

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21  
BURO STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21  
NO. W.S. 409

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 409

**Witness**

Mr. Valentine Jackson,  
95 South Circular Road,  
Portobello, Dublin.

**Identity**

Centre I.R.B. Circle, Dublin, 1912;  
Member of Leinster Council I.R.B. 1914.

**Subject**

- (a) National activities 1907 - Truce;
- (b) Howth Gun-Running 1914.

**Conditions, if any, stipulated by Witness**

Nil

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BUREAU STAIRS MILEATA 1913-21

NO. W.S. 409

STATEMENT OF MR. VALENTINE JACKSON,

95 SOUTH CIRCULAR ROAD, PORTOBELLO, DUBLIN.

formerly of

St. Joseph's Cottage, Brewery Rd. Stillorgan.

From my early days I had leanings towards the Separatist Movement. This was partly owing to the fact that my mother, whose maiden name was Hopper, was a first cousin of Jane Hopper, who married James Stephens. This Jane Hopper was a sister of George and Charles Hopper who were well known in connection with the Fenian Movement. (See Devoy's "Recollections of an Irish Rebel"). Jane Stephens and her three sisters accompanied Stephens into exile and returned with him to Dublin in the early nineties, at which time I got to know Stephens. He was then a very old man while I was a mere youngster. His family and mine were in close touch until his death about the turn of the century.

It is my intention in this statement to confine myself strictly to matters within my personal knowledge. I shall avoid, as far as possible, hearsay evidence and shall refrain from useless comment. My recollection of the events is naturally impaired by the lapse of time. This particularly applies to the more prosaic happenings. Needless to say I kept no diary. Many of the dates I shall mention, especially the earlier ones, must be taken as approximate. On the other hand, my memory of places is sound. Any locations I shall give may be taken as pretty accurate, except where I express a doubt. The events which I shall record with greater detail are those which were impressed more vividly on my memory. These may contain some minor error, but they may be taken as substantially correct.

a tailor,

About 1907 I got to know Bartholomew Hickey/who lived in Stillorgan Village. He it was who, some years before, had hung out a black flag to greet King Edward VII when he passed his

house on his visit to Leopardstown Racecourse. The police, however, removed the flag before the cortege arrived. One evening, about 1907, Hickey invited me to his house and introduced me to a dark, slight young man, in a grey Norfolk suit, who had cycled from Dublin. He was Sean McDermott.

Shortly after this I was introduced to Fred J. Allen and to Sean Ó hUadhaigh. McDermott, Hickey and those two sponsored my nomination for membership of the Irish Republican Brotherhood (hereinafter the I.R.B.). I was sworn in by George Lyons at his house in Brunswick St. (now Pearse Street).

In making this statement to the Bureau of Military History, I feel satisfied that I am no longer bound by the terms of the oath I then took, as the matters on which I propose to speak are now ancient history and cannot in any way be a cause of injury or annoyance to persons named who are still living. Neither can my remarks now affect the objects for which the I.R.B. laboured. It is also made on the understanding that it is intended for historical record and not for immediate publication. Moreover, I look upon the Department of Defence as the legitimate successors in military matters of the Irish Republican Brotherhood.

The Circle to which I was first appointed was the one of which Hickey was a member. It met on Sunday evenings at 41 York St. (not Parnell Square), under the chairmanship of Patrick T. Daly. I do not remember the name of this club and what I can recall of its doings is of the vaguest. I have a dim idea of my first night - a smallish room packed with men, a fog of tobacco smoke and the deep bass voice of Daly as he introduced the new recruit. I was a member here for about six months when it was decided to form a new circle to cover the South Co. Dublin area. Members of city circles living in this area were transferred thereto. Dunlaoghaire

was selected as the most central point. I was at the inaugural meeting and amongst those present were Fred Allen, Sean Ó hUadhaigh, Hickey, Michael J. Cooke, manager of a business house in Blackrock, Patrick J. Farrell, assistant clerk Rathdown District Council, Sean O'Byrne of Dunlaoghaire, a civil servant, one Delahunty, a shoe-making instructor from Carriglea Industrial School, Walter Foley of Messrs. Lee's, Rathmines, and William Rollins of Sallynoggin. ~~There were~~  
~~several other members present.~~ We did not know one another very well and after some discussion Cooke was elected Centre on the motion of Allen, and I was elected deputy Centre. At this first meeting there were about twelve to fourteen members present. In time, this membership doubled. Of the later members were Michael Higgins of Loughlinstown, Sean Brady, now T.D. for the area, my brother <sup>M.W. O'Reilly,</sup> Ralph, /Dowling, a railway official from Dalkey and later stationmaster at Harcourt St., and the brothers Owen and Tim Finn, tailors, of Blackrock.

This Circle originally met at a Trades Hall on Crofton Road and continued there for several years. It later transferred to the basement of Sean O'Byrne's house in the Main St. opposite the Carnegie Library, but meetings were sometimes held at the Courthouse in the Town Hall. The routine business transacted at these meetings was somewhat humdrum. They were held monthly and were invariably attended by a visitor from the Centres Board (hereinafter the C.B.). Each member paid a monthly subscription of 1/-. When the meeting opened, the secretary called the roll and collected the subscriptions. Then any proposals from members of the Circle for new recruits were considered. These had to be proposed and seconded by two members. Any names approved of were given to the visiting Centre who reported them to the C.B. for circulation among the Dublin Circles in case there might be any objections. In pursuance <sup>of this</sup> ~~with the~~ regulations

the names of the men who had been proposed at other Circles were read out by the Visitor. The Visitor then generally had a few words to say about recruiting, absenteeism, and so on, and the meeting terminated. I should add that the Visitor was given the collected subscriptions for return to the C.B.

Shortly after the formation of this Circle, Sean Ó hUadhaigh and myself were appointed delegates to the Wolfe Tone Memorial Committee which met monthly at Parnell Square and was presided over by James Stritch, a Paving Inspector in the Dublin Corporation. I was a member of this committee for many years, carrying small subscriptions to it from the Circle, and occasionally from other sources.

