

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1919-21

BURO STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21

No. W.S. 1,356

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21

STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 1,356

Witness

Tadhg Dwyer,  
Grovestown,  
Dundrum,  
Co. Tipperary.

Identity.

Commandant 3rd Battalion 3rd Tipperary  
Brigade.

Subject.

Kilnamanagh Company Irish Volunteers,  
3rd Tipperary Brigade, 1914-1921.

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Nil

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STATEMENT BY TADHG DWYER,

Grovestown, Dundrum, Co. Tipperary,

Commandant, 3rd Battalion, 3rd Tipperary Brigade.

I was born in the year 1895 at Clonkelly, Dundrum, Co. Tipperary. My father, who was a farmer, died when I was only four years of age, and I, having finished my education at Knockavilla National School, commenced farming by assisting my mother and brothers when I was fifteen years old.

I joined what was then known as the Kilnamanagh Company of Irish Volunteers when it was formed in 1914. It could scarcely be called a company, for our numbers never exceeded a dozen in the years before the Rising of 1916. Eamon Ó Duihir of Ballagh was our leader and we did a bit of training, principally foot drill. We had no arms except a miniature rifle with which we did a bit of target practice. This target practice was carried out on the railway line at Ballagh railway bridge, and whilst thus engaged we were often watched by members of the R.I.C. from Dundrum. The target practice had a sequel in so far as four or five of us were summoned to the local Petty Sessions Court. I cannot now recall what the exact wording of the charge was - it was way back in 1915 - but the R.I.C. evidence was given in such a way as to indicate that we were endangering the safety of passing trains. This was inaccurate for our range ran parallel with the railway tracks, but I expect the R.I.C. were trying to bolster up the charge and make the most they could of it. We were fined some small amount, with the

alternative of a term of imprisonment. Someone must have paid the fines for us for the matter ended there.

My recollection of Easter Week, 1916, is that we were mobilised to parade on Easter Sunday at the usual place, that is at the railway bridge at Ballagh where, as I have said, we were in the habit of having the target practice. I was, and I am sure the other members of the company were also aware that the Rising was planned and was to start on Easter Sunday, for Eamon Ó Duibhir had told us about it and had pledged us to secrecy a few days before, possibly at the time he was arranging the mobilisation. Then again it was clear in my mind that we were to get rifles on Easter Sunday. From whom or from where the rifles were to come I cannot say, but the impression that we were to have them when the Rising commenced is very clear in my mind. On Easter Sunday we received word that the mobilisation was off, but on the following Tuesday we got orders to parade again that night. That evening two Volunteers were sent to Dualla to try to contact the late Pierce McCann about getting rifles. They came back empty-handed. On the Tuesday night the late Michael Sheehan, afterwards Brigade Quartermaster of the 3rd Tipperary Brigade, took charge, as, if my memory is correct, Eamon Ó Duibhir had left and gone to Dublin when the news was received on Easter Sunday that the mobilisation was off. Sheehan put a couple of the men out on scout or guard duties, while the remainder of us were engaged cutting the telephone wires on the railway line. We were then dismissed and told we could return to our homes. In addition to Sheehan and myself, the others whom I can recall as having taken part in this incident were Con Deere, Gooldscross, James Browne, Clogher, Michael

and Thomas Kearney, Cappamerna, and Patrick McCormack, a next-door neighbour of mine.

After the Rising Eamon Ó Duibhir, Michael Sheehan and Con Deere were arrested and imprisoned. They were the three oldest men in the company and were the three best known to the R.I.C. in this district for their association with Irish Ireland and nationalist movement.

There was then a lull in Volunteer activities until after the general release of the untried political prisoners at Christmas, 1916. Early in 1917 reorganisation of Volunteer units and organisation of Gaelic League branches and Sinn Féin clubs commenced. It was about this time that Seumas Robinson, later O/C 3rd Tipperary Brigade, came to reside in Ballagh as the guest of Eamon Ó Duibhir. Seumas, who had fought in Dublin during the Rising of 1916, helped in the organisation work and in the getting of new men into Volunteer companies. At that time anyone who had fought in the Rising was, in our eyes, a national hero. It was, too, about this time that I joined the I.R.B. and was sworn into that organisation by Seumas Malone, who was then teaching Irish in Ballagh and Rossmore.

