

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
BURO-STAIRE MILEATA 1913-21
No. W.S. 447

ROINN  COSANTA.

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 447.....

Witness

Thomas Courtney,
18 St. Brigid's Terrace,
Galway.

Identity

Intelligence Officer
Castlegar (Co. Galway) Coy. Irish Volunteers,
1914-1916.

Subject

National activities, Co. Galway,
1909 - 1917.

Conditions, if any, stipulated by Witness

Nil

File No. ...S.1330.....

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
BURO STAIRE MILEATA 1913-21
No. W.S. 447

STATEMENT BY THOMAS COURTNEY.

18 ST. BRIGID'S TCE., GALWAY.

It is difficult to make a start in writing of my part in the Rising 1916; so I will go further back, as, thinking back over the years I have come to the conclusion that Galway town was and, in my opinion, still is the most shoneen town in Ireland. My earliest recollections are an election between Lord Morris (later Lord Killowen), conservative or unionist, and Leamy, nationalist. Morris won. Then torchlights, bands, flags. Sometime later King Edward of England came to Galway. I have never seen so many flags (Jacks), banners and decorations. There was one little thing. Near the fish quay on the route which the king was to go was a large banner, green and gold. On it was 'God save our Glorious King'. This was on the old Distillery wall. Three of the bigger boys in my school (The Claddagh) - Joyce, Kelly and Brennan - got behind the wall and when the people were cheering at the king's approach, pulled the banner behind the wall and hung out an old shirt in its place. This was the signal for a dozen of us, the smaller fry who were all sitting on the bridge, to jump down and run. Joyce, Kelly and Brennan ran off through the ruins.

I cannot remember when I first got in touch with the Castlegar boys, but I seem to have been acquainted with Mick Newell a long time before the first World war. He had been arrested in connection with local trouble and I was able to get a message to him in Galway jail; but I believe the country lads thought much of me for getting notes into the jail through a boy who served Mass. This method was used by me in 1920 and 1922.

I also remember a man speaking at Eyre Square, Galway. One or two policemen were always in attendance. On this occasion, the evening of a fair day, he was telling the crowd

to buy nothing but Irish goods even if it were only a box of matches. The police method was staring into the faces of the people who drifted away until there was one man and three boys, including myself, left. I was given to understand afterwards that the speaker was Arthur Griffith, which at the time did not convey much to me. I remember distinctly the R.I.C. sergeant saying to the man who was speaking "Why are you staying, there is nobody to listen to you", and his answer: "while there is one I won't go".

This was my first clash with the R.I.C. as, when I was told to move, I refused. They spoke to me as I was a telegraph messenger and likely to obey, but I could not do so as my companions remained firm. For this the police tried to get me dismissed.

In about 1909 I joined the Ancient Order of Hibernians in Galway; I think I was then one of the youngest members. In 1912 I became a member of St. Patrick's Temperance Boat Club and was made captain in 1913. I mention this because I was still captain in 1916 and, owing to the war, we were unable to continue the employment of a storekeeper (boatman). As I always held the key of the boathouse I was able to use any boats I required.

When the war started in August 1914 the town of Galway went recruiting mad. It was not a question of 'will you join up', but 'what regiment are you joining?'. The next incident I remember is a mob attacked a small number of Volunteers and tried to take the rifles from them. These Volunteers were some of those who had left the Redmond Volunteers. Seamus Carter got a jail sentence for defending himself against the mob who tried to take his rifle.

I cannot remember at what time I first became connected with the Castlegar boys. I think it was owing to my getting

messages into Galway jail to men who were in for cattle driving and the shooting of a policeman (land trouble).

A few nights after Carter was arrested I met some lads from Castlegar, John Fallon and the Newells. They had come into town to do something against the Redmond Volunteers. I advised them not to do so as it would only mean a jail sentence for some of them with the option of getting off if they joined the British army. Sometime later I was asked to go to a meeting at Castlegar. As a result of this meeting, a big recruiting meeting in the Town Hall, Galway, was a complete fiasco, with stink bombs made by University students, cutting out the lights, etc.

I later became a member of the I.R.B. and the Castlegar Company, I.V. Brian Molloy was Captain. At this time we were only discussing a possible rising. Then Mick Newell arrived from Dunboyne and we often met at Brierhill (not the company) - seven or eight of us - Mick Newell, B.Molloy, T. Newell, B. Fallon and a few others.

Shortly after joining the Castlegar Company I was appointed Company Intelligence Officer. At one of these meetings Mick Newell instructed me not to parade with the company and advised me not to associate openly with the Volunteers. He said I would get much more information if I were not suspected of being a Volunteer.

