

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
BURD STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21
No. W.S. 764

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 764

Witness

Commandant Patrick O'Brien,
Liscarroll,
Co. Cork.

Identity.

Lieutenant Liscarroll Company
Irish Vol's. (Co. Cork, 1918 - ;
O/C. Cork No. 4 Brigade, 1921.

Subject.

National activities, North Cork,
1914-1921.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil

File No. ...S. 2072.....

Form B.S.M. 2

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No. W.S. 764

STATEMENT

BY

COMMANDANT P. O'BRIEN,
LISCARROLL, CO. CORK.

I was born at Knockardbane, Liscarroll, in August, 1896.
My people were farmers and shopkeepers.

While I cannot claim that this statement will contain a complete record of all the activities in the area, I wish to affirm, however, that all records which I am giving can be accepted as true and accurate, and can be vouched for by me and by many others still living - (December, 1952).

It is considered desirable to briefly show the position from the National viewpoint, which obtained in our area during the earlier years of the period being covered, in order to give a background to the later developments which gradually gained momentum, culminating in the activities of 1920-1921.

1914.

In 1914, Liscarroll, like most other rural parishes, had its national interests solely in the two political parties of the time, locally termed Redmondites and O'Brienites. Both parties had about an equal following and political feelings were often very bitter between them. There was no National Volunteer Unit in the parish, and Sinn Féin was practically unheard of.

1915.

In 1915, a Company of the National Volunteers was organised

by Major Purcell of Burton House, Churchtown, "the adjoining parish". This Unit was supported principally by the Redmondite followers, and a number of boys between sixteen and twenty years of age. Those latter would not have any interest in politics and were only in the Unit for the novelty of the drilling and route-marching, which was part of their programme.

A small party of the O'Brienite adherents refused to be associated with the Unit, and endeavoured to organise a Unit themselves. This effort was not very successful but it had the effect of breaking up the other Unit, the ultimate result being that the parish was again without a national organisation during the latter part of 1915 and 1916.

1916.

The news of the Rising of Easter Week, 1916, was received more in silent wonder as to what it all meant, but the executions which followed had the effect of awakening the whisperings of nationality in the minds of many of the younger people in the parish, the old people being more cautious and reserved.

The after effects of the Rising, the executions, deportations, etc., quickly began to claim the sympathy of the majority with the men who had been executed and deported.

From this time forward, the R.I.C. stationed locally were beginning to lose any little popularity which they may have enjoyed up to then.

The younger men in the parish were beginning to lose

confidence in their political leaders, but there was none locally to whom they could look for leadership.

1917.

In 1917, a branch of the Gaelic League was formed and, through its activities by way of Asridheachts, Hurling Matches and Concerts, a further awakening of the national feeling was fostered in its members.

Sinn Féin was beginning to be generally organised throughout the country and the young men of the parishes were anxious to form a Club.

Some local enthusiasts advertised a meeting for the purpose of forming a Sinn Féin Club. This was not a success, as the party responsible for calling the meeting failed to take the initiative and address the small number, who arrived in the vicinity of the venue advertised for the meeting.

It had, however, the effect of a more lively interest being taken, in the possibility of the formation of a Club, with the result that a strong active Club was formed about two months later - in October, 1917.

The next step now was to organise a Volunteer Company, and the first enrolment of Volunteers took place on the 26th December, 1917.

Mr. James Brislane, a native of Liscarroll, but working in Charleville as Manager of a Hardware Store for Mrs. Binchy, was an officer in the Volunteer Force, being the Battalion Commandant for the Charleville area, which was a Unit of the

Cork Brigade. Mr. Brislane officially organised the Company, and appointed Thomas Kelleher as its Captain until such time as he would deem it fit to have an election to select the Company Officers.

From this time onwards politics had no place in the minds of the Volunteers, and both Redmondite and O'Brienite adherents became thoroughly united.

1918.

Early in January, 1918, the following Company Officers were elected :-

Thomas Kelleher - Captain.
Patk. O'Brien - 1st Lieutenant.
Denis O'Connell - 2nd Lieutenant.

The Liscarroll Company, which started on its first parade with twenty-eight men, grew each week in strength of numbers until about mid-April it exceeded the one hundred figure. The fight against the proposed conscription of the youth of the country into the British Army was a great incentive.

The only equipment which the Company possessed, of military nature, at this time, were two D.B. shot-guns and two S.B. guns, with scarcely two dozen cartridges. It was very difficult to purchase cartridges at this time. However, the will to succeed was there and they meant to find the way. Farmers who possessed shot-guns were approached and many of those were got for the asking and others were got otherwise. There were isolated cases where owners of shot-guns handed them over to the R.I.C.,

Needless to say, those were branded as the loyalists.

Towards the end of March, 1918, the local R.I.C. raided the home of Thomas Kelleher, the Company Captain, with a view to arresting him. Owing to the fact that one of the R.I.C. men's wives spoke of the intended raid to a neighbour, Kelleher was forewarned and was not at home when the raiders called. It meant, however, that he had now to remain "on the run" and avoid arrest. This was a great hardship on him as he had only a younger brother now at home to try and keep a farm going.

During the Conscription period of 1918, the Company maintained a strength of well over one hundred members. A good Company of Cumann na mBan was also organised at this time.

Owing to the threat of Conscription being defeated, the Company began to lose its strength of numbers during the early Autumn. Still a good number stood loyally by their Captain who had to remain 'on the run' all through the Summer. His home was being continually raided by the R.I.C., yet they were not prepared to arrest him, when he boldly marched past them every week at the head of his Company.

A show-down was expected on the night of the anniversary of the Manchester Martyrs, 1918, when it was known that the Volunteers were to have a procession through the village. The R.I.C. called on the military at Buttevant Military Barracks, about seven miles distant. A platoon of about thirty military was drafted into the village and formed up outside the R.I.C. Barracks.

The Volunteers had a hurried consultation and it was sought

to get the Captain to remain out of the parade and let the 1st Lieutenant take his place. The Captain, however, definitely refused to agree to this suggestion but compromised by agreeing to remain in the ranks and let the 1st Lieutenant lead the parade. About twenty of the most determined Volunteers procured hay forks for the purpose of defending their Captain, should the military attempt to arrest him.

The parade started on its route and as it approached the R.I.C. Barracks where the military were formed up on the side walk the R.I.C. Sergeant called on the parade to halt. This challenge was ignored and the Captain gave a counter order from the ranks, with the result that the parade was passed through before the military could decide what they should do, and, as some of them afterwards remarked, 'what could they do with men armed like that', meaning the hay forks.

A few weeks after this incident the Captain was taken seriously ill and he died on the 16th December, 1918, in the cottage of a Volunteer. He was buried in the family burial ground at Springfield, between Dromcollogher and Broadford, Co. Limerick, with military honours. Revolvers were substituted for rifles as the latter were not procurable in the locality.

1919.

In January, 1919, the Company was called together, and at an election of Officers the following were elected by ballot:- Patrick O'Brien, Company Captain; Michael O'Regan, 1st Lieut., and John Fitzgibbon, 2nd Lieutenant.

During 1919, the company strength was reduced to thirty-

five men.

The principal activities of the Company during 1919 were weekly parades at which each man was instructed how to handle a rifle.

Early in 1919 the Company Captain purchased a Lee Enfield from a local man who was home on leave from the British Army and who had succeeded in bringing home the rifle some time previously. The Captain also got three long Webley revolvers .45 from the same man. Ammunition, however, was very scarce and on no account could we afford to use the rounds we had for each weapon for practice.

From 1919 onwards the Company Captain had to attend Battalion Council meetings. The Battalion known as the Charleville Battalion was comprised of the following Companies:- Charleville, Effin, Ballyhea, Newtownshandrum, Milford, Dromina, Liscarroll, Churchtown and Buttevant.

James Brislane, Battalion Commandant.

Denis Driscoll, Vice Commandant.

Robert Joyce, Adjutant.

James Winter, Quartermaster.

During the Summer of 1919, an organiser from Cork City, named Seán O'Sullivan, came to the Battalion and conducted a course of training at which Officers from each Company used attend each night for about three weeks. This was a great help to the battalion as there was nobody in the battalion capable of conducting a training class with any degree of success. It also gave the Officers of the different Companies a chance to

get acquainted with each other and a great spirit of comradeship soon grew up between them, and which tended to grow stronger as time went on.

About this time I became a member of the I.R.B.

Towards the end of 1919 the Companies of the Battalion were rated as follows:- Charleville, Lisscarroll, Effin, Ballyhea, Dromina, Churchtown, Newtownshandrum, Milford and Buttevant. The latter two were only section strength and Lisgriffin was unorganised.

About this time the Battalion Vice Commandant - Denis O'Driscoll, of Newtownshandrum - left the Battalion, having taken up a job as draper in Carrick-on-Suir. Patrick O'Brien, Captain, Lisscarroll Company, was appointed Vice Commandant, and Michael O'Regan became the Company Captain, at Lisscarroll, and P.J. O'Rielly, 1st Lieutenant.

The Vice Commandant's first job was to organise Lisgriffin, a parish adjoining Lisscarroll. A company of about forty men was organised in Lisgriffin under Thomas Frawley, who continued in charge up to the Truce.

The only other company in the battalion to possess a rifle at this time was Charleville, they having succeeded in getting two rifles from soldiers home on leave.

1920.

The entire armament of the battalion at the beginning of 1920 was three Service Rifles, short Lee Enfield, about 200 rounds of .303 for same, and about 18 revolvers of various makes

and calibre, with scarcely half a dozen rounds for each.

The raid (known as the Wesleyan raid), which had proved so successful at Fermoy in the month of September, 1919, when a number of rifles were captured, had put all other battalions thinking of doing something similar to improve their armament. About this time, the fact of being an active Volunteer meant that one had to be continually on the alert to avoid the possibility of arrest, a few instances having occurred where Volunteers had shot policemen who had attempted to arrest them. These incidents helped to make the Volunteer organisation more determined and helped also to show up the Officers in their proper spirit, as it sometimes happened that men were elected to Officer rank who were not prepared to take risks.

