

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

BURO STÁINÉ MILEATA 1913-21

No. W.S. 280

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21

STATEMENT BY WITNESS

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 280

Witness

Mr. Robert Holland,
Hollybrook House,
Naas Road,
Inchicore,
Dublin.

Identity

Member of Fianna Eireann 1909 - ;
" " I.R.B. Dublin 1915 - ;
" " 'F' Coy. 4th Batt'n.
Dublin Brigade I.V's. 1914 - .

Subject

- (a) National activities 1909-1916;
- (b) Howth Gun-Running 1914;
- (c) Kilcoole "
- (d) Distillery, Marrowbone Lane,
Easter Week 1916.

Conditions, if any, stipulated by Witness

Nil

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STATEMENT BY MR. ROBERT HOLLAND,

Hollybrook, Naas Road, Inchicore, Dublin.

About 1909 Fianna Eireann was started in Brunswick Street (now Pearse Street). I attended the initial meeting. I was brought there by Liam Mellowes. Madame Markievicz (Countess) was also present at this meeting which was attended by about 25 people. The older people there were Bulmer Hobson, Dr. Kathleen Lynn, also a man whom I took to be Sir Roger Casement. There was also a man present named James Stritch who was a Corporation official. The Countess gave an opening speech or lecture and the whole gist of this was that there was an organisation then getting a very strong hold on the country known as the Baden-Powell Boy Scouts and she emphasised the fact that the purpose of this organisation was really to prepare the youth of the country for the British Army and engendering British ideas into them. It was, therefore, essential that an organisation be started in opposition and the Countess made reference to the fact that in previous centuries each generation had struck a blow for freedom and that probably in our time a blow might be struck and that at least those who would be in this would require some military knowledge. The organisation was formally initiated at this meeting. The first officers of this organisation were Liam Mellowes, Eamonn Martin, Paddy Ryan, a chap named Lonergan and Dr. Kathleen Lynn instructed us in First Aid. At first the organisation was confined to Dublin and it was only a matter of a few months when a Branch was formed in 34 Camden Street somewhere near O'Leary's Mills. I was transferred to this Branch on its formation. I was then 12 years of age. Our first official outing was the occasion of the visit to the country of the late King George in the year 1911. The
/Fianna

Fianna on the day of his arrival proceeded to Bodinstown as a protest and an oration at Tone's grave was given us by James Stritch. Some of us had kilts and others green shirts. Countess Markievicz wore uniform.

Our main activities were drilling, lectures in Irish History, Military History and training in First Aid, also scouting, semaphore and Morse signalling. We also held Irish classes. Shortly after our trip to Bodinstown, a general organisation of the Fianna took place in the City and more branches were opened. North Frederick Street was the second branch opened and others were started at Inchicore, North Strand, Dorset Street, Dolphins Barn and Liberty Hall. The Fianna were organised in Sluaghs and Battalion Council meetings used to be held at Surrey House, Leinster Road, Rathmines, the home of the Countess Markievicz. We also formed a Fianna band. A member of this band was a Tom Donoghue who afterwards became a priest on the English mission and fought in 1916 - other names that I remember were Christy Martin, a brother of Eamonn Martin and Mick Delaney who was the big drummer. The Drum-major was Christie Bolger. Sean Brady, T.D. was also a member of the Fianna. Con Colbert, Sean Heuston, Garry and Paddy Holohan, Paddy O'Daly, Hugo and Dery McNeill, Brian McNeill were other people in the organisation who became prominent afterwards. Seán Doyle, son of Peadar Doyle, T.D. who was afterwards shot by the Tans at Ticknock, was also a member. Kenneth Reddin, now a District Justice, was a member too.

Our favourite places for camping during the summer months were Malahide and Ticknock and St. Enda's. We carried on with our training and other activities including

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route marches every Sunday. The Irish Volunteers were started in 1913 and the elder members of the Fianna assisted in the training of the Volunteers. Con Colbert, Eamonn Martin and Sean Heuston went as whole-time instructors but still remained in the Fianna. There was also P. O'Daly, later O.C., A.S. Unit in Black and Tan days, later still Major General, National Army.

The Sunday of the Howth gun-running about 30 members of the Fianna who were over 12 years of age were mobilised for Parnell Square at 9.30 in the morning. We proceeded to Howth marching along with the Volunteers. I would say 400 men were in the Volunteers mobilisation. At Howth some of us were detailed to get food ready, but before it was ready a man whom I believe was Captain White asked for boys who knew the semaphore and morse signalling. Six of us were picked out. Paddy and Garry Holohan, Barney Mellowes, two others and myself composed the party and we were brought up to the Hill of Howth. At this time I saw a yacht about two miles out in the bay together with a number of small boats. Captain White was looking through a telescope and turned around and asked one of the group to send a message to the yacht. The message was "We are ready, are you?" This message was signalled by morse and after a short delay it was sent again in semaphore. We received a message back but I did not know what it was. Captain White then told us it was alright and we proceeded back to the town. When we got down we could see the yacht coming into the harbour and as far as I can recollect the Volunteers on the Pier were formed up in double file. Rifles were passed out of the yacht to the Volunteers on Piers, and were also packed into three or four cabs. We filled a track-car which was really a hand cart with ammunition and rifles and then lined up for home. We
/marched

marched back with the Volunteers. When we reached a point about 200 yards from the old sea wall at Malahide Road we met the British military and some kind of a row started. We immediately scooted back up Malahide Road with the rifles and ammunition that we had and dumped it in a deep dry ditch at the back of Charlemont House. It was Paddy O'Daly who acted as guide and told us where to dump it as he was familiar with that part of the country. I proceeded home to Inchicore and brought a rifle with me but no ammunition.

The next incident of note was our connection with the gun-running at Kilcoole. The previous evening, which was Saturday, we were mobilised for St. Enda's College. We did nothing but remained at St. Enda's until Sunday morning. During our stay there I saw Padraig and Willie Pearse there. They gave us a talk on the grounds of the College and they showed us Philpott Curran's house and some semaphore work. We were demobilised after breakfast on Sunday morning and went home.

A branch of the Irish Volunteers was started in Inchicore after a meeting had been held on the Sunday evening of the Howth gun-running. Up to this time Con Colbert was in command of the Inchicore Sluagh of the Fianna and held the dual position of Chief Scout of Ireland. I was second in command to him of the Inchicore Sluagh of the Fianna. Con Colbert took charge of one section of the Inchicore branch of the Irish Volunteers. I assisted him in the drilling and scouting of the Volunteers whilst still remaining in the Fianna. After John Redmond's speech at Woodenbridge offering the services

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of the Irish Volunteers to His Majesty The King, a general mobilisation of the Irish Volunteers of the Inchicore area was called for the Fifteen Acres in the Phoenix Park. Larry Kettle and Bob Page spoke at this meeting and advocated recruiting for the British Army but Willie Partridge, who also spoke, talked in favour of the Irish Volunteers saying that Home Rule was shelved and that we should at least have our own freedom before we fight for anyone else. Tom Clarke and McDonagh also spoke. After this a show-down was called for and I would say that only a small fraction of the men present joined what afterwards made up F. Company of the 4th Battalion of the Irish Volunteers. They numbered about 40 or 50 out of approximately 800. The Inchicore area was very much a British garrison district and in addition a large number of the instructors were ex-British Army men. This explains the high percentage of men who remained on the Redmondite side. After that our numbers got smaller as everything tended to favour the Redmondites who had the use of the Courthouse at Kilmainham as their Headquarters and being pro-British had much greater facilities than those who went over to the Irish Volunteers. Another enticement to these men was that they were offered half pay from their employers, principally the Great Southern Railway and Guinnesses, and were promised their jobs as well if they joined up the British Army. In this way the Irish Volunteers were only a skeleton of their original number. The ordinary training of the Irish Volunteers consisted of route marches, rifle drill and general field training. Organising for the Irish Volunteers continued throughout Dublin City and the country. F. Company trained at the back of the Workmens! Club, Inchicore, and

did its indoor training in Emmet Hall, Inchicore. This was the home of James Mallin who was executed after 1916. He was a Captain in the Citizen Army.

Some time later on, Liam Mellowes and Captain Robert Monteith were forbidden to enter the city or county of Dublin and an excursion of the Irish Volunteers from all over the country to parade in Limerick was arranged. Monteith at the time was in Limerick. I went on this excursion. The Volunteers carried rifles, revolvers and a sprinkling of rifle ammunition. On arrival in Limerick there was a public meeting. During the meeting there was a lot of interruptions and a few scuffles took place. There were contingents of Volunteers from Tipperary and Cork and other parts of the country. All the Volunteers were formed up with some bands and we marched through the city and got a very hot reception in Mungret Street and Irishtown where we were pelted with every kind of rubbish, including pots, pans, bottles and jam jars. Coming along a road parallel with the Shannon at a hall belonging to the Redmond Volunteers there was a band which started to strike up as we were passing for the sole purpose of causing confusion in our ranks. After the procession had come to a halt at a hall which was under the control of the Irish Volunteers, our rifles were taken from us and a guard was placed over them in the hall. We were then allowed to break off and move around the city but we were warned to keep out of certain districts as Limerick at that time was very much a British garrison town. In the evening we came back to the hall and were handed back our rifles and we then marched in military formation to the Railway Station. During this journey we had a repetition of the morning's hostility towards us and one outstanding feature was a

/Catholic

Catholic Clergyman who had a hackney car employed near the Railway Station encouraging the crowd to beat us out of the town. I did not know his name. There were some shots fired and a lot of the carriage windows of our train were broken. I left Limerick with a very bad impression of it and remarked to Con Colbert, who was a Limerick man, that the people of Limerick ought to dispose of their Treaty Stone. Colbert replied that there were bad sheep in every flock. We got back to Dublin without further incident. I might mention here an incident on our march through the city. A man in an upper window of a house was being held by two others, one on each side. He seemed very hostile towards us and about 100 yards down the same street a woman with a Crucifix and a Rosary beads was praying aloud for our welfare.

