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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS

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Witness

Frank Thornton,
115 St. Helen's Road,
Booterstown,
Dublin.

Identity.

Volunteer Organiser;
Deputy Assistant Director of Intelligence 1919;
Director New Ireland Assurance Coy. 1951.

Subject.

(a) National activities 1912-1919;
(b) Funeral of O'Donovan Rossa, 1915;
(c) Easter Week 1916 -
G.P.O., Crown Alley and College Green, Dublin.

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STATEMENT OF FRANK THORNTON.

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STATEMENT OF FRANK THORNTON,

115 ST. HELEN'S ROAD, BOOTERSTOWN,
DUBLIN.

I was born in the town of Drogheda, Co. Louth in 1891. My people on my mother's side were Harte's, and my grandfather, John Harte, and his sons took part in the '67 Fenian Movement, resulting in their clearing out to America after the collapse. My mother always preached Fenianism to us and my grandfather taught me that very fine old ballad "The Bold Fenian Men".

In 1912 I went to Liverpool and very shortly after arriving there I joined the Gaelic League in Duke St. About February 1913, I was enrolled in the Irish Republican Brotherhood by Tommy Craven and became associated with men like Steve Lanigan, Neil Kerr, Pat Lively, Joe Gleeson, Martin Gleeson, Hugh Early, Snr., and dozens of others.

At the same period that the Volunteers were inaugurated at the Rotunda in Dublin in 1913, we started the Volunteers in St. Martin's Hall, Liverpool. The I.R.B. members were used mainly to use their influence with the old United Irish League and Ancient Order of Hibernians branches in the city and, as a result, we had up to 1,200 Volunteers enrolled very shortly after that meeting. We paraded at Greenwich Park, which is situated close up to the Aintree Racecourse. This Park was Gaelic Athletic Association headquarters in Liverpool and we used the G.A.A. and the organisations referred to to develop the Volunteer movement. At this period, the G.A.A. was very strong in Liverpool, and I started the Tir-na-nOg Football Club. Subsequently, I became assistant secretary of the County Board. The Volunteers developed fairly rapidly and we utilised ex-servicemen (Irishmen who had been in the British army) to train us. In a short space of time the Volunteers became fairly efficient, and courses for N.C.Os. were set up.

In the meantime, the G.A.A. were carrying on their Annual

Championship programme and all arrangements were made for the 1914 Hurling Final between Scotland and England (London representing England). A big programme was arranged for August Monday, 1914. The O'Toole's (selected from Dublin) were down to play the pick of Lancashire and the St. Brendan's Camogie Team from Dublin to play a Lancashire Camogie Selection. We little thought when we were making these arrangements that we had selected the day for the opening of World War No. 1, but events were also happening in Ireland. The Howth gun-running took place on the previous Sunday, the last Sunday in July, resulting in arms being landed and bloodshed taking place in the streets of Dublin. However, our visitors arrived from Ireland and all arrangements were completed for our matches on the Monday, the O'Toole Pipers Band arriving from Dublin with the Dublin team. It was decided in Liverpool that we would mark the occasion by making a strong protest in the streets of Liverpool against the shootings at Bachelors Walk. The Volunteers were paraded on Sunday afternoon, headed by the O'Toole Pipers Band and a large banner in front with the words "Remember Bachelor's Walk", "Bullets for Dublin", "Support the Volunteer Defence Fund". Hundreds of collectors accompanied the demonstration through the city and a large amount of money was collected, all of which went to purchase arms at a later date. The demonstration was not interfered with and on the following day our matches took place. It is interesting to note that the late General Michael Collins played for London against Scotland that day. London won the O'Connor Cup and Championship. There were rather lively scenes in Liverpool on August Monday night when the O'Toole Pipers Band played through the streets on its way to Lime St. Station and numerous clashes took place between Irish supporters and British ex-servicemen at Lime St. Station, and it was only with difficulty that we succeeded in getting the band on board the train.

The events that followed are now history; the split of the Volunteers, resulting from Redmond's Declaration. This had a very serious effect on us in Liverpool, because the late Mr. T.P. O'Connor, M.P., called a meeting for St. Martin's Hall of all Volunteers, and put a proposition before the meeting that the Volunteers should be used for the home defence of Liverpool. This proposition was not carried, but the net resul of the meeting was that the Volunteers disappeared, all U.I.L. Branches and A.O.H. Branches withdrawing from our General Executive. The week after the split, stocktaking took place on our part, and we found ourselves with about twenty-five Volunteers in Duke St. and in or about the same number in Bootle Branches of the Gaelic League. Bootle became "A" Coy. and Duke St. became "B" Coy. and, eventually, Sean Hennessy of Cork became Captain of "A" Coy. and I became Captain of "B" Coy Nothing daunted, however, by this reverse, we set out to build up again our strength and it is satisfactory to note that 67 members of my company came to Dublin and took part in the Insurrection of 1916, and about 50 from Bootle Company. These Volunteers were quartered at Kimmage Camp and, in the words of the late Padraig Pearse, "they were the first standing army tha Ireland had since the days of Patrick Sarsfield".

The training of the Volunteers continued despite innumerable difficulties and, of course, being closely watched by the British Authorities all the time. However, we succeeded in keeping our organisation intact and in securing fairly substantial quantities of arms and ammunition by purchasing them from local stores in the first instance, from troops and, in a lot of cases, by appropriation. These guns and ammunition were got to Ireland by diverse routes. In some cases ~~enumerable~~ NUMEROUS funerals took place, where, instead of a corpse, the coffin was filled with either arms or ammunition and, in every case, we succeeded in getting the consignment through to its destination The men who were mainly responsible for the export of arms and

ammunition were Neil Kerr and Pat Lively, Steve Lanigan and Hugh Early. These men did a real good job of work.

I was a painter by trade and served my time with my father at Drogheda, and was now employed by Harland & Woulfe, Ship-Repairers, at Alexandra Docks, Liverpool. Very soon after the commencement of the war I was appointed a foreman. My main job was camouflaging merchant cruisers and particularly the gun shields. One day I was working on a ship called the "Hildebrand", a "Booth" liner, when we went out to the Mersey estuary on a trial trip. When out about 10 miles we were in the middle of quite a considerable number of ships and a submarine torpedoed two of the ships in our immediate vicinity. Our after-gun was manned, being a 4.7, and fired at the periscope. Instead of doing damage to the enemy we only wrecked ourselves, as the whole after-deck rose in the sky with the concussion, completely putting the gun out of action and throwing one of the crew into the sea; he was rescued and we made for port with all possible speed.

In November 1914, the Manchester Martyrs Commemoration was organised for Duke St. Branch of the Gaelic League. The lecturer selected was Pierce Beasley. I went down to the Liverpool landing-stage that night to meet Pierce, who was stopping in his father's house in Wallasey(Note: his father was editor of the Catholic Times which was published in Liverpool). To my amazement, Pierce stepped off the Wallasey Ferry Boat in full Volunteer uniform. We then proceeded to walk up Water St. into Dale St., pass the C.I.D. (Police Hqrs) and on to Duke St. We passed hundreds of soldiers and naval men on our way;on every occasion everybody came smartly to attention and saluted Pierce, thinking he was wearing the uniform of one of their corps. Pierce delivered his lecture and we escorted him back to the ferry and he arrived safely home. Pierce Beasley, it appears, came over every day in

uniform and travelled free on boats, trams, etc., as an officer of their Defence Forces.

It then became necessary to do something more than just drill the lads in Duke St. as we had to do something about getting them properly trained in the use of firearms. With this end in view we secured the basement of Cahill's, Tailors and Outfitters, in Scotland Road. It was a very suitable place because the entrance to the basement was by a lane in the rere of the building. All the members of our company set to in real earnest to put this basement into proper ship-shape - carpenters, painters, plumbers, etc. - and in a very short space of time we had that basement sparkling like a new pin. Targets were erected at one end which could be moved at will on a wheel, thereby training me in firing at moving targets, B.S.A. miniature rifles being used, and an abundance of ammunition for these ~~guns~~ RIFLES was available. We also trained the men in revolver drill, although not actually firing live stuff, but, generally, an atmosphere of real live activity prevailed. The extraordinary part about it all is that right up to the time that our Company left Liverpool for Dublin this basement was never raided by the police and, as a matter of fact, it was subsequently used during the later days of the Black and Tan war as a receiving centre for arms and ammunition but, unfortunate to relate, Neil Kerr, junior, son of old Neil Kerr, was accidentally shot there by a companion when testing revolvers in the middle of the Tan war.

As I mentioned earlier on, quite an amount of gun-running, some on a small scale and some on a big scale, was taking place nearly all the time and on one particular afternoon, Joe Gleeson and myself had a box of rifles on top of a taxi on our way to Garston Docks. When going down London Road, Liverpool, our taxi got involved with another car and hit a tram standard in the centre of the road; the usual crowds and police gathered

and Joe Gleeson, as quick as lightning, hailed another taxi, tipped a policeman on the shoulder and said: "Hey, mate, give us a hand to get this box on the top of this other car, we are in a hurry to catch our boat at Garston". Two policemen, Joe and myself tilted the box of rifles from the wrecked taxi on to the second car and off we went to Garston and safely deposited our stuff in the boat that was sailing that night.

I was one of the delegates attending with Tommy Craven, Neil Kerr, Pat Lively and Steve Lanigan the first Volunteer Convention at the Abbey Theatre, Dublin, in 1915. By this time we had built up the strength of our units and had two very well-trained companies in Liverpool. When over here in 1915, around Whit, I went with the 1st Battalion, Dublin Brigade, on their famous excursion to Limerick. I was marching in the battalion with Comdt. Ned Daly that day as we were attacked from all quarters with bricks, stones and bottles and, as is well-known now, by a well-organised mob of ex-British soldiers' wives and ex-British soldiers who had been properly primed for the occasion by a Redmondite. The battalion came through the attack that day with flying colours despite the fact that we had numerous casualties.

At the end of 1915, I got instructions to make arrangement with the Old City of Dublin Steampacket Company to have their boat draw alongside the American liner "St. Paul" in the Mersey when O'Donovan Rossa's body arrived there on that boat. The whole anxiety of our American friends of the Clann na Gaedheal and also of the I.R.B. and the Volunteers in Dublin was to ensure that O'Donovan Rossa's body did not touch English soil on its way back for burial to Ireland. All arrangements were made to have the City of Dublin boat alongside, but owing to the late arrival of the "St. Paul", brought about by bad weather, this was not possible. However, we got over the difficulty in another way. We mobilised fifty members of our

Volunteers in Liverpool both from "A" and "B" Companies and boarded the "St. Paul" at Prince's Landing Stage, and carried O'Donovan Rossa's body from Prince's Landing Stage to the Nelson Dock on Irish shoulders, and I think that by this means we carried out the wishes of everybody concerned. We boarded the "St. Paul" at Prince's Landing Stage on that day and carried O'Donovan Rossa's remains right along the Dock Road, the journey being over two miles. I think it can be safely claimed that by this method O'Donovan Rossa's body had landed in Ireland when we took it on our shoulders at Prince's Landing Stage. The City of Dublin boats at that time were Irish owned and controlled and, on arrival at Nelson Dock, a guard was mounted which remained on duty after numerous reliefs until the boat arrived at North Wall. I was in charge of the party coming across and, on arrival at North Wall, we were met by the Dublin Volunteers, but still continued in charge of the remains which we brought to the Pro-Cathedral in Marlboro' St. (I am arranging to get the names of all those who came across, later). We were on duty then later on at City Hall and took part in the funeral to Glasnevin.

As I mentioned before, from time to time we had taken part in numerous little raids for arms and in escorting arms here and there and in gun-running and it was necessary from time to time to arm our men. On one particular occasion towards the end of 1915, one of our fellows was caught and as he was known to the C.I.D. to be a member of Duke St. Branch of the Gaelic League, and as I was a suspect, being the officer in charge, I was arrested in Liverpool one Thursday night. I was brought to Dale St. Police Station for questioning and was held for 48 hours. I was closely questioned by detectives, army officers and naval officers and subsequently charged with being in charge of a body of men to whom I issued firearms. I engaged Austin Harford, who

was one of the leaders of the Irish political section in Liverpool and a very good solicitor. However, to cut a long story short, Harford succeeded in throwing the prosecution into confusion, resulting in my being discharged as no case was proved. They had raided my place when they had me in Dale St. and went through everything with a fine comb, but got nothing, as I naturally didn't keep anything of an incriminating nature or arms there. As I have stated, I was discharged about 48 hours after being arrested and, on the following morning, I reported back to my job in Harland & Woulfe's, but was informed by the General Manager that he wanted to see me in his office immediately. The General Manager was a Belfast Orangeman and started off by telling me how sorry he was to have to give me the news he was about to give and that he had full sympathy with me in everything. He informed me that by order of the military authorities I was discharged, as I was a danger to the realm, and, accordingly, I was discharged. This didn't particularly perturb me at the time, because I had already got the tip from Dublin to be ready to bring my unit home to Dublin on very short notice, and, leaving Tommy Craven in charge of the company, I went back to Dublin for further instructions. When in Dublin we made all arrangements with George Plunkett and others to prepare Kimmage Camp and, at the end of that year and the beginning of January, the remainder of the units both A and B Companies, gave up their jobs in Liverpool and reported for full-time duty as soldiers in Kimmage Camp, Dublin. Amongst those who arrived from Liverpool with the unit were my two brothers, Hugh and Paddy Thornton. I think at this stage I should explain that in the middle of 1915 a day was set aside by the British Government called the "Lord Derby Scheme Day". On this particular day everyone resident in England, Scotland and Wales were compelled to sign a form giving full particulars about themselves,

occupation, etc., and all those of military age came automatically liable to be conscripted.

