

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
BURO STAIRE MILEATA 1913-21
No. W.S. 634

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 634

Witness

Jack McElhaw,
Camlough,
Co. Armagh.

Identity.

Member of Camlough Company Irish Volunteers, 1917 -
Captain same Company later.

Subject.

National activities, Co. Armagh, and Co. Down,
1917-1924.

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Nil

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STATEMENT BY JACK McELHAW,
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Sometime in the year 1917 a man named Herbert Moore-Pim, a Belfast ex-Unionist and convert to extreme Republicanism previous to 1916, held a Sinn Fein meeting in the village of Camlough, Co. Armagh. His attempt to address a public meeting in the interests of obtaining recruits for Sinn Fein was broken up by Canon Charles Quinn, Parish Priest of Lower Killiavy, who made a physical attack on Mr. Pim and succeeded in temporarily preventing him explaining the policy of Sinn Fein. Shortly after this Frank Aiken, then only after leaving school, came to me about organising a company of volunteers in Camlough and starting a Sinn Fein hall in the village. We called a meeting and we enrolled about 19 members in the Volunteers.

Organisation of Volunteer Companies and Cumann-na-mBan -
South Armagh Election.

Shortly after the formation of the Camlough Company, Dr. Charles O'Neill, M.P. for South Armagh, in the British Parliament, died and a by-election was called and the polling date was fixed for February, 1918. Dr. Patrick MacCartan of Carrickmore, Co. Tyrone was selected as a candidate to represent the Sinn Féin interests and a Newry Solicitor named Patrick Donnelly was the Hibernian candidate. No Unionist went forward. The start of the South Armagh Election campaigning directed attention to all aspects of the Sinn Fein Movement. Companies of Volunteers were organised in many places. Frank Aiken was very active in organising companies. Peter Boyle and I generally

went with Frank when he was engaged on this work. One of the places we visited was Correnshego where we started a Company. James Kenny R.I.P. was appointed Captain. Branches of Cumann na mBan were also formed in many districts. When the Branch was formed in Camlough I was put in charge of them for drill instruction. I had responsibility for their military training etc. Sometime after the formation of this Branch in Camlough and when branches were got going in other districts Roseen Byrne and Nano Aiken relieved me of all my Cumann na mBan responsibilities.

The Volunteers practically took control of Sinn Fein during the South Armagh election. The election was very hotly contested. The Orangemen and the Hibernians united in a most agreeable manner to beat Sinn Fein at the polls. Sinn Fein, although beaten, put up a good show against the unholy alliance of Orange and Green.

Public Drilling of the Volunteers - Subsequent arrests:

Some time in the spring of, I think, 1918, an order came to all local Volunteer Companies from General Headquarters that on a certain Sunday all Volunteer Companies in Ireland should take part in open air drilling in Military formation on a public thoroughfare and not to be intimidated into non-compliance, with this order, by the presence of members of the R.I.C.

Frank Aiken drilled the Camlough Company on the Sunday appointed in the presence of some of the local R.I.C. A few days afterwards Frank was arrested and taken to Armagh jail as a remand prisoner. He was subsequently taken to Newry Court-house and before Mr. J. Wolfe-Flanagan R.M. on the Bench, was charged with illegal drilling. He refused

to recognise the Court and was sentenced to a month in Belfast jail.

On the day of Frank's trial I mobilised the Camlough Company and marched them into Newry where we were joined by the Newry Volunteers, and both the Camlough and Newry Cumann na mBan. I drilled the Volunteers outside the Courthouse during the time the trial was in progress. When the trial was over we marched the Volunteers through the principle streets of the town. During all this activity on our part the police made little attempts to stop us. They made a feeble attempt to seize our flag which was carried at the head of the column of marching Volunteers.

A short time after this I was arrested by R.I.C. and taken to Belfast prison on remand. After three weeks in Belfast I was returned to Newry for trial. On the morning of my trial when awaiting removal to the courthouse from Canal Street Barrack, Mr. J. Wolfe-Flanagan, R.M. came to me and pressed me strongly to sign a declaration that I would not take part in any future drilling and he declared that if I did so I would be released. I forget now what I told him but I am sure it was not nice or complementary to him. When I was taken to the Courthouse Mr. Flanagan sentenced me to two months in prison. I suspected I got an extra month for my "bad manners" to him in Canal Street Barracks.

After the trial I was taken to Belfast Prison "to do my sentence". I met Frank for the first time since his arrest and he inquired what had kept me. I was released after doing my sentence about June, 1918.

Raid for arms on Cope's:

I went with Frank Aiken on a raid for arms which was carried out on a Castle occupied by a family named Copes. We travelled to this place which is situated near Armagh City in a car supplied by James McGuill, Dundalk. On our way to the place we went astray in the darkness. However, we got in touch with a Volunteer whom we did not know and he directed us to our destination. When we arrived at the place we were met by a number of other Volunteers. Frank took charge of the raid. I was armed with an "Hydrolic" Jimmy for forcing doors that were locked against us. I proceeded in front of the others and opened the doors.

The place was immense with two flights of stairs to some of the floors. The lady who appeared to be in charge of the place came down one stairway when I was going up the other. On this stairway I met a man who appeared to be the butler. He was armed with a revolver and I disarmed him. The lady I have mentioned above was armed with a shotgun. She fired two shots before she was disarmed. No casualties from this shooting. I proceeded from room to room opening doors of the next room after a careful search was made in the last one. There was one portion of the house where Frank Aiken had information that a store of arms were kept. We got only one rifle and a shotgun in this place.

The lady of the house was subjected to questioning as to the location of the reported store of war material that we heard was in the place. She showed such spirit and courage at the start of the raid that we expected she would not answer our

questions except under some pressure. There was a very frail old man in one of the rooms. Probably this lady's father and we bluffed her that we intended to give him a severe questioning about the location of the arms. She then told us that the stuff had been removed a few days previously.

I heard that amongst the inmates of the House were three armed ex-soldiers and that those men were disarmed. I did not see those. A policeman was caught in the servants part of the premises and was tied up.

The most surprising feature of this raid was the vigorous and courageous attitude of the lady of the house when she became aware of our presence in the house, and that when the raid was over she paid compliments to our behaviour during the raid and to the fact that so much valuables were lying about in some of the rooms and nothing touched or tampered with.

The raid was a failure as far as capturing a supply of arms was concerned.

General Election, December, 1918:

On the last day for the nomination of a candidate for South Armagh in the General Election I was given one hundred pounds (£100.0. 0.) with instructions to take it into the Clerk's Office, The Workhouse, Newry, and I was to wait there up to the last minute of the specified time for posting the deposit for nominating a candidate and if no contrary instructions came I was to pay in the money.

A Mr. Greenan, then Master of the Workhouse was in the office in the Workhouse whilst I was there and he advised me that the posting of the money was foolish. My orders had to be carried out. About five minutes after I paid in the money word came that the nomination of a Sinn Fein candidate for South Armagh was called off by arrangement between Sinn Fein and the Irish Parliamentary Party. I dont know if this money was forfeited or not.

On the day of the General Election the Camlough Company of the Irish Volunteers went to Edward Street Station, Newry, awaiting a train for Belfast where we were ordered for duty on that day. Before the Belfast train came in we got an urgent message cancelling our orders for Belfast and instructions to proceed with all speed to Carlingford, 10 to 11 miles away. When we arrived in Carlingford we were shocked to find a large number of the inhabitants wearing Union Jacks. It looked as if Sinn Fein had few adherents in Carlingford in the year 1918.