Our chief concern was to get arms, but it was not until October, 1917, that we managed to get our first service rifle. In that month a British soldier came home to Ardmayle on leave, bringing, as was then the custom, his rifle with him. We raided his home and took the rifle. As a result of this raid, British soldiers were forbidden to bring their rifles with them when coming to Ireland on leave.

On a night in January, 1918, raids for arms were carried out on the residences of two ex-British officers - on Major Armstrong's at Moyliffe and Major Edward's at Rathduff. It was with the raid on the latter's house that I was concerned. Seumas Robinson was with us in this raid, and the information we had was that some of Carson's rifles were stored at Major Edward's place. This information proved to be incorrect, and after a thorough search of the buildings our booty consisted of a repeating shotgun, a revolver and some ammunition. All members of the company were mobilised for this raid, as it was considered a good opportunity to give the men some practical training. The repeating shotgun was a very useful weapon. It was used throughout the whole campaign and I still have it as a souvenir of that era.

By April, 1918, good progress had been made with the organisation of Volunteer companies in every parish, and in that month a meeting of company officers of five companies was held, the object being to form a battalion. I was at the time 1st Lt. of the Knockavilla Company. It was agreed to form the battalion and election of battalion officers was then proceeded with. I was elected Battalion Commandant, Michael Sheehan, whom I have previously referred to, was elected Battalion Vice Commandant, Philip Fitzgerald of Rossmore was elected Battalion Adjutant, and John C. Ryan of Annacarty was elected Battalion Quartermaster. Later on in the year and after the brigade was formed, Seán Treacy, the Brigade Vice Commandant, attended a battalion council meeting at which the appointments of the battalion staff were ratified. The battalion was at first known as the Dundrum Battalion; later it was designated as the 3rd Battalion of the 3rd or South Tipperary Brigade. Its

Its area comprised the parishes of Knockavilla, Annacarty, Hollyford, Rossmore and Clonoulty. The five companies and their captains were as follows:

<u>Company</u>	<u>Company Captain</u>
'A' - Knockavilla	- Wm. O'Dwyer
'B' - Annacarty	- Tom Carew
'C' - Hollyford	- Paddy O'Dwyer
'D' - Rossmore	- Ned O'Reilly
'E' - Clonoulty	- Wm. Ryan.

Tom Carew and Michael Sheehan later on (in 1920) went to the Brigade Staff as Brigade I/O and Brigade Quartermaster respectively. Ned O'Reilly was then elected Battalion Vice Commandant to replace Sheehan, and Simon Breen and Michael O'Dwyer succeeded Tom Carew and Ned Reilly as Company Captains of 'B' and 'D' Companies.

As trained instructors were not available, the task of training the companies fell to the lot of the battalion staff. In this work Seumas Robinson was of great assistance to us. During the conscription crisis in the early summer of 1918 when our strength in numbers was at its greatest, I ordered what was the first mobilisation order of the whole battalion. It was done as a test to see how many men would parade in the event of an emergency, and to make it look as if something serious was intended, my instructions to the Company Captains were that all men were to bring two days' rations. I also arranged that a battalion officer would visit each company parade. The result was very satisfactory and it was gratifying to see the numbers who turned up. During this period while the conscription menace remained, we were fully occupied in reloading shotgun cartridges with ball ammunition and constructing crude bombs which were packed with gelignite. There was no shortage of gelignite; we had an ample supply which was taken in a rick on Molloy's hardware stores in

Thurles in August, 1917. Ned O'Reilly and myself carried out some experiments with it, and we found that a charge of gelignite placed between a strong thick wall and a securely buttressed plank would, when fired by a length of fuse and a detonator, breach the wall. To do this properly it was necessary to drive wooden stakes into the ground so as to ensure that the props and supports were sufficiently staunch to hold the plank in position when the charge exploded. Later I will refer to an occasion when the substitution of iron pins for wooden stakes led perhaps to our failure to capture an R.I.C. barracks.

In July, 1918, Ned O'Reilly, Philip Fitzgerald, Michael Lacey, Patrick O'Keefe and myself were cycling from a Gaelic League meeting in Drumbane. We were held up by a military patrol and questioned. We gave our names in Irish, which, of course, the British officer could not understand. We were then arrested and taken to the military camp near Drumbane. Later we were charged with an offence against D.O.R.A. (Defence of the Realm Act) and sentenced to a month's imprisonment, which we served in Limerick Jail.