There is little to record for several succeeding years during which this routine work was carried on. Sometime, about 1909 or 1910, the members of the Dublin Circles were instructed (or requested) to attend a general meeting which was held one Summer Sunday evening at the old Town Hall, Clontarf, to hear a lecture from the Rev. Father Sheehy, brother of David Sheehy, M.P. He was himself, I was told, a member of the I.R.B. The various Centres were gathered in the entrance hall to identify the rank and file. I had not the gumption to count the number who attended, but I would say there were between two and three hundred. The lecturer was enthusiastically received. I have now no idea of the subject matter of his lecture, but I know that it dealt only with the I.R.B. When he had finished, several of those on the platform spoke. There were also some speakers from the body of the hall. One of these was a thin delicate-looking young man who had a small noisy following who insisted on his speaking and who loudly applauded him when he finished. I cannot remember what he said. I inquired who he was and was told that he was Sean O'Casey,

the "Protestant Republican". So far as I know, this was the only general meeting of the I.R.B. ever held during my period of membership.

It was, I think, sometime in 1912 that I went to an ordinary meeting of the Circle which on this particular night was held in the Courthouse at Dunlaoghaire Town Hall. When I entered the room, I found nine or ten of the members already present and amongst them one who was to me a stranger. I presumed that he was either the Visitor from the C.B. or a new recruit. Later on other members arrived, including Cooke the Centre. As the latter was about to take the chair to open the meeting, the stranger stood up and asked him who was his deputy and if he were present. Cooke replied that I was Deputy Centre and pointed me out. The stranger, who by now I had learned was Bulmer Hobson, then announced that he was there by order of the Supreme Council and that his instructions were to suspend Cooke as Centre. He then requested me to take the chair, which I did. Hobson then made a statement to the effect that Cooke had with others entered into a conspiracy to disrupt the I.R.B. by seizing the paper, Irish Freedom, or to interfere with its publication. He also made other charges, which I cannot now remember. Cooke made some attempt to reply to these charges, but to my mind he made a poor "showing" which consisted merely of denials. I noted that at no time did he question Hobson's authority or his right to speak for the Supreme Council. In the end, Hobson ordered him to leave the room, which he did.

Hobson then said that the next duty of the Circle was to elect a new Centre and that he would temporarily take the chair while this was being done. I was proposed and seconded and unanimously elected. (It was at a later meeting, I think, that Hickey was appointed Deputy).

It is noteworthy that neither Fred Allen nor Ó hUadhaigh attended this meeting - a most unusual occurrence, as both had been very regular in their attendances. The meeting then proceeded as usual, and when it was finished, Hobson gave me instructions regarding my attendance at the next meeting of the C.B. He also ordered me to expel Allen and Ó hUadhaigh from the I.R.B. and he gave me a slip on which was typed the form of oath that they should take. As well as I can recall, it consisted merely of a pledge of continuing secrecy as regard the I.R.B.

Later, by appointment, I saw Allen at his office in Lord Edward St. and Ó hUadhaigh in the street near his home in Monkstown. This was to me a very unpleasant duty. Each of them proposed an amendment of the oath. These were in identical terms and consisted of a reservation in regard to any essential evidence they might have to use in the event of either of them being publicly accused of misconduct by the I.R.B. I considered this amendment reasonable and on my own account accepted it. They each then took the oath as amended. Later I felt some compunction in having so acted without authority and feared trouble. In the end, I must now admit, I took the line of least resistance and merely reported that the two men had been sworn out. I must say that the intervention of Hobson at the Circle meeting came to me as a bombshell. I had not the slightest inkling that trouble was brewing. Except for the accusations made by Hobson when suspending Cooke, I never afterwards was told anything, official or unofficial, of the circumstances that led to these expulsions. Neither did I make any inquiries. I felt a little hurt by the official reticence in this matter.

I do not know who dealt with Cooke. I presume it must have been one of his colleagues on the C.B. At the exit of Allen and Ó hUadhaigh the conversation was severely limited

to the business in hand, owing probably to a certain amount of embarrassment on both sides.

At this time my brother retired. Not that he was in any way associated with the trouble, but because he held Allen in high regard. It was Allen who had enrolled him and he did not wish to remain after his departure.

When I went to the Centres Board I found that Hobson was the Chairman, a position which he held until Easter Week. Other members of the Board then were Cathal Kickham, Gregg Murphy, George Irvine, George Lyons, Sean Milroy, Seamus O'Connor, Tom Hunter, Sean Murphy, Seamus Deacon, Luke Kennedy, Michael Flanagan (of the Typographical Union), Peadar Kearney, Frank Lawless of Swords, and a man by the name of Buggy, I think, but I am not quite sure. These may not be all of them, but they are all I can now recall. There were, of course in time, some changes. Buggy, for instance (if I am right in thinking he was ever a member) disappeared early. Deacon was replaced, I think, by Sean Tobin, while P.J. Farrell came on in mid-1914. The Board met monthly, at 8 p.m., and invariably at 41 Parnell Square.

The routine duty of a Centre was first of all to preside over his own Circle. Secondly, to attend the meeting of the Centres Board at which meeting, amongst other things, Centres were appointed to visit other Circles. In this way from time to time I visited most of the Dublin Circles, the greater proportion of which held their meeting at 41 Parnell Square. These would occupy three nights in the month, but later on, in 1915, there were, if I recollect aright, fortnightly meetings of the Circles.

After the formation of the Volunteers, late in 1915, the work of the Circles began to liven up considerably. Instructions were issued that all members who were anyway fit



were to join the Volunteers and to attend drill regularly and that every effort should be made by the Centres and others to get on to the working committees of the Volunteers. As a result, myself and other members of my Circle managed to be appointed to the Committee of the Blackrock ~~Committee of the~~ Volunteers and drilled with the Company. I also joined the Dundrum Committee of the Volunteers of which Seamus O'Connor was a member, but I only attended a couple of the meetings here as I could not fit in the time for all the meetings and drills. At this time too, rifle clubs were formed in each Circle. Members subscribed 1/- per month for the purchase of rifles as well as the ordinary subscriptions. This money was paid in to the C.B. and as it accrued, rifles were purchased and balloted for by the subscribers.