From then on we settled down to more intensive training and drilling. The policy of field work and manoeuvres, although carried out in a small way, gradually gave way to special services such as engineering, the handling of explosives, first-aid, signalling, bomb-throwing and instructions on street-fighting. About May, 1915, I was sworn into the I.R.B. by a man named Christy Byrne, who is still alive and who was at that time a fitter's helper in the Dublin Corporation. With him was Martin Kavanagh, still alive, and a moulder in the C.I.E., Inchicore. I was told to attend a meeting of the I.R.B. on the following Sunday morning at 12 o'clock in 41, Parnell Square. When I got there, there were about 20 to 30 men all of whom seemed older than me, and I was surprised to see an older brother of mine there, Dan Holland. He said to me "You seem surprised, but you needn't be because Frank (another brother of mine) and my father are members of another Circle." The Centre of
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my Circle was a man named Hegarty. After that meeting, Con Colbert told me to get some of the Fianna boys into my position in the Fianna as it was not too good in Europe for England and that every man was required in case an opportunity might arise, and that he wanted me to come whole-time with him in the Irish Volunteers. I was sent to two special classes in No. 2 Dawson Street, one was for lectures in street-fighting and the other was lectures on first-aid. That took up the whole winter of 1915 and the early months of 1916. About five weeks prior to Easter Week we had discovered that people entering No. 2 Dawson Street had been shadowed. I left No. 2 Dawson Street one night and a lady followed me as far as James's Street Fountain where I gave her the slip. Up to this time I had been Commandant of the South Dublin Fianna and on going whole-time into the Volunteers held an unofficial rank of Lieutenant.

About five weeks prior to the Rising a consignment of seven cases of American .22 rifles arrived in our house, 157 Inchicore Road, and from that time until the Rising great activity was maintained. To try our best for recruits all the leaders addressed street meetings. A spurt was put on to encourage the men to get their hands on service rifles and .303 ammunition. These could be bought from British soldiers who were returning on leave from France and other war zones. Prices ranged from £3 to £7 per rifle and if a soldier was drunk enough we relieved him of his rifle without any compensation. A lot of this was done because every Volunteer had to buy his own firearm and ammunition. Men who had previously

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taken part in the Howth gun-running valued the Howth rifle at 25/- as both gun and ammunition were far too heavy to carry, and every effort was made to replace it with a more suitable weapon. Every night now, there was something on, attending classes of one kind or another.

Early in Holy Week, on the Monday or Tuesday, I was attending one of the special classes in Kildare Street when a message came in that my presence was required upstairs. I went up and I would say that it was a meeting of the Volunteer Executive that was taking place. In the room I saw Tom Clarke, Major Sean McBride, Eamonn Ceannt, James Connolly, P.H. Pearse and Tom McDonagh and another whom I think was Ned Daly. Con Colbert was there too. When I went in conversation stopped and Con Colbert said to me after a moment or two "I think Bobby, that the time is near ripe" or words to that effect. He continued "You have a job to do and from now on there must be no slip-up." He told me to memorise the following :- "Go to Wellington Barracks, South Circular Road, and time yourself from there to the Cork Street gate of Ardee Street Brewery. Also strip the boxes of rifles at home, all bar two and have them fitted up. Your father will give you an address on the South Circular Road and make sure to deliver the two full boxes there." That was all he told me and I then left the meeting. On Spy Wednesday evening I was in Dawson Street when Colbert came to me and told me to bring the rifles of the five cases we had opened to the Brickfields at the Second Lock, Grand Canal, Dolphins Barn, at 8 o'clock the following night. I did this the following evening and when I got to the Brickfields, using a pony and cart to carry the rifles, I

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saw Colbert there and all the members of the Inchicore Volunteers which had by this time been formed into 'F' Company, 4th Battalion. There were also some new recruits. There were more men there than usual. I did not receive any message from my father but that evening Colbert gave me an address on the South Circular Road, to deliver the two cases of rifles to, that were unopened. The address was a house in Lennox Street. I do not know the name of the man who lived there but I was of the opinion that he was a lorry-driver of Thompson's Carriers, Brunswick Street, (now Pearse Street).

On Holy Thursday morning Barney Mellowes called to my house and told me I was wanted at St. Enda's College. This would be about 9 p.m. He said Colbert knew. I went out there on a bicycle. There was a lot of the senior members of the Fianna there, about eight altogether. Paddy O'Daly (later Major General) was in charge. We shifted two loads of rifles and ammunition together with a number of cases containing documents and papers to 41, York Street. These loads were brought by a horse and cart which I think was the property of St. Enda's. We finished this at about 4 p.m. and I then went home. It was later that evening when I took the five cases of rifles to the Brickfields.

On Good Friday morning Con Colbert called to my house at about 9 a.m. He told me to be ready to mobilise, on no account to leave the house unless on his orders and that the next mobilisation would probably be the last. I took this to mean that the fight was on and in fact I asked him if this were so. He said 'Yes'. He told me to mobilise any men that I thought would fight irrespective of whether they were members or past members of the Volunteers. A

/lot

lot of men had left the ranks of the Volunteers because they thought nothing would ever come of it and these were the men Colbert was referring to. I was not to start mobilising anyone until I got the final word to do so. Colbert also told me that morning that when mobilising it would be street fighting and to tell the men to bring the principal tools of their particular trades such as hammers, saws, picks, crowbars and such like. Also any man who had a scissors or hair-cutting machine to bring one. He also told me to go to Confession and make sure that the others went also. He passed a remark to me then or perhaps on the following Sunday that if we didn't get men to turn out he would fight on his own. He then left and I did not see him again until the following Sunday.

At 6 o'clock on Holy Saturday evening Tom Young came to my house and told me to mobilise and to bring 48 hours' ration on the mobilisation. The mobilisation was for Sunday at 10 o'clock at Emerald Square, Dolphins Barn. When my father came home on Saturday night, he, my brothers Frank, Dan and Walter and myself had a family meeting. Frank, who was my eldest brother, made a decision that the four sons would go out if my father stayed at home. Frank had already posted us and he pointed out that my mother was a cripple and we had a young sister then about seven years of age. My father kicked up a row about this decision and said he had spent all his life both in the Fenians and the I.R.B. and that he would go out whether we went or not. We could not persuade him to stay at home and left it at that.

I might mention here that Con Colbert was a man of small stature, only about 5'3" or 5'4" but of good stocky build.

build. He was a fluent Irish speaker and spoke a lot of Gaelic. He was a non-smoker and a teetotaler and had one ambition only - to free Ireland. In fact he never spoke about anything else unless it was connected with Irish History and all his lectures centered around the subject of 'Why we failed'. His answer to this question always 'Drink and want of discipline and loose talk'. He was at this time a junior clerk in Kennedy's Bakery and several times he told me himself that his wages then were 27/6d. a week. All his pocket money went for equipment for the members of the Fianna boy scouts. He was very particular about dress and went into minor details on everything. He often lectured boys on how they should keep their bodies. He used to tell them that they should wash their feet as often as they washed their face. He was a very good-living Catholic. He spoke with a broad brogue. Another of his sayings was 'First serve God and secondly serve your country'. He was very popular in the Fianna and held the rank of Chief Scout of Ireland. This popularity he carried to the Volunteers. You could never doubt anything he would tell you and he was never abusive, and I am of the opinion that he got the death he prayed and wished for.

I was to start mobilising on Easter Sunday morning. Con Colbert arrived by himself at my house at 6 o'clock that morning. He told me the mobilisation was off pro-tem but I was to mobilise all the men telling them to stay in their own homes and that they were not to go any distance from home without leaving word where they were to be found. I was also to give them instructions as to their equipment and rations. Colbert then went away saying that further instructions would be sent me. I then proceeded to contact

all the men and finished this work about 6 p.m. that evening. I did nothing after that until Monday morning. I knew by Sunday morning's paper that the general mobilisation had been cancelled but a number of us were in doubt about it being permanent as we expected that a leakage of our intentions would get out and the Press would be against us. I stayed at home Easter Sunday evening until about 8 p.m. when I went to the Cleaver Branch of the Gaelic League in Donore Avenue where there was the usual Sunday night Ceilidhe. I stayed there until 10.30 p.m. and then came home and went to bed. At about 7 o'clock on Easter Monday morning Tom Young called at the house and told me that he had mobilised the district as far as The Black Lion, Inchicore, and as far as our house on the Inchicore Road for Emerald Square at 10 o'clock that morning, and that I was to mobilise as many as possible as quickly as possible for the same place and time but I was to be sure to be there myself at Emerald Square at 10 o'clock. My brothers Dan and Walter did some of the mobilising and I finished this work at the Third Lock at about 9 a.m. I had only time to do Inchicore Cottages, Tyrconnell Road, Ring Street and the last I did were the three brothers Power, Archie, Bill and Liam, at Bluebell Cemetery. I then went home, got all my equipment together and proceeded to Emerald Square, somewhere about 10 a.m. There were then about 100 Volunteers in the Square with Eamonn Ceannt in charge. Other officers there were Willie Cosgrave, French-Mullen, Seamus Murphy, a Lieutenant Murray, a Lieutenant Egan, Con Colbert, A Captain Tommy McCarthy and several other officers whom I did not know by name. All these officers wore full uniform. There was a lot of excitement and at about 10.30