In October, 1918, the 3rd Tipperary Brigade, was formed at a meeting of battalion officers of all the battalions which had then been formed in South County Tipperary. This meeting was held in an upstairs room in Moloney's chemist shop in Tipperary Town, and Dick Mulcahy, then Chief of Staff of the Irish Volunteers, presided. When the meeting was asked for proposals for the position of Brigade Commandant I had no hesitation in proposing Seumas Robinson. It is quite possible that many, even a majority, of those present did not then know Seumas, who was at the time serving a term of imprisonment in Belfast Jail. I pointed out that he, having fought in the Rising of 1916,

had practical experience of fighting which the remainder of us lacked, and I referred to the amount of organising and training work which he had done since he came amongst us almost two years before. My proposal was seconded by the late Tommy Donovan of Drangan, who was Commandant of the 7th Battalion and who was killed by British forces at Killenaule in March, 1921. As far as I can recall, Seumas was elected unanimously. I certainly cannot remember any other name being proposed. The other brigade officers elected at that meeting were: Brigade Vice Commandant, Seán Treacy, Solohead; Brigade Adjutant, Maurice Crowe, Glenbane; Brigade Quartermaster, Dan Breen (now T.D.).

In the following month, November, 1918, I was present at a battalion council meeting which was being held at Sheehan's of Dundrum, when some local Volunteers reported that two British soldiers were drinking in a publichouse in the village and that one of them had a rifle with him. They (the soldiers) belonged to a half company of troops encamped guarding a railway bridge nearby. I dismissed the meeting and, with P. English, M. Davern and W. O'Dwyer, waited on the road by which the soldiers would probably return to their camp. We intercepted them and took the rifle. A wrong man was subsequently identified by the soldiers and he served twelve months in jail for the incident.

The next incident of note to which I will refer is the ambush at Soloheadbeg which took place on January 21st 1919 and in which two R.I.C. men were shot dead and a large quantity of explosives were captured. I cannot recall being present at any prior meeting at which plans and arrangements for the ambush were made, but my



instructions were clear and simple, and they were - that each day until the ambush took place I was to send a picked man from my battalion to the ambush position. For about a week I sent a man and on the day the ambush took place two men from my battalion were present. They were: Patrick O'Dwyer, Captain of the Hollyford Company, and Patrick McCormack, an Irish teacher and a neighbour of mine. McCormack, on his return, gave us the news of what had happened, of how the two policemen had been killed and of how the gelignite had been captured. I have an idea that Seumas Robinson came back to my area that evening too. He may have come with McCormack, but I have a recollection of getting him fixed up for the night at a local house, as it would be too dangerous for him to come to my own house on account of the likelihood of police raids.

There was intense police and military activity in the area after the Soloheadbeg ambush and I was again arrested. This time, from some captured documents, the police had discovered my rank and I was taken to Cork, where I was charged before a military court with being a member of an illegal organisation. I was sentenced to twelve months' imprisonment. I only did about half of this sentence, for in September, 1919, on the recommendation of the prison medical doctor, I was released on the grounds of ill health. I had spent most of my time in Cork prison in solitary confinement, and this must have had an adverse effect on my health. At least, it appeared to the doctor that way or he would not have recommended my release.

The gelignite which was captured at Soloheadbeg lay where it was planted on the day of the ambush for approximately 9 months, i.e. from January until October, 1919.

Owing to the continuous police and military activity in the district it could not be removed, and the wonder was that in all their searching that they never found it. Then in October, 1919, Tom Carew and 6 members of his ('B') Company, viz. D. Carew, M. Ryan, J. and P. Quinlan, M. Taylor and J. Mahony, brought it to Goldengarden, where it was handed over to Ned O'Reilly and D. O'Keefe, who transported it to Corhue. Here the Battalion Quartermaster, John C. Ryan, took charge of it and transferred portion of it to members of the 2nd (Cashel) Battalion. I cycled ahead of the 2nd Battalion men when they were on their way back with their portion of the gelignite, and at Ballagh school I spotted a patrol of R.I.C. men. I was, however, sufficiently ahead to be able to turn back and get the Cashel men away by another route.