After our arrival in town we ordered all the R.I.C. we saw on duty on the streets, or at the polling booths, to return to their Barracks and to remain in their Barracks whilst we were in town. The police went to their Barracks and closed themselves in for the day. A series of attacks were made on us from all sides by mobs on the streets. Our training as Volunteers and our discipline enabled us to take control, preserve order and protect voters going to record their votes until the polling booths closed. Seamus Lyang of Dundalk was polling clerk in Carlingford and when the booths closed we had to take Lyang under our protection and escort him out of the town. All the

pubs and shops in town were antagonistic to Sinn Fein and refused us refreshments. After the closing of the poll about 9 p.m. we started back for Camlough, a march of 14 or 15 miles after a most exhausting day.

Raid on Ballyedmond Castle, Co. Down:

Ballyedmond Castle is situated between Rostrevor and Kilkeel. Information was conveyed to the Volunteers that a large supply of arms and ammunition was stored in the Castle. I dont know the details of this. Plans were made to raid the Castle on a particular Saturday night - in the spring of 1919 I think. Volunteers were mobilised for this job from most districts in South Armagh and South Down. Dundalk and North Louth supplied a number of Volunteers some of whom travelled to Ballyedmond by sea. The castle was the property of Captain C. Nugent, an officer in the British Army in the 1914-1918 war.

I was placed in charge of about ten men on the road near the Castle entrance. Our duty was to protect the men raiding the Castle from surprise by crown forces and also insure that no casual person passing the vicinity of the castle would get an opportunity to give the alarm to the local police force or to the Military in Newry. This district had a mixed Unionist-Nationalist population. Any persons coming within view of us that night were made prisoners and released only when the raid was called off. The raid started about 12 midnight and was called off about 4 a.m. Peter Boyle was with me that night and we were the last to leave the vicinity of the Castle.

There was only a small number of rifles captured in the Castle. We had information that about 300 rifles had been stored there as far as I can remember. We got only eight or nine weapons.

Ruse attempted to capture Newtownhamilton Barracks:

About February, 1920, Frank Aiken told me of a plan he had worked out which he hoped might gain us admission to Newtownhamilton R.I.C. Barracks. The plan was simply for Frank to dress himself in a British Officers uniform. He was to be accompanied by about three men dressed as British soldiers and all wearing field equipment and the soldiers carrying rifles. If we gained admission we hoped to overpower the garrison of a sergeant and four or five constables

On the night selected for carrying out the ruse we travelled to Newtownhamilton dressed and equipped as described. There were a number of other volunteers on duty in the town, some for the purpose of scouting before our arrival and others to take part in the operation if our attempt to gain admission succeeded.

Frank as Officer in Charge, Peter Boyle, myself and another whom I think was Seamus Donnelly of Armagh, marched up to the barrack door. Frank rapped on the door. A policeman inside inquired who was rapping. Frank said "Military Officer on raiding duty" and gave his name as Lieutenant Brown and asked the Constable to open the door, as he desired to interview the Sergeant in Charge. The Constable refused to open the door and no coaxing him to do so had any effect. When the ruse

failed we quietly left the vicinity of the barracks. This attempt subsequently occasioned some local excitement as the districts surrounding the town contained a substantial number of Unionists in the population, and was considered safe from I.R.A. activities.

Preparations were made after this failure to prepare plans for a real attempt to capture Newtownhamilton barracks. All the preparations were completed early in May, 1920, and the attack was timed to take place on the night of the 8th May, 1920.

About the 3rd April 1920 we carried out a general order to burn all Income Tax Offices in our area. I was mobilised to help in the burning of the Head Income Tax Office in the town of Newry. This office is situated near the centre of the town along Merchants Quay facing the Newry Canal and the position would be most dangerous to get away from if the Crown Forces got the alarm and approached the position from both Monaghan Street and Canal Street directions. I was placed with a few others who included Johnnie McCoy, on the street opposite the Custom House, to protect the men inside who were engaged in burning the books and documents. Frank Aiken was in charge of the men working inside and those men included some of the Newry Volunteers who had a good knowledge of the inside of the building and where important books and documents were kept. This burning was successfully carried out and a large quantity of important books and records were destroyed without causing any alarm.

On the same night another section of the Newry Volunteers were engaged in raiding for and attempting to destroy the papers and documents in the house of a Mr. Grandy, Income Tax Collector in another part of the town. Amongst the Volunteers in this raid was Tom Tate who was a Newry Battalion Officer. When Tate who was in charge of the party entered Grandy's house he found the family in a living room. A daughter of the house - Miss Grandy - had been serving with the British Women Auxiliary Forces - The W.A.A.C!'s - during the 1914-1918 war was present when Tate, who was armed with a revolver, entered the room. She went up to him and caught him by the nose. She applied pressure on his nose in a most painful manner and forced him to drop his gun. She held on to Tate whilst she rang up the local police barracks and held him a prisoner until the police came and arrested him. This lady was trained in Ju Jitsu during her service with the British Forces. When Tate's comrades seen his helplessness they cleared off and left him there.

Attack on Newtownhamilton Barracks - May, 1920:

Newtownhamilton is a small town about 8 miles from Armagh, 12 miles from Newry, 16 miles from Dundalk and 9 miles from Castleblaney. All those were garrison towns in the vicinity of Newtownhamilton and in the town itself were considerable Unionists communities and there from 1914 onwards a well organised force of Ulster Volunteers who were reputed to have a well equipped secret store of arms available in the locality. In planning the attack on the barracks we had to visualise the possibility

of the Ulster Volunteers coming to the help of the R.I.C. when their barrack was attacked. As far as I can remember all roads leading to Newtownhamilton were blockaded and armed parties were posted at those blockades to prevent reinforcements being sent to them during the attack. A considerable number of men were posted near the town to be available to deal with the Ulster Volunteer element in case they became active.

I was selected to accompany Frank Aiken, who was in charge of the operation, in taking over a public house at the Eastern gable of the barrack. The men along with Frank and I were Peter Boyle, Tommie McGinnitty, Jack Doran, Frank Killen, Peter Kelly, Frank Doran. There may have been a few others that I can't remember.

We arrived at the door of the pub, McManuses, about 11.30 p.m. and after some delay obtained admission. We then proceeded to drill a hole in the gable wall of the barrack into a downstairs room and inserted a small charge of explosives. The result of the explosion was disappointing as the breach made was small and the police immediately started to fire through the opening.

We then went upstairs and commenced to drill a hole into an upstairs room in the barrack. From the time we obtained admission to the pub a particularly heavy rifle fire was directed at the barrack from an old ruins directly opposite and from the barrack a heavy rifle fire was opened from the front windows overlooking the street. Hand grenades were all thrown out. After probably more than an hours work we got a hole drilled through the barrack gable into the

upstairs room. We had a small quantity of gelignite remaining which we used to mine the wall. When we had the explosive charge ready for firing Frank Aiken demanded the surrender of the garrison and he informed them that he was going to blow up the barrack if they refused. The man in charge - Sergeant Traynor - refused to surrender and then the mine was fired. It did not do so much damage as was expected. In fact to get into the barrack through the breach made was a difficult job in the darkness. After the explosion the police fired some shots through the breach in the wall and Frank Aiken replied to this fire with his revolver. Frank also got in to the barrack through the breach and he had an exchange of shots with a policeman inside. We then got back with some difficulty as in darkness and dust inside we had trouble in finding the breach. When we returned we got paraffin oil and threw it into the barrack in bottles which we set afire. That side of the barracks was soon a raging mass of flame which rapidly spread to all parts of the barracks building. During this period other demands for the surrender of the defenders were refused. When the building got properly alight the noise was terrific. Rifle fire and the explosion of hand grenades and the crackling of the slates on the roof when the fire reached them made a continuous volume of sound. When the barracks got too hot for the police they evacuated and went out into a back yard behind the barracks. We could not dislodge them. We had no means of attacking except through a gateway from the public street. They had hand grenades and we had none and they had shown a determination to fight it out with us.

