

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

BURO STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21

NO. W.S. 580

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COSANTA.

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 580

Witness

John Duffy,
Hillside House,
Monaveen,
Woodlawn,
Co. Galway.

Identity.

Member of R.I.C. Athlone, and Kiltoom, Co. Roscommon
1916-1921;

I.R.A. Intelligence Agent.

Subject.

- (a) Intelligence work on behalf of I.R.A. within the R.I.C. ranks 1917-1921.
- (b) R.I.C. Opposition to Conscription;
- (c) R.I.C. plans for shooting of Michael Collins;
- (d) Black and Tan activities, Co. Roscommon, 1920-1921.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil

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CONTENTS.

	<u>Page.</u>
1. <u>Meeting with Michael Collins:</u> Proposals put forward to induce men to resign from the R.I.C.	1 to 4
2. <u>Raids for arms by military and police:</u> Local I R.A. leader warned in advance - Police refuse to wear military uniforms.	4 to 5
3. <u>Kiltoom R.I.C. refuse offer of surplus ammunition.</u>	5 to 6
4. <u>Reprisal speech by a military officer:</u> Efforts to give speech press publicity.	6 to 8
5. <u>Police Union formed:</u> Police to down arms if ordered to implement Conscription Act.	8 to 9
6. <u>Access to County Inspector's office:</u> Key to police cipher procured; also list of prominent I.R.A. men.	9 to 11
7. <u>R.I.C. incited to shoot Michael Collins:</u> Collins coming to Roscommon from Boyle warned in time.	11 to 12
8. <u>Raid on Father O'Flanagan's house:</u> Money stolen by Auxiliaries. Vestments destroyed. Matter given publicity in America. Inquiry ordered.	12 to 14
9. <u>Soldier courtmartialled for selling rifles.</u>	14 to 16
10. <u>Volunteers warned of raid on Mooneen Bog.</u>	16 to 17
11. <u>Rifle dump at Lanesboro' saved.</u>	17
12. <u>Two Volunteers captured following an ambush near Boyle.</u>	17 to 19
13. <u>Activities by Black and Tans frustrated.</u>	19 to 24.

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STATEMENT OF MR. JOHN DUFFY,

Hillside House, Monaveen, Woodlawn, Co. Galway.

Meeting with Michael Collins.

In 1916 I was a member of the R.I.C. and I was stationed in Athlone. I became very friendly with Dr. McDonnell who lived in Queen St., Athlone, and who was very much associated with the national movement at the time. Some time in 1917 he asked me to accompany him to Dublin, as he wanted to introduce me to Michael Collins, Alec McCabe, Joe McGrath, etc. During the period of the early years of our friendship Dr. McDonnell and myself had constantly discussed the political situation in Ireland. He knew that my feelings were in favour of helping the Irish Cause in any way I possibly could. In reply to his invitation to accompany him to Dublin I told him it would not be fair for me to continue on in the R.I.C. I added: "If you want it so, I am prepared to retire from the Force and give my service entirely to your Cause". He answered: "You would be only one man with us, but you would be worth a hundred men by remaining in the Force". After a considerable amount of argument and discussion and specifying conditions under which I could be of service to him, I agreed to go to Dublin. A day was arranged and the doctor travelled the evening before. I took a day's leave on the pretext of fishing in the Shannon and I travelled to Dublin by train and met Dr. McDonnell, as already arranged, at Church St. We went to a house there of Mrs. Gray. On entering it we met a man wearing a beard, who was introduced to me as Michael Collins. We had a chat over lunch which was served there and he asked me would I mind going to another part of the city. I travelled to the address which he gave me, but which I cannot now recall. As far as I can recollect, it was in the street where the Cavendish-Burke murders were plotted.

and I think the name was Fox. I had heard my father mention this several times when I was a boy. On entering the house I saw a number of young men there and I asked one of them if there were any strangers in the house and he said no. "Well", said I, "I was directed here over an hour ago", adding: "If there is any young man who wants me (giving my name), tell him I have arrived". A young man present went out the front door of this publichouse. He was a long time absent and he came back through the premises, beckoning me to follow him through a long hall where men were seated on forms. I saw Collins at the end of the hall and when he recognised me he signed to me to come on. I accompanied Collins to a small room and sat around a table with him. The next who appeared, to the best of my knowledge, were Joe McGrath and another young man whose name, I think, was Joe O'Brien. A few more came from Listowel and Limerick. There were also a couple from the north of Ireland, and a man from the town of Tuam. In all there were about ten or twelve present. We adjourned to an outer room and sat round a bigger table. Michael Collins had a heap of leaflets which he handed out to each one, telling us to read them carefully and if there was anything objectionable in them not to be shy to mention it. The purport of the leaflets was that Michael Collins himself was to get a clergyman to call to every police barrack in Ireland to induce all young men up to twelve years' service to leave the Force. In the case of men who had between 12 and 25 years' service who were married, they were to get compensation, and any men having over 25 years he (Collins) was to write to them personally to leave the Force and take their pensions. When I read the leaflet I told Collins that I did not agree with it. He asked me my reasons. "Well" I said, "if you are going to get a clergyman to call to all police barracks to induce men away from the Force the whole scheme will be defeated before it is put into operation because, if you carry out that scheme, you will have half the

clergy in Ireland shot, because, I added, before that clergyman is halfway to the Parochial House, information regarding the object of his journey will be on its way to Dublin Castle".

