloved Mother – What a contrast the contents of this letter are to the one I wrote you last night. What a change 24 hours can bring. But, Mother, surely this is the last news it would be possible for you to hear of me. I go tomorrow morning at 7 o'clock to meet my Redeemer and my Judge. Through the infinite mercy of Almighty God I hope to join my dear father + Dermot + all my deceased relatives + friends in Heaven. Yes, Mother, my hour has come, and I must obey the call. But, Mother, I want you not to worry about me + I hope you will respect my wishes. You know that this is God's will + what further proof of His Mercy could we have in that he has given me such an opportunity of preparing my soul for Eternity. Yes I have a lot to be thankful to Almighty God for, when we consider the uncertainty of life and the certainty of death and the suddenness with which so many young Irishmen are being

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called away. We had ample time to prepare. We were notified of our execution on tomorrow, at four o'clock this evening + we had a long talk with the priest, Fr. McMullan after which he heard our confession + in the morning will say Mass here + give us Holy Communion before we are executed, so you see we will be well prepared; better perhaps than we would ever be again. I know this must come as a great shock to you all after all the assurances Fr. James got. Now, Mother I hope you won't worry too much over this, but just think of the crown of glory I hope to receive in the morning. I know it will be a great blow to you all, but for the sake of the passion + Death of Christ bear it patiently + Almighty God will surely reward you for this + for all you have suffered for my sake. You have been a model mother to me + to all of us + I know you would share your last breath with any of your children + ever since Father's death it has been my one desire to make you happy but now I am to have a real opportunity of making you + all the rest of my brothers and sisters as happy as it is the will of God you should be, by my prayers on your behalf in company

out here when they read the reports that the Blooming English

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#### Exercises:

1. What was Sean Larkin's full title in the IRA?
2. What time did he say his execution would take place?
3. What did he hope his death would achieve? Do you think it played a part in achieving this aim? Why?
4. How did Sean describe the prisoners' treatment in Drumboe Castle?
5. What title has been given to this letter? Do you think this is the original letter? Give one reason for your answer.