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STATEMENT BY WITNESS

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Witness

Joseph O'Connor

Identity

Lieut. A/Coy. 3rd Bn. Dublin Bde. 1914-1915.

V/Comdt. 3rd Bn. Easter Week 1916.

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(b) Formation of 3rd Bn. Dublin Bde.
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(d) 3rd Bn. area, Holy Week and Easter Week 1916.

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On the 15th August, 1898, a great National Commemoration was held in Dublin City at which I attended. The foundation stone for the memorial to Tone and his comrades was laid at the top of Grafton Street. As an aftermath of the Commemoration the Wolfe Tone Clubs were formed. One of their functions was to erect Commemorative Plaques on the houses in the city which were associated with the 1798 period. Like other young fellows at the time I was anxious to join one of these Clubs. I had not mentioned it to my father, but he asked me to give him one promise. He said he knew that I was almost certain to follow the lines he had followed and he would be perfectly satisfied if I would promise him never to join a secret society.

In connection with the plaques of which I have spoken, I remember James Stephens, the former leader of the Fenian Movement, a very old man with a long flowing white beard, unveiling a memorial on a house in Cornmarket, Dublin. Some time afterwards I attend his funeral in Dublin City.

In 1899 the Boer War started. Great sympathy was felt for the Boers by nationalist Ireland. I can remember a meeting being announced to favour the Boer cause and being advertised for Beresford Place. This meeting was attended by Maud Gonne, Jim Connolly and others. The meeting was proclaimed and the horse-drawn brake from which the speakers were to have spoken entered O'Connell Street. James Connolly started to speak to the people there and he was pulled out of the brake by the police. He was sentenced to three months' imprisonment, I think, for his action. There was quite considerable rioting and disturbance in the city at the time. The mounted police were ordered out. They charged the crowds in Capel Street and for the first time I saw the people of Dublin stand up to an assault by the police; on this occasion with the extra weight of prancing horses. The Officer-in-charge of the police was unhorsed and many of them were hurt.

In 1897 the Queen of England celebrated her diamond jubilee and the decorations and general conduct of a section of the people was very annoying. Trinity College students protected by the Authorities, demonstrated very roughly in favour of the jubilee and, of course, against the citizens. This culminated in a fierce riot in College Green. In that one night I saw upwards of 200 people and at least 16 or 20 police carried out of the street to hospital. The blackguardism of the police was so marked that the following night the dockers of Dublin came together and marched in processional order through the centre of the city. Every premises they passed which had flown a flag and whose windows were unprotected, they smashed. This procession ultimately reached Rutland Square, now Parnell Square. The Orangemen's Association had a hall there. There was some shouting and cheering outside on the pavement and some members of the Orange Society fired shots from revolvers. That was the first shooting I can remember. The police were called "Jubilee butchers" because of their conduct during the Jubilee celebrations.

When the French Delegation arrived for the '98 Commemoration I was in the party to receive them and when we had reached the outside of a hotel at the corner of Nassau Street and South Frederick Street, the police intervened. We called them "Jubilee butchers" and they beat us up. I can remember getting a blow from a policeman and feeling myself whirling round at least six times before I hit the ground.

About 1900 I began attending Bodenstown. At this time the revival of Irish was beginning to come before the people. In 1906 I joined the Gaelic League. I was one of the Committee to make Irish compulsory for entrance to the National University.

The Gaelic League did an immense amount of work considering the material they had to handle. The enthusiasm they encouraged had, to my mind, a very great effect on the future history of the country. Thousands of young people, male and female, attended nightly at classes to learn the language and to get an

understanding of what Irish nationality meant. During this time when the Gaelic League with its many aspects was working, one of the principal mottos was "Ireland sober, Ireland free". The young men of that time felt it was their duty to abstain from intoxicating liquor, and, of course, this meant a re-orientation of their outlook on life.

This was soon followed by a dockers' strike on the Dublin Quays. The dockers at that time were organised in an English Trade Union. There was trouble also in Belfast. Jim Larkin was in Belfast and when a settlement was reached there he was invited to Dublin. When the strike was finished in Dublin, Larkin was ordered back to Liverpool. He refused to go and instead formed the Irish Transport & General Workers' Union at a meeting in the Trades Hall in Capel Street which I attended, and at which he spoke for two hours. The whole atmosphere in the country was changing and worked up to the strike of the dockers, tramwaymen and others in 1913. I saw some shocking brutalities done on the people by the Police Force during that time. I saw the people being batoned and beaten, and I saw the start of the Citizen Army to protect them. My first experience of the Irish Citizen Army was at Beresford Place in 1913 when they were led by Captain White whose head at the time was in bandages.

In November, 1913, I attended the meeting for the formation of the Volunteers in the Rotunda Rink, Rutland Square, now Parnell Square. I signed the enrolment form at that meeting. The meeting was addressed by Dr. Michael Davitt, Laurence Kettle, Éamon Ceannt, and was presided over by Eoin McNeill. There were actually three meetings being held at the same time. The one at which I attended met at the Skating Rink; there was one outside the Skating Rink and another in one of the large meeting rooms of the Rotunda buildings. The same speakers to the best of my recollection, addressed each meeting. Eoin McNeill was the only one who remained on the platform in the Skating Rink.

I can remember the horror with which I heard Michael Davitt's son state at that meeting that the Volunteers about to be organised would not interfere with British power in Ireland. There was a lot of booing and hissing when Laurence Kettle spoke because of some family connection with labour trouble in North County Dublin.

The Volunteers were distributed in areas according to the district in which they resided. In my case I was directed to a unit which met at 41 York Street, Dublin. This was eventually the 3rd Battalion of the Dublin Brigade. The Companies were "A" and "B".

"A" - York Street.

"B" - Great Brunswick Street, now Pearse Street.

The strength I would say at that time was about 300 in all.

From "A" Company, "C" Company was formed; from "B" Company, "D" Company; and from "B" and "D" Companies, "E" Company was formed.

In March, 1914, the election of Company Officers took place, and in my unit, "A" Company, I was elected 1st Lieutenant. Ted Sheehan was elected Captain and J. Hickey elected 2nd Lieutenant. This election was presided over by Eoin McNeill who was a member of "A" Company. After some time the 3rd Battalion was formed out of the various Companies.

"B" Company:	O'Rahilly	- Captain.
	Martin Ryan	- 1st Lieutenant.
	Charlie Murphy	- 2nd Lieutenant.
"C" Company:	Eddie Byrne	- Captain.
	Mick Malone	- 1st Lieutenant.
	Simon Donnelly	- 2nd Lieutenant.

"D" Company: I cannot remember who were the officers of "D" Company. Billy Byrne will be able to give this information.

"E" Company: Éamon De Valera - Captain.
Liam Tannam - 1st Lieutenant.
and (but of this I am not sure) a man named Darcy - 2nd Lieutenant.

This was the formation when the guns were landed at Howth.

The Dublin Brigade was fortunate in the fact that a Major Casserly, Active Officer in the Indian Army, was in Dublin on sick leave. This officer instructed an officer's class every night for the last fortnight of his leave at the offices of the Volunteers then in Great Brunswick Street. These lectures were invaluable particularly in view of the fact that almost immediately afterwards we got the handling of our own men, and as a result of this, training commenced in earnest as each of the Company officers gradually became able to take over from the instructors who were in the main ex British Army men. When Britain went to war, these ex soldiers were called up and we got the entire control of the training. In so far as the 3rd Battalion was concerned, the training was very efficient. I say that in the light of after experience because, whilst the British Army men were very anxious to perfect our men in footdrill, we, their officers, were much more concerned in getting them on to field work and in the use of the rifle and bayonet. We had a drill ground at Camden Row in which we erected a moving target in addition to the ordinary stationary ones. We were able to buy .22 ammunition. We had some .22 rifles and we charged each Volunteer a penny for five rounds, the cost of the ammunition. Although the distance was short, say, twenty-five/thirty yards, the men got very useful with their rifles. Nothing was done in a slipshod fashion. The men were taught to gain the prone

position in the correct form, and frequent competitions were held for the best shots, inter Company and inter Battalion Officers and men alike.

GUN-RUNNING AT HOWTH.

On the morning of the 26th July, 1914, the Battalion paraded at Camden Row. We marched to Croydon Park where we joined with the other city Battalions, and from there the Brigade marched to Howth in very good time and first-rate discipline. When the Fianna signalled from the road, the yacht entered the harbour and the four Battalions marched at the double up the pier to the north end of the east pier. The unloading of the rifles started immediately. They were handed from the yacht to the men lined along the pier and from man to man, both front and rere ranks. At this time Éamon Ceannt, in charge of the fourth Battalion and last unit, had taken long wooden batons from a trek cart brought by Fianna Éireann along the march. Thus armed he formed his men at the end of the pier and prevented any enemy activity or in fact, anyone but a Volunteer from entering the pier. Immediately the unloading of the rifles started. The British coastguards sent up warning rockets signalling a war vessel that had been inveigled out of Howth that very morning. The R.I.C. and coastguards made efforts to interfere but with no success.

