W.S. 665

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ROINN COSANTA.

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 665

Witness

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(Proinnsias O Dubhtaigh),
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Dublin.

Identity.

Captain 'C' Company Enniskillen Battalion,
Irish Volunteers, 1913 - ;
Chairman, Monaghan Dail Court, 1919-1920.

Subject.

Ballykinlar Internment Camp
1921.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil

File No. S.1888

Form B.S.M. 2

C O N T E N T S

M E M O R A N D U M

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BALLYKINLAR INTERNMENT CAMP

by

PROINNSIAS Ó DUBHTHAIGH (F. O'DUFFY)

who was interned in Camp II, Ballykinlar, from January to December, 1921, and acted as Prisoners' Commandant in that Camp from June until the general release in December, 1921.

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BALLYKINLAR INTERNMENT CAMPS

(1) General Description.

There were two Internment Camps at Ballykinlar, usually distinguished as Camp I and Camp II. Though these two Camps adjoined each other for a short distance at one end - being separated only by the double fence of barbed wire which surrounded each camp - they were isolated from each other, and communication between the prisoners in one camp and those in the other was forbidden. This regulation was overcome, however, by the simple plan of throwing messages (attached to a stone) from one camp to the other at the place where the two camps adjoined. To prevent these messages falling into the hands of the British a code of signals was arranged to indicate "coast clear", and safe receipt of the message.

Each camp was self-contained, apart from the fact that there was only one hospital for sick prisoners. This was situated in Camp I, and this fact was availed of for discussions of important issues of policy between the prisoners' leaders of the two camps: a reliable person from Camp II "went sick" and got transferred to the hospital. It was also availed of to transfer men who were "wanted" (by the British) from one camp to the other: the man who returned to Camp II (after a short stay in the hospital) was sometimes not the man who had gone to the hospital. Though there was a British Medical Officer on the staff of the Camps, the medical treatment of the prisoners was left mainly to their own

doctors, of whom there were a number among the prisoners.

Each camp held (when full) 1,000 (one thousand) prisoners. These were divided, for purposes of administration, into four companies (250 men each), and each company was housed in ten huts (25 men to each hut). The companies in Camp I were described as A, B, C, and D, and those in Camp II as E, F, G, and H. In addition to the huts, in which the men slept, the camp buildings included large central huts for use as chapel, dining-hall, recreation (concerts etc.), canteen, cook-house, work-shops, etc.

The sanitary arrangements were very primitive - latrines and buckets. This was the most objectionable feature of the camps, and, as all the work within the camps had to be done by the prisoners, the emptying of the buckets was one of their nastiest "fatigues" (as camp duties were called).

There was a Catholic Chaplain (Fr. McLister) - appointed by the Bishop of the diocese - attached to the camps, and a chapel in each camp. Prior to the arrival of Fr. Burbage as a prisoner to Camp II (about the end of January 1921), Fr. McLister said Mass on alternate days in the two camps; afterwards Fr. Burbage said Mass daily in Camp II and Fr. McLister in Camp I.

Camp II.

(1) The remainder of this memorandum deals with conditions in Camp II; my information regarding Camp I is based on hearsay (and a short visit to the hospital), but I believe that it differed in many ways from Camp II. Particulars regarding the organisation and activities of the prisoners

in the latter camp are contained in an album entitled "The Book of Ballykinlar" at present on loan in the historical collections of the National Museum. The following is a copy of the descriptive note attached to it:-

THE "BOOK OF BALLYKINLAR".

On August 12, 1921, all the Teachtaí Dála in Ballykinlar Camp were released in order to attend a meeting of Dáil Éireann which was held in the Mansion House on August 16, 1921. The Ballykinlar Teachtaí procured this album and had it autographed in the Mansion House by Michael Collins, Eoin MacNeill, Arthur Griffith and Éamonn De Valera. It was then sent to Proinnsias Ó Dubhthaigh, the Commandant of No. 2 Camp, and was autographed by every prisoner in the Camp. There are over a thousand names, grouped together according to the huts which the prisoners occupied. A page is devoted to each hut and each page is ornamented with a border of Celtic illuminated work, no design being repeated. The artist was Micheál Ó Riada of Killarney. The book also contains a complete account of the life and activities of the Camp and sketches by Muiris MacConghail, Liam MacEoin, Cathal Ó Samhrain and B. Ryan. The book, with an illuminated foreword, was presented to Father Burbage by Proinnsias Ó Dubhthaigh on behalf of his fellow prisoners. Father Burbage was first a prisoner in the Curragh Camp, then in Arbour Hill and was finally sent to Ballykinlar where he remained until the General Release.

Lent by Rev. T. Burbage, P.P., Tinryland, Co. Carlow. E.W. (Loan).

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(2) Camp Organisation and Officials.