He then asked me for my alternative and I said: "There is not a parish in Ireland where there is not a branch of your organisation. Let them get a decent man or two, and let them not be 'yahocs', to call on the parents of every young man in the Force having up to 12 years service". "If you do that" I continued, "these young men will be said and led by their parents that reared them more so than by any clergyman, and you can tell those people to tell their parents if you are successful in this organisation and ever form a police force, they will be the first to be taken into it". On hearing my recommendation he (Collins) immediately drew a cross through the leaflet and my suggestions were taken down by him in shorthand. A messenger took the notes away who later returned with fresh leaflets which embodied my suggestions. I placed some of these leaflets inside my socks that night. The first thing Collins asked me then was would I be able to get the names from police records which were in every County Inspector's office of prominent I.R.A. men throughout the country who had come under the notice of the R.I.C. authorities. Further, he asked me would I be able to get the key to the police cipher code. I replied that it would be impossible for me to meet his request at the present time, as I was then only an ordinary duty constable and would not have access to such documents. Feeling sure that I was ready to assist him in any way I possibly could he told me that I would work in conjunction with a doctor, a clergyman and a solicitor, and that I was not to recognise any other person, whether he was a prominent I.R.A. man or not. Any information I had to give I was to convey it through any of these three named. The three gentlemen I was to work with were Dr. McDonnell, Father O'Flanagan and a solicitor not named at the time, but who later turned out to be Willie Kilmartin, a solicitor's clerk in Roscommon town. At that particular time

Dr. McDonnell was the only man who was in Athlone. The remaining two were in Roscommon. In case Father O'Flanagan or Kilmartin were absent I was to convey my information to Thomas Farrell.

Raids for arms by military and police.

Some time following my meeting with Collins, a number of us were ordered out one day to cut turf for the barracks. During this turf cutting operation one of my comrades was discharged back to the barracks for bread for our tea. On his return he excitedly informed me that he had been talking to the District Inspector's clerk and that the latter told him that all the out-station men were to be put into British military uniform that night to raid for shotguns and Sinn Fein and John Redmond rifles that were concealed in a cave at Coosan. On hearing this information, I jumped up from the bank, washed my feet and put on my shoes. I cycled to Dr. McDonnell's house, but he was not there, and then I went to Sean O'Hurley, a local I.R.A. leader at the time, but he was not there either. In desperation I met an Income Tax man, a Mr. Markham, whom I knew well, and I told him to go to the Printing Works and tell Sean O'Hurley from me that all the shotguns all over Ireland were to be taken up after 12 o'clock that night, but not to mention my name to anyone. He solemnly pledged his word that he would do this for me. All members of the station and the out-station men were paraded at 11.30 that night and marched under the Head Constable to the local military barracks. We were there handed over to the colonel in charge. He had us paraded into the Military Riding School and there instructed us to step out of the ranks and don British military uniform. As I was in the leading file in the rere rank I spoke up and said to the Colonel: "Well, Sir, I am prepared to go out in the uniform I joined in, but I am not prepared to go on any raid in a disguised uniform". "Up, Duffy" said O'Toole, one of my comrades. Sergeant Croddick said: "About turn", whereon we marched out of the Riding School without donning the uniform. The Head Constable admonished me, not

seriously, to the effect that I was always drawing trouble down on his head. We were then divided into groups and mixed with a number of British soldiers and N.C.Os. with one of us accompanying each group. Our duty was to see that the military took nothing from the houses they were intending to raid except guns or seditious documents. The net result of the raids on many houses and the caves at Coosan brought negative results as far as the searching parties were concerned. Evidence that the information that I had given was circulated extensively even to the city of Dublin was brought to light by the remarks of a lady living in a house at Coosan. When the colonel and his party arrived there, the lady said: "Isn't it late ye are coming: we are up here all night waiting for ye". The colonel knew then that the game had been given away. When the various searching parties arrived back at the military barracks the colonel got up on a little heap of stones and addressed his men to the effect that information must have got out beforehand regarding the intended raid and that he would have the matter thoroughly investigated. About four days later a County Inspector named Mr. P.A.Holmes, who was a Crimes Officer in the Curragh, came down to investigate the whole matter. Every R.I.C. man in the barracks was closely interrogated about the people with whom he had come in contact, the publichouses he had visited, etc. Although they questioned me closely I did not come under suspicion, as I did not leave barrack after I had given the information away at 5 p.m.

Kiltoom R.I.C. refuse offer of surplus ammunition.