From early in 1920 it was clear to every Officer and Volunteer that to remain in the organisation meant that they must be prepared to take action against the R.I.C. and British military, who were now doing their utmost to crush the Volunteer organisation. To counteract this, R.I.C. Barracks were being attacked and attempts being made to ambush Military patrols moving around trying to deter the Volunteers from meeting.

The Charleville Battalion were as much alive to the situation as any Battalion in the South, but they had to contend with very strong enemy force actually billeted in the Battalion area. This force comprised an Infantry Brigade Headquarters at Buttevant and a Company of the 17th Lancers; a Machine Gun Battalion at Ballyvonaire, also

an R.I.C. Barracks at Buttevant,)	
" " " " Churchtown.)	Each about
" " " " Charleville.)	a dozen men.

an R.I.C. Barracks at Milford.)

a half Company of military at Charleville.

An R.I.C. Barracks had been evacuated at Liscarroll during 1919 and its occupants transferred to Churchtown.

In spite of this enemy strength it was decided to attempt an ambush of a military lorry between Buttevant and Liscarroll in February, 1920. The plan in this case was to get a party from the adjoining Newmarket Battalion to attack Freemount R.I.C. Barracks, which was only four miles from Liscarroll. It was the custom at that time for R.I.C. Barracks, if attacked, to fire verey lights in the air to summon military aid. The road was to be trenched about one and a half miles at the Buttevant side of Liscarroll, and the ambush party to be in position alongside the road. This attempt was frustrated by some men, who were detailed to be on the spot to prepare the trench, failing to arrive, and, as a result, the attack had to be called off at Freemount.

The attack at Freemount was about to start and people in houses in the vicinity of the Barracks had been ordered out. This gave a certain amount of publicity and, as a result, the Barracks at Freemount was evacuated within a fortnight.

A similar attack was planned for the road between Milford and Charleville. The military did not travel.

On the occasion of the attack on Ballylanders Barracks, the three rifles in the Battalion were lent by the Battalion O.C. to the East Limerick Officers for the job and, incidentally, were never returned, which meant that the Battalion area was again

without a single rifle, yet the Charleville Battalion had to block the roads leading from Buttevant and Ballyvonaire to Kilmallock and Ballylanders. This was so effectively done that reinforcements did not arrive for hours after the attack was over.

A similar operation had to be carried out on the occasion of the attack on the Kilmallock R.I.C. Barracks at the end of May, 1920, as approximately eighty members of the Charleville Battalion were engaged in blocking the roads between Buttevant and Kilmallock to prevent enemy reinforcements moving to Kilmallock from North Cork. In addition to supplying the road-blocking parties seven others and myself, namely, Con McCarthy and Seán Cronin of Charleville, P.J. O'Brien and Jim O'Brien of Effin and Michael O'Regan, P.J. O'Reilly, Daniel O'Brien and myself from Liscarroll, actually took part in the attack on Kilmallock Barracks. P.J. O'Brien of Effin and myself, who had had previous experience of using a rifle, were with the party in position in rear of the barracks and the remainder of our lads were employed with the parties engaged in throwing bottles and containers of oil through the breaches in the roof of the barracks from the adjoining houses.

A member of the Churchtown Company - Charles Winter - succeeded in bringing a rifle from Ballyvonaire Military Camp on the night Kilmallock was attacked, having got it from a soldier with whom he was acquainted. Thus the Charleville Battalion, with a strength of approximately 400 men, on the 1st June, 1920, was the proud possessor of one Service rifle. Incidentally, this rifle was used with good effect on later dates against the military at Clonbannin, Churchtown and Rathcoole engagements.

It was kept and used by D. O'Brien from January, 1921, to the time of his arrest early in May, 1921. The rifle is now in the possession of the Cork Museum.

. . . .

The country as a whole had undergone a big change during the years of 1918, 1919 and the first half of 1920. The Charleville Battalion had kept in line with the change. The people, at first cautious and slow to show their real feeling, were now openly supporting all phases of the National Movement. The Volunteers, many of whom at first joined for the sheer novelty of it, were now almost to a man more than anxious to hamper the forces of occupation in every possible way. Volunteer Officers and others were being constantly raided for by day and night. Many were arrested, but many more evaded arrest and then spent most of their time in improving the organisation.

The general situation now was that the British forces of occupation were continually employed in raiding the homes of Volunteers and prohibiting Feises as organised by the Gaelic League, hurling and football matches organised by the Volunteers and even stopping the holding of established Fairs and Markets.

The Volunteers, on the other side, were doing everything possible to make the task of the military more difficult, by continually advertising Feises and Matches for venues, and then holding them at other centres a few miles distant.

About the end of June, 1920, the Charleville Battalion O.C. was instructed by the Brigade Commander (Liam Lynch) to hold up the mail train from Dublin to Cork and remove all mails for censorship. This operation was carried out in the vicinity of

Charleville station, where the train used to stop for a few minutes. Tom Coughlan and myself boarded the driver's platform when the train came to a standstill, without attracting any attention. The driver was instructed to move his train after the usual few minutes' delay and, when he had got the train about a mile from the station, he was forced to bring it to a halt, where about 40 Volunteers were waiting to board it, and removed all the letter mails to two waiting motor cars. The mails being removed, the driver was allowed to continue his journey to Cork. The mails were censored the following day, and, with the exception of mails for the military Post and R.I.C. Posts, all others were remailed the following evening at different centres throughout the Battalion. Owing to some useful information being gained by this raid, it became the practice to have the mails raided periodically throughout the Brigade.

Liscarroll Company had by this time become a very active Company, and the Military Post at Buttevant had it marked as its most difficult area.

The R.I.C. about this time had completely ceased to act as a police force, the Volunteers having completely usurped them in these duties. Cahirmee Fair was due to be held at Buttevant from the 10th to the 12th July. Arrangements had to be made to police the fair, by the Volunteers. The local Volunteers could not well do this as a number of them were more useful as Intelligence agents, some even having constant access to the Military and R.I.C. Barracks: it was decided that the local men should not expose themselves, and twelve Volunteers were drafted into Buttevant from Liscarroll. Those men succeeded so well

in keeping the peace that the R.I.C. became jealous and called on the military to have them removed from the town. The Volunteers, having been told of this, dispersed amongst the crowd, with the result that the military could not find anybody to remove. The sequel to this, however, happened about a week later when a half Company of the 17th Lancers moved out to Lisscarroll and took up quarters under canvas, within the shelter of the old ruins of the Castle, which had been lying derelict since the wars of 1640-1650. This garrison immediately set to work to fortify their post by means of sandbags and barbed wire, with the result that within a few weeks they had the place made into an impregnable fortress. (Remember the armament of the Volunteers at this time was not sufficient to even attack an ordinary cottage).

The sum total of the Battalion armament was one Service rifle, one single shot carbine, about fifteen revolvers or automatics of different patterns and, on an average, about twelve shot-guns, in each of the ten Companies. Each Company would have about 150 rounds of buckshot loaded cartridges for the shot-guns and perhaps about 6 rounds for each revolver.

It is difficult now to realise the mentality of the youth of that time, who were prepared even with this poor armament to face the might of the British Empire, undaunted. However, speaking for myself and those with whom I was closely associated at the time, our first and last inspiration was that if the forces in occupation had the armament it was up to us to devise ways of getting it from them.

The advent of an enemy post once more in our midst soon began to manifest itself.

I was still Battalion Vice O.C. and had never been raided for, yet. I was taking no unnecessary risks and seldom slept at home at night. Usually I would be attending Company meetings of some of the Companies throughout the Battalion, the Battalion O.C. and myself having divided the area between us. In this way, I seldom arrived home before 12 or 1 o'clock each night.

. . . .

Early in August, 1920, the local Military O.C. in Liscarroll (a Lieut. Honeywood) sent a message to me to call up to the Military Post. I called up and remained at the outer gate and asked the sentry to notify the Officer i/c that I was there if he wanted to come out. He came out and, following a discussion on some general topics, he informed me that he would hold me personally responsible in the event of any attacks being made on the R.I.C. I immediately got my back up and enquired from him whether he had service in the Great War. He stated he had and I then enquired from him what their normal procedure was in dealing with spies. He replied "Shoot them", and I then politely informed him that we intended to follow similar action with the R.I.C. We parted, needless to say, not too friendly, and the sequel was that I was arrested the following week. At this time I had been suffering intensely from severe stomach pains and I had to lie down for two or three hours every day. They happened to come about midday when I was lying down in agony and could not lift a finger to save myself. I was brought to Buttevant Barracks where I was held overnight. I was then transferred to Cork Jail and on arrival there found that there was a fairly large number of I.R.A. prisoners confined there. Maurice Crowe of Tipperary, who was the leader of the prisoners, informed me that it was intended to commence

a hunger-strike at 12 noon the following day, and he asked me if I was willing to participate and I told him I was. I did not take any breakfast the following morning as I had fully made up my mind on being arrested that I would go on strike, even if I were the only one to do so. I was on this strike for eleven days and, in between, we had some interesting happenings. There were between fifty and sixty on strike and after the seventh day some of the lads were removed to England. On the Sunday following my arrest, when attending Mass in the Prison Chapel, I was surprised to see Liam Lynch (Brigade O.C.) and three or four others whom I knew in the Chapel. Liam had been arrested in the City Hall with Terry MacSwiney, where the enemy, without knowing it, had made a big capture which included almost all the 1st Brigade Staff, and Liam Lynch and a few others from the 2nd Brigade. Practically all, except Terry MacSwiney, were released a short time later, as they had given false names on arrest and had convinced the authorities that they were in the City Hall for business or other legal reasons. While we were in the Jail, Liam Lynch met me one morning outside the wings of the Exercise compound and told me he had a map of the Brigade area, with all the Battlions and Company areas marked up on it. I got him to slip it to me practically under the nose of one of the warders and got rid of it in double quick time by tearing it in small pieces and dumping in a lavatory.

By the seventh or eighth day of the strike ten or twelve of the prisoners had been deported to England. On the ninth night, the Prison Governor, Prison Doctor and a military doctor came to my cell and, after examining me, requested that I take nourishment (Beef Tea) for the journey across to England. I

refused, with the result that they did not remove me that night. On the following morning, a warder, who was friendly to the prisoners (I forget his name) came to me and enquired what had happened when the Governor and the doctors visited me the night before. When I told him about the nourishment he said every one of the prisoners who took it had been deported. He advised me to stick it out.