As the rifles were passed along the last of the line was the first to be armed. My unit happened to be in that position and I was ordered to relieve Éamon Ceannt. This I did and I felt very proud of the fact that I commanded the first armed unit of Irishmen in public display in Ireland for many years.

The unloading proceeded quickly. The ammunition was taken away mainly in motor cars and the men carried their rifles

back to town. The first halt of the day was made at Raheny on the return. Those of us who had sandwiches got a few minutes to eat them. I saw Seán McDermott approach Tom Clarke on the road and I instinctively knew that there was trouble ahead. We formed up almost immediately after this conversation and proceeded towards the city. When we reached the junction of the Howth Road and Clontarf Road, it was held by British military and police. We wheeled through Charleville Road and gained Malahide Road, but when we got there the enemy had it blocked also. We marched our men in their respective units as they came along and made no effort to deploy. We blocked the road completely with a mass of men. Darrell Figgis went forward to consult with the Officer-in-charge of the police. Whatever words passed, the police were ordered to charge our men and disarm them. This they tried to do, but for the first time they found themselves up against disciplined and trained men who stood firm. A British Army unit about sixty strong, was then ordered forward and with bayonets fixed at the ready they approached our line. Again our men held fast and with empty rifles used as clubs forced the British soldiers to retire. In this charge I saw some of our men being wounded; fortunately they all recovered. I saw the Officer-in-charge of the British troops appealing to the Officer-in-charge of the police for permission to fire. This he did not get, but the police were again ordered to charge and disarm the Volunteers. They refused, and I heard them saying, "This is a job for the military".

Some shots, not volleys, but small arms were exchanged, and a British soldier in front of my unit was wounded. During the time that this was in progress the units of the Volunteers behind the first couple of ranks facing the enemy were ordered across the country. When the time arrived that one could turn round the road was cleared except for the few men we had immediately in front. We ordered those men to follow our comrades and saved all the rifles.

Who gave the orders on this occasion I cannot remember, but

I did see Éamon Ceannt, Michael Judge and Darrell Figgis besides Clarke and McDermott and possibly McDonagh.

The general direction our men took was towards Croydon Park. Some of the men thought that the Irish Citizen Army house at Croydon Park would be a safe place to leave their rifles until a more favourable time for removing them, but the Irish Citizen Army were not very helpful and refused to give some of the rifles back to the Volunteers. Notwithstanding all those things I think we did a very good job. We saved all the ammunition and prevented any material from falling into the hands of the British. Eventually the men brought the rifles to their homes and after some time when they became more useful and got more knowledge of the weapon we distributed ammunition.

I have mentioned that the British patrol vessel had been inveigled out of Howth. A pretended landing of arms had been made at Greystones. The vessel went to intercept the cargo and whilst away the Howth rifles were landed. A day or so afterwards some of our men were mobilised and paraded to Kilcoole, County Wicklow, where another yacht arrived (the property of Sir Thomas Myles, I think), with another cargo of rifles and ammunition. In all I would say we got about 1,000 rifles. They were of a very old pattern and I was told afterwards by Charlie Lawlor of Fownes Street that they had actually been bought for 2/6d. each. They fired a soft-nose bullet with a very loud explosion but they were a delightful rifle to use.

BACHELORS WALK.

After the setback suffered by the British military and their annoyance at being unable to fire ball ammunition at their unarmed opponents (as, although our men had rifles they had no ammunition nor would they have known how to use it if it had been given to them), the police and military finding an empty road before them turned homewards in disgust.

Word had been spread along their lines of approach to the city and the small boys thought it great fun to remind them of their clash with the Volunteers and possibly throw some orange peels in derision at them. Be that as it may, when they reached Wellington Bridge on Bachelors Walk, they turned round and fired point blank at the people on the footpaths. Quite a number of people were injured. A man whom I knew well, named Pidgeon, was killed. After the inquest was held when the remains were being removed to church, we turned out the entire Dublin Brigade as an escort, and Dublin citizens helped to the fullest extent. In fact, with practically no organising, the funeral was the first of many such enormous gatherings. The Volunteers procured a slab for insertion in the footway at Bachelors Walk. Some trouble arose with the Corporation or the Authorities and the memorial remained in the Volunteer Offices at Dawson Street. In a couple of days after these happenings, war broke out between Germany and England. The effect in Ireland was immediate. People who were what one would have thought rebels on Sunday were completely pro-British the following Sunday. British reserves were called up and an intensive recruiting campaign started. One of the sickening things in all this pre '16 period was the inconstancy of the ordinary people as was to be demonstrated to us on many occasions both before and after the events I have just described.

Some of the people, particularly those connected with Sinn Féin, organised parties to interrupt British Army recruiting meetings. It was our desire to keep the Volunteers away from such gatherings. It was difficult to do so but I think on the whole we succeeded. We tried to keep the ideal of a free Ireland before their minds, and we tried to use up all their free time at classes, practising and at lectures and concerts, all of them with a very definite object before them. So also we kept the original Gaelic League slogan of "Ireland sober, Ireland free" before the men's minds.

The work of training the Volunteers really started from the Howth Gun-running. Up to that our men had been practising in barrack square formations only, but from Howth Sunday onwards we, having got control of our own men, concentrated on field training. Just about this time I got my first hint about the Rising. In this ground in Camden Row that I have spoken of, there was the remains of a building which I suggested to The O'Rahilly should be covered for wet weather work, and I mentioned that it would pay for itself in six months. His reply was: "We'll be in Hell or free in six months". I said no more about the matter.

One of the training exercises that we had was on the Three Rock Mountain in September 1914, and we divided the Battalion, one half holding the crest of the Mountain and the other half attacking. This showed the officers how little we knew of what fighting conditions would mean. It resolved itself into marching up the hill and marching down again.

On the 19th September, 1914, John Redmond made his famous Woodenbridge speech and split the Volunteer Force from top to bottom.

I was present at a meeting at the top of Grafton Street/ St. Stephen's Green that Connolly addressed whilst he was surrounded by bayonets fixed on Howth rifles which he had refused to return to the Volunteers after Howth. On this occasion a meeting was being held in the Mansion House, about one hundred yards away, at which Mr. Asquith, the Prime Minister of England, and John Redmond, the leader of the Irish Parliamentary Party, spoke and appealed to Irishmen to join the British Army.

When the Redmond split took place in Camden Row, those who were going with John Redmond, although in the great majority, agreed that we others should remain in possession of the drill ground. There was a full parade of each Company called and after both sides had explained the position the men were asked

to decide for themselves. In my case, although I had a full Company on parade, approximately one hundred men, I was left with nine men who remained loyal. We were fortunate in the fact that our officers remained firm and we had sufficient enthusiasm to restart. I was very glad that when the split occurred there was so little bickering.

After some more training in field work an operation was arranged for Saucerstown outside Swords. This was early in 1915. We marched to Swords and as we were entering the town I heard the Company behind mine singing a very fine marching song. That was the first occasion on which the "Soldier's Song" was sung in public, certainly as a marching song. It caught on and in a few days' time every Volunteer in Dublin was whistling or singing it.

Very early in 1915 I was instructed to attend at a special class which was formed. The instructor was a man whom we knew as Slattery. He was a teacher at St. Enda's. The classes were of a very advanced nature in the destruction of communications and the construction of bridges and barricades. He gave us a lot of instructions in the use of high explosives, how to handle them, and their power when properly used.

The attendance at those lectures was very select. I would say not more than two or possibly three officers from any Brigade. I can remember only one other officer from the Dublin Brigade, and the number attending never exceeded twelve. The meetings were held only on occasions when an influx of people into the city would be expected so that those who were appointed to attend would not be under undue observation.

Captain Ted Sheehan was detailed to organise an Engineering Battalion. Éamon De Valera was appointed to the vacancy created by the transfer of Captain Sheehan and was promoted Commandant, and one of the first things done by him

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was the formation of a Battalion staff. Fitzgibbon was Vice-Commandant. James Byrne was Quartermaster. I was Captain of "A" Company; O'Rahilly, Captain of "B" Company; Eddie Byrne, Captain of "C" Company; P. Begley, Captain of "D" Company; Liam Tannam, Captain of "E" Company. All of the Companies were sadly depleted by the split, but the number of recruits that joined afterwards was certainly satisfactory and I would say on the average a better type of man. The great trouble with us was the scarcity of money.

The men had to pay threepence a week towards the cost of rent and light. They had to pay for the ammunition they used in practices. They had to pay for their own rifle ammunition and equipment. In addition to that the Companies had to form a Company Fund to provide themselves with such things as first aid field dressings, stretchers, signalling flags and lamps and a reserve of ammunition, and where possible, training tools, i.e. picks and shovels. The sacrifices made at the time, both by officers and men, were very great, and of course, it was the desire of every officer or Volunteer to have a uniform of what he considered to be the first Army of Ireland for years.

Shortly after De Valera's appointment he mobilised the Battalion in the Concert Hall at 41 York Street. The hall wasn't full although I am sure two hundred men would fill it. During the course of his address he emphasised the point that this was a serious business and that now was the time for men to say whether they were prepared to accept the position as he explained it. I knew that this was a warning that a further step had been taken towards an armed insurrection . I was told, I think by De Valera, that the Dublin Commandants had submitted plans for the defence of Dublin and that Connollys was the one accepted and that he, Connolly, was given command of the city to carry out his plans.