Early in 1914, I would say the C.B. elected two of its members as delegates to the Leinster Council of the I.R.B. I was one of these. The other was, I think, Sean Tobin, but I'm not at all sure. Although I must have attended several meetings of this Council, what I can now recall concerning it is negligible. I can say that it met on Sunday forenoons at Parnell Square at long intervals, six monthly, I think. The meetings were informal and did not last more than half an hour or so. The attendance never exceeded six or seven men. I must admit that I have not the slightest recollection of the business transacted at the meetings I attended. As to its personnel, I can only definitely remember Robert Brennan and Lawrence de Lacy, both still living. I have a vague idea that de Lacy was Chairman and that he may have been elected to this position at the first meeting I attended, but I am not clear on either point.

There were three members of the I.R.B. whom I met officially, but I cannot say where. I am nearly sure I did not meet them at any circle or at the C.B., so it follows

that it must have been at the Leinster Council, either as members or visitors. These three were Dermot Lynch, Dermot O'Hegarty and Denis McCullough. I understood at the time that the Chairman of this Council was, ipso facto, a member of the Supreme Council. Unlike some of my colleagues in the I.R.B., I was never able to whisper who was or was not a member of the S.C. and I was not inquisitive on the point.

About the middle of 1914 a new Circle was established at Shankill. Farrell, Higgins and two or three others were transferred to it from Dunlaoghaire. Farrell was elected Centre. It was called the Ballybrack Circle and it met in the Carnegie Library on the District Council Housing Park close to Shankill Railway Station.

About ten days before the landing of the guns at Howth Hobson asked me if I could manage a row-boat. I said yes. He then asked me to get one or two other rowers for a special job on a Sunday morning. I told him there would be no difficulty in this. Later he sent word to me to attend with my "crew" at Father Mathew Park, Fairview, on Sunday 26th July at 9 a.m. sharp, and to parade there with the Volunteers, when I would be given further instructions. Accordingly I picked two men. One of these met with a mishap on the Sunday morning and could not attend. The second man, Jim Brady (a brother of Sean Brady, the present Dail member) and myself arrived at the Park on time. There we fell in with one of the Volunteer companies and were duly paraded. Hobson then came forward and requested that any men in that company who had been detailed for special duty should come forward. Brady and I obeyed and he then took us one side and gave us the following instructions: We were to travel to Howth by tram and stroll around the town. If we saw any of our comrades there ~~were~~ were not to form any groups or indeed to take any notice of them.

About half eleven or before, we were to hire a boat to be rowed by ourselves for a trip in the Harbour and outside. At about noon, a white yacht would be seen coming from the north towards the Harbour and passing between Ireland's Eye and the mainland. This yacht would be carrying arms for the Volunteers, who would be there to meet it. Our duty was to keep our boat between the yacht and any boat containing police or coastguards which might put out to intercept her. We were to try and do this unintentionally as it were, but in any case to do our best to keep them off. He also said that there would probably be others on the same duty. Thus far Hobson's instructions. Accordingly we took tram to Howth. As we had plenty of time we got off at the railway station and strolled into the town. As we went in I saw two I.R.B. men by the sea wall but, as instructed, I did not go near them. I was anxious to investigate the boat situation, so Brady set out to look for one. He went down the East Pier and found a boatman who would let us have his craft. It was much too early yet to go out, so we took a walk up the Hill by the east end of the town. About 11 a.m. we went down the Pier to where our boatman was - about two-thirds of the way down. He told us that it would be very risky to go outside the harbour as the sea was very choppy there. From the point where the boat was tied we had a very good view of the whole harbour and the stretch of the main street, so that we could easily see a boat putting off from the mainland.

We accordingly decided to wait, but as time passed there was no movement. From where we were we could get out well in front of any row-boat putting out from the town. Promptly on time we saw the white yacht in the distance. We kept a close eye on the harbour, ready to jump into the boat at any moment, but there was not the slightest sign of action by friend or foe from any point. We waited thus until the yacht had come so close that she must make the harbour before she could be

intercepted. At about the same time we saw the Volunteers entering the town by the end of the West Pier. We then ran down to the end of the pier at the mouth of the harbour. In a couple of minutes the yacht glided in. As she did so, Brady hailed her and asked about the guns. As she entered she turned sharp to the left and sidled up to the edge of the pier just inside the harbour mouth. Besides Brady and myself, there were few if any on the pier at this point when she berthed. One of those on the yacht asked Brady to come aboard. He jumped down and at once helped to uncover the portion of the hold where the rifles were loosely stowed. The first two rifles taken out he handed up to me with an injunction to hold one of them for himself. By this time the Volunteers had arrived. Some men went aboard and the rifles were soon being rapidly passed up and along the line.

During the unloading a small sailing boat nosed over from the west pier towards the stern of the yacht, out of curiosity, I suppose. One of those on board this boat was Harry Bonass, a solicitor from the Law Agent's Department of the Corporation whom I knew well. Someone on the yacht put this boat under arrest while the unloading of the arms was completed. Brady remained on the yacht until the last rifle was handed up. He then came ashore and claimed his weapon. He and I fell in with a small rearguard company of about 40 men under the command of a smart looking red-haired officer not known to me. We followed the remainder of the Volunteers who had already marched into the town and were halted there. When we joined the main body there was some re-arrangement of the companies. The one we were in was moved up somewhat nearer to the middle of the column, while a small contingent from North Co. Dublin was placed at the end. These latter did not accompany us to the city but turned off at Kilbarrack Lane, I think.

Immediately after we left Howth I called over the red-haired officer. I told him that I had been at Howth on special duty, that I had not marched down with the Volunteers that I had only just recovered from an attack of rheumatic gout in my left foot and that, as I believed I would not be able to march to Dublin, I intended to leave the ranks and take the tram at Suttons Cross. He told me that I was at liberty to leave the ranks whenever I liked, but that I could not take the rifle with me. I said I had no intention of leaving it behind. He replied that he had strict instruction not to allow anyone to leave with a rifle and that he would carry out his orders. He added, however, that I was marching quite well and he was sure I could manage. He was also able to tell me that there would be a halt at Raheny where I would get a rest. I decided therefore to continue. As we entered Raheny by the main road I saw, about 100 yards down the side road on our left, three or four R.I.C. men with rifles and helmets standing in the roadway. They had apparently been apprised of our coming. They did not come near us. We halted here for a quarter of an hour. When we resumed I found that this short rest had not improved my foot; in fact, it made it worse and it began to pain me badly.