Around about 5 a.m. the attack was called off and we made for our home districts.

Attempt to stop and search a train at Adavoyle etc:

The next item of importance was an attempt we made to halt and raid a goods train at a level crossing at Adavoyle. We had information that arms and munitions were being sent from Dublin to Belfast in the summer of 1920 by goods trains. So about 40 to 50 volunteers from Camlough, Mullaghbawn and Meigh Companies went to the level crossing to stop the late goods train. This train generally travelled slow and was heavily laden and in this instance was pulled by two engines. We put the crossing gates across the Railway line with the red lights against the train. We also took red lamps down the line on the southern side of the gates and when the train came we stood on the line swinging the red lights as a signal for the train to stop. The drivers of the train when they saw our signals probably sensed that our signals meant a hold up. They accelerated their slow speed and refused to stop. When our attempted ruse failed we could do nothing more about it and the train passed on.

Some time after this incident some members of the Camlough and Bessbrook Companies stopped a train on the main railway line near Bessbrook and searched it for arms and mails etc.

Planned attack on soldiers escorting explosives in Newry:

About August 1920 plans were made to disarm a Section of soldiers of about 12 to 14 men who, on certain days escorted two R.I.C. men who conveyed

explosives from the military barracks in Newry, to Edward Street Railway Station where they took the early train for Gorragee Railway Quarries where the explosives were used for blasting operations. The soldiers were all armed with rifles and fixed bayonets. They wore full equipment including trench helmets and they marched in two files on each side of the R.I.C. men carrying the explosives. The sergeant in charge of the soldiers marched at the rear and was armed with a revolver.

Our plans for this operation were to commandeer a car for the quick removal of the arms and explosives to provide an assault party of about 12 to 14 men, with about 20 others to protect our rear and provide additional help to overpower the soldiers and police if necessary.

On the night before the morning fixed for this operation Frank Aiken, Peter Boyle, Johnnie McCoy and myself travelled to Meigh where we met, as far as I can remember, a few of the Meigh and Killeavey Volunteers - probably Charles McGinnity and Mickey Fearon. We remained in an outhouse near Mat Cunninghams, Meigh, and whilst there we carried out certain disguises on our persons. We equipped ourselves with beards and moustaches and in some cases we blackened our faces here and there. We then, shortly before daybreak, went to Mr. Cunninghams Garage took the lock off the door and took away his motor car. We proceeded in the car to within a short distance of the town of Newry where we waited for the time we expected the armed escort to arrive near Caulfield Place where he planned to attack them.

As we did not wish to run any unnecessary risks of rising an alarm by being seen in Newry we arrived at Caulfield Place about 5 minutes to 8. We expected to find the Newry men waiting for us as arranged at this rendezvous, but they were not there. We had a quick scout around hoping to locate them but failed. We then got information that the soldiers were approaching. Frank Aiken was the officer in charge and his first orders were for us to get into position behind some low garden walls in front of houses in Caulfield Place and have a go at disarming the escort. I can't exactly remember how many of us were in the position. We all came to the place in a model T. Ford car, including Frank Aiken. I remember Johnnie McCoy, Petie Boyle and about three or four others including myself. Perhaps Charlie McGinnitty, Mickey Fearon and Tommie O'Neill and I can distinctly remember John Quinn of Newry being there. We discussed the job on hands whilst waiting for the soldiers. We were all armed with revolvers and we had a number of hand grenades also available. We saw that we would be outnumbered about three to one. We were considering the question of ambushing the escort and using the hand grenades, when the possibility of detonating 50 to 60 lbs of gelignite by the use of hand grenades suggested itself. This possibility endangered the whole object of the operation, capture of arms and explosives. It was only when the party of soldiers and police were exactly opposite us that Frank Aiken told us to let them pass. At the time this order was given we were standing behind low walls about 15 to 20 feet from where the soldiers were marching and they must have seen us; at this time there was no traffic on the streets.

When the excitement of the preparation and waiting for this operation had passed we had a good laugh over our disguises. In my case I got a quantity of wadding and in the darkness I teased it out and fitted it on to my face as a full beard. After the operation was called off and when taking my "beard" off I found that its colour was a pale green!

General raid for arms:

My part in the general raid for arms was searching houses in Bessbrook village. We raided a number of houses in which we got four or five shotguns. During those raids it was necessary to have a guard on the police barracks in Bessbrook which was District Headquarters.

In Mullaghbawn district during this general raid a clash took place in a house where a few of the sons of the house were ex-British soldiers and when a few of the I.R.A. mostly youngsters went in to raid the house they were attacked. During the scrap in the house the owner - father of the ex soldiers - got a serious head wound. A young man named Lappin who was in the vicinity at the time when he heard of the affair got his bicycle and went to the R.I.C. with a report of what had occurred. The next evening some of the I.R.A. who were on the raid of this house were arrested by Crown Forces and others raided for. The I.R.A. got orders to arrest Lappin. He was arrested and taken into Camlough district where he was responsible for his safe custody for a few days. He was tried by I.R.A. courtmartial and was sentenced to banishment from his native district. I had him conveyed to a district he did not know, where we

released him with the warning that if he returned to the South Armagh area he would be shot at sight. This man, as far as I know, did not return to Mullaghbawn until all the troubles were over.

Attack on Camlough Barracks:

Preparations were being made in the Autumn of 1920 for an attack on Camlough Barracks. This Barracks was one of the strongholds of the R.I.C. in what is now the six counties area. On account of its strategic position the structural strength of the building was increased by all the usual military defensive devices such as sandbags and steel shuttered windows; at least two lines of barbed wire entanglements surrounded the barracks and the front entrance was protected by sandbags and barbwired trestles which were removable. At night these trestles were chained in position blocking the passage from the road to the entrance doorway. We had no illusions about the strength of the building or the defensive measures taken for its defence. Various plans for its attack were discussed.

The plan eventually decided on was to pump into the barracks a mixture of petrol and paraffin oil using a force pump and a garden hose and by this means to burn out the barracks. Because of Camloughs close proximity to Newry with its large military and police garrisons it was essential that all the roads leading into Camlough should be properly blocked against motor traffic to delay reinforcements. In conjunction with the attack on Camlough Barracks it was arranged to ambush any reinforcements coming from Newry on the night of the attack at the Egyptian Arch about a half mile from Newry on the Camlough road.

This position at the arch was so strong that it was felt that heavy casualties could be inflicted on any Crown Forces passing that way on the night of the attack.

Frank Aiken was in charge of this attack. He took personal control of what was considered as the most dangerous part of the operation. This was to insert the tube conveying the mixture of petrol and paraffin in through an upstairs window of the barrack. This tube was gun barrel tubing and was about 10 feet in length with a few feet of the same tubing fitted at right angles at one end of the 10 feet tube. The other end of the tube was connected to the garden hose which was about 50 yards long and reached to a barrel placed in the field just outside the barracks garden at the rear of the building. The barrel contained 40 gallons of the inflammatory mixture and a force pump was available to pump the mixture.

