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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 503

Witness

Commandant James Cahill,
Portobello Barracks,
Dublin.

Identity

Member of Irish Vol's. Cavan 1914, and 1917 - ;
Member of I.R.B. Cavan, 1917, and Dublin later;
Member of A.S.U. 1920-1921;
Officer, National Army, at present.

Subject

(a) National activities 1914-1921;
(b) Death of Harry Kelly, Dublin, 1920;
(c) Bloody Sunday, November 1920;
(d) Formation of A.S.U., December 1920.

Conditions, if any, stipulated by Witness

Nil

File No. S.1760

Form B.S.M. 2.

ORIGINAL

Statement by Commandant James Cahill,
Portobello Barracks, Dublin.

In the year 1914, a Company of the Irish National Volunteers was formed in the town of Cavan. I joined the Company and was requested to leave on the grounds that I was too young. I was then fourteen years of age. However, I missed nothing as the Company faded out after some months.

In the spring of 1916 there were no Volunteers in Cavan. I think that the Ballina Company was the only unit in the county. Father Dolan, St. Patrick's College, a very sincere patriotic Irishman, kept a small group of students, four or five, and myself in touch with the national movement. We were aware that a rising was planned and we got an assurance from the Ballina Company that we would be allowed to join them when the call would come. Owing to the confusion caused by conflicting orders issued from Dublin, the Company took no active part in the insurrection.

In the winter of 1916-1917, I was present when a Belfast man named Seamus Dobbyn formed a circle of the I.R.B. We had seven or eight members. Later, we organised a Company of the Volunteers.

Nothing of any great importance occurred in Cavan during 1917.

A number of interesting events occurred in the year 1918 but I doubt if I shall be able to narrate them in their proper sequence. The threat of conscription caused the

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Company to expand to twenty or thirty times its former strength. With the passing of the conscription menace the Company dwindled almost to its former strength. During the East Cavan Election we were constantly on protective duty. The Ancient Order of Hibernians were ferocious in their attacks on the members of the Sinn Féin organisation. Occasionally they were assisted by the Orangemen. Generally the attackers made a hasty retreat on the approach of the Volunteers. Frequently the Hibernians or Orangemen would conceal themselves behind walls or hedges and attack us with stones as we cycled past.

We were very fortunate that none of our members ever got seriously hurt. The Constabulary would take an impassive attitude towards those affrays until such time as our opponents showed signs of being beaten; then they would attack us in no uncertain manner. On one occasion there were celebrations in connection with one of the by-elections and a large force of Constabulary was patrolling the town. One of the Constables, who had been drafted from Sligo for the occasion, recognised one of our men, Hunt, who had escaped while a prisoner in Sligo a short time previously. After a long chase through the streets a Constable who had outrun the other police, was in the act of seizing Hunt when I drove my head with full force into his stomach, and Hunt and I made good our escape. A "separation" woman who witnessed the affair, gave the police information and I was brought before the local bench of Magistrates. On the morning of the trial I received an order from the Brigade Commander, Paul Galligan, to recognise

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the Court and plead common assault. I had intended not to recognise the Court. Paul's orders saved me from six months' imprisonment as I was let off with a fine of ten shillings which I never paid. I was informed afterwards that one of the Magistrates, or Justices of the Peace, a local Auctioneer, paid the fine himself. The police were not satisfied with the outcome of the case and brought pressure to bear on my employer who gave me the option of breaking my connection with the Volunteers or leaving his employment. I immediately left his employment. It happened at this time that arrangements were being made for a big break from Derry Jail. I went to Clones to see General O'Duffy concerning arrangements that were being made for the transport of the escaped prisoners through Cavan and Longford. Returning to Cavan after a few days' absence, I found that the Volunteers had asked my late employer to take me back to his employment. I was reluctant to go back but the Volunteers were anxious that I should be taken back as there were other employers who were considering taking a similar line of action. I agreed to go back for one month. A month later I moved to Dublin. At a farewell dance in the Town Hall my comrades presented me with a watch which is still in my possession.

I got a transfer from the Cavan I.R.B. Circle to a Dublin Circle. I reported to Michael Staines at an office in Bachelor's Walk. He arranged for my transfer to "D" Company, 2nd Battalion, Dublin Brigade. I was on protective duty in Dublin during the 1918 General Election.