After that I was transferred to Kiltoom, Co. Roscommon. There I met Sergeant Galligan and we became very friendly. I knew that he was sympathetic to the Irish Cause at the time, but of course I did not give away my mind to him. I was not long there when the military came out one evening and wanted us to take surplus ammunition. They told us that we could use this ammunition whenever we wanted. We concluded that the reason

we were getting this ammunition was that we were to be given a free hand and that if anybody was shot in the locality it could not be traced to members of the R.I.C., as a check-up on the ammunition issued to us would not reveal any shortage. Following our refusal to accept this ammunition, Sergeant Galligan made some allegation against the military, with the result that it was thought that he would be arrested. We decided that this would not happen and that, if necessary, we would defend Galligan with whatever arms and grenades we had at our disposal. Shortly after that I was transferred back again to Athlone.

Reprisal speech by a military officer.

In order to discourage breaches of information by members of the R.I.C. frequenting local publichouses, the District Inspector decided to establish a wet canteen in the barracks. One night I was invited into this canteen by a friend and, for the first time since I was confirmed, I partook of intoxicating drinks. While in conversation with my friend, three military officers came into the canteen wearing rush hats and veils down to their knees. One of them made a speech to members of the R.I.C. present and said that Constable Potter had been shot at Knockcroghery and that there was a colonel either wounded or shot near Athlone. He said: "We are going to have reprisals" adding: "I want all the men in this barracks to take part in the shooting of these prominent members of the I.R.A. so that there will be no man left to tell the tale". Feeling in very good form as a result of the intoxicating liquor that I had partaken of, I stood up and addressed the officer, saying that I never joined the police to become a murderer, a dissenter or a looter and that, personally, I would never do it. Then I took a £5 note from my purse and bet a pound against him that he would never take part in the murders himself. I left the canteen as fast as I could and, as I was going out the door on

to the kitchen a shot was fired at me which lodged in the jamb of the door. Two years later I discovered that it was one of our own men who had fired the shot - a man named MacNamara from Clare. When I got clear of the kitchen on to yard and scaled boundary wall I made for the house of the local curate. I told him what had transpired at the barracks and to seek Dr. McDonnell, Joe Dixon (a solicitor), Jimmy O'Meara (a butcher), Gilbert Hughes (a railway employee), Tommy Farrell and Sean O'Hurley - a leader of the I.R.A. organisation at the time - and to tell them not to return to their homes until all this trouble was over. I decided that night that I would sever my connection with the R.I.C. When I was trying to make up my mind definitely I felt the best thing would be to take a few days' leave and discuss the position with my wife. I obtained four days' leave and when I arrived home I saw the local doctor and explained everything to him. He advised me to return to my barracks and to complain of sciatica and lumbago. He pointed out the sciatic nerve to me, telling me that if the police doctor examined me to yield to it. He added that after about three weeks I should come home on leave covered by a certificate from my own doctor and that he would then give me a further certificate for as long as I wanted. When I returned to duty I saw my old friend, Dr. McDonnell, and I told him that I had intended leaving the Force, giving him my reasons. He sent word to Collins immediately of my intention. Collins sent down a courier by return with instructions in his own handwriting that under no circumstances was I to leave the Force and that if I did so I would be looked upon as a "coward". The word "coward" decided my determination to remain on.

The houses were raided the night I left for home, but the victims that were to be executed had taken my advice and left their homes beforehand.

The canteen incident gave me the idea that it should get

publicity in the press, but as I could not do it myself, I was greatly concerned what would be the best way to have it done. It so happened that a young police recruit was present when the officers entered the canteen with the announcement about reprisals. He made his escape out of the barracks that night and made his way home to Kilconnell, Co. Galway. I got a neighbour of mine named Michael Coen, who was prominent in the Movement to go down to Kilconnell to get in touch with the leader of the I.R.A. there and become very friendly with the police recruit whose name was Carr. In this way, I had hoped that he might obtain a written report from him of what had happened that night in the canteen. I would then arrange to have this statement passed on to Michael Collins for the purpose of giving it press publicity. Carr, however, skipped it to England and refused to make any statement, so my idea was not fulfilled.

Police Union formed.

While stationed in Athlone I took part, with other members of the station, in preventing cattle drives at a place named Talty, within four miles of Ballinasloe. I met a sergeant from Trim, T.J. MacElligott. We became very friendly and he seemed to take me into his confidence and told me that he was forming a police union. He asked me to organise Connaught and he would organise Leinster. I agreed to this and he did his part. The result was that between us we formed a fairly strong unit numbering about 6,000 in all. A meeting was arranged to be held in Ballinasloe Town Hall on a certain date. When the authorities got to hear of this they immediately issued orders that we were not to attend. Contrary to such orders, on returning from my morning beat, I got on my bicycle in company with Sergeant Craddock and cycled to Ballinasloe. When we reached the town we saw that Sergeant MacElligott and a strong party of police delegates were also making their way to a meeting place. Before entering the Town Hall, however, a police constable approached

us and told us that if we went to this meeting our names would be taken and to be very careful. We went to the meeting, however, and Head Constable O'Neill, very reluctantly acting on definite instructions, took our names. Evidently, information about our attendance was forwarded to Dublin Castle. At that time the Conscription Act for Ireland was being discussed in the House of Commons and the object of our Police Union was to get unity amongst the Police Force as a whole so that in the event of conscription being enacted the police would down arms and would not take any part in implementing conscription.