Somewhere in the neighbourhood of Killester I heard my officer tell a Volunteer, who was complaining that he had not got a rifle, to wait awhile as there was a chap over on the right (meaning me) who would be dropping out at any moment and that he could have his rifle! This commonsense decision angered me very much and any thoughts I might have had of quitting vanished. I determined to go on until I dropped. As we came down the straight from Killester I thought of the paving setts in the tram tracks which we were approaching. I felt badly enough on the tar macadam road, but I decided that the tram paving would finish me if I were to get that far, which was doubtful. It was in this gloomy

frame of mind that I saw with dismay that the head of the column had wheeled to the right and was moving at the double along Charlemont Road towards Malahide Road. This, I decided, was the last straw. In a couple of moments I too was at the double. On turning the corner I saw, about 100 yards further down, a military cordon with fixed bayonets across Howth Road.

This then was the cause of the change of direction and the increase in pace. I don't know how I got across that stretch of road, but somehow I managed it. As we turned to the left down Malahide Road, still at the double, someone shouted that there was another cordon ahead of us. About 50 yards further on I was halted at last. I do not know what others thought, but I could only view the presence of this cordon as a timely intervention of Providence to save me from ignominy. About a minute or two after we halted I heard from the direction of the front a report as of the discharge of a small bore firearm - one single shot and no more. Although I was on the outside right of the column I could see nothing of what was happening at the front, nor did I care much so long as I was not asked to move. I was taking my heaven-sent rest and I had grounded that wretched rifle which by now weighed about eight stone - or so it seemed to me.

About eight or ten minutes after the shot, two men, supporting a third who was limping, came down the road on our right. A little below me they passed through the ranks and into the house of a doctor on our left. I was at the time told that the limping man was Michael Judge and that he had been wounded by a bayonet thrust. About 10 minutes later an officer came down and asked us to keep to the ranks, that there was going to be no trouble and not to worry. I do not want to suggest by this that the men - in my vicinity at any rate - were in the slightest degree showing any signs of panic or depression. On the contrary, they were quite

calm and cheerful in spite of the danger that threatened them. There was, however, much natural curiosity regarding the happenings at the front and there were occasional strayings from the ranks at either side in an effort to see for themselves. After a further lapse of ten minutes or so one of the leaders came down the ranks. It may have been Hobson, but I am far from sure. He ordered us to break up into small parties, to move back along the road and to make our way across the fields to the west towards the city bringing our rifles with us. He said that if we did this we would not be interfered with but that we would not be allowed past the cordon or to enter the city as a body by any route.

We then began to dissolve and to move back along Malahide Road. Brady and I let most of them pass us. My foot was now giving me but little trouble, but I decided that there would be no trudging across fields for me. The two of us had strolled slowly back for 200 yards or so when we came to some small villas on the east side of the road. These were set back a little from the path with steps leading up to the front door. At the gate of one of these a man was standing. As we came up he spoke to us. He delivered a vehement attack on the government for interfering with us and contrasted its inaction in regard to the Ulster Volunteers. I knew then that I had found what I was looking for. During a lull in his tirade I asked him if he would keep our two rifles until the next evening. He at once agreed, but asked us to move on to the side door a few yards on and to be ready to slip in when he opened it. He rightly thought it imprudent to carry the guns up the steps with so many people about. He took us in by the back and up to his sitting room where he made us sit down for a while. He was a small man in the fifties, as well as I can recall. He told us his name was O'Byrne. He produced some newspaper



cuttings and read from them several verses which he had written in praise of the Volunteers and such like. We left after about 15 minutes. When we came out on the road we found that the Volunteers had vanished, but there were now crowds of people traipsing up and down the road, apparently waiting for something to happen. As we came towards the coast road we found the military cordon, consisting of about a dozen men and an officer, still in position across the road at the point where they first stopped us, that is to say, some 200 yards south from the junction with Charlemont Road. The men were now standing "at ease" and were not interfering with pedestrians. We were in civilian dress. There were few uniformed Volunteers at this early period. I stopped and spoke to the officer. I asked him what was the trouble. He said something to the effect that he knew little more than I did, that he had been sent out to stop some Volunteers Corps who had brought some arms from Howth, that he did not like the job, but that he had to obey orders. We then moved on.

While waiting for our tram at the bottom of the road, two military motor ambulances came out from town, stopped opposite to where we stood and disgorged their full of armed Borderers who promptly fell in and marched up Malahide Road. This occurred at the very least one hour after we had been first stopped by the cordon.

At Harcourt St. Railway Station on my way home I bought an evening paper from which I learned, to my great astonishment, that we had entrenched ourselves at Howth Road only a few hours previously. On the following evening, Monday, I met Brady by appointment at Nelson Pillar at 5.30. There we took a sidecar to Malahide Road to see our good friend, Mr. O'Byrne. He was waiting for us with the rifles neatly and separately tied up in brown paper. We drove back to the pillar with our parcels, boarded a Dalkey tram for Blackrock, and so home.



Before finishing with the Howth episode, I must advert to a few matters. I have an idea that Brady and I may have known that the yacht would berth by the end of the east pier, otherwise we would not have gone to this relatively remote point to hire a boat and would not have hung around there so confidently. I have, however, no recollection of being given any instructions on this point. I am almost certain that the Volunteers had turned on to this pier before they could have seen where the yacht was going to berth.

One other point. Farrell, the Ballybrack Centre, told me afterwards that early on the Sunday morning he left Bray for Howth in a motor boat with a friend of his who owned the boat and that off the Baily they ran into very heavy seas which caused great delay, so that when they got to Howth all was over. I did not inquire from Farrell what his instructions were. I presumed they were similar to those given to me.