We were in a bit of a quandary as to what to do, but we received instructions from our G.H.Q. in Dublin to sign the forms, but, as far as possible, to sign them in Irish. This was done in all cases, and even in quite a large number of cases by Orangemen who were employed in Harland and Woulfe's, these men coming along to us and asking us to change some of their extraordinary names into Gaelic. Well, we put Gaelic on most of them. This was the reason why, in referring to our men later on, the British stated that the only reason we left England was to avoid conscription. I think they should know better than that knowing what happened in Easter Week 1916. Both Hugh and Paddy took part in the 1916 Rising, as did also my sister, Nora, who was a member of Cumann na mBan. Hugh was in the Post Office, and Paddy was with me in Liberty Hall until Easter Monday afternoon, when he was sent to Fairview. When at Fairview he was slightly wounded through the top of the lung and this wound became very bad subsequently owing to inattention, as Paddy was then not quite 16 years of age, and was discharged by the British after the surrender as being under age. In 1920 Paddy was taken out of Joe Stanley's Picturehouse where he was acting as manager in Drogheda, and brutally murdered by the Black and Tans. Hugh, who was interned in Frongoch Camp, was taken out of the Camp with a number of others, the Noonan brothers, etc., and forcibly conscripted. He was brought to Salisbury Plain where he was forcibly dressed in khaki uniform, but succeeded in getting a knife and ripped the uniform to pieces and spent the best part of the next six weeks in his shirt. However, they didn't succeed in conscripting him, as they were compelled to release him. Later on in the year the reason given was "temporary insanity". It was a way out for them at least, but no matter how long they kept Hugh, he would still have acted as he did in the beginning.

In a very short space of time Kimmage Camp was organised on a proper military basis, sentries being posted day and night. London, Scotch and Manchester Units arrived. George Plunkett was made O/C. Camp. The men were organised into various groups, some making pikes, others making special charges for shotgun cartridges; other groups loading cartridge with extra powder and special pellets; various other groups making canister bombs. There was no idle time in the Camp, which was run on strict military lines.

About the middle of January I got permission to go on a walking tour to the south of Ireland with Sean Hickey. We had strict instructions, however, that we must report at different headquarters on our line of march. We set off on a Tuesday morning with the intention of averaging about 20 odd miles a day, and all went well until we came to Toomevara in Co. Tipperary. Here the police took a very keen interest in our movements and we were very closely questioned. My name was Frank Drennan and the other man, Sean O'Neill. The police however, were not satisfied with our explanation and we were taken to the barracks, but after about an hour and a half we were released. We informed the police that we were walking to Cork. We started off from Toomevara with the police cycling slowly behind us, and on arrival at Dublin Road, Nenagh, we decided that we would have a meal. We went into what is commonly known down the country, or was at that time, as an "eating house". After having our meal, we decided to take a chance and ask the good woman of the house if she could assist us by getting us out the back way. We didn't know this woman at all, but as the police were sitting on the window sills of the house opposite, we pointed them out to her and, like many another good Irish woman, she immediately rose to the occasion and arranged with her neighbour in the next stree to let us over her garden wall and out through the front door. We left the R.I.C. men still waiting outside while we walked

on to Limerick. That was a memorable walk, because we continued walking all night and arrived in Limerick at about 4 o'clock in the morning. Not wanting to draw attention to ourselves, we slipped in the back way on to the station and slept on the seats of the railway station until it was time to ramble down town.

We reported for duty with the Limerick Brigade and decided to go no further. I was attached to the staff of the Limerick City Brigade under Jim Colivet. During my stay in Limerick Tom Clarke, one of the executed leaders of 1916, arrived, accidentally wounded in the right arm, and it was one of my jobs every morning to fill Tom's pipe for him. Shortly afterwards, Sean McDermott arrived and, on the eve of St. Patrick's Day 1916, Sean McDermott got all the officers and N.C.Os. of the Limerick City Brigade to the Fianna Hall and, without actually telling them in so many words that the insurrection was about to take place, he left nobody in any doubt as to what the real position was. He instructed me to report back immediately to Kimmage Camp by the end of the following week. On St. Patrick's Eve a Proclamation was poste all over Limerick prohibiting the use of or the carrying of arms by civilians. This added a little thrill to our parade which took place on St. Patrick's morning. Ignoring the proclamation, we paraded in full strength, every man armed, with advance and rearguards carrying ball ammunition, and marched to Castleconnell. This was a very hectic march, because it took place in a snowstorm. However, we arrived back safely in Limerick and dumped our rifles without any loss On the following morning, at about 12 o'clock, my digs was raided as was the digs of Sheehan, but neither of us was present. We got the tip and immediately reported to O/C. Limerick for instructions and eventually that night picked up a car outside Limerick and drove to Dublin. It is rather interesting to know that the car in which we drove to Dublin

was the same car that went over the cliff in Kerry, in that terrible disaster on Good Friday, the driver being the same Tom McInerney. It is also remarkable that Sheehan was one of the men drowned in that same car on that Good Friday and that I actually was detailed the day before they left Kimmage to accompany the party, but was taken out of the car at the last minute and sent up in charge of 28 North Frederick St. which was then A.O.H. American Alliance Hall, and was being used by us as an auxiliary camp to Kimmage. It was from this headquarters that I brought my party under orders on Easter Monday morning to Liberty Hall and, after reporting to Seamus Connolly, our commander-in-chief, was left behind in charge of Liberty Hall until Monday afternoon, when we vacated it, clearing out with all our stores and ammunition.

On Easter Sunday morning, after the calling off of operations by Eoin MacNeill, Sean McDermott contacted me and instructed me to have two girls ready for dispatch work to the country. He insisted on one of them being my sister, Nora Thornton, whom he knew very well. He contacted me again at about 3 a.m. on Easter Monday morning and I got my instructions to send Nora to Kerry on the mail train on Monday morning. She got specific instructions to contact Fr. Breen and hand over her dispatch. This she did, but had to go on to Killarney to contact Fr. Breen and subsequently attended all meetings of the Kerry Brigade. In the meantime the police were looking for the girl who arrived on that morning's train, but she had disappeared and, under instructions from the Volunteer Executive, she remained in Tralee and did not get back to Dublin until the week following the surrender. It is interesting to note, however, that when she made her application for recognition for 1916 she was informed by the powers that be that she was only entitled to three days' service for that week, as that was all the time that was, in their opinion, necessary to do the job.

On Easter Monday morning I reported with my unit at Liberty Hall. I was left behind with about a dozen men to hold that building until such time as I could seize sufficient transport and organise the withdrawal of all our stores and ammunition to the G.P.O. This evacuation took place some time about 6 o'clock on Monday evening, but the strength of the unit leaving was in or around 200, as men who had missed their mobilisations in the morning for various reasons kept reporting all day long to Liberty Hall, a great tribute to these men and the Dublin Brigade are proud of them.

On arrival at the G.P.O. on Easter Monday night, 1916, we marched into the yard at the rere of the Post Office with our supplies. We were met by the commander-in-chief, James Connolly, and I was instructed to take twelve men from the party and hold them pending further instructions. The balance of the party was ordered, after resting and drawing rations, to proceed to our own post at Fairview. My brother, Paddy Thornton, went to Fairview with this contingent and, as I stated earlier, was slightly wounded there.

After resting some time and having our tea in the restaurant in the G.P.O. and meeting a lot of old friends, I was ordered to take my twelve men to the Express Office to reinforce Sean Connolly. My instructions were to proceed by Fleet St. and Temple Bar as we held the National Telephone Exchange. I think it was Ted Sheehan who was supposed to have been in charge there.

I extended my men on both sides of the road on arriving at Fleet St. and, as we approached Crown Alley in this order, an old woman rushed up to us shouting: "Get back, son, get back, the British are in the Telephone Exchange". I ignored the warning, thinking, like Wally Carpenter who was with me, that the old woman had mistaken some of our men, who were in uniform, for the British. I had a rude awakening when a

machine gun opened fire on us from the telephone exchange, and we were subjected to rifle fire from the corner buildings of Crown Alley. However, instead of retreating, I gave the order: "Forward at the double and round the corner to the right for your lives", and so we reached the quays with only one casualty. On reaching the quayside, we came in view of our men who were in occupation of "Kelly's Fort" across the river, and these, mistaking us for British troops (as most of us were in uniform) opened fire on us. However, we succeeded in attracting their attention by putting up a white flag and firing ceased. I came back to Westmoreland St. and occupied the old London, North Western Offices and sent a dispatch to the commander-in-chief, telling him what happened and asking him for further instruction I received back a reply by return congratulating me on my actions in the matter and on sending back the information about the occupation of the National Telephone Exchange and ordering me to take over a building in Fleet St. at the back of the College Restaurant and to start sniping at Trinity College and the Bank of Ireland.

Acting on instructions, we occupied Delahunty's publichouse which is now Pearl Bar, because this gave us easy access to the rere yard of the College Restaurant, thereby enabling us to get on to the roofs and the upper windows without being detected Later on in the evening, a further six men were sent to me and at about midnight I received instructions from Seamus Connolly to be prepared to occupy buildings on the other side of the road getting into the rere of the buildings in Fleet St. and so on to the roofs immediately behind the Bank of Ireland. Additional men were to be sent to me to carry out this job, and from the dispatch I understood that we were to act as a covering party on both sides of the road to enable a force from the G.P.O to attempt to capture Trinity College. This job was abandoned and on Easter Tuesday morning I was instructed to evacuate the position and return to the Post Office. On arriving at the

Post Office without casualties I was instructed to bring my men across the road and occupy the Imperial Hotel, which was at that time over Clery's. I took over the Imperial Hotel about midday on Tuesday and proceeded to bore through the walls connecting the buildings on our left and right. Later on that night we contacted Brennan Whitmore, who was on my right flank towards Talbot St.

Numerous incidents occurred during our occupation of that building of which the following examples come readily to mind: On Thursday, the Imperial Hotel had been under continuous shell fire from all directions, as all shells missing the Post Office front and rere eventually hit us. On Thursday the line of buildings to our left towards O'Connell Bridge was burning fiercely and, indeed, from time to time crashing on to the street. Our men worked their way from building to building until they found their road blocked by flames. The order was given to make a dash across the road to Princes St. side of the Post Office. And here comes the first incident that flashes into my mind at the mention of Easter Week:

n About ten men made a dash towards the Post Office; all but one man succeeded in making Princes St. All but one: he fell on the last tramline nearest the corner of the street. He fell on his face; his rifle shot off to the right; he lay perfectly still and I thought he had been killed or badly wounded. However, he started to crawl slowly towards his rifle. Now, all this time there was a hail of machine gun fire playing up and down the street. He slowly crawled towards that rifle and managed to get his hand firmly on it. Then with one wild spring and a dash he succeeded in reaching the side entrance of the G.P.O. A ringing cheer burst from the men on our side of the street.

Another incident is that of the late Noel Lemass falling

wounded outside the Imperial Hotel, Lower O'Connell St. and being pulled into safety by his comrades.

You see, a communication wire had been fixed by us to the G.P.O., and messages attached to the wire were hauled backwards and forwards across the street until the wire broke down. Then I called for Volunteers to dash across the road to the G.P.O. and back again to the Imperial Hotel, with important dispatches, Noel Lemass was one of those who volunteered. He made the trip to across/the G.P.O. successfully in spite of machine guns and snipers, who were keeping up a continuous fire up and down the street. On the return journey he almost succeeded in reaching safety. As he reached the footpath he was wounded in the leg and fell. Ned Boland and Jack Whelan immediately dashed out from the door of the Imperial Hotel and pulled him to safety.

During the Insurrection I received a request from my commander-in-chief, James Connolly, to erect "The Plough and the Stars" on the Imperial Hotel alongside the Tricolour already flying there. I immediately agreed, and only succeeded after great difficulty as it had to be erected under fire, but up it went - "The Plough and the Stars" - and there it stayed, altho' only the front wall of the building remained after the fight had concluded.

The men under my command were composed of Citizen Army and 2nd Battalion, Dublin Brigade. Our orders were to hold the Imperial Hotel, which was over Clery's, and right opposite the G.P.O., and some neighbouring buildings, until they were blown down by shell fire or burned down. The order concluded: "The British must not occupy these buildings". We held those buildings until the walls were falling around us from shells and fires caused by incendiary bombs.

After I was released from Dartmoor Prison I was very interested to learn that the Citizen Army flag "The Plough and

ll flying on the burned-out Imperial Hotel for about three days after the Insurrection was over.

On Thursday there was an attempt to shell the Post Office with the 18 pounder from Parnell Monument. The gun crew were sniped so effectively while trying to get the gun into position that they were all badly wounded or killed. Reinforcements rushed out, manned the gun again, loaded and fired it. The shell did not hit the G.P.O., because the gun seemed to spin round as it was fired. The shell hit the Y.M.C.A. in Up. O'Connell St., which was occupied by British Forces. The British must have thought it was our troops that were shelling them, because they immediately evacuated the Y.M.C.A., coming under our fire and suffering very heavy casualties.

I think it is interesting to state here that while quite a controversy has gone on over a number of years as to the flags flying on the G.P.O., as to their relative positions, I want to emphatically state that the flags flying were:- On the Princes St. corner a green pennant with the words: "Irish Republic"; on the Henry St. end, the Tricolour. This Tricolour on the corner of Henry Street was half shot down on Thursday evening but never really fell because while the pole appeared to crack, before it actually fell it was pushed up again and eventually somebody lashed a piece of wood around it. This was done under machine gunfire from Amiens St. Tower and from the buildings from Trinity and also from the Rotunda roof. In the first instance, the flag was partly cut by machine gun fire from these places and a close examination of the coping stone on the corner of the building will reveal the fact that it is splintered all over with machine gun bullets.

We occupied the buildings at the back across Sackville Lane which runs at the rere of Clery's, and late on Friday, were in very close contact with British forces who had worked their way up from the Marlboro'St. end. We were being continually raked by machine gunfire from the dome of the Custom House, Ameins St. Tower, the Bank of Ireland, Trinity and buildings in Upr. O'Connell St., one of which was the

Y.M.C.A. - an incident occurred there which is described in preceding chapters. Very heavy shellfire continued all day Thursday and Friday, and shells which missed the Post Office from either the Park or the River end invariably hit the buildings either to our right or left or our own building. Notwithstanding this heavy shellfire and machine gunfire from all around, I believe that we could have successfully held these buildings for an indefinite period, but what beat us in the finish was the rain of incendiary bombs which kept falling all around and our inability to deal with this particular type of fire. On Thursday night Hoyte's blew up. Hoyte's store at the back was full of barrels of methylated spirits, turpentine, etc. These barrels were blown high into the sky and quite a number of them fell and exploded on the roof of the Imperial Hotel. We had quite a number of men wounded, none of them very seriously, and we had sufficient First Aid to deal with the situation. I was wounded myself twice on Friday in the right leg. The fire continued to approach on us and we were virtually beaten out of the upper portions of Clery's and the Imperial Hotel, and, acting under very specific instructions from the commander-in-chief, orders were given that every floor must be defended and the building must not be evacuated until it was impossible for any enemy to occupy it and thereby create considerable damage to our headquarters across the road in the G.P.O. We held on until only five and myself were left in the building, having retired the balance of my garrison to Brennan Whitmore's position on my right flank.