From 1918 up to 1920 I carried out the routine duty of a Volunteer, attending parades, etc. Late in 1920 I was a member of a squad of nine or ten men, carrying out armed

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patrol duty in O'Connell Street. We were ordered to assemble in Collins' Billiard Room in Parnell Street. Later, as the place was suspected to be under enemy observation we were ordered to dismiss and re-assemble in the Banba Hall, Parnell Square. About half an hour later Mick Kilkelly and I who were at the main entrance, Banba Hall, when we saw a lorry of Auxiliaries swing into the Square from the east side. Mick remained in the hallway, with the object of securing the door, whilst I rushed up the stairs to warn the remainder of the party. In the excitement which ensued a member of the party left his revolver on the floor. I delayed a moment to pick up the revolver with the result that I was the last man coming down the stairs. On reaching the hallway I found that the party had gone towards the rear of the premises. Kilkelly had failed in finding any way to secure the door, and as was typical of the man, remained to cover the withdrawal of the other men. The Auxiliaries, unaware that the door was unlocked and unbolted, were endeavouring to smash it in with their rifles. As Kilkelly and I withdrew a rifle-barrell was pushed through the glass panel at the side of the door. When we entered the dance hall, which is at the rear of the Banba, all was in confusion. A concert had been in progress and our party, rushing through the hall, caused the audience to become excited. Seats were upset all over the place and it was with difficulty that Kilkelly and I forced our way through the crowd. On reaching the back door we found one of our men, Loughney, frantically trying to force back the bolts which had become stuck through disuse, paint and rust. Mick Fitzpatrick, an official employed in the Banba, arrived on the scene, forced Loughney away and suggested

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that we should return to the hall and mix among the audience. This line of action would certainly result in a number of arrests and the loss of practically all the Company's revolvers. I in turn forced Fitzpatrick away from the door and with bleeding hands ultimately opened the door. By that time, three of our men, Mick Kilkelly, Nick Leonard amd Harry Kelly, despairing of getting out by the back door, had gone back into the hall hoping to find another exit. The first two passed their guns over to two girls, who succeeded in getting out without being searched. They were fortunate as women searchers arrived after they had left. I was the last of our group getting around the bend in the lane at the back of the Banba, and glancing back I saw a lorry of soldiers entering the lane from Frederick Street. They were about seventy-five yards distant from us but did not observe us. Before we left the Banba an order had been given for us to re-assemble at Ballybough. The last arrivals at the rendezvous brought the information that Harry Kelly had been killed immediately outside the back door of the Banba. From statements made by residents in the lane and persons who were in the hall, it would seem that Harry, failing to make an exit by any other route, with his gun in his hand, attempted to get out by the back door. As he emerged he was confronted by a soldier whom he shot. Another soldier, who was on the lorry which was drawn up close to the door, brought his riffle with terrific force down on Harry's head. Death must have been instantaneous as his skull was crushed and the brain was protruding. Nevertheless, two soldiers lifted him up and held him against the wall whilst another soldier fired several shots into his body.

On Saturday night, 20th November, twelve or fourteen men of "D" Company, 2nd Battalion, assembled at a meeting

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place in the vicinity of Amiens Street. A number of H.Q. and Brigade Staff Officers were present, and informed us that a most important operation was planned to take place at nine o'clock next morning. Our Intelligence had located the chief British Intelligence Officers who were living in various hotels throughout the city. Each officer had a number of spies or touts who kept him supplied with information. It was planned to shoot all of those Intelligence Officers next morning.

"D" Company was given the task of dealing with three Intelligence Officers who were residing in the Gresham Hotel, O'Connell Street. Three groups, consisting of three men each, were detailed to carry out the shooting. The remainder of our party were given the tasks of controlling members of the hotel staff and residents, covering the exits and preventing communication with the outside during the operation.

Paddy McGrath, Company O.C., and I were amongst the last to leave the meeting place. At the door, Paddy made a last appeal to Dick McKee to permit him to go on the operation. Dick refused to give permission, as one of Paddy's sons was detailed for the Gresham, and he considered that sufficient for one family. I believe Paddy and I were the last of our people to see Dick alive, as on his way to his lodgings he was picked up by the British and taken to Dublin Castle, where he was tortured and finally murdered.

