

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21  
BURO STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21  
No. W.S. 1621

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21

STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 1621.

Witness

Con Flynn,  
Kildarragh,  
Bandon,  
Co. Cork.

Identity.

Member of Brigade Column, Cork 111 Brigade, I.R.A.  
2nd Lieut., Ballinadee Coy., Bandon Battalion,  
Cork 111 Bgde., I.R.A.

Subject.

Ballinadee Coy., Bandon Battn., Cork 111 Bgde. I.R.A.  
and Brigade Flying Column, 1915 - 21.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil.

File No S. 2939.

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No. W.S. 1621

STATEMENT BY CORNELIUS FLYNN,

Kildarragh, Bandon, Co. Cork.

I was born in Ballinadee on January 12th 1900.

I was educated at the local national school until I reached the age of 14, when I went to work with William O'Driscoll, Kildarragh, who was a horse dealer. I travelled all over the country with my employer, who was then purchasing horses for the British Government.

I joined the Irish Volunteers in Ballinadee in the spring of 1915. Being considered too young, I was one of about ten boys of my own age who were organised into the Ballinadee unit of Fianna Éireann. Other members of this unit were: Richard Twomey (scout master), Patk. O'Brien, Michael Flynn (brother), Denis Donoghue, Patk. McCarthy, James Crowley, Frank Brennan, John Barrett, Jerh. O'Neill. Our sluagh was associated with and acted in co-operation with the local company of the Irish Volunteers (Ballinadee). As far as I can recollect, this was the first company of the Irish Volunteers formed in West Cork. The officers were: -

O/C - Tom Hales  
1st Lt. - David Collins  
2nd Lt. - Cannot recollect.

The four section commanders were: - Dan Griffin, James Barrett, Jack Corkery, and Con Donoghue. The strength in the early stages was about 30, but it increased to about 60 in the autumn of 1915.

The only type of training carried on was close order foot drill in the fields in the district, but occasionally the company went on route marches to neighbouring areas on Sunday evenings.

The arms held by the company in the autumn of 1915 consisted of 12 Mauser rifles with 12 rounds for each, and, I think, 3 Lee Enfield rifles. In addition, there were a number of shotguns. The Mauser rifles and ammunition were received when the company paraded at Innishannon to meet Terry MacSwiney and some other Volunteer officers from Cork City. The Lee Enfields were procured as follows: -

- (a) one by Tom Hales from Terry MacSwiney;
- (b) one by a ruse from a member of The South Irish Horse who was home on leave from his unit in the area;
- (c) I cannot recollect the circumstances in which the third rifle became available.

Training in close order drill and route marches continued throughout 1915. On one occasion the company paraded in Kilbrittain where a recruiting meeting for the British army was being held with Lord Bandon as principal speaker. The company, armed with rifles, shotguns and croppy pikes, marched through the meeting and broke it up despite the efforts of the R.I.C. to prevent them. The parade on this occasion was in charge of David Collins (1st Lieut.), who was now forced to go "on the run".

A contingent of eight or ten men from the Ballinadee Company travelled to Dublin to O'Donovan Rossa's funeral in August, 1915.

At a parade of Ballinadee Company on Palm Sunday, 1916, Tom Hales announced that the company was now a unit of the Irish Republican Army under the command of G.H.Q. staff, and that in future all orders would be transmitted direct from H.Q. He had, I think, been appointed O/C Bandon district where, in addition to Ballinadee, there were now a few skeleton units here and there. The strength of the company at this parade was about 90 - a big percentage of them being

from Kilbrittain area where a unit had not been organised at this time. Before this parade was dismissed, the date of the next parade was fixed for Easter Sunday 1916.

On Easter Sunday morning, the company, to the number of about 65, assembled at Brown's Cross on the road to Bandon about 7 a.m. They were armed with rifles, shotguns and some croppy pikes. They marched to Macroom, where they met men from Cork City and from the other companies in the area. When the parade in Macroom was dismissed, the Ballinadee Company returned to Crookstown, where they remained until next day. They returned through Bandon on Easter Monday. As far as I can recollect, Tom Hales was in charge of this parade - on which all who took part provided two days' rations and cooking utensils. The company (Ballinadee), on its return to the home area, was ordered to 'stand to' and await further orders. <sup>No</sup> The further orders were received during Easter Week as far as I can recollect. I did not take part in the march to Macroom but was in touch with the men who did when they returned.

The company assembled at Rathrought on the Sunday after Easter, 1916, and, as was usual, the parade was under the watchful eyes of the R.I.C. - on this occasion Sergt. Crean. A member of the company, whose name I cannot recollect, reported that he had seen Sergt. Crean get a letter from a motor cyclist on the road outside Ballinadee village. It was then decided to search the sergeant, so Jack Corkery and Edward Barrett were ordered to hold him up and do the job. They carried out the O/C's instructions but nothing was found on the R.I.C. man. However, the men who held him up were marked men ever afterwards.