With these thoughts in mind the recruitment of the Company and the arming and training was a matter of continuous concern. Fortunately when Major Casserly was lecturing he

dealt entirely with field conditions and we were not ashamed to bring our men out and try out the formations that he had advised. We made many mistakes, but I think we succeeded after a while in handling the men very well.

After the reorganising of the Companies as a result of the Redmond split, the first of our mass manoeuvres that I can remember was at Easter 1915 at Finglas. It was a rather big affair. Finglas was attacked from all sides and I think we all were more than a little satisfied with the manner in which we were able to handle the men, but our best effort was to confine the 2nd Battalion to Stepaside. This operation began at 4 o'clock in the morning and finished at 4 o'clock in the afternoon.

The next thing that I remember was the recruiting marches. They were taken up very seriously, each Battalion acting on its own and parading their districts. I think it did well for at least this much it did do. It informed the men of their own particular areas which was to the good. In our Battalion we had weekly field work, sometimes at night, sometimes on Sundays. A favourite point of attack was Pallatine House, Tallaght. It was quite remarkable how well the officers were improving in the handling of their men. During this time the National Volunteers were organising and they had a great Volunteer parade from the Phoenix Park to the centre of the city and back to the Phoenix Park. It was a well done and highly organised affair. Our effort to counteract that was a visit of the Dublin Brigade to Limerick.

When we reached Limerick we paraded the city during which we passed through the district known as Irishtown, where we were received with great hostility and pelted with street rubbish, and the people leaning from the windows cursed us as we passed, and afterwards we stored our rifles in a premises and put a guard in charge of them. The men were dismissed for a couple of hours. I remember being very uneasy that our men were disbanded and that

the rifles, all we had as an Army, were left in one building with just a very small number of people protecting them. It would, in my thoughts, have been a very easy task to have taken the whole lot in one half hour. So upset was I with the arrangement that I couldn't bring myself to go further than one hundred and fifty yards from the place where the rifles were stored.

When we got the men re-assembled and were marching towards the Railway Station to entrain for home a great crowd of the people of Limerick turned out to abuse and attack us. They threw stones and everything they could get at us. Just immediately in front of me some of the crowd grabbed one of our men's rifles. The attackers got the stock of the rifle - he held the barrel. All this occurred in an instant. They pulled the barrel and the foresight reefed his two hands and left him in a bad way. We got the rifle back, but I mention the matter to show that public opinion was not at all in favour of the Irish Volunteers at that time.

After our visit to Limerick we applied ourselves even more to our field exercises and lectures. The classes were held twice or three times a week to describe and instruct the men in street fighting; we were trying to get arms and organising to collect money. These were our special activities up to Rossa's death.

When O'Donovan Rossa died in America it was decided by, I think, the I.R.B. to bring his remains home to Ireland for burial. The remains were left in the City Hall, Dublin, and the people of Dublin showed great respect and great sorrow in their attendance at Cork Hill. I happened to be the Officer-in-charge of the last Guard of Honour at the City Hall on Rossa's remains. I had seen Rossa earlier in life, for on his return from America my father brought me to Kingsbridge Railway Station to welcome the Fenian on his arrival in Dublin.

It was a big task to control the masses of people who were anxious to pay their respects to the remains in the Central Chamber of the City Hall. Rossa's widow remained by the side of the coffin for a couple of hours. During the time that I was actually on guard an old woman approached the coffin. The dead patriot's features were visible through a glass in the coffin lid. She looked and said, "Ah!, they tried to make a pig of you, but they couldn't". That reminded me of what I read of Rossa's imprisonment when, with his hands bound behind his back, he had to lap up his food from the floor.

The following morning we organised the funeral. It was the first of the great national funerals carefully organised and properly marshalled. When we reached Glasnevin the remains were received by a bugler who sounded the last post, and when the body was interred three volleys were fired over the grave. Pearse then made his famous oration in which he called on the manhood of that generation to take up and complete the task so well begun by Rossa. This may have sounded a bit strange to the ordinary person, but to those of us who knew the things that were likely to happen it was sweet music indeed.

The next thing that I can remember was the St. Patrick's Day Parade in 1916. The Brigade assembled at College Green after having attended Mass at St. Michael's & John's Church, one of the oldest in Dublin. I was not present at the Mass as I had been detailed to act as outside guard, and I divided my Company into four parties as a protection around the Church. I was particularly satisfied about that arrangement because I felt that it was dangerous for our force to be in large numbers in a confined space at any one time. I knew that I could depend on my men to give the men in the Church at least time to deploy if the British made any serious move. I was told that it was a very beautiful ceremony. Quite a number of our officers and men were in uniform at this time and many of the officers had swords. The swords were drawn in salutation at the Consecration and a special guard was detailed to present arms whilst the colours were dipped.

After Mass the Brigade paraded at College Green and was inspected by the Chief of Staff, Eoin McNeill. The saluting base was opposite Foster Place and our ranks extended to Dame Street. During the preparations for the inspection we had stopped all traffic through College Green. When a British officer approached College Green on horseback he demanded to be allowed through, and De Valera refused him permission to pass. The situation was tense for a moment as assistance could be obtained from Dublin Castle within a couple of minutes if it was desired to use force, but he decided to return to George's Street and take another route to his destination.

HOLY WEEK.

Battalion Staff.

The organisation of the 3rd Battalion by the beginning of Holy Week, 1916, was as follows :-

Éamon De Valera	Commandant.	
Seán Fitzgibbon	Vice-Commandant.	(deceased).
James Byrne	Quartermaster.	(deceased).
P. Begley	Adjutant.	

The following were the Companies :-

"A" Company:	Joseph O'Connor,	Captain.
	Tim Finn,	Lieutenant (deceased).
	Hickey,	Lieutenant.

"B" Company:	The O'Rahilly,	Captain.	(killed Easter Week).
	Charlie Murphy,	Lieutenant.	
	Martin Ryan,	Lieutenant.	(deceased).
"C" Company:	Eddie Byrne,	Captain.	
	Simon Donnelly,	Lieutenant.	
	Michael Malone,	Lieutenant.	(killed in 25 Northumberland Road, Easter Week).
"D" Company:	P. Begley,	Captain.	
	Joe Byrne,	Lieutenant.	
"E" Company:	Liam Tannam,	Captain.	
	Darcy,	Lieutenant.	(deceased).
"F" Company:	Tom O'Connor,	Captain.	
	James Brady,	Lieutenant.	

The area under the control of the 3rd Battalion was from the Grattan Bridge south side of the Liffey from Parliament Street, Dame Street, George's Street, Aungier's Street, Redmond's Hill, Wexford Street, Camden Street, Camden Street Upper, South Richmond Street, Mount Pleasant Avenue, Upper and Lower, Palmerston, Dartry, thence in a straight line to Glencree Reformatory, Kilgarron, Enniskerry, Tinahinch to Bray, taking in Bray town to the seacoast and river line south side to Grattan Bridge.

Fitzgibbon left Dublin on Monday or Tuesday to go to Tralee to distribute the rifles arriving from Germany. A meeting of the Battalion staff was called for De Valera's home at Morehampton Terrace for, I think, Wednesday night. All the Company Captains were present with, I think, Seán McMahon

representing the O'Rahilly, and Michael Malone representing the Battalion Engineers. The Commandant informed the staff at that meeting that Vice Commandant Fitzgibbon would not be with us as he had other duties to perform. The meeting was called to fill the vacancy thus created.

Commandant De Valera asked me to become Vice Commandant of the Battalion to replace Fitzgibbon. I explained that whilst I was honoured with the offer of promotion, I would much prefer to remain with my Company, the fight being so near at hand. It was then decided to appoint Begley who was acting as Battalion Adjutant at the time, a man from the 2nd Battalion named Murphy being appointed Adjutant. I think it was at that meeting that we got twenty-five pounds towards the funds of each Company to help in buying stocks of food and some tools that were urgently required. This was the first money we ever received from Headquarters. These were the only matters discussed at the Battalion Council.

Instructions came from the Commandant that we were to remove our portion of the first aid equipment which was at the Volunteer Offices in Dawson Street to our own Headquarters which were then at 144 Great Brunswick Street, now Pearse Street. He also ordered that I should have an armed guard day and night from Thursday onward. Four men of my own Company slept at my home and even at my place of employment our men were on guard. I cannot say if the same precautions were ordered for all the officers.

On Good Friday some of my section commanders, representing their sections, led by one of the officers, presented me with a sword as a token of respect from my own Company. I was very proud of this token of their esteem and hoped to wear it for many a long day.

The whole atmosphere about the week before Easter was one of highly-strung nervous activity. From my own part I fully appreciated the enormous task before us and I fully realised the poorly armed force we were preparing to lead against one of the finest armed nations in the world. I had spent all my life

working and praying for this moment and I felt thoroughly satisfied that I was doing what was right and no matter what the cost was I was determined to give of my best.