The positions occupied near the barrack for the attack were as follows: - Directly in front of the barrack on the opposite side of the road three small houses were taken possession of and the upstairs windows used as positions for Riflemen. On the southern side of the barracks a number of men took up position along the side of the barrack and behind the cover of a low wall some 10 to 12 feet from the side of the barrack. From this position handgrenades and rifle fire was directed from close range on the barrack windows. On the northern side of the barrack Frank Aiken, myself and Tommie O'Neill took up position and got the garden hose and metal tubing from the barrel at the rear up to the side of the barrack. Jack Doran and Paddy Henry took charge of the pumping.

Every thing was very quiet up to the time Frank started to insert the tube into the Barrack window. The noise occasioned by his efforts gave instant alarm to the garrison and immediately things began to happen.

In order to insure that the mixture we were pumping into the barracks should catch fire we lapped the piece of tubing at right angles to the main piece of tubing with flaxtow which is a by-product of the scutching process in preparing flax fibre and is most inflammable. Before attempting to insert the tube in the barrack window we had to light the tow and the lighting of the tow was a signal to the men in charge of the force pump to commence pumping. When Frank failed in his first attempt to put the tubing into the small opening which was left in the sandbagged and steel-shuttered window I had to assist him by standing back from him and seeing where the window was and directing him. The barrack windows were about 14 feet from the ground on this side of the barrack. The night was pitch dark, extremely cold with showers of sleet and snow. When Frank's attempt would fail I would go to his assistance and both of us tried to get the tube in. The light from the burning tow and the noise we were making soon directed the attention of the garrison to our side of the barrack and they opened rifle fire in our side of the building. As soon as the garrison showed evidence that they knew the attack was on a vigorous attack was made on the barrack from the houses in the front and from the men on the south side of the building. The volume of firing from the Barrack and at the Barrack was deafening. The police used handgrenades in all directions and they also sent up a wonderful show of very lights which at times

lighted up the barrack surroundings as bright as noonday.

We succeeded, after several failures, to get the tube into the barrack in an upstairs room. Even before we got it in some handgrenades were thrown out on our side. I remember seeing one falling beside me and the spring hit me. I threw myself in between two potato drills and when the explosion occurred I and the others ran for the nearest cover which was outside the barrack garden. When we got to the cover we found that one of the handgrenades had exploded near the tube in which the petrol-paraffin mixture was being pumped into the barracks and severed it. We knew this as soon as it happened as the pumped mixture ignited after the tube was cut and the flame lit up all that side of the barracks.

After we left the barrack garden I found that Tommie O'Neill got a serious schrapnel wound in the leg which completely immobilised him. I am not sure if he received the wound in the barrack garden or whilst leaving it.

When Frank Aiken saw that the hosepipe conveying the inflammable mixture into the barrack had been severed, he realised that the attempt to take the barracks and subdue the garrison was a failure; that further exchange of fire could have little effect and would only cause a wastage of valuable and scarce ammunition. He gave orders calling off the attack by the other sections engaged.

As soon as the attack was called off we had to make provision for Tommie O'Neill's transfer to a safe locality where he could have medical attention for his

wound. We carried Tommie to the Sinn Fein Hall at the Newry side of the village and we examined his wound. It was a serious and painful wound caused by a handgrenade splinter. Frank Aiken located the splinter and was able to extract it with a penknife. We then applied a first aid dressing. As Tommie expressed a most decided wish to be taken to Meigh where he wished to stay with the Rev. Fr. Mullin C.C. Meigh we had to carry him in a most roundabout way across fields and on to the Keggal road. There we handed him over to two members of the Meigh Company who conveyed him the remainder of the journey to Father Mullins. Tommie O'Neill was a young man of fine build about 14 stone in weight and in order to convey him the Meigh men commandeered a donkey. No other conveyance was suitable as the roads were so well blockaded. The donkey could be hoisted across most barricades and proved a comfortable and docile means of conveyance. When we got O'Neill started safely on his journey up the Keggal road Frank and I started from Camlough towards Newry. Frank told me that we would go down to the Egyptian Arch to give the Newry men a help. We could hear heavy firing from the direction of the Arch. When we came up to Frank Aiken's residence we met Frank's sister Nano. Frank asked Nano to go to some friends house and stay there. Nano refused to do so saying she was going with him.

Whilst we were talking to Nano we saw a flare signal at High Street which signified that the Tans had succeeded in passing through the ambush position at the Egyptian Arch.

This signal was an important part in the plans made for the attack on Camlough Barracks. Michael

Creegan was placed at Coopers Hill, High Street. equipped with a bag of straw which had been saturated with paraffin oil. When he saw Crown Forces tenders passing the Egyptian Arch he was to light the bag of straw and wave it on a long hay fork as a signal to the men at the barracks.

On seeing the flare signal Frank, Nano and I immediately went back the Camlough Road and across the Newry Road, up Mrs. Dunne's lonan and up the fields to the Quarter Road and down a a lane way leading towards the mountains. We were not far from the road when we saw several motor tenders full of Crown Forces passing in towards Camlough.

Later on that night we took Nano to my mothers bungalow where she joined my sister Nellie and my mother. They later evacuated the bungalow when they heard that my uncle's pub was burned by tans shortly after their arrival in Camlough, and went to Mary A. Crilly's house where they remained until morning. When the Crown Forces from Newry arrived in Camlough after the attack was called off all the I.R.A. engaged on the attack were at least half an hour gone from the vicinity of the Barracks. The first thing the British forces did was to set fire to the three houses opposite to the barracks and another house called Smyth's at the end of a row of houses near the barrack. Those houses were burned as a military necessity. My Uncles pub was next set fire to and completely destroyed not as a military necessity.

On the evening of the next day - Monday - those official fire raisers came to Frank Aiken's residence and sprinkled paraffin oil in the rooms

down stairs and set fire to them. This attempt was a failure as the fires only smouldered and went out. The incendiaries later returned and again set fire to the premises. They had, I understand, to return a third time before their efforts showed satisfactory results.

On Monday night my mother's bungalow was set on fire and completely destroyed by Tans. British Military, Tans and Special Constabulary occupied positions in the village and on roads leading to it night and day for at least a week. All people passing were held up and questioned or searched. This holding of all the roads by Crown Forces made our communications rather difficult for a few days. A few days after the attack Frank, Peter Boyle and I made contact with Johnnie McCoy and the four of us took possession of an old vacant house on the side of Camlough mountain. This house overlooked Camlough village and was only about 1200 yards from the barrack. Our object in going into this place was to be close at hand to carry out an attack on a patrol opposite the ruins of Frank Aiken's residence, as soon as the occasion offered. We had to be extremely careful whilst staying in the place. We could not light a fire during daylight hours, as the smoke could be seen for miles around and would arouse curiosity which might be dangerous to us. Whilst here we generally slept by day and moved about by night. We had two volunteers who supplied us with all requirements in food etc. named Sean Doran R.I.P. and another who is happily still alive named Jimmy O'Hara. This other was

one night going in the direction of his home from where we were staying. He was halted by a number of R.I.C. who questioned him about where he was coming from. He gave them wrong information. They told him that he was coming from the vacant house we were in and that we were in it, and that they were going to that house to get us. He was ordered into his own house and was told that if he attempted to get out they would shoot him. The inexplicable result of this affair was that the police did not come near us nor did they get the military out from Newry to surround the place. The only reasonable explanation of this affair is that the police did not fancy taking any physical risks to get us and that the weather being very bad at the time they preferred being in bed to lying behind a fence firing on us.