Next morning I met the Company Commander, Paddy Moran, opposite the Gresham Hotel. We crossed the street together and entered the hotel at exactly nine o'clock. As we passed in, a newsboy called me by my name, asking me if I

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required a paper. A second newsboy, seeing our men converge on the hotel, called to the first, "There's a job on. Best clear out of this". We let them go, as we were confident that they would not give the alarm. It was unpleasant for me to realise that an outsider knew of my connection with the operation, particularly as I was residing but a short distance from the hotel.

The three groups having assembled in the vestibule, each was dispatched by the Company O.C. to its respective destination, the group of which I was a member moving off first. As we were not conversant with the layout of the hotel, I ordered the head porter to guide us to McCormack's room. Whilst proceeding along the corridor I observed a man of foreign appearance come to a bedroom door. I had a hunch that he might be one of the other two Intelligence Officers and would, if we continued on our way, take alarm, barricade himself in his room, and endeavour to call for assistance. I covered him with my gun, and asked him for his name. He promptly replied, "Alan Wilde, British Intelligence Officer, just back from Spain". At that moment, Mick Kilkelly, whose group had been detailed to deal with Wilde, came on the scene and fired, killing him instantly. The fact that Wilde was a new arrival and probably mistook us for a British raiding party would explain his readiness to give us information regarding himself.

As I moved away, I saw through a window a lorry of British soldiers patrolling slowly along O'Connell Street. We found McCormack's bedroom door closed but unlocked. Nick Leonard and I entered the room and moved towards

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McCormack, who was partially sitting up in bed. He fired, the bullet passing between Nick and myself burying itself in a door jamb. We fired almost in the same instant, killing him outright. Nick took possession of McCormack's pistol, a .38 automatic. The possession of a gun in that period and his readiness to use it, completely refutes statements which have been made from time to time that he was not a British Agent, and that our Intelligence erred in including him amongst those to be executed.

The third Intelligence Officer had not slept in the Gresham the previous night, and so escaped the purge.

As we emerged from the hotel there was no enemy in view, and the usual Sunday morning calm prevailed in O'Connell Street.

In November, 1920, I witnessed an incident which demonstrated heroism on one side and extreme brutality on the other. A large contingent of Auxiliaries took up position in the Parnell Street area, while some of its members climbed on to the roof of a house at the corner of Parnell Street and Dominick Street and seized a Republican flag which had been flying there for some days. They were about to tie the flag to the back of a lorry when it was seized by a middle-aged street trader. During the struggle which ensued the woman succeeded in twisting the flag around her body. She was beaten to the ground, where she was severely kicked until, growing weak, she released her hold on the flag, which was then tied to the back of the lorry, and the Auxiliaries drove off in triumph with the flag trailing along the muddy street.

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During this incident, the Auxiliaries, with fingers on the triggers of their revolvers and carbines, watched the people for any hostile move.

About mid-December the Company Adjutant informed me that Headquarters had ordered each Company in the Dublin Brigade to pick two or three - I do not remember the exact number - of their best men for transfer to a special unit that was about to be organised. The men of this unit would be full-time soldiers, and the unit would be available at all times for immediate action. "D" Company, he stated, would nominate me for the unit if I had no objection. I told them that I would be very pleased to serve in such a unit.

Late in December all those nominated for the unit were assembled in the meeting place off Amiens Street, and given full particulars by Headquarters officers, concerning the proposed new unit. It was to be designated the Active Service Unit or A.S.U. We were informed that the likelihood of survival in the A.S.U. for more than a few months was very slight, and that there would be no reflection on any man who did not wish his transfer to go through and preferred to continue serving with his old unit. We were promised, should the country's fight for independence succeed, that the surviving members of the A.S.U. would be the first officers, after several centuries, of an Irish regular army. It would be obligatory on members of the A.S.U. to relinquish their occupations and to devote themselves entirely to army service.

The unit would consist of fifty men, two of whom would act as officers. It would be divided into four sections. Men transferred from the 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th Battalions

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would serve in Nos. 1, 2, 3 and 4 sections respectively. Sections would normally operate in their Battalion areas, i.e., No. 1 Section in the 1st Battalion area, No. 2 Section in the 2nd Battalion area, etc. For large operations, two or more Sections would operate together under an officer. Paddy Flanagan was appointed O.C. of the unit.