At a meeting of the Battalion Council in 144 Great Brunswick Street on Good Friday night the following, I am nearly certain, were present :-

Commandant De Valera
Captain Begley
Lieutenant Byrne
Lieutenant Charlie Murphy
Volunteer Michael Hayes - on Adjutant's staff.

I represented "A" Company; Seán McMahon, "B" Company; Eddie Byrne and Michael Malone, "C" Company; Captain Begley, "D" Company. "E" Company was not represented, nor was "F" Company.

We were given precise orders as to the positions we were to occupy on Sunday and informed as to the quantity of stores we would have at our disposal. A large quantity of provisions had been purchased and in addition each Company using their Company funds plus the £25 had accumulated an amount of stores. Each Company was to be responsible for the collection of such stores and for having them transported to the area in which his Company would operate.

The Commandant went over the plan in very great detail. In fact, he was able to tell each Company Captain where he would enter on to his area and what he would find to his advantage or disadvantage when he got there. The thing that concerned the meeting to a very great extent was the firm belief that enemy action would be taken before we had occupied positions, and it was with a view to having an alternative plan that an amount of the discussion resolved itself into.

The positions to be occupied over the area were given in detail. "A" Company was to occupy the railway line from Grand

Canal Quay to Dún Laoghaire. They were to occupy all the level crossings and assist in dominating Beggars Bush Barracks front and rere. They were to hold the railway workshops in Upper Grand Canal Street and generally help other units coming within their range of fire.

"B" Company were to take over Westland Row Railway Station. They were to send a party up to Tara Street and link up with the 2nd Battalion who would be in charge of the Amiens Street section of the railway. They were on the other side to connect up with "A" Company on the railway at Grand Canal Quay.

"C" Company were to occupy Bolands Bakery and the Dispensary building at Grand Canal Street. They were to occupy Roberts builders' yard on the corner of the canal and Grand Canal Street. They were to barricade the canal bridge connecting Upper and Lower Grand Canal Street. They were to occupy Clanwilliam House, the schools and parochial hall on Northumberland Road and No. 25 Northumberland Road.

"C" Company were also to have controlled the canal bridges at Upper Mount Street, Baggot Street and Leeson Street and join up with the 4th Battalion or the Irish Citizen Army.

"D" Company were to connect with "A" Company at the level crossing at Merrion. They were to hold a line from Merrion to the Liffey along the coast including a boom which would be defended from land positions. This boom was to be at the end of the South Wall extending from south to north of the river. Their base was to have been Bolands Mills or the Distillery immediately adjoining which they were to have garrisoned. These were the instructions they got to occupy Bolands Mills.

"E" Company were not present and we were informed that they had a task to perform. This, we later heard, was to form part of the garrison of the G.P.O.

"F" Company was to connect with "A" Company at Dún Laoghaire Railway Station and to maintain the Railway Station

and landing pier in the harbour.

On a calculation we all were certain that we would have eight to ten hundred men at our disposal.

After a very lengthy discussion as to the co-ordination of our forces Lieutenant Michael Malone of "C" Company, who had been detailed to occupy 25 Northumberland Road, walked over to where I was after the meeting had finished, and said, "Well, Joe, it's pretty close to hand. I know you'll come through, but I won't".

One of the main factors in the position was the railway line connecting Dublin and Dún Laoghaire. This was a main route of supply from Britain and it was very important that the enemy should be denied its use as it entered the very heart of the city. I was amazed at the amount of information our Commandant had accumulated and how thoroughly he understood about the position each Company was to occupy. He was able to discuss every detail even to the places where it would be possible to procure an alternative water supply, where we could definitely find tools for such things as loopholing walls and making communications. I am positively certain that he had spent months reconnoitring that entire area and in our discussions, particularly that one of Good Friday night when we really got down to the task put before us, I cannot remember a query put to him that he was not able to answer immediately, and there was not a solitary suggestion to improve the dispositions made. De Valera certainly showed that he had given his full attention to the task ahead and that if anything did go wrong it certainly would not be his fault. This was all very encouraging to us.

As to how much our officers and men knew, I cannot say. I knew that there was to be a rising, and with outside help I thought it could be successful; I thought that every man would rush in to help.

The ordinary conditions of the national life had become so

bad that it was nearly impossible to see a difference between Ireland and England. The little the Gaelic League did was largely undone by the Great War, and something big should happen to reawaken the country to her sense of importance.

Our constant endeavour was to keep reminding our men what to do if, and when attacked, to continue our preparations to resist conscription and talk about what changes would happen when Germany won the war. But at no time was it stated, at any of our important meetings, that we were starting an insurrection, with or without assistance, but very definitely an atmosphere was cultivated leading to the uprising, and I think it was this that kept the British guessing, and the fact as I have already stated was that our movement was sober, both officers and men.

I mentioned our attack on Stepaside. After fighting our way through we were stopped on the main road and sent to occupy a crossing that had been neglected. This meant an additional three or four miles, but when we returned the men were allowed to fall out. Not a man of my Company went into the public-house although they had been on the go for more than twelve hours.

We spent most of Saturday and Sunday in individual scouting of the positions and familiarising ourselves with their advantages and disadvantages and with the practicability of linking up with the other units for the fight. The position we had to occupy was the line of the Grand Canal from the Liffey to Leeson Street Bridge inclusive.

On Holy Saturday I met De Valera in Camden Row. He had left the drill ground and I was just approaching it. We stopped to talk and tell each other how near we were to it and he said a remarkable thing. "We'll be alright, it's the women who will suffer. The worst they can do to us is kill us, but the women will have to remain behind to rear the children". It was one of the few times that he ever really revealed himself to me.

Easter Sunday.

On Easter Sunday morning accompanied by my guard I went to 8 o'clock Mass at Harrington Street Church. On coming out from the Church I bought the "Sunday Independent", and to my horror read McNeill's Cancelling Order. It was the first of the mishaps of the week of which I became aware. One of my Company had reported that he was on business at the place of embarcation at Kingstown on Saturday night. He saw a tall man accompanied by four R.I.C. men being escorted on board a vessel to sail for England. I thought that it was just an ordinary arrest of a deserter and that the extra guard was there merely because of the unsettled times. In any case the vessel had gone before I got the information. I am fairly certain that the man whom he saw was Roger Casement.

It was a great shock to read McNeill's order. The extraordinary thing was that, although I knew McNeill very well - he was in fact a member of my own Company and had presided at my election as an officer - I felt that it would be wrong to obey his order to demobilise, and I got in touch with our Commandant at Battalion Headquarters and let him know my feelings. It was decided that the Battalion would mobilise as ordered.

The mobilisation in the case of "A" and "C" Companies was at Earlsfort Terrace in the grounds of the National University, and the time 4 o'clock in the afternoon. Action was to begin at 6 o'clock and was to be started by the blowing up of the Magazine Fort in the Phoenix Park. One of the things that we were particularly proud of in the 3rd Battalion was our mobilisation scheme, that was our ability to get our men together with their arms and ammunition in a short space of time, but on this occasion the men were ordered on the Wednesday to parade on the Sunday at Earlsfort Terrace at 4 p.m., with two days' rations and full equipment I was preparing to parade at Earlsfort Terrace myself when a messenger (I think it was Michael Hayes) arrived from the Commandant instructing me to cancel my parade, to instruct the men to remain on 'stand-to' and I to report at 144 Great Brunswick

Street for conference.

I sent out the demobilisation order and proceeded to Great Burnswick Street where I saw Commandant De Valera. He asked me what I thought the effect of the demobilisation would be on the men, and I told him that in my opinion it would undo all the work we had put into it and that it would take us at least six months hard work to undo the harm. His reply was, "Surely, it's not so bad. How many men do you think would respond to an immediate order?", I replied: "Twenty", although I had one hundred and twenty men on parade on Sunday, every man of them with some form of weapon, but I knew my men well and I felt that the most I could pledge for would be twenty.

De Valera said: "I don't think things are so bad as you suggest". I replied that I hoped he was right. He asked me what I thought we could do to remedy matters. I suggested that as I had arranged a concert for 41 Parnell Square on Easter Sunday night we should carry on the concert and that he should attend and say a word of encouragement to the men, many of whom would be in the hall. He agreed to do this and we proceeded with our arrangements and actually held our concert at which he spoke.

On Easter Monday morning about 10 o'clock the Commandant sent me an order to mobilise my Company and to report to him at 144 Great Brunswick Street. I set the mobilisation in motion for an immediate assembly at Earlsfort Terrace and I proceeded to Great Brunswick Street. When I saw the Commandant he told me we were going into action at 12 o'clock. I asked him were they mad. His reply was: "I am a soldier and I know you are a soldier also". I saluted and retired. Before leaving the room he shook hands with me and said: "We may never meet again".

I proceeded to Earlsfort Terrace where I saw Dick Carroll distributing Howth gun ammunition to the two Companies. Less than half the men were in uniform. The mobilisation being so very small I decided to remain at Earlsfort Terrace until 11.30 at which time we moved off to take up our respective positions.