Following the formation of this union the Castle authorities became very perturbed, with the result that they sent down an Inspector General to the various stations throughout the country to test the feelings of the men. I believe they became very alarmed when he reported back that 75% of the R.I.C. would down arms rather than enforce conscription and the chances were that the remainder would follow.

Access to County Inspector's office.

I was very hastily transferred to Roscommon town, given only two hours to take my belongings and get into a military lorry to proceed there. When I had my things packed, I managed to get word through to Dr. McDonnell that I was being sent to Roscommon. Dr. McDonnell went to Roscommon that night and told Father O'Flanagan that I was now in that station. As I was leaving the barracks next morning, the Co. Inspector, Mr. Hettreat, called me over and said: "You are down here now. I believe you took a prominent part with T.J. McElligott in forming a Police Union, wanting to disrupt the police and circularising the entire Force to get their signatures to obtain Dominion Home Rule for all Ireland?" Continuing, he said: "In addition to this I have heard very peculiar rumours about you and if you don't give over this tommy-rot, remember you will not be many hours in the Police Force". I did not reply. I was

not long there when Sergeant P. Harte appointed me in charge of police stores for the Co. Roscommon. As I was taking up my books one day to check against Sergeant Harte's, I saw the Co. Inspector and the Crown Solicitor. (Heferin) standing at courthouse and as I was passing the Co. Inspector's office I observed the key in it. I pulled the key out of the lock and examined it very closely, making a mental picture of what it looked like. I returned it immediately to the lock and went back to my stores where I drew an outline of the key on a piece of paper. That evening I went down to McDonnell's - a hardware shop in the town - and asked to be shown some keys. I picked out three made keys that I thought would suit and took three unmade keys also. I tried these keys in the lock when opportunity presented itself, but none of them would fit, so I took one of the unmade keys that I thought would suit and widened it with a little lock-saw. I then tried it in the lock of the door and found it fitted perfectly. This gave me the advantage I was looking for - access to the Co. Inspector's office without enlisting the aid of anybody else. On a Saturday night I started out to fulfil the request made by Michael Collins to obtain a list of names of prominent I.R.A. men all over the country who had come under police observation. It did not take me long to find the lists required and I took them away. I worked all the Sunday copying out in my own handwriting the names, addresses and crimes of the men concerned and the complete list numbered 3,912 names. I passed this list on to Frank Simon, the local I.R.A. leader. On that Sunday night I returned the files to the office on the completion of my task.

Following this episode I succeeded in getting hold of the key of the police cipher code. This I also passed on to Frank Simon. As this code was in general use throughout the country for military and police every day for a period of three months without being changed, and as the authorities had no

suspicious that it was in the possession of any undesirables, arrangements were made whereby a Post Office clerk named McNamara would transmit police messages to the I.R.A. for the purpose of decoding. In this way the I.R.A. knew the contents of a message even before it reached the Co. Inspector's office. One message came through from, I think, Dublin Castle, to the effect that police and military were to round up a number of prominent I.R.A. men in Co. Roscommon. This message was again decoded by the local I.R.A. in time to allow them to escape the net. When it came to the ears of the Co. Inspector that Volunteers were moving out of the whole county, he became suspicious and the round-up operation was not carried out.

R.I.C. incited to shoot Michael Collins.

I remember one evening the D.I. summoned all men of the station to the dayroom. He produced a photograph of members of Dáil Éireann which he passed round to each man asking them if they were able to identify any man in the group. When they were not, he took a life-size photograph of Michael Collins with two issues, a side issue and a front issue, and passed them round, but no man said he knew him. He put the photographs back in his pocket and then he made a speech to this effect: "The man whose photograph you have seen is coming into Roscommon tonight from Boyle with Father O'Flanagan. He is responsible for the murder of all your comrades and men". Continuing, he said: "Every road that is leading into this town is to be guarded by policemen and a policeman is to be with each group of military. This man is to be taken off the car and shooting is good enough for him". When we were dismissed, I made my way to the post office and from there to John Brennan's house where there was a man always 'standing-to' to receive any messages that I might be able to convey. I told him to get two cyclists for every road leading into the town as soon as possible and to have Collins taken off the car as far out from the town as he possibly could and to tell Father O'Flanagan to meet me at 6.30 p.m. at

the south side of the chapel. Collins was taken by the I.R.A. in a place named Kiltewan, about five miles outside the town. When I subsequently met Father O'Flanagan at the appointed place, he asked me the best time to bring Collins to the town, and I told him at midnight, but to be sure that all military and police lorries had returned to barracks.

Raid on Father O'Flanagan's house.