On the tenth night the Governor and the two doctors came to me and again wanted me to take the beef tea, saying I would not be able to survive the journey, and remained almost an hour trying to persuade me. I still refused. They left the cell and later returned and again tried to persuade me to take some stimulant and when I persisted the three of them did their utmost to force some stimulant into my mouth with a spoon. I succeeded in preventing them getting any through my lips, and, after doing all they could, one of the doctors remarked "Strike that man's name off the list". The following morning the Governor arrived in and told me I was to be released that day at 12 o'clock. When the friendly warder arrived later and I was telling him what had occurred and that I was to be in reception hall dressed at 12 noon, the warder advised me on no account was I to dress myself. The Governor arrived back to my cell at 12 o'clock and demanded to know why I was not dressed. I told him I was too weak to dress myself, so he then called a warder to bring two convicts to dress me. The two convicts turned up, who were two tinkers from Bandon, in jail for beating up a soldier in Bandon. They dressed me and brought me down to the reception room, where five of the prisoners were awaiting release. We were told an ambulance was to arrive to bring us to

the Mercy Hospital, and whilst we were waiting the Governor again tried to prevail on me to take some beef tea. I still refused and eventually when the ambulance arrived we were transferred to the Mercy Hospital. We remained in the hospital for six days before we were discharged. There was no military guard in the hospital. On the sixth day a lot of rumours were in circulation that we were to be taken back from hospital to the prison. I left the hospital that day and travelled by train to Buttevant. I was anxious to know how I would fare out at home - whether I would be re-arrested or not.

On returning from Buttevant to Lisscarroll by side car I met a party of the troops who had arrested me and who remarked "There's the so-and-so out again." The Officer in charge, who had been in charge of my escort when I was arrested, had jibed me that my "wings were clipped", and I told him I'd be out in a month. He asked me if I would have a bet on it and I agreed. Needless to say I did not call to collect my bet, but I decided to have full satisfaction otherwise. I remained at home only a short time and came into the village and showed myself and was talking to a neighbour: after about twenty minutes two soldiers arrived and satisfied themselves it was myself. They returned to the Post again, and after about ten minutes a party of fifteen moved out and came in my direction. When within fifty yards from me they started playing ball and kicking it towards me. About thirty yards from me there was a slight bend in the road which obscured their view for a few paces. As soon as I saw this, I got across a ditch and made my escape. When the soldiers who had not seen me slipping off came near the neighbours to whom I had been speaking, they pounced on them, and when they

realised the bird had flown they demanded to know where I was gone.

My home was raided that night shortly after midnight and on the following morning at 10 a.m. and twice also the following night. On an average my house was raided about four nights a week from then to the following Christmas.

The position at home was that two brothers of mine, who were not in the Movement, were arrested when they caught me on the first occasion. Those two had not joined the hunger-strike, but had been deported to England. A third brother - Dan - who was arrested about a week after me was released after a short period. Dan had been in the Movement from the start, as was also a younger brother - Jim.

Early in August, 1920, all arrangements had been made for the formation of a Brigade Column, but, owing to a series of incidents, its mobilisation had been postponed. The principal reason for the delay was that the man selected to take charge of it - Paddy Clancy - was shot dead by the enemy at Derrygallon on August 15th, 1920.

This Brigade Column eventually mobilised at Badgers Hill, Glenville, on September 15th. Liam Lynch was the leader and the following were the members :-

Paddy O'Brien,	Liscarroll.
Paddy McCarthy,	Meelin.
Michael O'Sullivan,	do.
Dan Brown,	do.
Dan Vaughan,	Boherbee.

Patk. Healy,	Kilcorney, Millstreet.
Thos. Coughlan,	Charleville.
Dan Shinnick,	Castletownroche.
Jim O'Neill,	do.
Jerh. O'Donovan,	do.
Jim Halloran,	Ballindangan.
Dan Daly,	Bushy Park, Rathcormac.
George Power,	Fermoy.
Lar Condon,	do.

Those were the original members: some others joined later, including:-

Jack Healy,	Millstreet.
Jimmy Brunnock,	Rathcormac.
Jack O'Mahony,	Araglin.

The above formed the nucleus of what started the activities in North Cork.

We spent a week in training under Liam Lynch in Glenville. This training mainly consisted of musketry, rifle marksmanship, fire control and minor tactical training, including field signals. After about a week Ernie O'Malley joined us, accompanied by Jerry Kiely from Tipperary. When the week's training had finished we took up a few ambush positions, without contacting any enemy. One was on the road between Bartlemy and Rathcormac and the other between Kaem and Glenville. In the latter position a motor van approached which turned out to be a motor bread van, and some of our lads fired a shot at it and then everyone opened up, with the result that the van was riddled but the driver

luckily escaped. Our instructions had not been too clear.

We then moved on to Burnfort Company area (Mallow Battalion). We continued our training each day under Ernie O'Malley. After about the third day it was decided to go into position on the main Cork-Mallow road at Mourneabbey. While inspecting this position a messenger arrived from Mallow to say of the possibility of the capture of the Mallow Barracks. This message was from the Company O.C. (Tadg Byrne). This meant a switch over of plans and arrangements were made to contact the Mallow Company. The Brigade O.C. (Liam Lynch) and E. O'Malley then had a discussion with some members of the Mallow Company, and Dick Willis and Jackie Bolster produced plans of the Barracks and gave all the details of the customary movements of the garrison each day. With this information the possibility of capturing the barracks was considered feasible, so arrangements were made accordingly.

The following night the Companies of the Mallow Battalion were contacted and each assigned duties on road blocking and scouting, etc. The Column moved into Mallow town from Burnfort about midnight and succeeded in getting into the Town Hall, where they remained until the following morning. Plans of attack were examined once more in the Town Hall and it was decided that Paddy McCarthy (one of the Column) should move in along with Willis and Bolster, and represent himself as a Clerk of Works from the Board of Works - (Willis and Bolster were employees of the Board of Works - Painter and Carpenter respectively). He went in with the other two at the normal starting hour. Each of these three was armed with two revolvers. When Paddy McCarthy got in he marked time by measuring some work done

by the other two, and at about nine o'clock half the garrison (about twenty or twenty-five) of the 17th Lancers proceeded to leave the Barracks to exercise the horses of the Unit, leaving the remainder of the men in the Barracks. It was customary to take the horses to a field about one mile outside the town for exercise. To get to the field it was necessary for them to pass through the town. When the Column, which was in the Town Hall, saw this party passing, we got ready immediately for action, giving the others time to get to the exercise field before the Column would leave the Town Hall. The Column then proceeded through the rear of the Town Hall and on through the Town Park, which meant a distance of 200 yards to entrance of barracks. The Brigade Officer Commanding had insisted on heading the attack into the barracks, Ernie O'Malley first to engage the attention of the sentry by handing him a note, the plan being, whilst the sentry was engaged with O'Malley, the first members of the attacking force were to rush the gate. Strict instructions had been issued by the Brigade O.C. that only as a last resort should shots be fired. There was a hurried consultation between some of the leading members of the Column and it was decided that the Brigade O.C. was to be headed by three or four of the Column when it was too near for him to cause any argument. The plan of entry went O.K. according to plan - sentry being engaged by O'Malley. The first members of the Column - three having got in front of the Brigade O.C. - rushed through the door and, immediately he did so, the Sergeant, who was in charge of the remainder of the garrison, was standing in his shirt sleeves supervising the shoeing of a horse about ten yards from the gate entrance. On seeing the raiders enter he ran in the direction of the Guardroom: he was called on to

halt by the first of the raiders, but refused. A shot was then fired but he still kept running towards the Guardroom and had almost reached the Guardroom when a second shot was fired with the intention of stopping him - the first shot had given warning to McCarthy, Willis and Bolster who were actually within the Guardroom when our lot appeared at the gate. They had held up the entire guard - about ten troops actually in the Guardroom at the time. On hearing the first shot Willis turned at the doorway and saw the Sergeant approaching at the double; the raiders' second shot and a shot from Dick Willis were almost simultaneous, with the result that the Sergeant fell wounded across the entrance of the Guardroom door. By this time most of the raiders had entered the Barracks, and were proceeding to search the building for any soldiers that may be found. In all, twenty-three men and the Sergeant (wounded) were found in the barracks. These were lined up under a few members of the Column, who kept guard over them whilst the barracks was being searched for arms and equipment. Three motor cars had arrived by this time, driven by Volunteers, and were quickly loaded with various equipment and ammunition, including two Hotchkiss guns. The Column members took the rifles, which numbered twenty-seven, and one revolver which the Sergeant had. The garrison then was locked into one of the buildings, one of their number being detailed to look after the wounded Sergeant, and an effort was made to set fire to the remainder of the building - hay being placed along the stone staircases and steeped in petrol found in one of the stores. Owing to the scarcity of the wood in the buildings the fire failed to catch. When we had left, the man in charge of the Sergeant released the others, who extinguished

the fire. The whole raid took only about sixteen minutes.

Following this raid the Column retired back to Burnfort and remained there for the day and then proceeded to Lombardstown and remained on guard over the Co-Operative Stores, fearing reprisals would follow. The reprisals were not attempted in Lombardstown but were carried out in Mallow, where several houses were burned. Dick Willis and Jack Bolster left the barracks that morning and remained with the Column afterwards - both becoming in time expert gunners with the Hotchkiss gun.

It was not possible, owing to transport difficulties, for the Column to get into Mallow to meet possible reprisals, so there was no other alternative but to find billets in Lombardstown area, where it remained for a few days. The Column then removed into the Charleville area and billeted in the Ballyhea Company area, near Ardglass.