Some time late on Tuesday evening part of our Forces, returning from Fairview, came in by the back of Sackville Place. Frank Henderson and Oscar Traynor were in charge of this party and they had a number of captured British prisoners with them. I held up the barbed wire entanglement

at the corner of our position which stretched across the road, to enable them to get under, and they went off in the direction of the Post Office, but for some unforeseen reason, when nearing the Post Office, they started to double. The men in some of our positions to the right saw what they took to be British troops, evidently running towards the Post Office, and opened fire on this group; fortunately nobody was wounded. I felt annoyed at this incident myself, and immediately went into our Post and ordered an examination of all the rifles of those on the front of our position. I found that no shots had been fired from my post. Later on that night, my position was reinforced by about twelce men from those who had newly arrived from Fairview. Amongst them was Noel Lemass, Con McGinn (who is at present employed as Principal Customs Officer at Dun Laoghaire), Brian McGinley, Ned Boland (a brother of Harry Boland), Billy Whelan, Seamus Daly (whom I promoted on the field to Lieutenant, and who has until recently been a Commandant in the Irish Army. I will give a more detailed list of the garrison later on. Late on Tuesday night a fatigue party was sent over from the G.P.O. to requisition blankets, mattresses and provisions. We had set up an endless rope across the road with a tin box attached so that dispatches could be drawn backwards and forwards between the Post Office roof and the roof on our position, as already described. This box was riddled with machine gun bullets in its passing back and forth, and the rope severed later on in the week..

On Wednesday morning we were visited by Sean McGarry, who, at the time, was one of the leaders of the I.R.B. movement and close personal friend of Tom Clarke. He was sent over by the Commander-in-chief to inspect our post and to check up on our dispositions. On this tour of inspection, he insisted on going out on to the roof at the rere through a skylight which I had previously warned him was very dangerous, as it was

continually under fire from snipers. He climbed up on to a ladder and, while attempting to pull himself up on to the roof, bullets hit the framework all around him, and he fell down on to the floor on top of me, but he wasn't even scratched.

On Thursday, while a number of our men were resting in an annex at the back of the hotel, a large tank which was built out on the side of the building, overhead this annex, was hit by a H.E. shell and just disappeared, the water falling down in one huge lump on to the annex and washing our men out of it on to the main passage in the Imperial.

When speaking about Liberty Hall earlier on, I mentioned the fact that I had been left behind in charge of the building, to guard our stores and collect provisions where procurable, but, at the same time, I received instructions that under no circumstances was I to provoke a fight with any of the enemy, as my job was to hold the building and defend it if attacked, but not to look for trouble. Just before zero hour, however, on Monday, it looked as if we were going to be involved in a fight with the cavalry escort guarding a supply of ammunition which was being brought from the North Wall. It was only with great difficulty that I prevented some of my men in the top windows of Liberty Hall from dropping a hand-made canister bomb on this party. However, they passed safely by, and even past our post at Kelly's fort, on the corner of O'Connell St. and then on to somewhere near the Four Courts. At that stage they were halted by the Four Courts Garrison and were hemmed in for most of the week. My reasons for mentioning the incident at this stage is that on Thursday night, or the early hours of Friday morning, there was a terrific noise from the direction of Middle Abbey St. Every post in the street was alerted and, to our astonishment, into O'Connell St. dashed

about twenty or thirty horses. It would appear that these were the cavalry horses I referred to as having passed Liberty Hall and the troopers were compelled to let them go loose in the early hours of Friday morning. The horses stampeded wildly down Abbey St. into O'Connell St. and disappeared down Lower Abbey St. in the direction of the Custom House.

On my return from prison in 1917, my sister Nora handed me some of the newspapers for the week following the Insurrection and I was highly amused to read the attack and capture of Liberty Hall. According to the reports, Liberty Hall, after being shelled for the best part of a day, was taken by British Forces at the point of the bayonet. I was one of the last men to leave Liberty Hall on Monday, and I can say that there was nobody in the building during this heroic bayonet charge. The British were deceived, however, by the fact that we barricaded all the windows and left the flag flying on the building before we left.

On Thursday, during the shelling of O'Connell St. by the battery in Tara St., a H.E. shell came right over our building and hit the front of the Freeman's Journal Office, now the Capitol Cinema, and blew a huge hole in the upper portion of the building. On the same afternoon a shell came through one of the back windows of the Imperial Hotel and hit the side wall, exploding in the room. A sniper sitting at one of the three windows in the room furthest from the explosion was found still at his post, not wounded, but stunned.

We had quite a number of snipers posted around the building at different vantage points, some covering the dome of the Custom House from the rere top, and others from the top side windows of the Imperial. One of these, Paddy McMahon, did trojan work and succeeded in disposing of quite a number of snipers who had been causing a terrific amount of damage in certain parts of our building.

The shellfire intensified and the number of incendiary bombs increased and, what with the disaster of the falling barrels of methylated spirits, turpentine, etc. from the Hoyte's explosion, we were now a cauldron of flames. However, acting on our specific instructions, we relentlessly held on until only six of us remained on the first floor, holding both the rere and the front, mainly the rere.

The British at this time had worked their way in towards the back by Marlborough St. I can remember the names of at least five of the six, and possibly later will give you the sixth. They were Ned Boland, Billy Whelan, Lieut. Seamus Daly, Con McGinn, (?)X Murphy and myself. We remained until the ceiling of the first floor was falling all around us in flames and then retreated through Allen's, which was now one huge well of flames. We had to come down a ladder about 15 ft. which was on fire, and gradually worked our way out, having received severe burns, and having our uniforms very badly burned, we reached the corner of Talbot St. The buildings at this end had not yet gone on fire. Acting under some idea of finding his way to the country, Brennan Whitmore had retired in the direction of Marlborough Lane and Gloucester St. Some of his troops, amongst whom were Sean McEntee, T.D., and Paddy O'Keeffe, the late Clerk of the Dáil, succeeded in reaching the Post Office, but all efforts on our part to contact the Post Office for further instructions failed, as the building was then in flames. The fire gradually enveloped all our corner and we were forced to retire to the far side of Talbot St. and got out to the back of Cathedral Lane through a billiards hall, the name of which I cannot remember. I distinctly remember, however, that we went through the billiards hall. We failed to contact Brennan Whitmore and finally occupied a building on the corner of Gloucester St. and held on there until the surrender.

X do not remember Murphy's Christian name

After aurrendering, we were marched down to the Custom House with quite a number of others who were brought from different places. Before reaching the Custom House, one officer of the Royal Irish Rifles did everything he possibly could to have me shot. Why particularly myself, I don't know, but, however, through the intervention of a young Lieutenant, I was saved and eventually brought to the Custom House. When we arrived at the Custom House, quite a number of other prisoners were there already and the only place they had available to put us was in the yard. We were all ordered to lie down on the stone flags in a yard and we remained in this spot until some time on Monday. During all that period we were never allowed even a drink of water, or given any food, nor were our wounds attended to, and by this time, some of our men were in a very bad condition - with exhaustion, loss of blood, and with no attention they were really in a dangerous condition. This situation existed until the Royal Irish Rifles from Belfast were relieved by an Australian Unit on Sunday. The Australians, on taking over on Sunday evening, realising the position, divided their own rations with us and acted in quite a decent fashion. We were being continually shown Howth rifles and the bullets of the Howth rifles, and informed that we would be shot with our own bullets, but at that stage it didn't really matter what was going to happen, because, although not what you would call despondent, certainly a gloom had set in amongst us.

About midday on Monday, we were lined up - two deep - and a long line of the Notts and Derby Regiments lined the road each side of us. We were marched across Butt Bridge, along Tara St., up College St., up Dame St., Cork Hill, Patrick St., and, on our way up along Patrick St., if it weren't for the fact that we were so strongly guarded by British troops, we would have been torn asunder by the ex-soldiers' wives in that area. Eventually we reached

Richmond Barracks and we were divided up into different rooms. On arrival at Richmond Barracks. we were paraded before a British officer, who took down all particulars as to name, address, etc. of each prisoner. I gave my name as Froinsias Ua Droighneain, but the officer wrote it down as Frank Drennan. He was Irish and evidently thought that was near enough. It suited me owing to the conscription situation. I was sentenced under that name and was thereafter known by friend and foe under my new cognomen. When I went into the room to which we were assigned, I remember one of the first men I met was Big John O'Mahony. Ffrench-Mullen was also in that room, slightly wounded.

Every day we watched the crowds being mustered on the square and marched off, but I was always kept back. I tried on several occasions to get out with the crowd, but I was taken out on each occasion and sent back to the room. Finally, I was charged, tried by Field-General Courtmartial along with Sean McDermott, Harry Boland and Gerald Crofts. I was charged personally with numerous things that I had no contact with, one of which was blowing up the Magazine in the Park, but mainly with causing serious losses to the British Forces in the vicinity of the rere of our buildings towards Marlborough St. and around that area. After the courtmartial the four of us were sitting at the Green in front of one of the main buildings when Eoin MacNeill arrived in a cab, a prisoner. He tried to shake hands with Sean McDermott, but Sean turned his back and walked away. Now, all those who knew Sean McDermott at that period, knew that he walked with difficulty with the aid of a stick, owing to an old leg injury, and one of the first acts of his escort when we were ordered to fall-in for our march to Kilmainham, was to take away that stick, and immediately Harry Boland came to his rescue and put his arm around him, Gerald Crofts doing likewise for myself, as my right leg by this time had got very stiff and sore from congealed blood. We were

marched down along the road to Kilmainham Gaol, and with every yard there were indications of the changed attitude of the people. The open trams passing by always brought a cheer from somebody, even though rifles were pointed at the offender on every occasion. Old men stood at the street corners and saluted, despite being pushed around. Finally, reaching Kilmainham, Sean McDermott turned round to the three of us, shook hands and said: "I'll be shot, and it will be a bad day for Ireland that I'm not. You fellows will get an opportunity, even if in years to come, to follow on where we left off". Well, poor Sean was shot, as he felt he would, and we, after being transferred to Mountjoy, and spending a week there, were sent off to Dartmoor Prison, to do ten years' penal servitude each. When in Mountjoy, however, we were all marching around the circle one day when our friend "Wait and See" Asquith arrived and walked into the ring and attempted to shake hands with de Valera, but de Valera walked on; he then tried several others, but met with the same response, finding himself so ignored he left the ring hurriedly. After four or five days in Mountjoy we were brought down in Black Marias to the North Wall, bound for an unknown destination. In the party were de Valera, Tom Ashe, Dr. Dick Hayes, Frank and Jim Lawless of Swords, Jack McArdle (Liberty Hall), Con Donovan, Gerald Crofts, Harry Boland, Professor Peadar Slattery (St. Enda's) and myself. I remember well when the boat was sailing down the Liffey Gerald Crofts singing: "Oh, the last glimpse of Erin". On our way to Dartmoor Prison on the following day, escorted by the Notts and Derbys, our train was diverted into a siding at Bristol Station. Despite the fact that a very heavy armed guard surrounded us, a determined attempt was made by the mob to get at us. They fired stones, bricks, bottles and everything else, but eventually the British military fixed bayonets and cleared the platform. We arrived at Princetown Station and were marched from there to Dartmoor Prison; all our party were in Volunteer uniforms.

We arrived very tired, and, while waiting in between the two gates for general admission to the prison, the warder there turned around to some of our party and said: "You blokes must feel very tired after that long train journey from Ireland". One of the party asked where did he think Ireland was and he said it was a county in the north of Scotland.

We were then marched into the Reception Room in the prison; the Governor, Doctor, Chief Warder and Warders were all assembled there. We were ordered to strip off all our clothes and the Warder started to call out identification marks on each prisoner's body. There were twelve in our party that night and, as far as I can remember, at least six of the twelve were wounded. As I mentioned in an earlier paragraph, no attention, good, bad or indifferent, had been given to the wounded after the surrender, resulting in the bandages in every case being firmly adhered to the wounds. The doctor at Dartmoor was not particularly perturbed at this and ordered the warders to remove all bandages. This was done in such a rough manner that in all cases when they pulled away the bandage the scab of the wound came with it. After our examination by the doctor, we were issued with old clothing which had been worn by previous convicts. Our wounds were not dressed again, nor did we even get back the old bandages. Needless to remark, we passed a very pleasant night!

When we awoke next morning we were brought down for further examination. In Professor Peadar Slattery's and my own cases, my two wounds had gone septic, and two of his eleven wounds had also gone septic. These wounds remained bad for a considerable period, but finally cleared up.

We were all finger-printed, photographed and numbered on our first day in Dartmoor. The method employed in all these convict prisons was to allocate a letter of the alphabet to each year. The letter for our particular year was the letter

"Q", and my number was Q.96. This number was stamped on every article of wearing apparel - it was stamped on our boots, shirts and on the left sleeve of the khaki uniform there was a black shield with this number in white. Similarly, there was a black shield on the front of the khaki forage cap which each prisoner wore, the number also in white. Thereafter we were known only by our numbers.

We were divided up into various fatigue parties. Harry Boland and Con Donovan, I remember, were on fatigue parties serving out what was called breakfast on my particular landing. New batches of prisoners were arriving every day and finally our number reached about eighty. The two last arrivals were Austin Stack and Con Collins. On the morning after their arrival, when we were lined up in the main hall, Eamon de Valer brought the whole party to attention when Stack and Con Collins arrived. He was immediately rushed off to his cell and got two days' bread and water and confinement to cell the following day. The rules in these prisons were very strict, talking being strictly forbidden, and, during exercise in the prison yard, two paces had to be kept between each prisoner when walking around the ring. It wasn't long until we acquired the art of being able to talk to each other without moving our lips, but, invariably, somebody was caught, or somebody was blamed and got either one or two days on bread and water. If the prisoner denied the charge against him, it was described as insubordination and he got a further day on bread and water.

The main body of our party were detailed to the bag-making shop, great care being taken by the authorities to ensure that we had no contact with the other prisoners. George Levans, Dick King of Wexford, and I were detailed on to a painting party in the Main Hall. Both Levans and I, being painters by trade, were entrusted with the mixing of the paint and we conveniently forgot to put in any driers, resulting in the

prison being beautifully painted, but the paint never dried. The warders' uniforms, and even the Governor's, were destroyed with paint from time to time, and after a bit we were removed from this occupation and sent to the bag shop.