A strong force of British military, accompanied by some members of the R.I.C., moved into Ballinadee area on the first

Tuesday in May, 1916. They surrounded the home of Tom Hales in the early morning and took the following Volunteers, who were in the house, as prisoners: - Bob Hales, Wm. Hales, Terry MacSwiney, Paddy Hyde, Seán Hyde, John Roche. The raiding force seized all the arms held in the house, but I cannot recollect what arms were taken. The homes of the leading members of the company in Rathrough area, including Donoghue's (where Tom Hales was staying), Collins's, McCarthy's, and the home of Jas. J. Walsh, were also raided. The first house raided in this area was Collins's, where the raiders fired on a Volunteer who resided there but who escaped. While the search was in progress at this house, Collins's sister went to Donoghue's and warned them of the raid. As a result, Tom Hales and other wanted men escaped. When Donoghue's was searched, the enemy raiders got two rifles and a service revolver. Tom Hales, Denis Donoghue, and Jack Corkery now crossed the Bandon river and left the area, remaining 'on the run' until the prisoners were released at Christmas, 1916. In the absence of the officers in the intervening period, Ballinadee Company became disorganised, and when the British demanded the surrender of the arms held by the Volunteers, four rifles and a number of shotguns were handed up.

When the Volunteers were reorganised in the summer of 1917, the strength of Ballinadee Company was about 60. Beyond normal training and organising, there was very little activity up to February, 1918. About this time I was a member of a section of the company (to the number of about eight) under Tom Hales which went to Snugmore in the Kinsale area to reinstate a tenant who had been evicted during the Land War from his farm. When we got to Snugmore we found present representatives from Ballinhassig, Kinsale and other companies in the area. We were informed that the house on the farm

was occupied by a force of R.I.C. Plans were made to surround the building and to attempt to capture the garrison and, of course, their arms. We were armed only with sticks and hurleys. While we were being moved into position, one of the R.I.C. men left the house and endeavoured to make his way into Kinsale. He was captured and disarmed - a carbine being taken from him. While the attempt was being made to capture the R.I.C. party, the work of ploughing the farm went on. Eventually, when the house was approached, it was found that the R.I.C. party had withdrawn - apparently while we had been concentrating on the capture of the man who had left the house in the first instance. The ploughing was now finished and the men set about loading up their ploughs, so the Volunteers set out for their own areas. We had only left the farm when the R.I.C. garrison who had escaped returned from Kinsale with reinforcements and arrested three of the men who had been engaged on the work of ploughing.

It was about this time that the Volunteer organisation in the district was organised on a battalion basis. There were now companies in Ballinadee, Bandon, Kilbrittain, Innishannon, Clogagh, Crosspound, Farnivane, and Newcestown. These were now organised into Bandon Battalion, Cork Brigade. As far as I can recollect, the first officers of this battalion were: -

O/C - Tom Hales  
 Vice O/C - Hugh Thornton  
 Adj. - Liam Deasy  
 Q/M - Tadhg O'Sullivan.

The threat of the British to enforce conscription in Ireland in the spring of 1918 led to an increase in the membership of the Ballinadee Company. The strength now reached to about 100. The majority of the newcomers continued to serve in the Volunteers when the conscription scare had

passed. At this period we were engaged in making buckshot, refilling cartridges, making bayonets for shotguns, and raiding for any available arms which were not already in the hands of the Volunteers. About 30 shotguns were captured in those raids, which were usually carried out by 3 or 4 men in each case. In addition to these duties and normal training, the members of the company helped (1) to organise the general public, (2) collect the anti-conscription fund, (3) obtain signatures for the anti-conscription pledge.

In March, 1918, a by-election took place in Waterford City in which the candidates were Major Wm. Redmond (Irish Parliamentary Party) and Dr. Vincent White (Sinn Féin). The supporters of Redmond included a strong percentage of ex-British soldiers as well as their wives and families. These people were violently anti-Sinn Féin and intimidation of Sinn Féin election workers was rife in the city. As polling day approached it was decided to bring in Volunteers from outside brigades to protect the workers (Sinn Féin) and their supporters. In this connection, a party of about twelve men from Ballinadee Company went to Waterford on protection duty. I cannot remember the names of those who travelled.