On 1st January, 1921, I reported for active service to Tom McGrath, who was in command of No. 2 Section. Our first task or job, as we usually referred to such operations, was an attack on British forces in Bachelor's Walk. In this, as in most subsequent actions, we confined ourselves to the use of grenades and revolvers. We adopted what was to become our normal tactics. Groups of two or three men took up positions at about thirty yards intervals, remained as inconspicuous as possible at street corners, shop windows, etc., and, on the approach of the enemy vehicles, moved on to the footpath and attacked at point-blank range. We suffered no casualties in this engagement, but inflicted quite a number on the enemy.

The Quays seemed to be our most successful area of operations, as during the months that followed I actively participated in three other ambushes by the Liffey-side, two on Ormond Quay and one at Liberty Hall.

Most of our attacks were directed against Auxiliaries and the British Murder Gang. During one attack on the Murder Gang on Ormond Quay, I estimated that we killed or wounded half their number. After that ambush the Gang ceased to play an active part in the struggle. Our own casualties in the Quay ambushes were two wounded, and both were able to resume duty in a short time.

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The introduction by the British of armoured plating and steep sloping, close wire mesh on their vehicles rendered our five or six-second timed grenades ineffective, as it was impossible to get them into the vehicles. We countered by adopting a 2½-second fuse. This certainly added spice to bomb-throwing, for if we escaped Black and Tan bullets we were liable to be wounded from flying fragments of our own grenades. On a number of occasions before turning to seek cover I saw my grenade explode over the target at ten or fifteen yards distance.

The only wound I received during the War of Independence was a slight scratch on the leg from a grenade splinter. On the day I received this scratch, Seán Quinn was severely lacerated by fragments from, I think, his own grenade.

About seven o'clock on a Sunday evening early in 1921, I was strolling along O'Connell Street in company with three men from "D" Company, 2nd Battalion. They had participated in a very successful ambush in Dorset Street that morning and were, as a result, in great spirits. We did not notice a number of military lorries approach until the occupants, wearing gym. shoes, were jumping on to the foot-path almost alongside of us. We quickly moved apart and mixed with the usual Sunday evening crowds that thronged the street. I was seized and hurriedly forced into one of the lorries. Almost immediately the soldiers said that I belonged to "D" Company and that I was one of the ... Sinn Feiners who murdered their men in Dorset Street that morning. They informed me that after curfew they would throw me into the river. This was a treatment which they had meted out to a number of Volunteers a short time previously, and I had no doubt that they intended to carry out their threats.

A dispute arose between the soldier who first seized me and the N.C.O. in charge, as to which of them should get possession of my watch.

After some time the lorry I was in and another lorry drew up, end to end, immediately in front of Clerys in O'Connell Street. While some soldiers were causing a commotion amongst the people in the vicinity, I was knocked down and dragged into the second lorry, which quickly drove away.

For two hours, whilst the lorry patrolled the Quays, Capel Street, Parnell Street and O'Connell Street, I was compelled to lie on the floor of the vehicle with the butt of a rifle on my head or neck. I have good reason to remember that the streets of Dublin were then surfaced with cobble-stones.

After curfew, the lorry halted at Bachelor's Walk and I was permitted to stand up. The soldiers moved off on foot to patrol the streets, whilst I was left with one man to guard me. My guard seemed to quickly tire of this task, for he also moved away and disappeared round a corner, leaving me alone in the lorry with a rifle. The opportunity which was being given me to pick up the rifle and make a dash for freedom was very obvious, but I decided that I would not accept the bait and be numbered amongst those who were "shot trying to escape". After some time alone in the lorry an officer arrived and blew a whistle as a signal for the soldiers to assemble. The first to arrive were two soldiers who had been concealed in an adjacent lane about thirty yards distant. My guard also arrived and re-loaded his rifle.

I was taken to Dublin Castle and from there to the guard-room in Portobello Barracks, where I spent the remainder of the night in the Detention Room. I was not provided with bedding of any sort.