/Colbert

Colbert came to me and asked me to hand him over all my equipment and asked me if I had carried out the mobilisation. I told him about Tom Young calling to me that morning about 7 o'clock and that I had started the mobilisation when he had left off. I told him that my brothers, Dan and Walter, had taken on the other sections of the Company area. Dan and Walter were on the Square at this time. Colbert then took all my equipment from me and handed me a .38 nickel-plated revolver with about 20 rounds of ammunition. He says "What about your job on the barracks?" I told him it would take me two minutes from the South Circular Road entrance of Wellington Barracks to the Cork Street entrance of Ardee Street Brewery. He asked me if I had a bicycle and I said "No". He then took a bicycle which I believed to be the property of a Lieutenant Egan (still alive in the Garda, Kilmainham Barracks) and handing it to me said to go to the gate of Wellington Barracks and to watch the military and if I saw anything suspicious such as troops forming up on the Square or the filling up of cars with troops, and if anything like this occurred previous to 11.15 I was immediately to return to Emerald Square. If nothing occurred I was to stay there until two minutes to twelve and then proceed to Ardee Street Brewery. Colbert also told me then that the positions they - the 4th Battalion under Commandant Ceannt - were going to take up were that he would be in occupation of Ardee Street Brewery, Seamus Murphy in Marrowbone Lane Distillery, the Headquarters with Commandant Ceannt would be in the South Dublin Union and that Captain Tommy McCarthy would occupy Mount Brown (Roe's Distillery). I proceeded to Wellington Barracks as directed and stayed there.

/Nothing

Nothing abnormal occurred and I left it at two minutes to twelve and went to Ardee Street Brewery. I was in mufti with knickerbockers, long stockings and leggings. When I was leaving Emerald Square I would say there were about 150 men there with about 50 members of the Cumann na mBan. There was a very small percentage of men in full uniform and with a good few men in part-uniform. There were all makes of rifles and shotguns with revolvers of various types. Some carried swords and bayonets. Some of the men even carried pikes of the crudest kind. P.S. Doyle, who is still alive and was Quartermaster of "F" Company, told me he would be with Ceant acting as Section Commander or Adjutant.

When I arrived at Ardee Street Brewery almost on the stroke of 12 o'clock, the gate of the Brewery was locked with a very rowdy crowd of women of the poorer class around it. These consisted mainly of British soldiers' wives and their dependents. They were expressing in no uncertain fashion their sympathy with the caretaker of the Brewery who they said was manhandled by a lot of Sinn Feiners who had gone in and beaten him up. I knocked on the gate to get in and after about two minutes knocking and kicking at the gate I found I could not get in. I made up my mind to come away when my brother, Dan, and a Volunteer, Mick White (still alive) came around from the Coombe end of Cork Street with a hand-cart. They had some of the American pattern rifles on the hand-cart with some boxes of ammunition of a very mixed type. There was also a case containing hand grenades of British Military pattern and an assortment of tinned foods. The hand-cart was packed to capacity and was very heavy. Immediately I saw them I ran over and stopped them coming to the gate. I told them there was no chance of them getting in there and suggested

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that we should go back along Cork Street and try to get down Marrowbone Lane to the Distillery. They agreed and we moved off. Just before we got to the head of Marrowbone Lane we could distinctly hear rifle fire from the canal direction. It was fairly heavy and seemed to come from the direction of James' Street Harbour and Marrowbone Lane. People started to run in all directions and we came along Cork Street having decided not to chance Marrowbone Lane. We got as far as Dolphins Barn and pulled the car into a Mrs. McCabe's yard mistaking it for 'Mocky' Keogh's yard. A young boy, a member of the McCabe family and a member of the Fianna, knew me and told me that 'Mocky' Keogh's yard was up about 20 yards further and that we could get there by crossing at the back of the houses. He said he saw men there. My brother Dan and Mick White remained with the hand-cart in McCabe's yard whilst I proceeded along the back of the houses along an open laneway to 'Mocky's Keogh's yard. When I got there, there were about 14 men there. I did not at first know who they all were, but two of them were in uniform. One of them was a Sergeant named Martin Kavanagh and the other had a Captain's uniform on him. This was Philip Cosgrave. There was Joe McGrath, who was in mufti, whom I had previously known and a chap named Mick Riordan. I did not know who the others were but they appeared to be of the 'grocer's curate' type. Joe McGrath spoke to me. I gave him all the information I had and explained all that happened since early morning. I told him about my brother, Dan, and Mick White being in McCabe's yard with the stuff and he told me they had a big lot of stuff with them in 'Mocky' Keogh's yard. By this time rifle fire appeared to have got heavier and there were a few explosions. Joe McGrath asked me would I chance my arm

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to get in touch with one of the positions held by the Battalion. I said I would and made up my mind to go back and try and contact Con Colbert. I was on foot and people were coming up Cork Street towards me. Some of these advised me not to go down Cork Street as there were some soldiers killed there. I decided I would wheel into Marrowbone Lane as I was then nearest to it and try to contact Seamus Murphy. About three quarters of the way down in an elbow bend of the road a lot of people had congregated on the bend and a British soldier was lying dead on the centre of the road. The people advised me not to go any further but I said I lived down that way and went on my way. I knocked at the big entrance gate to the Distillery and a fellow from inside shouted out "Who's there"? I recognised his voice and said it was Bobby Holland. It was Ned Neill who was a Sergeant in 'F' Company and I had known him personally. He immediately opened the gate and let me in and handed me over to a Lieutenant Murray (still alive) who brought me to Seamus Murphy who was then a Captain. I explained to him all that had happened and told him I had failed to contact Con Colbert and mentioned about my brother, Dan, Mick White and the hand-cart. I asked him what way were they fixed and he told me he had about 50 men and about 50 women. He said that neither Con Colbert, Ceannt or Dan McCarthy had refused to take any of the Cumann na mBan with them and that they had all come with him. He told me that he was very short of riflemen. I told him what was in the hand-cart in Mockey's yard where my brother, Dan, and Mick White had brought it. He asked me if there was any chance of I getting back there and bringing all the men and stuff back with me. I said I would do it and Lieutenant Harry Murray brought me back to the entrance gate. We there made

/arrangements

arrangements with Ned Neill who was on the gate that at the quickest possible moment I would try to get back. I was then let out over the wall and I proceeded along the 'Back of the Pipes' which was a detour. I got back to Mocky Keogh's yard and reported to Joe McGrath (of Hospitals Trust, still alive) and Philip Cosgrave (brother of Willie Cosgrave and told them my mission. They immediately proceeded to get a horse and cart yoked up and they filled all the stuff into the cart. When I got back there other men had joined those already there. Two of them I knew. One was Joe Bowman and the other Joe Gorman. When the horse and cart had been loaded up we pulled it out and proceeded down Cork Street at top speed, running. It was only a distance of about quarter of a mile. We ran all the way, turned into Marrowbone Lane and the gate of the Distillery was thrown over and we entered being received with cheers from the crowd inside.

It was about 3 p.m. when we arrived in the Distillery. They were all in good spirits there and they had posted the small garrison that they had to the best advantage, one man to each room. The rooms were like dormitories about 80 feet long by about 40 feet wide. These rooms were used as stores for kiln-drying wheat. The building lay between Marrowbone Lane at one end, Forb's Lane on one side and the Canal in front. At the right-hand side was the 'Back of the Pipes'. There were eight windows on each side of each room with ceilings about 9 feet high. There was a lot of air ventilators in each wall about 12 inches from the floor level and these had small wooden shutters which could be pulled to one side. The walls of the buildings were

/about

about 2 feet thick, and we used the ventilators as port holes to fire out through.

When we arrived Lieutenant Murray took command of us. There seemed to be more women than men in the garrison. In fact all the girls who were there were members of the Cleaver Branch of the Gaelic League and had been at a Ceilidhe the night before. All these were also members of the Cumann na mBan. A few of their names are Josie and Emily O'Keefe, Josie McGowan, two O'Flaherty girls, two O'Byrnes, the three Cooney sisters (still alive) and a Miss Cumiskey who was, I think, in charge together with the wife of Captain Semus Murphy who was in charge of the whole garrison. There were also two Monaghan sisters. At this time the garrison had not occupied the other portion of the Distillery the far side of Marrowbone Lane. We were brought into what could be called the Main Hall. It was a large round room with a distiller's vat in the middle of the floor. This vat had just been cleaned out and when we got there they were filling this vat with water, using hose pipes and buckets from all available taps. Both men and women were working at top speed. Captain Murphy asked how many of us could use rifles and he said he had quite a number of men who had little or no knowledge of the rifle. The 14 of us all had good knowledge of the rifle and Martin Kavanagh, Tom Young, Mick Riordan, Mick White, my brother, Dan, Joe Gorman, Joe McGrath and myself were all very good shots and had perfect knowledge of both Lee Enfield, Martini and 'Howth' rifles. Lieutenant Harry Murray was next in command to Seamus Murphy and he began to put us in position. I was brought up to the top floor and Murray told me that if any more help came into the garrison he would send me relief. This top floor was my home for /that