Towards the end of 1919 Seumas Robinson, Seán Treacy, Dan Breen and Seán Hogan were in Dublin. Treacy, before going to Dublin, told me that when coming back they would travel by the night mail train and get off at Gooldscross railway station, and we arranged that he would send me a telegram to let me know when they were coming. A few days before Christmas, 1919, I received a telegram handed in at Dublin saying "Six tons of basic slag on train". I knew it was from Treacy and that they were coming that night, for we had arranged that the telegram would be about farm manure. My watch was slow that night and I was still almost a quarter of a mile from Gooldscross station when I heard the train pulling in. A scout had just reported that a patrol of R.I.C. men were at the entrance to the station. I decided to make a dash for the station in the hope that they (Robinson, Treacy, Breen and Hogan) might not be in a hurry leaving their carriage

and that I would reach them before they came out the entrance and walked into the arms of the police patrol. I met them as they came up the steps from the platform, warned them of the position and got them to leave the station by the yard entrance. They were, however, spotted by the patrol, who called on them to "halt" and an exchange of shots then took place between the patrol and the four wanted men, without inflicting casualties on either side. Ned O'Reilly, who was with me, and myself were both unarmed.

In January, 1920, Drumbane R.I.C. barracks was attacked by units of the Mid Tipperary Brigade assisted by four men from 'C' or Hollyford Company of my battalion. The four men from Hollyford who took part in that attack were: James (Jim) Gorman, Paddy O'Dwyer, J. Fitzpatrick and P. Ryan. Gorman, who was an ex Australian soldier, had fought in the 1914-1918 Great War and was 1st Lieutenant of his company. As far as I know, Drumbane was the first barrack attack in which he took part, but from then onwards there was scarcely a barrack attack in any of the three Tipperary brigades at which he was not present. He also lent a hand to our neighbouring battalion of the East Limerick Brigade, and by the autumn of 1920 he was looked upon as an expert or authority on barrack attacks. He is now living in the U.S.A.

On the night of March 7th, 1920, with nineteen members of the battalion, including the Adjutant and Quartermaster, Ned O'Reilly and Jim Gorman, I assisted the neighbouring battalion of the East Limerick Brigade in an unsuccessful attack on Doon R.I.C. barracks. Sometime before, "Yank" McCarthy, Commandant of that battalion,

who had heard of the experiments which Ned O'Reilly and myself had carried out with the gelignite and to which I have already referred, asked me if we would blow a breach in the gable wall of Doon R.I.C. barracks which he proposed to attack. It was agreed to make the operation a joint one, but as Doon was in the Limerick Brigade area it was decided that the Limerick men would take charge of it. The idea was to capture the barracks by blowing a breach in the gable wall and then to rush a party of men specially detailed for the job through the breach and into the barracks. We had at that time not thought of, or heard of, the technique of attacking barracks via the roof.

My task was, principally concerned with the setting and exploding of the gelignite charges. I brought the gelignite with me. It was snowing that night and we had no difficulty in moving into position. All roads leading to Doon were blocked and the rifle and shotgun men moved silently into their posts. Their instructions were not to open fire until Ned O'Reilly and myself had fired the fuses and got back under cover, or unless the police discovered our presence and made a sortie out of the barracks. There were no windows, only loopholes, in the gable wall, which we reached unobserved. We got three charges of gelignite supported by planks and props against the wall, but, instead of wooden stakes, iron pins made by a local blacksmith had been provided to secure the props and to give the planks the necessary resistance. As the ground was hard, the iron pins were considered at least as good for the job as the stakes, and they could be more easily and quickly driven into the ground. This proved to be a mistake, for as we drove the pins we discovered that the ground was hard to a depth of only about three inches

and soft underneath. This made me very doubtful about the success of the job, but as there was then no time to go look for wooden stakes there was nothing for it only to chance it.

All three charges exploded but, as I feared, the iron pins failed to hold the props of the planks and the gelignite blew outwards, causing little damage to the wall. The shotgunmen and riflemen opened fire, which was returned by the police garrison, but knowing that our failure to breach the wall rendered our chance of taking the barracks hopeless, we called off the attack after a short time.