We got word that the rising was to be on Easter Sunday. The company was got together and ready, some with shotguns, but the majority had pikes made at Newell's forge. Now, we believed that we were to get arms from Germany for the rising. I had two shotguns of my own which I had taken to Brierhill. During Easter Sunday evening three or four others and myself were cutting shotgun cartridges. This is a wild-fowler's trick which makes a shotgun cartridge dangerous as

a bullet for about 200 yards.

Then word came that the rising had been called off.

At this time I had six boats hidden near Moycullen; so I went there on Easter Monday to see if they were all right. I had previously brought the boats there so that the Moycullen and Spiddal companies could cross Lough Corrib and get to Castlegar without having to go through Galway town.

That evening I went to Brierhill and talked with Mick Newell and a few others; the rest of the company had been dispersed. We were doubtful as to what we should do as, by this time, there were rumours of Germans landing, etc. It was decided that if I got any news in Galway town I would go to Castlegar immediately.

On Tuesday morning about 5.30 I put on my post office tunic and went to the G.P.O. Normally I would be on duty at 6.30. When I arrived there the door was opened by a policeman. In the hallway were three R.I.C. men armed with rifles. Other R.I.C. were scattered about the office, at windows, &c. and I knew from the number of empty stout bottles I saw everywhere that the police must have been there all night. I then went to the Telegraph Room where one of the clerks told me of a rebellion in Dublin. The R.I.C. were there also. My problem then was how I was to get out and go to Brierhill. I went back to the sorting office where the Acting Postmaster (Mr. Plummer) was in charge. He was with the police at a sorting bench drinking stout. He thought I was on the night staff and said "Courtney, you can go home". All seemed confusion; everybody talking; so I took five or six letters in my hand and made for the door. The police at the door did not question me, but one of them said: "Are you coming back again?". I said I was. I got on my bike and when I turned towards Eyre Square I saw that armed police were

standing at the corner and others in doorways. I held the letters prominently in my hand when I saw two of them walk to the middle of the road to meet me. I was trying to think of some excuse when one of them said: "Post for Renmore Bks." I said "Yes", and did not even have to get off the bicycle.

When I turned the corner of Eyre Square I saw five soldiers coming towards me. It was the military postman; this morning he had an escort. I thought they would stop me, but the military postman recognised me and waved his hand in salute. I did the same and passed on. When I got to the next corner I cycled as fast as I could and got to the forge at Brierhill between 6 and 6.30. Mick Newell was there and one or two others. He told me that they had got word earlier that the rising was to start; he also said that Brian Molloy and the Hare (Callanan) had gone to Moycullen. He seemed doubtful until I told him that they were fighting in Dublin. We then sent the boys who were at the forge to hurry up the mobilisation. Of course, we didn't use the word mobilisation but get the lads here quickly. He then told me that I had to go to Moycullen to get that company across Lough Corrib, as they would be unable to get through Galway town. I was then to go to Spiddal and see Micheal Ó Droighneain, and, of course, use the boats to get that company across the Corrib, and also the arms which we were sure would have been landed from a submarine. I remember Mick saying "For God's sake, don't get caught; if you are, the devil a rifle will we lay ^{our} hands on". I thought that he had definite information that the rifles had to be landed. I told him I would be careful and that when I had the Moycullen Company across that I would get them to hold the south bank of the Corrib, until I guided the Spiddal Company and the arms across. I asked him to have some of the boys to meet us and act as guides if we had to scatter. In about half an hour I was again on my way.

I did not go direct to Galway town, but to the village of Mealo, 2 miles to the north of the town. I got a boat there and got to my home where I changed my clothes and then went on to Moycullen. When I got there I had some difficulty in finding the Captain (Thornton). As the houses in this area are scattered, it took me some time to locate him and, by the time I did, I knew that there was something wrong as the few lads whom I met were evasive when I asked where the company was waiting. Eventually, when I did get him I was prepared for his answer, as the girl who took me to the house where he and a few others were told me that two men had already been there, but that they had gone again. She said she was his cousin and ashamed of him. When I saw Thornton and told him what to do he said: "what's the use against the army without guns". I said: "get your men across the river at Menlo, I will have plenty of guns this evening. (I believed I would). He said: "Bring them here". I was disheartened and told him to go to hell. I then displayed a revolver which I had - a Harrington & Richardson .22 - I had never fired it as I had only six bullets and I never did. But in 1917 a lad used it for practice and it burst, leaving his hand useless for months.