It was intended to carry out an attack on the Churchtown R.I.C. Barracks, which was manned by about ten R.I.C. and Tans. This was an isolated stone building, with a surrounding garden wall, and it was considered a rather difficult problem in the absence of explosives. There was scarcely a pound of explosives in the Brigade at that time and we had not reached the stage of manufacturing it ourselves. Plans were laid for the attack and the local Company was instructed to keep a sharp look out so that they could report on the movements and whereabouts of the garrison for the night. It was frequently the custom for some of the garrison to frequent one or all three pubs in the village. About 6.30 p.m. on the evening of the proposed attack a dispatch arrived from one of the Churchtown Company, saying that the

garrison seemed to be aware of the proposed attack. This information caused a change of plans and it was deemed inadvisable to carry out the attack in view of the close proximity to Buttevant Military Barracks, only three and a half miles away. Incidentally it was later ascertained that this information was supplied on purpose to get us to put off the attack. The Column then removed to Freemount in the Newmarket Battalion area, where it was thought possible that an attack could be brought off against a patrol from the military post at Liscarroll. This patrol would consist of members of the 17th Lancers who used travel on horseback, but it was found on arrival at Freemount that the patrols, which were frequent during the month of August, had completely stopped. This would have been due to the fact that the Post was preparing to close down for the Winter, which was not known to us at the time.

Arrangements were then made, following our arrival in Freemount, for a combined attack with the West Limerick Battalion of Newcastlewest on an R.I.C. patrol at Dromcollogher. The Column had actually proceeded on the proposed night of attack to within a few miles of Dromcollogher to find that the local Units were not prepared to participate, stating they were not ready. The Column returned back to Freemount and next day went on to Drominarrigle, four miles south of Newmarket. The Brigade O.C. (Liam Lynch), Ernie O'Malley, and Seán Moylan, who was then O.C. of the Newmarket Battalion, inspected the road between Kanturk and Newmarket with a view to ambushing an enemy supply lorry travelling almost every day between the posts of Kanturk and Newmarket. A position was selected about a mile from Kanturk at a place called Ballydrocane. The Column moved into position

the following morning, lining the roadside behind a hawthorn hedge on the right-hand side. There was a bend on the road here and an entrance to an old disused dwelling, from which it was proposed to move a cart across the road to obstruct the lorry on its approach. About 10 a.m. a single lorry approaching from Kanturk was signalled to the Column. This lorry moved directly into the ambush position. A milk cart taking milk to a nearby creamery at Allensbridge was within the ambush position at this time. Fire was opened on the lorry, and the driver was shot dead and the lorry collided with the milk cart and came to a halt in the middle of the ambush position. The enemy immediately returned the fire and some of them jumped from the lorry and took cover underneath it. The fight lasted only about a minute, when the military intimated by shouting that they would surrender. A few members of the Column immediately jumped over the fence and the military underneath the lorry again fired at them, none of whom were wounded. A return blast was then given by the remainder of the Column, inflicting slight wounds on the majority of the military. They surrendered immediately. Their arms and equipment were taken and the Column moved away from the position. The lorry was not burned owing to the fact that the dead driver was still in the cab of the lorry. The remainder of the soldiers were allowed their freedom.

The column moved back to Drominarrigle, where they remained during the day. After nightfall, with local Volunteers from the Newmarket and Kanturk Battalions, it moved into position in the vicinity of Allensbridge Creamery and the town of Kanturk to meet any possibility of reprisals. There were no reprisals

on this occasion and the Column again moved back to Drominarrigle area.

Next day the Column moved on to the Millstreet Battalion area and billeted at Drishanebeg.

After a few days in Drishanebeg Ernie O'Malley left for Dublin, boarding the train at Rathcoole (near Banteer).

The Brigade O.C., with myself and a few others of the Column, went to inspect a position with a view to an ambush on the Millstreet-Macroon road. About three miles from Millstreet (at Keamcorrige) while we were inspecting the spot, we saw in the distance five lorries of enemy coming from the direction of Macroon. We immediately lay down behind the rocks, intending to allow the enemy to pass. After waiting for about five minutes, when they should have passed, there was no sign of them. I gave a careful look out and saw the enemy had dismounted and had approached on foot to about fifty yards from where we were. We ran for it and got away without being observed by them. As a result of the enemy's careful precautions on this road, it was not considered advisable to waste any further time in the area. The local Battalion O.C. (Cornelius (Sonny) Meany) called on the Brigade O.C. to round up some bank robbers who had so far evaded the efforts of the local battalion. This was the result of a bank robbery which had been carried out earlier in the year at Rathduane. The Manager of one of the Banks at Millstreet and his Cashier were on their way from Millstreet to Knocknagree, where a Fair was being held. They had a large sum of money with them and they were held up at Rathduane, and the money taken. The perpetrators of this robbery had circulated the rumour that

it was done by the I.R.A., therefore the onus was on the I.R.A. to clear themselves. Some of the actual robbers had already been captured and dealt with, but the ring-leader of the gang was still at liberty and had evaded several attempts to capture him. The Column were moved into position around his house a few mornings later, before daybreak. Just as day was breaking a man was observed leaving the house. He moved out about three hundred yards and apparently got suspicious and ran back again into the house. A few shots were fired with a view to try and get him to stop. He continued and got back towards the farm-yard buildings, where he was lost to view. The Column moved in, searched the out-buildings and the dwellinghouse and eventually got the man. The Column, with their prisoner, then moved on to Glantane in the Mallow Battalion area.

It was now almost the end of October. The Column had been going constantly since Mid-September. The Brigade O.C. decided to allow the Column members go back to their own battalions for about a week or ten days, with instructions that each battalion should organise a Unit Column, the members of the Brigade Column to train them.

Before the Column was actually disbanded, a Courtmartial was held on the bank robber, and it was decided that he be deported, with instructions that if he returned to the area he was liable to be shot. About three-fourths of the money captured by this gang had been recovered, and the local battalion was presented with £100 by the Bank authorities for their splendid services.

The members of the Brigade Column then returned to their own battalions and proceeded immediately to train Columns in the

different battalions. The intention was that each Unit Column would operate in its own area. By this time arms were a little more plentiful in the areas, as the captured arms at Fermoy in 1919, which were the first arms used by the Brigade Column, had been returned to the Fermoy Battalion, and the Column had been armed with the rifles captured at Mallow in September, 1920. There had also been about a dozen rifles secured from Headquarters - those, with the other surplus rifles after the Mallow raid, had been distributed amongst the battalions according to their requirements. The Newmarket Battalion had received what rifles had been captured at Ballydrocane, and the Charleville Battalion had got five rifles from the Brigade pool.

Charleville Battalion had now about ten Officers who were continually 'on the run'. These were organised as a Column, in conjunction with about fifteen men from the Newmarket Battalion. They laid an ambush in the vicinity of Milford R.I.C. Barracks. I was in charge of this party. We actually took up position about 300 yards from the barracks, where we remained for a whole day expecting a patrol to leave the barracks. No patrol moved out on that day and the Column returned to Tullylease just before nightfall. Three days later Milford Barracks was evacuated. Having got word of its evacuation early in the day, the Column leader (Paddy O'Brien) sent word to the local Unit to have the barracks scouted and word sent to the Column as soon as the evacuation was completed. The members of the Column had to be brought a distance of about ten miles and it was the intention to burn the evacuated barracks before dark as it was feared that the enemy might endeavour to get back into the building after darkness, and frustrate any attempt to destroy it. The barracks

was actually evacuated about 3 p.m. and the Column were then about four miles away moving towards Milford on foot. They arrived within about a mile of Milford when the local Unit failed to contact them. The Column waited on for awhile and then proceeded on to Milford, having found out from some local residents that the barracks had been evacuated earlier in the day. A few members of the local Unit were contacted but they were unable to give any information about the situation. The Battalion O.C. and the Column O.C. then decided to proceed and destroy the barracks. They went towards the building, which was an isolated one and situated about a quarter of a mile from the village and standing about twenty feet in off the road. The local Volunteers and a few members of the Column were instructed to procure some hay and straw from a nearby farm, and a couple of others were sent to the village for paraffin oil. The Battalion O.C. (Jim Brislane) and myself entered the building to ensure that no traps had been laid by the late occupants. Having carefully inspected all the rooms on the ground floor and upper storey, the Battalion O.C. moved out with the intention of getting Volunteers to bring in the material to set fire to the building. He had just moved out the door and I was starting to come down the stairs, holding a lighted candle. I quenched the candle when halfway down the stairs and went to follow the Battalion O.C. At the door I was challenged to 'put them up', and a shot was immediately fired. I realised I was hit but was not knocked unconscious or off my feet. I immediately managed to slam the door shut and was now in possession of the barracks. The intruders, whom I could not see owing to the extreme darkness, were endeavouring to push in the door but were unable to do this as I had the bolts fastened on the inside. By this time I knew I had been shot in the face and in the darkness I tried to bind

up the wound with a first aid outfit in my possession. During this time I could hear the voices outside the door, but had no means of finding out how many might be there. From my inspection of the barracks I was satisfied they would not be able to get in, and the door which I had shut was backed with a steel plate. I had to keep pressure against the door to prevent them forcing it back any little bit. The position remained thus for about ten minutes, they still trying their best to force the door open, and I inside wondering how many were outside. Eventually one of the local Volunteers, who had been sent to the village, returned, and, stopping at the gate, was immediately captured and brought in near the door. This Volunteer, named **CREMIN**, was being forced by the two Tans who were outside to assist them in trying to push in the door. They meant to push him in before them and he was protesting. I recognised the voice of the local Volunteer and decided to try a ruse to give him a chance of escaping. I allowed the door to be pushed a few inches open by slacking a chain which secured the door. The local Volunteer was being forced to try and push his way in. I fired a shot just in front of the aperture of the open door and then cranked back the door again. The local Volunteer (Cremin), on hearing the shot, started to roar that he was shot and ran for the gate. The Tans, thinking he had been shot, allowed him to get away. He contacted the Battalion O.C. immediately, and the other members of the Column who were lying close by, but could not know what to do. Cremin was able to explain to them that there were two Tans outside the door trying to get in and that there was someone inside who had the door barred. The Battalion O.C. immediately sized up the situation, knowing who was inside, and ordered the Column to open fire in the direction of the door, he, himself, firing with a revolver in

the direction where Cremin indicated. The position then meant that the Tans were more or less between two fires, but the night being so dark made it impossible to discern anyone, even at a few feet. The Tans apparently decided the position was no longer safe for them and, knowing the ground better than their attackers, managed to get away. Those Tans were from an adjoining Post at Dromcollogher - only about two miles away across-country - and had been frequent visitors to the Milford Barracks. The Battalion O.C. then proceeded, after about ten minutes, to get the Column to move cautiously close in around the barracks. Having satisfied himself that they must have got away, he shouted to me enquiring if I was alright. This was a welcome call, and I answered back to say I was alright. I then opened the door and came out to my comrades. By this time the wound which I had received was beginning to overcome me. The bullet had hit the cheek bone underneath the left eye and had flattened itself out and remained in the head. It was a .38 bullet. It was subsequently learned that one of the Tans had received a similar wound and died later from its effects. I was examined by the local doctor at a nearby farmhouse and he instructed the Battalion O.C. that I should be removed for an operation to extract the bullet, which he was unable to do locally. The barracks was not burned that night, but was burned three days later.