that night and in fact for the remainder of the time we were there. Murray also gave me some brush handles and some long sticks with about a half dozen caps and hats. I put the caps and hats on the long sticks and put them at the edge of the windows so that they could be seen from outside and with the intention of drawing fire from any British military outside. Murray then brought down a Volunteer who had previously been on duty in this room. I afterwards^o learned that the Volunteer was a barber named Keogh who lived in High Street. The room I was posted to was something like this :- As one entered this room from a blank wall there were windows on my left which commanded a laneway called 'The Back of the Pipes' and Fairbrothers Field, which was about 12 acres square. This field borders Guinness's buildings, Rialto, as far as Dolphins Barn. In front and to my left was Cork Street. I had grand observation of both North and South sides of the Canal banks, along the back of the South Dublin Union as far as Dolphins Barn bridge over the canal for about a half mile. There were four windows and four ventilators to the front and I had a full view of Basin Lane Convent, Christian Brothers' Schools, Basin Lane and Basin Street and of course the canal was in front as well. I could see all over the roofs of the houses in that area and in the distance a portion of the James' Street section of the South Dublin Union. About forty yards in front of me on the other side of the canal was a blank wall which ran from Rialto Bridge to James' Street Harbour, a distance of about three-quarters of a mile. James' Street Harbour was on my right and the wall was unbroken for the whole length that I could see. This wall was from 10 to 12 feet high and on the canal bank opposite me there was a gable end of two houses appearing over the wall with a single up and down

/window

and I would teach her to load them and leave them on the floor at my hand, as I might have to fire from either side of the building. She brushed away all the wheat into the middle of the floor. I opened up all the ventilators and she went away and brought back with her a Lee Enfield and a Mauser and haversack full of ammunition. The windows of the room were all open windows with neither shutters or glass. I never fired from any of these windows but only through the ventilators. Whilst Josie O'Keefe was away getting the rifles I saw British troops pass over Rialto Bridge from Kilmainham. I did not fire at them as they were too far away. I showed Josie how to load the two rifles and she remarked how heavy the Mauser or 'Howth' rifle was. She learned the job of loading them very quickly. As a matter of interest each cartridge for the 'Howth' rifle was about 6 inches long and weighed about a quarter of a pound. It had a lead top about an ounce and a half in weight and made a very large entrance and exit hole.

The time was now about 5 p.m. At this time I got my first sight of khaki in the cabbages in Fairbrothers Field. There was a rise in the middle of the field like a place where manure had been stored and it ran along for about a hundred yards parallel to the Distillery and about 200 yards from it. Between the field and the Distillery lay the 'Back of the Pipes'. It had a double wall about 7 feet high and between the near wall and my right were the gardens and yards of the houses on one side of Cork Street. The soldiers appeared to have been in extended formation a few feet apart and they appeared to be preparing to attack us in that formation. I told Josie

/O'Keefe

O'Keeffe to go down, and report what I saw to Captain Murphy and also to warn those directly underneath me or anybody else she met on her way down. She was then to come back to me as soon as possible. The soldiers appeared to delay and one of them seemed to walk up and down giving them some orders as to what to do. I sighted this particular individual on my rifle but before I had time to press the trigger of my rifle I was taken by surprise myself. A volley of shots rang out both from over and under me and then I fired. The soldiers went down and returned the fire. This fire kept on until dark. Josie O'Keeffe kept loading up the rifles for me and then Josie McGowan came along with another rifle. The two of them stayed with me until it was almost dark and they brought me up a can of tea and some bread and a can of fresh water. I was completely blackened at the time from the powder of the 'Howth' rifle. When the girls had gone I took off my shirt and left it off and put back my coat and waistcoat. In using the 'Howth' it was a bad weapon for street fighting. Flame about three feet long came out through the top of the barrel when it was fired and a shower of soot and smoke came back in one's face. After three shots were fired from it, it would have to be thrown away to let it get cool and the concussion of it was so severe that it drove me back along the floor several feet.

The girls told me that they had to report in the main hall to Miss Cumiskey and Mrs. Murphy as all Cumann na mBan girls must stay in the Main Hall through the hours of darkness. I could hear all the time distant firing which at times appeared to be heavy. I also heard some very heavy explosions on occasions. I had no knowledge of where they came from. Throughout the night we adopted a kind of

/sniping,

sniping, front and rear of the buildings, but we could not use much ammunition. I must have slept a little through the night although I do not remember. On the following morning, which broke fine and sunny, I was 19 years of age on that day, 25th April. My brother, Dan, came up to wish me a happy birthday and we wondered what part my father and my brothers, Walter and Frank, were playing and where they were. The British are now realising that it is a real fight and are not leaving themselves so exposed to our fire. They formed up in Fairbrothers Field and on both sides of the canal bank and I have got up another Lee Enfield rifle. Josie O'Keeffe and Josie McGowan came along with my ration of tea and bread. Some people have evidently come in through the night or early morning with information and I hear a few more men have come in to give us a hand and that we are holding the whole City. I hear that all the country is marching on Dublin and it is only a matter of a few days until we will have the job done. All we have to do is to keep it up until they arrive. The shooting starts again. About 6 a.m. I got into a sort of side elevator or fire escape on the side of the building at the Dolphins Barn end thinking this would be of better advantage. I am no sooner in that when a volley of bullets go through the galvanised iron and into the ceiling. I find myself then unable to get out. I had to stay in this position for some hours. Eventually I got out and Emily O'Keeffe tells me that my brother, Walter, is down below and that he wants me. I went down and met him. He told me that my father had collected some shot guns and ammunition in Joe Bowman's house in South Square, Inchicore, and that my brother, Frank, was fighting in the South Dublin Union. He had heard that the Germans had landed in Galway, and that

the Volunteers from all over the country were on their way to Dublin. I told him all the names of the men who were with me in the Distillery who lived in the Inchicore district. Walter, who was only about 15 years of age at the time, took off his celluloid collar and Captain Murphy took it and wrote a dispatch on the inside of it to be delivered to Commandant Ceannt in the South Dublin Union. I then went back to my post and continued to fire as occasion demanded.

In the forenoon of Tuesday, Jack Saul came upstairs to help me. He told me he had been with Captain T. McCarthy who had mysteriously disappeared and that the whole garrison had left. This garrison had taken over Roe's Distillery at the top of Mount Brown and James' Street and opposite the South Dublin Union front entrance gate. He (Jack Saul) had gone home but had got out of his house again in Brookfield Road. He said a lot of British soldiers had been killed along the Canal banks at Dolphins Barn and also in Fairbrothers Field. He then told me the story about the Germans landing and about the country Volunteers and that we had a good chance of getting help from the men in Dublin. The firing still continued all round us. Josie O'Keefe tells me at this time that a messenger boy from some poultry shop had dropped in six chickens which were meant for the officers' mess in Richmond Barracks. He was a Fianna boy named Maguire who lived in Dolphins Barn. I remember taking notice of a woman leaning out of a window at the gable end of a house opposite me on the front side of the Canal. My brother, Walter, returned with a home-made cake for me from my mother for my birthday. He also brought one to Mick Riordan from his mother. We knew now that enough help has come in to man the whole distillery and that Tom Young is looking after the footbridge which crosses over from our part to the other side of Marrowbone Lane. The bridge was

elevated about 30 feet high. Ned Neill is still in charge of the main entrance gate. All the men on our side are by this time organising a raid on the dead soldiers for rifles and ammunition during the night and Con Butler and myself are picked to cross the wall. The British troops nearest to us were withdrawn about 4 o'clock in the evening from Cork Street, Fairbrothers Field and the Rialto Bridge end, and also from the Canal Basin side and Guinnesses Brewery. These troops must have come from James's Street and Thomas Street direction. We had engaged them for about two hours previously and had inflicted heavy losses on them. One of them in particular ran all the way up to us and got as far as Forbes Lane when he was killed. We took in his rifle and ammunition. We then saw some stray Army horses roaming about; one of them had the body of a Lancer soldier dragging along the ground and the dead man's foot was caught in the stirrup.

About 6 p.m. on Tuesday we learned that British troops were being landed at Kingstown and that they were being beaten back from entering the city, and the feeling was that if we only held out now we would soon be out and around ourselves. The sound of explosives and rifle-fire was continuous and plain for us to hear in the direction of the city but we were in great spirits as we felt we were winning all around. Darkness then set in and my brother, Walter, returned. He told me quite a lot of soldiers were dead in Fairbrothers Field and he thought there was a good chance of us getting their rifles and ammunition which were lying about. He told me that Mick Butler (still alive), a Fianna boy from Dolphins Barn area, and himself could show me where they were lying. I then made arrangements for Jack Saul to keep a look out for me whilst I went down to the Main Hall for a wash which I
/badly

badly needed as I had no one since early on Monday morning. I felt in a bad way for fresh air and my shirt had been taken away by Emily McGowan to be washed. When I got to the Hall they were saying the Rosary, My nose and throat were bothering me as the dust of the wheat affected them. I was met by a Sergeant Kerrigan (still alive) who was a few years older than myself. Discipline was a thing we did not require as every man and woman there never queried authority. I had been for two years Commandant of all the Fianna in South Dublin and had seven years experience in the Fianna. Although only attached to the Volunteers, I thought I had a roving commission. Kerrigan asked me where I was going and on telling him he asked who gave me permission to leave my post. I explained I was in a bad way. He said that was no excuse and that I should have sent one of the girls to him before dark. He sent me back, but after a few moments came after me and gave me permission. I then told him I was going on an expedition as soon as it was dark enough and he said he had no authority to let me out, but that he would see Lieutenant Murray or Captain Murphy and get permission from them. About half an hour later Kerrigan brought me down to Captain Murphy and Lieutenant Murray. I explained to them what I was going to do. They said it was alright and that my place would be filled. I then went back to the Mein Hall and got washed but could not get my shirt. I felt fine after the wash which was from a bucket in which other things had been washed, as the water seemed to be scarce.