At this time we had in the battalion a good share of arms, including rifles, ammunition and grenades, which we received from the brigade during the early months of 1920. Still in March, 1920, Ned O'Reilly and myself planned an ambush of British military from Thurles at a place called Rathcannon on the road between Thurles and Clonoulty. We cut a wide deep trench in the road and lightly covered it over with light wattles, canvas and sand. A large tree some short distance away on the Thurles side of the trench was almost cut through and held in position by ropes, ready to be dropped behind the lorries when they entered the ambush position. I considered the position a very suitable one for an ambush as we were able to place men armed with either rifles, shotguns or grenades in commanding positions at both sides of the road. The strength of our party at the ambush position was 26, made up of 2 men from 'A' Company, 3 men from 'B' Company, 4 men (including Jim Gorman) from 'C' Company, 14 men from 'D' Company, the Battalion Adjutant, Ned O'Reilly, and myself. To draw out the military from Thurles a feint

attack on Clonoulty police barracks was made by the Battalion Quartermaster and five other men. The firing at Clonoulty lasted for about two hours, during which a police sergeant was wounded. The police there sent up Verey lights for assistance, but when the military lorries we were expecting did not come we withdrew from the position at daylight next morning.

On the 9th May, 1920, Ned O'Reilly and four men from 'D' Company attacked an R.I.C. patrol on the road between Clonoulty and Gooldscross. In this engagement an R.I.C. sergeant was shot dead and his revolver captured. Our men suffered no casualties.

The attack on Hollyford R.I.C. barracks took place on the night of May 12th, 1920. Ernie O'Malley (from G.H.Q.), Seumas Robinson, Seán Treacy and Seán Hogan had spent the few days and nights previously with me in my area, and I am almost certain that it was while at O'Keefe's of Glenough that we decided to attack Hollyford barracks and made the plans to carry it out.

The barracks was a long two-storied building standing aloof from any of the other houses in the village. It was garrisoned by about 12 R.I.C. men and its windows were steel shuttered and loopholed. There was no house near enough to it which we could possibly occupy as a key point of attack and from which the roof of the barracks could be set on fire. After a long discussion it was decided to use ladders to gain access to the roof and I was appointed to take charge of the arrangements for the procuring of the ladders and for the hoisting of them against the barrack wall. In this connection I should like to mention that the walls were about 30 feet high and a ladder

long enough for the job could not be got locally, so I arranged with a tradesman to splice three or four ladders together and this gave us one of sufficient height. Meanwhile, arrangements were made for the blocking of all roads leading to Hollyford and for manning the road blocks. Practically all members of the battalion who were not actually engaged in Hollyford were on this work, and we also got some assistance from other areas. Brian Shanahan, Commandant of the 4th Battalion, with some of his men held a post on the road between Tipperary Town and Hollyford, while men from Tipperary No. 3 Brigade held the road from Hollyford to Thurles.

At Shanahan's farmhouse, about a mile from Hollyford, the final arrangements were made on the day of the attack. Mud bombs were made and, as the gelignite was frozen, it gave us severe headaches as we thawed it out. Here, too, I and my section rehearsed the carrying and hoisting of the ladder. This was necessary as we needed to be able to do it quickly and noiselessly when it came to erecting it against the barrack. It was a tricky and delicate job. That night a supply of paraffin oil and inflammable materials were deposited in the creamery, which was located about 80 yards from the barracks, and men were detailed to draw the oil in buckets from the creamery as it was required.

The attack started about midnight. Riflemen had then taken up positions on all four sides of the barracks. In our bare feet we approached the barrack with the ladder and got it into position at the first attempt. While we held it, Seumas Robinson and Ernie O'Malley, carrying the equipment they required on their backs, climbed the ladder and got on to the roof. Our men then opened a slow steady

fire on the windows and door of the barracks, to which the police replied with rifle fire and rifle grenades. At intervals they also fired Verey lights.

The success of the attack depended mainly on the efforts of O'Malley and Robinson to get the barracks burning and thus to force the garrison to surrender. It will be appreciated that their task on the roof was a difficult and unenviable one. To a certain extent things did go according to plan. After a time they succeeded in breaking some of the slates and getting the roof timbers and ceilings burning. The police then took refuge in a small room which was separated by a thick dividing wall from the main portion of the barracks. All efforts to set this portion on fire and untenable failed. It was here that the garrison held out.

By 7 a.m. things had reached a stalemate. The position was that it looked as if we could not dislodge them, and with the coming of daylight and the hope of the early arrival of reinforcements the police were not likely to surrender. The Brigade O/C then called off the attack. Victory was, however, to be ours before nightfall, for in the afternoon British forces who came to Hollyford evacuated the R.I.C., and men from the local company then demolished what remained of the barrack. The withdrawal of the R.I.C. from Hollyford was a big advantage to us, for it gave us a great stretch of open country without any enemy post in it.