My Howth rifle was a single-charge breech loader with bolt action and, if I remember aright, had a bore of 11 or 12 m.m. It was stamped with the date, 1884. The cartridge case was of brass and held a leaden round-nosed bullet. When discharged, a considerable amount of smoke was emitted with a smell strongly reminiscent of black gunpowder. About a month or two before the Rising, I loaned this and another rifle for a Volunteer parade. I never saw them again. On inquiry later, I was told that they had served their purpose.

I have read much of what has been written in praise of the courage shown by the Volunteers at Malahide Road on that July evening, but I have yet to read a single word of tribute to the good behaviour of the rank and file of the military cordon who faced the Volunteers. Some writers have indeed gone so far as to imply that by comparison the

British soldiers were a disorderly mob. This begrudging attitude may be the result of an over zealous patriotism, or of a lack of moral courage or of a poor sense of humour, or perhaps a little of all three. But surely one does not enhance the record of his own prowess by belittling that of his opponent. I have often wondered what were the feelings of the handful of men in the cordon when they suddenly saw, bearing down on them from behind a corner, a column of some 1,000 armed men. Remember that these soldiers could not have known that the Volunteers were to a large extent untrained, that they had no ammunition, and were even without bayonets to fix on their long villianous-looking rifles. Yet they held their ground, under the complete control of their commanding officer. Strange to say, no one has ever asked why they did not break and run, hell for leather, when they saw us coming!

It must have been on the Tuesday preceding the Kilcool gun-running that Sean Fitzgibbon 'phoned me to meet him at six o'clock the same evening, at the Volunteer Office in College St. on an urgent matter. The office was three or four floors above the street level and was, I think, over what was then the Vegetarian Restaurant. It was in this office that Fitzgibbon had introduced me to Sir Roger Casement a short time previously.

He now told me that a further consignment of rifles was expected to arrive on the following Saturday night somewhere on the Wicklow coast. He added that after our experience at Howth and with war now in the offing, the government would use every effort ~~the government would use every effort~~ to seize the rifles if they got wind of the affair. He planned to take the rifles by lorry from the coast to some suitable depot convenient to the city and that from this depot a fleet of taxis would carry the rifles

in small quantities and by different routes to various depots in Dublin. He asked if I thought that the Corporation Reservoir property at Stillorgan (where I was employed) would be a suitable distributing centre. I said that a better place could not be found. It adjoined a by-road where there was little night traffic; it was surrounded by a high wall; it contained a large yard and plenty of parking space for vehicles. Besides this, I lived across the road from this yard.

On the following evening I went again to College Green to make final arrangements. It was settled that the taxis - 20 or 25 in all - would be sent to Stillorgan at five or six minute intervals, the first arriving about 9.30 p.m. when they would be duly parked in a laneway leading from the yard by the northern boundary wall. When the lorry or lorries arrived they would be taken into the yard where the transfer of the rifles would be carried out.

There was one other matter which had to be considered. The Waterworks Superintendent, Thomas Lochtie, who resided on the Reservoir premises, was a potential danger to the success of these plans. He was of Scotch parentage, was my superior officer (Corporation), and was a very decent fellow in most ways, but he was obsessed by a bitter and unbridled hostility to anything that savoured of Irish Nationalism in any shape or form. His house was beside the railway station and over 300 yards from and out of sight of the proposed theatre of operations, but he or one of his family might easily take a walk around the reservoirs and discover the taxi park. To provide against this contingency it was arranged to send out by the first taxi three reliable men to act as police and who would arrest any interlopers. To enhance their authority I was given on loan (at College St.) a large F.N. automatic pistol and ammunition. I had also for this purpose my Howth rifle and another 7 m.m. magazine rifle. There were two very

convenient valve houses where prisoners could be held under lock and key until the job was completed.

On the following Thursday afternoon, Liam Mellowes and Eamon de Valera came out to Stillorgan to check these arrangements with me. They travelled by motor cycle with sidecar driven by de Valera. They appeared satisfied with everything. All these lovely preparations were, however, brought to naught by the arrival at the reservoirs on the following night, Friday, by the last train from Harcourt St. of a posse of 15 or 20 members of the R.I.C. armed with rifles and in full war paint. They said that they had been sent to guard the reservoir so that the water supply would not be poisoned or otherwise interfered with by German agents.

The earliest moment I could get in touch with Mr. Fitzgibbon was on the Saturday morning at 10 a.m. by the private Corporation 'phone to the City Engineer's Office. He decided that the plans for Stillorgan must be cancelled and that, fortunately, he had an alternative depot, but that it was not so well placed as Stillorgan. The guarding of the reservoirs by the police was continued until the end of 1915.

Fitz. asked me to go to Kilcool, but I declined as I was still troubled with the rheumatism. Indeed, it was shortly afterwards that I was compelled, on this account, to discontinue my Volunteer activities and to confine myself to my Circle duties. My condition improved somewhat during the Winter, but in the Summer of 1915 I began again to suffer, and in September I was completely laid out with arthritis. At the end of that month I went into St. Vincent's Hospital for treatment. Here I remained for 12 weeks. I came out somewhat better, but for some months could not walk

without two sticks and was unable to resume work until June.

During a considerable portion of my time in the hospital Frank Fahy was a patient in the same room, while Dr. Jim Ryan was a member of the Resident Medical Staff.

One Sunday afternoon early in 1916, Paddy Gleeson called at my house at Stillorgan with two young men who had just arrived from Scotland. They were Irish, but spoke with a strong Scottish accent. It transpired that on the previous Saturday afternoon they had broken into a hut containing explosives, on some work in or near Glasgow, that they had stolen a box of gelignite, drove to the Dublin boat with their parcel, arrived in Dublin on Sunday and safely delivered the gelignite. They both worked in Glasgow, one of them, I think, in a shipyard. They told me a story about the battleship Valiant, then recently launched. It appeared that during her trials a serious fault developed in her turbines, believed to be caused by enemy agents. She was taken to port and a strong guard placed on board. The repairs were made by picked men who were only allowed on board on production of a pass and after being searched. I think one or perhaps both of those boys stayed with us for a day or so, after which I believe they went to the camp at Lerkfield. I understand that they later took part in the Insurrection. I cannot recall their names.