Every prisoner in that shop had a particular job to do and had to get his supply of twine, needles, canvas, etc. from the central store. One of our party, Seamus de Lacey, was in charge of this store and, as a result, we were able to keep up communications between each other as to possible developments or as to any line of action to be followed. Eamon de Valera and Tom Ashe were continually making representations to the Governor, demanding that we be treated as prisoners of war, and, as a result, one particular morning these two men, with Dr. Dick Hayes, were removed from the prison and sent to Parkhurst. Finding that these three had been removed from the main body, all sorts of inquiries were instituted by the prisoners, resulting in our finding out from one of the warders that they had been removed to Parkhurst as, in his words: "the Governor was afraid that they would organise a revolt in the prison". A vote was taken, through the medium of de Lacey in the stores, as to what action we would take and, as a result it was decided to organise a passive resistance strike, working away at the mail bags until they were about half completed and then ripping them back and starting all over again. In this way we successfully stopped the manufacture of any mail bags for use by the British authorities and at the same time had the authorities in a cleft stick, because our men were all working but producing nothing.

The food was particularly bad in Dartmoor and the weather extremely cold. The water was so full of iron that in the morning when we picked up our mugs there was a thick crust of rust on the top of the water, and I blame this in no small measure for the fact that a large proportion of the men in that

prison left with very bad teeth.' I remember on one occasion both Harry Boland and I arrived down at the doctor's office with badly swollen jaws as a result of bad neuralgia, or toothache. The method of curing it was both drastic and dramatic. We were gripped by two warders, pushed into a chair and, the doctor with his forceps proceeded to extract two of our back teeth without any cocaine or gas, nearly pulled the heads off the two of us, and for about ten days afterwards we were unable to talk and, I believe myself, were very nearly lockjawed. We were all hopping up and down, from solitary confinement and bread and water, back to the bag shop. Every day there was some prisoner or other on punishment, because by this time a spirit of real revolt had set in and, in actual fact, the prisoners were ready for anything.

The daily routine at Dartmoor Prison was one aimed at training us for future domestic life. The British Government evidently had at the back of their minds that we all should be trained to be useful in the home. Therefore, we were called every morning at 4.30 a.m. The first job we had to do was to clean up our cells, polish all the tinware, fold all our blankets and sheets and roll them, and have everything ready for inspection by 5 a.m. At about 5.30 a.m. we were served with what was known as breakfast - a pint of skilly and a dark, nearly black, loaf, but you could get all the water you wanted to drink. After breakfast, all the cells were inspected by the Chief Warder and Warders and, at about 7 a.m., all doors were thrown open. The first order issued was "Stand to your doors"; every man had to stand to his door. Then the order was given: "Two paces forward, Right and Left Turn, Quick March", and off we went for our daily routine. Each man had to take it in turn to act on the fatigue parties and, of course this was something which we all looked forward to, because it gave us a chance of having a sly word with some of our pals in

another wing. At 4.30 p.m. we were back to our cells and we were all served with a magnificent tea - a pint of shell cocoa and another black loaf. Everyone had to be in bed by 8 p.m. when "Lights Out" was sounded. The only occupation we had when we were locked up was reading the bible or walking up and down the cell, but this had to cease at 8 o'clock. All the time, whether you were reading or walking up and down, every now and again we could hear the little slide going back, and an eye looked in at you through a keyhole in the door. Saturday afternoons was our half day. We were served out qith leather knee straps and we had to get down and scrub out the main landing and the ground floor. This was a nice "cushy" job, as the ground floor was made of granite.

One day early in December, the Governor came in to the ~~back~~ bag shop and announced that the British Government had decided to remove us all to Lewes Gaol, outside London, and that all the other prisoners from Portland and Parkhurst would be similarly removed there. He told us thet the British Government, in the goodness of their hearts, had decided to send us up to Lewes in civilian clothes, if we would be prepared to give our parole. As soon as he finished he was asked what would the position be when we arrived at Lewes. We were informed that we would go back again into convict uniform, but that our conditions would be slightly improved. He then informed us that he would give us half an hour to make up our minds in the matter, and we demanded that during our discussions all Warders must be withdrawn from the bag shop. This request was acceded to. After a long deliberation taking into account the fact that we felt that this might be a trick of the British to have their Press photographers outside showing how well they treated their prisoners, we decided to reject the offer of parole. Having communicated our decision to the Governor, that we were not prepared to give our parole, he informed us that we would be sent to

Lewes Gaol handcuffed and six on a chain. As I mentioned earlier, the weather was terribly cold, and it had been snowing now for the best part of a week or ten days; fatigue parties w of convicts were out cutting passages through the snow. On the morning that we were transferred there were two chains of six each. On my chain was Bob Brennan, Dick King of Wexford, Pat Fitzpatrick (Bob Etchingham), Jack McArdle, George Levins and myself.

We left Dartmoor at 6 a.m. for Princetown, changing at Tavistock Junction for London. While on the platform at Tavistock Junction, Bob Brennan was lilting and Dick King started to step-dance, to the amazement of the passengers on the platform. A few of the younger element seemed to resent our little bit of jollification and attempted to assault some members of our party, but this was very speedily dealt with by two British soldiers in uniform, who drew their belts - one soldier remarking that at least we fought for our country, not like the 'skunks' that were attacking us, and who had by various means evaded conscription or national service. We were left handcuffed and chained together all day long and did not arrive at Lewes until about 11 o'clock that night. Of course, the British mentality on this matter was only what we had expected; to be herded together all day long like cattle was only what they had been used to dishing out to Irishmen over the generations. When we arrived at Lewes Station we lined up on the steps outside the station and sang every Irish song that we could remember, finishing up with the "Soldier's Song". We then marched down, got into Black Marias and off to Lewes Gaol.

A number of us volunteered for a job in Lewes Gaol, scrubbing out the main hall, because the Chaplain had intimated to some of us that, whilst he got the "Independent" posted to him regularly every week, he never opened it, and

and we realised that here was an opportunity of being able to get hold of some of these papers by volunteering for this particular work. The job was not alone to scrub out the corridor, but to dust the Chaplain's and Chief Warder's Offices. In Lewes we had all been served out with a big brown pullover or gansey, which turned out to be very useful to us on this particular operation. We were under the control of a Warder, and a certain amount of subterfuge had to take place to enable us to secure the trophy - the "Independent". In the middle of this passage was another passage to the right, leading down a flight of stone steps, at the bottom of which was a tap, and on every occasion we got to this passage either Harry Boland, Dick King, George Levins or myself found that we had to get a bucket of clean water. The Warder, of course, escorted us down to the end of the steps, and the nearest man to the Chaplain's office dashed in and seized whatever copies of the "Independent" he could lay his hands on, putting them inside his pullover or gansey. This procedure went on for weeks and weeks without any of us being caught. Quite a large number of these papers were around the prison. In this way we discovered that Joe McGuinness who was with us, had been elected as T.D. for Longford, because, although the information had been wired to the prison, the authorities had not notified Joe of his election. We secured the paper on that morning and, after the evening recess, the word had gone around to keep it quiet, and immediately we were let out on to the grounds for the evening exercise, at which we were allowed to talk, Joe was seized and carried shoulder high around the grounds, to the amazement of Warders and Governor. We retired to one end of the grounds which was near the garden and held a sing-song there for hours, Gerald Crofts rendering quite a number of songs on that occasion, Harry Boland and myself also contributing.

Another job which we had, in between, was again painting. On this occasion we put driers in the paint and adopted new

tactics. Our job was to paint the woodwork in the Chief Warder's house, which was just outside the main gate of the prison. As a matter of fact one of the windows, which was barred, of course, looked straight out on to the side of the gate. It was left to ourselves to choose our colour scheme and we painted the doors green, white and orange. They looked quite well, but I don't think either the Chief Warder or any of the Warders ever suspected what we were doing. During that particular job, Dr. Russell, M.O. for Dublin, arrived on a visit to the prison in connection with the health of Gerald Crofts, which had deteriorated very badly. We were working away at one of the windows which was open and Doctor Russell managed to pass us, unnoticed, one of the posters in connection with the Longford election. It was the famous poster of Joe in convict uniform, with the words "Put him in to get him out". During the parade I referred to earlier, on the night of his election, we had that poster. However, our painting job ended rather abruptly when we were put on the painting of the windows of the outside of the prison. One day two German officers (prisoners) with an escort were being marched down the road and we started singing "The Watch on the Rhine" from the top of the ladders, The Germans immediately came to attention and saluted and then started shouting "Good old Ireland". We were nearly pulled down off the ladders and rushed back into the prison, but we were never let out any more. In the meantime, one of our lads who had been a bit careless, with the papers, reading the "Independent" too openly on one occasion, got caught and, of course, we were suspected, but they couldn't do anything about it, only take us off the job, but our lines of communication were cut.

The only change in our conditions in Lewes from those operating in Dartmoor was, that during the exercise period, the prisoners were allowed to talk, but it wasn't long until

we drove a "coach and four" through all their rules and regulations, resulting in a general breakdown in control at Lewes. A Council of War was formed and Eamon de Valera was appointed leader. A demand was made for treatment as prisoners of war, but, under the guise of "negotiations", they succeeded in getting us back into our cells, and refused to unlock our doors on Sunday morning to let us out to Mass. The singing of "God Save Ireland" by Bob Brennan on Sunday was the signal for the general smash-up of the prison. I have never seen a job so thoroughly carried out. The prison was literally pulled to pieces, brick by brick, holes were bored in the walls and in the floors, and a regular line of communication existed from one end of the corridors to the other. This went on for a number of days, during which we were being fed through a square hole which carried the lighting for the cell. Subsequently, bringing in reinforcements of Warders, firemen and policemen, they smashed down the doors and hosed us out of the cells. There was no question of surrendering or parleying, you were just knocked down by a baton or a fire brigade hose, and we mostly woke up lying on the floor, handcuffed to somebody else. We were re-arranged again in gangs of six, handcuffed together and chained. On this occasion we were sent to Portland Prison. We formed a pact amongst ourselves that we wouldn't obey any instructions, good, bad or indifferent, on our arrival at Portland, and, despite entreaties and threats from the Governor and Warders, we persisted in this attitude.

Of all the prisons we had been in up to this stage, Portland was certainly the worst. The Governor seemed to have a cruel, cynical outlook in his dealings with convicts, whether they happened to be ordinary convicts or mere Irishmen, as we were, but he certainly hated us. However, as far as we were concerned, the fight was on and we meant to see it out to its conclusion.

The morning after our arrival we were all paraded in the exercise yard. There was one man always took my fancy amongst our bunch, and that was a fellow we described as "Long Quinn". I think his Christian name was John, and he was a linotype operator in the "Dundalk Examiner". Quinn expressed himself so forcibly on occasions that even the Warders were startled, but he was a great old character, and was a full hundred per cent behind us in everything we did. On this particular morning we carried out, or appeared to carry out, the prison regulations, and were marching around the ring with the usual three paces between each prisoner in a very orderly fashion, when suddenly somebody let a war whoop and, by arrangement, we started running in all directions, some into this yard, some into another yard, and all around the prison. The alarm was sounded and machine guns and rifle men manned the walls, thinking that these desperadoes were going to try and climb them, but we were only trying to create a bit of a diversion. Having achieved our object, we quietly walked back to the yard and continued marching around. You never saw such a collection of Warders mopping their brows as appeared that day. We were all marched back to our cells and on the following morning paraded before the Governor. The Governor started off with the usual lecture on discipline, saying that if we wanted to have an easy time in this prison, we had better conform to all the rules and regulations, etc. etc. We, however, had no intention of stopping there any longer than was necessary, and had made up our minds already that we were not going to conform to his rules and regulations. The usual questions were put to us: "Your number? Your name? etc." all of which we refused to answer. Now a very interesting point arises here. According to prison regulations, i.e., British prison regulations, a prisoner may not be kept in the dark cells on bread and water for more than three days at a time, even if a sentence is 21 days on bread and water. Under the control of

the prison M.O. he is brought up from the dark cells at the end of the third day, and at least two days elapse before he serves his next three days. Of course, these were Irish prisoners that were being dealt with. We were sentenced to ten days' confinement to the dark cells, on bread and water, and we never got out of them until we were released on the general amnesty in 1917. The only occasion on which we were ever let out of the cells was to perform the usual functions of nature, and once a week to have our hair forcibly cut, with two Warders holding us down in the chair. All this time we were on bread and water diet. There was no light in the cells. We had no handkerchiefs (for fear we might try to hang ourselves), no braces, and an ordinary wooden board to lie on. Of course, this was only what it should be; these were only the ordinary peasantry who had dared to rise against the British authority in Ireland, and, therefore, we accepted the position as such. We accepted that position because we knew what our forbears had gone through in the same prisons before us. We knew that even though we appeared to be going through a certain amount of hardship, it was nothing to the hardship that the men of '98, '67, and so on, had suffered, because they had no moral support behind them in Ireland and we knew we had.

The days dragged on and we lost all idea of time. Once a week the Governor came around.

I will describe the cell doors, which I forgot to do earlier on. Inside each cell door was an iron grid, so that when the cell door proper was open, the prisoner was still in his monkey cage, and the Governor and the Chief Warder could with safety come around and interview him through the iron bars. Most of us completely ignored the Governor during that period, but one or two of our fellows went off the deep end and, on one or two occasions, some of the lads imitated baboons by climbing up the iron cage outside, to the embarrassment of the Governor.

However, all this went on and one morning (one very welcome morning for us all), the door opened and in came Father Maher the prison Chaplain, a very old and timid man; he had been there when Michael Davitt was in that gaol. He had the morning paper and a torch in his hand. Needless to remark, we couldn't even look at the paper because we were nearly blind at the time, and he read out to us the paragraph in the paper which stated that the Irish prisoners were to be released on unconditional amnesty - an unconditional release. You can imagine our feelings on that occasion, when we realised that we had won another rouhd against the British and, despite the fact that they had us in their power, that the ponderance of world opinion, of Irish world opinion, had been so influential that they were forced to release us; but they weren't finished with us yet. About one hour after that announcement had been made by the Prison Chaplain, we were dragged out of our cells and our hair forcibly cut again. This is the real British mentality - get in the last blow when you can, even despite the fact that you have been defeated in your efforts to hold the particular individuals, nevertheless do everything you can to make things unpleasant for them; and they certainly did it on that morning.

Then the next episode. All the cell doors were opened, but the cages were still there. The valiant Governor paraded around announcing the unconditional amnesty, but he was still afraid to open those cages. He made an appeal to each and every one of us that on leaving the prison we would create no demonstration, that we would sing no songs or do anything to interfere with the ordinary discipline of the prison. I can tell you that he got a warm response, and very hurriedly he cleared out of the place.

