

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

BURO STAIRÉ MILC T: 3 1

No. **W.S. 413**

ROINN



COSANTA.

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 413.....

Witness

Mr. Patrick McCrea,
376 Clontarf Road,
Dublin.

Identity

Member of 'B' Company 2nd Battalion
Dublin Brigade 1913 -.

Member of I.R.B. 1913 - ;
" " The Squad, 1919.

Subject

- (a) National activities 1913-1921;
- (b) G.P.O. Easter Week 1916;
- (c) Bloody Sunday, November 1920.

Conditions, if any, stipulated by Witness

Nil

File No. **S.1497**.....

Form B.S.M. 2.

C O N T E N T S.

	<u>Page.</u>
1. Volunteer activities pre-1916	1
2. The Rising	1
3. Volunteers re-organised 1917	5
4. Raid on Collinstown Aerodrome	6
5. The Squad	7
6. Raids for arms	8
7. Raids on Dublin Castle Mails	9
8. Burning wagons at Kingsbridge Station and disarming the guard	11
9. In Balbriggan with O/C. Fingal Brigade	13
10. Raid on Guinness's boat	14
11. Instructions for the execution of six G-men	16
12. Proposed capture of Secret Service agents and spies	17
13. Bloody Sunday	17
14. Ambush at Whitehall.	22.
15. The attempted rescue of Sean MacEoin	24
16. Attempted ambush of troop train at Killester	36
17. Michael Collins	38
18. General attack on enemy forces in Dublin which did not materialise	42
19. Train ambush at Ballyfermot	43

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

BURO STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21

No. W.S. 413

STATEMENT OF MR. PATRICK McCRAE,

376, Clontarf Road, DUBLIN.

Volunteer Activities, pre-1916.

I joined the Volunteers at the inception in 1913, and I took part in the Larkin strike that year. I was attached to "B" Company, 2nd Battalion. When the split came I went on the side of Pearse. About 90% of the company I belonged to remained loyal and did not go over with the Redmond Volunteers. During the years 1913 and 1914, there was little activity apart from the Howth gun running in 1914. I took part in the march to Howth. Our company was in charge of Captain Kerrigan coming from Howth and we were drawn in line across the road at the Malahide Road where the parley took place with the police and military. We were drawn across the road two deep. All the Volunteers were behind us and the Scottish Borderers in front. The majority of the Volunteers got away with their guns. I think the fact that the general body had got away was the reason we were not disarmed.

I was a member of the I.R.B. which I joined about the same time as I joined the Volunteers. I was initiated into the I.R.B. by Tom Hunter in 1913. I became a member of the Circle of which Con Colbert was Centre. We met in Parnell Square - I cannot remember the number of the building there. We only met about bi-monthly. As an ordinary member of the I.R.B. I was not familiar with the inner workings of it. I was sworn in by Tom Hunter at the Bull Wall, Dollymount.

The Rising.

Coming to the Rising of Easter Week 1916, I was still a member of the same company as when I joined. My company

captain in 1916 was Captain O'Reilly, with Leo Henderson and ... Murphy as 1st and 2nd Lieutenants.

On Easter Saturday night I was in company with Tom Hunter and he hinted to me that action was pending and when I asked him if I could go home on the following day, Sunday, he said: "Your services will be required", or words to that effect.

I was mobilised for 12.30 on Easter Sunday at Father Mathew Park, Fairview. On our way to the parade ground I was met by the company mobiliser, H. Williams, and informed that the parade was off. I was with two other Volunteers; we had three days' rations with us and were dressed in full uniform. The courier did not give us any other instructions. I was free that evening and went to the pictures. I did not know that a further mobilisation was to take place on Monday morning and I went out the country on that morning to my own home. Although I did not know anything about a Rising I had a feeling that something was going to happen and, although they wanted me to stay at home, I would not do so. I came back on the evening train and when I was told the Rising was on. I had my mobilisation note from the previous day and I reported to the Post Office. I told Sean McDermott how it happened that I was not wearing my uniform and he told me it would not be wise to go home now for it, but to remain where I was, that there was plenty of work for fellows in civilian clothes. I think a member of the Cumann na mBan was sent for my ammunition.

On Tuesday in the Post Office our first job was to commandeer the National Volunteer rifles and the Hibernian Rifles out of Parnell Square, and the man in charge of that was M.W. O'Reilly. We succeeded in this mission. When we loaded them in the car we walked back to the Post Office again, and on the way there was a skirmish in Jervis St.

where I got slightly wounded in the hand. After going into the Post Office there was a man killed outside and he was taken to the hospital.

On Wednesday, while crossing the street, I was again wounded. I came back into Marlboro' St. and I was taken to the Mater Hospital where I remained until the Rising was over. In the hospital there were two policemen who were guarding a patient of their own and were not there for political reasons. I think the patient was mental, and was put in the Mater Hospital before the Rising. The nurses or doctors would not have anything to do with him and that accounted for the presence of the policemen. One of these knew me from the time of the Larkin strike, and he reported me. When the mental patient had gone, the police remained on in the hospital. I drew the nuns' attention to these two policemen before their patient had left and, when the patient had gone, the nun came to me and said: "I am afraid you are right; I will find out what they are doing". She got Surgeon Blaney to 'pump' the fellows and he (Surgeon Blaney) informed the nun that they had another very important patient there, mentioning my name, who was one of Jim Larkin's lieutenants. The nun told me I was not to worry about it, that she would be able to arrange things. I remained on in the hospital until such time as they were going to bring me to the Castle. The nuns and doctors were able to find out this information by getting very 'friendly' with the police. About half an hour before the ambulance was to come for me to bring me to the Castle hospital there was a nurse there, - I think her name was Nurse Joy and that she came from Kerry - who took the two policemen to the pantry to give them a drink, by the way she was so fond of them, and during their absence I was dressed in a hurry and taken out through the mortuary, put in a car and taken to a place called Carnew in the Co. Wicklow. I got

safely away although we stopped in Baltinglass, where we made inquiries from the police without arousing suspicions. I had been married about four months that time and I had more or less to give myself up in the country because, since the authorities were not getting any satisfaction from me, they had threatened my wife that they would arrest her. They asked her what part of the country did I come from and she said she did not know. They were going to arrest herself and her sister. The priest, however, came on the scene and the police informed her that they would only give her a respite of three days. For this reason, I let myself be seen by the authorities and one night I was arrested by the R.I.C. in the country. I was kept in the local barracks in the country for a night and under an escort of detectives I was taken to Dublin on the following day. I was placed in the Bridewell on the night I arrived and on the following morning I was taken to the Castle. I was then transferred to Richmond Barracks and brought before three military officers there. They asked the usual questions and, not being charged, I gave them no information. They had the Howth ammunition on the table and asked me did I know anything about it. I was put into the compound then with the rest of the men and detained there for about a week. The man in charge with us was Peter de Loughrey (since dead).

After about a week or ten days we were removed to Wakefield prison in England. Darrell Figgis was in the party. The leaders had been removed to Reading before we arrived in Wakefield. I think Eoin MacNeill was there, and other leaders, but they were kept separate from us. We got poor food after arriving and we got only a half hour out of the twenty four hours of the day for exercise and this continued for two or three weeks. The first week of May was very cold and our underclothing was taken from us

according to prison custom. On the morning I arrived I had been travelling all night and I lay down on the plank bed from exhaustion and fell asleep. I had my overcoat over me and they took it away and put the plank bed up against the wall. They were very severe at first, but they relaxed somewhat. We were guarded by military and civilians. The military sergeant-major was James Connolly; his people came from Kerry, and we got on very well with him. As a rule, we were not called by our names, but by numbers. A girl whom I knew from Enniscorthy sent me a picture postcard of Vinegar Hill and Connolly remarked: "Is this another reminder for us?". The people down the country used to send us '98 pipes and the old sergeant-major had to get one for himself which he later smoked. We were allowed a lot of facilities, and the nuns from Leeds were very good to us. Andy Clerkin came over and was very good to us too. I was only about two months there when I was released.

Volunteers reorganised, 1917.

Coming towards the end of 1917, the Volunteers were reorganised. I found myself back with my old company again and this time the company officers were P. Daly, company commander, and L. Henderson was lieutenant, I think. During the remainder of the year 1917, and practically all of 1918 there was very little military activity other than organising, parading and drilling. At the 1918 election most of the Volunteers gave a hand.

Some time late in 1918 I was transferred from the company to the transport section of Brigade headquarters. When I was on the Brigade I was not confined to jobs of the 2nd Battalion - I could be detailed for any job within the brigade and with the active service unit.