The organisation followed the usual plan. The prisoners elected a Commandant (and a Vice-Commandant); the men (25) in each hut elected a "hut-leader", and those (250) in each of the four companies (or lines of 10 huts) a "Line Captain". These appointments were notified to the British and recognised by them. In addition the Commandant and each Line Captain appointed

an Adjutant to assist them in their duties. After a time the British objected to the title "Commandant", and ordered that it be changed to "Supervisor" (and Vice-Supervisor). Leo Henderson was the first Commandant in Camp II, and I was his Adjutant. He resigned in May or June, and I was elected to succeed him; Seán O'Sullivan was my Adjutant. Fionán Lynch was Vice-Commandant, and on his release (August) Con O'Donovan succeeded him. The "Line Captains" were Joe Gleeson ("H" Company), John V. Joyce ("G" Company), Louis McDermott ("F" Company), and Seán O'Donovan ("E" Company). The Commandant, Vice-Commandant, Line Captains and four persons appointed by all the Volunteer Officers in the camp, formed the "Camp Council", which was responsible for all matters of policy, etc. We had also a Camp Quartermaster (who was selected, I think, by the Council, and co-opted a member of that body). Jim McInerney (Limerick) filled this post very efficiently during the whole period. His chief responsibility was to ensure that the food supplied to the camp was up to standard, both in quantity and quality. Our meat supplies were inspected by our Camp Vet. (Seán O'Donovan) who condemned a carcase on one occasion on the grounds that it was tubercular. The British authorities were taken aback at his condemnation, as their meat was supplied by the same contractor, but they accepted it and gave us an alternative ration (of tinned meat.').

Another important camp official was our Treasurer, Martin Ryan. He was responsible for the organisation and working of our special currency system, the payment of accounts (for canteen supplies, etc.). Apart from our "camp money", he held a substantial sum in cash, and kept a special account relating to it which he camouflaged in

such a way that the British could not discover it, if they examined our camp accounts. He was assisted by Micheál Ó Loingsigh, as Camp Accountant, whom he trained in his accounting methods. When Martin Ryan was released (in October, I think), Ó Loingsigh succeeded him as Camp Treasurer.

One of our doctors acted as Dispensary Medical Officer (Dr. Leonard), and another (Dr. M. O'Connor) as Public Health M.O. - to ensure cleanliness throughout the camp. There were a number of minor posts, such as Librarian (D. MacCullough); Parcels' Officer (P.C. O'Mahony) Baths' Superintendent (J.V. Lawless), etc. We had also a barbers' saloon, a tailors' shop, and a boot-repair shop, each staffed by fully qualified tradesmen, whose only payment was a weekly ration of free cigarettes from our canteen.

(3) <u>Safeguarding of "Wanted" Prisoners</u>.

There were a number of persons among the prisoners who had been active Volunteers and were "wanted" by the British on serious charges, e.g. Dublin Volunteers who had taken part in the Mount Street attack on the British Intelligence officers. The principal plan adopted in Camp II to safeguard these prisoners was to get them to change identity with other prisoners, if possible persons who resembled them in appearance. In some cases a double exchange was made: A became B, B became C, and C became A. A few men from Camp II were also exchanged with prisoners from Camp I (by means of the Camp Hospital - explained elsewhere in these notes). A censorship was also made (by a staff of censors appointed by us) of all prisoners' letters before their removal by the British: any letter containing undesirable statements or information was destroyed.

A small Intelligence group was also brought together, composed of senior Volunteer officers from the different parts of the country, to enquire into the antecedents of all the prisoners to see if there were any spies among them. This group was satisfied with the bona fides of all the prisoners except one - a barber from Cork. This man had never been associated with the Volunteers, and none of the Cork prisoners would vouch for his reliability. He was put on the staff of the barbers' shop, and arrangements were made to have him carefully watched. One day he was seen giving a letter secretly to the British Commandant, and he was released soon after. He was probably arrested in error, and made a special appeal for release.

The value of our scheme for safeguarding "wanted" prisoners was tested on one occasion. A man was removed from the camp and brought before a Court in Drogheda; the police witnesses refused to identify him and said he was not the "wanted" man; in fact he was from Manorhamilton, but as no one knew who he was he was released.

(4) <u>Ill-Treatment of Prisoners</u>.

A number of the prisoners, especially some from Cork and other southern districts, had suffered ill-treatment after their arrest and on their way to Ballykinlar. To obtain accurate and full records of these cases a Commission of responsible persons (their names are given in the "Book of Ballykinlar") was set up. This Commission took statements from the prisoners concerned, and the records were taken from the camp by the Chaplain, Fr. McLister, for transmission to Dublin. The only serious case of ill-treatment of prisoners in the camp occurred when a small group of them were caught

drilling in a recreation hut. They were removed and punished by detention for some days in the cells. While there some of them were badly beaten up by a British provost-sergeant (named Bryant) because they did not stand to attention when visited in the cells by the British orderly officer.

(5) Appeals against Internment Orders.