On Good Friday, 1916, at about 4 a.m., a messenger arrived at my house bearing a verbal summons for me to attend a special meeting of the C.B. at the Volunteers Hqrs. Dawson St. at 11 a.m. the same day. I am almost certain that the time mentioned was 11 a.m. but I could not swear to it. The messenger was Joseph O'Rourke, then a mere youth, whom I knew but slightly. In later days he became a close friend of mine. He is now an Inspector under the National Health Insurance, Cathal Brugha St. I don't remember asking by whom

he was sent with this summons. He had cycled from town and he left me to continue his journey to Shankill on a similar errand to Farrell.

Later that morning I sent word to Hickey, who now lived at Blackrock, to attend this meeting and to report the result. I should add that Hickey had been deputising for me on the C.B. for the previous seven or eight months. He returned in the afternoon. He told me that he had attended the meeting, that Hobson was in the chair, that the meeting lasted only a short while and that no business was transacted. Hobson adjourned the meeting, telling them to return home and await further instructions. Hickey was somewhat agitated. He told me that it was pretty certain that an insurrection was planned for the following Sunday (Easter), but as to whether he was given this information by the Chairman or gleaned it from some of the other members present, I cannot now say. After the surrender, he told me that he had received no further instructions; neither had I.

On Thursday, the fourth day of the Rising, I had two separate visits from some members of a mounted military troop who were patrolling in the vicinity. An officer of this troop questioned me. He was an undersized, ill-favoured and ill-conditioned individual. He was badly briefed. He harped on the idea that I had been wounded in Dublin earlier in the week. I did not like this fellow and was glad to see him off. About ten days after the surrender I received another visitation, this time of a more formal but less disagreeable character. It was heralded by a formidable and imposing motorised cavalcade. I had got wind of its coming and was on the lookout. It was headed by a wagon of some sort on which was mounted a revolving gun of 3 or 4 inch bore, fitted with a shield and manned by naval gunners. Behind this were armoured cars and lorries of military and (as I later heard)

a covered wagon with prisoners. When this pulled up at my house the local sergeant of R.I.C., Flanagan by name, and another man in civilian dress dismounted and asked for me. The sergeant introduced his companion as an Inspector from Scotland Yard who wished to question me. He was a quiet, well-spoken and courteous man, in sharp contrast with his predecessor of two weeks back. His questions were simple and easily answered. "Did I take part in the rebellion?" "Did I know Pearse?". "When did I last see him?" and so on, mentioning several of the leaders. He made it clear he was at a complete loss to understand why we should want to separate from Britain. I tried to explain and so the interrogation rapidly degenerated into a political discussion covering a wide range.

He finally told Flanagan that he had decided to leave me where I was. Our talk lasted for over half an hour. I subsequently learned that they had started at Shankill at about 8 a.m. and had slowly worked their way to my place collecting about ten prisoners on the way, including Farrell and some of the Shankill boys. They left me at about noon and went straight to Portobello Barracks. Here the prisoners were ~~to be~~ detained for a day or so before being all released.

My brother, Ralph, told me that, quite by accident, he met Farrell in Dunlaoghaire on Good Friday afternoon. Farrell asked him if he would like to take part in a little adventure on Easter Sunday morning in which there would be an element of risk. My brother agreed to come in when he learned that he had orders to cut the telegraph lines beside the railway on Bray Head. (Many of these wires were Cross-Channel ones leading from Dublin to the submarine cable near Kilcool). He also asked him to bring a gun with him, if possible. They arranged to meet in Bray at 11 a.m. on Sunday. On Saturday evening my brother went to Dublin and borrowed a .38 revolver

from Gerard Crofts. He met Farrell, who had five or six of his own men with him, on the sea front. While they were discussing ways and means, a motor cyclist arrived with a dispatch for Farrell. This proved to be an order postponing <sup>cutting</sup> the ~~outing~~ to a future date. Farrell told my brother that he would see him the following day. On the next morning Ralph went by train to Shankill to see Farrell. He was told he was gone out and he, therefore, came home, assuming that no further order had arrived. At the same time Farrell had taken the train to Stillorgan to collect my brother for the cutting of the wires at noon, an order <sup>for</sup> which he had received late on Sunday night. When he failed to find him, he returned to Bray and cut the lines. Unfortunately they had twice passed one another in their double train journeys.

On the Monday following the surrender a member of my Circle, Tim Finn, came to see me. I have already mentioned him and his brother Owen. They were natives of Cork. They were tailors, were both married men with families and resided at Blackrock. Tim was Lieut. of the Blackrock Coy. of the 3rd Battalion of the Irish Volunteers. Jim Brady, who was with me at Howth, was Captain. He now reported to me that in accordance with instructions he had paraded with his Company in Blackrock Park on Easter Monday at 9.30 or 10 a.m. preparatory to marching to Dublin to the battalion mobilisation point. Brady did not put in an appearance. After waiting for about half an hour, Finn sent a man to Brady's house at Booterstown Avenue to make inquiries. He was told that he had left the house. After another long wait for his Captain, Finn placed his sergeant in charge of the company and went himself to Booterstown Avenue, more than half a mile distant. There he saw Sean Brady, who told him that the mobilisation order had not been issued by the duly authorised officer of the Volunteers, that it was invalid and that his brother Jim was



not going to obey it. Finn returned to his company. On his way back he could plainly hear the sound of rifle fire from the city. He found his company sadly depleted. The long wait, the absence of their Captain and then the sound of the fighting had unnerved them, and most had gone home.

In spite of this, Finn started at once for the city marching by the main road. Besides himself, his force consisted of eight armed men and two cycle scouts. I am not able to give the number of men on the muster roll of this company, or to say how many had originally paraded on that morning. With all this upset Finn had completely forgotten that Elm Park, on Merrion Road, had been in the occupation of the <sup>British</sup> military as some kind of a training camp, for a considerable period. He only remembered this when almost abreast of the gate entrance he saw the sentry on duty there coming to attention to salute the armed party. He at once rapped out the necessary command to his squad and returned the salute as he passed. At the end of Pembroke Road he met his scouts, who told him that armed members of the O.T.C. of Trinity were moving out in skirmishing order by Merrion Square towards Mount St. He thereupon seized Carisbrook House, a private residence, at the corner of Pembroke Road and Northumberland Road and installed his party there. He was in a quandary. He had no idea of where his battalion was or what exactly was happening, so he decided to go out and reconnoitre himself. Outside he was told that the Volunteers were in Stephens Green. He went there and contacted some of the College of Surgeons Garrison, whether in the Green or the College I cannot now say. He was told that de Valera was in occupation of Westland Row Station, but that it would be dangerous to attempt to join him there. Finn then asked if they would allow him and his men to join them (at the Green) but this, he was told, could not be allowed. The only advice

they could give him was to fall back on Blackrock and await further orders.