Raid on Collinstown Aerodrome.

I think the first action of importance that I took part in was the raid on Collinstown Aerodrome in March 1919. It was a 1st Battalion assignment, but I was called in on it as being attached to the Brigade Transport, and there were a couple of 2nd Battalion men on it including Mick McDonnell; Paddy Holohan was in charge. It was personally organised by the Brigadier, Dick McKee, with the assistance of Commandant Paddy Holohan and a few other members of the 1st Battalion who were employees in Collinstown. On the night of the raid we mobilised in Parnell Square - about 25 strong. The men were to travel there in five cars and three cars were to take them back on completion of the job. Two cars were deputed to take the rifles and ammunition. One did not turn up, hence we were one car short. Four or five of the Volunteers detailed for this raid were dressed in British uniforms. One was George Fitzgerald, who was dressed as a British officer (he works in Industry & Commerce). I think the reason for this arrangement was to get close to the sentries and take them by surprise. We left for Collinstown about midnight. We had to pinch a car to get there. All the cars went out the Santry road. Two cars went by the Ballymun road and two others the main Swords road, turned left at Cloughran. We met at the cross as one goes down to Collinstown. It was a bright, moonlight night. The reason they selected a certain hour was because they knew when the guard would be changed and there would be no further change for four hours. There were two British soldiers on sentry duty and our men got close to them and held them up. They could not give any alarm. After that they rushed the guard-room where, I think, 12 or 14 were taken by surprise before they could reach for their guns. These were tied up and, as far as I know, they gave no trouble, with one exception, and

he got tied by the heels to the rafters. One of them was very unconcerned and asked for a blanket to be thrown over him. I think we were two hours altogether in Collinstown. Seventy-five rifles and about fifteen or sixteen thousand rounds of ammunition were got there. No alarm was given and the stuff was got away. It was placed in two cars and taken away. Mick McDonnell was in charge of the rifles and ammunition. On the homeward journey Joe Lawless was with me. He was in one of the cars. My car was the last to leave the job and, although it was only an M.T. Ford, we brought twelve men from Collinstown to Dublin, and some of them were big men. Everyone who went on that job was issued with a dagger and knuckleduster combined. They were to be used instead of guns in case of trouble. I put the car I used back in the garage in Capel St., replacing ^{the} and key and the boss knew nothing of the affair. We were allowed to keep the daggers. Later on, I gave mine to a Father Walsh who fancied having it.

The Squad.

The original squad, as far as I can recollect, were twelve in number. They were Mick McDonnell in charge, Paddy Daly, J. Slattery, Tom Keogh, Vincent Byrne, Joseph Leonard, Eddie Byrne, ... Barrett, Paddy Griffin, Sean Doyle, M.O'Reilly. I cannot remember the remaining men. These men functioned as a squad from about the middle of April 1919, and they were paid and worked directly under G.H.Q. Before I became a member of the squad I was asked by Paddy Daly if I had any objection to shooting policemen. I answered that I was a Volunteer and that I would carry out any orders given to me. When the question of payment arose I stated that I was in business with my brothers, that I did not want to draw on the funds and that I could be called on at any time as I was my own master. Men had to be available at all times. They might be given only fifteen minutes to prepare. My business

premises were located in Georges St. I became a member of the squad some time in the winter of 1920. I was one of the additional members who joined. The others were Ben Byrne, Frank Bolster, Seamus Brennan, Bill Stapleton, and Paddy Drury. There were four men working in the ammunition factory and they were often called out to assist us. These were Gabriel McGrath, Mick Keogh, Sean Keogh and Sean O'Sullivan. The list of names I have quoted were those given by me to Piaras Beaslaoi in his life of Michael Collins and at that time my memory was much clearer than it is now.

When I became attached to the squad I got to know Michael Collins personally. My first recollection of him carried me back to Easter Week 1916, to the G.P.O. where I saw him in uniform emptying stout in the mess. Somebody passed a remark to the effect that it was a shame to be wasting the precious liquor. Collins replied: "If we lost in '98 through drink, we are not going to lose through it this time". As already stated, Mick McDonnell commanded the original squad of twelve; Paddy Daly took charge later.

Raids for arms.

During the month of January 1920, instructions were issued that the Volunteers should embark on a large-scale raids for arms and ammunition stored in private houses. The raids were carried out by the Volunteers in their own areas, and my district at the time would be east Clontarf. I forget the name of the Volunteers who accompanied me, but it was only a question of calling on the private houses where we knew they had shot guns. I should think we collected two or three dozen in the one night. We met with no opposition even from loyalists. It seemed to me that a number of the people were glad to get rid of the arms.

A few people valued their guns to a great extent and expressed the wish to have them returned when things became normal. As far as I know, some of these guns were returned to the owners later on. After the truce they were stored in Islandbridge and I believe we labelled some of these guns with the owners' names when we were collecting them. We deposited them in a local dump for the time being. I considered I had put the guns which I collected in a very safe place near my own home in Dollymount. They were, however, discovered by some youngsters on the following day while they were playing in the vicinity. A Mr. Robb, a Castle employee, became aware of this through the youngsters but, instead of reporting me, he called on my wife during my absence, telling her how he had come to the knowledge of the guns. He asked her to get me to have them moved from there as he did not want "the blaguards", meaning the Tans, brought around the place. I moved them that night to the central dump, the location of which I forget.

Raids for Dublin Castle Mails.

A mail van carrying mails for Dublin Castle was held up in Parnell Square. The van was brought into Dominick Lane. As well as I remember, Paddy Kennedy and Vinny Byrne were with me. We had our own car in Dominick Lane to which we transferred the mails. We transferred all the mail in the Post Office van into our own van. We went up Dominick Lane, up Dorset St. where we turned into Temple St. towards our dump. Having dumped the mails, we discovered while sorting them that we had not got the right one. We had 26 or 27 mail bags. Through our friends in the Post Office we later discovered that the special bag which we missed was placed under the driver's seat in the horse-drawn van. We had a second raid and Vincent Byrne accompanied me.

On this occasion we took the same route as on the previous raid. We came out into Upper Dorset St. and crossed into Lr. Dorset St. and when we turned into Temple St. this time we ran up against a patrol of British soldiers carrying rifles 'at the trail'. Ten or twelve of them were spread across the road and we were within 25 or 30 yards from them when we saw them. As we were travelling in the centre of the road I had to swerve to my left side. It was a bad experience even when we had turned off. Evidently they did not suspect us. We proceeded down Frederick St., turned into Gardiner's Place, went in behind the patrol and went to the same dump. This time we found we had the right mails. The other mails which we had were notices sent out by the Land Commission demanding rents from farmers. A further raid for mails took place at the Rotunda Rink, the reason for it being to search for the monthly police report which was due in Headquarters about that time and was sent in by the R.I.C. in the country districts. We were always able to know these things as our friends in the Post Office kept us informed. I was asked to come on that job and to provide a van to take the mails away. It occurred between 6 and 7 a.m. I can't give the names of many who were on that job, but a number of men arrived there at the same time and they entered the Post Office by all doors, taking the place by surprise. There was a chute leading to a downstairs compartment where the employees were waiting to receive the bags of mail, but instead of the mail bags, they were confronted by armed Volunteers who held them up. The mails were then duly collected and transferred to the car. All this was done without a hitch and the mails were taken by me to our dump in the rear of Fitzwilliam Place. I placed the mails in the dump and locked up the place, returning to Brennan & Walsh's of O'Connell St. where I had an appointment with Liam Tobin, Tom Cullen and Peadar Clancy. I handed the keys of

the dump over to them as arranged. I accompanied them to the dump and remained for some time with them while they opened the mails. The first letter opened by Tom Cullen was very amusing. It was from a lady to Lord French congratulating him on the effective way he was putting down the "rebels". Tom Cullen took special charge of that letter and said he would answer the lady in question.

Burning wagons at Kingsbridge Railway Station
and disarming the guard.