In the Detention Room there was only one other "prisoner", and he informed me that he was a pawn-broker's assistant and belonged to the 3rd Battalion. He offered to get me contact with a friendly soldier who was on guard and would be willing to smuggle out letters or messages. By now I suspected that my fellow-prisoner was a stool-pigeon and I decided to use him as a means towards my release. I willingly accepted the offer, and shortly afterwards the obliging soldier arrived, dressed in a complete new "Martin Henry" outfit. I handed him a letter, which was in a closed and stamped envelope. I also gave him some money. The letter was addressed to my landlady and informed her about my arrest. I told her not to worry as I expected to be released in a very short time, I, as she was aware, not being a member of any illegal organisation. I requested her to burn some Irish notes which she would find in my bedroom. About an hour later I was taken to the orderly room, where I was questioned by an Intelligence Officer. I reluctantly admitted that I had been a member of the Gaelic League the year previously. He produced my Irish notes and seemed to have a slight knowledge of Irish. As I had anticipated, the letter had been immediately conveyed by the soldier to his superior, who, as a result, came to the conclusion that I was just another harmless Gaelic Leaguer.

I was taken to the Auxiliary headquarters at Kilmainham, where a number of Auxiliaries indulged in a lot of abuse and threats. One of them banged down on a table what seemed to

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be a loaded .45 revolver and ordered me to pick it up. This I refused to do.

I was next taken to the Royal Barracks, now Collins Barracks, where I was interrogated by a Colonel, who gave instructions that I was to be taken to the Castle, and if the people there failed to identify me I was to be let go. I was kept only about a quarter of an hour in the Castle and then released.

Some time about May, 1921, information was circulated that a detachment of Scotland Yard detectives were coming over and would soon be operating in Dublin. They would probably pose as tradesmen or artisans.

Some days after the reception of this information, I and three other unarmed A.S.U. men were assembled in an untenanted shop in Fleet Street, adjacent to Crown Alley, awaiting orders from the unit O.C. We were there about half an hour when I observed two men loitering at a nearby street corner. They were dressed in suits of a colour and cut peculiar to seafaring men, and were wearing seamen's Trade Union badges, but what attracted my particular attention was the fact that everything they were wearing was absolutely new. Just as I was in the act of drawing my companion's attention to those individuals whom I suspected were Scotland Yard detectives, they were joined by two others similarly attired, and the four moved rapidly across the narrow street in our direction, drawing Smith and Wesson revolvers as they approached.

We were in a very difficult position, as there were only two doors, the front door which the detectives were approaching, and another door which gave entrance to a small

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square yard, which was completely walled in. Paddy O'Connor ("Ninepence" O'Connor) dashed out the back door and started climbing in a most extraordinary fashion at the angle formed by the intersection of two twelve-foot walls. The remainder of our party had neither the ability nor the time to emulate O'Connor's feat, for just as he was disappearing over the wall the detectives were entering the shop.

After the usual "hands up" and personal search, they questioned us concerning our business in the place. Under the circumstances a plausible explanation seemed almost impossible and for my part I was almost in despair when I had a brainwave. I decided to adopt the attitude of mistaking them for I.R.A. men. In an angry voice I asked them if they considered themselves Irishmen, holding people up with guns, and I expressed the opinion that they were worse than the Black and Tans. My attitude was so unexpected that it took them completely by surprise, but they again demanded what business had we in the shop. I replied that we were waiting there to back horses and that they must be well aware that it was a bookie's receiving office. Strange as it may seem they accepted my explanation and let us go. The presence of four new typewriting machines in an otherwise empty shop did not seem to the Scotland Yard men to call for any special explanation. The machines had been commandeered the previous day for use at G.H.Q. We learned subsequently that this was an unfortunate blunder for the Scotland Yard group, as the Dublin Castle detectives had the place under observation for some weeks and were ready to pounce when the Yard men blundered on the scene.

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On an extremely cold frosty day, with occasional showers of sleet, I and six or seven of the A.S.U. men were in ambush position in the vicinity of Amiens Street station, awaiting a party of Auxiliaries who, our Intelligence had informed us, would pass that way, travelling in touring cars. Some of us,on arriving at the ambush position, decided to draw the safety pins from our grenades, as when attacking fast-moving vehicles even a fraction of a second counts, so grasping tightly our grenades to ensure that the levers would not spring open, we stamped up and down trying to keep ourselves from freezing.

The people in that area who had become familiar with our appearance, moved quietly away from our vicinity. In a short space of time the streets were practically deserted, even the D.M.P. men moved away to a safe distance.