Every prisoner received a document on arrival at the camp, called an Internment Order, which included a provision for appealing against the order. It was decided at first that no one should appeal - this was regarded as a matter of policy at the time - and though a considerable number of the prisoners (at least one-fifth) had never been active in the Volunteers or Sinn Féin, the decision not to appeal was faithfully observed. After further consideration and representations by some of the Dublin Volunteers among the prisoners, it was agreed that Volunteers who wished to do so might appeal. (This was not announced openly to all the prisoners, however). Amongst those who then appealed, were released, and took part in the subsequent fighting in Dublin, were Paddy Daly and Mick Love. (There may have been others, but these are the only two names that I can remember now).

(6) Military Training.

At first no objection was raised to the prisoners' drilling in the camp, and all (especially the younger men) were drilled for some time each forenoon. A roll was made (and checked, as far as possible) of all prisoners who were Volunteer Officers, and lectures and training classes were organised for them. The only text-books available, however, were a description of the mechanism etc.

of the Thomson gun (from an American Encyclopaedia), and a book by a German Officer (Lettow Von Vorbeck, I think was his name) giving an account of his campaign in Africa during the 1914-1918 European War. Prisoners who had taken part in ambushes or other military events gave an account of them, and discussions on tactics, etc. took place. After a few weeks an order was issued by the British forbidding drill in the camp, but military training continued secretly. The British seemed to be aware of this, and made a couple of attempts to surprise a training class. Our scouts usually prevented this, but on one occasion a small group was caught (practising bayonet fighting, I think), and its members fot a few days' cells as punishment.

(7) Communication with G.H.Q.

Arrangements were made by Camp I - before Camp II was opened or occupied - for sending and receiving dispatches to and from G.H.Q., and other confidential messages. A British soldier was bribed to act as a messenger between the Camp and a person in Dundrum (whose name I have forgotten) if I ever knew it?). At first a corporal named Love was employed for the purpose. His official duties included the supervision of the cook-houses (in both camps, after Camp II was opened), and he was obliging and reliable, as far as I am aware. Then a new Quartermaster Sergeant named Farrell came to the British staff. His duties included supervision of the issue of certain rations (such as coal), the equipment and supply of materials to our workshops (barbers', tailors', shoemakers' etc.). From his arrival Farrell was extremely friendly to all the prisoners with whom he came in contact. In a short time Corporal Love was removed from his post - on a charge of neglect of duty - and Farrell was employed to carry camp despatches.

Farrell was a Co. Cavan man, and I understand that he was employed on the recommendation of a Cavan prisoner in Camp I, named Bartley. He was paid £1 a week (shared equally by the two Camps)for nine or ten months for carrying our despatches, and I am now fully satisfied that he was a British spy all the time, and that all despatches out of, and into, the Camps were read before delivery. I had begun to suspect him a short time before we were released, and further consideration since then has confirmed my suspicion. Fortunately any despatches from the A.G. to Ballykinlar that I ever saw, contained no news or information of importance, and if those from the Camps contained information that did us harm, we deserved to suffer for entrusting them to a man like Farrell.

In the section of these notes dealing with escape plans I have described how all plans that were referred to in despatches from the Camps were immediately discovered by the British. The day after the escape attempt by Riordan and his companions, Farrell came to me and asked why he had not been told of the attempt, so that he could have made arrangements for transport for them at Dundrum to get them away from the district quickly. I assured him that the attempt was quite unofficial, and that I knew nothing about it.'

A short time before that another incident occurred which points strongly towards Farrell's treachery (and audacity). During the truce a Co. Meath prisoner (Liam Sheridan) was released on parole. On his return he was driven back to the camp by a local Volunteer officer, named Farrelly, accompanied by two ladies. Farrelly drove through the outer gate of the camp grounds, and was promptly arrested and detained - the ladies being released.

A few days afterwards Farrell came to me and said he wanted to see Liam Sheridan. I asked him what he wanted with him, and he said that a notebook which had been taken from the Volunteer Officer, Farrelly, contained some names of persons having charge of rifles, but no addresses, and he wanted to get their addresses from Sheridan in order to warn them.' On the spot I thought that story was fishy, and I asked Farrell how he got Farrelly's notebook? He said that Lieutenant Farrar (the British Chief I.O. at the Camp) had asked him to lock it up for him as he (Farrar) was in a hurry. I thought this explanation a bit "thin", and I told Farrell that he could not see Sheridan as we had a strict rule against individual prisoners having secret dealings with any of the British staff, but that if he gave me a list of the names he referred to I would try to have warnings sent: I never got that list.

(8) Camp II Currency System.

One of the features which contributed much to the comfort of the prisoners in Camp II was the money system operated in the camp. The prisoners were not allowed to bring ordinary money with them into the camp (or to receive money sent to them), but many prisoners brought in small sums concealed on their persons - the large number of rings made from pennies and silver coins is evidence of this: a few prisoners returning to the camp off parole brought substantial sums secretly in with them. At an early stage the British Commandant decided to issue a special paper currency to the prisoners (against their 'cash held by him'). The lower denominations (i.e. from 1d. to 2/6d.) were printed on coloured paper, and notes for 10/- and £1 were typed on white paper. This "camp money" was very welcome, as it enabled prisoners to buy cigarettes, etc. at their canteen.