At 10 o'clock that night I crossed the wall and landed in a cottage garden next to the Distillery yard where I picked up Walter and Mick Butler as arranged, at the

/entrance

entrance to the Back of the Pipes Canal end. We crawled into Fairbrothers Field and made very slow progress and the time seemed very long before we picked out the first dead soldier. I cut off his web equipment and one of the others took his rifle. In this manner we stripped quite a lot of dead soldiers. In all we got five rifles. I carried two, Butler carried two and Walter carried one. We tied the web equipment on us and found it very hard to crawl along the ground and not make noise. We got back to the wall and tapped it to Mick O'Neill on the opposite side. He took over the rifles and ammunition and we went back for another trip. We brought in another five rifles and more ammunition. I then returned and reported back and was sent up to the fourth storey of the building to Jack Saul. He told me that whilst I was away he thought he heard some one digging at the Canal double gate right under us. He knew I had crossed the wall to the left of us but he could not account for this noise. I listened and heard this noise, like chains rattling. Something very heavy was being moved about. Saul shouted out "Halt!" but the movement still went on. I shouted "Halt or I fire!" and we both shouted that we had it covered. We then decided to fire at the gate. Both of us fired and then a lot of confusion and noise ensued. A few minutes later Sergeant Kerrigan came up and shouted that some one in our wing had shot and killed 'Mocky' Keogh's horse. The horse had been rambling around the yard, nibbling the grass and throwing the collar and hames up around its head.

Some time during the night of Tuesday/Wednesday, Con Colbert evacuated Watkins' Brewery, Cork Street, and came to our post at Marrowbone Lane. Just at daybreak on Wednesday morning he sent for me. I went to the Main Hall and he greeted me with all smiles although he looked very tired.

/He

He asked what had happened to me and I told him all about myself and about Dan and Mick White and how they and I had come to be in Marrowbone Lane, also all I had picked up in Mocky Keogh's yard. I asked him how many men he had and his answer was "Less than a score". I then asked him why he had left his post and he said it was not an important post and covered nothing of any strategic importance. I then noticed that he was very lame and I asked him if he was wounded. He said "No" but that he had sprained his ankle about 12.15 on Monday jumping off a barrel in the brewery. We had a long talk of all that happened since he sent me away on Monday morning, as it seemed weeks to me. Colbert seemed very disappointed at the response of the Fianna and the poor mobilisation of the Volunteers and passed the remark to me that if they had turned out we would need no outside assistance. All the time he gave me the impression we were going to win and that if only one had turned out with him he would have carried on. Whilst I was speaking to him we got word that a dairy cart with four churns of milk had been commandeered and that a breadvan was also got. Con Butler then appeared. He had been on an expedition of his own all around Cork Street and Dolphins Barn area. Con was very fond of a 'pint' and had been a cooper in Guinnesses. He was at this time about 32 years of age, of exceptionally powerful build and about 5'10" in height. He told us he had got 3 pints of stout in a pub in Cork Street and that whilst there he learned that a Dublin Fusilier home on leave from France had a rifle in a house somewhere near Cork Street. Con Butler had called on him and took his rifle. Con Butler had also called to a house where a British Officer lived. This house was

/called

called 'Walton House' and was somewhere on the Canal. Butler took this officer's topcoat, which was a very good one, and had this coat with him all through his internment in England.

On Wednesday about 10 a.m. a young man drove three two-year old cattle down Marrowbone Lane. The gate was opened by Ned Neill and the cattle walked in. I then learned that Tom Young was directing all these operations from his position on the bridge overlooking Marrowbone Lane. I was sent for and reported to Captain Murphy and Con Colbert. I was told to kill one of the cattle, as I was then an apprentice butcher. I got a jack-knife and a few penknives and sharpened them in the yard on a sandstone. When I had them ready I tied up one of the cattle to a winch and killed it with a sledge hammer; I dressed it and a lady named McGrane had come in with information and whom I had known well. I gave her the heart of the dead beast. Colbert was very anxious about the hide and he asked me a lot about curing it to make mocassins. I knew nothing about this and he went and started to cure it himself. To my knowledge we had only one wounded casually up to this and that was Paddy McGrath with a head wound. This was a near miss as the bullet had grazed the top of his head. I was sent back to my post at about noon and there was very little firing at or in our post, only an odd shot. But in the distance the firing had increased and the explosions were heavy. A kind of fog came up from the city. About 1 p.m. bullets began to hit our building but we saw only a few soldiers in Fairbrothers Field with some scattered along both sides of the Canal. We took 'pot' shots at them and it seemed that more bullets hit the walls all around the Distillery.

/But

But no mass formation of soldiers was in sight. I got to one porthole at the Dolphins Barn side and Jack Saul took the Canal Harbour side. Some bullets began to come through the windows hitting the inner wall. Splinters of bricks and mortar started to fly and twisted bits of the lead bullets flew around in all directions. We got word that Mick Liston was wounded up in the 'Crow's Nest', a name that we had put on the air vent that ran along the length of the wing in our section. This vent had no cover or protection and only consisted of wooden louvers. Liston was wounded in the head and was taken down and dressed. It was the first time I realised that I could be killed. I then learned that nearly all the men who had come in with Colbert were divided up among this side of the Distillery as it occupied the best position and was the most open side to the enemy.

My brother, Dan, big Jim O'Callaghan, Dan and Faddy Troy, Mick White, Mick Riordan, Arthur, Billy and Liam Power, Tom and Martin Kavanagh, Bob Young, Bill Kelly, Jack Saul and myself, all had the two top storeys to ourselves. That was practically the whole Company that had turned out, bar two and these were my brother, Frank, and the Quartermaster, Peter Doyle, who were in the South Dublin Union garrison. Tom Murphy and Darcy had been arrested at Dolphins Barn Bridge at 12 o'clock on Monday and Colbert made a check and accounted for 36 members turning out, out of a total of about 400 who had been mobilised the previous Holy Thursday.

Liston was not long away getting dressed when he was back with a piece of black coat lining stitched round his head like a cap. We asked him not to go up again, but he insisted. I might mention that Mick Liston was the best

/rifle

rifle shot in 'F' Company at any rate - in fact the best rifle shot in the whole 4th Battalion. We all had a great affection for him, and his wounding brought out the first bit of bitterness in us. We all set our teeth to get revenge. Mick was no sooner up in position when he was down again with another head wound, this time more serious. As he passed me I saw blood running down his face. He said he was alright but I got a chilly feeling in my stomach. He was about 20 years of age. Our hearts sank and I saw the tears run down Josie McGowan's face and Josie O'Keefe's as they brought him down. I now shifted my position to the front of the building commanding the Basin and the Canal. Logs of wood were in front. I scanned the roofs of the houses in Basin Street, Basin Lane and James' Street Christian Brothers' Schools. The bullets kept coming in from all sides and the lads in the "Crow's Nest" had to evacuate it as it was being penetrated continuously by bullets. In about an hour Liston came back. I noticed a woman that I had seen the day before leaning out of a window just opposite me. She had a hat, blouse and apron on her and I got suspicious. I told Mick O'Callaghan that I was going to have a shot at her. He said 'No'. I said it was a queer place for a woman to be and that it was queer she should have a hat on her, as she must have seen the bullets flying around but took no notice of them. I made up my mind. She was only about 35 or 40 yards away from me and I fired at her. She sagged half way out the window. The hat and small little shawl fell off her and I saw what I took to be a woman was a man in his shirt sleeves. Just then I saw the tops of rifle barrels behind the tree trunks under the window. Mick Liston craved to get back up again. He put up a good case that he was the one who got the bullets and that he should have the honour of eliminating them (meaning the soldiers that were hiding behind the tree trunks), now /that

that he knew where they were. Up he went and we all came to the 'Ready', covering the top of the tree trunks and each taking a certain point to aim at. We had to wait about ten minutes. A few shots came from the hidden soldiers, but the soldiers did not show themselves. After another few minutes, another fusillade was fired at us during which one of them made a mistake and showed himself. Liston potted him. The soldiers then broke cover and ran along the wall towards the South Dublin Union and Rialto Bridge. They had to run about three quarters of a mile during which they were under our fire. There were twelve in all and everyone of them was hit. From that time on we were very careful and kept a look-out for snipers.

The next event was a sniper in a tree about 200 yards on the Dolphins Barn side of the Canal. He was sitting on a branch half way up and with the trunk of the tree between him and us. We all saw him and Mick Liston potted him out of it and this soldier remained hanging out of the tree all that day. As darkness came on the firing eased off but the usual odd shots and thuds hit the building from time to time. Then we began to see the glow from the city. As night fell, the light of this glow spread over the whole city. Shots and heavy explosions could be heard frequently. We got word that the city was on fire but that we had only few casualties whilst the British were suffering heavy losses. We certainly believed this, as this was our own case. We had no one killed and only two wounded and these were back in the fight again. If all the garrisons were like ours, and we had no doubt that they were, we were doing very well indeed. We had only to bide our time. We must win and none of us thought otherwise. Failure was the last thing
/that

that I or the rest of us thought of. After reading and thinking over our history of the short quick battles, we could not lose now. We were more than two days and a half fighting and that was longer than four previous rebellions put together. A trickle of reinforcements kept coming in and we were all in high spirits, all young men determined to win and this was our only object. I and the rest of us had made our Easter duty and God would see us on the winning side. I was thinking all about my school days, the lectures that the Christian Brothers gave us each Friday from 12 o'clock to 1 about the Mass Rock and the Famine, of Blessed Oliver Plunkett and of Emmett and Tone, McCracken and the Sheares. All these came back to my mind in the dark of the night.