On Xmas Eve we vacated this house. On that morning about 11 o'clock the four of us were in bed when we heard some person attempting to break in the door. The door was a flimsy affair and we had it barricaded on the inside with blocks of wood. The person on the outside was using considerable force to break in. As we had heard of the police's knowledge of our whereabouts that morning we came to the opinion that it was Crown Forces were attempting to open the door, so we prepared for action. After some effort the barricades gave way and the door opened. A man in everyday working clothes appeared in the doorway and when he saw us fully armed and in positions to use them he must have got as big a fright as we got. It turned out he was a local farmer who was looking for strayed sheep and when he came to "our place"

he investigated in the hope that the sheep might be put into the house and the door closed on them to prevent further straying. This place was no longer safe!! so we left it Frank and John McCoy to spend Xmas with friends and Peter and I went to Mr. Mackin's House near the Mountain House and spent Xmas there.

After the burning of my mother's bungalow my mother and my sister Nellie went to Scotland where my mother had friends. Shortly after their arrival there I got a message from Scotland that my mother was seriously ill and I was advised to go to her. I went to Frank Aiken and informed him of my mother's illness and he gave me leave to cross to Scotland to look after my mother's welfare. My mother's illness lasted for a considerable time and I remained in Scotland up to the end of May, 1921, when I got orders to return. I got my mother removed to Ireland and obtained accommodation for her for some time in O'Hare's of Warrenpoint.

After my return home I reported to my Battalion O.C. Michael Fearon. Some time after this Michael Fearon asked me to call in to Warrenpoint and inspect a new building which the R.I.C. had taken over and fortified as a barrack. I was to have a careful look over the outside of the barrack and its surrounding with a view of gaining as much knowledge as possible as an attack on this barracks was contemplated. The morning I got those instructions I proceeded armed to Warrenpoint. This was the morning of the day that Constable Gabbie was shot near the markets in Newry. On my arrival in Warrenpoint I inspected the surroundings of the barrack and then called at O'Hare's where my mother

and sister Nellie were staying. When O'Hare saw I was armed and when he heard of the shooting in Newry he became most anxious to get me from about his place. He got another O'Hare who did motor hackney work and had purchased a motor car from the Earl of Kilmorley and had only got delivery; on both sides of the car were the Kilmorley coat of arms. I got into the car and the driver started for Newry. He passed through the town and dropped me a few miles outside of Bessbrook. There was great military and police activities that evening as a result of the Gabbie shooting. We passed through several cordons in the vicinity of Newry and the Kilmorley coat of arms seemed a safe conduct to us whenever halted. When I left the car I proceeded to walk. I attempted to get to Barney Burns place near Eshwary, I lost my way and I got into a district I didn't know. I met a man on the road and I enquired from him where the Mountain House was. I made this inquiry to find out where districts, I knew, were located. The man looked keenly at me, remained silent and passed on. The Mountain House - a wellknown public house - was raided that evening for me.

I eventually got to Barney Burns and I remained there.

When I returned to the Camlough Company area I found that all the active men were dispersed in small bands. The days were long and bright and in the entire southern end of Co. Armagh, police and military patrols were constantly on the move. Round-ups were of frequent occurrence. All well-known Republicans, members of I.R.A. and Sinn Fein and Cumman na mBan

were on the run and could not safely remain in their own houses. The British Forces were engaged in a campaign of murder of any I.R.A. men who fell into their hands during their frequent night raids. Several British spies were shot by the I.R.A. In Killeavey districts four I.R.A. men were murdered in one night. Those shootings are recorded in the Irish Daily and Local papers of the time. No ambitious operation could be attempted by the I.R.A. as the long days prevented the secret movements of men from district to district. All that was possible at the time was to evade capture and to carry out reprisals for any acts of outrage committed against our people by British armed forces.

I called a meeting of the members of the Camlough Company. I had an idea that the Company wanted some reorganising. I had been away in Scotland for about four months and I felt that my absence might have made some difference with the outlook of the men. At this meeting I tendered my resignation as Company Captain. The men would not hear of my resignation. I consented to remain on as Company O.C.

Truce Period:

About August, 1921, a training camp was set up at Killeavey, Co. Armagh, where all 4th Northern Division Officers from the Divisional Staff to the Company Captains received a course of instruction. The Instructional Staff in the camp included two G.H.Q. training officers. I spent about a month in the camp. I was on duty in the camp when Mick Collins addressed a monster Republican Meeting in Armagh city about September, 1921. Before this

meeting took place Frank Aiken, then Divisional O.C. came to me and told me that he was putting me in charge of a strong guard on the training camp; that he considered that a strong guard was necessary as the opposition forces might be inclined to attack or carry out a raid on the camp during the absence of so many of the I.R.A. at Collins meeting in Armagh. I took charge of the guard on the camp as ordered. Nothing happened.

On the day after the meeting Michael Collins, Harry Boland and Frank arrived at the Camp and Frank asked me to take charge of all the men in the camp for a parade, march past and inspection of arms by Michael Collins who was then Commander in Chief of the I.R.A. I carried out my instructions.

From the time of the training camp up to about February 1922, training of local companies and an occasional Battalion mobilisation were carried out with regularity.

About February 1922 the Northern Government commenced a system of carrying out heavy motor tender and armoured car night patrols on the roads in South Armagh districts. We were mobilised on a few occasions to ambush those patrols. Nothing however, came our way on any of the occasions we were waiting for them. After a few weeks we were called off this waiting in positions to ambush patrols.

Republican Courts:

Early in the truce period a republican court was organised in Camlough. The following were appointed as Republican Justices - Pat McGinn, High Street, Bessbrook; P.J. Hughes Lisseraw and Thomas Woods,

Bessbrook, Clerk of the Court. Courts were held regularly in the Forresters Hall, Camlough. At one of the first sessions of the Court, District Inspector McFarland attended at the Forresters Hall with an armed force of R.I.C. to suppress the Court or to attempt to scare the officials of the Court and litigants from taking part in the business of the Court. When the District Inspector found that he could only put a stop to the functioning of the Court by the use of armed force, he withdrew his men and no further attempt was made to interfere with Court work. After the Republican Courts had been a few weeks in existence their popularity with the public and with litigants became assured. Nearly all the prominent Newry Solicitors attended at the Camlough Court to represent clients including Mr. Fisher, a Unionist Solicitor.

In addition to the holding of Republican Courts the organisation of Sinn Fein made strenuous efforts to prevent the functioning of British Courts and succeeded in imposing a boycott on those courts which left little work for them.

Actions for the recovery of debts due when tried in a British Court was in most cases undefended and decrees were as a result easily obtainable. In one such case a decree for debt was issued against Thomas O'Hanlon of Lathberget, Mullaghbawn, who was in business as a Hackney car owner. O'Hanlon was in Camlough fair when the Gripper (Sheriff's Bailiff) who had been handed the decree for collection went to the R.I.C. and requested the Sergeant in Charge to provide him with a police escort to enable him to make a seizure on O'Hanlon's horse and car. This

request was granted and the Gripper made the seizure and locked horse and car up in Doyle's yard. O'Hanlon came to me to get his horse and car back. I got my gun and told O'Hanlon to take his horse and car from the yard. The Gripper made an attempt to effect a second seizure. I warned him off. He then went to the R.I.C. for further assistance. The Sergeant told him to clear off as he (the Gripper) was not fit to hold on to a seizure when the police went to the trouble of helping at it.