After leaving Thornton I got some tea from the girl and returned to Galway town. I thought I could get one of the town company to go to Castlegar to let them know of my failure at Moycullen. I could not see any Town Volunteers but I was told that Micheal Ó Droighneain was in town. I decided not to meet him in the town as it would call attention to both of us; so, when I saw him coming towards me, I went on to intercept him at Sea Road where I waited for a considerable time. I then returned towards Dominick Street where I was told that he was arrested and had £500 in German gold on him. I then decided to go to Spiddal, but this was a bit of a problem as I did not know any of the Volunteers

in Spiddal. Of course I was acquainted with some of the boys there. I didn't know who was or was not in the Volunteers, as the only man I knew was Micheal Ó Droighneain. I got to Spiddal and spoke to anybody I could but all seemed reticent; when I inquired if I could see any of the Volunteers I could see that they did not trust me. After a good while I met a girl cycling towards the town with whom I was acquainted. She was quite willing to talk about the rising, but denied knowing any Volunteers. Then came a mail car driver, Andy Naughton. He was a Spiddal man. I knew him well. I think he had been in America. I told him in a whisper what I was doing. He called the girl, Miss Folan, and spoke rapidly in Irish. The result was that I went with her for about a mile and she told me to await her coming back. After a while she returned with a man much older than I. I told him who and what I was. He seemed suspicious, and at this time two others arrived, both about my own age; one of them knew me as a postman. I then told them of Ó Droighneain's arrest and also could tell them that Ó Droighneain got pikes from Mick Newell, the time and day and number of pike heads. I also told them that I had been to Moycullen and the reception I got there. This cleared the air, as they seemed to know something about it, as one of them said: "have you a gun in your pocket?"

They took me to a house, gave me tea. I then asked if they were expecting arms. Other boys came and went while I was there. They were expecting a submarine to land arms. In the course of conversation I gathered that there were about 25 men on the lookout, but if arms arrived they would get more help. I told them of the boats and the arrangements for transport, etc. Then a young lad about 17 years said he would show me a road where I could get to Galway via Rahoan. Before I left they told me of where I could

meet a man the next night much nearer to Galway town, and also if the rifles came a man would go to Menloón the bank of the Corrib to meet me and, failing that, Andy the mail car driver would have word for me.

I got into town about 8 o'clock and everybody seemed to be on the streets. I talked with many and after I had walked up and down Shop St, with a couple of fellows I knew well in Rowing Clubs. I left them to go and talk with another group. In a few minutes the four lads drifted away, when one of them, a member of my own boat club - his name was Christy Monaghan - turned back and said to me "You are a nice b..... captain of our club to be one of them Special Police". His language was lurid. To be brief, the first two fellows I met were Special Constables. I convinced Christy that I was not a so & so Special and decided to tell him what I was. I walked up and down with him. It was only then that I noticed so many pairs who were patrolling the streets, Monaghan all the time saying: "here is another pair of 'B.s'." I then told Christy that I had to go into the country and that I had to cross the river. He said "I will go with you and join the Sinn Feiners". I told him that I had to go alone. He was much younger than I and I said: "Be ready when we want you". That would not do him. He asked was I a captain. I said yes, and that I would put down his name. He insisted on leaving me across the Corrib. I told him to note all the Specials and to see me the next night. He was a carpenter's apprentice and did not go to work the next day or during the week, but met me next night when I was crossing the river. I don't know how long he had been waiting, but he had such a complete list of Special Constables that I could hardly believe some of the names until I verified it during the week and that was easy, for as the week was passing and no attack by the Sinn Fein army - as we were called - they became more arrogant and walked with a military stride. Christy also told me that he had another lad

Paddy Heffernan, who wanted to join us and was at present watching the Specials on and off duty at the Eglinton Barracks. So I had my first two recruits. They did a good job for me throughout that week (God rest their souls).

After such a digression, Tuesday night I crossed the Corrib between 11 o'clock and midnight (about). I went to Small's house in Killoughter and after getting something to eat I fell asleep by the fire. They did not call me until about 5 o'clock. Mrs. Small (R.I.P., who sat by the fire, thought I was waiting for daylight. I hurried as I had about 4 or 5 miles to go and had just passed the village of Ballybane I heard the noise of motor cars a long way off. This was early on Wednesday morning. After a short while cycling I could tell that there were several cars coming much nearer. I put my bike over the wall and hid behind it. The cars were further than I thought. I must have heard them when they were leaving the town. It was about 15 minutes before the first car appeared; it contained police; the next contained police and civilians. All had rifles. I did not count the cars which were open (no roof). I was more interested in the occupants as I knew most of them. One, a post office clerk, was driving a car (Charlie O'Neill). All cars were going dead slow, but making a lot of noise. I now know that had I gone on I think I would have come up with the boys in time to warn them. I followed the cars slowly - that is, when they had gone out of sight. When I arrived at Kiltulla the cars had gone, also the company, but a crowd of women and girls were at the Carnmore Crossroads all looking at a pool of blood on the road. They could not tell me anything about the fight. I heard the sound of the rifles and shotguns when I was passing through Brierhill. I went on towards Athenry to come up with the boys. But after going some miles I turned back; when I again got to Carnmore I met a Volunteer who was left behind to meet me. The company had gone across country. He told me of a

policeman being killed and others wounded. The Claregalway and the Castlegar Coy. were on their way to Athenry.