At about 11 o'clock on Wednesday night I got word that a priest was in the Main Hall and that I was to go down for Confession. I went down and told him I had been to Holy Communion on Easter Sunday. He gave me his blessing and I went back to let another man down to him. At dawn on Thursday morning we saw that British troops had taken up positions all around us. Trenches had been dug on both sides of the Canal, also in Fair-Brothers Field and we settled down to a 'battle royal'. All rifles are brought into play and Jack Saul, my brother Dan, Mick White and myself took up positions facing four different directions. At the usual time the girls brought along our breakfast, tea and bread. I did not know what had happened the beast that I had killed the day before, as we got no meat. The girls kept loading the rifles and we were allocated three rifles each. I occasionally used one of the Howth guns and I was driven about 12 feet across the

/floor

floor every time I fired it. Some of the soldiers break and made a run for cover to the outer boundary wall of the Distillery which brings them nearer to us. A lot of these must have reached this wall by 2 o'clock that day. We sent down one of the girls to the Main Hall and Sergeant Kerrigan came up. Four others and myself were brought down to the yard and given hand grenades. There were about 30 other men and all the women were put into the Main Hall. There were about 20 men in the Hall at the yard entrance and Con Colbert instructed us in the use of these grenades and in the use of very crude pikes which Mick O'Neill (Ned's youngest brother) was making at a portable fire in the yard. They were being made out of scrap iron picked up around the Brewery Yard and put on what looked to be broom handles. They only consisted of a piece of steel with a sharp point and I began wishing that I had taken the soldiers' bayonets as well as the ammunition. Jack Saul then heard some talking on outside the Canal gate where he was at the time and he and some one else threw one of the grenades over the wall. We heard some screeching and shouting outside and a lot of moaning. As a result, the soldiers at the outside of the wall ran away from it and they were fired on by a volley from the Distillery. I saw Con Colbert smile as he sent us back into the building again saying "that stops that attack for the present". When I got up on top again, the soldiers had become scarce but I could see a lot of bodies all around outside the wall and up as far as Dolphins Barn Bridge. I could just see a pit and Red Cross men working at it putting bodies into it at the Bridge. Other Red Cross men started to dig a pit in Fairbrothers Field and we stopped firing in that direction. As night approached again the firing eased off but we could see the bright red glow over the city.

/Throughout

Throughout the night we all slept in our turn for a few hours although it seemed that we only closed our eyes. All during the night the firing and banging continued and still our dogged spirit is 100% with us all. We are winning and nothing else matters. We will surely get that help. The Germans could not be far from Dublin now and the country Volunteers are showing the way. They have beaten the British in Athlone, Limerick and Galway days ago and they have only to hammer the troops in the Curragh Camp. We have eliminated all the troops that landed at Kingstown and we are only mopping-up the crowd that came down from Belfast. All this is what we were told by the odd stragglers that came in and we readily believed it all as we know that the soldiers we have killed belonged to a varied lot of regiments. We have seen their cap and collar badges. Some of these we have in our possession. The Notts, the Derbyshires, the West Kents, the Berks, the Wiltshires, the Royal Irish Rifles, the Dublin Fusiliers, the 4th and 5th Hussars, 17th Lancers, South Irish Horse, Enniskilling Fusiliers and Liverpool Rifles, and several others, so we thought there could not be many more left. We knew that Germany was beating England in France and so a few more days wouldn't matter. We carry on with our spirits getting higher.

My brother Watty and Jack Butler brought in a message that the men in the Great Southern and Western Railway are putting engine boilers on lorries got from Guinnesses to act as armoured cars, that these have camouflaged holes painted on them and that they are being brought out with British troops to fight against. The men supposed to be doing this work were Fitters on the Railway. Trains are supposed to be bringing up flour, bread and potatoes. Watty told me Jack Doyle had been captured by a plain-clothes policeman at
/Dolphins

Dolphin Barn Bridge and that soldiers and D.M.P. men had searched our house and the houses of all the men out with us around the Inchicore area. He told me my mother and sister were in good spirits and that Mick Liston's mother and sister had been beaten up by the people of Murray's Lane and Richmond Road; also that Miss Mulhall's shop had been looted and that Feadar Doyle's house had been practically wrecked by the same people. I asked him what the men in Inchicore were doing that they did not stop this and he said it was the "ring-paper" gang that got loose. A Constable Murray, 'A' Division, D.M.P., was on the raid on our house and told my mother that they would manure the lane with our bodies.

Friday morning broke. The weather was still summer-like with no rain and quite warm, even during the night. We thought the City must all be on fire as we saw the big red glow through clouds of smoke. The British soldiers were not so plentiful this morning. They only had pot shots at us now and again and we adopted the same methods any time they left cover. The Cumann na mBan girls then went to crush some wheat to make cake bread. News came in that the Great Southern and Western Railway armoured cars were operating in the City and that a trainload of troops had passed the Inchicore works. I was brought down to kill another beast and I saw that a side of the beast I had previously killed had been used. I have, however, no recollection of getting any meat for my dinner and I asked for some. I was told it was Friday and handed a can of soup and some bread. We were all in good form and those on the ground floor were engaged cleaning up the place. There was a feeling that we were going to be there for a long spell. I met Con Colbert and talked to him about our early days in the Fianna, our summer camps on the strand at Malahide and how we scraped up money to send the young boys /to

to the Circus that used to pull in at the Green at Malahide. Also about our camping at Ticknock, the struggle it had been to keep a hall for the Fianna and to pay for it. He told me that he had very little left after he had his digs paid for out of his 27/6d. a week. I had never been worried with much money as I was still an apprentice with 15/- a week and owed 30/- for a Lee Enfield rifle. Colbert asked me how I got on with the mobilisation on Easter Monday and we there and then made out a list and checked up all the men of the Company we had about a month previously. Lieutenant Larry Murtagh of Chapelizod had been handed over a new Company called 'G' Company about a month before this and had been made a Captain. This Company consisted of men living in Chapelizod, Blanchardstown, Palmerstown and Clonsilla. I told Colbert my brother Dan had got word to Mick Fox and Fred Foye of Chapelizod and that they had mobilized 'G' Company. It was easy to check up 'F' Company as it consisted of practically a few families of brothers. There were four Hollands, Bob, Dan, Frank and Watty. There was Mick and Ned Neill; there was Tom and Martin Kavanagh, Bill, Liam and Arthur Power, Paddy and Christy Byrne, Joe Bowman, Con Butler, Joe Downey, Darcy, Peadar Doyle, Joe Gorman, Bill Kelly, Mick Liston, Tom Murphy, Dan and Billy Troy, M. O'Callaghan, M. Riordan, Mick White, Tom and Bob Young. I told Colbert that Tom Murphy and Darcy had been taken prisoners on Monday morning at Rialto Bridge and that my brother Watty had told me this. The majority of us were from 18 to 20 years of age. Colbert was then about 23 years of age. Colbert all the time seemed to think that we must win and said to me that we must come in at the peace negotiations when the European War had finished. But there was no

/mention

mention of any of us surrendering at any time. The whole garrison on this day more or less relaxed and the chaps were finding their bearings and making themselves acquainted with the different parts of the buildings. I met some lads from other Companies who had come in. Joe Kennedy and Pat O'Brien, members of the Cleaver Branch of the Gaelic League, told me that while on inspection around in the offices in the Distillery they came across some £15 in gold which they had handed up to the Quartermaster, Captain Phil Cosgrave. Joe Parker, Bob Dempsey and J. O'Toole informed me on that day that they had been out to Woolton House on the Canal and had found a lot of First Aid equipment and some soldiers' uniforms. They told me Con Butler was already in the house when they came in.

About 4 p.m. on Friday troops appeared on Rialto Bridge and we were all rushed into positions. It became evident by their movements that we were going to be routed if possible. They had field kitchens as far as we could see and were being fired on from our garrison in the South Dublin Union. Some of these troops came down the Canal and started to fire on us, others spread into the fields and we started to reply to their fire. This continued until darkness and it eventually died down. I sent down one of the girls to ask permission to go down to the Main Hall. I went down. This was about 10 p.m. and the usual Rosary had been started. When this had finished, we had a talk with some of the girls as we all knew one another. During this chat some of the girls suggested that we should get some kind of music and have a ceillidhe for Sunday night. Alice Corcoran said she would try and

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get her brother's violin if any of the Fianna boys would go for it. The main hall was lighted up with candles but no light was visible from outside. When I got back to my post the City looked like an inferno; every place seemed to be burning and there was the usual firing and heavy explosions. We now knew that the British were using artillery and we expected that we would be the next to come under artillery fire. But we hoped that the Germans and the country Volunteers would arrive in time. I was thinking that we should move out into the streets and made up my mind to suggest this to Con Colbert. Although he was not the original officer commanding the garrison, he seemed to have been given the command from Captain Seamus Murphy, as far as I could gather, it was Con Colbert and Harry ^{MURRAY} ~~Murphy~~ ^{Hollan} who were giving all the orders.