Attempt to capture Camlough Barracks - Ruse:

There was a Constable James Armstrong serving in Camlough Barracks in 1920-1921. This young man was known as being antagonistic to the Special Constabulary, many of whom were serving in Camlough Barracks with him. He was also suspected of having sympathetic leanings towards the I.R.A. I got in touch with him early in 1922. About the end of April I discussed with him the possibility of the I.R.A. gaining admission to Camlough Barracks through a side door and so seizing the barracks. Constable Armstrong was most enthusiastic about this operation. He was resigning from the force in a short time and he promised his co-operation and freely offered his advice about the inside arrangements in the Barracks, and the movements of the garrison, their sleeping accommodation and time-tables. I collected all the information possible about the Barracks and I had consultations with the Divisional O.C. Frank Aiken on the whole matter. The plan finally agreed on and sanctioned by the Divisional staff was as follows:-

On Sunday morning the 7th May, 1922, the side-door of the Barracks was to be left open by

Armstrong, at about 8.30 a.m. At this time a number of the garrison composed of Special Constabulary who had been out on motor patrol duty during the previous night would be in bed for a sleep. We were told that the majority of those men returned to the Barracks each morning under the influence of intoxicating drink. A number of the Catholic members of the garrison would have gone to Carrickcruppen Chapel for 8.30 a.m. Mass, so that the garrison would be at its weakest at that time each Sunday morning. On that particular morning a party of picked officers from the Military Barracks in Dundalk under the command of Johnny McCoy came to within a mile of Camlough before the appointed time to take part in rushing the Barracks through the side door. A courier was to be despatched to this rushing party when watchers at the Barracks saw that the side door was open.

I was one of a party of men under Micky Fearon, Battalion O.C. waiting in a shed at my mother's cottage for a signal from a man named Halpenny who was concealed in some rock about 20 yards from the Barracks side door. We got the signal from Halpenny and we all rushed to the rocks. When we arrived there we found that the side door was closed by one of the policemen who had been on duty the previous night. We heard later that this man was rambling about in a drunken stupor and blindly blundered into a door he knew should be closed and he closed it.

The closing and locking of the side door rendered all our plans futile as we had not a hope of getting access to the Barracks, and quickly subduing the garrison except by a ruse such as was

planned. All the wires leading from the Barracks were cut as were other wires in the vicinity of Bessbrook and south of Newry. All the people going to Mass in Carrickcruppen were held up at the Forresters Hall on the Newry Road and compelled to remain there until the operation was called off.

During the time this matter of rushing the Barracks was being discussed, I was living at home in Camlough and when the plan failed I started for Ravensdale Camp which was Battalion Headquarters and where about 150 men from the Battalion were billeted under arms. That Sunday night the house where my mother and sister were living near Camlough, was raided for me by Crown Forces under the command of D.I. McFarland. A man named O'Hagan was a visitor in the house at the time of the raid. When the raiders had given the house a thorough search and found nothing they attacked O'Hagan and threatened to shoot him. My sister Nellie appealed to the police to lay off O'Hagan as he was a harmless young fellow and had no connection with the I.R.A. They left eventually without doing any serious damage to O'Hagan.

Activities in South Armagh - Dungooley Camp:

About the first days in June, 1922, I was stationed in Dungooley Camp on the South Armagh border. The Mullaghbawn and Camlough Companies, who had evacuated Northern Ireland, made up the garrison of this Camp, which contained about 100 men. This Camp was used as a training ground for Column men and as a base for operations against British Forces in the Six County Area. About the end of May, 1922, wholesale arrests of wellknown Republicans and I.R.A. men took place all over the Six County Area. All around the Border districts in South Armagh the Nationalist

Civilian population made a nightly trek across the Border to safeguard themselves against what might happen to them during night raids on their homes. Those middle-aged and older men camped out in the fields in Co. Louth during the fine summer weather which then prevailed and were fed at least one meal per night by the Camp cooks. The whole atmosphere of the time as far as the civilian unionist and the civilian nationalist was concerned was one of expectation of something unpleasant if not horrible about to take place. The nationalist population of the Border districts secured some safety when they spent their nights across the Border. The police forces in the Six County Area moved about rarely in South Armagh areas except in heavy motor car and armed car patrols which were generally a mixed force of Special Constabulary and the Regular Police Forces sometimes supported by British Military. A column of about 60 men composed of officers from the Military Barracks, Dundalk and men from Dungooley Camp on many occasions moved into South Armagh districts and took up ambush positions. This column had a strength of approximately 60 men and generally remained in Northern Ireland for about 3 days at a time. On one occasion a Section of men from Dungooley travelled to within $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles of Newtownhamilton and captured Captain McMurrin - Area Commander of the B. Special Constabulary in South Armagh - from behind two motor tenders containing well-armed A. Special Constabulary who were acting as Captain McMurrin's escort. Captain McMurrin was taken into the Military Barracks in Dundalk, informed that he was to be kept and treated as a prisoner of war ~~but would~~ but would be held as a hostage for the good behaviour of the Crown Forces within his official area. If any of our people were killed by Crown

Forces in South Armagh he would be executed as a reprisal. He got all facilities that an officer prisoner should get; this, notwithstanding the criminal status imposed on our officers or men captured by British and Northern Government Forces and sent to prisons in Britain.

Fight near Dungooley Camp:

The Camp at Dungooley was situated at a large farmhouse near Dungooley Cross, on the reverse side of a hill facing away from the South Armagh frontier. A cross road is situated on top of this hill overlooking the frontier. This is a four road cross, one road running north and south, leading from Dundalk to Silverbridge in Co. Armagh, and crossing the frontier about 600 yards north of Dungooley Cross at Carriff Grove; the other roads leading east and west. On the east side it leads to Forkhill and across the frontier after descending a steep hill about 400 yards from the Cross and the west side leads towards Mountshill in Co. Louth and Ballsmill in Co. Armagh.

On the western side of the Cross facing Forkhill, we had the road fortified by the erection of half walls on the roadside which were loopholed for the protection of riflemen who were posted behind those breastworks to prevent the approach of hostile forces. In front of the half walls the road was mined at intervals down to the actual frontier to prevent the approach of hostile motorised forces or armoured cars. Those road mines could be electrically exploded from a position overlooking the mines.

On Thursday the 1st June, 1922, about early midday a number of Special Constabulary were seen approaching the frontier line from the Forkhill side in their shirt sleeves. When they were noticed and identified as policemen they were fired on by the men at the road barricades. They rushed into positions on the border line and replied to our men's fire with arms which they had concealed on their persons. The entire camp garrison got under arms and took up the various positions guarding against an all-out attack on the camp. The small number of Specials who initiated the attack got themselves into a dangerous predicament. Our men were closing in on them and it became evident that they could not long survive. Reinforcements of police came to their assistance from a camp where a large number of Special Constabulary were encamped at Captain Alexander's place about two miles from Forkhill. Some of those reinforcements got in and occupied Flynn's house which is exactly on the frontier line. The doors and windows on this house faced Dungooley Cross and our positions. When the police in Flynn's house got into action we commenced a concentrated attack on the house from the front and sides which made it soon apparent to the police that they had entered a death trap from which they could not escape. A number of armoured cars and armoured lorries - about 7 or 8 - soon arrived from the Military Barracks in Newry and got involved in the shooting. Armoured cars manned by military concentrated on evacuating the police from Flynn's house. This proved a difficult operation as our men were now entrenched in strong positions and were maintaining a heavy and effective fire on the front and rear of Flynn's house.

Machine guns were used by both sides. With the extra military reinforcements arriving the "battle" front gradually extended until about a mile of country became involved. Sometime about midnight a British Army officer who was in charge of the party attempting to relieve Flynn's house asked for a truce to enable him to extricate some wounded men who required urgent medical attention. His request was granted and shortly after this when the police were evacuated from Flynn's house all enemy forces withdrew and the "battle" ended.