The Captain of "C" Company was not on parade, so Simon Donnelly took charge of "C". "C" Company had about the same strength as "A" - 120 men. Their mobilisation that morning was 30. "A" Company's mobilisation was 18. "B" Company whose area was around 144 Great Brunswick Street, mobilised the strongest of our Companies. "D" Company were poor in numbers, and "E" Company had been allocated to the G.P.O. The only members of "E" Company we had were men who missed the parade for marching into the G.P.O. It was arranged that as the units were marching into their positions that Cumann na mBan who had paraded at Merrion Square should join the Companies and enter the Bakery with "C" Company from whence they would operate. Unfortunately, this arrangement fell through. I think it was the fact of remaining so long at Earlsfort Terrace that we were over anxious to reach our positions before 12 o'clock. This is the explanation of how we were deprived of the assistance of Cumann na mBan.

When "A" Company reached Great Clarence Street, the position from which we were to enter the railway, we had as already stated, eighteen men. I halted the men and addressed them. I told them we were going into action for the freedom of Ireland, or, rather, as I said, for the glory of God and the honour of Ireland. I told the men that any man who felt he was unable to take the final step was at liberty to leave. One man did hand over his rifle and equipment, but just at that moment another member of the Company, unarmed, arrived on the scene. He took over the rifle and we entered the railway from Clarence Street using a disused cart as a means of scaling the wall. During this entrance one of the rifles went off and one of our men, Tom Scully, was shot in the leg - the first casualty. We carried on and took possession of the railway workshops and houses adjoining. We then proceeded along the railway line to a terrace of houses on the South Lotts Road between the railway line and Grand Canal Street. We broke an entrance from the railway and entered the terrace of houses. Then the houses up to the

corner were telescoped. The corner shop was a provision store by the name of Horan. This became known as Horans Fort. It dominated the entrance to Beggars Bush Barracks which was only thirty yards away. This place became a very important position throughout the remainder of the week. I remember on two occasions whilst visiting the place seeing the premises actually burning with the intensity of the fire concentrated on it, but it was held until the final surrender. In this connection I would like to mention Seán Guilfoyle and Peadar O'Meara, who did trojan work at this point.

We extended our line to the Level Crossing at Lansdowne Road with the intention of linking up with "F" Company in Carisbrooke House and "D" Company in Ringsend. We then proceeded to dig trenches on the railway line whilst other parties were removing the fish plates and sections of the line to prevent an armoured train or the like from passing through.

On entering the railway workshops we broke all the glass and erected barricades in the space in front of the building and a balcony from which we could dominate Grand Canal Street and assist in defending Grand Canal Street bridge which by this time was barricaded with vans from Bolands Bakery. "B" Company entered from Westland Row. They took over possession of the station and that part of the railway line up to Bolands Bakery. They then formed a part of the guard at the Commandant's headquarters in the Bakery.

When we took over the Bakery a batch of bread was being baked in the ovens. The bakers, realising the position, very courageously volunteered to remain until the bread was ready. They did so and withdrew the bread before leaving. This was of great value to the Garrison and to the people in the vicinity of the Bakery who were helped with the bread. This Company was under the command of Seán McMahon assisted by Seán Quinn and I think, James Fitzgerald.

"F" Company, the Dún Laoghaire/Blackrock Company was originally to have held the railway station and landing station at Kingstown Harbour, but owing to the small number of men on parade they decided to join forces with the remainder of the Battalion at Bolands Bakery. They did actually occupy Carisbrooke House at the junction of Pembroke Road/Northumberland Road but only for a very short time. What happened afterwards I do not know.

"D" Company should have held the area from the Level Crossing at Merrion to the river at Sir John Rogerson's Quay, but as their numbers were so few they had to retire on Bolands Mills at Ringsend which they continued to hold until ordered to vacate the position on Sunday.

"C" Company were to have occupied the line of canals from Grand Canal Street to Leeson Street with a connection with the Level Crossing at Merrion. "B" Company were to have occupied the railway station at Westland Row and Bolands Bakery at Grand Canal Quay with the Dispensary at Grand Canal Street as a first aid station. This was because of its proximity to Sir Patrick Dunn's Hospital in the same street immediately opposite.

"A" Company was to have occupied the railway from Bolands Bakery to Dún Laoghaire to link up with "F" Company. They had to withdraw to the Level Crossing at Lansdowne Road to occupy the line of houses at South Lotts Road from the railway bridge to Grand Canal Street. A house was occupied midway in Upper Grand Canal Street on the north side as a connecting link with the railway workshops at Upper Grand Canal Street. This railway workshop was a very important centre as if the enemy got possession they would be in a position to dominate the centre of the area. It was in this building that I made my headquarters for the fight.

Adjacent to "D" Company post was a very strong distillery building, the possession of which would dominate the entire position held by the 3rd Battalion. The Commandant decided that

it would be necesaary to have this building destroyed and we flew a flag from the tower. It was, to the best of my recollection, a plain green flag - I would say, about six feet by two and a half or three feet. It was the Commandant's intention that the enemy should identify this building as the area headquarters "D" Company's parade was so small that they found it impossible to occupy any position originally allotted to them other than Bolands Mills on the Ringsend Road.

The Commandant decided that after dusk he would have messages flashed by lamp from the building instructing our men not to fire on Zeppelins who were our friends and the dreaded enemy of the British. This was done to attract the attention of the British on the tall building so as to destroy it. The ruse worked as the British brought their artillery to bear on the building and gave it a great pounding for the week. An amusing incident happened in this connection during their bombardment of the distillery from, I think, the Show Grounds at Ballsbridge. Some of the shells passed over the building and fell into the Liffey. The Helga, a British patrol boat, was proceeding up the Liffey with the object of shelling Liberty Hall and O'Connell Street when they came under what they considered to be an attack from our positions, but it was really the shells passing over the building from Ballsbridge. The Helga then attacked the building from the river and ably assisted in destroying the position.

"C" Company occupied 25 Northumberland Road, the school-house on Northumberland Road and the parochial hall opposite the school-house, Clanwilliam House at the corner of Lower Mount Street immediately in front of the canal bridge with a clear line of fire to Haddington Road. The value of 25 Northumberland Road was that it also overlooked the exit from Beggars Bush Barracks. In addition, "C" Company had men in a builder's yard alongside Clanwilliam House. They were on a pedestal which enabled them to fire over the wall which was strongly built. The remainder of their Company helped with "B" Company to form the guard at

headquarters. A First Aid Station was set up in the Dispensary which was entered from Bolands Bakery. "D" Company took possession of Bolands Mills on Ringsend Road, a fine strong building. They were to have taken possession of the Distillery also but their numbers were too small.

"F" Company which, as I have already stated, were from Dún Laoghaire and Blackrock, took possession of Carisbrooke House. They were very few in numbers. When it was reported to me that the post had been evacuated I ordered the occupation of a house on Lansdowne Road to protect the occupation of the railway Level Crossing.

We had scarcely occupied our positions when 12 o'clock struck and we found ourselves in action. A volunteer force known as the"George's Rex" were returning to Barracks from some outdoor work. They were fully armed and before they entered the Barracks we opened fire on them. They replied as effectively as they could and some of them succeeded in gaining entrance to the Barracks. The fight was on. Almost immediately the bombardment of our positions began. Sorties were made and a continuous day and night sniping of our positions. Very soon the firing had penetrated the Gasometers which were very close to our positions and as the evening fell the smell of gas was stifling. Owing to the smallness of our numbers the work of preparing the position for defence was very heavy and had to be continued all through the night. As a matter of fact some of the sections were not relieved before Wednesday night.

Monday and Tuesday passed with the British searching out our positions and our attacking at any opportunity, however slight, that we got. In addition to this we had to keep the garrison at Beggars Bush confined to barracks. We succeeded in our efforts all day on Monday and Tuesday but on Wednesday we got word in the early morning that enormous forces were arriving at Kingstown.

On Tuesday evening I had heard that the "Daily Mail" was on sale in Dublin, being sold at one shilling a copy. The story was told to bring out the fact that people were willing to pay a shilling for a newspaper, but to me it brought a very different message. It made it clear that the port was open and if the British were able to get in their newspapers there was certainly nothing to prevent them from landing troops. The following morning my fears were fully realised.

By 12 o'clock the advance units had arrived at Ballsbridge. We put up whatever resistance was possible but their pressure of numbers brought them towards the city. When they reached the field of fire from 25 Northumberland Road, Lieutenant Malone who was in charge of that post with Volunteer Grace and two other men, gave them a warm reception so that they had to defer progress towards the city until they had cleared this post completely. Lieutenant Malone died on the stairway of that house defending his post just as he foretold on the Good Friday night after the conference.

During this time the British made a sortie on to the railway. I have explained that we held the Level Crossing at Lansdowne Road, but there is a laneway at the rere of the houses on the south side of that road ending against the railway wall, a wall of shall we say, twenty feet high. The British got ladders and scaled this wall, thereby entering the railway line between the post at the Level Crossing and its support in the trench on the railway line. Fortunately our connecting files discovered them and immediately opened fire. They rushed forward towards Westland Row Station, and as I happened at that moment to be inspecting the terrace of houses on the South Lotts Road I was able to collect six men and move them across the railway line to prevent this advance. The movement was successful and after a very close range fight at a maximum of say, 20/25 yards, we succeeded in beating the British back, and though they were able to take their wounded, I gave instructions to have the dead

buried. I had one man wounded in this fight - Christie Murphy by name. He was hot clean through the body, and as he staggered over to where I was standing during the fight, he fell at my feet and he said: "Well, Sir, I am dying for Ireland". He did not die, but lived many years afterwards to serve his country.