On Saturday morning all the British troops had been withdrawn out of range of our fire and appeared to be waiting for reinforcements. We were all warned to stand to our posts early on Saturday morning as a massed attack was expected. Colbert and Harry ^{MURRAY} ~~Murphy~~ ^{Hollan} inspected us. I made my suggestion to Colbert and he said he would see to it. A few stray soldiers came within rifle range and got hit, but all Saturday was an uneventful day.

Sunday morning found us in much the same way, but the British troops appeared to have been completely withdrawn as none appeared to be in sight. We had an easy day and except for a few that remained on look-out duty the rest of us could ramble all over the Distillery. I went all around the place and got an idea of the total number of men in the garrison and from this I would say there were about 100 men and 40 women. A lot of people called in on Sunday and I spoke to Miss Bushell who, I believe, was instrumental for /the

the safe evacuation of Con Colbert and his men from Watkin's Distillery on the previous Tuesday night or Wednesday morning. She told me that none of the positions occupied by the Volunteers had been taken from them, that the Magazine in the Park had been destroyed and that the troops which had come from England had suffered very heavy losses and were completely beaten and were in complete confusion all around Dublin. She could not give us any information regarding the country only she had received the same rumours that we had heard all ^{the} /week. We were still in the best of spirits and the girls had baked some cakes and were getting ready for the ceillidhe in the Main Hall which had previously been cleared. We were looking forward to this when at about 6 p.m. a despatch came from Commandant Eamonn Ceannt at the South Dublin Union which was the Headquarters of the 4th Battalion. We were told that this despatch had come from Ceannt and it was to the effect that no one was to fire on any British soldier he would see in uniform without first reporting to one of the officers. A rumour went around that a truce was being called. Captain Murphy, Lieutenant Harry Murray and Con Colbert seemed to be excited and a lot of the older men of the garrison were talking together. When Con Colbert broke away from them I approached him and asked him what the excitement was and had anything serious happened. He said - "Bobby, I do not know what to say or think, but if what I think comes true our cause is postponed to a future generation. We are to surrender unconditionally and I cannot forecast what that will mean. We must have been let down very badly as we have not had the support of our people that we had expected." This conversation took place about 6.15 p.m. on Sunday evening. I went back up the building and as I came to each man that

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was left on guard who were all excited I broke the news I had as easy as possible. They were all dumbfounded and a dejected appearance replaced the previous good spirit.

At about 6.30 p.m. Tom Young sent down word that Volunteers and an ambulance were approaching the Distillery from the James' Street and Guinnesses side of the Brewery. I saw a priest, a British Army officer with a Volunteer officer in front marching in military formation. They passed our front gate entrance before they came to a halt. They had a white sheet on a flag pole. The horse-drawn ambulance was the one attached to the South Dublin Union. I afterwards ascertained that there were some wounded men in it, one, in particular, was a Lieutenant French-Mullen, a Volunteer officer who was badly wounded. Commandant Ceannt, a British Army officer and a clergyman, who was either a Carmelite or a Franciscan, entered the front gate. Ceannt shook hands with Colbert, Murphy and Murray and the six of them had a conversation lasting only a few moments. Colbert saluted Ceannt and walked back towards me in the yard. I asked him what was the news and he said that all was over. When I heard this I felt kind of sick in my stomach, putting it mildly, and everybody else felt the same, I'm sure. It came as a great shock. Colbert could hardly speak as he stood in the yard for a moment or two. He was completely stunned. The tears rolled down his cheeks. I glanced at Captain Murphy and he had turned a sickly yellow. Harry Murray bowed his head. Then Colbert pulled out his whistle and blew it. He gave a general order to those around him to bring down all the garrison to the yard. When all came down, he told us to 'fall in' in double file. He brought us to 'attention' and numbered us off. We totalled slightly over 100. Colbert then told me he was after receiving a despatch
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from Commandant Ceannt to cease fire, that the Supreme Command~~ers~~ Headquarters had given him that instruction and that Commandant Ceannt and his forces were already outside the Distillery. Whilst this was proceeding, one of the men in the rear let a shotgun fall and it went off. The pellets wounded Joe Gorman in the leg. Ceannt, the British Army officer and the Clergyman had withdrawn to the front gate. Colbert then announced that we were surrendering unconditionally and that anyone wishing to go or escape could do so. We were all in a state of bewilderment but I have a distinct recollection of Joe McGrath (of Hospitals Trust) saying :- "Toor-a-loo, boys, I'm off." He crossed the wall. Some others broke also. Then Colbert reformed us up, numbered us off and we 'sloped arms' and we marched out of the Distillery through the front entrance with Colbert at our head. A lot of men had gathered around outside and I heard Eamonn Ceannt distinctly say :- "Where were you men when you were wanted." We fell in behind the South Dublin Union ambulance which was in the rear of the South Dublin Union garrison. The Cumann na mBan girls were formed up in our rear. I heard then that the South Dublin Union garrison had some casualties, killed and wounded. We marched in military formation down Marrowbone Lane and into Cork Street, through Cork Street into The Coombe and up Patrick Street, turning into Bride Road. On our route we were subjected to very ugly remarks and cat-calls from the poorer classes. An incident occurred here which I think should be recorded. When we were almost at the Coombe Maternity Hospital, two drunken men insisted on falling in with us. They were ejected from our ranks several times on the route but eventually must have got into the ranks in my rear, for about two months later I saw these two men taking their exercise in Knútsford Prison. As we marched into Bride Road the British

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military with fixed bayonets were formed up two deep on each path. They had machine guns posted at Bride Street end facing us and the military then closed in behind us. Orders were given for us to halt and people were ordered to get away from the windows of the buildings on each side and to close them. We were then put in double file facing what is known as Iveagh Baths and told to 'stand at ease'. Colbert gave all military orders up to this. Then a military officer from the path in front of us gave the command for us to lay down all our arms on the road in front of us. He then ordered us to march forward towards him and when we got to the kerb brought us to a halt. A military lorry was then passed down behind us and soldiers started to throw our rifles and revolvers into the lorry. A few shots went off as a few of the late owners had forgotten to extract the cartridges. When all had been taken up we got the order 'About turn' and a group of officers and N.C.Os gave every man of us a minute search. Any spare cartridges and revolvers found were thrown on the road, gathered up and thrown into the lorry. When all this was over we were ordered into fours and we got a 'right turn' and marched back into Patrick Street and then turned up into Nicholas Street, then into Christ Church Place, High Street, Thomas Street, James' Street, Mount Brown and Kilmainham. There were few people on the streets up to Kilmainham Cross, but at this point a crowd had gathered. It would then be about 8 p.m. and was falling dusk. At Kilmainham we were jeered at and as we passed by Murray's Lane both men, women and children used filthy expressions at us. 'F' Company which was mainly made up from Inchicore, heard all their names called out at intervals by the bystanders. They were "Shoot the Sinn Fein . . . s". My name was called out by some boys and girls I had gone to school with and Peadar Doyle

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was subjected to some very rude remarks. The British troops saved us from manhandling. This was the first time I ever appreciated the British troops as they undoubtedly saved us from being manhandled that evening and I was very glad as I walked in at the gate of Richmond Barracks. I had played with some of that mob in my childhood days: Delaneys of Murray's Cottages, McLoughlins, Briens, Ennis's, Wrights, Cregans, McEvoys, Harrisons, all who knew members of 'F' Company personally. *as I glanced at Miss L. Malhalla's shop which was just outside the BKS: it was a complete Rock*
Inside Richmond Barracks, we were packed choked full into a billet and three or four buckets were left in to act as latrines. The door was locked and we had hardly room to sit down. We were in this room all night. Everyone seemed to be in serious thought and no one wanted to converse as we were practically jammed tight together. Some one suggested that if one side of the room tightened the other half might get room to sit down and rest for a while. This was done. Martin Kavanagh, Tom Young, Mick Liston, Con Colbert and myself were together and luckily on the side that got the first rest. We sat down on the floor with our backs to the wall. I opened the conversation with "What will be the next British move?" Tom Young answered - "The Lord only knows". Martin Kavanagh said "I would not be surprised if we were shipped to France", and elaborated on this. We are all trained men; they must be in a bad way on the various fronts in France as the Germans were beating them on all sides and I am not surprised if the troops they have for replacement are of the same standard as those that have been sent against us. They will be very poor dependants, no doubt. They may divide us into small groups so that we will not be in a position to be of any value to the Germans or detrimental to them. Mick Liston was of the
/opinion

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opinion that we would be shipped to some of the colonies as they had previously done so with other insurgents, or if not, that we would all be executed. After a pause Colbert spoke. He said that from his point of view he would prefer to be executed and said "We are all ready to meet our God. We had hopes of coming out alive. Now that we are defeated, outside that barrack wall the people whom we have tried to emancipate have demonstrated nothing but hate and contempt for us. We would be better off dead as life would be a torture. We can thank the Mother of God for her kindness in her intercession for us that we have had the time to prepare ourselves to meet our Redeemer." Colbert then called us all to recite the Rosary for the spiritual and temporal welfare of those who fought and died in the cause of Irish Freedom, past, present and future generations. We were in darkness and remembering no more, I fell asleep.