When more than two hours had elapsed, and it became apparent that the Auxiliaries would not keep their appointment with us, we decided to disperse. Drawing my grenade from my pocket for the purpose of replacing the pin I discovered that the tight clasp with which I had held it, combined with the intense cold, had caused my fingers to cramp around the cold metal, and it was with great difficulty I succeeded in loosening my hold, by forcing open each finger separately. I still shudder to think what my fate would have been had the Auxiliaries arrived on the scene that day.

About the middle of May a friend from the country informed me that my mother was in bad health and that she was anxious to see me, but was reluctant to cause me worry by informing me of her state of health. I immediately applied to the O.C. of the A.S.U. for a few days leave. For about ten days he kept putting off granting me leave, as he wished

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the unit to be at full strength for a big operation that was planned. Ultimately he granted me two days leave, with strict instructions that I must be back and available for duty on the third day. That was the day that he anticipated the operation would take place.

Arriving home I found that my mother had somewhat recovered but was still far from being well.

As my two brothers were away from home, my eldest a prisoner in Belfast jail and my youngest in Cavan town, about twenty miles away, I did not consider that there was much danger of the place being raided. I went to bed feeling quite safe but immediately after dawn was awakened by my mother, who must have kept watch throughout the night, calling to me that there were lorries halted on the road in front of and about half a mile from the house. I had just pulled on my shirt and trousers when my mother again called to say that a party were approaching the house from the rere. Dashing down the stairs in my bare feet I saw, as I cleared the end of the house, a party of constabulary enter the yard from the rere. Luckily they did not observe me. Crouching low under the cover of a hedge, I ran for a couple of hundred yards and dived into a dike of muddy water, which was screened over by a thick mass of thorn bushes.

The raiders, who were a mixed lot of Black & Tans, Auxiliaries and military, made a thorough search of the dwelling-house, out-houses and haggard. Hay-ricks were systematically prodded with bayonets to ascertain if anyone was concealed in the hay.

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Over an hour elapsed before my father came to tell me that the raiders had departed and all was clear. I was almost paralysed with the cold, and my father had to force open my mouth that I might swallow some hot whiskey. But it was my mother who suffered most, for she dreaded what might have happened should those ruffians discover me.

I thought next morning, as I journeyed back to Dublin, lacerated from thorns and still suffering from the effects of my long submersion in the cold water, that the peace and quietness of country life was much over-rated.

On arriving in Dublin late in the afternoon I discovered that I had missed by some hours one of the greatest operations in which the A.S.U. had participated. As a result of this operation the Custom House was still burning fiercely. The operation had taken place a day earlier than the O.C. had anticipated.

That evening I carried out the most difficult task which it was my duty to perform during the war, when I visited a number of Dublin houses and broke the sad news to parents and relatives that their sons had been killed at the Custom House.

As a result of the Custom House operation our ranks were badly depleted and it became necessary to recruit twenty or more men from the Dublin Brigade to bring the unit up to strength.

In contrast to the extraordinary success which attended our attacks on enemy vehicles in the city thoroughfares, our several operations against troop trains ended mostly in failure. I participated in three attempts to ambush troop trains, one at Drumcondra and two at Killester. At

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Drumcondra, with a section of the railway line displaced, the Active Service Unit in full strength was awaiting the arrival from the North Wall of a troop train, when along came a small empty goods train which slowly came to a halt with the engine hanging crazily over the embankment.

Failure of the H.E. charges to explode and de-rail the train was the cause of one of our failures at Killester. On the other occasion elaborate preparations came to naught as the troop train which we were to attack had been derailed by the I.R.A. somewhere in County Louth. We, unaware that the train had already been derailed, remained in ambush position so long that the British, acting on slightly inaccurate information, surrounded the Clontarf railway station area. A slight sound attracted the attention of another man and myself who were posted under cover of a hedge on the extreme city side of our position. Looking through the hedge we were surprised to see a fully equipped "Tommy" marching up and down, obviously unaware of our party's proximity. Further investigation disclosed that the British were present in some strength.

We were ordered to withdraw quietly over the then open country towards Whitehall, but the British threw out a wider cordon and it was only with the greatest difficulty that we succeeded in regaining the city.