The next operation in which the company (Ballinadee) was represented took place at Kilmacsimon Quay in April, 1918. A collier - "The Old Head" - was moored at the Quay. It was armed with a 4" gun and carried a supply of ammunition for same. It was learned that there was also a rifle and a stock of suitable ammunition on board. The possibility of capturing the gun was discussed by the officers of the company, but no action was taken. I now learned, on a Sunday evening, that the boat was due to sail on Monday. Feeling that some effort should be made to capture at least

the rifle and ammunition, I arranged, in conjunction with Paddy Brien and my brother, Michael Flynn, to raid the boat. As it was necessary to obtain the permission of my officers to carry out the raid, I approached my O/C (Seán Hales). He gave me permission, so with Patrick Brien, Michael Flynn, and Bill Hales I proceeded in the direction of Kilmacsimon Quay. On the way we met Jack Corkery and Denis Crowley, who agreed to join us. We carried two revolvers - both ineffective. One was carried by Bill Hales and the second by Patk. Brien. When we reached Kilmacsimon Quay about 10.30 p.m. we boarded the boat and held up the two gunners - members of the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve - who were the only members of the crew on board. I then smashed open the magazine, where I found the rifle and about 2,000 rounds of ammunition. In addition, the magazine contained a big stock of shells for the 4" gun, but as we had no means of transporting them we had to leave them behind. We took the rifle and ammunition and withdrew to our homes. I dumped our capture in a fence close to my home.

As far as I can recollect, it was in May, 1918, that a force of R.I.C. raided the home of the Hales family and endeavoured to arrest Seán Hales. He was in bed when the raiding party entered the bedroom, but despite the best efforts of four R.I.C. men they failed to get him out of bed. Eventually two of the raiding party threw down their rifles and left the room, later marching into Bandon barracks and resigning from the force. When this pair had gone, Seán Hales jumped the other members of the R.I.C. party and, after a struggle, escaped. Following this incident, enemy activity was intensified and raids on the homes of Volunteers were a regular feature in the district.

Normal training continued throughout the remainder of 1918. Towards the end of the year we were all working for



Sinn Féin in anticipation of a contest in the area in the general election which was to be held in December. There was no contest in our area as the Sinn Féin candidate was returned unopposed. However, the company (Ballinadee) again sent a quota of about a dozen men to Waterford City where the Redmondite party were contesting the election.

There was no exceptional activity during the year 1919. Training at this time was become more advanced. Men were being trained in the use of arms, scouting, and the use of cover at week-end manoeuvres in which two or three neighbouring companies took part. These gatherings were usually held under the supervision of some officers from the Battalion Staff.

Early in 1919 Cork Brigade was divided into three separate brigades, and our battalion (Bandon) became a unit of Cork 111 Brigade (West Cork). The battalions in this brigade were: - Bandon (1st), Clonakilty (2nd), Dunmanway (3rd), Skibbereen (4th), Bantry (5th), and Castletownbere (6th). The officers of the brigade, as far as I can recollect, were: -

O/C - Tom Hales  
 Vice O/C - Cannot recollect  
 Adjt. - Liam Deasy  
 Q/M - Pat Harte.

During the summer of 1919 all Volunteers were engaged in organising and collecting for the first Dáil Éireann Loan.

At this stage the Volunteers, who up to now had been controlled by an executive elected by themselves, came under the control of Dáil Éireann and all members took an oath to support and defend the Irish Republic and the Government of the Irish Republic, which was Dáil Éireann, against all enemies foreign and domestic. We now became the official defence force of the Irish Republic and were known henceforth as the I.R.A. (Irish Republican Army).

Military activities became more intensified as 1920 advanced. Towards the end of February in this year, the R.I.C. barracks at Timoleague was attacked by a force drawn from Ballinadee, Timoleague, Kilbrittain, Barryroe, Clogagh, and Ballinspittal Companies. The combined force was in charge of Seán Hales (O/C Bandon Battalion). The strength of the Ballinadee representation was about 12. Some of these were: - Patk. O'Brien, Tim Crowley, Jack Corkery, Dan Hogan, Jas. Barrett, Tim Coughlan, Jerh. Crowley, Jack O'Donoghue, Denis O'Donoghue, Con O'Donoghue, and Con Flynn (witness). This party assembled at Cros na Leanbh Cross and moved across country to O'Neill's, Ardcrow, where we met the men from Kilbrittain. The combined force now continued across country to within a half mile of Timoleague village, where we made contact with the remainder of the attacking party and the O/C (Seán Hales).

The R.I.C. barracks was a building standing on its own with a laneway at one gable end. It was proposed to place a mine, which had already been prepared, against the gable end. It was expected that the explosion of the mine would breach the gable end, and a main attacking party was standing by to rush the breach. Sections were now allocated to positions covering the barrack and to outpost duty. While the mine was being placed in position, a bomb was dropped through a loophole in the gable wall. This loophole was not visible from outside as the wall had been holed from the inside, leaving the external plaster unbroken until the garrison desired to push something through. One of the mine laying party was slightly wounded, but the work of laying the mine continued and the fuses were lighted. While this work was proceeding, a covering party in position in houses opposite the barrack opened fire on the building.

The mine failed to explode. The mine laying section now withdrew and, having loaded a cart with hay, pushed it to the gable. They then set the hay on fire in the hope that it would explode the mine. This was again ineffective and the load of burning hay was now pushed to the door of the barrack with no better result. While these operations were in progress, the covering parties surrounding the building kept up an intermittent fire. Eventually, after about 2 hours, the operation was called off and all units were instructed to return to their home areas. On this occasion I was a member of the covering party which was in position in the houses directly opposite the front of the barrack. Other members of this party were? - Jack Fitzgerald, Con Crowley, and another whose name I cannot recollect. We were all armed with rifles and took up positions just prior to the opening of the attack about midnight on, I think, February 25th 1920.