After a month or so the British Commandant ordered a check of the amount of "camp money" in circulation in the two camps: he assumed that some of it would have been lost or destroyed, and he promised to provide some extras for the prisoners with any surplus of their cash that he might have. When the check was made he was shocked to find that more camp money had been handed in by the prisoners than had been issued to them. It is possible that mistakes were made by the British in the amount of camp money issued, but the more probable explanation is that some of money returned was forged, especially the 10/- and £1 notes. The British Commandant then decided to issue no more camp money. He agreed, however, to co-operate with with us in the issue of a currency of our own. The scheme was that prisoners who had money with the British Commandant would sign a (witnessed) document authorising him to transfer their money to our Camp Commandant. When he was notified that this had been done, our Commandant issued camp money to each prisoner corresponding to the amount of money transferred to him. When a prisoner was released he handed over his "camp money" to our Commandant who then issued an authority to the British Commandant for the transfer to him of an equivalent sum in cash. The scheme worked quite satisfactorily, and credit for its success is due mainly to our Camp Treasurer, Martin Ryan.

At first our "camp money" was home-made: it was hand-written and duplicated on a small neo-style duplicator. To guard against the danger of forgery the "camp money" was checked and renewed at frequent intervals, but no evidence of forgery was ever discovered. The money was not satisfactory, however, as the paper from which it was made got torn very easily, and we enquired from some Dublin

printing firms about the terms on which they would supply us with printed money. Colm O'Lochlainn (of O'Loughlin, Murphy and Boland, as the firm then was) agreed at once to provide us with printed money, and to make no charge for doing so. Soon afterwards we received the new "currency". The various "coins" were circular, graded in size according to value from ld. to £1, nicely designed and printed on thin hard card-board. Many of these "coins" were retained as souvenirs when the prisoners were released, resulting in an equivalent cash sum remaining to the credit of our Camp Commandant. At the general release (in December 1921) a sum of £165 remained in the Camp Treasurer's hands; this was made up of profits from the canteen, sale (to British canteen) of remaining canteen stocks, and unredeemed "camp money". From this sum a grant of £75 was made (through Mr. Denis McCullough) in December 1922 to the dependants of some Belfast republican prisoners; (then detained on the "Argenta"); the remaining £90 was given to the Irish Red Cross in June, 1941.

(9) <u>The Camp Canteen</u>:

This was a sort of combined grocery and tobacconist's shop, with the addition of such side-lines as stationery, stamps, macramé-twine, etc. The sale of cigarettes was the principal and most profitable psrt of its business. Though cigarettes were rather scarce at that period in many parts of the country, we were seldom without a supply. For that the credit is due to Carrolls of Dundalk, and I would like to express our indebtedness to that firm. They always gave our orders priority, and filled them without delay.

The sale in the canteen of such things as tea,sugar, condensed milk,enabled the prisoners to provide supper in

their huts at night, as there were usually a number of prisoners in each hut with sufficient money to purchase the necessary materials for the purpose.

The profits on canteen sales were substantial (over £10 a week on cigarettes), and were used to supply a free ration of cigarettes to prisoners employed permanently on certain camp duties: the cooks, barbers, tailors and boot-repairers. An allowance of 2/6d. a week was also made to all prisoners who had no money of their own.

(10) Plans for Escape.

Right from the beginning careful thought was given to making plans for escape. The most obvious plan was to make a tunnel from under the floor of a hut out under the barbed wire fence. This was done in Camp I when Joe McGrath was Commandant there, and when the tunnel was almost finished he (unfortunately) sent a despatch to H.Q. to ensure that transport would be available, if possible, near Dundrum, to remove the escaped prisoners. But a day or two before the escape was due to take place the British discovered the tunnel.

In order to make tunnelling more difficult the British then dug a trench about five or six feet deep in the "death-walk" (i.e. the passage in the middle of the barbed wire fence around each camp), and inserted iron spikes about nine inches apart to a depth of six feet below the bottom of the trench. To get underneath these obstacles it would be necessary to sink a tunnel to a depth of about fifteen feet. This was impossible (in Camp II at any rate), owing to the soft nature of the ground below a depth of about eight feet. The only portions of the camps' boundary which the British did not consider it necessary to protect with the trench and

spikes were the ends which adjoined the roadway between the camps and the British soldiers' quarters. Though there could be no reasonably safe outlet for a tunnel made in that part of the camps, one was actually constructed from Camp I directly under the roadway, and was only discovered when a heavy lorry passing over it sank in it.' This lorry was bringing a group of prisoners, who had been released on parole, to the railway station, and the incident took place on the day of Tadhg Barry's murder (15/11/21). The British also omitted to fortify (with the trench and iron spikes) the gap in the barbed wire fence from Camp II to the adjoining football field. Plans were then made for a tunnel under this gap from the nearest hut. When the tunnel was nearing completion it was (unfortunately) mentioned in a despatch, and the British discovered it. They then continued the trench and spikes through the gap in the fence, and placed a wooden foot-bridge over the trench. Periodical searches for tunnels were then made by the British in all the huts and though tunnelling was no longer regarded by the more responsible prisoners as an effective means of escaping, some prisoners continued to experiment with them. We had an expert adviser on tunnel-making in Camp II, Michael Sheehy, a mining engineer.