He told me the pikes were no good and even the shotguns had effect only on the nearest cars. I went with him to a house in Kiltulla and had breakfast. His instructions were to stop me and that I was to go back and watch for the landing of arms. Three or four others would be on the roads at different points to meet me. I then returned to the town via Lough Corrib. By this time all roads into the town were watched by police. Two soldiers who were home on leave were watching the Dongan road. They did not stop or question anybody. The police searched carts or large parcels. They would not let a bag of flour out of the town. Christy Monaghan volunteered to go from the town past the two soldiers; they didn't take notice of him. The east end of the town leading to Oranmore, Athenry, Dublin was well guarded. The soldiers had a machine gun behind the wall at one spot. The town was full of special police. Everybody was talking of the rebel army which was supposed to be marching on the town. Rumours of a German landing etc.; about 4 o'clock that evening my young brother came to me to say that a man was waiting for me at home. I lived on the west side of the town at Newcastle Road, so I had no trouble to leave for Connemara at any time. When I got home Andy the mail van driver was waiting to tell me that a boat like a submarine came near the shore near Ballinahown after midnight and went out to sea again. Did I know what signal should be given if it were German. I said I would go out there later. (I knew nothing about signals).

I went by Rahoen which was off the main road which was off the main road and a few miles from Spiddal. At the appointed house O'Donnell, a youth, and another met me and it was another disappointment. It was a British light draft anti-submarine boat. They got this information from a man who had served in the Gunna Mora (Naval Reserve). I afterwards learned

that it was a boat which was there in case the R.I.C. Barracks in Spiddal was attacked.

Back again to Galway town. The same thing - special constables patrolling and many wild rumours. On Wednesday night I could not leave the town (what I mean is the main street) as I was talking to three lads from my own boat club and could not get away from them without arousing suspicion. I knew they were special constables. I decided to say I would go home. This was near midnight; two of them walked with me all the time chatting about fishing. I was very suspicious as one of them, Jack Liston, always brought the conversation round to the rising and if I knew many of the country fellows. It was very late, or, as I should say, early on Thursday morning, when I crossed the Corrib. Christy Monaghan and Paddy Heffernan were waiting to put me across. They had been waiting for hours though I did not tell them to do so.

As it was so late I decided to take a short route by just avoiding the cross roads where I knew there were soldiers. When I got as near the cross as I thought safe, I put my bike over the wall, crossed a field and, in getting my bike over the next wall I was a bit careless and probably made some noise. I heard the call "Who goes there?" (and it was not an English accent). I didn't reply, but made for the next gap in the wall (I knew this district well and the darkness didn't trouble me. I probably again made some sound as there was a burst of rifle fire. I didn't see the flash of the rifles so I knew I was in a spot behind the hill where they could not have seen me. Shortly after that I met a Volunteer who had come to meet me and was much nearer to the town than I had expected. It was only then that I knew that the Volunteers were at Moyode under Mellows. I didn't go any further but went back to town. I didn't take a short cut again

I found out on Thursday that the watchers at the roads to Castlegar, Oranmore, etc. had been withdrawn. I went to the crossroads at College Road (from the docks). There was no visible sentry, but I met some of the people - some women coming to the town. They told me that the ships in the roadstead would blow up all the villages, Castlegar, Kiltulla, Carnmore, etc. It seems that some of the so-called gentry had visited some of the people and told them that they should tell all that the navy was going to shell all the rebel villages again.

Earlier, some minesweepers in the bay fired a number of shells at Castlegar. No damage was done and no village was hit. I knew that without going to Castlegar, which I will explain how I got to know. I prevailed on the people to go back home and stop any others. I told them there was no danger. Some of them took my advice, but not all. I left them and went on to Kiltulla where I met some women and a few men whom I knew should be with the company. The men who told them to leave the villages were active special constables; that is, two of them, Mr. Christy Kearns and Mr. Tolpuitt. I didn't find out the names of the other two men. At the time of writing this, Christy Kearns is a leading member of the Agricultural Committee in Galway.