There were two open wagons with military stores at Kingsbridge. These were to be sent to some part of the south of Ireland. Every morning when these two wagons were hitched on the goods train the fireman and driver refused to operate the train. Each morning these two men were dismissed and two fresh men put on the following morning. The same thing happened again, the two fresh men refusing to drive the train, with the same consequence, that is, their dismissal. This continued for about a week, two men being dismissed each day. The matter was reported to the headquarters of the I.R.A. and Michael Collins decided that they would disarm the guard and destroy the military stores of those two wagons. We were mobilised for Kingsbridge between 2 and 3 p.m. on a Saturday. It was a first battalion job, as far as I know. I was brought in on it with another man from the 3rd Battalion named Fitzgerald. We reported to Peadar Clancy at Kingsbridge outside the Goods Yard. He was, of course, a Battalion leader. He consulted with us, informing us that it would be impossible to do the job on the Saturday. At this time there was no one in the Goods Yard which was practically closed, as the workmen had all gone. The two wagons were at the country side of the stores and one could not get near them without being suspected. Peadar Clancy then said he was calling off the

the job and that we would do it on Monday morning. He added that there would be no difficulty in doing the job when the full staff were present and the stores opened. Some of the men were not very satisfied as they could not be there on Monday morning. Peadar then asked how many could be there, and nine or ten, including myself, agreed to be present. Clancy was unable to come on Monday morning but we turned up as arranged, and I believe the man in charge was Charlie Byrne or his brother of the 1st Battalion. Nine of us turned up and there were ten soldiers on guard armed with Lee Enfield rifles. We took them by surprise. Of this guard of ten, only two were on sentry duty. The remainder were engaged in drawing water, cooking and cleaning. We moved around amongst the railway staff and made ourselves as inconspicuous as possible. Each of us had instructions to cover off one member of the guard no matter what his duty or position was. We achieved this purpose and held up the armed sentries, disarming them. We then put the entire guard in a closed wagon and locked them in and took their rifles and equipment with us. Our capture consisted of ten rifles and about 500 rounds of ammunition together with the web equipment and steel helmets of the guard. We sprinkled the two wagons containing the military stores, which was our objective, with petrol which we had taken along specially for the job, and set the wagons alight, waiting until they were practically destroyed. I left the station accompanied by Charlie Byrne and another Volunteer whose name I do not recall. As we were leaving the station the public and railwaymen who were there actually cheered us. I took the captured material, proceeded down the south quays, turning into Parliament St. and down Dame St. and College Green. When I arrived at the junction of College Green, two tenders of Tans came along from the direction of College St. They were coming from Beggars Bush. I happened to arrive at the junction a

fraction of a second before them and the policeman on point duty let me through first, holding up the Tans, which was a relief to me. I reached the dump in Fitzwilliam Place without a mishap. Here I parted with my two companions and locked up the dump. Although I was a member of the Headquarters Squad I always made sure that whenever arms or ammunition were captured, some part of the booty would go to my own battalion; consequently, I returned to the dump that evening, taking one rifle and a steel helmet from it. I transferred the rifle to the battalion and kept the helmet. An inquiry was held into this by the 1st Battalion and I think all those engaged on the job except myself were put through the 'third degree'. Evidently they never connected me with the loss. I took the steel helmet to my own home to keep as a souvenir. I placed it between the boarded partition of an outhouse which I thought to be a very secure place. Shortly after the Truce I proceeded to recover my helmet from the outhouse. During the search I had pulled down half the partition when my wife came on the scene and asked me was I looking for something. I said: "Yes, for a steel helmet". She said: "I saw you put it there, although you were unaware that I was watching you. I took it", she continued, "that night, put it under my cloak, went down the Bull Wall and dumped it in the tide. It has probably gone back to England by now".

In Balbriggan with O/C. of the Fingal Brigade.

I got a note from the Brigade O/C., Oscar Traynor, to report to Brigade headquarters on a certain evening. This would be early in September 1920, before Balbriggan was burned. The Brigade O/C. told me he wanted me to go to Balbriggan and to take Micheal Lynch with me. The latter was an officer in the Fingal Brigade. Lynch was to

meet his men somewhere near Balbriggan in some outhouse on a farm. They were there at the appointed time. The job was to shoot up the Tans when they entered the town of Balbriggan. When Lynch arrived he held a meeting with his men and after waiting a couple of hours, a message came through that the operation was to be called off. It was getting late at this time and there was no possible chance of my getting back to town before curfew. Lynch brought me to Dr. Brian Cusack's place in Oldtown. The Cusacks were very much mixed up in the Movement. We decided we would stay there for the night. Mrs. Cusack made us very comfortable; we had supper and played cards until a late hour in the night. Mrs. Cusack warned me that I was not to leave without breakfast and to wait until she would call me, but I awoke very early and slipped out unseen. Lynch was not returning with me. The car I was using was a new Ford which had been recently captured from the Auxiliaries at Ballsbridge. I drove back towards Dublin without mishap, arriving in Donnycarney. I decided to leave the car in Jim O'Neill's place; he was also in the Movement. Having deposited the car, I proceeded home. I first reported to my own home before I went back to town as I knew they would be anxious. I arrived there about 7.30 a.m. My wife was already up; she appeared to be very worried and wanted to know where I had been. I remarked that she was up very early and she told me she had been up all night. I made the excuse of staying in my brother's place all night, that I could not get home before curfew. As it was assumed that I had breakfast, I had to suffer on until lunch.

Raid on Guinness's boat.

The O/C. of the Brigade, Oscar Traynor, instructed that I was to report to him on Sunday morning. There were only 6 or 7 fellows for the job, and he informed me that it was

reported to him that there were some rifles on Guinness's boat which was lying at the Custom House dock. Sunday was the only day suitable for the job, as only the crew would be on board. As the military were on guard outside the Custom House, at the time, the Brigade O/C. asked me to bring a car out of the dump. The keys of the cars at the time were held by Maurice Brennan, who was O/C. Transport, and when I went in search of him I learned he had left Dublin for the weekend and, unfortunately, had taken the keys with him. I reported back to Oscar Traynor and told him I could get a car out by bursting the lock, but he thought this would be unwise as it would be exposing our dump which at the time was very useful to us. Cars were not so plentiful that time and he considered what was the best thing to do and the possibilities of obtaining one. I told him there was a football match on in Croke Park, starting about 2.30 p.m. and that I thought if we went down there about that time it would be possible to take one of the cars parked outside the grounds. Oscar Traynor accompanied me to Croke Park and the remainder of the fellows made their way down to the Custom House dock. When we arrived at Croke Park, we walked along the line of cars, selected one with the door open and got into it. The young man who was minding the cars approached and said the car did not belong to us, that the man who owned it was at the football match. A policeman was standing not far away, but he took no notice of us. We showed the young man the butt end of a gun and he stopped talking immediately. We took the car and drove down to the Custom House dock at the North Wall. We got three or four rifles on board the boat which we carried away. The men were wearing long coats and they concealed the rifles under their coats, brought them out and put them in the car. The British military guard was within 25 yards of us and noticed nothing unusual. Traynor came back in the car with

me and we dumped the arms in Hardwicke Place, took the car to Croke Park, leaving it in the exact spot from where we had taken it and no one was the wiser of the occurrence except the young man in charge of the cars. The second half of the match was on at this time and we entered the football ground, mixing with the crowd, and there was nothing further about it.

Instructions for the execution of six G-men.

We had instructions to eliminate six G-men who were making themselves frightfully obnoxious. Their names were given to us and these men attended Church on a Sunday morning in pairs. The whole squad was mobilised to carry out this job together with members of the Intelligence Section. The job was to take place around 8 o'clock on Sunday morning. MacSwiney, the Lord Mayor of Cork, was slowly passing out at this time and the job was only to be carried out in the event of his death. The morning papers were out about 8 o'clock on Sunday mornings at this time and we were able to know that MacSwiney was still living. On the first Sunday morning everyone was in position and the job could easily have been carried out, but we were unable to act as there was a hope that MacSwiney might be released. On the following Sunday we were in the same position, but the G-men did not turn up for Church. We learned later that they had gone to another Church. On the next Sunday morning we switched over to the other Church, waited until the Service was over, but there was no sign of them. On that particular job we had Dan Breen and Sean Treacy with us. On the Sunday we went to Clarendon St. the G-men did not go out, but the military and Tans surrounded our former venue, looking for us. We went to the first Church two Sundays in succession and the military and Tans surrounded the Church we had been at on the first Sunday. I would like to mention that when our party were

waiting for the G-men, to our own knowledge sub-rosa a newsboy in the vicinity approached us, saying "Here they are now, boys". The job was eventually called off and it is most likely that our presence at the various churches had become known to the British.

Proposed capture of Secret Service Agents
and Spies.