At Easter, 1920, I took part with other men from Ballinadee, Ballinspittal and Kilbrittain in the destruction of the evacuated R.I.C. barracks in Ballinspittal. Between men on outpost duty, blocking roads, and the main demolition party, there were approximately 70 men engaged in this operation. The strength of the Ballinadee representation was about 30. The necessity for the engagement of such a large force was due to the fact that the building had to be destroyed by a crow-bar brigade - being taken asunder stone by stone.

When the second attack on Howes Strand Coastguard Station, which was carried out mainly by men from Kilbrittain Company, took place on July 22nd 1920, Ballinadee Company was represented in the operation by a section of six men. Some of the Ballinadee men who took part were: - John Barrett, James Barrett, and Tim Crowley.

The Brigade O/C (Tom Hales) and Brigade Q/M (Pat Harte) were taken prisoners by a force of military towards the end of July, 1920. These arrests led to some changes in the Brigade Staff, which now became: -

O/C - Charlie Hurley (late Vice O/C Bandon Battn.)  
 Vice O/C - Ted O'Sullivan (late O/C Bantry Battn.)  
 Adj't. - Liam Deasy  
 Q/M - Dick Barrett.

Towards the end of August, 1920, representatives from the companies of the Bandon Battalion on the southern side of the Bandon river - Barryroe, Timoleague, Ballinadee, Kilbrittain, Ballinspittal, Clogagh - were mobilised at Gaggin, about six miles from Bandon, on the main Bandon-Clonakilty road on a Saturday morning. Mick O'Neill was, I think, in charge. The strength of the muster was about twenty. We were all armed with rifles and took up positions behind the roadside fence. We remained in position all day, but there was no enemy activity in the area so all returned to their home areas on Sunday morning. The representatives from Ballinadee were Dan Hogan and myself.

Early in October, 1920, after the first training camp at Clonbuig in Kilbrittain area. I was one of a party which travelled to Dunmanway district where we took up a position at Fanlobbus, about 3 miles from Dunmanway on the main Dunmanway-Bandon road. The strength of the party was about fifty and was representative of all companies in the Bandon Battalion. Charlie Hurley and Liam Deasy were in charge, while Seán Hales was also present. Although we remained in position all day, the expected enemy convoy did not put in an appearance. We withdrew from the position about 4 p.m. and moved into billets in the area.

We remained in the same district until Saturday evening, when the men from Ballinadee, Ballinspittal,

Kilbrittain, Newcestown, Crosspound, Kilpatrick and Bandon units under Seán Hales (O/C Bandon Battn.) travelled back to Newcestown, where we arrived between 9 and 10 p.m. We divided up and went for refreshments in two farmers' houses (Corcoran's and Lordan's). Seán Hales (O/C) and Jim O'Mahoney (Adjnt.) went into Newcestown village. They had only entered a shop in the village when two lorries of British military pulled into the village square. The military entered the shop in which Seán Hales and Jim O'Mahoney were but did not take any notice of them. Immediately the enemy troops had left for their lorries, Seán Hales and O'Mahoney dashed back to Corcoran's where I was having tea with about nine or ten others. Our party and that at Lordan's were mobilised immediately and we moved at the double back towards Newcestown. Before we got within half a mile of the village we saw the lights of the lorries approaching. We were instructed to halt and take cover. All sections took up positions behind the roadside fence and were extended over a distance of about 100 yards. When the leading lorry had entered the ambush position, fire was opened on it by the men nearest the end at which it entered. The lorry ran along for a short distance and collided with the fence immediately outside the spot where I was in position with Jackie O'Neill and Con Lehane. We opened fire on this lorry at point blank range and there was considerable confusion amongst the occupants. All who had not been wounded by the opening burst of fire hurled themselves from the lorry. The second lorry was unable to pass and came under fire in the centre of the position. After an exchange of shots lasting about twenty minutes, our force withdrew as there was no hope of concluding the engagement satisfactorily in the darkness. The enemy casualties were, I think, one officer killed and several other ranks wounded. The I.R.A. had no casualties.

The men who took part in the above described attack at Newcestown on October 10th 1920 reassembled at Greenhill in Newcestown area, where we remained throughout the next day (Sunday) and well into Sunday night, as we expected the enemy forces to return to the area to take reprisal action. As they had not arrived by early Monday morning, we withdrew to Crosspound area where we were disbanded and instructed to return to our home districts.

When the column formed after the second Brigade Training Camp at Ballymurphy engaged a strong enemy convoy at Toureen on the main Cork-Bandon road on October 26th 1920, Ballinadee Company was represented by Paddy O'Brien and James Barrett. Tom Barry was in charge of the force engaged here, but the Brigade O/C (Charlie Hurley) and Brigade Adjutant (Liam Deasy) also took part.