Then came Warders with trays of sandwiches, coffee, tea and everything else. Prisoners who had been there on bread

and water in dark cells for at least fourteen days had no relish for any of these things, so, except for a drink of tea and probably putting a few of these sandwiches in our pockets, we ~~ate~~ AtE very little; in any event, we were too excited.

I should have said that the Governor, when speaking to us, announcing the conditions, told us that he regretted to say that it was impossible to provide us with civilian clothes at Portland and, as a consequence, we would all be sent to Pentonville Prison in London for civilian clothes, and that all the other prisoners from the various gaols to which they had been sent would also assemble there - that we would all be released together, but that we were in actual fact free, and that warders in civilian clothes, purely to pilot us through, would accompany us to London. This was certainly a farcical situation, but one which we nevertheless enjoyed, as you will hear. We were marched up into the prison yard and, as soon as we assembled in the prison yard, we all fell-in two deep and proceeded to sing every song we knew, finishing with the National Anthem. Afraid of a demonstration of this kind, the Governor had locked up all the convicts in their various cells and every song was greeted from the windows by the rattling of mugs on the windows and yells from the convicts of "Good old Ireland - that's the stuff to give them", etc. I tell you that from what I heard afterwards about Portland, the discipline in that prison was very bad from the authorities' point of view for a long time afterwards.

It was about a mile and a half from the prison down to the station and, as we were trudging down along the road in our convicts' uniforms, a convoy of Australian troops passed by and immediately pulled up. The troops insisted on our getting up on the lorry and, with terrific cheering, singing, etc., they drove us to the station. These troops, of course, were fully aware of who we were and that we were released prisoners who

had fought in the Insurrection in Dublin in 1916. What a different train journey from that which we experienced on the previous Christmas week on our way from Dartmoor to Lewes. On this occasion we were still in convict uniform, but we were as near as possible to being free men, because the warders in civilian clothes were afraid to interfere with us, and every place the train stopped we got out on the platform and rambled up and down, arm in arm, winking at girls, etc., all for a bit of devilment. The "mad Irish" were certainly loose in England on that occasion. We arrived at the outskirts of Paddington Station late that afternoon and the train was suddenly pulled up because we had run into the first aerial torpedo air raid on London and, of course, we were all looking out of the windows, but we could just as easily have been demolished by one of these aerial torpedoes as anyone else, but nevertheless we had that feeling that here we were prisoners of our old enemy, watching her headquarters being attacked by her enemy. Explosion after explosion took place all around, but nothing, however, within a quarter of a mile of us, and after about an hour of this, the "all-clear" sirens went and our train started to crawl in towards Paddington Station. It only got to within a hundred yards of the station when we were all ordered out of the train and marched up along the line and into the station platform. It was only then that we realised that two aerial torpedoes had struck the station and demolished quite a large portion of it. We proceeded along the platform where there was a large crowd of people who identified us as the Irish rebels. They started to attack us with stones from the debris. Our fellows replied in no mean measure. Eventually a police reinforcement arrived and the crowd was driven back. Two of our men were wounded around the head, but not very seriously. We were brought to Pentonville Prison, and I will never forget that night as long as I live. We were put into a ward that hadn't

been used for some time, the weather was particularly warm, and a very violent thunder storm raged all that night, but the thunder storm was nothing to the attack of battalions of fleas. We were literally eaten alive that night and the only solace we had was that part of the convict uniforms we were wearing must have gone as well. On the following morning we all went down to the baths, discarded our convict apparel and had a good wash. We were then issued with "Martin Henry's". Everybody was in great humour that day. We were all put on buses and driven off to Euston Station, but here again the British were afraid that repercussions might occur at Euston if the ordinary Irish population in London were let give us the rousing send-off which they would have given us had they the opportunity; so we were sent off on a train two hours before the Irish Mail. Our supporters turned up there, I understand, afterwards, to find that we had gone two hours before.

We arrived at Holyhead where we were all paraded by Eamon de Valera on Holyhead platform opposite the Mail Boat. Jim O'Sullivan, ex-First Battalion, now Limerick, acted as adjutant and brought the parade to attention on that day. We formed fours, about turned, formed two deep and eventually were marched up to the 1st Class gangway. The ticket-checkers there refused us admission, as the British had issued us with 3rd Class only tickets. However, feeling in a first class mood, Eamon de Valera decided that we should all travel 1st Class, and we just brushed the ticket checkers aside, marched up the 1st Class gangway and down into the saloon. About an hour afterwards, the Captain came down and appealed to us to leave the 1st Class, that we couldn't stay there as we were only 3rd Class passengers, but this we refused to do. In the meantime, the ordinary passengers arrived on the boat and we were getting plenty of moral support from them. The Captain then, concluding that discretion was the better part of valour

decided to leave us there. Having won our point, when the boat sailed most of us spent our journey up on the bow of the boat, with a crowd of British Tommies who were coming back to Ireland. I remember Harry Boland and myself being up there trying to teach these soldiers the air of "The Soldier's Song". Before we came to Dunlaoghaire quite a number of them were able to sing it. Standing on the bow of the boat, I remember well Harry Boland on the lookout for the first sign of land, singing that old song "The Dawn on the Hills of Ireland".

We little knew what was in front of us when we arrived in Dublin. We didn't know anything about the incidents of the previous fortnight. We didn't know about the banning of the carrying of hurleys, but there was a terrifically enthusiastic crowd on the pier at Dunlaoghaire on that day. We were escorted to our carriages on the train and when we arrived at Westland Row our real trouble started.

In their enthusiasm the crowd nearly tore us asunder that day. Every man was trying to carry some part of some other man out to the coaches outside, but the result was that some of us found ourselves halfway up and halfway down most of the way out. You can't beat a Dublin crowd on an occasion like this. They certainly made us all at home and conveyed to us the opinions of Dublin on the Insurrection of '16. As I have said, we were carried out on to the open brakes outside Westland Row and escorted through the city by a huge crowd of people up to Fleming's Hotel in Gardiner Place. Here a royal feast awaited us. When that was finished, of course, we all broke up into our various little groups to contact our friends, relatives, etc. We were back in Dublin with a determination. The surrender of 1916 was only a breathing space between that and the commencement of the war proper for the freedom of the country.

On the afternoon of the day of our arrival, we all met in Exchequer Hall, Exchequer St., where the famous document for presentation to the American Government was prepared. It was written on a sheet of Irish linen and signed by all the returned prisoners present, headed by Eamon de Valera, Tom Ashe, Austin Stack, Con Collins and numerous others, myself included. It was then handed to Doctor Pat McCartan who brought it to America and handed it to the American Secretary for State. Years afterwards it was handed by that gentleman to the late John Devoy and the original is at present in the possession of Mr. Frank Robbins, Liberty Hall. I have a photostatic copy of the document at my own office in Dawson St. We went to the Mansion House afterwards and got our photograph taken in the grounds. This photograph was taken by Keogh Bros., Dorset St., and is still available there

The prisoners all split up into various groups, as I have stated before, a very large percentage of them, however, going to Clare to assist in fighting the East Clare election which was being contested by Mr. Eamon de Valera against Mr. Paddy Lynch. Before going to Clare, however, I went to West Limerick with Doctor Dick Hayes and Con Collins and stopped in Con Collins's house, out near Rathkeale, for a few days, and took part in the big demonstration in Limerick to welcome home the prisoners. After the victory of East Clare, I returned to Dublin and was instructed to report for duty to Michael Collins, who was then in charge of the Prisoners' National Aid Association, and who had also taken on the job of organisation of the Volunteers.

In every area things began to get very busy - companies, battalions and even brigades being re-organised - and our men were being arrested all over the country. A large number of prisoners were in Mountjoy Gaol, and, following the refusal of the authorities to grant them political treatment,

they went on hunger strike. After a couple of weeks on hunger strike, the authorities decided to forcibly feed them and it was during this operation that Tom Ashe died. As I pointed out earlier on, owing to confusion created in the minds of the authorities as to who I was, I escaped being arrested. Having come out of Dartmoor Prison as Frank Drennan and now re-appearing as Frank Thornton, I was allowed to move freely throughout the country, and was able to carry out a lot of very valuable work. I was operating in Meath and took part in a Sinn Fein Concert at Kells, where, after singing one song, I received a wire stating that Tom Ashe had died on hunger strike. I immediately went out on the stage, announced the news and suspended the concert as a mark of respect, having said a few very well chosen words which were not to the liking of the authorities, who tried to arrest me and a few others who were present. I escaped, however, and got back to Dublin and took part in the Ashe funeral.

Following the Tom Ashe funeral, I received definite instructions to go to Louth and organise parades in every available part of the county and to start wearing uniform again. On the Sunday following the funeral, I paraded about three hundred men on The Mall at Drogheda. We marched out to Oldbridge to the point where the Battle of the Boyne was fought in 1690 and extended the men from one end of King William's Glen to the other. The police had followed us on bicycles, motor bicycles and sidecars. They were at both ends of the Glen, so I decided to climb the hill on my right and appear to go cross-country back towards Drogheda. They immediately divided their forces, one half going to Tullyallen and the other to Drogheda, and when my scouts reported the position all clear, I brought the men back down into the road again and crossed up the hill on the other side, and went off to Oldbridge. We crossed the river at the ford there, the same

ford that King William used during the Battle of the Boyne. We came back through Co. Meath and into Drogheda, dismissed the men and were standing in the doorway of the White Horse Hotel an hour later, when the cavalcade of R.I.C. came back into the town, having completely lost us. However, I was arrested in Drogheda about a fortnight afterwards, brought to Belfast and sentenced to six months' hard labour for wearing uniform and drilling. During my trial in Victoria Barracks, Belfast, the Prosecuting Officer stated that this was my first conviction. They still had not connected me with the Frank Drennan who had been released from Portland Prison. After the sentence I was sent to Crumlin Road Prison, Belfast, the only other prisoner there being Sam Heron. Sam and I went on hunger-strike immediately, and after about ten days I was taken out one day and brought to Dundalk. Sam was left behind. It was only afterwards I learned that the Mountjoy prisoners, who had been transferred to Dundalk some ten days before, had been released that morning on hunger-strike, and actually boarded the same train for Dublin on which I came from Belfast. However, I was kept on the train until they were safely aboard and brought out by a back entrance. When I arrived at Dundalk Gaol I found that I was the only prisoner there, political or otherwise, and in the "Independent" of the following morning I saw a double caption "LEFT ALONE TO DIE IN DUNDALK GAOL". I was alone in the gaol for about another nine or ten days when a contingent of prisoners arrived from Kerry, amongst whom was Paddy Cahil the Foleys, Dinny Daly of Cahirciveen, and several others whom I knew. Every effort that could be made to get us to go off the strike was carried out by the authorities. In the mornings the Warders went around the cells with trays of rashers and eggs, but after about four or five mornings of this they gave up the attempt to break the strike.

A week after the arrival of the Kerry prisoners a consultation was held and it was decided that I was looking too healthy and that I would have to collapse on the ground. This arrangement was carried out the next morning and I was carried into my cell by the rest of the prisoners and the doctor hurriedly sent for. Before the doctor arrived I swallowed about six pills of soap ~~and~~ as we had been informed that this had the effect of quickening up the pulse and of rising the temperature. At the same time I smoked as much as I could. The doctor arrived but decided that I wasn't bad enough to be released. This procedure was kept up for the next couple of days and, finally, one night the Governor arrived in my cell and asked me if there was anybody outside in Dundalk who would come up to the gaol so that I could be handed over in his care. I told him that Seamus McGuill of The Market Square would be only too glad to oblige and, about an hour afterwards, I was handed over to Seamus McGuill. I was supposed to be in a very weak condition (?)*, so weak that I walked down from the gaol to the Imperial Hotel where the local O/C. had a doctor awaiting my arrival. After examination by the doctor I was allowed tea and dry toast. This was repeated again the next morning with the exception of a bowl of soup at midday; this was all I was allowed for a couple of days.

The Governor of the Gaol at Dundalk was named McHugh. He wasn't a bad sort of a fellow but, of course, he was the Governor and had to carry out his job. My release had been granted under the "Cat and Mouse Act". This was an act which allowed the authorities to release a prisoner temporarily, if in bad health through hunger strike or otherwise, but also allowed them to re-arrest that prisoner immediately, at their discretion, or should he again break the law. When I was released I had a beautiful brown beard with ginger streaks in it, about three inches long, and not being of a modern turn of mind, I decided I had better get rid of this beard now that I had come back again into circulation. On the morning following my release,

(*. Supposed to be in a weak condition)

therefore, I went to a barber's shop across the road from the Imperial Hotel and when I arrived all the chairs were occupied. I was sitting reading the morning paper when a man got up out of one of the chairs and stood looking at me, amazed. It was the Governor of the Gaol, McHugh. "I thought you were dying" said McHugh, and I answered: "That was last night. I am much better this morning". I got my beard taken off and that night I left by the evening train for Dublin. I was seen off by nearly half the population of the town, headed by the local Brass Band.

I was back in Dundalk, however, inside a fortnight, and took charge of about 800 Volunteers who assembled on the Crescent, right opposite the Gaol at Dundalk. This body of Volunteers was the main Guard of Honour to meet Eamon de Valera on his visit to Dundalk. We paraded through the town in complete defiance of the "Cat and Mouse" Act and British authority.

I started to wear Volunteer Uniform and proceeded about my business organising the Volunteers in North Louth, South Down and South Armagh.

I think it is only right at this stage to refer to something which happened around Whit in 1917 and which resulted in the formation of the New Ireland Assurance Collecting Society. During an earlier period, before 1916, in preparation for things to come, Arthur Griffith had in his papers frequently urged that something should be done to stop the flow of insurance premiums out of this country as part of a campaign to deal with the economic situation. It always was the first plank of Sinn Fein that everything Irish should be supported and that every effort should be made to keep the monies of the country circulating around amongst the people and re-employ these funds to create further industry. He was always very keen on trying to solve the problem of how to retain that

£5,000,000 of insurance premiums which were being annually exported from the country. One of his biggest supporters in that direction was Mr. M.W. O'Reilly, who became the founder of an Insurance Society at a later stage. As can be seen from the following history of events, Michael Collins, Doctor Jim Ryan, Liam Tobin, Eamon de Valera, the late Dick Coleman, Michael Staines and myself became the prime movers in bringing this idea to fruition. The following extract from the history of the New Ireland Assurance Company is, therefore, relevant to this story:

"While the formation of an Irish concern to compete with the foreign companies and societies which had almost a monopoly of Irish assurance had long been advocated by Sinn Féin, and while tentative plans had often been discussed, all who have supplied information for the compilation of this narrative, are agreed that the moving spirit in the formation of NEW IRELAND was Mr. M.W. O'Reilly, the present Managing Director of the Company. When he was interned in Frongoch in 1916, after taking his share in the fighting of Easter Week, Mr. O'Reilly often discussed the project with groups of his fellow prisoners, including Michael Collins and Dr. Jim Ryan, (~~the present Minister for Agriculture,~~) both of whom afterwards gave great help in getting the scheme actually into operation. Towards the end of August, however, Mr. O'Reilly was transferred from Fromgoch to Reading Jail, where he remained till his release at Christmas 1916; and during that time nothing further was done in the matter. In January 1917, he was again in touch with Michael Collins, who was then showing his mettle as Secretary of the National Aid Association. Collins was so satisfied with Mr. O'Reilly's ideas that he was emphatic in encouraging him to translate them into action, and promised to render every assistance in his power.