A number of British Secret Service agents who were residing in houses and hotels throughout the city were picked up each morning by a car which was provided and taken to Dublin Castle. The last agent to be picked up by this car each morning resided at the Shelbourne Hotel. The Squad had instructions to be at the Shelbourne Hotel on a certain morning, together with members of the Intelligence Squad. The agents were to be captured and taken away; presumably it was intended to have them executed. On the morning this was to take place, at the last moment it was called off. We dispersed, but I did not know why the operation was called off. I heard later it was put off for a much bigger operation which took place on "Bloody Sunday". I think at that time that the Intelligence Squad were compiling a list of those people with the help of our men who were in the Castle, namely, Colonel Broy, Colonel Neligan and McNamara. It was Tom Cullen who told me this was the reason for the calling off of the operation in question.

Bloody Sunday.

Sometime during the week preceding "Bloody Sunday" a few of us had an inkling that a big operation was arranged for the following Sunday. This operation would combine the services of the Dublin Brigade in addition to the Squad and A.S.U. In other words, it would be a Brigade operation.

On Saturday the battalions of the Dublin Brigade were mobilised at their respective headquarters and certain men were selected from each battalion for certain areas to carry out the operation that was to be allotted. In short, the operation was the elimination, on Sunday morning at 9 o'clock, of enemy spies and agents who had been listed by G.H.Q. Intelligence as men that should be executed as a military necessity. I was mobilised for 35, Lr. Gardiner St. together with the remainder of the Transport men. It was between 8 and 9 o'clock when I arrived there and received my instructions from Dick McKee and Peadar Clancy. They were together in the hall. I was told what was to take place on Sunday morning and instructed how to distribute the cars. All cars available were to be distributed on Sunday morning, each car with two drivers was allocated a certain street or area. I was told to assist the unit that was operating at 28 Lr. Baggot St. As well as I remember, the men on that job were a couple of members of the Squad - P. Griffin, Eddie Byrne and Mick Fleming. Mick Fleming was in the army later.

The British agent in Baggot St., listed for elimination was, as far as I know, Captain Baggaly, who was believed to have been one of Kevin Barry's torturers. On that Sunday morning I left home about 7.30 o'clock and made my way to the dump in North Great Charles St. I met the remainder of the men there - at least some of them. We collected our guns and got out the car. We timed ourselves to be in Baggot St. about five minutes to 9 o'clock. We arrived there up to time - I think it was two or three minutes to 9 - and within three minutes another man, who was on the job, turned up. We parked the car a little to the rear of the house on the opposite side of the street. When our men arrived there was no delay, as arranged. Three or four men entered the house, leaving one man on each side of the building outside as a guard for the

men who had actually gone into the house. They had particulars of the agent's bedroom. When the room was entered he tried to escape through the window, but before he reached the window he was put out of action. The job was completed in the space of a few minutes. We got away without incident. We left Baggot St. and we came down Merrion Square and Westland Row. When we came into Merrion Square we picked up a few men coming off the Mount St. job - one was Herbert Conroy. We arrived back at the dump without any interference from anybody. We replaced the car and dumped our guns. Headquarters that morning was at 6, North Richmond St. - Byrne's - in case of casualties, and for the purpose of making our reports. I think we were about the first unit to arrive there. After a time the other units came in. Sean Russell was there. I think he was quartermaster of Dublin Brigade at the time, as he was taking the reports from the units as they came in. After giving our reports in Richmond St. and remaining in conference for a time, hearing reports of other places, etc., we returned home. I got home about 11 o'clock. I was living in Dollymount. I had not been to Mass at the time. I had breakfast. Members of the family inquired as to where I had been and I told them I was out with the boys, fishing, as this was a practice with the local boys, and was at Mass. My wife said she had not been to Mass, and I had been thinking of going to the 11.30 Mass, the one evidently she proposed attending. Up to this point my wife did not think I was deeply involved. When I said I had been out fishing she asked me where was the fish. This remark caused me to stumble and I could not think of a satisfactory answer. In order not to give myself away, after breakfast I took the tram into town and went to the short 12 o'clock Mass in Marlboro' St. When I left the church I met several of the fellows who had been out that morning with us and, at this time, there was terrific

activity on the part of the military and Tans all over the city.

The Tipperary team had arrived in Dublin that day to play Dublin, in Croke Park. I was told that the British had raided the Tipperary Football team where they were staying in Gardiner's Row. We, therefore, decided that there would be no football match for us that day; that we would not attend it, as we thought there would possibly be trouble there. I returned home about 2 o'clock and lunched. After lunch I had been in the habit of going to football matches on a Sunday, and my family asked me was I not going to the match. I said no, that I was feeling tired and would lie down and have a rest. I lay on the couch in the room and fell asleep. I was awakened that evening about 4 o'clock. My wife came into the room crying, with a "Stop Press" in her hand. I woke up and asked her what was the matter. Before speaking she handed me the "Stop Press" and wanted to know was this the fishing expedition I had been on. Seeing that there was no use in concealing things any longer from her, I said: "Yes, and don't you see we had a good catch", or words to that effect. - She then said: "I don't care what you think about it, I think it is murder". I said: "No, that is nonsense; I'd feel like going to the altar after that job this morning", and thus I tried to calm her. I don't think she put out any lights in the house during the following winter. I did not stay at home then for about a week. That Sunday night I slept in a grove in the demesne known as St. Anne's, which was nearby. Up to this time I had no knowledge of the arrests of McKee and Clancy, only hearing of it on Monday morning when I came into town where I visited the Squad headquarters in ^{Monebands} Moran's of Abbey St. They considered it as one of the worst blows we received from the beginning of hostilities. Dick McKee and Peadar Clancy were great personalities and were idolised next to

Michael Collins by all men of the Dublin Brigade.

The worst came shortly after that when we were informed they had been murdered. Volunteer Clune was also with them. The bodies were removed to Bricin's hospital, and Michael Collins sent a note to the O/C. of the Dublin Brigade that a number of Volunteers, not prominent in the Movement, were to be sent to Bricin's hospital to carry out the bodies from the mortuary to the waiting hearse, as he did not wish to have the remains handled by the Tans. Oscar Traynor detailed me to find suitable men for this mission, but not to go on it myself, nor any member of the Squad. I found it difficult in the short time at my disposal to procure Volunteers readily available. After picking up a couple (one was Tommy Gay), I made up three including myself. As I had only got two Volunteers I thought it better to accompany them. When we got to Bricin's hospital we walked up to the front entrance. There were several Tans walking around the hospital grounds as we approached it. When they saw us going towards the mortuary they turned their backs to us in what I thought to be a spirit of decency. They entered the hospital and I did not see them again. Some relatives of the deceased were present. The coffins were uncovered and I had an opportunity of examining the bodies very closely while waiting for the hearse to arrive. While noting that the remains were properly laid out and prepared for burial, I observed that Peadar Clancy had a large hole in the temple between the eye and the ear which had been plugged with cotton wool and that he was also badly wounded about the throat. As his throat was also covered with cotton wool, it was obvious to me that it was badly marked. Although he gave me the impression that he was maltreated, he still wore his characteristically pleasant smile, even in death.

Dick McKee's remains also bore evidence of maltreatment,

as the face and head were badly marked. After paying our last respects to the remains, we covered the coffins. In order to make a fourth to carry the coffins to the hearse, we had to call on the services of Dick McKee's fiancée. The funeral cortege was small as we wended our way to Marlboro' St. Church on a wet, gloomy evening and there appeared to be a sadness over the city. I cannot remember who met us at Marlboro' St. Church. Although it was a great blow to Collins to have lost Dick McKee, he still carried on as actively as ever.

Ambush at Whitehall.