A raid by two Auxiliary officers accompanied by two R.I.C. Sergeants was carried out on the home of Father O'Flanagan. The two R.I.C. sergeants were sent to ensure that the Auxiliaries would not take away any private property. Father O'Flanagan's typist was put under arrest by the Auxiliaries and ordered to leave the town in so many hours, and her typewriter seized. During the search the two Auxiliaries found a £5 note in a jug on a shelf, which they collected. The two sergeants there and then objected, but their objection was overruled by the Auxiliary officers. As they were about to leave they saw a suitcase. They could not open it, so they got a knife and ripped it open. The case contained vestments belonging to the priest. The sergeants again objected to cutting of the suitcase, but without effect. They suggested that the case should be taken to the barracks and held there when it could be opened in the presence of Father O'Flanagan. On opening the case they cut the vestments to pieces. When Father O'Flanagan returned to his home that night and saw the depredation that had been done, and missed the £5 note from the jug, he became very annoyed. He came up to the Co. Inspector to complain about the matter, but he got no satisfaction from him. Later he saw the colonel in charge of the military, but got less satisfaction there. He told them that he would go further with the matter and have an inquiry opened. The Auxiliaries, on hearing this, made arrangements to have Father O'Flanagan taken away and probably shot. This came to my knowledge and I rushed down to Father O'Flanagan immediately and asked him to leave his house as soon as possible

and that if he stayed in the town not to stay in any house the second night, but to leave the town at the earliest opportunity. He took my advice and went to the College in Sligo. During his time there he prepared a file of everything that had transpired during the raid on his house. He got this away to America and Dr. McDonnell told me that the contents of the file were posted on the doorway of the British Consul's office in America and other public places. As a matter of fact it got so much publicity in this manner that the British Consul communicated with the Home Consul to know if it was true. The Home Consul knew nothing about it. He communicated with the British Government, who knew nothing about it. They, the British Government, communicated with Dublin Castle and, as the latter knew nothing about it, they sent a convoy of twelve lorry loads of British military down to the Co. Inspector's office in Roscommon, bringing down the dispatch that came from the British Consul in America and asking for a report on the matter. I can't remember now what the Co. Inspector's reply was, but he sealed it next morning and sent it to the officer in charge of the convoy to have it taken back to Dublin Castle. That night, with the aid of my skeleton key, I gained access to the Co. Inspector's office and got hold of the file of correspondence dealing with the raid. I copied the complete contents of this file. From this time I knew that an inquiry was about to take place, but as I did not know what the two R.I.C. sergeants were prepared to say, I invited them to a local publichouse for a drink and when they were sufficiently refreshed I discreetly introduced the matter of the raid. I asked them how they were going to act and they said they were looking forward to the day when they could swear to the truth of the Auxiliaries taking the £5 note and cutting up the vestments. I left the original file back in the Co. Inspector's office and handed the file of copied documents to Doctor McDonnell who, in turn, passed the file on to Michael Collins

and the latter got the file sent to America where the copied documents were again used as propaganda and posted on the British Consul's doorway together with the original poster about the raid.

Soldier courtmartialled for selling rifles.

While in Athlone, another incident occurred which I feel should be recorded. Two rifles were purchased from a soldier by a young Kildare man named Keavey who was employed in Kilkelly's pawn office. Sometime later the authorities got information which led to a search of Keavey's personal belongings. Sergeant Craddock and five or six men, including myself, went to search the place. When Keavey was questioned by the sergeant regarding the rifles he said he had not ^{got} them there and that there was no use in searching. This left the sergeant in no doubt as to his guilt and he was put under arrest, but I was not present at that particular time. The sergeant called me then to search the premises with him and we did so. We got nothing in the place and the sergeant then went to Mr. Kilkelly and asked where Keavey's private room was. We went to his private room and the sergeant told me to search the room and under the bed we found a suit of military uniform. I pulled out the uniform and I saw that it was the uniform issued to John Redmond's Volunteers. There was also a tin trunk in the room which was locked and the sergeant sent a shop-boy and myself down to Keavey, who was under arrest, to get the key to open the trunk. On opening the trunk, the first thing I saw was a six-chamber nickel-plated revolver. The next thing I got was a whistle and chain. I took both out and searched the trunk for seditious documents, but found none. The sergeant and his men then took Keavey to the barracks and he told me to take the uniform, revolver and whistle to the barracks also. I headed the escort to the barracks and the sergeant told me to leave what I was carrying in his office. On entering the office I saw a tongs in the fireplace which I got hold of and whipped the

trigger off the revolver. I then obliterated the fresh broken parts of the revolver through the use of turf and then put it into the uniform, which I folded and left there. A couple of months later Keavey was courtmartialled in Renmore barracks, Galway, and Sergeant Craddock and I were ordered there to give evidence. The soldier from whom Keavey purchased the revolver gave evidence against him. Then Sergeant Craddock was called to give evidence. I was called up then. The Judge asked me where did I get the uniform and I said under the bed and that it was a suit of John Redmond's Volunteer uniform. On hearing this the Counsel told me that he didn't ask me that question, but I said it was only fair to the young man. He asked me how did I know it was a Redmond Volunteer uniform and I said there was no black braid down the front of this suit, but that there was a black braid down the front of the Sinn Fein uniform. He asked me then where did I get the revolver and I told him I got it in the man's trunk but that it was a broken miniature revolver from which a shot bullet or other missile could not be discharged. The Counsel said: "I didn't ask you that question". But, again, I told him that it was only fair to the young man to say that it was a broken miniature revolver. He asked me then where did I get the whistle and chain. I told him I got it in the box also. He asked me what sort of a whistle it was and I said I did not know, but that it was a whistle. He asked me then what would it be used for and I said I did not know. Keavey then answered that it was a post-boy's whistle used for the purpose of calling for letters. The Counsel said: "I can put it down as a signalling whistle". "You may", said I, "on the young man's admission, but not on mine". I told young Keavey before I went in to the colonel that I could do nothing for him except two things, namely, how long I knew him, and to ask me for evidence of character during that time. When I had given my evidence, Keavey asked me how long did I know him. I told him I knew him for the past three years and always found him respectable and I never knew him