I travelled by motor to Glenville the following day and waited at Mrs. Hickey's of Badgers Hill until a doctor from Cork city came out and arranged for my removal next day to Glenvera Nursing Home, Cork. An operation was performed by Dr. Guisani, who removed the bullet. I was about six weeks in the hospital

before I was able to resume duty. On my way from Glenville into Cork I stopped at Delaneys of Dublin Hill, waiting for a covered car from Cork to bring me to the Nursing Home. I met two of the Delaney boys while I was there. On the day of my release from the hospital I attended the funeral of those two boys who had been shot by the Tans a few nights before, on the night Cork City was burned.

During my absence in the hospital, the Brigade Column had been mobilised again in the vicinity of Millstreet, where an operation was being carried out in the town against a patrol of Tans. Paddy McCarthy, who was the outstanding man of the Column, was shot in action that night by the Tans. The death of Paddy had a very depressing effect on all the members of the Column.

The Brigade O.C. decided then to disband the Column and allow the members back to their own Battalion areas, where they should endeavour to increase activity with the local Battalion Units. In this way it was hoped to have greater activities throughout the whole Brigade area.

1921.

About the middle of December I got out of the hospital and reported to Brigade Headquarters at Lombardstown. Just prior to my being wounded I had been appointed Brigade Quartermaster. This appointment meant that I had more frequent association with the Brigade O.C. We now decided to call a few selected men from each battalion to do a fortnight's special training immediately after Christmas. This training class was held in the vicinity of Nadd under my charge. This training comprised rifle and small arms training, use of ground and cover, fire control, occupation

and withdrawal from an ambush position, combat signals and some physical training. All the battalions were represented, except Fermoy, which was badly organised owing to the many arrests of Battalion and Company Officers. Before disbanding the training camp, I instructed those present to intensify the fight in their areas. The Brigade O.C. and myself moved into the Fermoy Battalion area. The Brigade O.C. had to devote his time to organisation and the selection of suitable men for Officer rank in the battalion, whilst I was engaged each day for the first week in training the nucleus of a battalion column.

The Fermoy Battalion area at this time was being very hard pressed by the enemy, there being large military centres at Fermoy, Kilworth and Moorepark. The pressure of the enemy can be judged from the fact that practically every house in which we stayed for the fortnight was raided within two days of our staying there.

After spending a full fortnight in Battalion organisation and endeavouring to get the best and most suitable man to act as Battalion O.C., a Battalion Council Meeting was held at Ballynoe, where a new Battalion O.C. was appointed (Tom Griffin). The meeting finished about 1 p.m. and Griffin was arrested the following morning. Con Leddy replaced Tom Griffin as the Battalion O.C.,

The Brigade O.C. and myself then moved back to the Lombardstown area, and shortly after I moved on to the Charleville Battalion area, where I was trying to get some action initiated to relieve the pressure elsewhere.

I got back to the Charleville Battalion early in February, where I had to lie up for a fortnight, due to a poisoned leg. In

the meantime I had contacted the local Battalion Column, and they were almost continually lying in different positions each day, without any success. They then moved into Churchtown one night to get a Tan patrol in the village, for they had waited for them several days out the roads, without success. One Tan was shot that night.

The Battalion Column now decided to snipe the enemy Posts from this time onwards at Buttevant, Churchtown and Charleville on two or three nights each week. This activity on our part had a demoralising effect on the enemy because they had to be continually on the look out and this action confined them to the barracks to a great extent.

Shortly after this, the enemy changed its tactics of spasmodic raiding and, instead, used cordon big tracts of country and try to comb it out. These tactics made it very dangerous to have any large numbers concentrated in any locality. The organisation could not afford to chance losing all its active men in one swoop.

The latter part of March and early April was devoted principally to perfecting an organisation, whereby all the members of the different battalion columns could be mobilised in a period of thirty-six hours approximately.

About the 1st March, I, being again able to move around with the Column, took a dozen men into Charleville with the intention of attacking a party of R.I.C. which usually collected the mails each morning. Our principal reason for this attempt was to prove to the enemy after the recent sniping attacks at night that they

could also expect daylight attacks close up to their posts. The Column, which moved into Charleville, were frustrated in their attempt at getting the patrol, due to the fact that a number of school-children arrived on the scene, necessitating the holding up of the fire of the Column, allowing the Tans to get clear of the position. A few shots had been fired at one of the Tans who was later than the others, having called into a shop for a drink and the daily paper. That night the Tans murdered the Chairman of the U.D.C. - Seán O'Brien, who was a prominent Gaelic Leaguer. He was not a Volunteer.

The Column withdrew from Charleville to Dromina, where a dispatch awaited them to proceed at once to Drominarrigle in the Newmarket area. The Column, after only one hour's delay in Dromina, continued to journey on through Freemount, Bawnmore, Allens Bridge and on to Drominarrigle, where they arrived at about 8 p.m. that day to be told on their arrival that they were to contact the members of the Newmarket Column in the vicinity of Knocknagree. They now proceeded to Knocknagree and on arrival there were informed that an ambush was to take place next day on the Rathmore-Killarney road, at a place known as The Bower, which would be about eight miles further on from Knocknagree. This meant that the column, which had arrived from Charleville and had practically no rest the previous night and travelling all day, would be another night without rest. Yet there was no murmur of discontent so long as there was a prospect of an engagement. The Charleville and Newmarket Columns, in conjunction with the Kerry Nos. 1 and 2 Brigade Columns, took up positions next morning. At this time some members of the Column were experimenting in the manufacture of mines, but knew very little of the technicalities

attached to same. The combined Columns remained in position all day. Seán Moylan was in charge of the North Cork contingent and Tom McEllistrum was with the Kerry party. The Columns again went into position on the second day, but were informed in the afternoon that the enemy in Killarney knew of their presence. It was then decided to shift the scene of operations, information having come to hand that the enemy Brigade Staff from Buttevant had been inspecting the Kerry Posts and were due to return to their Headquarters at Buttevant. This important opportunity could not be allowed to pass, so it was decided to move East into the North Cork area and thereby lull the suspicions of the enemy. This removal was done overnight with one of the Kerry Columns accompanying the Newmarket and Charleville Columns. Millstreet Battalion was contacted and instructed to have their Column in the vicinity of Clonbannin early next morning. The position selected was about half a mile west of Clonbannin Cross where there was slightly high ground on both sides of the road allowing fire to be brought on the road from both sides without any danger of cross fire. The mines were placed on the road, and at about 10 a.m. when scarcely half the Column were in position, three lorries were signalled travelling from the East. The Column was quickly rushed to their positions and instructed that every man was to hold his fire until one of the mines exploded which was to be the signal for opening the attack. There were only two mines on the road - one at the eastern and another at the western end of the position. Dan Vaughan was in charge of the one at the Eastern end. Seán Moylan, who was in charge of the operation, was to take charge of the mine at the western end. The mine at the western end was the first to be fired. The three lorries moved right into the position, and as Seán Moylan

was about to press the switch for the mine he mentioned to me that I fire the first shot and try to get the driver. He pressed the switch and I pressed the trigger of my rifle. The mine failed to explode and my rifle went to half-cock, the result being that the lorries had passed out of the ambush position without seeing or realising anything was amiss. A hurried consultation followed and it was decided to remain in waiting and chance getting them on their return journey, and this time to rely only on rifle and Hotchkiss fire. At about 2.10 p.m. a signaller indicated that the enemy was approaching from the west and this word was passed on to all the sections, it having been previously arranged that fire was to be opened on the leading lorry when it reached about midway in the ambush position. The signaller now indicated that there were five cars. These eventually turned out to be two lorries in front, a touring car, followed closely by an armoured car, and a third lorry in the rear. This convoy moved into the position and fire was opened according to plan, the first lorry being brought to a halt a little inside the eastern end of the position. A second lorry was also brought to a halt some little distance in rear; the touring car was halted about midway in the position, and it was so closely followed by the armoured car that the driver of the armoured car, in attempting to avoid it and possibly being under a heavy concentration of fire, allowed the car to run into a dyke on the roadside. In spite of this, the last lorry, which was still well outside the western end of the position, kept moving on until it was actually brought to a halt by the attackers' fire. The position now was that all the enemy had evacuated their lorries, and the occupants of the touring car, having jumped from their car when it stopped, made a concentrated target for the fire

of the attackers, with the result that they were put out of action immediately. The occupants of the first two lorries had many of their men killed or wounded, whilst the occupants of the rear lorry - about ten in number- succeeded, though under strong fire of the attackers, to gain the cover of a nearby cottage. The armoured car, though unable to proceed out of its position, was, however, able to bring fire to bear on most of the positions held by the attackers. This prevented any possibility of getting the rifles of the occupants of the first lorry who had been put out of action and could easily have been picked up were it not for the fire of the armoured car. The engagement continued and the Columns at the southern side of the road withdrew from their positions after a little over an hour fighting. The Column on the northern side of the road were not aware that their comrades on the southern side had withdrawn, and continued on in their positions for nearly another hour. Eventually, a section of the enemy was seen approaching by a fence at the western flank of the northern attackers. A section had been placed on this flank before the fight commenced, as a protective measure, but, on seeing the occupants of the last lorry get inside the ambush position, they had crossed over to their comrades on the southern side and retreated with them without thinking of what they had done. The attackers on the northern side now found themselves in the danger of being brought between two fires and, while a few men at the western flank had to try and hold up the attack, word had to be got to men on the eastern flank to retire as quickly as possible. This was done successfully, but it was chiefly due to the action of Dan Vaughan, who at one period succeeded in holding off the enemy from gaining a point where they could bring fire to bear on the men retiring. The time was now 4.10 p.m. The ultimate result of this engagement was that the enemy Brigade O.C. -

General Cummings - was killed with fourteen Other Ranks, and about as many more wounded. The I.R.A. had no casualties.