Another escape plan proposed was to cover a man with old macintoshes at the bottom of the "swill-cart" when it was being filled at the cook-house. This cart was sent into the camp by a local farmer who had the contract for removing the refuse of food from the camp. The driver was accompanied by a military policeman, but they were both glad to accept a mug of tea in the cook-house while the prisoners filled the cart. Before carrying out the plan a despatch was sent to the Adjutant of the local Volunteer Division for a report on the driver of the cart - whether he

could be relied on to keep his mouth shut. The reply was satisfactory, but before it was received the plan was dead: the swill-cart was emptied at the outside gate of the camp and refilled, every time it left the camp.

The escape from Camp II which came nearest to success, and would have succeeded but for an accidental bit of bad luck, was a rather elaborate one and required some organisation and the co-operation of the bulk of the prisoners. The recreation field which adjoined the camp, and was about the same size as an ordinary soccer football field, was open only for some hours each day and was closed before dark each evening; it was not guarded as carefully as the camp proper, as only one sentry's block-house overlooked it, and the barbed wire fence around it was less elaborate than that around the camp. The entrance to the field (from the camp) was near the end farthest from the sentry block-house, and a few yards outside the field at that end there was a disused shed whose door was always open. The entrance was so near the end fence that a crowd leaving the field together would obstruct the sentry's view of the space between the end of the field and the shed. The attached rough diagram (not drawn to scale, and made from memory after a lapse of 30 years) will help to explain the position.

The plan was that while a crowd was leaving the recreation field a small group of prisoners should cut through the lower strands of the barbed wire in the end fence in front of the shed, crawl into the shed, remain there till it became quite dark, then crawl out again and across the recreation field and cut their way through the boundary fence. In order to ensure a good crowd at the

entrance to the field on the evening of the escape-attempt an important football match was fixed for that afternoon and the chief cook was instructed to blow the whistle for tea before the match was quite finsihed. A few prisoners were stationed at the field entrance to warn the crowd not to stare at the escaping men and excite the suspicion of the sentry.

The plan worked without a hitch. The escaping men had crossed the recreation field and cut their way through the boundary fence undetected, when they were accidentally discovered by the British Camp Commandant (Colonel Innes). He was walking alone around the outside of the camp to visit the sentry posts, and walked on one of the escaped men, who were trying to hide in the long grass. He raised the alarm at once and the powerful search-lights were turned on; we then knew that the attempt had failed.

There were five men in the party who made the attempt; and they were in charge of a Co. Waterford man named Riordan, who was largely responsible for the scheme: I do not remember all the names of the other four (I think they were published in the newspapers soon after), nor can I remember why they were selected. The plan involved many risks. The men had to remain perfectly still for over four hours in an open shed, past which British soldiers were passing frequently; they had to crawl diagonally across a football field in full view of a sentry, and cut a way through a strong barbed wire barricade without making noise or attracting attention. The risks were so great, and the success of the scheme so doubtful, that one senior Volunteer officer from Dublin refused to take part in it, and urged me to forbid it.

Looking back on the matter now, I think the number (five) was too large for a plan of the kind, and endangered its success: it should have been limited to two.

The plan which I have just described led to the escape-attempt of P. Colgan and M. Donegan from Camp I. When Riordan was serving his punishment sentence for attempting to escape he was recognised by a British Military Policeman with whom he had served in the British Army. They discussed escape plans, and agreed that the only successful way would be to walk out of the camp in British Army uniform. This military policeman offered to supply two suits of uniform at £5 each, and this information was passed on to M. Donegan (or "Fitzpatrick", as he was called in the camp). Apparently money was scarce in Camp I, and I got an urgent request by the inter-camp post for £10 I got the money from our Treasurer and sent it across at once. (I presume someone with more direct knowledge has told the rest of the story of this escape).

(11) <u>Educational Activities</u>.

The "Book of Ballykinlar" (referred to already gives some idea of the extent of these activities. Classes for teaching Irish, graded according to the learners' knowledge

from beginners to advanced, and in the three main dialects, formed the main part of the educational programme, and many of the prisoners made good progress. The most faithful and hard-working of the Irish teachers was Micheál Ó Cuill of Cork. Other successful classes included one in mathematics, taught by Martin Ryan (our Camp Treasurer), and in surveying, taught by James Quigley (formerly Co. Engineer for Co. Meath, and later Chief Engineering Inspector in Local Government Department). Examinations were held and certificates issued at the end of some of the educational courses. A certificate issued in Ballykinlar Internment Camp was produced in 1923 by a candidate (Joe McRickard) for appointment as a Land Commission Inspector, as evidence of his qualifications in land-surveying. (I was a member of the Civil Service Selection Board before which the certificate was produced).