After the shelling I went down to the docks. Near the house which was the naval base I got chatting with a sailor named Stark and Thomas Murray, who was motor driver for Leslie Edmonds of the Congested Districts Board. I saw Edmonds, Commander of the naval base, and some others standing at the door of the naval base. I asked Stark what were the ships firing at with their big guns. Stark laughed at me for my lack of knowledge regarding guns and said: "They are not big guns; they are only 4 inch. The real big ones will shake the town. I made the appropriate remark that I thought they were

too big for my liking. Also in the group were two other sailors. I asked them if they could come for a drink as there were pubs at the docks. Stark got permission from an officer who was on the deck of the Lord Henage. I also invited Murray who got permission from Edmonds. We went to Walsh's pub. The sailors were surprised when I took lemonade. I again brought the conversation around to the firing and asked did they think many places had been blown up or people killed. Then Murray, not to be left out of my hero worship, said they did not hit anywhere near a village. I said I doubted this as the gunners were trained men. Those shots, he explained, were to 'cod' the Shinners. I said: "How do you know?". He explained that Commander Hannon and Edmonds and another officer had the maps of the district, and that his boss, Edmonds, had marked out to an inch where they would hit the Galway-Oranmore Road when the Shinners came to attack the town. The shots already fired were to make the Shinners think that they were not able to get the range of the road, etc. I expressed a doubt about being able to hit any spot they liked to hit. One of the sailors who I then knew was a gunner said: "When I have the range I can drop a shell into 5 square yards". All during this I acted the part of a very nervous and wondering civilian. I now knew why the sentries were taken from the crossroads, so I left the sailors after assuring Stark that I would tell his wife he would go to see her that evening. I then went to Castlegar, direct route, and sent on the information to Moyode Castle. Lines of communication had been established between Galway and Moyode. Volunteers had been posted at various points and all messages were relayed from one to the other. I also sent out information which I had picked up regarding troop movements, positions of sentries, etc.

I did not go to Spiddal that day. I knew that if the rifles came I would get word; but I also knew that if

arms did arrive it would be too late, As some of my own company and Claregalway company had left Moyode without permission.

I cycled back to town; it was still daylight, without hindrance; no sign of soldiers or police, though I passed openly by the road where I had been fired on early that morning. I cycled home by the docks avoiding the main street. I changed into my new clothes (Sunday rig), eat something and went up town. (Going up the town meant anywhere past O'Brien's Bridge). Plenty of special constables, most of them walking in the middle of the road in pairs. I was on the lookout for Christy Monaghan or Paddy Heffernan. I got as far as the middle of Shop St. I turned to look into Naughton's windows to avoid speaking to some special police (friends of mine) who were coming towards me. I let them pass and was about to continue towards Eyre Square when an R.I.C. man fell into step with me and said: "You are wanted at the barracks". I said: "Righto". He was very nice about it and said "You have been to too many dances in the country I think". He then said: "You can walk on in front if you like". I said: "Yes" and he fell back to his companion. That few minutes' walk was terrible, trying to think what I would say - if I would admit being a Volunteer or deny it.

I walked into the barracks and the first thing I noticed was two Volunteers, one of my own company, and the other Claregalway company. I didn't know his name. Conroy was the man of Castlegar company. They were sitting at the fire. I then saw amongst the police one of the men who were on the street when I left the town on Tuesday morning. It was the peeler who thought I was going to Renmore Barracks. I thought it was all up with me when Conroy looked at me and said hello. I spoke, but don't know what I said. When a sergeant who had been standing watching me said to Conroy:

"Do you know this man?" Conroy said: "I know him well, he is a post-boy". I was left there standing in the middle of the room. Nobody spoke to me. I thought they were all looking at me. I couldn't stick it any longer so I turned to the peeler who had taken me and said in what I meant to be an arrogant voice, but was not: "Who wants to see me here?". Some more minutes elapsed in silence. I thought it was an hour when a peeler said: "Come with me". I was taken to another room - an office. A police officer was at a table; it was not the Galway D.I. He said: "What is your name?" I told him. He said: "You work in the post office?" "Yes, sir". "Do you know the Newells?". I said: "What Newells? "How many Newells do you know?" I said: "Several, some in Castlegar, some in Headford and Corrondulla". At that moment a peeler came in with Conroy and said "This is the man". The officer said to Conroy: "You're in the Volunteers?". "Yes, sir". "Do you know this man?". "I do, sir, his name is Courtney; He is in the Volunteers with you" "No, sir, he is a postman". "That will do". Conroy and the peeler left. Question: "Do you know Michael Newell?" "I do, very well". "What is he in the Volunteers?". "I don't know. I know he is a blacksmith". "Is he in the Volunteers". "He could be". "Do you know Brian Molloy?". "Yes". "What is he?". "A farmer's son". "What is he in the Volunteers?" "I don't know". "Don't you know he was drilling the Volunteers?". "I never saw him". Then his manner changed. He looked at a paper and said, or I should say, snapped: "Now, Courtney, I want the truth". He then named several nights when I was seen cycling into town late and said: "Where were you?" (mentioning each night). I said: "At a dance"; to each night referred to I said a dance. I got that idea from the peeler who took me to the barracks.