Following this engagement, after about a fortnight the enemy became very active again. About this time the enemy resorted to a trick of sending out men as alleged deserters, and this was done on a few occasions from Buttevant Barracks. On the first occasion a supposed deserter was held up in Liscarroll Company area, where he was held for a few days and afterwards allowed to move on. It was found that he had returned immediately and was actually with a raiding party that raided some of the houses in which he had been kept a prisoner. The Battalion O.C. and myself decided that this should stop, and about a week later - about mid-April - another supposed deserter, who had moved out about ten miles from Buttevant, was captured in the Freemount area. This man was questioned and it was felt that he was more on intelligence than as a deserter, so it was decided to take drastic action with him. He was taken back and shot within a few miles of Buttevant. This, undoubtedly, had the effect of rousing the tempers of the enemy, but it also had the effect of stopping any soldiers posing as deserters. As a reprisal for the shooting of the supposed deserter, my own home and the home of the Company Captain of Liscarroll were both blown up by explosives.

About the following week a detachment of Military from Buttevant arrived at Liscarroll and set about taking up quarters in the ruins of the old castle where they had been the previous year. The fortifications by the previous garrison had been completely broken down by the local Company, and also an extra number of breaches made in the walls. About eight members of

the Column - mostly from Liscarroll Company - who happened to be in the vicinity on the day the troops arrived, decided on giving them a reception that night. About 10 p.m. they approached from both sides and opened fire with rifles, which they kept up for a quarter of an hour. The enemy were badly shaken as they had no secure positions from which to return the fire, and made a hurried exit out of the Post the following morning. This was welcome news to the Column, but the enemy still had a few other cards to play. It was the custom during this period for the local Companies to be occupied almost three or four nights every week in blocking the roads by cutting trees or trenches and destroying bridges, with a view to restricting the enemy's transport movements. During the last week of April, Liscarroll Company were opening trenches every night on the orders of their own Officers and were being rounded up next day by the British military to close them up again.

In April, 1921, I brought about ten or twelve members of the Charleville Battalion Column, and a similar number from Newmarket Battalion, into West Limerick at the invitation of the local Column O.C., with the intention of staging an attack on a large R.I.C. patrol operating in the vicinity of Abbeyfeale. It was the practice of the patrol almost every ~~night~~^{day} to move about a mile outside the town on the main road. We occupied a suitable position, together with some of the local lads, about a half mile outside the town, and waited patiently for the patrol to appear. They never showed up, and on that particular ~~night~~^{day} they only moved a hundred yards outside the town, whether by intuition or good luck, so all our preparations were of no avail.

On May Eve a trench was being opened about a mile from the

village of Lisscarroll, and some of the parties on their way ^{home} after completing the work were intercepted by a military patrol which killed a young lad - Dennehy - only about 14 years of age.

On May 4th a detachment of military again moved out from Buttevant and camped near the roadside, midway between Lisscarroll and Freemount. Word was sent to the Column who were in the adjoining parish of Dromina. Word had also been received from the Company in Charleville to the effect that a number of lorries of military had arrived in town that evening. This information from both sides was a definite indication that a round-up was likely to take place next morning in some locality. The Column were contemplating the action to be taken and finally decided that they would move back into Tullylease and allow the enemy to waste their energies in all probability around the Charleville area. The Column arrived in Tullylease, consisting of about ten men, at approximately 11.30 p.m. and contacted members of the local Company and explained the position to them, and it was decided that the ten men move on to Knocktoosh, about two miles west of Tullylease village. They were billeting in three houses - two at one side of the road and one at the other side, four remaining in each house at the southern side and the Battalion O.C. and myself remaining in the house at the northern side. Two local Volunteers offered to remain on scout duty until day-break, when they would arrange to call the members of the Column in one of the houses. This was done, and at daybreak one of the scouts went to awaken the man in one of the houses at the southern side. Having awakened them, one of them - Michael O'Regan - the Company O.C., of Lisscarroll, went out with the local scout to be shown where the Battalion O.C. and myself were sleeping.

Having arrived out on the road they were proceeding in the direction of the house where we were and which was only about three hundred yards away, when they were immediately called upon to halt. The local scout - John Stokes - was shot dead and Michael O'Regan was surrounded and captured and got no opportunity to draw his revolver. The other scout - John Roche - who was about one hundred yards away attempted to get word to the other members of the Column. He was fired on and wounded in the shoulder. The other members of the Column in the house, who had been called, on hearing the firing went immediately to the adjoining house and roused their comrades. One of them went in the direction from which he had heard the fighting and saw about thirty military gathered on the road. He had no knowledge at this time of Stoke's death or Regan's arrest and did not know in which house the Battalion O.C. and myself were. The remaining seven members of the Column succeeded in getting outside the ring of the raiders. The Battalion O.C. and myself were still sleeping peacefully about three hundred yards from all this and continued to do so for about two hours longer until awakened by the noise of an aeroplane which seemed to be at the door. The plane came so close to the house that we could plainly see the pilot as we lay in our beds. The Battalion O.C. immediately jumped out of bed and said he would have a look around. Whilst he was out I dressed myself and met him at the door just as he was returning. He mentioned that there was something wrong around but that he could not see anybody. Just then, the man of the house (Mr. Sheehan) arrived in and said to us to move out quickly as the military were all around the place. We moved out the one door of the house around the gable end, and as we did so three or four military arrived from the gable end at the left. They did not see us, nor did we see them.

We moved a small distance from the house and got into the shelter of a drain which we travelled along for about one hundred yards. We then realised that whilst we were in the drain we were possibly quite safe from view but that should we attempt to leave it we would be exposed to view for an area of three hundred to four hundred yards. We had no alternative but to remain where we were, although nearly up to our waist in water. We felt sure that the members of the household would try to contact us when the danger would have passed, but that they would not be likely to do so otherwise. This surmise proved correct. It was, however, nearly two hours before the farmer came to look for us. He attracted our attention by continually calling his dog, and when he located where we were he told me that the military had only just gone. He also told me about young Stokes' death and that someone was arrested. He mentioned, too, that he could not understand how the military had not seen us as we left the house or how we had not seen them as he felt we should have met at the door. Later same day we heard about Regan's arrest and that he had given his name as O'Keefe. He was removed to Limerick Jail and eventually released after the Truce.

We contacted the other members of the Column that evening and returned to the Charleville area.

For the next few days we were solely confined to trying to make contact with O'Regan at Limerick Jail. This was done eventually through the Prison Chaplain, and on the 10th May a sister of his decided to go to Limerick to try and visit him under the name of O'Keefe. She was to be accompanied by another girl named Hannah O'Donnell.

On the night of May 9th, a brother of O'Regan - John - who was Battalion Quartermaster, had replaced James Winters - arrested a short time previously. He (John O'Regan) and my brother, Dan, called to the house of Miss O'Donnell at Aughrim, about two miles North of Liscarroll and left of the Liscarroll-Milford road, from where O'Regan's sister and Miss O'Donnell were to start next morning for Limerick. On that day I was at the other end of the Battalion area but had arranged to meet those two at O'Donnell's that night. I arrived there about half an hour after midnight, and, having discussed the proposed visit to Limerick and given them some instructions which I had got during the day, the three of us (John O'Regan, Dan and myself) prepared to move off, as we had definitely decided for some time before that O'Donnell's would not be a safe house to stay in, owing to one of its members (Michael O'Donnell, an Officer in Liscarroll Company) being 'on the run'. John O'Donnell, seeing us about to leave, invited us to remain the night as it was so late, and as all the members of the household would be up very early in the morning there would be very little danger. As we were discussing whether we should stay or not, another member of the Liscarroll Company who was in the Column, named Patrick Sheedy, arrived looking for us. In addition to this there was another Volunteer (Daniel O'Connor) working at O'Donnells, and it was decided then that Sheedy and Dan O'Connor would remain on scout duty whilst the three of us had a sleep. About 8 a.m. the following morning we were called by John O'Donnell, and a farmer named William Barry who was living in the adjoining farm came in to tell us that three lorries of military had passed, going in the direction of Milford. We enquired if Sheedy and O'Connor were out scouting and were told they were. We dressed hurriedly and were about to leave when John O'Donnell suggested

to us that as the tea was ready we might as well have a cup before we left. We scarcely had the tea finished when there was a knock at the front door. John O'Donnell opened the door and was immediately confronted by a military Officer. He banged the door out and bolted it and shouted to us there was an Officer at the door. We immediately rushed for the back door and got clear of the house. We made for a gateway leading into a small enclosed haggard adjoining the yard, when we were immediately confronted by about ten soldiers who were lined up outside the ditch. I fired one shot with a Colt automatic and turned to make for another gateway leading to the yard. We succeeded in getting through, and, after proceeding for about forty yards along by a fence O'Regan was leading at this time having been first to turn on my firing at the military. My brother was about five yards behind O'Regan and I was about ten yards in rear of my brother. I saw O'Regan stumbling, but the ground was very rough at that particular place. It never struck me that he may be wounded, although shots were coming from three different points at the time. The brother, Dan, stopped to assist O'Regan and they both shouted to me to keep going as they were alright. About ten yards beyond this point there was a gateway leading to my right, with a broken gap in a fence just alongside it. There was heavy fire coming from the left, and I thought immediately if I crossed the gate I would have a poor chance. I ducked to the right, through the gap in the fence and as I did so the gate was shattered with a volley of machine gun fire. I stopped for a few moments, then rushed past the gate only to come under fire again from my right. I ran for about fifty yards and dropped in to a slight hollow in the field. I remained there for about a minute and, when I saw a few soldiers getting over a fence about one hundred yards away and coming towards me, I left them come to

within about thirty yards and then opened fire with the few remaining rounds in my automatic. They must apparently have thought I was dead for immediately I opened fire they turned and fled for the ditch. During this short stop, and having regained my breath I decided to take another chance of getting to the next ditch one hundred and fifty yards away. I started to run and fire was again immediately opened on me. I gained the fence, however, and succeeded in getting over it. This afforded a bit of cover so long as I lay flat, but was not sufficiently high to give me cover if I stood up. I was now able to size up the position as to which points fire was coming and had to make a choice of two directions in which to go. The shortest journey to the next fence would be roughly one hundred and fifty yards, but this would mean going directly in front of those who were firing at me: the alternative was to keep by the ditch which I had crossed and which would afford me cover by throwing myself flat occasionally. This meant having to go about six hundred yards directly at right angles to the firers. I succeeded in making the distance by throwing myself flat three or four times on the journey. While I was travelling in this direction one of the Officers in charge of the raiding party endeavoured to head me off, and when eventually I thought I had got to safety I was again called on by him to halt. I had a few shots left in my automatic and we had an exchange of shots and I just happened to be lucky enough to give him a slight wound in the arm preventing him from coming any further. I had now reached fences which afforded me good cover from view, and the enemy made no other attempt to follow me up.