"Mr. O'Reilly, like not a few who fought in the Rising, found when he came back to Dublin that the position he had occupied before Easter Week, was no longer available to him. His former employer, however, offered him an alternative post.

"As this would have taken him to Belfast, and thus would have interfered with his plans for the formation of a new Assurance Society, he declined it. In any case, he was anxious to get a more intimate knowledge of the insurance business of the Friendly Collecting Societies. Consequently, he approached Mr. T.P. Kelly, Dublin Secretary of the Royal Liver Friendly Society (~~new Senator Kelly~~) who put him in touch with the Enniscorthy District agent of the Royal Liver Society, whose interest Mr. O'Reilly promptly purchased. Before transferring with his family to Enniscorthy, Mr. O'Reilly again discussed his project with Michael Collins who showed a growing interest in it and renewed his promise of assistance, which he carried into effect shortly afterwards. Meantime, operating in the Enniscorthy District for the Royal Liver Society, Mr. O'Reilly renewed his acquaintance with Dr. Ryan, who was then in practice in Wexford town, and who showed that he had not lost the interest which he had evinced in Frongoch in the idea of creating an Irish organisation to deal with Irish insurance. Dr. Ryan constantly urged him to get ahead with his project.

"On the Saturday prior to the opening of Feis Charman, the Wexford County Feis, which was held in Enniscorthy at Whitsuntide 1917, occurred the meeting which may be said to have definitely decided the establishment of NEW IRELAND, Collins, true to his promise, had interested four of his friends in the scheme; and along with some other Volunteers, three of them, namely, Frank Thornton, Liam Tobin and

Michael Staines, travelled down to Enniscorthy for the Feis, which was then looked upon as one of the biggest Irish-Ireland events of the year. The fourth member of the group was Dick Coleman, who had been unable to travel. All these men had taken part in the Insurrection of 1916. Frank Thornton, Liam Tobin and Dick Coleman having been only just released from Dartmoor and Portland Prisons. The three who made the journey called at the shop of Mr. T.D. Sinnott, over which Mr. O'Reilly had a flat, and inquired for the latter. The necessary introductions having been effected, the visitors broached the business which they had come from Dublin to discuss; and Mr. O'Reilly experienced the delight of feeling that the project to which he had devoted so much time and thought was at last on the way to becoming a reality. Dr. Ryan joined the party shortly afterwards, and the five young men spent hours discussing the scheme in all its bearings - possibilities, difficulties, dangers, and ultimate purpose. The upshot of the talk was a definite decision to go ahead, all present pledging their assistance and undertaking to help in providing the necessary finance.

"From that moment the establishment of the NEW IRELAND was assured. The next big move, however, was not made until the end of the year, though a great deal of preparatory work and much useful propaganda had been done in the interval. The meeting at which the formal resolutions were passed directing the launching of the Society and providing for its future management, was held on 5th January 1918. The presence at this meeting of Mr. de Valera, who had a few months before been unanimously elected President of Sinn Fein, indicated the importance which the leaders of the Nation had begun to attach to wresting the insurance business of the country from the foreign firms which not merely drew Irish money away for expenses and profits, but also invested

outside the country all the great funds built up by the premiums of Irish policyholders. Mr. de Valera, who proposed Mr. O'Reilly for the chair, took an active part in the discussions which ensued.

"It is worth while reproducing the minutes of that historic meeting just as they were signed by Mr. Staines, who presided at the next meeting, held a fortnight later. Here they are:

Saturday, 5th January, 1918.

"The first meeting of those interested in the formation of a Collecting Society took place on this date, the 5th January, 1918. Those present thereat were: Michael J. Staines, Michael W. O'Reilly, Richard Coleman, Frank Thornton, William Tobin, Eamonn J. Duggan, Eamonn de Valera, George J. Nesbitt, John Murphy.

"It was proposed that M.W. O'Reilly should take the chair and, after a discussion resolved:

'That a Collecting Society to be called the New Ireland Assurance Collecting Society be formed'.

"The proposed rules of the Society be drawn up by M.W. O'Reilly and submitted for the members' approval at a future meeting.

"The following formed the first Committee of Management: Michael J. Staines, Dr. James Ryan, William Tobin, Richard Coleman, Michael W. O'Reilly, Frank Thornton and Daniel McAllister. Two Trustees were elected: George J. Nesbitt and Dr. James Ryan.

"The position of Treasurer to the Society was filled by Michael J. Staines, who was proposed by Michael W. O'Reilly and seconded by Richard Coleman and elected unanimously. For the position of Secretary, Michael W. O'Reilly was proposed by Michael J. Staines, seconded by William Tobin and elected unanimously.

"The next meeting was fixed for Saturday, the 19th January, 1918, at 8 o'clock.

(Signed) Michael J. Staines.
19th January 1918".

As I have stated, the New Ireland Assurance Collecting Society came into being on 5th January 1918. I was appointed Divisional Inspector for the Society for Louth, Monaghan, Cavan, Longford, Armagh, South Armagh and Down. Liam Tobin was appointed in charge of the Cork areas, and Dick Coleman for Dublin County. My reason for bringing in this matter at this stage is that while seriously undertaking this job of creating an organisation to get control of insurance in Ireland, at the same time we were using this organisation in its early stages as a cover for our general activities in organising the Volunteers. As Insurance Officials both Tobin, Coleman and I had an excellent cover for our activities in the various areas over which we were operating. In addition, every man appointed to any position of trust in the new Insurance Company was a Volunteer and, in this way, we paved the way to setting up a very important Intelligence Organisation and provided a very good cover for all our activities wherever we went.

At a later stage, when it was decided to launch the Dáil Éireann Loan, our men played a very important part all over the country in collecting funds, and our Head Office at 56 Bachelor's Walk was one of the main calling stations for people coming to Dublin to deposit Dáil Loan money. It was during this period that I first met the late Tom Cullen, who was Acting Quartermaster General, Tom's office at the time being at 52, Bachelor's Walk, which was being used as a Quartermaster's Distributing Station. At the New Ireland offices, officials had often to remain late at night dealing with matters arising out of the Dáil Loan. One of the most enthusiastic workers in

that connection was a Miss Maura O'Kelly. Not alone did she fit in dealing with the Dáil Loan, but also was always ready to receive parcels of arms ammunition and have them sent to their proper destination. The late Joe O'Reilly, who was personally attached to Michael Collins as an aide-de-camp, was a regular caller every day at the office. Mr. Daithy Ó Donnchadha called regularly at the office to collect the gold which had been deposited during the day for D'ail Éireann. He was escorted wither by myself or by Tom Cullen on all occasions. Mr. Daithi Ó Donnchadha was Michael Collins's chief Finance Officer.

Early in 1918, the famous South Armagh Election took place and Volunteers from Dublin, Clare, Louth, Dundalk, Down and Monaghan etc. all moved in to help in the general organisation of the elections. These elections were not merely political, they were national in their outlook, and every effort was made to get our men in. Doctor Pat McCartan was the candidate on this particular occasion and was defeated after a very tough election.

About this time three men were on hunger strike in Dundalk Gaol, Seamus O'Neill, Tipperary, Michael Brennan of Clare, and Sean Treacy of Tipperary. These three men were outstanding men in their own areas and it was felt, particularly by the Tipperary men, that every effort should be made to get them out of gaol as it was considered that their loss would be a very serious blow to their respective areas. I was approached on the matter and, having formulated a plan to rescue them, submitted it to G.H.Q. for approval. I was, however, instructed by G.H.Q. that under no circumstances was I to attempt to carry out the plan, as they felt that the situation was such that they could not afford to have men on the run all around the country, as plans which were being formulated for the continuation of the fight were

not yet completed. I conveyed this decision to the Tipperary men, who appeared to be very dissatisfied with it, but, as far as I was concerned, I could do nothing further in the matter. On the following Saturday night, however, I decided that at least we could do something to draw public attention to these hunger strikes, and, accordingly, I mobilised all the South Down, South Armagh and North Louth Volunteers, and we paraded through the town, completely encircling the gaol, to the consternation of the prison authorities, and then proceeded to march back down Ahne St. towards Clanbrassil Street. I received a dispatch, however, from one of the Volunteers to the effect that the military had turned out and were holding the end of Clanbrassil St. with one line of soldiers kneeling at the ready with fixed bayonets and the other standing behind them. On marching down the street, however, I spotted Peter Hughes, who was then Chairman of the Urban District Council, and I called him over and got him to fall in beside me, informing him that we were going to hold a protest meeting in the Square, and that I wanted him to preside. We kept on marching, and to be quite honest about the matter, I was in a terrible jam, because I didn't know what the military were going to do, and at the same time, I realised that there was only one thing for us to do and that was to keep on marching right into them, as any attempt to halt or to disperse the men would result in probably a bayonet charge or something even worse. As stated, we kept on marching, and as we got just up to the military, an order was given to open ranks and we were let march through. We marched into the Square and formed a hollow square on the outside part, allowing the crowd to come inside and secured a hackney car as a platform. District Inspector Norris did everything he possibly could to prevent us holding the meeting, even threatening us with baton charges, bayonet charges, etc., but we were adament in our determination to carry on and had taken a lot of precautions to protect ourselves and the crowd, if necessary, as we had in our ranks

sections of men armed with batons and about fifty men with revolvers. However, the protest meeting went off undisturbed and we held the square until about midnight that night when all the R.I.C. and military had cleared away.

The week after this incident I left Dundalk one afternoon in a Ford car driven by John McGuill. We went out the main Belfast Road and visited various units in South Down and into South Armagh, coming back a completely different road through Crossmaglen. It is rather remarkable that later that night, before we returned, an identically similar Ford car, driven by a commercial traveller named Murphy of Dublin, was coming in by the Belfast/Dublin road when the R.I.C. opened fire on it and killed Murphy. District Inspector Norris at the inquest completely lost his head and practically admitted that it was our car that he thought he was holding up.

A few weeks afterwards, this was now February 1918, I returned from Crossmaglen at about 3 o'clock in the morning, feeling very tired, but was rudely awakened at about 8 o'clock by Dan Breen. Dan had come up to Dundalk with a message for Sean Treacy, who was still on hunger strike in Dundalk Prison. His object in coming to me was to see if I could arrange to get him in to see Sean as a relative of his. Being an old resident of the gaol myself, and knowing the Governor, I decided that I would go up and try to arrange a visit. Dan decided to accompany me. We walked down Park St. and when we got to the Square, old John McGuill, who was sitting on a barrel outside his son's publichouse, called me over. Old McGuill was a fine type of man and wore a very long beard. He told me to tell that young man that was with us (Breen) to look out for himself, as the Station Detective Sergeant had been cycling up and down the town all morning, and that when he saw Dan Breen and I coming down Park Street, he immediately cycled back towards Ann St. Barracks. I warned Dan, and when

we arrived outside Ann St. Barracks, about twenty R.I.C. rushed out. Dan, thinking it was himself they were going to arrest, attempted to pull a gun, but they ignored Dan and, instead, they arrested me and frog-marched me into the barracks. I think Dan gave up the idea of a visit after this incident. Later on in the day I was walked up to the Station with a big escort of R.I.C., as no hackney man or motor driver in the town would drive me to the Station. The people were definitely hostile to the R.I.C. everywhere, and on the way to the Station, unfortunately for the R.I.C., we ran into hundred and hundreds of school-children coming out from the National schools. They all formed up around us singing, and marched to the Railway Station with us, to the embarrassment of the R.I.C.

When I arrived at Belfast Gaol, my old pal Sam Heron was there and one or two others whose names I can't remember at the moment. We all immediately went on hunger-strike, but on this occasion a notice was posted in each cell, warning prisoners that they were going on hunger strike at their own risk, and that no prisoner would be released, no matter how bad he was. However, we continued with the hunger strike, which went on for about twenty-three or twenty-four days. In the meantime, however, negotiations had taken place outside, between Austin Stack and the British authorities, on the question of political treatment for prisoners, and an agreement was arrived at. On receipt of instructions from Stack, we went off hunger strike. I was removed to Dundalk Gaol two days afterwards. There was quite an assembly of well-known people in Dundalk Gaol at that particular period; Terry McSwiney, Seán Treacy, Mick Brennan of Clare, Mick Colivet of Limerick, Frank and Leo Henderson, Dick McKee, Dublin, Paddy Sweeney of Dublin, Ben Hickey of Tipperary, Oscar Traynor of Dublin, Dinnie Lyons of Kanturk, John Brady of Midleton,

Tommy Foley from Kerry, Liam Malone of Westport, Tommy Ketterick of Westport, Charlie Gavin, Westport, Tom Hehir of Ennis, Joe Reid of Westport, Seamus O'Neill, Tipperary, Paddy O'Keeffe, Clare, T.P. Sullivan, Kerry, Jim Leddon of Limerick, Jim McInerney, Limerick, John O'Brien, Killaloe, Ernie Blythe, Diarmuid Lynch (Cork).

Very soon after my arrival at Dundalk Gaol, elections were held, and an O/C., Adjutant and General Staff to conduct the affairs of the prisoners were elected. Mick Brennan of Clare was elected O/C. I was Adjutant, Terry McSwiney, Dick McKee, Sean Treacy, Frank Henderson, Oscar Traynor and Diarmuid Lynch were elected as staff. Inter-wing rivalry was encouraged, and it wasn't long until the Handball Championship of the prison was being fought out against the gable end wall of one of the wings.

During the election for the various officers, election meetings were held by the supporters of the various nominees, and some very rousing scenes took place when attempts were made by one side or the other to break up some particular meeting. The weapons used, in a lot of instances, were potato stalks which were secured from the garden.