The main duty of the members of all companies in Bandon Battalion and throughout the brigade during the months of October and November, 1920, was the collection of the arms fund levy in their own areas. This levy was being raised to supply equipment and clothing to the men in the column. The amount of the levy in the rural areas was based on the number of cattle carried on each holding.

A general parade of Ballinadee Company was held about mid-November, 1920. It was attended by Seán Hales (Battn. O/C), who informed us that a Brigade Flying Column was about to be formed. He asked for one volunteer to join this column from the company. Similar procedure was followed throughout each battalion in the brigade. On this occasion I volunteered for service with the column and was to be provided with equipment. While awaiting the provision of the necessary stores, I was approached by Patrick Deasy, who was already 'on the run'. He asked me to allow him to go in my place, stressing the

fact that he was already 'on the run'. Eventually I agreed to his request and in due course he proceeded to the assembly point fixed for the column about the 3rd week in November, 1920. He was, unfortunately, killed in the opening engagement at Kilmichael on November 28th, R.I.P. Jack Corkery, who had been away in Tipperary for a short time, replaced Pat Deasy on the column.

On the day following the attack on the Auxiliary convoy at Kilmichael on November 28th 1920, a party drawn from Ballinadee, Kilpatrick, Kilbrittain, Crosspound, Innishannon and Knockavilla Companies, to the number of about 40, took up an ambush position at Brinny on the Cork-Bandon road about 3 miles from the latter town. Liam Deasy (Bde. Adjt.) was in charge. We were armed with rifles and shotguns. We moved into position about 9 a.m., occupying a farmer's house, a cottage, and using the cover of the roadside fence. The party was extended over a distance of about 1,400 yards in four sections. We remained in position all day until nightfall, and just as we had assembled in preparation for our withdrawal our scouts to the east signalled the approach of the lorries. All sections dashed towards their old positions, but some had not reached them when four lorries entered our position. Fire was opened on the lorries as they drove through, but I don't know whether there were any enemy casualties. Amongst the men who were in this engagement were: Con Sullivan (Innishannon), Jerh. Deasy (Innishannon), Tom Kelleher (Crosspound), Frank Neville (Knockavilla), Patk. O'Brien and myself (Ballinadee).

Sometime early in December, 1920, two deserters from the British army came into Ballinadee Company area. Their presence was reported to me by Jerh. Deasy, so we decided to take them into custody. We picked them up on the road

and placed them under arrest - later handing them over to Bill Hales and Paddy O'Brien (1st Lieut. Ballinadee Company). They took them to billets in Rathrought area. One of these deserters was Peter Monahan who later joined the Brigade Column as engineer and was killed at Crossbarry on March 19th 1921. The second deserter remained in the area working with farmers and never took any active part in I.R.A. activities.

Most of the companies in Bandon Battalion were represented at the attack on Kilbrittain R.I.C. barracks on New Years Night 1921. The main attacking party assembled at Clonbuig about 10 p.m. A mine which had been made by Peter Monahan was ready here. As well as being set for detonation by electricity, this mine had been fitted with ordinary fuse and detonators. The main attacking party, to the number of about 30, moved into Kilbrittain village about midnight while the remainder of the party took up positions at roadblocks and outposts. Having reached the outskirts of the village, the members of the main attacking party removed their boots and four men in their stockinged feet, accompanied by Peter Monahan carrying an exploder, which was attached to the mine, carried the mine on a trestle up to the door of the barrack where they placed it in position. The four men who placed the mine against the door were: - Denis Manning, Jack McGrath, Jack Corkery, - Connolly. They withdrew and Peter Monahan pressed the exploder, but there was no explosion. I should have mentioned that before the party moved towards the barrack with the mine, the fuse had also been lighted, but neither method was successful in exploding the mine. With about 20 others I was awaiting the explosion in the vicinity of the barrack. We had instructions to rush the breach made by the mine if it was a success. We were armed with a mixed selection of rifles and revolvers. We also carried torches soaked in paraffin to be used in an endeavour to set fire to the building should we fail to take it otherwise. In addition to our party and



the mine laying one, a covering party was in position in some houses opposite the barrack. When the mine failed to explode, fire was opened on the building and an effort was made to explode the mine by throwing grenades, but this was also a failure. In the absence of a successful mine explosion there was no hope of capturing the barrack, so after a short exchange of fire all sections were ordered to withdraw to their home areas.

A second attempt to capture Kilbrittain R.I.C. barracks was made on January 15th 1921. The plan of attack was similar to that of New Year's Eve referred to in previous paragraph. The only difference was in the construction and placing of the mine, which on this occasion was made by filling a small suit case with explosives and suitably setting it for detonation. The case was then taken to the barrack by, I think, Con O'Sullivan (Innishannon) and - Ahearne (Kilbrittain) and placed on the barbed wire entanglement surrounding the building. I think that the mine was to be fired by a fuse which was lighted just before the mine was laid on the entanglements. Again there was no explosion, and after an exchange of shots all sections withdrew.