The D.I. then said: "You seem very fond of dancing".

I said: "I am, indeed. I am captain of the Temperance Boat Club and have dances in the Temperance Hall". He again looked at the papers and said: "What were you doing yesterday evening and this evening at the docks. Any why had you your post office uniform on?". I said: "I put on the tunic in order to help me see one of the sailors as I had a packet for him". "What's his name?". "Mr. Stark; his wife who lives next door to me asked me if I would do so". "You know Mr. Stark well?". "Yes". "What rank or rating is he?" "I don't know, except he is a sailor on one of the navy ships". "Which ship?". "I don't know". He then said: "Now Courtney, the postmaster of Galway, Mr. Plummer, gives you a very good character and has a good opinion of you, but I think you have of late been in the company of dangerous characters and, though you did not march with them on St. Patrick's Day, you were with them in the evening. I don't believe you are telling the truth, and your movements are suspicious and also your association with those murderers of policemen. But, owing to the postmaster's very high opinion of you, I will let you go home for the present, but remain at your home we we may want you later". I said: "Thank you, sir" and was about to leave the room when a policeman (the one who took me to the barracks) came in accompanied by Conroy. The D.I. then said in a loud voice: "Conroy, you have lied to me. This man admits that he is an officer in the Volunteers". I looked at Conroy, but he did not look at me. He was staring at the police officer. He was deathly pale. He said: "I have told you the truth and if he said he is an officer in the Volunteers, he is telling lies or he is mad". Conroy was further interrogated, but I don't remember what was said, I was so surprised at Conroy's manner and words. The D.I. said something; he was speaking to me and telling me I could go. The policeman said: "The officer is speaking to you". I said: "Yes, sir".

"Go straight home, now, Courtney". I said: "Thank you, sir". I don't know how I left the barracks. I know I was afraid to look back, thinking it was a trap, as I heard footsteps behind me since I left the barracks until I got as far as Shop St. where I met two specials, one from my Boat Club, J. Liston. They seemed very surprised at seeing me and one of them said: "Where are you going?". I was mad this time, as I saw they thought I was in for keeps. I said: "You can go to hell and find out" and continued on; a little further on the footsteps, which seemed to be behind me, came nearer, but I didn't look around until Christy Monaghan came up with me and said: "These B.s. are following you, Tom". I said: "Walk on, Christy, and wait for me with the boat". I went straight home and told my mother, R.I.P. what had happened and that they would probably call for me during the night. I changed into a tweed suit while she was cooking supper for me. While I was eating my supper she was cutting bread and made a parcel of it and said: "You will be on your keeping now like your great grandfather (on your keeping was the term used by the people in Connemara for on the run).

I left my house by the back door which led into some fields and got to the river where Christy was waiting. He wanted to accompany me when I told him I was not coming back. I would not allow him. He agreed to take the boats which I had hidden back to the Boat Club. It took Heffernan and himself three nights to do this as both had to start out in one boat with fishing gear and come back with two boats. This meant several journeys.

I remained in the country sleeping in different houses, in Menlo, Killoughter and Carrabrowne. This was part of Castlegar parish, but there were no Volunteers from any of these villages, except one in Killoughter and two at Menlo, but were not out in the rising.

I visited Newell's, but Mrs. Newell told me to keep away from the house as the peelers were constantly calling there. Mick, Tommy and Bill were arrested, but James was still free and they were searching for him. Nearly all were caught in about three weeks.

I didn't go home for about a fortnight, when my young brother met me at Menlo and told me that Mr. Meally, an overseer in the post office, had sent word that I would have to get a doctor's certificate as I could not be on sick leave without one or I would get into trouble. I took the hint. My brother told me that the police had not been looking for me. Dr. Arthur Colohan, when I visited him, gave me a further week sick leave. I reported back to the post office that I would be on duty when the certificate expired. I signed on the following Monday morning and I wondered what reception I would get. No notice was taken of me except the head postman, James Walsh, said "Are you better? You don't look too well. I will put you on a light walk".