The serious end of events was dealt with by the holding of lectures on tactics, preparation for ambushes, and instructions to officers on the procedure to be adopted should conscription be passed by the British Government. The brains behind the scenes in all these lectures, arrangements and instructions was Dick McKee. Dick was a wonderful personality and, without any question, was accepted as an authority and one whose opinion could be acted on without hesitation. He elaborated a simple but a very complete scheme in every detail, for our escape from the prison in the event of conscription being passed. Every detail was gone into and arrangements were made with the local O/C. at Dundalk, to have lorries

ready on an arranged date, so that the prisoners could be brought to their various destinations. Every man in the prison received his instructions as to the Brigade he was to report to, in the event of his not being able to reach his own area. The first part of the plan was to secure revolvers from outside, if at all possible, and, after an examination of the whole situation, we found that this was possible owing to the system obtaining in the prison as regards visits. The visiting system in Dundalk Gaol was so lax that we were able to get all the revolvers we required into the gaol. Four visitors came in at a time to visit four prisoners and, with just a low partition between the prisoners and the visitors, it was quite easy to pass the revolvers across the top of the partition. The Warder usually stood at the door. Of course, on occasions like that, one or other of the prisoners engaged the Warder in conversation for some time, and distracted his attention while the necessary transfers were effected. After conscription was called off, these revolvers were again passed out of the prison in the same fashion. This was Dick McKee's great idea and, as I have already stated, it was he prepared the plan for the escape from the prison. The plan was a simple one. The Guardroom was right across the passage in the main hall from the visiting room. There was a flying sentry up and down the hall, and during the daytime there were no other guards posted. The arrangements were that, on the selected day the four visitors coming in would be armed, and the four prisoners going out to meet them would likewise be armed, and when the visit was over, the visitors going out would disarm the guard in the hall, and the prisoners would rush the Guard-room. Individual prisoners were detailed for various jobs, such as cutting the telephone wires, etc. As conscription was abandoned, the job was called off and, as I said before, the revolvers were again passed out.

About March 1918, Mr. Diarmuid Lynch received a

notification from the British authorities to the effect that he was being deported to America as an undesirable American citizen. He applied for permission to get married before he was deported, but this permission was refused. We had a long consultation on this matter and, as a result, arrangements were made with the local Volunteer O/C at Dundalk, Jim Toal, to arrange with one of the Curates in St. Patrick's Church that he should make the necessary arrangements to marry Diarmuid in Dundalk Gaol without the permission of the authorities. My sister, Nora Thornton, and Mrs. Terry McSwiney who were up and down to Dundalk on visits to us, were the couriers between Dublin and Dundalk, and made the necessary arrangements with the bride-to-be, Miss Kathleen M. Quinn. On the arranged date a party arrived, with the priest from Dundalk, to visit Mick Brennan, Dick McKee, Diarmuid Lynch and myself. The name of the priest was Rev. A. Ryan. An examination of the Marriage Register at St. Patrick's,Dundalk, gives the following information:

"THIS IS TO CERTIFY that it appears from the Register of Marriages in the Parish of Dundalk, that

DIARMUID LYNCH
and
KATHLEEN M. QUINN

were lawfully married in St. Patrick's Parish, Dundalk, according to the rite of the Catholic Church, on the 24th day of April, A.D. 1918, the WITNESSES being

MICHAEL BRENNAN
and
CARMELL QUINN.

Officiating Priest: REV. A. RYAN.

Marriage noted as contracted in a private place".

The foregoing Certificate of Marriage was issued on the 14th January 1951, and signed by Joseph MacEvoy, Adm.

The Priest, Father A. Ryan, Kathleen Quinn, and her sister, Carmel, were on one side of the partition, and the four of us were on the other. My job on that particular occasion was to make sure that the Warder did not interfere in the event of his noticing anything strange. However, the necessity for any action in that direction did not arise. The Priest simply put his arms around the two of them and appeared to be carrying on a very private conversation, and in the process, married them. Michael Brennan, Camp O/C., was best man and Carmel Quinn the bridesmaid. Later on that night, the Priest brought in the Register under his coat and took it around to the cells for the best man's signature. On the following morning Mick Brennan, O/C., and myself went down to see the Governor. We informed him that we had bad news for him, and his reply was that he couldn't see how we could have bad news for him, that he was the one who could have bad news for us. We told him that Diarmuid had been married the previous day, without his knowledge or permission. He jumped up from his chair shouting "Impossible", "Impossible", "Impossible". However, we advised him to go down to St. Patrick's and examine the Register, which he did, I understand. Two days afterwards, at about 7 o'clock in the evening, Diarmuid was taken out of his cell to be deported. We, however, had warned the Volunteers outside to keep a lookout on The Crescent, and await an agreed signal which would indicate to those outside that Diarmuid was being removed. They immediately notified all and sundry in the town, and the result was that when Diarmuid arrived at the Station, half the population of Dundalk was there to send him off.

In a recent publication by Bob Brennan in the daily press, about the time of Diarmuid Lynch's death, he referred to the fact that Diarmuid was married in Mountjoy Prison, and that on his arrival at Dublin he was met by Eamon de Valera and others. The fact is that, when the police escort brought

Diarmuid from Amiens St. Station and put him into the Black Maria, Mick Collins and Harry Boland were there and insisted on getting into the Black Maria with Diarmuid and his wife and went up as far as Arbour Hill with them. His wife had also met him at the station. The following week he was deported, and his wife, although she made several attempts to get away, only succeeded in reaching England, where she was held up and got very rough treatment, I understand. After the marriage in Dundalk, we made a collection from all the prisoners and Mrs. Terry McSwiney arranged to buy a silver salver and to have the names of all those in the prison inscribed on it. This was done and it was presented to Diarmuid subsequently; it is at present in the possession of his wife.

As I mentioned earlier, a certain amount of rivalry took place between the prisoners of the various wings, in sport, &c and our particular wing decided to issue a weekly journal. This journal was called "The Truth". On each side were the words "Rough" - "Tough" and, underneath that, "A Journal of uncommon sense". This journal, which was written by quite a number of us, was very voluble in its criticisms of the general appearance, actions, characteristics, etc. of each and every member of the prison, but it was good fun. The last copy of this Journal to be issued was taken out by Long John Quinn, a prisoner who was released early in 1918, and who was a lino-type operator in the "Dundalk Examiner". Quinn's first action on being released was to set up the last edition of this paper and he had about twenty copies of it printed. It was about the size of "The Spark", and a copy of the paper is at present in the 1916 section of the Museum.

It was about this period that a serious row took place in Belfast Gaol. Although we got the runblings of it in Dundalk, nothing occurred there to disturb the ordinary

routine, because the authorities made no attempt to break their agreement with us. The Belfast strike was of very serious proportions and one wing of the gaol was virtually wrecked, the prisoners being hosed on several occasions, but finally the authorities gave way and peace was again restored there. About the middle of June we were all shifted from Dundalk Prison to Belfast. Nothing of any great consequence occurred for the short period I was in Belfast, and I was released on the 15th August 1918.

I remember that morning well; it was a lovely Summer morning and I was looking forward to enjoying a couple of days with some friends at Belfast, but immediately I got outside the wicket gate of the prison I was touched on the shoulder by an R.I.C. Inspector who read out a Deportation Order signed by Mr. Shortt, the Chief Secretary. This order stated that I was guilty of some plot with the Germans and, as a consequence, I was to be deported from Ireland. I was brought to the Station in a Black Maria and sent on to Arbour Hill. After a few days in Arbour Hill, a sergeant, a corporal and twenty men of the Welsh Fusiliers escorted me from Arbour Hill to a London North Western Cargo Boat at the North Wall. We were put down between decks and had a very rough crossing, all my guard getting sick, and I was the only one who did not get sick. We were on our way to Reading Prison and I remember well it was a Saturday. After an uneventful journey on the Mail train we arrived at Euston Station in the small hours of Sunday morning and we immediately went by lorry to Paddington Station. On arrival at Paddington Station I was marched over to a huge Y.M.C.A. hut. It was fitted out as a Station restaurant for troops and was fully 30 yds. in length. I was put sitting at a table just inside the door on the left as I went in, and all the troops proceeded up to the counter for breakfast. I was only sitting there for less than half a minute, when a very tall lady, in a very haughty fashion,

ordered me out of the hut and told me that only soldiers were allowed in there. Naturally I obeyed and, on going outside, looking to my right, I saw an underground tube station. I remembered I was atill carrying money. I went as rapidly as I c could towards the tube station, but not too rapidly so as not to attract any attention, but, to my consternation, on arriving at the tube entrance I found it locked. It was only then it dawned on me that the tubes did not start running until 9 o'clod on a Sunday morning. My only other means of escape was to come back again past the hut and then on to the other end of the platform, but before I reached the hut, the sergeant and the corporal came running out looking for me, and I immediately kicked up a terrible row, complaining that I was thrown out of the hut by this lady, and of course they accepted my story and went in & kicked up hell. If I had only had the good fortune to have turned left instead of right I was gone, and knowing a bit about London, it would have been very difficult for anybody to have recaptured me.

After we had breakfast I was brought over to a Waiting Room, but no further chance presented itself of getting away. Finally we boarded the train for Reading and arrived there some time about 10 o'clock. There was no conveyance at the Station to bring us to the prison, and we started to walk. About half-way to the Prison the Sergeant suggested that it wouldn't be a bad idea if we all went into one of the local pubs and had a drink. With this I readily agreed, and we went into the Blue Lion. I couldn't tell you the name of the road it is on, but it is about halfway to the prison from the Station. As a matter of fact we had three drinks there. The Sergeant stood a drink, the Corporal stood a drink and I stood a drink, and, of course, all the time at the back of my mind was "some opportunity might present itself of getting away". However, that didn't happen, and we finally arrived at the Gaol. Most English prisons are built on a height overlooking some main

road or some road of importance, and there is a driveway up from the main road to the entrance gate on the height, and it was the same in Reading. We marched up this avenue to the main entrance and the Sergeant rang the bell. A little grid opened on the front gate, the Sergeant announced: "A prisoner from Ireland", the gateman inside simply shouted out: "We don't take prisoners here on a Sunday" and slammed the grid. This happened several times and, finally, the Sergeant turned to me and said: "What are we going to do?" I said: "I think we'd better go back to the pub", so we all about-turned and started to move off again towards the pub and had actually reached the entrance of the Drive up to the gaol when a car pulled up and a man got out who later turned out to be the Governor. He asked what all the trouble was about and, on being informed by the Sergeant that he had brought a prisoner from Ireland and had been refused admittance to the Gaol, the Governor instructed him to come back and he would fix up the whole matter. Well, what struck me as very funny was that, having succeeded in getting me into the Gaol, each and every one of that guard were expressing their regret to me for having succeeded in getting me into the Gaol and wished me the best of luck. Each and every one of them solemnly shook hands with me. However, I had arrived at Reading and found quite a number that I knew who had arrived there before me. Amongst them were the late Walter Cole, Frank Fahy, Frank McGuinness, Willie Cosgrave, Doctor Dick Hayes, Joe McDonagh, Ned McDonagh, Ned Fleming, Paddy Cahill of Tralee, Dinnie Daly of Cahirciveen, Jim Fleming of Cork, Larry Ginnell, M.P. I was only in the Gaol about a fortnight when it was decided to elect a Camp Commandant and I was picked for the particular job. I immediately started to alter the rules and regulations that were then operating. Now, we weren't prisoners in the ordinary sense of the word; we were simply people deported from Ireland and detained in Reading, and yet the authorities, for their

own convenience, had started to lock us up at 6 o'clock at night. We objected very strenuously to this, but got nowhere with the protest. Of course, this was only one of the things we objected to. Finally we sent in a list of our demands and, on their being refused, we all adjourned to the top landing in our wing, bringing all the food we had, clothes, bed boards, filled all the fire buckets with clean water, and then barricaded the staircase. Finally, the Governor gave in and our cells were left open day and night until we were finally released in 1919. Prisoners like ourselves were always looking around for some new row to start, and the next move was to demand civilian clothes. We were, in fact, wearing our own civilian clothes, but our contention was that as we were there on British Government business, in other words, being detained by them, there was no reason why we should wear out our own clothes, but, of course, this demand was turned down.

I should have stated earlier that in the next wing to us were German prisoners of war, not so much prisoners of war as Germans who had been arrested on their way home and had been picked up in England. They were a very decent crowd of fellows and at certain times we slipped in and had discussions with them and swapped eggs and other things for different things they had. Finally we got from them a lot of things like ropes, twines, needles, sacking needles, wax end, knives, etc. One thing we got was the loan of a large tailor's scissors, so we decided that we would have a parade. We picked on three of the prisoners and we got them to lie down with legs and arms outstretched on the dark blue blankets. We chalked them out on this, cut out a pattern of a suit, sewed it up on the edges, cut it in the middle and made coats and trousers. On the next occasion we went to see the Governor we were accompanied by these three prisoners in their latest model suits. The Governor was horrified and made all sorts

of protests and we informed him that unless we got the clothes that we demanded we would continue with our programme. He promised to get in touch with the Home Office immediately and in about ten days he got a letter which he mis-read and the next thing we knew was that three of four contractors from the town of Reading were in taking our measurements for suits of clothes. We insisted on the best Wolsey underclothes, shirts, ties, and even overcoats each. These were all supplied immediately, and about a fortnight afterwards, I was sent for very hurriedly by the Governor one morning and he brought me into a room adjoining his own and showed me huge bales of clothing which had arrived from London - the old "Martin Henry's". The Governor, as I said before, had mis-read his instructions and had understood that he was to get the stuff locally, while in actual fact, they meant in London that they were sending it down. We had what we wanted and we wouldn't give them up. I don't know how he fixed the matter up afterwards with his own authorities, but, as far as we were concerned, we didn't very much mind.