Fight at Jonesboro:

A few days after the Dungooley fight a few members of the Special Constabulary who formed part of the garrison of Jonesboro R.I.C. Barracks went to the public house known as Gallaghers at Flurrybridge in the Free State Area and only about 60 yards from these Barracks and commenced to loot it for cash and intoxicating drink and goods. Those men were surprised at their looting by a few I.R.A. officers stationed in the ruins of Ravensdale Castle and the Castle farmyard about 400 to 500 yards from Jonesboro. Those officers opened fire on the looters who all received wounds and were able to return to their Barracks with some difficulty, even when helped by some of their friends from the Barracks. The shooting soon alerted the entire police garrison in Jonesboro who got out after the I.R.A. officers who fired on their comrades. The men in Ravensdale camp immediately got under arms and a fight commenced. The I.R.A. camp and the Specials Barracks at Jonesboro are on elevations facing each other and very soon rifles and machine guns were working full blast from both positions.

Reinforcements soon arrived to both sides. For the I.R.A. from Dundalk Military Barracks and from Dungooley Camp. Large reinforcements from the Military Barracks in Newry and from a few of the neighbouring camps of Special Constabulary came to the assistance of the garrison in Jonesboro. It soon became evident that the Barracks were being slowly approached and surrounded by the I.R.A. attackers. A position quite close to the Barracks was occupied and fortified from which an effort to sap under the Barracks was started. It was hoped by this means we could mine the Barracks and so force the garrisons surrender or destroy them.

During the second day of the fight six Cumann na mBan girls from Bessbrook collected explosives and handgrenades which were dumped in Bessbrook area. They procured a pony and trap and started with their load of war material for the scene of battle. They succeeded in crossing the border and on the Free State side were held up and searched by Specials. They were arrested and taken back into Northern Ireland and lodged in Bessbrook R.I.C. Barracks. The fact of the girls arrest was soon reported to Divisional Headquarters in Dundalk which soon steeled the attackers of Jonesboro to increase their efforts and by endangering the Barracks and its garrison, obtain a bargaining position to obtain the girls unharmed release.

At the end of the second day of the fight the I.R.A. held a few positions in Northern Ireland territory near the Barracks and the British Military from Newry seemed to hold about a half mile of the main Belfast-Dublin road, on the Free State side

from the border at Carrackarnon to Flurrybridge and Jonesboro.

This fight started, I think, on a Thursday evening, continued all Thursday night, Friday and Friday night. On Saturday the Military Barracks in Newry opened communications with Frank Aiken, Divisional O.C. in Dundalk Military Barracks. The Military Officer in Newry inquired why the fight at Jonesboro was being prolonged and if a truce could be arranged and if so on what conditions. The Divisional O.C. informed the Military that if the Cumann na mBan were released unharmed he would call off the I.R.A. attacks but if not that the Barracks and all in it would go up in smoke forthwith. The Military Officer agreed to the terms and the fighting was called off at about 7 p.m. on Saturday when the girls arrived safe in Dundalk.

Shooting of Patrick Creegan and Thomas Crawley by Crown Forces:

On the evening of the 14th June, 1922, Patrick Creegan was standing outside his home at Derrymore, Bessbrook, when a stranger in plain clothes on a motor bike came up to him and asked him his name and was told it was Patrick Creegan. Some short time later a motor tender containing armed men came along and asked Creegan his name. He answered "Creegan". The men then seized him and took him with them on the tender in the direction of Whitecross. At Lisadian, Whitecross, the men in the motor tender met Thomas Crawley on the road. Crawley was a local farmer and auctioneer and had Republican sympathies but had no connection with the I.R.A. Crawley was also taken in the motor tender and it drove off. Later on that evening or night

Creegan and Crawley were found on the road between the Mountain House and Lislea, shot dead, with their hands tied behind their backs. The place where their dead bodies were found was part of an ambush position occupied by the I.R.A. about a week or so previous and each body was placed over a hole where land mines were inserted in the road during the lying in ambush. Neither of the murdered men had any active connection with the I.R.A. Creegan might have been shot for his brother Mick, who was an active volunteer. This shooting was looked on by the I.R.A. as a retaliation by the Crown Forces to force the I.R.A. to cease their then policy of awaiting in ambush positions for heavy mechanised patrols of police and military travelling the roads.

The Altnaveigh Shootings:

The small village of Altnaveigh is situated in South Armagh, slightly over a mile from Newry. All the inhabitants of this district were Orangemen and were members of the B.Specials. The men of this district were reputed to have connections with a lot of local shootings of Republicans, both in pre-Truce and in 1922. The shooting of Patrick Creegan seemed to have pin-pointed attention to the Altnaveigh district as his brother Mick was arrested in September, 1920 as a result of raiding a house in Altnaveigh, where the evidence of the owner of the house failed to secure a conviction at Mick's courtmartial. I.R.A. Intelligence had little doubt that the Orangemen of Altnaveigh were connected with a lot of the shootings of Nationalists which took place in the vicinity of Newry in 1921 and 1922. When the shooting of Creegan and Crawley occurred it seemed a challenge to the I.R.A. that

reprisals on our civilian population was to be adopted as an effective means of stopping our military activities. The fact that our columns could take up positions six or seven miles within the Northern Ireland frontier was a challenge to the control the Northern Government were anxious to secure, and it was also a protection to our civilian population as it caused a practical cessation of night raidings by Crown Forces in country districts.

It was decided that the policy of reprisal by the British Forces in the North should be met with a policy of counter reprisals by the I.R.A. and Altnaveigh district was selected as the site for the start of those counter reprisals.

On Saturday the 17th June in the early hours of that morning a party of I.R.A. men moved into Altnaveigh district and attacked a number of houses - seven or eight in all. Rifles and bombs were used. Six people were slain and four dangerously wounded. The houses of three families were badly burned.

The dead were -

Thomas Crozier and his wife
 James Heslip, farmer (50)
 Robert Heslip and his son (17)
 James Lockart, farmer (21)
 Joseph Gray (17)

Badly wounded included -

John T. Gray
 William Lockart
 Joseph Little
 Edward Little

The houses of Thomas Crozier, John Heslip and William McCullough were badly burned.

When the details of this operation became known it caused alarm and terror in all South Armagh districts. The shootings and outrages which took place before Altnaveigh happened were progressively getting worse, until at last the crescendo seemed to have been reached. The fear inspired by Altnaveigh and what had gone before was not confined to any one party or section of the community. All were afraid of what was to come next. In neighbouring districts around Newry, Bessbrook and Altnaveigh area all the male civilian population evacuated their houses at night and slept out in the fields. This state of affairs soon produced strange bedfellows for the Nationalists which included Hibernians and Republicans and the Unionists and Orangemen went together in many instances for company when sleeping out and promised each other protection, as for instance, the Unionists promised their Nationalists friends protection if the Specials came along and the Nationalists promised vice versa if the I.R.A. arrived on the scene.

The fears that something terrible would happen after the Altnaveigh shootings did not materialise. In districts where the Unionists had a majority of the population and where the B.Specials were able to carry out their nightly armed patrols and where in some cases they acted in a provocative and domineering manner to their Nationalist neighbours, after the Altnaveigh affair those armed patrols ceased and their manners improved. The only explanation for this great change is that a lot of decent Unionists felt that the shootings in Altnaveigh had been earned and came as a logical sequence to former shootings.