Mr. T. Meally, Overseer (he was a Protestant and a loyalist) called me to his desk when I was about to go off duty that day and said: "I have got to pay you for stabbing the boys in the back (he had a brother in France)". I said: "What do you mean?" He answered: "I know you are up to your neck in this Sinn Fein Rising". I said: "If that is so, I don't want pay, though I don't know what you are talking about". He said: "Sign for this money, if you don't want to get me sacked. You know damn well what I mean, and if I did my duty I should go to the police. (At this stage I believe I would prefer to be arrested). I said: "Why do you not do so, like all good loyalists?" He lost his temper and said: "Blast your cheek, I am a loyalist, but I am also an Irishman just as good as you are". He then calmed down and said: "Sign this for your wages, Tom". I did so. He then said:

"I could be dismissed for what I am doing. Don't speak until I have finished. Last week a woman came to the public counter and asked to see the Postmaster; as he was away, I saw her. She complained that you were the cause of a lot of trouble in the country (meaning the rural districts) and that you were one of the prime movers in the rebellion. I told her she should go to the police and she said it would be dangerous as you would likely get to hear of it and burn down the house as you had all the boys and girls spying for you. I took the statement from her, but she refused to sign it though she gave me her name. Now Tom," he said, "I have that statement or report about you as I have to save myself, so that if she comes again to the Postmaster, or goes to the police, I can leave it in the Postmaster's office in some old file and say it had become mislaid during the Postmaster's absence, and I am sure you will not look on that as spying on you". I thanked him and said I understood his position and told him that whatever happened I would always consider him a good Irishman. A few months later he told me he had destroyed the paper.

In 1920 he came to me and said his house was raided by Volunteers and a useless old gun which had belonged to his grandfather was taken. I was glad that I had the influence which enabled me to have the gun returned with an apology. He thought more of the apology than the gun.

From the time the boys were arrested all my spare time was spent in Castlegar district. I made it a point each evening to call to the homes of some of the men who were in prison; some were glad to have me call for a chat; others were very cool, and some others were abusive and accused me of being an English spy and the cause of having the lads in jail. Others looked forward to my coming and at some houses I would not be there only a few minutes when some women or men

would arrive for a chat, and I knew from their manner that their welcome and blessings for my safety were genuine.

At this time a lot of the boys and girls were eager to do something, so we decided to get up a dance to raise money to send the lads tobacco, cigarettes and food. As I had so many helpers I decided to organise working parties, that is, to send a boy or girl to a house where they could be of help. After a short time I had about 15 girls and about 25 boys, well disciplined and reporting for work. Of course, I had no authority from any Volunteer body to do this, but I told them they were all listed as Volunteers and had their names in a book. The book appeared very important to them. Everything was going fine, except that the priest objected to the boys and girls going along the roads singing rebel songs and tried to get their parents to keep them away from me, as I would probably have them also in jail before long. He had old-fashioned ideas and it was a great worry to him to see half of the young men of his parish in jail and, as he thought, the younger crowd heading for the same destination. I understand that he was very good in 1920 and a great help to the boys, but I never spoke to him or he to me after - or a few weeks after the dance - which I will explain later.

Having decided to get up a dance I got tickets printed. This was to be a house dance, but in a few days the fifty tickets were sold and so many others asking for tickets. I got more printed and decided to have the dance in the Brierhill schoolhouse. The teacher thought we only had to ask Fr. McHugh to get permission. I wrote what I thought a very nice letter asking his permission to hold a dance in the Brierhill school. This was ignored so, as time was getting on for the dance, I sent two women to see him. He refused permission to hold the dance in his parish. The night of the dance arrived and no dance-hall and crowds arriving, some from long distances on

bicycles. So I decided we would have the dance in Newell's house and barn. Fr. McHugh came to Newell's house and told Mrs. Newell he forbid her having a dance in her house. I was having a cup of tea when he called Mick Newell's father outside at this stage. Mrs. Newell was doing her best to keep me in the house and not go outside to see him, but I heard him telling the people to disperse as there would not be a dance. I went outside and told them not to go, that there would be a dance. He then went away.

Then I had some trouble as some of the boys wanted forcibly to take the schoolhouse for the dance. I had to use great persuasion to stop this, but succeeded.

One Sunday morning after that I was speaking to some of my company near the chapel when he came and said I should be in jail. I lost my temper and told him that he thought more of the six Catholic soldiers in Renmore Barracks than all his parish. I now know that this was unfair, but I was hot-headed. I never spoke to him afterwards. He was later changed to Oranmore and made a Canon, R.I.P. I was very bitter against him, but I later found out that he was not against me personally, as another priest, a great friend of mine who was trying to get up a church bazaar to raise funds, told me that Canon McHugh told him that I would be a good man to get to help him. (This was in 1917).

Well, after we had disposed of the money we got for the dance, we started drilling and practising and what we thought was military training, sending dispatches, etc. I had also by this time collected a few revolvers and shot-guns. This continued until the prisoners were released.