After the raid at Aughrim, from which I got safely away, but the Battalion Quartermaster - John O'Regan of Glenfield, Lis-carroll - was severely wounded and taken prisoner to Cork Barracks,

along with Daniel O'Brien, a member of the Battalion A.S.U. Unit, and also a member of Liscarroll Company.

Daniel O'Brien was executed on the 16th May, 1921, after a Drumhead Courtmartial.

O'Regan was unable to be brought to the trial owing to the severity of his wound - he had ten wounds in various parts of the body. He was released late in 1921 during the Truce.

On the 3rd May, 1921, ten members of the Newmarket Battalion Column proceeded to Rathmore by arrangements with the O.C. of the local battalion. The Rathmore Company had shot a spy named Sullivan that day and intended placing the body on the public road near the village. It was anticipated that the R.I.C. and Tans would send a party out when they heard of the body. The Newmarket Column and some members of the Rathmore Battalion took up position about a hundred yards from where the body was placed and, after waiting for some time, a party of nine Tans and R.I.C. made their appearance, and when they were all gathered around the body our lads opened fire, killing eight of the enemy - only one escaped.

Extensive reprisals were carried out by the enemy that night, as the local Creamery and several shops and houses were sent up in flames.

On Sunday, 15th May, a Battalion Council meeting was held about midway between Dromina and Liscarroll. I attended the meeting, being in the locality at the time. The principal business of the meeting was to appoint a Company Captain at Liscarroll in place of Michael O'Regan, who had been captured a fortnight earlier, and also to appoint a Battalion Quartermaster

in place of John O'Regan. It was intended, also, to pursue a more drastic warfare in the event of any of the two prisoners captured at Aughrim being executed, and also Michael O'Regan who was under sentence of death at Limerick. Whilst the meeting was in progress a local Volunteer brought word that three Tans and three girls from Churchtown had gone along to Freemount and had not returned at the time. The only weapons available to the men attending the meeting were revolvers, but there were a few members of the A.S.U. about one mile away on outpost duty whilst the meeting was in progress. A message was immediately sent to them to come on as it was decided to endeavour to capture the three Tans and hold them as hostages against our own prisoner comrades. Seven of the members present who were armed with revolvers went to try and intercept them on their return journey at Tulladuff Crossroads, about one and a half miles north-east of Liscarroll. As we approached the Cross we just observed the Tans approaching from another direction: they were on bicycles: we were on foot. They saw us approaching and put up speed and got clear of the crossroads before we were in a position to stop them. We opened fire on them with the revolvers but the range was too far and they succeeded in getting safely away.

Dan O'Brien (my brother) was executed on the following morning.

The Charleville Battalion then decided that soldiers, armed or unarmed, from thence forward would be shot whenever possible. Four soldiers were shot dead in Charleville within the following fortnight. Owing to this action the enemy were mostly confined to barracks in the battalion area, and only moved out in large

columns on foot or in large lorry convoys. To meet the situation we had to try and perfect the production of landmines. The Brigade Engineer was then contacted and brought to the Charleville Battalion area, where he instructed a few members of the Column in the procedure necessary for the production and firing of land mines. The Brigade Engineer at that time was Charles O'Connor, B.E. One of the members so trained was the Captain of the Effin Company, who had been attached to the Active Service Unit (P.J. O'Brien). This man was no sooner trained than he was picked up by an enemy convoy at Milford about 25th May. This man gave the name of Patrick Casey when arrested and was under sentence of death in Limerick Jail when the Truce intervened.

I happened to be with P.J. O'Brien at Milford on this occasion and had a very narrow escape from arrest also. When the enemy lorries suddenly arrived in the village we were together and he made a run for a nearby house, but I jumped over a ditch into a small garden and at the bottom of this garden was a hedge about three feet high, and after clearing over this I suddenly found there was a drop of at least ten feet on the other side. Luckily I landed uninjured, but fairly shaken, and I made good my escape.

It was then necessary to set about training other men, although Charleville Battalion had been fairly hard hit during the previous month, having lost four of its principal leaders. It was decided that the Brigade Engineer take a few men from Charleville Battalion and move with them into the Newmarket Battalion area.

The Brigade O.C., Seán Moylan, had been arrested on the morning of the 16th May, 1921. George Power took over as O.C. and I was appointed Vice O.C. instead of Brigade Quartermaster. Michael O'Connell, Lombardstown, was appointed Quartermaster.

The Brigade (Cork No. II) was now divided for operational purposes, the Brigade O.C. being responsible for activities in Mitchelstown, Castletownroche and Fermoy areas, and I was responsible for the remaining five battalions - Mallow, Kanturk, Millstreet, Newmarket and Charleville. The enemy were now raiding those battalions by means of large concentrations of troops cordoning off almost whole battalion areas in some instances. This necessitated that the Active Service Units should concentrate only in small numbers until required for a large operation. It was hoped that those small Units, with the aid of land mines which we had now almost perfected, would be more effective as a striking force against the enemy convoys.

Following a request from Jimmy Collins, West Limerick, the Newmarket Column, under Mick Sullivan, proceeded to Abbeyfeale for the purpose of attacking a patrol of R.I.C. and Tans which used to parade through the town every night. On the night of June 5th, 1921, the combined Columns of West Limerick and Newmarket lay in wait for this patrol, which normally consisted of about a dozen. When the patrol made its appearance on the town Square our lads opened fire, killing one of them outright and wounding several others.

Some reprisals followed but I do not know the details.

I now moved into the Millstreet area, reports having reached me of a possibility of carrying out an operation against

the Auxies stationed in Millstreet. The intelligence report indicated that from four to six armoured plated lorries travelled from Millstreet to Banteer for supplies two days weekly, usually on Tuesdays and Fridays: on some occasions doing two journeys on the one day. In conjunction with the Millstreet Battalion Staff I checked up on those movements and found them to be correct. We then arranged to carry out an attack against this convoy on June 16th, 1921, this date being on a Friday as it had been observed that Tuesdays and Fridays were their usual days for travelling, also that if these travelled only once on Tuesday they would do two journeys on Friday - one in the forenoon and one in the afternoon. It had been ascertained that there would be six land mines available for this date, so each of the five battalions was contacted on June 14th to send their active service units to the vicinity of Rathcoole Wood, about two and a half miles east of Millstreet. on the night of June 15th. These arrangements worked out satisfactorily, and on the morning of June 16th six mines were laid on the road and camouflaged between Drishanebeg and Rathcoole, a distance of about 1,200 yards. The mines were spaced as nearly as possible to the positions which the lorries used to occupy on their journeys. (These land mines were iron casings containing about seven or eight pounds of war flour manufactured by members of the Column. None of the Column had had any previous experience of mines, and these were in the nature of an experiment).

This Column consisted of about one hundred and twenty armed men, about eighty of them with rifles, one Hotchkiss gun and the remainder made up of shot-guns. The Column was divided

into eight sections, a section to cover each land mine and a section at each flank for protection. All the Column, with the exception of one section and three men, were stationed at the south side of the road, one section on the western flank at the northern side of the road and three men acting as flank protection to the east of this section. The line of retreat for all sections was indicated to the Section leaders, all sections proceeding to the south in rear of the wood, the northern section and the three odd men to retreat towards Kiskeam, via Keale bridge.

All preparations having been completed by 7 a.m., the Column withdrew into the centre of the wood where it remained concealed during the day: scouts were out for protection purposes. About 10.30 a.m. four lorries were observed travelling from Millstreet in the direction of Banteer. We were now almost certain that they would again travel in the afternoon, so we decided to let them do this journey unmolested. About 3 p.m. four lorries were again observed moving east towards Banteer: these having got clear of the position the Column moved by sections to the places allotted to each of them. The Column had safely taken up its positions and, after about half an hour's wait, the enemy were signalled to be returning. The plan of attack was that there being four lorries the first lorry would not be clear of the position to the west before the last lorry had reached the mine at the eastern flank. It was decided, therefore, that the last lorry should be the first to be attacked. These plans proved correct, for as the lorry was passing over the mine at the eastern flank it was exploded. The Hotchkiss gun was with the section covering this mine.