General Rising planned and called off:

In May, 1922, a general attack all over the Six County area was planned and I think agreed on by all the other Northern Divisional Officers. Arms in large quantities had been safely imported into Northern Ireland for use by the I.R.A. in the various districts all over the Six County area and the rising was fixed for some time about 19th to 24th May, 1922. The rising was called off and I know nothing further about it. The information about the contemplated rising got to the Northern Government and a large number of arrests were made in various districts throughout the Six County area. Those arrests did not effect my Brigade area as the I.R.A. strength of the Six County portion of the Brigade area were practically all located in Camps in Co. Louth. In fact as far as I can remember there was no attempt made by Crown Forces to effect arrests in South Armagh until much later than May, 1922.

Civil War and its effect in Northern Ireland:

At the end of June, 1922, when the Civil War broke out in Dublin, all military operations were called off in 4th Northern Divisional area within the Six Counties by the Divisional staff. The Division declared a neutral attitude towards the Civil War soon raging in the South. Part of our Brigade which comprised North Louth from the Glide river, northwards, and including the town of Dundalk and the Cooley peninsula, went over to the Four Courts Executive when the split took place in the I.R.A. in the spring of 1922. The 1st Brigade Staff and 1st and 2nd Battalion Staffs went over to the Executive. The Divisional Staff, 3rd Battalion, 1st Brigade and the 2nd and 3rd Brigades

remained under G.H.Q. When the Civil War started however, the entire Division declared a neutral attitude and took steps to maintain a strict policy of neutrality.

Nothing of any account took place for about two weeks. We heard rumours that the pro-Treaty forces under G.H.Q. were threatening to attack us if we did not become active on their side. Without any provocation or warning that they intended to attack the forces of the 5th Northern Division (pro-Treaty forces) came into Dundalk on the night of the 15th July, 1922, and captured the military barracks and the two police barracks which were all occupied by our men. There was no serious opposition offered as the Divisional attitude was still neutral. After the capture of Dundalk by Dan Hogan who was O/C of the pro-Treaty forces, Frank Aiken and many of our Divisional Officers were put into Dundalk jail and kept there as prisoners. About a week later a Divisional meeting was held, first to re-organise the various staffs after the many arrests and secondly to consider the question of our future policy consequent on the attack made on the invasion of our area.

It was decided that we abandon our neutrality as a policy and that we should attack the pro-Treaty forces who invaded our area. This took the form of an attack on Dundalk prison where all our captured officers and men were imprisoned. We successfully accomplished this by blowing a hole in the outside prison wall and getting about 120 prisoners out safely. The escaped prisoners included Frank Aiken, Divisional O.C. This attack on the prison is known since as "the Hole

in the Wall" and took place on the 27th July, 1922.

For at least a week after this there was little doing. About the 10th August we were mobilised at Omeath and were told to prepare for a big operation which turned out to be the capture of the town of Dundalk from the pro-Treaty forces. This was a big operation and involved the simultaneous attack on the military barracks, Bridge Street police barracks, Anne Street police barracks and the prison. There were very strong garrisons in all those places - about 400 men in the military barracks and about 150 men divided amongst the other three posts.

I was ordered to accompany Frank Aiken on the first wave of attackers on the backgate of the military barracks. Explosives were used on both the front and back gate. The mine at the front gate failed to explode and it was the attackers at the back gate that bore the brunt of the fight. After the back gate was destroyed by the explosion Frank Aiken and about nine men rushed the breach and got through. I was on the second wave of men and as far as I can remember was in charge. We got through to the Barrack Square safely. We immediately commenced mining the Officers Quarters on one side of the Square and the Men's Quarters on the other. A heavy fire was soon directed on to the Barrack Square from some of the Barrack Rooms. We, however got the upper hand as prisoners were captured and got out into the Square. We threw bags of explosives of about 8 to 10 lbs each into the windows of the ground floors of the barrack rooms. When those exploded the inmates generally surrendered. In the military barracks we took about 350 prisoners. The

other posts in town surrendered as soon as they knew that the military barracks had fallen.

Dundalk jail was pretty full of anti-Treaty prisoners after the surrender of the garrison those men were taken down to the military barracks and fully armed. The pro-Treaty prisoners taken by us were then all marched up from the military barracks and put into the prison. This must have been one of the fastest reversals of fortune for any two sets of combatants ever recorded in history. What looked to us as an immense store of rifles, machine guns, revolvers, automatic pistols and ammunition of all kinds was captured in Dundalk. Our first work after the capture of the town was to remove all this surplus stuff to hidden dumps. We had not sufficient man power to hold the town of Dundalk so that when the pro-Treaty forces moved in towards the town in an effort to recapture it we evacuated.

I went out to Dungooley Camp and I remained there with some of the Mullaghbawn Company and then from Camlough Company. We were warned by the Divisional O.C. against remaining in Dungooley camp. We did not heed the warning. A few weeks after the capture of Dundalk the Camp at Dungooley was surrounded by pro-Treaty forces and a number of us were captured. We might have all escaped but that Paddy O'Hanlon of Mullaghbawn got seriously wounded in the leg and in our efforts to look after him we got completely surrounded.

I was sent to Newbridge Internment Camp in Co. Kildare and I remained there until December, 1923. I was released in December, 1923, and I returned to Dundalk. I could not go home to Camlough as the

Northern police force were looking for me and the Northern Government had my name on an Exclusion Order as a person who was dangerous to the peace of the Six Counties if allowed to live within their jurisdiction. I went to live in Omeath with three or four others who were in similar plight as myself, having Exclusion Orders in force against them or warrants out for their arrest. I remained in Co. Louth until 1925 when my unfortunate economic condition, together with the feeling that I should defy the Northern Authorities by going home decided me. I went home. I was arrested by the local R.U.C. and sent down to Belfast prison as a remand prisoner, no charge being preferred against me. I was kept in solitary confinement in Belfast. I was one day taken into a small compound for exercise. An old warder was with me. I was told to march around a small ring. After a short time I enquired from the warder what was the cause of my being walked around in such a manner. He told me that I was being subjected to an attempt to have my identification established for the shooting of a Unionist named Frazer who was shot in 1922. He told me in a stage whisper to look up to a certain window when passing it and that I would see the outline of a lady's hat worn by the person who was there to identify me. That evening I was again speaking to the warder and I asked him if he knew the result of my identification parade. He told me he heard the result was negative. I then said "I suppose they will soon release me." He then told me that he heard I was up for another identification parade in about a weeks time. I then enquired what was it about this time. He first said he did not know and then later said that he heard the place Altnaveigh mentioned and the name of a person named Grey.

I got an opportunity to get a message out to the people at home stating that I was for an identification parade in connection with the Altnaveigh shootings etc. A young man of the Grey family, who had suffered casualties at Altnaveigh, was working as a clerk in Messrs. Fisher's Solicitors Newry. A stranger called on this young man and had a confidential chat with him in which he warned the young man that if he was noticed as absent from his work in the office or seen travelling to Belfast that it would be liable to have most unpleasant consequences. This stranger stressed that the young man's family had already suffered so much that to court any further danger of a repetition of such happenings would be calamitous. On the day fixed for the identification parade I was informed that it was called off and a short time afterwards I was released.

After this I continued living at home in Camlough. For a few years the local police maintained a close watch on my movements. I was interested in Greyhound racing and when taking my dogs out for a training walk I had a police spotter keeping me under observation.

Signed Jack M. Elbow
Date 7th January 1952.

Witness John Mc Coy.
Date 7th January 1952.