In addition to formal classes, lectures, debates and discussions were frequently held. Historical anniversaries - Wolfe Tone, Robert Emmet, etc. - were faithfully celebrated. Dramatic performances were also staged frequently. Some of the prisoners devoted all their spare time to the preparations for these performances, (Making costumes, scenery, etc.), and the results of their work sometimes reached a high standard.

On May 1st, some of the practical jokers in the camp staged a burlesque May-day demonstration. A red blanket was fastened on a pole as a flag; a prisoner (Alec Bradley, Monaghan) was hoisted on a door with his melodeon playing the "Red Flag", and a procession was formed The British took strong exception to this "demonstration", and sent word that the sentries had got orders to shoot unless it was discontinued.

(12) The Camp Library:

Our library was well stocked with books dealing with Irish History, biography, and works of fiction. The librarian was Denis McCullough. Any books we asked for, no matter how expensive, were sent to us without delay if they were available: we had merely to send a request for them to the Society of Friends (Quakers) in Dublin (to whom I refer elsewhere in these notes). The library was not used, however, as much as one would expect. The hut in which the books were kept was small, and had no accommodation for readers. The sleeping huts were too crowded and noisy for reading, and there was no other indoor accommodation for the purpose. Some prisoners tried to get a quiet spot for reading out of doors in the summer, but even this was not easy - with 1,000 men in a very confined space:

(13) The British Staff and our relations with them.

The British military (officers and N.C.Os.) in charge of the camps were drawn mainly from the "Cornwalls" and the K.R.R's."; the "Cornwalls were in charge of administration, and the camp guards, sentries etc. were from the "K.R.R's.". The "Cornwalls" had most direct intercourse with the prisoners; a lieutenant (assisted by a Sergeant) was in direct charge of each of the four companies. My experience of the "Cornwalls" was that some of them were kind and considerate: I might mention in particular Lieutenant Wilson, Lieutenant Mayo and Sergeant Roberts.

The "K.R.R's." on the other hand, were invariably offensive and hostile to the prisoners; it was generally reported and believed in the camp (on what authority

I cannot now remember) that one of their officers was particularly hostile, and was heard to make offensive remarks regarding the prisoners.

In addition to those mentioned (and, of course, the British Commandant, Quartermaster and Staff, and a number of military policemen), the British staff included a number of Intelligence Officers (whose duties included the censoring of all prisoners' letters and parcels). The chief Intelligence Officer at first was a Captain Newton, with whom I had no direct contact; he was succeeded by a Lieutenant Farrar, whom I came to know well and to detest thoroughly. He was a very mean, hostile type. When I complained of his conduct once to Lieutenant Wilson, he explained that Farrar was not really an officer; he was what they called in the Army a civilian Officer. I have dealt elsewhere with Quartermaster Sergeant Farrell. The only other member of the Intelligence staff with whom I had any dealing was a man named Montgomery. My business with him was this. Among the prisoners in Camp I there had been a young lad of about 19 years, who had been arrested in rather unusual circumstances. He was being tried, with his father or uncle before a Sinn Fein Court when the British swooped down on the court and arrested everyone concerned - judges, guards, and prisoners. The young lad was a person of low intelligence; he shunned his comrades in Camp I and was becoming rather unbalanced mentally. We were asked to accept him on transfer to Camp II as it was thought the change might do him good. It had the opposite effect, however, and we told the British Commandnat that we could not accept responsibility for him. He was then removed to the cells, pending an order for his release, which did not come

for a couple of weeks. Late one evening (about 9.30 p.m.) I was told that he had been released, but that he did not seem to be willing to leave. I asked for, and got, permission to see him. I found him in a dazed condition, moaning aloud near the outside gate of the camp - a most distressing sight. I brought him back, and asked for permission to have him kept in the camp hospital that night, and I would send to Belfast for an escort for him the following morning. I was told by the British Adjutant (who was sympathetic) that this was impossible: once a man had been released, they had no authority to re-admit him. Montgomery then came along and asked what I wanted to do. When I told him he gave immediate directions for the lad's admission to the camp hospital. An escort came for him the next morning (from the Liaison Officer in Belfast: this occurred during the truce), and brought him to the Mater Hospital, Belfast.

(14) Rows with the British Camp Authorities.

We had a series of disputes and rows with the British which had the double effect of loosening the rigidity of their control and maintaining the prisoners' morale. These disputes began, as far as I remember, with the question of saying "Sir", when answering the roll-call. A prisoner who had (inadvertently, I think) omitted to say "Sir" was reprimanded, and the following night no prisoner in the camp said "Sir". On one occasion an order was given that the prisoners should remove their beds and other property outside the huts to enable the British to examine the floors for traces of tunnel-making. We paid no heed to the order, and a party of soldiers was brought into the camp to carry it out. The summer of 1921 was rather hot, and we asked that the doors of the huts be left open at

night for ventilation. Our request was refused and the following night just before lock-up, the doors of every (sleeping) hut in the camp were broken off; after that we were not locked-up at night. At first the prisoners had to stand to attention in their huts for the British Commandant's inspection, about 10 a.m.; on the plea that they had to attend to camp duties (cook-houses, etc.) prisoners in increasing numbers, disregarded this inspection, and in a few months it was abandoned entirely. For some reason (which I do not now remember) we refused at one stage to answer to our names at the night roll-call, and from that forward there was merely a count of the persons in each hut. It was on this occasion (I think) that the British Commandant tried to frighten us and teach us a lesson. About an hour after "lights out" he marched into the camp, with all his officers and about 100 soldiers with fixed bayonets. He entered each hut with a few officers and armed soldiers and ordered the prisoners to stand by their beds: any who were asleep (or pretended to be) were roughly shaken by the N.C.Os. and some were beaten by officers with walking sticks. Whatever the purpose of the "invasion" was, it failed completely.