Reports reached Brigade headquarters from the 2nd Battalion that lorry-loads of Tans were coming into town from Gormanston each morning and that it would be an easy matter to ambush them. As a result of this, the O/C. of the Brigade sent for me as I was living in Dollymount in the Clontarf area at the time, where I had been for some years. He asked me if I could secure a suitable place in my area to dump some guns and ammunition after an ambush that was to take place at Whitehall. The place selected was only to be a temporary dump to store whatever guns might be captured just for one night and they were to be removed then to the dump in the city. His reasons for these arrangements were that after the ambush our men might be cut off from the city and it would not be possible for them to get back to the city dump with the arms, as some rifles were to be used on the job. I told him of a place I had in mind near Mount Prospect Avenue, Dollymount. The owner was Maurice Fenlon, a man who had helped us on many occasions. The dump being settled on, he asked me to go on the job which was to take place on the following morning. I contacted T. Kilcoyne and S. Murphy, officers of the company who were to carry out the job. The Volunteers were mobilised

to assemble at High Park Convent, Gracepark Road. Rifles and grenades were brought to this point by car. Between 20 and 30 men turned up for the job. They were divided into sections and arms handed out. Instructions were issued that the front section was not to fire on the first car. They were to hold fire until the car came in line with the rear section and, by that time, the whole convoy would be in the centre of the ambush. The men were extended out to 200 or 300 yards behind the fence which gave them good cover. After waiting some time the noise of the lorries was heard approaching and by this time everyone was keyed up for action. When the first car came into the ambush position, a Volunteer, contrary to orders which he may have misinterpreted, threw a grenade which exploded against the side of the car. There were some casualties in the car but evidently the driver escaped. He immediately swung the car around and retreated towards Gormanston. The cars following were, therefore, warned and they likewise turned around and went back in the direction of Gormanston. The job was now spoiled; I believe had the Volunteer held his fire, the whole party of Tans, if they did not surrender, would have been wiped out with very little loss to ourselves. After a short talk the signal was given to retire to Gracepark Road, as arranged. Here, the arms and ammunition were collected and placed in the car. On checking the men, one man was found missing. The officer in charge came to the conclusion that he had made his way back to the city. ^{we} As/were about to move off, the missing man turned up and he was told that the job was off and that he could go home. "But", he said, "I have a hand grenade here", and someone told him to throw it into the car. "But", he added, "There is no pin in it". He explained how he was fooled - that when the first grenade was thrown he withdrew the pin waiting for his turn, and when the job was called off he

spent some time trying to find the pin but failed in the search; therefore, he was obliged to carry the hand grenade without the pin. I remember he was a young chap. However, Tom Kilcoyne secured the hand grenade, whereon in company with him (Kilcoyne) and another officer I made my way to the dump.

The scene of the ambush extended from the Whitehall entrance to High Park Convent to a point behind the junction of Whitehall Road and the road that is running up from Collins Avenue. At that particular time the point at the junction of the road which I now speak of was known as "The Thatch". Prior to the ambush, instructions were also issued that roads in the vicinity leading towards east Clontarf were to be blocked and that one road was to be left free for us to go back. Here again, orders were misinterpreted with the result that the roads were not completely blocked, and if they had been blocked, the road that was to be left free to us would, I understand, have been the first to be closed against us. The stuff was removed from the local dump that night and taken into the city.

The attempted rescue of Sean MacEoin.

In the Spring of 1921, Sean MacEoin was summoned to G.H.Q. for a conference. Unknown to him, he had been shadowed from the time he left his home until he came to Dublin. On his journey, either to or from Dublin, he was arrested. Afterwards he was rushed to Mountjoy gaol. Michael Collins was very upset in losing MacEoin, as he was one of his best soldiers and was sure to be executed except he could be rescued. With this in view, Collins never ceased working out plans for his rescue, but he realised this was not going to be an easy job. At some time previous prisoners had been taken out of Kilmainham gaol with the

inside help of some of the guard. The British took no chances with MacEoin. There was a special guard of Tans and military placed in charge of him. Prisoners like MacEoin were tried in the Castle or the City Hall and were taken there from Mountjoy in an armoured car. This gave Michael Collins an idea of forming a plan for his rescue which was subsequently tried - an armoured car to be captured, crew and officers to be dressed in British uniforms and driven into Mountjoy together with forged papers for the removal of MacEoin to the Castle. In connection with this, Commandant Michael Lynch, Fingal Brigade, and Superintendent of the Corporation Abattoir, North Circular Road, reported that an armoured car called at the slaughter house each morning to escort meat lorries to the different barracks. Shortly after this, I was called to a meeting at G.H.Q. Most of the Brigade and Army Council members were there, also members of the Squad. Michael Collins asked me if I could drive an armoured car. I replied that I had never seen the inside of one, but had driven different makes of cars and I believed I could manage it. He appeared satisfied and then informed all of us present that it was proposed to capture this car at the abattoir with a view to rescuing Sean MacEoin from Mountjoy Prison. He then outlined his plan as follows: The crew was to consist of myself as No. 1 driver; a second driver to be detailed by Michael Lynch of the Fingal Brigade; two machine gunners - Michael Noone and J. Caffrey (Noone was later replaced by Peter Goff of Baldoyle). Emmet Dalton and Joe Leonard were to act the part as British officers. This completed the crew of the car.

Members of the Squad and some men from the A.S.U. were also to be there, P. Daly to be in charge, and they were to assist in capturing the car and holding up the soldiers to give time to reach Mountjoy before the capture

could be reported. This was necessary as the abattoir was in close proximity to Marlboro' (now McKee) Barracks. When all arrangements were completed, someone asked what would be done with the car when the job was finished. Michael Lynch then spoke up - it was he who had given us the means of getting the car - and he said he had a dump for us out on the Finglas and Ashbourne road and we were to take the car out towards Ashbourne. He added that if we met Tans on the road we would be having a 'go' at them. Collins then said: "I wish, Lynch, you would cut out these grand schemes, because they never materialise. If the car released MacEoin, it will complete the job we have in view and after that we are not concerned". We had no objection to Lynch's proposal with regard to the disposal of the car afterwards because we believed we were to get a car which we thought was capable of doing 60 or 70 miles an hour, hence we considered it would be only a matter of minutes to reach the place Lynch had in mind. It was a foolish suggestion, because when we captured the car we discovered that it was only able to do 10 or 12 miles an hour - a heavy vehicle with solid tyres; therefore it would have been a fatal mistake to think of going out the country with it.

One of the Intelligence Squad, Charlie Dalton - brother to Emmet - was detailed to take up position in Commandant Lynch's house which was situated in the grounds of the abattoir, and make reports of the movements of the crew and car and the best methods to adopt in capturing it. As already stated, these were the plans that were outlined at the first meeting and no further instructions were given by Collins on that night, only to hold ourselves in readiness for word from him as to when the actual capture was to take place. Some days later, all men detailed for the job were

were ordered to report to Squad headquarters in Abbey St. at 7 a.m. on a certain morning and await a message from Charlie Dalton. We reported on several mornings before the attempt was actually made. Michael Collins visited us each morning to see if everything was all right and gave us advice and encouragement. On Whit Saturday morning between 7.30 and 8 o'clock in May 1921, we were all sitting around, smoking and chatting, Michael Collins cracking jokes and relating some of his experiences when held up and searched by the Tans, when a message arrived from Charlie Dalton saying it was possible to go ahead with the job that morning. Everyone got busy immediately and paired off for their parts. There was just one hitch - the second driver did not turn up. It was the first morning he had disappointed, but no one blamed him - he had a long way to come and he was very young. Afterwards he told us he overslept that morning. Michael Collins was very anxious and thought it would be too much of a risk without a spare driver, as the job mainly depended on the car. He consulted me. I told him I could manage with Bill Stapleton, who was one of the Squad and had been learning to drive for some time previously. He seemed satisfied with this arrangement and shook hands with all, wishing us luck. His last words were not to use guns in the abattoir if possible, as it might spoil the second part of the job. We then left Abbey St. in pairs, made our way through different streets, arriving at the appointed place near the abattoir, and waited for the blind to be raised in Lynch's window. This was the signal from Dalton to proceed with the job. After a short delay a signal was given. The men walked in casually as if going to work in the slaughter house. Myself and Stapleton were about the second pair in. After going through the front

entrance we saw the car between Lynch's house and the slaughter house. We turned towards it per instructions to take it over. As we got near, a soldier came from behind the car, armed with a long Webley. We immediately shouted "Stick 'em up!". He glanced towards us and saw he was covered with two guns. His hands went up immediately, Stapleton keeping him covered while I stripped him of the gun and some of his uniform to complete my own. His cap which I took was not too comfortable - it was at least a size too small. I then searched him for the key of the car. While carrying out this operation, some shots were fired in the slaughter house, killing one soldier. I then told the soldier no harm would come to him provided he kept quiet, and that we only wanted the car. He then produced the key and seemed relieved. Up to this point he thought we were going to 'plug' him. He spoke to me then for the first time - words I would rather not have heard. He said the car was no good and would not take me very far, describing it as an "old tub" only used for escort duty from the abattoir to the barracks. This was bad news for me, but I consoled myself believing that he was only bluffing, and hoping we would not take it, as undoubtedly he would have to answer to his Commanding Officer for its loss. I learned afterwards that the whole crew received sentences of from 5 to 10 years' penal servitude. The car was now in our possession and we discarded our civilian overcoats, placed them in the car and donned the khaki similar to those worn by the crew. We stripped them of their caps and belts to complete our uniforms. I then took my place behind the wheel. The make of the car was "Peerless", double turret type. As there was no self-starter, the starting handle was a fixture in front and, not being used to heavy cars, Stapleton compelled one of the crew to give it a swing. The engine started. The inside being dark, it took me a few minutes to get the