to take part in any political organisation. That finished my evidence. I went out and the Counsel followed me and asked the question did I come up to free this young man. The sergeant said he did not think so. He then called me over and asked me why I gave the character to this young man without being asked for it. I told him then it was only fair to give the young man the character he was entitled to get. He said then: "Don't you know every young man is a Sinn Feiner at the present time?". I replied that I knew nothing of the kind and that until I found a young man a Sinn Feiner I was not going to swear him one. "That will do", he said, and went back to the ^{Courthouse} ~~guardroom~~. The sergeant and I went to the waiting room where there were military officers present. Keavey came out discharged from the Court. He walked over and shook hands with me, saying he was afraid I went too far. That ended that, and we went in then to Galway and he came across Craddock and myself and invited us to a publichouse, but we did not accept the invitation.

Volunteers warned of military raid on Mooneen Bog.

Mooneen Bog, between Roscommon and Lanesboro', was a rendezvous for the Volunteers of Longford and Roscommon where they met. It came to the notice of the authorities that drilling was going on there and they decided to surround the bog with a view either to capturing or shooting the men caught drilling there. Plans were made accordingly and three lorry loads of military and Tans armed with machine guns were detailed to surround the place. I was told that instructions were issued to them that from the time they left the lorries to surround the bog they were not to smoke, whistle, talk or make any noise as it was intended to take the Volunteers completely by surprise. I knew of the arrangements and I sent word immediately through the local Volunteers to Lanesboro' and other Volunteer centres throughout the county that the bog was to be surrounded and not to leave their homes until they would hear further from me. It was a very wet night when the military went out and took up their positions and they remained

there all night and the lorries went out and picked them up next morning. Their language was choice when they discovered that their raid was futile.

Rifle dump at Lanesboro' saved.

There was a journeyman blacksmith living in the town of Lanesboro'. One evening he was taken into Roscommon in a military lorry. I saw this lorry outside Grilly's hotel and it aroused my curiosity. I raised the blanket on the lorry to see what was under it and I saw this little man. I went immediately to the barracks and I was no length there until I found that he was a journeyman blacksmith and that he had given away information regarding the location of rifles at Lanesboro'. I immediately got in touch with Tommy O'Farrell, a reliable contact of mine and passed on the information that had come my way. The military raided the place that night and found no rifles. What became of the journeyman blacksmith, I don't know. He was taken from the local barracks at midnight and nothing was heard of him after.

Two Volunteers captured following an ambush near Boyle.

Two Black and Tans from Roscommon were brought in military lorries to the town of Boyle where they were to be tried by courtmartial for some crime they had committed. On the way an ambush was laid for them with the result that two military officers, two Tans and two soldiers were shot dead, their cars burned and their hotchkiss guns taken away. When the ambush was over two of the men taking part in it, Pat Mullooly and Pat Madden having put the captured guns safely away, went into a local public house. They took with them the military caps of the dead officers. In the meantime, military and Tans became very active and surrounded the entire area, arresting some of the ambushers and when Mullooly and Madden knew what was happening they left the publichouse and the military followed them and captured them. The military caps of the dead officers were at the time in their possession. These two men were put up on a lorry, badly treated and all blood, and strapped to a machine gun. The military would

have shot them on the spot only D.I. Cole intervened and said they would have to stand their trial. They were then taken to Roscommon police barracks where they were confined in an old gaol cell. The following morning when I was going out to the stores Mullooly called me and asked: "How is my mother?". I said: "Your mother is all right, and you will be all right too", altho' at the time I did not know him personally, but he knew me. The Tans went out to Mullooly's place where they shot his brother. I discussed arrangements with Frank Simon to have both these men rescued, but before our plans were ready they were strapped to machine guns and taken to Custume Barracks, Athlone, and conveyed from there to Mountjoy Prison. Knowing that a courtmartial against them was pending, I made it my business to go to the County Inspector's office daily to see if I could pick up any information as to when the trial would take place. Eventually word came from Dublin that the courtmartial was to take place at Custume Barracks, Athlone, and that all evidence was to be got ready. In the meantime Mullooly was transferred to Athlone, but I cannot say if Madden was transferred with him. On hearing this, I took a couple of days' leave and went to Athlone to see Dr. McDonnell. I remained overnight with him and discussed the best means of getting Mullooly out of the barracks. Dr. McDonnell went in to the military medical officer and Mullooly was then in an underground cell in the military barracks. As a result of Dr. McDonnell's discussion with the military medical officer, Mullooly was transferred from the underground cell to a military hospital, and two armed soldiers placed in charge of the hospital. I asked Dr. McDonnell to make arrangements to have the two soldiers bribed and that I would give a £5 note for this purpose. The bribe worked and Mullooly was rescued. During the rescue he sprained his foot and Dr. McDonnell took him in his car to a hill which was covered with gorse four miles from Ballinasloe. He went out at 3 o'clock next morning again and attended Mullooly's foot. They never captured Mullooly after that. Mullooly was

then 'on the run' and Sean MacEoin was in prison and the British Government would not give a guarantee to Dáil Éireann to the effect that when Mullooly would be captured both he and Sean MacEoin would not be shot. Dáil Éireann would not agree to this, and eventually the British Government reprieved the two.