There were three different British Commandants in charge of the camps. I had no direct contacts with the first, Colonel Little. He was succeeded by a Colonel Browne, a rather cautious type of man who seemed anxious to be as liberal as the regulations permitted. He repeated to me several times that he had learned one thing at Ballykinlar - "to do nothing without authority". I think this referred to his mistake in permitting Eoin O'Duffy to visit the camps when he called there as Liaison Officer. On one occasion Colonel Browne consulted me about a difficulty with his camp financial accounts:

there was an error of £10, and he could not go on leave until it was cleared up. I told him I would consult our Camp Treasurer, Martin Ryan, and see if he could help. Martin and I agreed that it might be a chance of getting some useful information, and he offered to "audit" the Colonel's accounts for him. He was brought to the Adjutant's office, and had little difficulty in showing that a sum of £5 on one side of the account should be on the other side.

Colonel Browne was succeeded by a Colonel Innes, who remained in charge until the camps closed. Innes was an active, autocratic, domineering type of man. It was he who led the "invasion" of the camp at night by an armed body of soldiers(just described); he also, personally caught the five prisoners who attempted to escape. He frequently stood at the camp gate watching the prisoners - probably to see if he could spot anything suspicious. He had been (I was reliably informed) in charge of the jails (or internment camps) in which conscientious objectors were confined during the first European War, and the Provost-Sergeant (Bryant), had been a "butty" of his there (I have referred elsewhere to the beating by Bryant of some of our prisoners when confined in the punishment cells).

(15) <u>Recreational and other Activities.</u>

These were very varied, and it would be difficult to give a complete picture of them. Apart from their obligation to do their share in necessary camp duties, the prisoners were under no obligation to take part in any other activities - and, indeed, a small number took very little part in them; the great majority, however, found some occupation to their taste. As a general rule the

forenoons were devoted to classes and camp duties, and the afternoons to outdoor recreation, or, in wet weather, indoor hobbies: the aim was to keep everyone occupied. Football was played at first on the space between the lines of huts in the camp, but a suitable field was afterwards provided. The gymnasium was equipped with punch-bells, sets of boxing-gloves (of various sizes), medicine bell, skipping ropes, etc. There were many sets of chessmen and playing cards available. The National Museum collections contain some specimens of articles made by prisoners in the camp.

Much ingenuity was shown by prisoners. A shortage of matches - in the summer, when there were no fires in the huts - was a great inconvenience to cigarette smokers until the "margariné-lamp" was invented. This was made from a condensed milk tin and a strip of cotton rag for wick; the fuel was surplus margarine (some prisoners did not use their ration). Once the lamp was started burning the heat from the small flame was sufficient to melt the margarine on the surface and induce a flow of its vapour along the wick. The great objection to lamp was that burning margarine gives off a very disagreeable odour, but this discomfort was borne as patiently as the many others of life at the time and many huts had a margarine lamp burning continuously.

(16) <u>Assistance from the Society of Friends (Quakers).</u>

I have referred to this matter elsewhere in these notes. I do not know how the proposal originated, or who was responsible for it. Some of the more prominent members of the Society (such as Senator Douglas) were active in the organising of the "White Cross" and raising funds for the relief of dependants after the Easter Rising, and it is possible that this led to the provision of cultural

and recreational assistance for interned prisoners. As far as I am aware this assistance was not provided in other prisons or camps (even in Camp I at Ballykinlar?); it may have been offered and not accepted.

The assistance which we received consisted mainly of gymnasium equipment, and books to form a library for study and general reading. No request of ours was refused, and many rare and expensive books were supplied to us.

The member of the Society of Friends with whom I had correspondence was a gentleman named Webb. (I do not remember his address).

(17) Death of Tadhg Barry.

About the middle of November the British Commandant told us that he had permission to release a number of prisoners (about 30) on parole from the camps, and he supplied a lorry to bring them to the railway station. When they were entering the lorry outside the camp gate and some prisoners (including Tadhg Barry) were standing a few yards inside the gate of Camp II, the sentry in the block-house overlooking the gate fired at Barry and shot him dead through the heart. Another prisoner (Con O'Halloran) dragged his body back a few yards, and an angry crowd quickly gathered, some of them shouting at and denouncing the sentry, who had them covered with his rifle. The threatening situation was saved by the presence of mind of Seán O'Sullivan (now Aide-de-Camp to the President) who called on the prisoners to kneel down and say the Rosary. In an instant all was calm; Father Burbage attended to Tadhg, and the doctors pronounced life extinct. In the meantime an officer had entered the sentry-box, and another sentry was brought to replace the man who had fired the

shot. So impressive was the scene inside our camp, and the instant change from angry abuse to prayer, that the British M.O. (Captain Harlow, who was not friendly to us) complimented me next day on the remarkable discipline of our men, and our control over them.