Monday morning. It was daylight when my brother, Dan, woke me up. I was cramped and stiff. The barrack-room door was open and the soldiers of the guard were handing in some half-pound tins of bully beef. They were being passed over the heads of those in front to the lads at the back with the order that two men were to divide each tin and to keep the tin as it would act as a mug to drink the tea with. We then got four dog biscuits each, Dan and myself staying together. After the meal an armed escort of about eight soldiers came to the door and an N.C.O. called out "Twenty men for the latrines". When these went out they were told to waste no time as they would have to be back before any others would be let out. After all had gone we were paraded on the Square. Our names and addresses and occupations were taken. After this we were /marched

marched off into what was known as the gymnasium hall. It was a wooden structure with a galvanised and glass roof. The entrance was a wide door and inside was a half wood partition and glass. When we were inside the hall an officer gave the command to keep to the right-hand side. He then gave us orders to sit down on the floor. We were in rows of about 10 deep. I was about three quarters of the way up the hall and could see the glass partition down at the door which was on my left. At the entrance I could see Johnny Barton and Detective Officer Hoey with whom I had personal acquaintance a few years later. There were Detective Officers Smith, Bruton and Inspector Barrett and many others whom I did not know, all members of the Detective Force. In groups they came to the glass and scrutinised us. After about twenty minutes they came in, in groups of twos. Barton and Hoey were together. They created an impression on me that will never leave my memory as they cynically walked slowly down along the hall with a sneer on their faces. Barton had an ash plant walking stick and Hoey had an umbrella. As they scrutinised our faces slowly Barton now and again said "You, and you and you, get up and over to the other side of the hall." Hoey took up where Barton left off. Anyone Barton missed, Hoey got, using the same tactics. The other detectives followed the same procedure. These called themselves Irishmen, the very scum that kept us in British bondage. That identity parade will never leave my memory, as I saw Con Colbert, Eamonn Ceannt, Willie and Phil Cosgrave, Major McBride, Peadar Doyle, Gerald Doyle, Mick Hayes, Willie Corrigan and scores of others in derision being pointed out and shouted at "Get up and over here". This went on for the best part of two hours, and

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when they had completed their job to their satisfaction they then marched them out of the hall. Those of us who were left must have looked a very squalid sight as now our leaders and intellectuals had been taken away from us. The men they had taken had gone through a hard eight days and nights ceaselessly fighting with very little sleep or rest. They looked very tired and worn out and I will say here that some months later when I learned that some of them had been executed I had no pity for them as it must have been a happy release, at least for one, that was little Con Colbert, for he had as much as told me so. I was glad he got his wish. When they had withdrawn the leaders, or those whom they thought were of importance, orders were given that anyone under 18 years of age was to leave the remainder and get to the other side of the hall. All the boys of the Fianna who had been acting as dispatch carriers, some only of tender years whose fathers or elder brothers had participated, stood up and went across the hall. Others who did not like to part with their elders stayed behind. My brother, Watty, got behind Dan and myself. He wanted to stay with us. Seán Doyle wanted to go with his father who was after being picked out. The detectives returned and segregated all the smaller boys and they were then brought out of the hall and all of us that were left were brought back to the barrackroom where we remained until Tuesday evening. We began then to ask ourselves again what was going to be the ultimate end of each group. The Cumann na mBan girls had been taken from us the previous night and we had no idea of their fate or their whereabouts. We made enquiries from the military guards, some of whom claimed to be Irish. We got such answers as "They are being sent to England to work on munitions" or "They were sent to Kilmainham or to female prisons to work in the laundries."

At about 6 o'clock on Monday evening, a lot of prisoners were paraded at one end of the barrack square. I would say they numbered between 200 and 300. There was a lot of excitement amongst us as we saw them being put in military formation. At the other end of the Square about the same number of British soldiers were lined up with fixed bayonets and full war equipment. We saw the troops move forward towards our comrades and get in double file on each side of them. Then an advance guard of troops was drawn up near the entrance gate with a similar number in the rear. Orders were given and the whole lot moved out. We then got tea and dry biscuits and started speculating again on what was going to happen to the rest of us. We slept on the floor, heads and points and woke up on Tuesday morning still tired and dirty. We were left in the barrack room all day. We saw some civilians in small groups coming and going under escort on the Square. On our rear or east side of the building where we were we could see an occasional leader or officer of our forces being escorted from one building to another. We picked out Colbert, Ceannt, Cosgrave, Peadar Doyle and many others as they were all brought out singly between four soldiers and an N.C.O.

At about 6 o'clock on Tuesday evening, all in our room were brought out into the Square and the proceedings were the same as I have already described the night before. We all heard the orders being given to the escort that 'any of us who stumbled or faltered, to stick the bayonet in us.' We marched out the gate and there met the mob of Sunday night. They had gathered more forces. They subjected us once more to cat-calls and filthy expressions and followed us as far as Kilmainham Cross where a road block had been erected. We marched down John's Road, Kingsbridge, all of which was familiar to me. I wondered would I ever see these places again. But that
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mattered little to me as I was sick at heart. Along the north side of the Quays down to the North Wall. There were very few people on the streets. We could hear the advance guard of soldiers giving orders to clear off the streets - 'Get in and close those windows'. As we passed O'Connell Bridge I saw the O'Connell Street ruins smouldering and sections of the Fire Brigade still using hoses on the ruined mass. On we went to where the B. and I. sheds are now. We were put into the hold of a cattleboat as that was the kind of smell that was in it. As the last of us got in the lights were switched off and we found ourselves locked in. We had^{got}/no rations leaving Richmond barracks and the only thing we next knew was the boat moving and we were out to sea being tossed about. A lot of others and myself got sick with the heat and foul smell and a torpedo or mine would have been a happy release. After what seemed hours eventually we were landed at an English port: I do not know which, but we were brought up a gangway to a railway platform terminus. Our military escort who I believe had been on deck all night were being served with coffee or tea and biscuits. We had to stand and look on. How I wished I could have had even a drink of water. We were then loaded into a train and landed at a place called Knutsford. We were marched some short distance and came in sight of a building which was easy to identify as a prison. This was my home to the end of August, 1916 when I was eventually interned in Frongoch, Wales.

I think it is only proper that I would refer once more to the armoured cars that were built in the Great Southern Railway Works at Inchicore as I have a photograph copy that was taken at that time and which I have presented to the
/O'Connell

O'Connell Christian Brothers' Schools for their 1916 Museum. In this photograph from left to right the names are as follows:-

Front Row: E.A. Watson, General Manager, Goodeve, Assistant General Manager; Buckley, Tom Delaney, D. Clothier, Jim Bruton, Redmond, J. Gunning, Jago, Smith, Duffy, Patterson, Bob Ryan, 'Bugs' McConnell, Clothier (Senior), Kit Walker.

Bottom Row: Hughes, Woodfull, G. Stevens, Heather, E. Clothier, Milliner, S. Ryan.

The boiler is mounted on a lorry belonging to Messrs. A. Guinness and believed to be the first armoured car to be used by British forces in any country. The small white bags in front contain flour given to the men who built those cars by the British military authorities. These were all fellow workmates of Joe Bowman, Peter Doyle, Ned O'Neill, Joe Downey, Bill and Dan Troy, Arthur, Bill and Liam Power, Tom and Martin Kavanagh, Tom Young, Bill Kelly, Joe Darcy, Mick O'Callaghan, Mick O'Riordan, Joe Gorman, Mick White, Paddy Byrne, Fred Foye and Mick Fox. The rest of "F" Company were city workers; but quite a number of Great Southern Railway men were in the City Companies. I am sure that the builders of the armoured cars were glad when they had the knowledge that they had contributed to the defeat of their fellow workmates.

I have done my best to give a true narrative and picture from my experience, as it appeared to me at nineteen years of age and the determination of the younger members and the appreciation of the hearts of steel of the older men that faced such odds and made such sacrifices of their homes and families.

Signed:

Robert Holland

Date:

18th July 1949

Witness:

M. J. O'Sullivan

Date:

18th July 1949

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
BURO STAIRA MILEATA 1913-21
No. W.S. 280

that night and in fact for the remainder of the time we were there. Murray also gave me some brush handles and some long sticks with about a half dozen caps and hats. I put the caps and hats on the long sticks and put them at the edge of the windows so that they could be seen from outside and with the intention of drawing fire from any British military outside. Murray then brought down a Volunteer who had previously been on duty in this room. I afterwards learned that the Volunteer was a barber named Keogh who lived in High Street. The room I was posted to was something like this :- As one entered this room from a blank wall there were windows on my left which commanded a laneway called 'The Back of the Pipes' and Fairbrothers Field, which was about 12 acres square. This field borders Guinness's buildings, Rialto, as far as Dolphins Barn. In front and to my left was Cork Street. I had grand observation of both North and South sides of the Canal banks, along the back of the South Dublin Union as far as Dolphins Barn bridge over the canal for about a half mile. There were four windows and four ventilators to the front and I had a full view of Basin Lane Convent, Christian Brothers' Schools, Basin Lane and Basin Street and of course the canal was in front as well. I could see all over the roofs of the houses in that area and in the distance a portion of the James' Street section of the South Dublin Union. About forty yards in front of me on the other side of the canal was a blank wall which ran from Rialto Bridge to James' Street Harbour, a distance of about three-quarters of a mile. James' Street Harbour was on my right and the wall was unbroken for the whole length that I could see. This wall was from 10 to 12 feet high and on the canal bank opposite me there was a gable end of two houses appearing over the wall with a single up and down

/window