Activities by Black and Tans frustrated.

The Black and Tans learned that Frank Simon and Madden were hidden in a little house in Waterloo, eight or nine miles from Roscommon town and they were going out there that night to take them out and shoot them. The guard would not let the men out without getting some higher authority. The guard then came up to the dormitory and asked Sergeant McLoughlin if he would let them out, and the sergeant said to let them go, that it was none of his business. I overheard the whole conversation and, pulling myself up in the bed, said: "They will not go out with a Crossley tender, value £1,400". The sergeant rejoined that it was none of my business, but I raised my voice and said that they would not go out on his authority, adding that even if the Head Constable gave the authority, I would still insist on a higher authority, and if the District Inspector gave the authority, I would go to the Co. Inspector before they would be allowed out. The sergeant told me that the Co. Inspector wanted to shoot them. "Well, if he does", said I, "he can let them out, but not until then". The Co. Inspector's house was practically adjoining the barracks and he overheard our remarks. Next morning, he told the Sergeant Harte that he heard my voice and that I would be called to the Co. Inspector's office to explain the cause of the disturbance. When I was brought before the Co. Inspector I told him that seven or eight Tans wanted to leave the barracks the previous night with a Crossley lorry value £1,400, in a drunken condition, to go out to shoot two men and that the guard would not let them out without a higher authority than himself. I told him what had occurred, adding that the sergeant said that he (the Co. Inspector) wanted them shot. On hearing this, the Co. Inspector jumped to his feet,

saying that he wanted nothing of the kind and "that will do, constable". He then went to the District Inspector's office where he remained for about two hours. Following this, the Black and Tans were not allowed out of barracks at night.

One Sunday morning the D.I. and a party of Black and Tans went out to Curraghboy in the Co. Roscommon and they arrested a young boy named Dick Mee. They took him into the barracks and he was left in the lock-up for some time. I used to supply him with cigarettes. One night I was over with Sergeant Harte at his house and I did not return to barracks until some time after midnight. When I turned on the light in the kitchen I saw six Tans lying on the boxes in plain clothes. When I went upstairs to bed I bent down over the man sleeping next to me and asked what the Tans were on for that night. He told me that they were going to take Dick Mee out of the lock-up when we were all asleep, put him out to the rear and let on that he was running away, when they would shoot him. I asked my informant was he sure of that and he said yes. I immediately went down to the lock-up to Dick Mee and told him under no circumstances to leave the lock-up voluntarily with anyone that night, and that I would remain in the dayroom, adding that I would not allow any man to take him by force out of the lock-up, but if he went voluntarily I could not stop him. I remained all night in the day-room which was visited periodically by the Black and Tans and as I remained on they eventually went to bed at 6 o'clock in the morning. I told the Head Constable after parade that morning what was going to take place that night. He immediately prepared an escort and took Dick Mee to Custume Barracks, Athlone.

On another occasion I was again instrumental in saving the lives of two men, Dan Kelly and Dick Mee. I overheard the Tans talking in the barracks that they were going out that night to get these two men. I rushed down to the Presbytery and told

Canon Cummins. He immediately jumped into his car and warned the two men. When the Tans arrived they were not there.

At the time that the military and Auxiliaries sacked Knockcroghery in the month of November, I came in from the store and was standing with my back to the fire when a Tan named Johnston entered. He was married to a girl in Glasses Lane, Athlone, and when he came in he spoke to the Sergeant, who was having his dinner in the kitchen, thus: "Well, sergeant, when I was going in to Athlone the other evening, I held up a jarvey with a white horse and I took £9 from him". At this moment the sergeant happened to observe me and in an effort to stop the conversation he walked out. "Well, sergeant", continued the Tan, "when I get my dinner I will go out and raid as many more". I, therefore, determined to remain in that night to watch this Tan. I remained watching that night and was reading, I remember, the paper which gave the account of the murder of Father Griffin. It was about 20th November. At about 8.30 p.m. another Tan named Knight came who was a comrade to Johnston. He looked around and went out again. The sergeant in charge of the barracks said to the guard: "Lock that door; if the D.I. comes along and finds it open you will be fined". Before the guard reached the door somebody entered and went upstairs. I asked the guard who it was and he said: "Johnston and Knight". "Had they anything?" I asked. "Yes", said he, "they had two armfuls of clothing in boxes". There was a sergeant standing at the fireplace, so I said: "Come on, sergeant, and we'll put a stop to this thing once and for all". "I will not", replied the sergeant, "they might shoot us". "Give me a candle, Simon" (Sexton), I said to the guard, "and I will soon follow them". I ran upstairs two flights, and when I was within three steps of the top the two Tans came out of the dormitory and they nearly whipped me downstairs with the rush they made past. I entered the bedroom and saw a new blanket bearing 57/6d on the tag label. I opened it and inside were three cardboard boxes. I took the lid off the