Excluding those engaged on road blocking and scouting duties, 63 men from my battalion, together with the



battalion staff, took part in that attack on Hollyford barracks. 'A' Company was represented by 12 men, 'B' Company by 18 men, 'C' (the local) Company by 24 men, and 'D' Company by 9 men. Those not required for the firing parties around the barracks were engaged on such duties as holding the ladder in position, drawing oil in buckets from the creamery and carrying the buckets of oil up the ladder to Robinson and O'Malley on the roof. Neither sides had any casualties that night.

On the 28th May, 1920, Jim Gorman and Paddy Costelloe, both of 'C' Company, went to Kilmallock and assisted the East Limerick Brigade men in the attack on the barracks there. The R.I.C. barracks at Drangan and Cappawhite were attacked on the same night, i.e. the night of June 4th, 1920. Members of my battalion took part in both attacks, and William Dwyer, Captain of 'A' Company, was wounded in the wrist at Drangan. At Cappawhite the attack on the barracks was well under way when reinforcements of British military arrived for the R.I.C. from Tipperary Town. The attack had to be called off and a running fight with the military ensued. There were 18 men from 'B' Company and 23 men from 'C' Company engaged at Cappawhite, but as I was not present myself at either Drangan or Cappawhite I regret I am unable to give a witness's account of what happened at either place.

The next engagement in which my battalion was concerned was the attack on Rearcross R.I.C. barracks which took place on Sunday night, July 12th, 1920. Including myself and Ned O'Reilly, who was then the Battalion Vice Commandant, 43 men from my battalion

travelled to Rearcross for the attack. I think it was from Hollyford we started, and we were accompanied by two Brigade Officers, Seán Treacy and Dan Breen. Rearcross was situated in Tipperary No. 1 Brigade area and the plans for the attack were prepared by the local Battalion Commandant. They were much on the same lines as for the attack on Hollyford except that ladders were not required, as access to the roof of the barracks could be got by occupying Flannery's shop next door. It was the intention at first to attack on Saturday night, but for some reason or other the local officers decided to postpone it until Sunday night. Ernie O'Malley was also there. I am not altogether sure whether he came with us from Hollyford or whether we met him at Rearcross.

My position on the night of the attack was with a party of 12 men under the command of Dan Breen. We occupied a position quite near to Rearcross on the Rearcross-Newport road. For some inexplicable reason this road had not been blocked, although it was the road by which reinforcements for the R.I.C. garrison were most likely to come. We blocked the road with a wall of sods and earth, loopholed it and remained on guard there all night. Runners kept us informed of the progress of the attack. O'Malley, Jim O'Gorman and another man from my battalion named Jack Carty had got on to the barrack roof from the roof of Flannery's shop and had got it burning. As the night wore on and dawn broke, the reports were not so favourable and it looked as if the garrison would hold out. The attack, which commenced about 11 p.m. on the Sunday night, was called off between 8 and 9 a.m. next morning. During the night a sergeant of the R.I.C. was shot dead by

two riflemen from the Hollyford Company when he opened the barrack door and came out to fire at the men on the roof. The only casualty on our side of which I am aware was Seán Treacy, who received a slight wound from a splinter of a grenade. From Rearcross we marched back across country to Hollyford.

About this time a brigade order was issued to Battalion Commandants instructing them to remain in their own areas and not to travel with parties going to assist in operations outside their battalion area, the idea being that the Battalion Commandant could be contacted at all times at short notice and then again the administrative work of the battalion had to be attended to. Dispatches were sent daily to the Brigade Headquarters at Rosegreen. Each company in turn supplied a man daily to act as dispatch carrier.

In August, 1920, on brigade instructions I sent a picked party of eight riflemen to take part in a proposed attack on Clerihan R.I.C. barracks in the 1st Battalion area. The men were actually in position when the operation was called off. In August, too, Ned O'Reilly, Jim O'Gorman and Jack Ryan (Jack the Master) took part in an ambush of a British military lorry at Cola in the 4th Battalion area. The interesting point about this ambush is that General Lucas, who had been captured by the I.R.A. near Fermoy, was in the lorry, having been picked up by it after his escape in Co. Limerick. About this time, too, a Battalion Active Service Unit, with Ned O'Reilly in charge, was formed. During this period (August and September, 1920) the A.S.U., supported by battalion and company officers and men, occupied ambush

positions at Ballinahinch, Killenure, Corras, Ballinure, Inch, Shaughavalle and Corhue without result. The expected enemy forces did not come.