When the Brigade Column invaded Bandon on the night of January 24th 1921 I was laid up. The following members of Ballinadee took part in this operation - Con O'Donoghue, Bill Hales, Patk. O'Brien, Tim Crowley and Matt Healy. In addition, Jack Corkery from the company was a regular member of the column.

The next operation undertaken by the Brigade Column in co-operation with the local companies was an attack on Innishannon R.I.C. barracks on the night of January 26th 1921. The mine again failed to explode and a few shots were fired at the building. The garrison replied and sent up Verrey lights.

On this occasion our party (Ballinadee) only got to Innishannon Bridge as the engagement was being called off.

At this stage reinforcements were sought for the Brigade Column, and with Jerh. Crowley, also of Ballinadee Company, I left to join it on February 4th 1921. Acting on instructions I reported to O'Neill's, Cloundreen, where I was to pick up a message from the Brigade I/O (Seán Buckley) for the Column O/C (Tom Barry). I got the message and we proceeded to Ahiohill, where we made contact with reinforcements proceeding to the column from Crosspound, Kilpatrick, and Newcestown Companies. This party were conveying arms, ammunition and explosives to the column. We were only able to travel by night and eventually made contact with the column on the night of February 8th 1921 in Skibbereen area.

Next night we accompanied the column into Skibbereen. I was detailed to No. 1 section, of which Pete Kearney was section commander at the time. The strength of the section was about twelve. We took up a position at a road junction on the outskirts of the town to await the arrival of possible enemy reinforcements. Two sections of the column entered the town while the remainder were holding the approach roads. This operation is described in detail in Tom Barry's book "Guerilla Days in Ireland", Chapter 14. The description recorded is, as far as I can recollect, substantially correct.

Having withdrawn from Skibbereen we moved into Drimoleague area, where we billeted on the night of February 10th 1921 while arrangements were being made for an attack on the R. I. C. barracks in Drimoleague village next night. The ground was surveyed by the Column O/C (Tom Barry), who was driven into the village in a horse and trap by a member of Cumann na mBan. While he was engaged on this work, a large mine was constructed and mounted on a trestle so that it could be carried by six men into the village where it was

to be laid on the barbed wire entanglements surrounding the barrack.

Towards midnight on February 11th, sections of the column, led by local scouts, were moved into position at the rear and also across the street from the front of the building. I was a member of a section which was detailed to charge the breach in the barrack wall should the explosion be a success. This party numbered about a dozen and some members were: "Spud" Murphy, Jim Doyle, Con Lehane, - Nugent, and Con Flynn (witness). All were armed with rifles and revolvers. The mine was then carried into the village on the shoulders of Jack Corkery, John J. O'Sullivan, Tim O'Donoghue, Liam Deasy, Denis Lordan, and Seán Lehane. It was placed on the barbed wire entanglements which filled the space between the wall of the barrack wall and the boundary wall of the street, and was then pushed against the wall of the barrack. On this occasion the mine exploded but did no effective damage to the wall. As there was no breach, orders were given to open fire on the building. Intermittent fire was continued for about ten minutes, when the signal to withdraw was given. All sections now withdrew to Castledonovan area, where we arrived about daybreak. Our section (No. 1) of the column occupied the first house leading into the billets and controlled all roads in Castledonovan area. Sentries and outposts were posted. We had hardly settled down when one of our sentries reported the approach of a lorry load of enemy troops. We were all ordered out immediately and took up positions from which to engage this enemy force should it come within range. At the same time messengers were despatched to the other billets to alert the occupants. The enemy party approached to within about 400 yards, halted, reversed and left the area. As there appeared to be a possibility of encirclement, the whole column was immediately withdrawn to

the top of a mountain in the neighbourhood, where we remained throughout the day without food or shelter.

The columns were moving round the area for some days following the Drimoleague attack without making contact with the enemy. On the evening of February 23rd 1921 we were in the vicinity of Bandon when we were informed that it was proposed to attack an enemy curfew patrol in the town. The column was divided into a number of sections to approach the town from different directions. I was a member of a section of twelve or so under John Lordan which moved into Bandon from the Dunmanway road to a position on the Square from which we could cover the military barracks. It was now about 8.30 p.m. Some other members of the section were: - Pete Kearney, Denis O'Brien, and Jim Doyle. The main body, under Tom Barry (Column O/C), had moved off to approach the town from the east. Our duty was to confine the military to barracks when the attack on the curfew patrol opened. A few scouts from our section picked up two members of the Essex Regiment and a naval wireless operator who were in the company of some girls. When the shooting broke out in the centre of the town a few rounds were fired by our section to indicate that there was an attack in progress. The military in the barrack replied with intense rifle and machine-gun fire while we withdrew a distance of about 200 yards with our prisoners. They were now questioned regarding the treatment meted out to unarmed I.R.A. men in Bandon barracks by themselves and their comrades. Several of our men had been taken prisoners, tortured and then shot out of hand by the members of the Essex Regiment stationed in the area. The two prisoners from the Essex Regiment were now shot as a reprisal. A note was given to the wireless operator for delivery to the O/C of the Essex Regiment in Bandon. The note informed the British O/C that the shootings were reprisals for the

conduct of the men of his forces. It was now close on 10 p.m. All shooting in the town having ceased, our section withdrew to billets in Newcestown area.