sequence of the gears. Two machine-gunners now took their places behind the guns. Next, Tom Keogh and Bill Stapleton got in ^{and} closed the door. We drove on to the North Circular Road, leaving the disarmed crew and the other soldiers in care of P. Daly and his men. Coming out of the abattoir I think I felt sorry for the driver, he looked so dejected minus his cap, gun and, of course, the car. We were now heading for the second and most important part of the job. We halted, as arranged, at Ellesmers Avenue, to take up our officers, Dalton and Leonard, both in British uniform, Dalton even wearing his decorations from the 1914/18 war. They sat on the outside. Continuing our journey, on reaching Doyle's Corner, I noticed the radiator boiling. This brought my mind back to the soldier's remarks about the car being a dud. No one else noticed this and I said nothing about it, as everyone had his own part to worry about. We were now close to Mountjoy. We drove up the avenue leading to the prison and halted at the entrance door. A small wicket door opened and a warder advanced to the car to examine our credentials. Captain Dalton produced a large envelope containing the forged papers for the removal of MacEoin. I noticed the letters "O.H.M.S." appeared in large print on all the papers. The credentials were sufficient to convince the warder we were Crown forces. The door was opened. We drove through and were surprised to find two iron gates padlocked between us and the door leading to the prison building. A military sentry with fixed bayonet had charge of these gates which he unlocked and let us through without further questioning. I halted at the space leading to the building. Dalton and Leonard alighted. I saw the sentry saluting them as they passed in. I then proceeded to turn the car ready for going out. The space was small and I had some difficulty in getting round. Not having had the experience of being in an enclosed vehicle, perhaps

made it more difficult. When I turned I purposely let the car drift in between the two gates and stopped, but kept the engine running. The sentry now approached and asked me if I were going out. I said yes - at least in my own mind I was hoping I was. The outer door was now closed and, as arranged by Michael Collins for our safety, a member of Cumann na mBan was to hand in a parcel to the warder on the gate and endeavour to keep him in conversation as long as possible, so as to prevent him from locking the outer gates against us. After a short parley he was about to push them out when our two men, Frank Bolster and J. Walsh (one of whom belonged to the Squad), drew guns and held him up. While this was happening a sentry on the roof covered off the gate and, unknown to us, saw the whole thing and fired and wounded Walsh. Everyone cleared from the outside gate and took cover. Tom Keogh shot the sentry on the inner gates. A good many shots were exchanged at this time. Then there was a lull and there was no guard, military or Tan, visible outside the prison building. For the moment we were wondering what was happening Dalton and Leonard who were inside. After a short interval, to our delight, we saw them coming out but, unfortunately, without MacEoin. Their first words were: "Who the hell started shooting", that it had spoiled the job. However, it was an unhealthy place to start an argument and there was nothing to be done but to get out as quickly as possible. Every man got into the car, some sat on the outside bringing the dead sentry's rifle, and we drove out and down the North Circular Road, halting at North Richmond St. where a private car was waiting to take the officers and MacEoin, that is, if we had got him, to a place in Howth. Dalton and Leonard transferred to the private car, and the remainder in the armoured car continued along the North Circular Road, Summerhill Parade and Ballybough, Fairview and Malahide Rd.

hoping to meet a party of Tans and waste the remainder of the ammunition. Although the car behaved very well and did all it was expected to do, nevertheless, what the soldier told me about it was correct. Going up the Malahide Road near Clontarf Golf Club it would only function in low gear. We then decided to abandon it. The machine gunners, Caffrey and Goff, with the assistance of Tom Keogh and Bill Stapleton, stripped the car of its two hotchkiss guns together with a rifle captured in Mountjoy and revolvers in the abattoir. Taking the guns through the fields, we placed them in one of our dumps. Myself, Stapleton and two others, whose names I don't recall, remained to disable the car. We fired some shots into the petrol tank and set it alight, leaving it blazing. We then crossed into the grounds of the O'Brien Institute, took off our uniforms and placed them under a hedge with the intention of picking them up later. We then made our way to Fairview, went into the 'local' and had a couple of drinks.

When we arrived at North Richmond St., N.C.Road, Michael Lynch got into the car with us, with the intention of going out towards the dump mentioned by him, and the road we took was the Malahide Road. We were fortunate, however, that the car stopped where it did; we were covered by the trees which were a sort of protection. If we had travelled a little further, the plane with which the British were searching for us would have located us; hence it was well that the car stopped at that particular point, because they didn't locate the car until late in the afternoon. It was a pity that Dublin Brigade were not allowed to dump the car. You see, we had a dump beside Bassi's Ale Stores, Upper Sherrard St. Collins's exact words were: "Cut out this dump scheme, Lynch".

It being Whit Saturday, I had promised my brothers who

carried on a provision business in South Great Georges St. to help them out. I parted with my comrades, giving Bolster my gun to return to the dump, took the next tram and reported to my Brothers' shop, arriving there about 11.30. I was speaking to the foreman at the counter when a man came into the shop, ordering two cases of eggs and paid for them. He spoke with a Cockney accent and asked if their van would run him up to Portobello Barracks, as he wanted to deliver the eggs before lunch. The van being outside the door, I could offer no excuse and said I would drive him. He put the eggs in the van and got in beside me. On the way he told me he had been 27 years in the British army, that 15 of them had been spent in India, that he was now out on pension and had the contract to supply groceries to Portobello and Wellington (now Griffith) Barracks. I tried to appear interested in his conversation, but I was all the time wondering what reception I was going to get in Portobello. Up to now my companion had heard nothing about the morning episode. When we arrived at the gate on the avenue leading to the barracks, it was locked and a double sentry on. The sergeant of the guard recognised the man with me. Calling him by his name, he asked him his business to the barracks. On being told, myself and the car were searched by two N.C.Os. We passed through and my man said: "I wonder what the hell is wrong this morning; it is the first time I have been held up although I come in every day". We were halted at the next gate leading into the barracks, where we were subjected to the same procedure as at the first gate. When inside, I noticed there was great activity. Soldiers were mounting a piece of artillery on a heavy lorry - I assumed this was for the purpose of going out to blow up the armoured car. When I pulled up at the store near the cookhouse, my man got out and took one of the

parcels, saying: "I won't delay you two minutes", but he did not return for about 15 minutes which seemed to me about 10 hours. By this time I was getting very restless and could not sit in the car. I got out, opened the bonnet of the car and lighted a cigarette to kill time. My man now appeared minus the breezy manner he had leaving me. He apologised for the delay and in whispered tones he exclaimed with an oath: "Do you know what has happened this morning? The so-and-so Shinnars took an armoured car from the soldiers and raided Mountjoy gaol with it. What do you think of that?" I replied that I could not believe it. Continuing, he added: "It's the so-and-so truth. We are a nice so-and-so laugh now". He then said he wanted to leave the other box at the Auxiliaries' quarters near the canal gate and we had better get out of here as quickly as possible, that they were all so-and-so mad and they would shoot somebody. When we reached the Tan's quarters, an Auxiliary came out - I cannot say whether he was an officer or a sergeant-major - but he was wearing a Sam Brown. He said: "Hello Watson" addressing the man with me, and he thanked him for the prompt delivery of the eggs which were required for lunch. Watson rejoined: "Sir, you need not thank me; it was through the kindness of this man who drove me up". "Oh, well", said the Auxiliary, "bring that man in for a beer". I was getting on so well at this stage that I did not wish to be disagreeable, so I went in ^{and} had a couple of drinks at the Auxiliary's expense. The latter engaged in a close conversation with Watson in low tones. I could not hear the full conversation, but I gathered they were discussing the morning coup. I got the impression that the Auxiliaries were glad the Regular Army had lost the car and I don't think these Forces saw eye to eye. I overheard Watson remark: "It was a terrible thing to

happen". The Tan said: "These fellows (meaning the soldiers) should not be let out without a nurse".

As we were near the canal gate, I inquired if it were possible to go out that way, but was informed there was only one exit, the way we came in. We left by the Rathmines gate without any further trouble. On our way back Watson said the Auxiliary officer told him that the military had issued orders for all entrances to barracks and government offices to be barricaded and no armoured car was to be admitted. I was told afterwards that one of their own cars that was out on duty that morning returned to the Castle and was kept waiting outside the Castle gates for two hours before it was identified. I dropped my friend, Watson, at the corner of Heytesbury St. I finished my day.