Late on the evening of September 28th, 1920, I received information through the Battalion Intelligence Officer that a mixed party of military and police from Dundrum were to raid the residence of James Carew (father of Tom Carew, the Brigade Intelligence Officer) at Goldengarden early next morning. A hurried mobilisation of all available men took place, our idea being to attack the enemy force on its way back to Dundrum after the raid. The difficulty here was that the British forces had a choice of three routes, by either of two roads or along the railway line. We occupied a central position with our main party and placed scouts in positions from which they could communicate with us by signal. When the final signal came it showed that the enemy had selected the most unlikely route - by the railway line - for their return. We were about 300 yards from the railway line and had to rush across fields and fences to get there. When we reached the embankment overlooking the railway line the police and military were passing along in extended formation. We opened fire immediately and an exchange of shots lasting about half an hour took place. The officer in charge of the military and two or three privates were wounded. As a reprisal British military from Cashel burned the residence of Eamon Ó Duibhir at Killshinane. This was the first reprisal carried out by British forces in my area.

In October, 1920, members of my battalion took part in two engagements with the British forces in the Tipperary No. 2 Brigade area. One was at Lackamore where three policemen were shot dead, and the other was at Ross near Borrisoleigh where an armoured car drove into an ambush position which had been prepared for military lorries. The armoured car was fired on and some of its occupants were wounded. It was during this month too that the Battalion Active Service Unit under Ned O'Reilly assisted the Brigade No. 1 Flying Column under the late Denis Lacey in an ambush of British forces at Thomastown (Co. Tipperary) in the 4th Battalion area. This was, as far as I know, the first engagement which Lacey's column had with the enemy forces. Again in October, 1920, six members of 'A' Company when passing through Clonkelly near Dundrum suddenly ran into a military patrol and shots were exchanged. A British officer was wounded. Two of our men, J. Browne and J. Butler, were captured and Browne was subsequently sentenced to ten years' penal servitude. The four who escaped were: Seán O'Dwyer, D. Donovan and the late W.B. O'Dwyer and M. Purcell.

Towards the end of 1920 it became clear to us that the British forces were getting information concerning the houses and places frequented by men on the run. An ex British soldier named Thomas Kirby was suspected of spying and he was ordered to leave the area. He joined the British forces and returned to the barracks in Dundrum, from where he guided the enemy forces in their nightly prowls for wanted men. Although he disguised himself whenever he was out of the barracks with enemy parties, he was soon recognised. Then one night he ventured out alone and was followed and captured in a publichouse at

Ballybrack near Annacarty where he was drinking. He was tried by courtmartial and could give no satisfactory explanation of his movements. To the charge of spying for the enemy forces he pleaded insanity. He was sentenced to death and was executed by a firing party. Before his death we brought a priest to him, who annointed him and gave him all spiritual aid. We buried him up in the hills near Ballybrack. Kirby's execution took place on or about the 8th January, 1921.

On the 17th January, 1921, Constable R. Boyd of the R.I.C. was shot dead in Cappawhite in compliance with a general order for special activity in all areas as reprisal for the death of Terence MacSwiney, the Lord Mayor of Cork, in Brixton Prison. The shooting of Constable Boyd was carried out by four Volunteers, viz. P. English of 'B' Company, J. Fitzpatrick of 'C' Company, and J. Ryan and D. Ahearne of 'D' Company.

In February of 1921 all arrangements were completed to attack Kilcommon R.I.C. barracks. This was a big undertaking - it was expected that it could last for 24 hours or more - in which all three Tipperary brigades were co-operating. Kilcommon is situated on the Thurles-Limerick road near Newport, and I am now not sure whether it was situated in Tipperary No. 1 or No. 2 Brigade areas. For this attack I went to Kilcommon with 33 men drawn from 'A', 'B', 'C' and 'D' Companies, together with Ned O'Reilly, the Battalion Vice Commandant, Philip Fitzgerald, the Battalion Adjutant, and J.C. Ryan, the Battalion Quartermaster. Units from other battalions and brigades were present. On the night arranged for the attack the No. 1 (Denis Lacey's) column held a position at Coonmore on the