I was now demobbed from the column, as were several others. I returned to Ballinadee area, where I engaged in the normal activities of the company - blocking roads, cutting trenches, and impeding the operation of enemy administration and activities in every possible way.

When the column again moved into Ballinadee area towards the middle of March, 1921, they took up ambush positions at Shippool on St. Patrick's Day. I was one of a party of about sixteen men from Ballinadee Company under the Battalion Adjutant (Jim O'Mahoney) who were acting as a reserve force and guarding boats which would be required to transport the column across the Bandon river in the event of a retreat from Shippool. This section was engaged on similar duty when the column took part in the engagement at Crossbarry on March 19th 1921. Amongst the sixteen men in this reserve force were - Pat O'Brien (1st Lieut.), Dan O'Donoghue, Ned Barrett, Denis Crowley, Dan Corkery, John Nolan, Pat Kearney, Jim Deasy, Ml. Flavin, Wm. Kelly, Tim Crowley, Jim Barrett, Bill Nolan, Dan Flynn, and Con Flynn (witness). In addition to this reserve force, there were twelve men from Ballinadee serving with the column at the time. Some of these men were: - Con O'Donoghue, Bill Hales, Tim Crowley, Denis O'Donoghue, Jack O'Donoghue, Jim Crowley, Matt Healy, Jack Corkery, Bob Hales, Seán Hales.

On the night following the fight at Crossbarry, the Battalion Adjutant (Jim O'Mahoney) received instructions from the Column O/C (Tom Barry) that I was to rejoin the column. I reported to the column in the vicinity of Ballinascarthy on the Tuesday or Wednesday of that week (22nd or 23rd March, 1921). The column was moving round the area until the night

of March 30th when we were in the neighbourhood of Rosscarbery. We were now informed that it was proposed to attack Rosscarbery R.I.C. barrack next morning. The column was now divided into a number of sections as follows: -

- (a) a storming party of ten men to lay a mine and rush the breach;
- (b) a group of ten men carrying torches to be lighted when the party at (a) had broken into the barracks. This group to follow the men at (a) were armed with revolvers;
- (c) three groups of five men each to cut communications on all approach roads;
- (d) a group of ten or twelve to occupy positions around the building to prevent occupants breaking out;
- (e) about a dozen men divided into three groups to hold roads in vicinity of the town;
- (f) a reserve force of about a dozen men.

All sections moved into their positions about midnight.

I was a member of the group at (b). We moved into town in our stockinged feet to a position beside the gable end of a house about 30/40 yards from the barrack. Tom Barry led a party carrying a large mine to the door of the barrack where the mine, with fuses lighted, was placed in position. The mine laying party withdrew towards our position and both parties lay flat on the footpath. In a few seconds there was a loud explosion and tiles, slates and glass showered on us. The order to charge was given by the O/C (Tom Barry). We all dashed to the barrack door to find that the breach in the doorway was not as large as we had hoped. At this stage one member of the garrison shouted "we surrender". Tom Barry ordered us to "get back" and we took cover by the walls of the houses near the barrack. We had no sooner done so than a bomb came flying from the inside of the building. At this stage the covering parties

at (d) opened intense fire on the barrack while Tom Barry threw a tin of petrol into the breach at the doorway and set it on fire. With about five others I was now sent to search the town for petrol or paraffin. Having obtained a supply of paraffin in a shop, we carried it in buckets and all kinds of utensils to the burning barrack, where it was thrown through the hole in the door by the Column O/C (Tom Barry). A steady supply was maintained and in a short time the stairway to the upper floor was on fire. The garrison had by now been forced to evacuate the ground floor and were concentrated on the one to which the burning stairway led. The fight went on for about four hours, when the garrison were forced to evacuate the burning building. They did not surrender their arms as they left them in what remained of the barrack, where they were burned. Two members of the R.I.C. garrison were killed and nine were wounded. We had no casualties. It was now about 5 a.m. All outposts were now called in. The column was assembled on the Square and after a short time we moved off towards the west. After travelling a few miles we changed direction and later moved to Rossmore district, where we billeted that day. At nightfall we were again on the move, reaching Newcestown area in the early morning while it was still dark.