When returning home that evening I missed a linen collar I had been wearing when leaving in the morning. After putting on the uniform I took off the collar and put it into a pocket of the uniform and forgot all about it. I had intended picking it up later. I returned to the O'Brien Institute the next day and found the uniforms gone. I thought no more about it, thinking my comrades had taken them. The following day, the Bank Holiday, Charlie Dalton and Joe Leonard called to my house. We went to Howth and met Emmet who had been staying up on the hill, and other members of the Squad. Then, for the first time, I was told by Emmet Dalton what had happened inside in Mountjoy Prison. It appears that all along Sean MacEoin knew that an attempt was to be made to rescue him. It had been arranged between himself and Collins through friendly warders that MacEoin would have some excuse for an interview with the Governor and the time of the interview was to coincide with the arrival of the rescue party. When Dalton and Leonard entered the prison they made their way to the Governor's office expecting to see MacEoin

there. In the office was the Governor and members of the staff, but MacEoin was not there. Dalton produced the forged document and presented it to the Governor. The latter examined it. He then stated he could not hand over MacEoin without telephone confirmation from the Castle. Dalton and Leonard saw that he was going to 'phone and that there was nothing for it but to hold the entire staff and put the 'phone out of order. After dismantling the telephone they proceeded to gag the staff and tie them up with the intention of locking them in ^{and} making their own way to MacEoin's cell. It was at this particular time the shooting took place outside and they decided that nothing further could be done.

On Tuesday morning I reported to Squad headquarters in Abbey St. about 10 or 11 o'clock. Michael Collins was there. He saw me coming and let me in. He shook hands with me and complimented me on my part in what had happened. I inquired who brought away the uniforms, if any member of the Squad had done so, as I was worried about my collar which bore a laundry mark that could be identified. During the day a message came through from one of the Christian Brothers in the O'Brien Institute that the Tans and military had searched their grounds the previous day with a bloodhound. The hound got the clothes and the party picked up some uniform and took them away. When this was reported to Collins he was worried about my collar. He sent for me and asked me the name of the laundry and what was the mark. I told him it was the Phoenix Laundry in Russell St. and that the mark was "M.C.17" He just laughed and said: "They will think it was me was on this job". However, he told me that he would send two men down to see the manager of the laundry and warn him not to give any information concerning laundry marks, or he would have to send another message to him, &c. which he would understand. He (Collins) advised me to go

out the country for a week or two until it had blown over. The following day I went down to south Wicklow where I remained for 8 or 9 days. The Custom House was burned in the meantime, which I probably missed being mixed up in.

The full crew which mounted the armoured car on its being captured and driven to Mountjoy were as follows:-
Myself as No. 1 driver; Bill Stapleton No. 2 driver;
Peter Goff and J. Caffrey, two gunners, and Tom Keogh.

Attempted ambush of troop train at Killester.

Information was received that two troop trains were leaving Northern Ireland for Dublin at different hours on a particular date in the early months of 1921. The first train was due to arrive in Dublin between 11 and 12 o'clock and the second train was of no concern to us, as it was to be attended to by Frank Aiken's men somewhere near the border. The first train was to be ambushed by the 2nd Battalion of the Brigade together with members of the Squad when it arrived in the vicinity of Dublin, at a point between Killester and Raheny. The Battalion O/C. was at this time, I believe, recovering from a wound received on a previous operation. In consequence, Paddy Daly and some of the company officers were in charge of this engagement. Mines were laid on the railway line concealed in a cutting near Killester bridge on the Raheny side. The men were extended to 200 or 300 yards under cover and on the embankment on the Artane side of the railway line which gave them a good line of retreat. There was a man posted about 400 yards further up the line. This man was to signal when the troop train would arrive, as other trains might be coming in. Every man was in position armed with grenades, rifles and revolvers. Engineers had charge of the mines. After about a half hour's waiting, the local train from Howth came along. There was no signal given and naturally no one was to fire. One

Volunteer fired a hand-grenade without orders which exploded against a carriage. Fortunately, I believe there was no one injured. The explanation given by this man later was that he thought they were to ambush the first train that came along. The Engineers realised the mistake and did not explode the mines. If they had exploded I believe the train would have been wrecked, as it only extended to a few carriages. Two headquarters' officers, Dermot O'Hegarty and Maurice Brennan, who were staying in Howth, were travelling into Dublin by this train. Later, Brennan told me that he had been telling Brennan where the proposed ambush was to take place that morning and that before he had finished the explosion took place. We were relieved, of course, that no lives were lost, as it was never our intention to attack a civilian train. The officers in charge were very upset at this mishap, as they were sure that the train officials would report the matter on arrival at Amiens St. which was only a ten minutes' run. The troop train was due at any moment and the men were kept in position for the attack for over half an hour, which was very risky. As there was still no sign of the troop train, the officer in charge thought it wiser to call off the job. It would have been dangerous to wait any longer as, if the report of the explosion had reached British headquarters, they would have quickly despatched troops and surrounded us completely. The men were, therefore, withdrawn and dismissed. The guns and ammunition were placed in two cars and returned to the dump. The cars returned via Fuckstown road, now Collins's Avenue, Drumcondra. When passing Binn's Bridge, there was a section of the A.S.U. waiting for the Tans passing to and from Collinstown. I think this A.S.U. section belonged to the 1st Battalion. As our transport resembled that of the Tans, and as we were a distance away, we were taken to

be Tans by the A.S.U. and they got ready for action, awaiting the signal from their leader, Tom Flood, I think, brother of Francis Flood who was executed. Fortunately, I was in the first car and was recognised by Flood who shouted to the men to hold their fire. None of us saw the A.S.U. and afterwards we were told of our escape. We got back safely to the dump with the ammunition. As far as I know, the troop train arrived late that afternoon.

Michael Collins.

I had known Michael Collins for some time, but never met him personally until one evening when I was attending a meeting at 35 Lower Gardiner St. I was the first into the room and a short time later Michael Collins came in. He said: "Hello, Pat, are you having a meeting here tonight?" "Yes", I said, "but I am afraid I am in the wrong room", whereon I stood up to leave. He said: "No, remain where you are. I am waiting for McKee and Clancy; we'd only have called in, in any case". He then entered into a general conversation with me and inquired what we had done with the two painters in the Post Office who had refused to come out on the one-day strike in relation to the hunger strike in Mountjoy. I told him that we got to know about their Union meeting in Parnell Square. Three of us went there one night, having taken a car, and we went into the meeting. We called the two men by their names and they stood up. We arrested them and took them out to the car. We drove out the country towards Artane. It was dark and was about 10 p.m. We took them into a field, tied the two of them together back to back, and left them lying in the field. We painted their heads with red lead paint, rubbing it well into their hair. Otherwise, we did not ill-treat them in any way. This pleased Collins very much, especially since we did not maltreat them, but just gave

them a warning. I believe they were discovered by some workman next day who released them, and they had not been seen in Dublin after that. Collins enjoyed this incident very much and approved of the methods used. He then went on to relate some of his own experiences. This was some time after the Dail Loan collection, or around that time. He said: "Do you know, Pat, I ran into a bunch of them last night in O'Connell St. and I was held up and searched by two Tans and I had £16,000 on me, but, he laughed, they were too bloody drunk to find it". He told these anecdotes in a jovial manner while dangling his legs from his seat on a table. McKee arrived then and Collins asked me not to leave the building without seeing him, as he wished to see me. When the meeting was over I saw Collins and McKee and he told me he wanted me to make a run down the country to Co. Meath on Sunday, accompanied by McKee and Austin Stack. He wanted to know if I had any car that would take him down. I told him there were only two cars capable of doing the journey and that they were in Mick McDonnell's custody. McDonnell was the man who organised the Squad and was in charge of it. He only believed in hard work with no amusement. When Collins heard that McDonnell owned the cars, he laughed and said: "You won't have much hope of getting one from Mick". However, he instructed McKee to give me a note to McDonnell for the loan of a car, as he wanted it on official business. I was to report back to McKee on Saturday and let him know if it could be arranged. At this time McDonnell was ill in bed and, on calling to his house, I was shown up to his room. On entering, I first inquired for his health and afterwards handed him the note from McKee. He read it three or four times without comment and then he looked up and said: "I hope this is not a bloody joy

ride". I assured him to the contrary, stating that what was in the note was correct. After some haggling, he decided to give me the car on the understanding that it was to be used exclusively on official business and he impressed on me to bring it back safely. I reported to McKee on Saturday, telling him I had secured the car, and it was arranged to collect the three of them at Vaughan's hotel. McKee, Collins and Stack got into the car about midday on a Sunday at Vaughan's hotel, and our first halt was somewhere between Dunboyne and Dunshaughlin with people of the name of McCarthy, who were friends of Stack. They were Kerry people, I believe, and owned a beautiful mansion there, and they were charmed to have the pleasure of meeting Collins and McKee; I think it was their first meeting. While there, Collins contacted Sean Boylan, O/C. of the Dunboyne area, and transacted some business with him. We were then lavishly entertained by the McCarthy family. Collins enjoyed himself very much and was like a child playing with the children in the garden.