Seeing that I was left with only five men, one of whom was armed with a broken shotgun and therefore useless, I sent Mick McCarthy back to the base with this wounded man. I instructed him to report to the Commandant what had happened and to ask him for reinforcements as I was afraid the British would renew the conflict and that it was very important that they should not be allowed to proceed along the railway. The reinforcements I got when McCarthy returned were ten rounds of .303 ammunition.

I have spoken of the railway workshops. When we entered this building the foreman-in-charge of the place at that time expressed sympathy with our actions. He explained to me that a position on top of the building between two water reserve tanks would give me effective control over the two canal bridges whilst the other side of the same tanks would give me control over Upper Grand Canal Street. I immediately manned both those places and took the necessary protective precautions. The effect of this was that I was able to remove the men who were posted in the open on the platform at the railway yard as I was getting better results from the tank positions. The British soon realised the importance of this move and opened concentrated fire on the new position which we maintained until the end and in which Volunteer Joe Byrne was killed while fighting from that post.

The yard I have spoken of at the railway workshops was entered by the British and after seizing the position they proceeded to entrench themselves. I saw the danger of this move and I collected some men with fixed bayonets, one of whom I can well remember was Tom Traynor, afterwards executed in Mountjoy.

Lieutenant Guilfoyle was in charge of the upper floor of the railway workshops. He had his men posted on the windows commanding the railway yard. One of his men was seriously wounded, I think it was Leo Casey. I warned Lieutenat Guilfoyle that on the blast of a whistle he was to cease fire and from the bottom of the building we charged with the bayonets to clear the enemy. Immediately before we started a bullet scorched a line across Tom Traynor's cheek extending at least six inches long. I asked him if he was badly hurt. He said: "Oh no!, carry on", and we went into that attack shouting as only Irishmen can shout under such conditions.

We succeeded in clearing the post and got two or three rifles that they left when they retreated. During all this time the fight was developing from Mount Street Bridge. The enemy had succeeded in clearing the schools and the parochial hall but they were met with point blank fire from Clanwilliam House, from Robert's yard, from the railway line at Alexandra Basin and from the tanks on top of the workshops. The British made gallant efforts to cross the canal bridge and they repeatedly formed and reformed in their efforts to do so. This fight was started about midday on Wednesday and about 8 o'clock that night I saw the horrible sight of Clanwilliam House burning and knew that the bodies of our comrades were being consumed in the flames.

To me this was a horrible sight as I knew that Clanwilliam House was a keep which meant that the garrison were to maintain their post to the very last and that there was to be no evacuation of the building. This was agreed to on Friday night as the position was of such vital importance. I have mentioned that the house extended much beyond the line of the canal bridge and because of that it was an ideal position from which to defend the bridge. The small garrison of eight or ten men sent in under the command of George Reynolds, including James Doyle, Paddy Doyle (killed), William Rowan, the brothers Walsh, were all well chosen men and they certainly carried out their duties to their utmost strength. I actually saw the shower of grenades which ultimately set the house on fire and although I did everything humanly possible to prevent the approach to the premises which was made from the city side of the canal, as

the enemy occupied premises on the county side of the canal between the two Mount Street canal bridges, they succeeded in crossing the upper one, i.e. the canal bridge at Upper Mount Street, and they worked down along the canal bank and a terrace of houses. Unfortunately there is a projection from the house opposite Clanwilliam House in Mount Street which gave the enemy effective cover for their approach to the bridge on the line of houses on the canal bank, and a short rush in sections of fours brought them to the point where they were able to hurl incendiary grenades into Clanwilliam House. The dusk was falling, in fact it had become dark before this happened, and when I saw the place going up in flames I naturally thought of the entire garrison being lost. This fortunately was not so as four at least succeeded in getting out after the flames had got a complete hold of the keep. I was told by the Medical Officer of Health (Dr. M. Russell) afterwards that immediately he was able to do so he had the premises searched for human remains, and with the exception of one human leg not a particle of flesh or bone was found. This, he said, was interred in a proper christian manner. He also told me that after very great trouble he succeeded in finding the body of Lieutenant Malone buried by the British in the garden of 25 Northumberland Road, the house in which he died in the fight.

During the fight I saw the doctors and nurses from Sir Patrick Dunn's Hospital cooly performing their work of mercy for the British soldiers in the midst of the fighting. I think I can claim that not one of that staff (of course they were well marked by their white clothing) was wounded by a bullet.

I remember visiting the tank position and whilst I was talking to one of the men, the rifle which he had been using stuck to his hand and we had to pull his hand from the rifle leaving the skin thereon. The men on the railway line at Alexandra Basin were in a very favourable position to help in the defence of the bridge as in each rush forward, not only were the

British met by the frontal fire from Clanwilliam House but were also caught in the rifle fire from the railway and the workshops. The men in the builder's yard did trojan work also and they effectively prevented the reinforcements from Beggars Buch Barracks from joining in the attack on the bridge proper, but chief honour must go for the defence of Mount Street Bridge to the garrison of Clanwilliam House. We lost, all told, six men killed and many wounded, but these after treatment were able to carry on. The British casualties were two hundred and forty, of whom fourteen officers and men were killed.

The fire at Clanwilliam House was to us the start of a fearful nightmare of fires and explosions. The city was under view from the elevated position of the railway line and the burning really commenced on Thursday. During the day it was possible to keep the men engaged with the intense activities and the extra pressure on our positions. The enemy was using every possible means for blasting us out of our positions, but no matter how they battered us and no matter how intense their firing was, immediately they appeared on the scene in person, our men jumped into activity and were only too anxious to close with them and fight it out. It was a curious effect that the artillery fire had on myself, my officers and men. Needless to say, none of us had experience of being under artillery fire, or in fact in any danger at all up to the Monday of this week, but I know myself that I enjoyed the artillery fire and took a pleasure in counting the interval between the flash and the noise of the explosion. This was added to by the duel between the Helga and the land-based artillery. The bursting of grenades and the continuous machine-gun and rifle fire was quite another matter. Our movements were entirely crawling and it was only at marked portions of our positions that men dare rise from their knees.

Needless to say our supplies of ammunition were very definitely limited and we had to restrain our firing until we actually saw the enemy in sight, but this was so frequent and

they came in such numbers that our men were continuously on the alert. When going into action we had been supplied with hand-made grenades. They were so heavy and so unreliable that after the first day I decided they would be much more dangerous if they did explode, to our men than to the enemy.

In the whole garrison of, we'll say one hundred men, to the best of my belief there were not more than fifty rifles. A number of the rifles were Martini-Henry, Mark 6 and Mark 7. They, with the ordinary Lee-Enfield, used .303 ammunition, but in the case of the Mark 6 and Mark 7 Martini they fired a different .303 type of cartridge. This caused us great confusion and we frequently had to stop to change the ammunition supplied to the men even in the hottest of corners. In addition we had the Howth rifles which fire an altogether different ammunition, and then we had shotguns, the cartridge of which had been loaded with heavier shot. Just prior to the outbreak a quantity of shotguns of an inferior quality was distributed among the Companies. With this extra loaded shotgun ammunition used in these inferior shotguns they were positively dangerous. During the course of the fight someone contrived a means of inserting a couple of these inferior shotguns into a metal rainpipe and firing the triggers by the means of a string. This was, I would say, not very deadly, but the roar and the splatter of the shot was very demoralising on enemy approaches. I suppose they thought we had a new weapon of which they knew nothing.

During all this time the pressure against Horan's Fort was kept up and day and night the garrison was under fire. We had to maintain the position even after the battle of Mount Street because the Barracks was so close to our position that if the enemy got freedom of movement they would envelope the whole area in a very short space of time.

On Thursday night we were expecting an enemy approach along the railway line but it did not occur. Later the Commandant decided that the men should get some means of resting and

withdrew them into the malt stores of Messrs. Guinness & Co. situated on Grand Canal Quay. Personally I did not like the change. I felt that we were confining the men into a comparatively small space and that it would be an easy task for the British to isolate us. The place had its advantages inasmuch as the rere of the premises was on the bank of Alexandra Basin, but notwithstanding that, and that it was a strong building and with the inducements of rest whilst being protected as much as possible, I still thought it would be better if our men were in their original positions or in positions approximating to their original positions. After a couple of hours the Commandant did order the men back to their positions and that each Company was to occup its former position as nearly as possible.

On Thursday it was learned that the Battalion Vice-Commandant was not in the area. The Commandant sent for me and told me of this and said: "You will have to take the rank now". I said: "Certainly", and I became second in command of the Battalion and the area of which we were in charge. One of my first tasks was to get in personal touch with the various Companies and find out how the men were maintaining their morale. I had very great difficulty in making a line of connection with "D" Company but after some time I succeeded in doing so and was very happy to see Lieutenant Joe Byrne and his men and to know that the morale was high and that the men were really anxious for more to do. I warned Lieutenant Byrne of the danger of enemy approach along the railway line and as a consequence later on was very nearly meeting my own waterloo as I was in uniform and his men having been warned to watch the railway line, seeing it, opened fire on me.