He accordingly returned to his men and vacated Carisbrook House sometime later. He said that the residents of this house had been quite decent to them having regard to their rude invasion. He retreated by Donnybrook and Stillorgan Rd. With the wish to hold his little company together he did not return to Blackrock, but instead camped in the old grotto in Stillorgan Grove; here he spent the night. On the next morning he went with one of his men to Blackrock to get rations and to hear the latest news. When he returned to the grotto he found that two of his men had decamped. On the following evening two others got an hour's leave to visit their homes. As he surmised, they did not return. So it went on until Friday morning when he found himself with only one man; so he quit and went home. This ends Finn's narrative. He was very much upset at not having played a more active part in the Rising. He bitterly reproached himself for not having marched at the appointed time without Brady, with having waited so long and with not having made a more determined effort to contact his battalion when he got to the city. It was useless to point out to him how unreasonable and how unjust to himself was all this self-reproach. As the weeks passed he brooded on this until one evening, in what may well have been a fit of refreshed despondency, he re-enlisted in the British army. Not many months afterwards we learned of his death on the Western Front.

I knew Tim Finn well. He had seen service in the British army before I met him. He had his faults. He was temperamental and sometimes wayward. In spite of this he was trustworthy. He had a withering and outspoken contempt for cant or show in any guise, a virtue which did not increase his popularity with many. His physical courage and fearless-

ness were beyond question. In thus commenting on the character of a colleague I am departing from a self-imposed code, but I feel that an exception is due in this particular case.

Towards the end of 1916, I received a visit from Sean Murphy and another Centre whom I cannot now remember. They told me that it had been decided to get the Circles going again. I said I felt very diffident about doing anything about this on account of being invalided and for so long and of having taken no part in the Rising, but they said I need not have any doubt on that account as my case had been investigated and I had been exonerated from any blame.

Here I must make one thing clear. I do not for one moment wish to pretend or suggest that but for my illness I would have been in action in Dublin during Easter Week. This is not to say that I would have disobeyed orders, but having regard to the confusion which reigned, as we now know, during that Easter weekend, it is hard to say what orders would have been given me. For one thing, the I.R.B., to whom I owed first allegiance, were unable to speak with a single voice, or perhaps it would be more correct to say failed to speak with any voice. On the other hand, the military staff had apparently made no plans for the deployment of the small South Co. Dublin units. It is most probable that in the circumstances I would, like Farrell of Shankill, have spent the week "standing by" waiting in vain for "further instructions".

Murphy and his colleague invited me to attend a meeting of Centres a few weeks later, which I did. The meeting was held in the end house on the east side of South William St. at the Exchequer St. end, and in a front room on the ground floor. I attended two or three meetings at this place. There were several of the older Centres present whom I knew.

In the meantime I took no steps to re-form my old Circle, as I still had scruples in the matter.

About this time, Fitzgibbon told me that Hobson was anxious to see me. I accordingly called on him at his house in Sandymount. He recounted his experiences of the Easter Week end which have since been published. He then asked me if I knew anything of the I.R.B. or if I was still in touch with it. I told him of the visit of Sean Murphy and that I had already attended a preliminary meeting of some of the former Centres with a view to reorganisation. He then said that he was distressed at the scandalous charges which were in circulation touching his behaviour prior to the Rising. He said he was quite prepared to face his trial on these charges and asked me if I would raise the question at the earliest opportunity. This I promised to do.

At the next meeting at William St. and the last which I attended, I saw several new faces including one whom I afterwards knew to be Michael Collins. At the end of this meeting I raised the question of bringing Hobson to trial. I added that I had seen him and that he was anxious to be given the opportunity of refuting the grave charges of cowardice and treachery that were in circulation concerning him. Collins, who, at the time, was standing near the window, spoke at once and said, somewhat sharply, that surely I should know that Hobson could only be tried by his peers who were now all dead. I told him that I considered that he was already being tried judged and condemned without trial by many of his former colleagues and that surely there were still enough people left who could examine into and prove or disprove these charges. Collins now shifted his ground and said that was all very well, but that the organisation had much more important work in hands than the trial and not to be talking nonsense, or words to that effect. In face of this attitude I could say no more.

I do not know who presided at this meeting, but I do not think it was Collins. None of the others present said anything one way or the other.

I made a mistake in waiting until the end of the meeting to raise the question, but I made a greater mistake in not previously seeking the support of some of the pre-insurrection members of the Board, some of whom knew Hobson much better than I did and who had been in action in Easter Week.

This was my last attendance here, as I had finally decided not to attempt to re-form my Circle. Instead, I had myself transferred to the Ballybrack Circle where, under the chairmanship of my old friend, Farrell, I continued a somewhat passive and not too enthusiastic rank and file member of the I.R.B. until the end of 1921. In the meantime I was not in other respects entirely idle.

As far as I am aware, my old Circle was never revived.

At the General Election of 1918 I was a member of the small committee that selected and worked for the return of the Republican candidate, George Gavan Duffy. The Chairman of this committee was Sean Fitzgibbon, who was also Director of the election. It was he who proposed Gavan Duffy's candidature. Duffy headed the poll in a three-cornered contest the other two being Thomas Clarke, Nationalist, and Sir Thomas Robinson, Unionist.

At the Local Government Elections which followed the General Election I was <sup>returned</sup> / Republican representative <sup>for</sup> ~~on~~ the Stillorgan Division of the Rathdown Rural District Council. I did not covet the honour, but I was pressed to contest the seat as I was well known in the area. I resigned from this Council after six months or so as it was irregular for one in the public service to be at the same time a public representative. The vacancy thus caused was filled by co-option.