Kilcommon-Limerick road and men from Tipperary No. 2 Brigade held positions on the Kilcommon-Thurles road. Positions were taken up around the barracks, and when everything was ready to begin the attack some of our men entered the house next door to the barracks. It was then discovered that an old lady named Mrs. Ryan - the mother of one of our men, Paddy Ryan of Doon, who was 'on the run' - lay bedridden in the house. For company she had three other elderly ladies with her. I understand that arrangements had been made previously to have her removed to a friend's house in the neighbourhood, but this had not been done. A consultation took place and it was decided to remove the four women from the house. This, however, was not quite so easy. When asked to leave, the three ladies became hysterical and infuriated and old Mrs. Ryan fainted in the bed. After this it was decided to call off the attack.

In March and April, 1921, intensive road blocking was carried out and all bridges over rivers in the battalion area were demolished. This was done, as far as I can now remember, as a result of a brigade H.Q. order. During this period the enemy posts at Dundrum, Annacarty and Clonoulty were continuously sniped. As a result, Clonoulty barracks was evacuated by the R.I.C. A friendly policeman passed on the information that the barracks had been mined before it was evacuated. This made its destruction a dangerous operation. However, it was successfully carried out by the Battalion Active Service Unit. The policeman's information was proved to be correct for explosions were heard after the barracks was set on fire. Again in April, 1921, five members of 'A' Company, viz. W.B. O'Dwyer, the Company Captain,

Michael Davern, Martin Purcell, P. Maher and J. Crowe were surprised whilst crossing a road at Ballymore by two lorry loads of British military. The military opened fire and badly wounded and captured O'Dwyer. They also captured Purcell and Maher, but Davern and Crowe succeeded in making good their escape. Martin Purcell was shot dead by the British military in Tipperary military barracks a few days later.

Early in May, 1921, nine members of the Battalion Active Service Unit, with Ned O'Reilly in charge, took up an ambush position at Clore, about two miles from Dundrum. The position was not an ideal one, as the nearest cover was about 100 yards from the roadside. A cycling patrol of British military came along the road and fire was opened on it. The military returned the fire and an exchange of shots lasting for about 15 minutes took place. There were no casualties on either side.

On the 14th May, 1921, British forces came into the area in strength and blew up five farmhouses. The houses destroyed were my mother's house at Clonkelly, W. O'Reilly's (father of Ned O'Reilly) at Coolorga, James Carew's (father of Tom Carew, the Brigade Intelligence Officer) at Goldengarden, Daniel O'Keefe's at Glenough where we frequently held battalion council meetings, and Tim Ryan's of Lurraleen.

To curtail the enemy's means of communication I arranged to have all telephones in the battalion area seized on the night of May 15th, 1921. There were then very few private telephones in the area, but to put the telephone in the barracks in Dundrum out of commission



it was necessary to seize the switchboard in the exchange at Dundrum post office. Owing to the close proximity of the barracks, which was then occupied by a garrison of about 40 Black and Tans and military, to the post office it was necessary to do this job at night. To gain admittance quietly to the post office was one of our major difficulties. The Postmaster, a man named Sealy, was hostile to us and it was known that it would be very difficult to get him to answer a knock. Bill Quillinan, the Battalion Intelligence Officer, solved the problem by prevailing on his employer, a draper named Crowe in Dundrum and one of the very few men with whom the Postmaster was friendly, to call on Sealy for a chat. By this ruse we got the door opened, held up the Postmaster and seized the telephone and switchboard without attracting the notice of the garrison in the barracks.

After such a lapse of time it is difficult to remember the day-to-day happenings of the period and I cannot now recall any other incidents worth recording. From May, 1921, until the Truce on 11th July of that year our activities were centered mainly on keeping the nerves of the enemy garrisons at Annacarty and Dundrum on edge by constant sniping at their barracks. These were the only two places in my battalion area then held by the British forces. Both were strongly garrisoned and fortified by steel shutters, barbed wire and sandbags, and the garrisons only moved out in large convoys protected by armoured cars.

Signed:

Tadhg Dwyer

(Tadhg Dwyer)

Date:

23<sup>rd</sup> February 1956

23rd February 1956

Witness:

J. Grace (J. Grace)  
(Investigator)

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

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