"C" Company had been driven back into the Bakery and Dispensary. A lot of sniping was going on around that area and it was "C" Company's task to keep the enemy away from Grattan Street which leads into Mount Street, as this was a likely route

of approach by the enemy. They also had the cooking and the protection of headquarters to look after. "B" Company was on the Westland Row Railway Station and the line up to Alexandra Basin.

On Friday the strain was definitely beginning to tell on our small garrison and I urged the officers to so arrange that the men would be relieved and to insist on their taking what sleep they could immediately they were so relieved. This had an excellent effect. The food problem was quite another matter. We had made fairly good provisions in the way of food that would keep, but owing to the disorganisation caused by the demobilisation, a quantity of this food was not brought into the fight. We were, as I have stated, very fortunate in having ample supplies of bread. The cooking was comparatively easy as we had the ovens and fuel of the Bakery, but the real trouble was in getting the food distributed to the posts. I remember the men trying all sorts of contrivances to get the food distributed.

The firing of the enemy never ceased day or night and they had naturally by now got an accurate range of our positions. With the use of high buildings they were able to dominate a large amount of our area. In this connection I have seen it stated that the British occupied the tower of Haddington Road Catholic Church and the top rooms of Sir Patrick Dunn's Hospital, but I never saw the slightest sign of fire from either of these positions and I personally was satisfied that they were not occupied.

In connection with the distribution of the food I remember a 3-gallon bucket of tea having been brought up from the Bakery to the railway repair shop for the garrison. After all the trouble, and there was great trouble and personal danger in bringing the tea that distance, just as the men were bringing their mugs forward a shower of bullets struck the wall against which the tea had been set and it was destroyed. The men got no tea.

I think it was on Friday that one of the priests from the Catholic Church in Westland Row came into the position and heard Confessions. I did not see him but I was very pleased to know that such had happened as I knew that the envelopment was being made effective. Because of this when I saw the Commandant, I asked him if he had any orders in case we were forced out of our positions. I meant what direction we were to take as needless to say surrender never crossed my mind. I knew perfectly well that surrender would mean hanging and the only thing I dreaded was to be hanged. I wondered if they had any plan thought out of a concentration on the Dublin Mountains. The Commandant told me that no such plan had been made but that he personally would like to try it when he found that he could be of no further assistance to his comrades in the centre of the city. I agreed with him that it would be worth trying. I had kept this plan in mind and gave my own men and encouraged the other officers to give their men the most rest possible and to have the least number of men in the advance positions.

On Sunday morning Lieutenant Quilfoyle came to inform me that a member of Cumann na mBan by the name of ~~Agnes~~ Elizabeth Farrell was seeking an interview with the Commandant for whom she had a message. I instructed Lieutenant Quilfoyle to conduct Miss Farrell to the Bakery. I wondered if this meant the end. I have mentioned the shock I got early in the week when I heard of the English newspapers arriving. I knew that the ports were open and that despite the rumours which we helped in circulating among the men that the remainder of the country had risen, I was fairly satisfied myself that we were alone in this fight. It would be just as well if we looked back over the week before detailing the actual surrender.

Early in this statement I mentioned that Commandant De Valera had given exhaustive consideration to the possibility of tthis area for use as an outpost for G.H.Q. in the centre of the city. I have mentioned that a minimum garrison of 500 was in his mind and in ours when considering the situations.

Actually I had hoped that we would have at least 1,000 men and that was the reason why I tried to arm every man in the Company with some weapon in the hope that our members would be so great that one weapon would serve two or three men. I also knew that for the one engaged in actual conflict you would have work for at least another five. The position was a very extensive one and certainly required the detailed reconnaissance given it by the Commandant. I had been in very close touch with him from our Gaelic League days and we came in closer contact during our reorganising of the Volunteers after the Redmond split. When he became Commandant and made that important announcement at 41 York Street in which he warned even the ordinary private of the seriousness of the task before us I certainly warmed to him and my admiration was certainly increased. I knew that he realised as I did that the best of our hopes would be to die by the bullet and like most soldiers I personally had, and I expect he had also, a horror of being hanged. With our knowledge of Irish history it was the least we could expect for having commanded men in a fight, and as the fight turned out a desperate conflict for the British, I personally am satisfied that their casualties in our area were well over the 300 mark.

I have mentioned that Commandant De Valera astounded us by the knowledge he had of the Bolands area and of the study he had given to all aspects of the position before the Rising, and it was well that he did so, for when the time to strike came he found himself entirely without his battalion staff. He had no Vice-Commandant, no Adjutant and no Quartermaster; the Captain of "B" Company had only been appointed; no Captain in "C" Company and no Captain in "D" Company and with scarce one hundred men.

How the man carried on his job I cannot say for he had to do everything himself especially for the first few hours. Begley, Vice-Commandant, reported on Monday night. I passed him through my lines, but as already stated, he did not remain in the fight. Lieutenant Charles Murphy of "B" Company did what Adjutant's work he could, and Volunteer Michael Tannam did what he could with the

Quartermaster's job, but neither of them had been trained for the task.

From the moment that Commandant De Valera issued the order to me that I was to strike at 12 o'clock I knew he was going to have a very anxious time. He went about his business in a throughly methodical manner. I have seen statements made by privates in our Garrison, men who could not possibly have known anything of the amount of work the officers had to perform (and they were very free in the expression of their personal opinions of the officers) - that was very unfair. At no time up to Thursday did I receive any order or hold any discussion with the Commandant that was not in perfect order and clear with precise instructions as to what he required to be done. From Thursday I was the Vice-Commandant of the Battalion. I have mentioned that we discussed the possibility of being forced out of our positions, and I remember how clearly he had his mind on the route along the Grand Canal that we should attempt to take towards the Dublin Mountains.

I would like in this connection to say a word about Lieutenant Charles Murphy, an officer of "B" Company, who had been taken on the Commandant's staff. He was a tower of strength in all the difficulties of the week. A word should also be said for Volunteer John Byrne for his work in the First Aid Dressing Station.

In the case of my own unit with which I remained until the end, I have already mentioned the work of Lieutenant Guilfoyle, Peadar O'Meara, and now let me mention Seán Golden and Tommy Byrne. These men were outstanding in their organising efforts during that week. Guilfoyle was a tower of strength. I felt when leaving him in charge of any post that I was perfectly safe. When one considers the small number of men in "A" Company and the huge area they had to defend and that a large part of that area was open - our positions were within thrity yards of Beggars Bush Military Barracks on the main railway line from the

port at which thousands of British soldiers were disembarking - I cannot say words adequate to the admiration I have for them. Consider that one incident of a full platoon of enemy rushing along the railway and being stopped by the connecting files whilst I was placing six men in the prone position across the line. With that handful we beat the backs of the British and so punished them that they made no further effort in that direction.

"B" Company had an onerous job to do. They were fortunate in their location. "C" Company had borne the brunt of the fight at Mount Street Bridge and then withdrew to headquarters in the Bakery. "D" Company under the fine leadership of Lieutenant Joe Byrne had maintained its post at Bolands Mills.

When Miss Farrell saw Commandant De Valera the order was not countersigned by the Brigade Commandant of the Dublin Brigade, and Miss Farrell took the order back, but she returned very soon and satisfied the Commandant that it was his duty to surrender. He sent for me and showed me the order. He asked me what my reactions were, and I told him that we came out as soldiers under orders and that we would continue to carry on as such. He then instructed me to mobilise the men and be prepared to march down from the positions to the point of surrender, stating that he himself would, under cover of a white flag, inform the British that we had been ordered to surrender.

Having collected the various Companies and seen that the men were properly dressed and in the charge of their own officers, I marched them from Bolands Bakery into Great Clarence Street, thence to Grand Canal Street and into Grattan Street where we saw the Commandant and British officers. I passed over command of the Battalion to the Commandant. He ordered the ground arms. We could hear the annoyance with which the men threw their rifles, those who had them, or whatever equipment they had, on the roadway. We got the order from the British to put our hands over our heads and we were marched by them to Lower Mount Street.

We were searched and marched to the Show Grounds at Ballsbridge. I was told years afterwards that as we reached Mount Street Bridge a British Officer arrived at Mount Street - Merrion Square end - with an order that we should be brought to Richmond Barracks. When he saw the distance we had travelled he instructed the Officer-in-charge to carry on to Ballsbridge. This, I am personally satisfied, was very lucky for the Commandant and his officers. If they had gone to Richmond Barracks instead of to Ballsbridge many would have been at least courtmartialled. We proceeded to Ballsbridge and were halted outside the cattle pens. The particular pen in which I was put with fifty-six others had previously housed a bull. His bedding was swept out, and we, fifty-six of us, were put into the stable that had accommodated one beast and he had been supplied with straw to lie on.