When the Blackrock Anti-Conscription Committee was formed under the auspices of the Three-Party Mansion House Conference I was made one of the Republican members of the committee. Fitzgibbon was also a member.

During the Anti-Conscription Crisis Rory O'Connor (later executed at Mountjoy Prison) came to me in the Waterworks Section of the City Engineer's Office, Castle St., to which I had been recently transferred from Stillorgan. O'Connor was then Engineer i/c Paving and was located in the same building. He wanted my opinion on a proposal that in the event of an attempt to enforce conscription the water supply should be cut off from all the city military establishments. I told him that I did not think this could be effectively carried out. One reason was that any stopping of the water in the branch pipes serving the buildings, from the mere closing of the valves to the cutting and plugging of the pipes would not be outside the competence of the military to rectify without much delay. Apart from this they could always get a supply of water by hose lines from the street fire hydrants. O'Connor was anxious to consider the matter further, so we spent the next few days driving around the city barracks during which he noted the size and exact position of the various branch pipes together with their valves and fittings.

About the same time, at the instance of O'Connor, I removed from the office to a safe hiding place the two sets of large-scale plans on which was plotted the position of the Corporation water mains both inside and outside the city. It was possible that they might at some time be of some assistance to the enemy. These plans were not restored to the office until 1922.

Another incident of the Anti-Conscription period that is worth recording was the call to the City Engineer's office of

a British military officer, a Major, I believe. He asked to see the Engineer in charge of the city streets. When he was shown into O'Connor's room he told the latter that he wished to discuss a matter of the greatest confidence. O'Connor assured him that he could do so with safety. He then said that there would be extensive street fighting in Dublin if conscription were enforced and that they would mainly use tanks, some of them of a heavy type, in such fighting. He wanted O'Connor to give him a list of streets which would be unsafe for the heaviest tanks, on account of sewers and other underground works. O'Connor said there were many streets through which it would be inadvisable to run heavy vehicles. He told the Major that it would help him to decide the matter if he could let him have the weights and load distribution of the tanks proposed to be used. This the Major promised to do. They then had a general discussion on street fighting and the Major finally departed, very well pleased with the interview. There was a second meeting a week or so later, but the dropping of conscription put an end to their interchanges.

I got these particulars from O'Connor. I record the story as an example of the watertight compartments in which the British authorities sometimes worked. The Intelligence Sections of both the military and police looked on the Corporation as a hotbed of rebellion. I found that under interrogation by the military or auxiliaries it was unsafe to mention <sup>the</sup> Corporation as one's place of business. After my first slip, I always said that I worked in the City Water Supply Department. They never seemed to connect this with the Corporation.

Early in 1920, O'Connor asked me if I could suggest some quiet place in the country where we could carry out some tests on explosives recently captured from some British military

depot. I selected a site by the east side of the Upper Reservoir at Roundwood then under construction, but on which work was suspended. The site was Corporation property, well away from any habitation and contained a couple of derelict houses of which only the walls remained. Here we two only carried out a series of tests. I was in no sense an expert in this matter, but I had during my service in the Corporation used considerable quantities of gelignite and Zonite for rock blasting and other purposes.

The material we tested was in the form of rectangular slabs about seven by four inches and about one inch in thickness. It was smooth, hard, of a whitish colour and each slab had a detonator hole at one end. We fired 6 or 7 charges in all in various positions and using one slab only for each charge. The results were unsatisfactory. The explosive appeared to be sluggish in action. I would say that three sticks of gelignite would have been more effective in each case. O'Connor was disappointed. He attributed the result to deterioration of the material.

During the closing period of the struggle in 1920-21 the I.R.A. carried out several raids for arms and ammunition in South Co. Dublin. Quantities of the seized material were stored at the Stillorgan Reservoir in rarely used underground valve chambers. This was arranged for between my brother Ralph or myself and the local I.R.A. with whom we kept in touch. The representatives of the I.R.A. who mainly dealt with us were the brothers Tom and John Carroll of Stillorgan.

On the setting up of the Sinn Fein Courts of Justice I was appointed (by whom I cannot recall) a member of the South Dublin District Court which met at Dunlaoghaire. The other two members were F.J.Allen and Morrissey, a Dunlaoghaire businessman. Allen was Chairman. We three officiated until the dissolution of these courts.



The end of 1921 also saw the end of my active political career, if the dabbings herein recorded may be so described.

The Dáil debates on the Treaty at Earlsfort Terrace finished me. I had no objection to a healthy difference of opinion, but I could not understand the unhealthy passion and hatred uncovered by these interchanges. I was appalled at the ease with which the unity (or what I believed to be the unity) of the previous five years was so irreparably shattered; all the more so, as I could see nothing fundamental in the matter in dispute. The members of this Dáil owed it to the people of Ireland who had so confidently elected them, and had so generously provided them with the sinews of war, to compose their differences and to present a solid front. They were, however, too bent on destroying one another. The so-called "Pact" was merely a device availed of by both sides to prepare for their mutual destruction. What angered me most with this sordid struggle was the comfort which it afforded to our enemies, a comfort which in the past we had so often afforded them, and usually when they were most in need thereof. I blame both sides for the calamities that followed. I did my best to remain friendly with those I knew on either side, but with only partial success, for this singular behaviour was looked upon with the gravest suspicion on the principle, I suppose, that he who is not with me is against me.

This is the year 1950. I have read much of the ocean of explanatory and justifying verbiage with which we have been deluged by both parties since 1922, but neither this nor anything that has happened in the intervening years has caused me to alter my views. On the contrary, they have confirmed them.

My leave-taking of the I.R.B., unlike my introduction, was not marked by any formal ceremony. I simply ceased attending my circle meetings. No effort was made to bring me to book for this dereliction and I know nothing of the subsequent history (if any) of this organisation of which I had been a member for 13 or 14 years.

Signed: W. Jackson.

Date: 17. 7. 50

Witness: Seán Bunnion. Comdt.

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
BURO STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21
NO. W.S. 409