During the early part of April we moved round the brigade area without making contact with any enemy force. It was close to the end of this month when we took up a position at Ballylickey on the Bantry-Glengarriff road. We were expecting a convoy of "Auxies" to pass but they did not put in an appearance. After remaining in position all day, we withdrew to billets in Bantry district. It was now decided to divide the column, and the men from the western battalions - Bantry, Schull and Castletownbere - moved into their own areas.

When the column split up, the men from the eastern battalions (Bandon, Clonakilty, Dunmanway, Skibbereen) moved to Kealkil where we billeted. We left here that night and travelled through the Pass of Keimaneigh to Gougane Barra, where we remained for a day, moving next night to Kilmichael and then on to Clogagh area via Newcestown. This section of the column was now under Seán Hales (O/C Bandon Battalion).

We now moved south to Inchy Bridge between Ballinascarthy and Timoleague, where we took a position on the railway embankment. We were expecting a party of military to travel on a train from Timoleague. Arrangements were made to derail the train within the ambush position. This was done successfully, but there were no military on the train. We now withdrew to Ballinadee, where we remained while arrangements were being made for transport to take us across the Bandon river. When the boats were ready we moved to Kilmacsimon Quay, from where we were ferried across the river to Shippool. We now moved into Dernagasha, where we billeted for two days before moving into Crosspound area.

The column travelled on to Newcestown after a couple of days and now the men from the companies north of the Bandon river (Crosspound, Kilpatrick, Newcestown, Quarries Cross) were disbanded and retired to their home areas. The remainder of the column, drawn from the companies south of the river (Ballinadee, Kilbrittain, Clogagh, Barryroe, Timoleague, Ballinspittal) re-crossed the river at Baxter's Bridge and billeted at Clogagh. This section moved next night to Timoleague - taking over control of all roads - while a demolition squad drawn from local units destroyed the road bridge there. It was now early in May, 1921, and this section of the column, to which I was attached, was disbanded. All men now returned to their home areas, where they were engaged with the men of the various companies in cutting enemy



lines of communication, destroying bridges, trenching roads and such like activities.

When the order for the general "shoot up" of enemy forces as a reprisal for the execution of I.R.A. prisoners was received, arrangements were made for a party consisting of Jack Corkery, Bill Hales and Tim McCarthy - all from Ballinadee Company - in co-operation with some men from Innishannon unit to ambush a patrol of R.I.C. at Innishannon on May 14th 1921. The Battalion Adjutant (Jim O'Mahoney) was in charge of this operation, in which one member of the enemy patrol was killed. The I.R.A. had no casualties.

On the night of June 11th 1921 (I think, perhaps it was later) I was one of a party of about fifty men drawn from Ballinadee, Innishannon Crosspound and Kilpatrick Companies under the Battn. Vice O/C (John Lordan) who took part in the destruction of the houses of five loyalist families in the area as counter-reprisals for the destruction of the houses of Republicans by the British. The houses destroyed were: Corr Castle, Peacock's, Dennehy's, Stenning's and Caulfield's. In order to distract attention from the job in hand, a few shots were fired at the R.I.C. barracks in Innishannon. All houses set for demolition were destroyed by fire.

Following the counter-reprisals referred to in the previous paragraph, Major Percival's column - of the Essex Regiment - about 400 strong, was continually operating in the Ballinadee-Kilbrittain-Timoleague-Innishannon area up to the Truce. As a result, all active I.R.A. men in the area were continually on the move trying to evade arrest.

The officers of the Bandon Battalion in the period  
1918-1921 were:-

1918

O/C. Tom Hales (to Brigade O/C. Jan. 1919)  
Vice -O/C. Hugh Thornton (I think)  
Adj. Liam Deasy (to Brigade Adj. 1919 Aug.)  
Q.M. Tadhg Sullivan.

January 1919

O/C. Sean Hales  
Vice- O/C. Charlie Hurley (to Brigade O/C. Aug. 1920  
on arrest of Tom Hales)  
Adj. Liam Deasy  
Q.M. Tadhg Sullivan

August 1919

O/C. Sean Hales  
Vice- O/C. Charlie Hurley  
Adj. Jim O'Mahoney  
Q.M. Tadhg Sullivan (to Brigade Q.M. March  
1921).

August 1920

O/C. Sean Hales  
Vice- O/C. John Lordan  
Adj. Jim O'Mahoney  
Q.M. Tadhg Sullivan (to Brigade Q.M. March 1921)

March 1921

O/C. Sean Hales  
Vice-O/C. John Lordan  
Adj. Jim O'Mahomey  
Q.M. Dan Holland (arrested June 1921)

June 1921

O/C. Sean Hales  
Vice O/C. John Lordan  
Adj. Jim O'Mahoney  
Q.M. Charlie O'Donoghue

My rank at the Truce was 2nd Lieut. Ballinadee Company,  
Bandon Battalion, Cork III Brigade.

The strength of the Ballinadee Company at this time  
was about 80.

Signed: Bob Flynn

Date: 24<sup>th</sup> May 1954

Witness: P. L. Dornell

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