After our arrival at Ballsbridge a doctor attended to the wounded and he was certainly very kind. Just on the point of surrender when I was bringing the line of my own men, i.e. "A" Company, down to the Bakery, Christie Byrne got shot in the throat. Two men were helping to bind him up and we were forced to lie flat on the earth and crawl along as best we could as the firing had not ceased, in fact it was becoming hourly more intense. When I thought they had had time to have bandaged Byrne I turned my head to invite them to come on in front of me and just at that moment a bullet passed the side of my head. It cut a vein and the blood flowed freely but the wound was in no way serious. It did necessitate a bandage being tied around my head and because of this I had to see this doctor in Ballsbridge. I am very glad to be able to say that he was in every way courteous and considerate.

After 12 o'clock on the following Tuesday we were taken out of the stalls and marched to Richmond Barracks, i.e. at the other end of Dublin. All sorts of threats of reprisals were made by the British before we left Ballsbridge. They had machine guns on

lorries in front of us and troops both sides of us and further machine guns taking up the rere. We got quite a hostile reception in passing through Thomas Street. People from the side streets were not in sympathy with the things we did.

When we reached Richmond Barracks the fifty-six of us were put into one room on the door of which "9 men" was painted. The guards in the Barracks seemed to have been totally inadequate. No effort was made to separate the prisoners into small batches or to prepare or cook food for them. We lived on bully beef, biscuits and tea. Not more than a dozen men were able to leave that room until 6 o'clock on Friday evening. With the dawn on Wednesday morning I was awakened by volleys being fired. I instinctively knew what was happening. I knew that some of our comrades had faced the firing squads. Each morning after I awoke before the shots were fired and after a minute or two the volleys would go off. Naturally I thought that the men were being shot in Richmond Barracks, but I know now that they were shot in Kilmainham Prison, quite a considerable distance away, but the volleys each morning certainly told their tales.

At 6 o'clock on Friday evening we were assembled on the Barrack Square, given a biscuit and a tin of bully beef. It was pouring rain. About 7.30 we were marched to the North Wall and put on board the Holyhead boat. The cattle lairs were our accommodation with the addition of the main hold left open. There was a very strong breeze out; in fact, so severe was it that at one time the engines stopped and those of us who were conscious believed we were being attacked by the Germans. We reached Holyhead about 8 o'clock the following morning and entrained for what we were to discover was Wakefield.

When we arrived at Wakefield we were put into separate cells and into solitary confinement. After three Sundays in that place rumour had it that there were two Catholic Priests attached to it. I demanded from the staff that our men should be permitted to attend Mass. Mass was offered on the following Sunday.

Conditions were very hard and the food was desperately scant. The men were locked up for 23½ hours out of the 24. We were paraded one day in the main hall and a British Major-General told us he had been sent by the War Office to find out if we had any complaints as to our treatment. The instruction I gave to my men was that they were to offer no complaints. During the time the Major-General was talking a man fainted. Two of the staff rushed forward to attend to him and one was heard to say to the other in reply to some derogatory remark: "If you were as hungry as he is, you would faint also".

About a week after the General's visit an order was issued that we could write letters, ask our people to send us parcels of food, that we were to walk two together during exercise and that the cell doors were to be left open for some hours during the day.

When exercise time came we were again paraded in the hall and the prison officials told us we were permitted to walk two together on the exercise yard but that we were not permitted to talk. I stood at the exit from the prison into the yard and told the men as they passed in two's that they were to talk. When the prison people objected I pointed out to them that it was absurd to expect two men walking abreast not to speak to each other. After another spell we were practically running the prison ourselves.

When the order came for removal to Frongoch I was in the very first batch to leave as I was told I was to be charged, but something had happened and they had decided to stop all further trials. When we reached Frongoch I was put on the Camp Council, i.e. the ten or twelve men who planned organisation. It was out duty so to organise camp life that the maximum amount of training for a resumption of the fight should be had. After some time I was one of a party brought to Wormwood Scrubbs. There we were interrogated by an Enquiry Commission, of which Lord Sankey was Chairman. When I went

there I was told to be seated, and in the most friendly manner possible I was told my name and address, the rank I held in the Irish Volunteers, and the position occupied by my Company during the fighting.

I was then asked did I know when leaving home on Easter Monday that I was going to fight, to which I did reply that I did not. The fight was to have started on Easter Sunday and when the men were demobilised, and the dis-organisation and demoralisation caused by the cancelling of orders I could truthfully say that when I was leaving home on Easter Monday morning I did not expect that we would go into action unless we were attacked by the enemy.

I was asked if I expected to return home on Easter Monday. I said: "Yes".

I was asked if I was a member of the I.R.B. I said: "No".

I was asked where I had spent Easter Sunday. I gave the particulars of my visit to the Club, 144 Great Brunswick Street, but made no mention of whom I visited there.

We were returned to the camp and after further lapse of time I was released and sent home

I arrived back in Dublin, I think some time in early August 1916. What a change had come over the people in that short space of time! When we were leaving Dublin the people were prepared to stone us through the streets, but as we returned the same people felt that they could not show us sufficient honour and we found ourselves acclaimed as heroes.

I found the National Aid Association with offices in Exchequer Street for the relief of the distress caused by the Rising. There was also an organisation run by Mrs. Clarke and Miss McMahon with offices in College Street. After some time these two were amalgamated and they became known as the National Aid Association. I was sent by the National Aid Association to

reorganise our friends in Liverpool, London, Manchester and Glasgow. Shortly after my arrival in Dublin trouble arose in Frongoch in what was known as the "ash-pit" strike. The British wanted our men to clean their guards' quarters in addition to keeping their own quarters clean. Our men refused to do this work and they were put into a separate part of the camp and given punishment conditions. All letters and parcels in and out of the entire camp were stopped. This created a lot of uneasiness at home and as they did not know what was happening in Frongoch they asked me if I would be willing to return and find out all the information possible, and I agreed to do so. Very Rev. Dr. Patrick Browne was the other representative from the National Aid Association. He went on Wednesday and I travelled on Friday.

When I reached Frongoch I knew a little of the district and I immediately proceeded to where I had heard the prisoners were detained. I met James Grace as I was walking along the road. He was in the punishment section. I told him what I was seeking and he gave me full details of the happenings. Just then I was recognised by one of the camp staff. I was placed under detention and brought to an isolated part of the road until the time arrived for my interview with the two prisoners in the camp.

When I entered the camp I was told that Peadar O'Brien was in the punishment section and that I would be able to see his brother, Owen O'Brien, instead. I saw Gerry Boland and as I was shaking hands with Gerry he slipped a little ball of paper into my hand. We had our discussion presided over by the censor, and as we were parting Owen O'Brien slipped another small ball of paper into my hand. I was escorted to the railway station and required to sit there for 2½ hours. During my wait on the platform Fr. Stafford, the Camp Chaplain, arrived, and, knowing that I had been visiting the prisoners, he was very anxious to open a conversation. He gave me further information. All this I brought back with my own report to the National Aid Association

and they made the fullest possible use of the information for propaganda purposes.

When Christmas came and the release of the men had taken place we formed a Prisoners' Aid Committee to work for the release of those of our comrades who had been sentenced. On that Committee were Cathal Brugha, Fred Allen, myself, and possibly Dermot O'Hegarty, Miss Plunkett, Mrs. Clarke and two other ladies.

A remarkable thing was that during the course of our work for the release of the prisoners both in Frongoch and in Lewes the Bolands played a big part. I have just described Gerry Boland's note which was the principal source of the propaganda which we used so effectively, and, like a bolt from the blue, we received a note from Harry Boland who was a sentenced prisoner in England. It was remarkable how this note came to hand. There had been trouble in the prison in which Harry Boland was and it was decided to distribute the men into different prisons. When an effort was made to handcuff Harry he fought vigorously against it. He was eventually overcome but not until the train had departed. When the prison people did succeed in putting the handcuffs on Boland they brought him by taxi to the prison to which he was being sent. During the passage of the car Boland, with his handcuffed hands, pretended to use his handkerchief. As he caught the handkerchief in his hand he jumped towards the window, threw the handkerchief out of the window, and the speed of the car being so great the warders were afraid tovgo in search of the handkerchief. Some woman in England picked up the handkerchief, opened the knots and found the note addressed to Harry's mother. This was the most damning piece of propaganda that we could possibly have got to use against the British. Full details were given of all the things that had happened, and I personally am satisfied it did more than anything else to throw open the prison gates.

When we organised a meeting to focus the attention of the

people on prison conditions the meeting was proclaimed. I was instructed to proceed with the meeting but at the last moment, about 11 o'clock on Saturday night, I got an order that the meeting was not to be held and that Beresford Place was to be put out of bounds for the Army on Sunday. I issued the necessary orders but some people did assemble at Beresford Place the following day, including Cathal Brugha and Count Plunkett. These two were removed by the police and in the melee a policeman was struck with a hurley and died as a result of the wound. This became known as the Mills Murder and it certainly helped to focus people's attention on the things that were happening in the prisons. The result of all this action was that the jail gates were thrown open and the men returned home in July, 1917.

Signed: Joseph O'Connor

Date: 13th October 1948

Witnessed: Seán Brennan (Seán Brennan) COMMANDANT

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