top one which contained cut plug tobacco; the next box contained bar plug tobacco and the third box was full of ladies' underwear. I discovered two five-haggin bottles of whiskey at the window. With the aid of the candle I saw another blanket on Knight's bed. This was labelled 37/6d and in it were about 1,000 boxes of polish. I came out of the bedroom and the sergeant was coming up, so we returned to the bedroom where we examined the lot. I asked the sergeant to bring out the District Inspector or Head Constable as I wanted to have an end put to this business once and for all. The sergeant replied, no, that we would do it the regulation way. I said: "I don't care a hang how you do it, but a stop must be put to it". The sergeant sent the guard to the D.I's. office to ask the Head Constable to come down. I was holding the lighted candle at the foot of the stairs when the Head Constable arrived. I used strong language to him and said this must stop. He said, "What?". So I took him to the bedroom and showed him the loot. He immediately issued orders to have all policemen in the station armed and report to him when the two Tans came in. The Tans duly arrived and seemed surprised when they saw all men under arms. One of their comrades, who had not gone out, told them that they were in for it now. Realising their position, one of them wanted to rush out, but I stopped him from doing so. Eventually the Head Constable arrived and questioned the Tans as to the time they left barracks and returned. They both said they left at about 4.30 p.m. and did not return until now. The Head Constable ordered both of them to stand back and put up their hands and then instructed Sergeant McQuillan and myself to search them. I searched Johnston and found the £9 that he had taken from the jarvey in Athlone. I then took from him two revolvers - one a Webley and the other a nickel-plated revolver, both fully loaded; a lady's gold watch, a silver watch and a gold medal which was initialled "J.J.". Sergeant McQuillan got a quantity of loot on Knight, also two revolvers. Between the two of them, the property found in the search carried on their persons was valued

at over £40. They were immediately put under arrest and confined to cells. They were taken to Athlone and after some time they were courtmartialled and given three years each in Brixton prison. It is interesting to note that when the R.I.C. were being disbanded, a petition came from the Governor of Brixton Prison to the County Inspector, Mr. Hetteray, for the release of the two prisoners. Mr. Hetteray turned down this appeal. Before the trial of these two Tans, I had a very narrow escape as two Auxiliaries came back into the town from Lenaboy for the purpose of shooting me in order to prevent me giving evidence against Johnston and Knight. Fortunately I was warned in time and arrangements were made to have them returned to their station. The man who had the £9 taken from him was asked to come down and give evidence, but evidently from sheer fright he was afraid to do so. The loot had been taken from Jackson, a shopkeeper in Knockcroghery.

As I am on the subject of loot, I feel that it should be recorded that the Black and Tans in Roscommon did not confine themselves to looting of Jackson's shop for jewellery, blankets and other articles of wearing apparel. It was a common practice for them when they went out the country in their lorries to shoot down fowl and other poultry, the property of poor people, and bring them back to the mess where some of them were cooked for their own use, and those that were not required were dispatched to their families in England. I insisted that any poultry so looted were not cooked for the use of the R.I.C. Constabulary.

Sergeant Harte informed me one evening that the Longford Auxiliaries were coming in that evening to sack the town of Roscommon and to arrest all the leaders and he asked me to give them word so that they would be all gone. I immediately crossed the old gaol wall and informed Thomas Farrell to give them the word and they all left the town immediately.

All the Athlone and Westmeath Volunteers were camped out in one of the islands in the Shannon and I was informed that

Wilbond, the Divisional Commissioner, gave £40 for the information, but I sent them word and they had all left the island before it was surrounded.

I am nearly sure there should be a few hundred Black and Tans in Roscommon as they had a commanding officer and several lorries. The Black and Tans were badly received by the old R.I.C. They refused point blank to go out on duty with the Tans, and the Divisional Commissioner (Wilbond) was wired for and he arrived from Athlone with an armed escort and the whole thing was patched up, but the old R.I.C. hated the Tans to the end.

There were no Tans in Athlone when I left there in 1919. Co. Inspector Maxwell was the Co. Inspector in Mullingar when I was in Athlone, and Mr. McDonnell was D.I. in Athlone. Mr. Hetrad was my Co. Inspector in Roscommon, and Cole my D.I. (a bad boy).

Dan O'Rourke, T.D., left Castlerea one Sunday morning at 9 a.m. The Castlerea police sent a wire to the Roscommon police that he had gone to attend Divine Service at Ballagh Church and to procure Volunteers to perform an ambush on the Castlerea police. The church was surrounded by police and Black and Tans, but I had sent word to have O'Rourke taken away.

Signed:

John Duffy

Date:

25-9-51

Witness: William Ivory Combs.

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