It would be impossible to describe the shock which the tragedy produced on the prisoners. Their nerves were at high tension. The truce and treaty negotiations had lasted many months and the hopes and prospects of early release had been more eagerly debated every day. Tadhg Barry had been very active and popular in all the camp activities; he had volunteered to act as hut leader in the "old men's hut" - a hut specially fitted up to accommodate 25 of the oldest men in the camp.

Most of the British officers seemed to regret the tragedy. They consulted us about arrangements to be made. They offered accommodation for the body in a building outside the camp (open to the public), and agreed that a group of 24 prisoners from the camp might accompany it to supply a guard until the funeral left on condition that they gave their parole not to escape. When a British Sergeant attempted to remove the Tricolour flag from the coffin, the Adjutant (Lieutenant Joselyn) forbade him. An inquest was opened and adjourned until the middle of January - by which time we had been released for some time and the feelings aroused among the public by the tragedy had lessened. The inquest was rather disappointing. Neither the sentry who fired the shot nor the sergeant nor the officer of the guard were present as witnesses. The only witnesses produced by the British were Colonel Little (who gave evidence regarding the orders forbidding prisoners to approach the barbed wire, obeying sentries,

etc.), an R.E. officer, who gave evidence that we had made tunnels to try to escape, and a Corporal Collins - whose evidence was of no importance (as far as I remember). It had been reported to us (with what grounds, I cannot say) that the officer of the guard that day was a Lieutenant Shephard, and that he had given special orders to the sentries "to stand no nonsense". We had hoped to have him cross-examined about this, but he was not there. The sentry was not available either to say whether Barry had disobeyed an order of his. The Coroner's jury were equally divided on the question whether the sentry was justified in firing the fatal shot.

As to what actually occurred when Tadhg was shot, I think there can be little doubt that he (and the other prisoners) were ordered by the sentry to get back, and that Tadhg disregarded the order: the other prisoners did, in fact, move away. Besides it was an offence to talk to persons outside the camp (as Tadhg was probably doing): two prisoners (Tormey and Sloan) had been shot dead for this in Camp I some months previously (but before Tadhg Barry reached the camp). Albert Wood, K.C., one of our Counsel at the inquest, wished to make the case that Tadhg was known, and deliberately shot because he was Tadhg Barry - but we could not support this idea. It had also been alleged that someone entered the sentry's box shortly <u>before</u> the shot was fired. This is possible, but we had no evidence of it, and it is doubtful if it could have happened unknown to our prisoners; an officer did enter the box <u>after</u> the shot was fired, to change the sentry.

(18) <u>Disposal of Camp Property.</u>

For future record purposes I give a brief account of the disposal of our common property in Camp II when

the camp closed. I have explained elsewhere that £75 of our cash was given to dependants of Belfast prisoners in 1922, and the remainder to the Irish Red Cross. It was intended that all the valuable books in our library be presented to Cork University College, whose library had been destroyed. They were packed in boxes and sent - at first, to the Gaelic League Offices, in Parnell Square, Dublin. They were left there for some time (a few weeks) as the released prisoners naturally had other matters to occupy their attention. When steps were then taken to send the books to Cork, it was found that the boxes had been broken open and all the best books stolen.

The camp piano and harmonium were sent to Denis McCullough's shop for (badly needed) repairs, and subsequent disposal. They perished when that shop was destroyed some time in 1922 or 1923.

The gymnasium equipment "disappeared" when the news was spread that the camp was closing - except the wrestling mat: this had only reached the camp the evening before we left, and I don't know what became of it.

Signed Proinnsias Ó Dubhthaigh
Proinnsias Ó Dubhthaigh
(F. O'Duffy)

Date 1st April 1952.
1st April 1952.

Witness John McCoy.
(John McCoy).
1/4/'52.
1/4/'52.

ADDENDUM re CAMP I, BALLYKINLAR.

The late Louis Walsh (Solicitor, and afterwards District Justice in Co. Donegal) was a prisoner for some time in Camp I, Ballykinlar. He was released after a few months (in May, I think), and soon afterwards published a book ("On My Keeping and In Theirs") in which he gave an account of his experiences in Camp I, Ballykinlar, and referred to happenings and leading personages in that camp. When a copy of the book reached us in Camp II we considered that some of the disclosures made in it were open to serious objection (as they gave "inside" information to the "enemy" while the Ballykinlar Camps were still open). We marked our resentment at the publication holding a public ceremony of burning a copy of the book in the centre of the camp before a large crowd of the prisoners.

P O'D.
1/4/52

Jm. Sty.
1/4/52.