We next started to make preparations for the inaugural meeting of Dáil Éireann following the 1918 elections. Three of us wrote home in the ordinary course of events and one asked for a piece of white, another a piece of orange and another a piece of green poplin, all asking for the same size. These pieces duly arrived and we sewed them together. We next secured a long piece of wood from the Germans in the next wing and made two receptacles for it which could be fitted to a window, through the broken pane of glass in any of the windows in the cells on the top floor. We now had everything ready for the day on which the first meeting of Dáil Éireann would take place in Ireland. We were able, of course, to get the papers, and we knew the date, so, on the 21st January 1919, everything was ready. We got our pole in position outside my cell window and we hauled the tricolour

up at about 12 o'clock. We took every precaution to guard all the approaches to that cell. Indeed, I believe myself, that the flag must have been flying there for quite a long time before anyone in the gaol saw it, but I understand, from what the Governor told me afterwards, that people in the town were protesting about this flag flying over the gaol for hours before the Governor himself even knew about it. The only approach on to the roof on our wing was through a trap door on the top landing, and they had to come up the main staircase which we held. I think myself that the Governor and the Warders didn't know what to do, and, in any event, felt that they wouldn't be able to deal with the position if they tried to use force, so they let things alone. At sundown we hauled down the colours and we hid the flag and, I understand, that flag was brought home to Dublin, but I really don't know where it is now.

One of the daily routines at Reading was Irish language classes in the mornings. As far as possible, all the Irish prisoners spoke Irish as much as they could, and only used an English word when they got stuck, so that by the time we left Reading, most of us could have got the Fainne. Frank Fahy was particularly helpful to all the prisoners by his instructions on Irish, and the general approach he made to teaching us the language. Of course, each and every one of us had a fair good smattering of it before that, but our long period in Reading considerably improved it. Everything was ready for an escape from Reading. We had rope ladders. We were able to get up and down on to the flat roof with an ea easy drop down into the street and we had a fair amount of money. We informed Dublin of our intentions through the egg box mail; this, as you know, was using the old egg box, putting the dispatch underneath the cardboard bottom of the box and getting back the answer the same way, with the next consignment of eggs. However, we were instructed to do

nothing, but to await further word from Dublin before we should move. We couldn't quite understand why this should be, but it was only afterwards, when we heard of Eamon de Valera, Sean McGarry, and Sean Milroy escaping from Lincoln that we understood, because, had we proceeded with our job, we certainly would have spoiled their chances of getting away. We were released from Reading in March 1919, I think it was the 8th March, and returned to Dublin.

I immediately reported for duty to Mick Collins and was instructed to report to Dundalk in connection with a job that was to be carried out there - a raid for Ulster Volunteer arms at Ballyedmond Castle. I was then on the organising staff of G.H.Q. which was controlled by Michael Collins. The raid on Ballyedmond Castle was organised between the Louth, South Armagh, and South Down Brigades. This job was to have been carried out early in 1918, but the arrest of almost the complete battalion staffs of the units concerned, at that period, necessitated the postponement of the project. It was decided that a certain amount of camouflage would have to take place to carry out the job successfully, as Ballyedmond Castle, the mansion of Col. Nugent, was situated on the north shores of Carlingford Lough, near Rostrevor. Most of the Louth men were ordered to Carlingford and Omeath, where quite a number of boats had been procured and they crossed the Lough by this means. Frank Aiken and his men came down over the mountains from Camlough, to a selected rendezvous, while the Newry men came along the lower road. We brought a half dozen cars from Dundalk through Newry, Warrenpoint, Rostrevor, etc. As soon as zero hour had arrived, and all Volunteers had taken up their posts, everything that came along any of the roads was allowed inside the cordon, but nobody, neither motorist, cyclist nor anyone else was allowed out. One of the methods of preventing cyclists from seizing their bicycles and making a quick dash away, was to take the valves out of the bicycle wheels.

We entered the building through the kitchen at the rere by smashing a window and searched the house from cellar to garret without finding anybody. Eventually Frank Aiken pulled victorious Col. Nugent out from underneath a bed. This man had boasted publicly on a number of occasions that if any of these Sinn Fein Volunteers came along to his place that he would make things very hot for them. However, he was a very insignificant quiet little man on that occasion. We found the rifles and ammunition in the basement, but the haul was disappointing. As far as my memory serves me, I think there were about 50 rifles, about 100 shotguns, various sizes of pistols and a fairly substantial quantity of ammunition for all arms. We collected all the arms and ammunition, dumped them into the cars and left the area immediately by road in the direction of Newry, went through Newry to Warrenpoint and on into Co. Monaghan, where we dumped the stuff. In the meantime, our men had started to re-cross the Lough, Frank Aiken and his men going back over the mountains, and all our prisoners were left to get away the best way they could. I should have said at the beginning that we had cut all the lines of communication between Dundalk and Belfast and Dundalk/Carlingford/Omeath/Warrn Warrenpoint.

I returned to Dundalk with Joe and Jas. McGuill and Joe Berrill. I was then staying at Matthews', a small hotel at the Bridge Street end of Dundalk. I did not arrive home until about 4 o'clock in the morning, and the only Mass I could get to was 12 o'clock in St. Patrick's. The priest was just about to start preaching the sermon when a Fianna boy knelt beside me and told me to get out quickly, as my digs were just being raided. I made my way around by easy stages down to Joe McGuill's, "The Bridge House", but at every crossroad and at every bridge the military had cordons. In actual fact the town was completely surrounded by military and R.I.C. Joe Berrill, Jim McGuill and Joe McGuill and I spent the day upstairs in

in McGuill's house, which is right on the corner of the bridge overlooking the border, the main railway line to Belfast lying behind it at the end of a long rampart running down by the river. We stayed there until it got dark and then crossed the back wall and, by arrangement with one of the local units, we got them to fire a few shots over in the direction of the Castleblayney Road, very near the railway. This had the effect of diverting attention in that direction and the patrol on the railway bridge started moving in that direction. As soon as they did so we went under the railway bridge and off into the country in the direction of Co. Monaghan. Dundalk remained in possession of the military for three days, but on the following Tuesday night, Mr. Eamon de Valera arrived there and held a public meeting despite the attention of the military.

I continued my activities as organiser of the Volunteers and at the same time organised for the New Ireland Assurance Society in Monaghan and also in Cavan. I contacted Eoin O'Duffy, the Brigade O/C., and Dan Hogan, the Brigade Adjutant, and started on a reorganisation scheme of that brigade right throughout the county. At the same time, I was operating on similar lines in Cavan and, at week-ends, I cycled from Clones over to Camlough in South Armagh to meet Frank Aiken who was engaged on the reorganisation of that brigade area. I returned to Dublin on several occasions and, by arrangement with my own office, and on instructions from Michael Collins, I went to Longford along with Michael Staines. My job was to completely reorganise the Longford Brigade, We visited all the wellknown men in Longford, and I remember Michael Staines and I visiting Sean McKeon at his forge in Ballinalee. He was then Company Captain of his own local Company. We went into the forge and, after the usual introductions; we told McKeon what we were after, and his reply to us was: "You provide the rifles and we'll provide the men, and we'll guarantee that

they fight". So on that understanding we proceeded with our reorganisation. Staines went back to Dublin and Pat Garrett, who had been sent down as whole-time organiser, under my control, carried on. The whole Brigade Staff was reorganised and Tom Reddington was appointed Brigadier, Sean Connolly, Adjutant, Ned Cooney, Quartermaster. We then proceeded to reorganise the various battalions. This was a slow and tedious job, but it was done in a very methodical fashion and, by the end of 1919, the Brigade was fighting fit. My job was to convey to the officers and N.C.Os., in the first instance, and the men at a later stage, G.H.Q's decision that the fight was now on, and that preparations had to be made immediately to prepare plans for attacks on enemy barracks, enemy ~~p~~trols, etc. One of the first areas that we paid special attention to was Drumlish. Drumlish had a very strong barracks which could be described as an Island Barracks, with roads running all round it. We called a meeting of the Brigade Council and each of the Battalion Commandants was instructed to go back to his own unit, prepare final plans for an attack on a barracks within their area, and to report back within a fortnight. The weather had been appallingly bad about this period, and I remember ~~coming in~~ night after night - Sean Reynolds driving me in a motor-bike and sidecar, coming in like a snowman. The result was that I developed "Flu" and, on the night of the Brigade Council meeting I was in bed in my digs in the house of Matthews, who was a schoolteacher, in the Main St. in Longford. However, the bed was pulled into the middle of the floor and the Council sat all around the bed where the plans were submitted. I presided at the meeting from the bed. On that night it was finally decided to attack Drumlish Bks. and all preparations were made. The attack took place, but unfortunately, owing to one of the usual mistakes which were made in those early days, somebody decided that they would

use an electric discharger for the mine that was put in under the gable end of the barrack wall. The charge didn't go off and the result was that although the barracks was peppered for three hours, we had finally to retire from the position. However, Sean Connolly made amends for that in the first week of January 1920, when he attacked Ballinamuck and took it inside four minutes, blowing down the gable wall and capturing all the arms and ammunition inside, without one single casualty on his side. I would like to pay tribute here to Sean Connolly, because I believe from my experience of him that he was one of the finest soldiers that Longford or any other county produced during that period. He was killed afterwards, it will be remembered, up in Leitrim. My memory of the occasion is that he was surprised in a farmhouse with five or six others, by the auxiliaries and, after negotiations with them, succeeded in getting them to allow the civilians to leave; he then fought it out with the auxiliaries until he and his companions were all killed. I think this was one of the outstanding incidents of the war and it is worthy of a check up.

At this stage in every part of the country, Collectors were out for the Dáil Éireann Loan. Walls were being painted with "Buy Dáil Éireann Loan" and posters were being put up all over the place. Meetings were held outside Church doors after Mass, and after one of these, Sean McKeon was arrested. I think he remained in gaol until some time in the New Year of 1920.

In Longford Town we had made a special study of the movements of the R.I.C. between 12 midnight and 3 o'clock in the morning, and, as a result of our investigations, we discovered that at between 1 and 2 o'clock every morning the R.I.C. retired to their barracks for supper. It was during this hour that we came out in force with paint cans, posters, etc. Slogans were painted on cement walls, big posters put in

inaccessible places and, on the night of the particularly big drive, Jimmy Hoey of Bray, who was in Longford as my Superintendent for the New Ireland Assurance Society, took charge of a special operation. He secured three ladders and, with six men, went to the R.I.C. Barracks in the Main Street, where they plastered the barracks from top to bottom with large posters "Buy Dáil Éireann Bonds". It wasn't until some time late on the following morning that the police discovered what had happened and by that time every ladder within reach of the police had been quietly hidden away so that they couldn't get up to take down these posters.

During my stay in Longford I was never suspected by the Authorities until the very last minute, because on the first day I arrived there with Jim Hoey from Bray, who I had brought up as the local District Manager, our first job was to canvass a Detective Sergeant to take out a policy with an Irish Company We were so convincing in our arguments that the Sergeant was all apologies for not being able to help us, as he frankly admitted that he would love to do it, but he would be afraid he would be branded as a "Sinn Feiner". On a later occasion, after Drumlish, he met me on the street one morning and told me that he had very bad news for me. He told me that there was a warrant at the barracks for my arrest but that he had informed the authorities that somebody must have made a terrible mistake, and had advised them to again contact Dublin to have it cleared up. Needless to remark, I didn't await the result of the investigation and disappeared into Leitrim that afternoon.

I arrived in Dublin on the evening of the attempt at Ashtown to assassinate Lord French – the 19th December 1919. I reported to Vaughan's Hotel and contacted Joe O'Reilly and Tom Cullen. Tom told me that we had to go immediately to 88 Phibsboro Road, the home of the Twomeys - Eddie, Jack and

Joe were in the Volunteers and Statia was in the Cumann na mBan. It appears that after Dan Breen was wounded during the attack at Ashtown he made his way to 88 Phibsboro Road and, of course, Mrs. Twomey immediately got in contact with Doctor John Ryan who dressed up Dan's wounds. The situation, however, was not too secure, as the British military and police had started to search all the houses in that particular area, on Phibsboro Rd., Munster St., Leinster St., etc. Tom had secured Joe Hyland with a taxi and we all went up to No. 88. I would like to record here that Joe Hyland's taxi was used for no other purpose but for the I.R.A., he himself being an active Volunteer. Tom Cullen, in his capacity as Assistant Quartermaster-General, extensively used the taxi for bringing arms and ammunition from one point to another.

We arrived at Phibsboro Road and found that Dan Breen was in such a bad state that we would have to put some sort of a short board from the back seat to the windscreen so that his legs could be kept high. After great difficulty, we fixed Dan up as comfortably as we could, and, at that particular stage, the British had arrived at the end of Phibsboro Road, coming up in our direction. With Joe O'Reilly inside and Tom and I on each of the running boards, we left in a hurry, and went up in the opposite direction and down Whitworth Road. We arrived safely at our destination in Grantham St., off Camden St., at Malone's house. Here Dan was comfortably housed and remained until his wounds had healed up. It is interesting to note that Dan eventually married one of the Malone sisters.

The operation at Ashtown Cross earlier on in the afternoon was very unfortunate. The escort car which always preceded Lord French travelling from point to point had failed to start, and the Lord Lieutenant, being rather impatient to get going, evidently ordered his driver to proceed unescorted, the second

escort car coming up behind him. Our men, not realising that this change had taken place, were about to allow the first car through when they discovered French was in it, but it was then too late. In a heroic attempt to try and rectify the position, Martin Savage got killed and Dan Breen and others were wounded.

I reported to Mick Collins the following morning on the general situation in Longford and various other areas in which I had been operating, and strongly recommended that additional arms and ammunition should be supplied to the Longford Brigade right away. This was particularly necessary in view of the failure at Drumlish and the necessity for bringing off a successful operation in the immediate future. This he promised to do and, at a later stage, just before Christmas, I was able to secure the necessary arms and ammunition, which safely arrived in Longford, resulting, as I mentioned earlier o in the capture of Ballinamuck Barracks immediately after the mine exploded.

In July 1919, when I was in Longford, Mick Collins had made up his mind to start an Intelligence Organisation within our own ranks and, although he was still Director of Organisation, he got around him one or two people to form the nucleus of this organisation. His first selection was Liam Tobin, whom he appointed as Deputy D.I. Tom Cullen, who was Assistant Quartermaster General, was also acting in a dual capacity, and Tommy Gay, who was a librarian in Capel St, was one of his agents. Shortly after that, about the same month, the nucleus of the Squad was formed, and in the same month Detective Smith of the "G" Division, was shot in Drumcondra. Detective Hoey, "G" Division, was shot later on in September, and Wharton and Barton, "G" men, in November.

On my reporting to Michael Collins, I was informed that I had been transferred to G.H.Q. Intelligence under Liam

Tobin, and I immediately accepted the position. I think that from this period onwards the rest of this story must be compiled in conjunction with Liam Tobin, so that between the two of us we will be able to give as true as possible a picture of what transpired in the organisation and working of Intelligence from this date to the Truce in 1921.

Signed: Liam Lynch

Date: 18th May 1951.

Witness: J. Lawless Col.