During this time I carried out a stunt against the special police. The British government recruiting, Lord Wimborne or Derby - I forget which, sent by post appeals to

join the army. Enclosed was a form which you could fill in stating what regiment you wished to join. I stole a lot of these instead of delivering them and filled in the names of the special constables and their friends, with the result that some of them when called up denied having filled in the forms. Some of them had influence enough to get off, but others had to go. I was very successful with this bit of work, as I had filled in forms for the friends of the Galway Recruiting Committee and it was noticeable how some of them cooled off in their recruiting efforts after that.

Now about Galway town. As I have already mentioned, I was very busy and found it hard to keep going to Spiddal and going miles out of my way to go to Brierhill and avoid being caught. I think it was on Wednesday evening, I am not sure, I went to the house of the Captain of the Galway Coy. and asked him to go as far as Castlegar for me, as I had to go to Spiddal. He refused. I then asked him to get some of the Galway Company to just take a message for me. He would not and told me I was a fool and did I think he was mad. My young brother called at the homes of three Volunteers and asked them to come to my home. Each said he would, but none of them came. On Thursday evening before I was taken to the barracks, I saw one of them (M. Ridge) deliberately avoid me. On the list I got of the special constables, Mickey Allen, the captain of the Galway Company was included. I could never verify if that was correct.

Special Constables.

Joseph Young, Merchant, now O.B.E.
 Christopher Kearns, Oramore, Gentleman farmer and
 on Agricultural Committee.
 ... Tolputt, then living at Rosshill, Galway. Gone away
 J.T. Miller, Distiller (deceased).
 A.E. Sowman, Miller's head clerk.
 Leslie Edmunds, C.D.B., shot at Breanloughane, 1922.
 H.J. Anderson, Dentist, deceased.
 W.J. Anderson, Dentist, Mill St. Galway.
 F. Lenihan, Dentist, Deceased.
 W.J. Fogarty, Chief Clerk, Galway Co.Co., Deceased.

Eugene Hickey, Clerk, Co. Co., New Road, Galway.
 J. Liston, Clerk, Co.Co., Deceased.
 J. Mullins, Deceased. R.I.C. Pensioner.
 Peter Kelly } Stood for Cumann na nGaedheal T.D., defeated.
 Jack Kelly } (Brothers).
 J. Allen, Manager, Galway Foundry. Now also Chamber of
 Commerce.
 J. Hession, then no occupation. Got a job as prison warden.
 Gone away.
 M. Brennan, blacksmith, Corrib, Tce., Galway.
 J.M. Whelan, Chemist, deceased.
 M.T. Donnellan, shopkeeper, deceased.
 E. Jackson, Manager, Moon's, Galway.
 J. Rycroft, shop assistant, Moon's, deceased.
 L. Walsh, commercial traveller, do.
 J. Casey, no occupation after leaving school. Gone away.
 J.J. Burke, Rahoon, Galway.
 ... Grant, Headmaster, Grammar School. Gone away.
 J. King, College Road.
 P. Lydon, Publican, Eyre St., Galway.
 J. Lydon, brother of above - went to U.S.A.
 Philip O'Gorman, merchant, Galway.
 A. Syme, Manager, Guinness & Co. Gone away.
 M. Long, clerk, deceased. Previously a chum of mine.
 P. Hession, Forster St. then a schoolboy about 16 years.
 Very active.
 Charles O'Neill, then post office clerk, native of Derry,
 later dismissed.
 J.H. O'Connell, post office clerk. Due to go on pension
 this year.
 W. Lydon, no occupation then. Now in D.M.P. I think he
 is a sergeant.
 J. Fitzgerald, Eyre St., deceased.
 R. Fitzgerald, Eyre St. Traveller. Was to join R.I.C. and
 was called in 1920, but didn't go, as it was
 too hot.
 C. Cooke. Then a clerk (lawyer's), Blake & Kenny, now a
 solicitor.
 Jerry O'Sullivan, then a Customs officer.
 Jerry Donovan, shopkeeper, Galway (Fruit shop).
 J. Kineen, Agent, Eyre Square, Galway.
 ... Casserly of Abbeygate St. railway clerk, gone away or
 deceased.
 F. Coy - then manager McDonagh's Sawmills. Deceased.
 J.P. O'Neill, then captain of Redmond's Volunteers in
 constant communication with police throughout
 the week, but could not verify that he did
 patrol duty.
 C. French, Claregalway. Deceased.
 R.W. Simmons, Photographer, Galway. Deceased. (very active).
 R. Grealish of Abbeygate St. Agent, Deceased. (very active).
 ... Joyce, School-teacher, Barna. Later executed as a spy
 by I.R.A.

Signed: T. Mac Cuspea

Date: 17/10/50

Witness: Seán Brennan Comdt.

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
BURO STAIRE MILEATA 1913-21
NO. W.S. 447