About 7 p.m. Collins wanted to know if I knew the way from there to Maynooth, as he would like to see Paddy Colgan who was O/C. there. I told him I could go that route. We left McCarthy's, setting out for Maynooth and arrived there about 8 p.m. on Sunday. Collins transacted some business with Donal Buckley and P. Colgan and inspected the burned-down hall. We remained a short time in Donal Buckley's house and we left for home about 9.30. When we reached nearly opposite Islandbridge Barracks, the back axle broke in the car and left us on the road. We got out and pushed the car as far as we could on the grass margin, leaving it there. Collins wanted to know how I was going to face Mick McDonnell and he laughingly remarked that he would love to be listening to what he'd say. He told me not to bother about it and not to return to it,

so we walked to Parkgate St. and got the tram to town. We got off the tram at Parnell Square. Collins invited us up to Vaughan's hotel for a cup of tea. I told him I would rather go to Mick McDonnell and have the row over. Collins agreed that I should go there and he asked me to call back and tell him what he said. Arriving at Mick McDonnell's house, I went directly to his room. On walking in, he said: "Are you only coming back now?" "That is all, Mick", I replied. "You are very late", he remarked. "No" I said, "it is only 10 o'clock". "How did you get on and where is the car?" he asked. "It is on the road outside Islandbridge Barracks", I said. On hearing this, he jumped up in the bed, and it was fortunate for me that he was invalided, as otherwise he would have thrown me through the window. He swore, cursing Collins, McKee and Stack, adding that he went to a lot of trouble in getting these cars for the use of the squad and not for driving the 'brass hats' around the country on a Sunday joyride. Continuing, he said "You can go back and tell Mr. Collins and McKee that they will never get a car from me again". I duly reported back to Michael Collins, giving the exact words Mick had used, including the 'brass hats' and the other choice names. Collins enjoyed the whole thing immensely. He even wrote a note there and then which he gave to McKee to have it sent to McDonnell to the effect that the next time he was collecting cars to get a good one. However, I was more closely in touch with McDonnell than any of the others.

Although the next day was a Bank Holiday and I had made arrangements to attend a race meeting with some of the boys, I was not satisfied to leave the car on the road. I got up early next morning and contacted my friend, Joe Lawless, who had a garage that time off Dorset Street. When I met Joe I told him my trouble. He decided he would

get an axle off one of his own cars, bring out his private car with it and transfer it to the other car, provided it was still there. We drove out and went past the car as a precaution against anyone who might be near it. We repeated this to ensure safety. No one seemed to be bothering about it and it was still in the same position. Joe and myself commenced to repair the car, having removed our coats, and we worked on it until late in the evening. Having completed the job, we got it on its wheels again and drove back into town and no one was the wiser of the incident. I drove up to McDonnell's house and went straight up to his room. He was still in a bad temper and asked: "What the hell do you want now - where were you all day?". I said I was working. "Away with the rest of the boys, I suppose", he said, "all at the races. Not one of them has come near me since yesterday - all enjoying themselves and I am left here. No one cares what happens to me". "As far as I am concerned", I said, "I have worked hard all the time. Your car is now as good as it was at first and I don't want to have any more talk about it". He seemed to change immediately and became very nice to me and said he was very sorry for all he had said the previous night, that he realised it was not my fault, but that of the other b.....s going around the country, who were responsible. He gave me the key of his garage and I put in his car. I think Collins kept that incident in his mind for six months, for whenever I met him afterwards, he would ask me what sort of cars McDonnell had.

General attack on enemy forces in Dublin
which did not materialise.

Sometime early in 1921, a general attack was planned by the Dublin Brigade on all enemy forces operating within the city. This operation was to take place, as far as I

can recollect, at a given hour, some time between 7^{p.m.} and 9 p.m. on a given date. The enemy were to be attacked at sight in the streets, in hotels or any other place that they could be located. The Dublin Brigade was mobilised for the job which was to be the largest operation carried out in Dublin since the Rising. The Squad, A.S.U., and Intelligence were spread over the Brigade, which was divided into small sections or units according to the strength or place allotted to them. A member of the Squad or A.S.U. was mostly in charge of small units. Everything in uniform was to be hit at sight. The section I was attached to was to operate at Kidd's restaurant off Grafton St., a favourite resort of the Auxiliaries from Beggars Bush Barracks, where they went to celebrate every evening. Had this engagement taken place, I believe it would have been a tough fight and not easy to get away, as it was more or less in the centre of the whole operation area, and we would be dealing with desperadoes who would fight to the last. By appointment I met some of the men at the dump whom I was to accompany on the job, including Tom Keogh. A couple of hours before the action was timed to begin, when we were actually planning the carrying out of our assignment, a message arrived from headquarters calling the whole job off. Looking back now, we were greatly relieved when we heard of the cancellation, as we were under great strain watching and waiting. We made inquiries as to who called it off. We were told it was Eamon de Valera, but we were never told the reason. That would have been a terrific operation if it had materialised.

Train ambush at Ballyfermot.

It was reported that a troop train was to leave Kingsbridge for the Curragh at 12.50 p.m. on the 8th July, 1921. It was decided to carry out an ambush on the train

at Ballyfermot Bridge. I was detailed by Oscar Traynor, O/C. Dublin Brigade, to accompany James McGuinness with a Thompson gun and the van known as "Green Lizzie". This car was taken from the enemy some time previous. Although open in front, the sides and back were armour-plated on the inside and camouflaged as a delivery van. The job was carried out by the south side A.S.U., Paddy O'Connor in charge. We all met at Ballyfermot Bridge fifteen minutes before the train was due. Paddy O'Connor outlined his plan of action. He had several two-gallon tins of petrol, hand-grenades, each man armed with a revolver and ammunition, and Jimmy McGuinness with a Thompson gun. The men with the grenades were extended under cover along the railway embankment on the Kildare side of the bridge. The petrol tins were cut open on top with a sharp instrument so that the contents could be poured out quickly. Shortly before the train arrived at the ambush position two men were placed kneeling behind the parapet of the bridge. As soon as the engine passed under the bridge, the men rose immediately and poured the petrol over the carriages as they passed along. At the other side of the bridge, when the train emerged, a couple of men had old sacks soaked in petrol which they ignited and dropped on the train, setting the carriages on fire. The hand-grenades and the Thompson gun then came into action. The train continued its course amid loud explosions and rifle fire could be heard over a wide area from both ourselves and the party in the train. The centre of the carriages appeared to be in flames. The train disappeared quickly out of sight. We suffered no casualties; I believe the enemy had several, but I never heard the exact number. Unfortunately, one civilian was seriously wounded, but I do not know if the wounds were fatal. The train did not stop until it reached the next station. The job being over, the men were called off. I cannot say

how the men got back to the city. As Paddy O'Connor was in charge I am sure he could supply more details. Jimmy McGuinness and myself had the job of getting back to the north city dump, that is, Moreland's of Abbey St., with the Thompson gun and the "Green Lizzie". We travelled the back road through Inchicore and Kilmainham down by Kingsbridge railway station. As we approached close to the railway entrance there were a couple of companies of Auxiliaries lined up beside the station. At first we thought it was a hold-up and had to decide in a split second what we were going to do. To stop and turn back would have been fatal as it would have aroused suspicion immediately, hence we thought it better to drive through and take a chance. If they tried to hold us up, the Thompson gun was loaded and ready for action. McGuinness had intended to pour the full contents of the Thompson gun into them, and we hoped to have a sporting chance of getting through with the protection afforded by the armoured plated sides and back of the car. We knew the alternative if we fell into the hands of the enemy, in possession of a machine gun. Fortunately, however, the Auxiliaries did not interfere with us and we got through safely to the dump. It was then about two o'clock in the afternoon. We had lunch and afterwards reported to Brigade headquarters to report the result of the morning's operation. We left Brigade headquarters between 3 and 4 p.m. When we came out on the street the newsboys were shouting "Stop Press". We bought a paper, thinking it was giving an account of the ambush that morning, but to our amazement, it announced the Truce.

Signed: Det. M. O'ConnellDate: 21 St. July 1950Witness: W. Garry Leonard