I had a rather eerie experience as a prelude to one of these Killester affairs. On the eve of the planned attack I and two others were detailed to accompany Paddy O'Connor ("Ninepence") to an arms dump which was located out Finglas way. On reaching the vicinity of the dump our two friends refused to proceed any further and left O'Connor and myself to carry on with the task. Having waded the Tolka and

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negotiated the high wall which encloses the area, we traversed with great difficulty, as the night was extremely dark, a maze of pathways until we arrived at an underground chamber. Entering the chamber we, with the light from a small piece of candle, removed a number of caskets until we uncovered one which contained a miscellaneous collection of ordnance. Removing as many grenades as we were capable of carrying, we replaced the caskets and returned to our companions, who, strange to say, were under a greater nervous strain than we were.

This particular mission ended much more satisfactorily for "Ninepence" than a previous one when he was removing a keg of H.E. from the dump. To leave his hands free for climbing the ladder, which was permanently left resting against the wall, he strapped the keg to his back, and having successfully got over the wall he started down a steep incline towards the river when he slipped and rolled over. From then on the keg took over control and rolled down the far from smooth slope with Paddy securely attached to it, ultimately arriving safe and dry at the bottom,with Paddy's face embedded in about ten inches of liquid mud.

One afternoon myself and three others took up position in North Frederick Street for the purpose of intercepting a party of troops who, we were informed, would pass that way at 4 o'clock travelling in two lorries from Collinstown to the Royal Barracks, now Collins Barracks. Tom Flood and Christy Fitzsimons on the East side of Frederick Street, opposite Findlaters Church, were to attack the first lorry, while Mick Dunne and I on the west side at the L.S.E. garage were to attack the second lorry. At exactly four o'clock four fully loaded lorries swayed into Frederick Street from Dorset Street. Dunne and I had to make a

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quick change in our plan of attack. We decided to leave the first two lorries to Flood and Fitzsimons, who from their positions would be unaware up to the last moment of the oncoming two additional lorries, while Dunne took the third and I took the fourth vehicle.

Concentrating all my attention on the last lorry I observed the alert faces of the soldiers, the muzzles of their rifles menacing the people, the fingers hooked around the triggers, and then the extending eyes of the soldiers as Flood's and Fitzsimon's grenades burst over the first two lorries. Then for me came the anti-climax, for just as I swung back my hand to throw my grenade, a van slid to a halt not more than two feet in front of me. Quickly moving round to the back of the van I found the lorry was far beyond my range and was proceeding at full speed into O'Connell Street. I now realised that as the lorry approached I had discarded the pin that keeps the lever in position, and I was compelled to spend half an hour searching before I discovered a suitable piece of wire to render the grenade safe.

Looking back over that period I consider that the principal cause for failure to bring some of our missions to a successful conclusion was our leaders' inability to issue proper operation orders. Frequently our men were detailed to take up attack positions without being informed of the probable direction from which the enemy would approach, his probable strength and the number of vehicles. Information concerning such important matters as the strength and the position of the ambush party, location of covering parties, lines of withdrawal, action to be taken should additional enemy forces arrive, was frequently not issued. A check-up to ensure that each man was conversant with his task was seldom made.

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On one occasion we took up position in the vicinity of Butt Bridge for the purpose of intercepting a party of Auxiliaries who, we were informed, would pass that way proceeding from the North Wall to the Phoenix Park. After being there for about ten minutes, George Gray and myself, who were standing on a doorstep adjacent to Liberty Hall, saw a number of military lorries approaching from the direction of O'Connell Bridge. We were faced with the problem of deciding whether we would attack the lorries, which presented a very suitable target, or await the problematical arrival of the Auxiliaries. We had to consider that the destruction of the party of Auxiliaries might be of the utmost importance. We remained undecided up to the last moment, when George, acting on impulse, slammed his grenade into the second last lorry. I succeeded in placing my grenade in the last lorry. Our men, who were posted under the raiway bridge, carried on the attack. I recollect seeing a grenade come flying over the lorries and land on the road a short distance from where I stood, the pin still in position but the ring gone. This was the result of a defective type of home-made ring. This was one of our most successful ambushes, and the fact that the occupants of the lorries were Black and Tans greatly increased our satisfaction.

Some time in June or early in July, 1921 I was in charge of a party who took over a number of Thompson Sub Machine guns for use by the A.S.U. We were given some instruction on the gun and had great hopes that it would revolutionize street warfare and tip the scales in our favour in the struggle. But the Truce came; the war

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ended and the new weapon remained untested in the streets of Dublin.

Signed: J. Mitchell Arnold

Date: 11th April 1951

Witness: Joseph Kearns Landy