Simultaneous with the explosion of the mine, the section opened fire, with the result that the mine effectively stopped the lorry and the fire of the attackers almost completely silenced the occupants. A few, however, returned the fire through the armoured port holes after a little while. The other three lorries were now well within the position. On hearing the explosion of the first mine the second and third lorries immediately stopped in their tracks, thereby avoiding any possibility of getting them with the mines. Fire was immediately opened on those as the occupants started to dismount. The first lorry kept moving on for awhile but stopped and turned before it had reached the mine at the western flank. It then proceeded to move back to the assistance of the others, but to get to them it had to pass over another mine. The mine was exploded and this lorry was also brought to an effective stop. Fire being opened on this lorry simultaneously with the explosion, most of the occupants were put out of action. The position now was that the first and last lorries had been effectively stopped and damaged sufficiently to prevent any further progress on their part. The second and third lorries had stopped on their own account but were also cut off by mines, which were now between each of the four lorries. The enemy in the two middle lorries carried on the fight with a few survivors from the first and last lorries. The attackers' positions would range approximately from fifty to a hundred yards from their targets. The fight continued for a little over an hour and as it was seen there was no hope of making a capture, as the automatic guns in the second and third lorries were able to dominate the positions of all four cars, it was decided to give the signal of retirement for the Column. All the sections got safely back to the cover of the

wood at their rear, and a check up of each showed there had been no casualties in any of the sections on the southern side of the road, and as the section at the northern side of the road would have come under very little fire it was hoped that these should also have got away unscathed, which surmise also proved correct. It was now about 6 p.m. and the bulk of the Column retired by sections in the direction of Kippagh, the Mallow and Kanturk Battalions retiring in the direction of Nadd and Lombardstown. The result of this action was that the Auxiliary Company at Mount Leader, Millstreet, which were in the habit of boasting around the town that they could not be ambushed, were the victims of a successful ambush, when about twelve were killed and fifteen to twenty wounded. Furthermore, though we had not a successful capture, two members of the Column came back the following day and collected nearly 1,200 rounds of .303 which had been discarded by the Auxies the previous evening. As a result of this attack, preparations were made by the enemy for a large round-up of the area, with Rathcoole as a centre. Large forces of military were drafted into the locality from the early hours of the night and morning of the 22nd-23rd June. These forces took up positions at vantage points, with Rathcoole as a centre, to a radius of about four to six miles all round. On the night of 22nd-23rd June, in company with the Divisional O.C. (Liam Lynch), Divisional Q.M. (Joe O'Connor) and Assistant Engineer, we travelled from Knocknagree to Kilcorney. The Divisional O.C. had been on his way from Kerry back to Divisional Headquarters, near Crookstown. We put up at Kilcorney, to be informed after about an hour that there were troops practically all around us. We remained the

day in Kilcorney getting continuous reports from the local Volunteers of the military activity which was at every side of us. By evening we were able to judge that in all probability we were actually in the centre of what was going to be one of the biggest round-up operations ever tried in the south. About 9 p.m. we decided to try and move out towards the south over Musherá Mountains in the direction of Rylane. Having reached the vicinity of Rylane about 11 p.m. the local Volunteers informed us that there was a military Post scarcely half a mile to the east of us. We decided that we would try and keep contact with this post and find out in which direction it moved. About midnight, the post was noticed to become active and preparations were apparently being made to move out.

About 1.30 a.m. on the 24th it was observed that this Post was starting to move off and inclined to move north towards Musherá. We then decided to remain where we were until we got further information from the area to our west. About 4 a.m. we were informed that what was probably a big round-up was going on in the direction of Musherá and Kilcorney. This was correct, and this operation which had taken so much care and planning by the enemy was another effort in vain, having taken only one prisoner and even he was not a Volunteer, and from later reports it transpired there were six thousand troops engaged in this round-up. One of the British troops who took part in this round-up, speaking later in a public-house, commenting on the lack of success with the round-up remarked "How could we catch the Shinners when they had signal fires blazing all over the country". He was unaware that it was St. John's Night (Bonfire Night).

After the round-up we got another invitation from West Limerick with a view to bringing off some action on a large scale between Newcastlewest and Abbeyfeale. I directed a number of our men to immediately start making about eight mines. The mines which we had used at Rathcoole had contained only about 7 lbs. War Flour, and whilst they effectively stopped the lorries they did not do much damage otherwise. We decided to have those mines filled with about 12 to 14 lbs. of explosive. This was tedious work because we could only obtain the principal ingredient - Chlorate of Potash - in very small quantities at the time, although most of the chemists in our area were friendly disposed and anxious to help. It was necessary, therefore, to let about a fortnight elapse before sufficient explosives could be got for our requirements.

The Column Leader in Newmarket (Michael D. O'Sullivan) and myself went into the West Limerick area and met some members of the Abbeyfeale battalion at Tournafulla. They informed us that there was a convoy of military passing regularly each week between Newcastlewest and Abbeyfeale. They asked us to inspect the ground near Templeglantine as it would be about the only place possible to get a position for an ambush. The convoy might number anything up to eight lorries, which could include an armoured car and would not definitely be less than four lorries. We inspected the road and chose a position between Ardagh and Templeglantine where we could get reasonably good fire positions, ranging from about thirty to one hundred yards, and slightly elevated over the road, all at the southern side. We made arrangements to have the Column ready on July 7th, and West Limerick were to have their Column mobilised at the same time. From information available we felt reasonably sure that the

convoy would travel on July 8th and we were to be in position on that day. On the night of July 7th a Column of eighty men from North Cork proceeded by Rockchapel to the vicinity of Tournafulla, where we met the West Limerick Column of about sixty men. The following morning we had eight mines placed in the road between Ardagh and Templeglantine, enclosing a distance of nearly a mile. The Columns were divided into sections covering each of the eight positions (Mines) and allowing for protection on the flanks. It was decided that should the convoy come we would attack them on their return journey from Abbeyfeale. The sections had to remain concealed in the ambush position during the morning as there was no suitable cover to conceal the full Columns in the vicinity. About 2 p.m. four lorries were observed coming from the direction of Newcastlewest - they were allowed to pass through to Abbeyfeale, and whilst our men were all keyed up waiting for the return journey we viewed them some considerable distance away returning by another route to Newcastlewest. A situation like this had never before occurred in the area, and it was afterwards ascertained that the R.I.C. in Abbeyfeale, afraid to move out on their own, had sought the protection of the military whilst collecting dog taxes from the residents in the rural districts. The Column withdrew after about an hour's waiting and it was decided to move back to the Tournafulla district and wait until the following Monday when the convoy would be again likely to pass, and in the meantime the mines to be left concealed in the road.

Late on Saturday evening, July 9th, a despatch arrived from Divisional Headquarters summoning myself and the Battalion Os.C., who were with the Column, to a meeting at Dromahane on Sunday, July 10th. We started immediately and got as far as

Freemount that night, where we heard the first rumours of a Truce. On the following day, Sunday, we got to Dromahane and arrived at the venue of the meeting. The Divisional O.C. was present and also the Brigade O.C. (George Power), who had brought his Battalion O.C. to the meeting also. It was then we were definitely informed that there was to be a Truce the following day at noon.

Some time prior to this the Divisional O.C. had intimated that the Brigade was too big for one Unit and had decided in making two Brigades for the area. This arrangement was carried out at the meeting and the Divisional O.C. appointed the staffs for both Brigades - Cork No. II and Cork No. IV. George Power was appointed Cork No. II Brigade and I was appointed Cork No. IV Brigade; Ned Murphy of Lombardstown, Vice O.C., Cork No. IV; Michael O'Connell, also of Lombardstown, Q.M., Cork IV., and Eugene McCarthy, Charleville, as Adjutant of the Brigade.

I then asked if it would be permissible for the Column to carry out an attack on the following morning, and was informed by the Divisional O.C. that we could please ourselves but that the Truce should be strictly observed at 12 Noon on Monday. We returned to Tournafulla that night and held a Conference with the Section leaders of North Cork and the Officers of the West Limerick Column. I explained to them about the Truce and asked for their opinions as to the advisability of seeking an engagement on the following morning. It was unanimously decided that we would go back into the positions evacuated on Friday and remain there until 12 noon.

At 11.45 a.m. on Monday, July 11th, I called the Column

together and explained to them the conditions implied by the Truce. The Column was dismissed at 12 noon, and at 12.15 p.m. when the men were actually removing some of the mines from the road a military party came on the scene from Newcastlewest. These, seeing our men on the road, first attempted to be hostile but when asked if they were prepared to observe the Truce they changed their manner and continued on their way to Abbeyfeale.

RANK HELD AT THE TRUCE.

The rank which I held at the Truce was O.C. Cork No. IV Brigade.

SIGNATURE:

P. O'Brien

(P O'Brien)

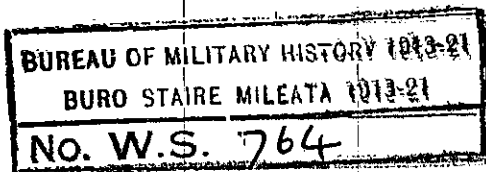
DATE:

December 10th 1952.

December 10th, 1952.

WITNESSED BY:

Thomas Halpin
LIEUT.-COLONEL.
(Thomas Halpin)



I feel that the attached statement by me, would not be complete, without giving the following information.

I travelled through the greater part of North Cork, from August 1920 until the Truce on the 11th of July 1921, only once during that time was I refused shelter for a night. The people throughout the area were by their hospitality, & their readiness to pass on information of the enemy, in a great way responsible for the successes achieved by the Columns in the area, as also by their generous subscriptions towards the funds of the I.R.A.

Those funds so generously subscribed by the vast majority of the people, was the only way, in which the I.R.A. could form a fund for the procuring of Arms or explosive material.

I wish also to state, that North Cork, ^{columns} like most other areas in the country, had to rely principally on their ability to arm themselves, at the expense of the enemy. In this they succeeded fairly well, seeing that in spite of the enemy's strength in the area, they were able to put ^{about} 130 men armed with rifles, into action if required ^{upon} the date of the truce.

This I feel is a definite contradiction to statements appearing in after years, that the I.R.A. were a weaker force at the Truce. My own opinion and also the opinion of the majority of the officers in my Brigade was, that we were a stronger fighting force, at the date of the truce than at any time since we had started, every fresh move of the enemy had been met successfully, and men were continually offering themselves for service with Columns.

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1011.01
BUREAU STAIRS, MILITARY HISTORY
NO. W.S. 764

Signed J.P. O'Brien

Brigade C/C
Cork & Bde.

(Dec. 10th 1952)

COPY.

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Copy.

I feel that the attached statement by me would not be complete without giving the following information:-

I travelled through the greater part of North Cork from August, 1920, until the Truce on the 11th of July, 1921. Only once during that time was I refused shelter for a night. The people throughout the area were, by their hospitality and their readiness to pass on information of the enemy, in a great way responsible for the successes achieved by the Columns in the area, as, also, by their generous subscriptions towards the funds of the I.R.A. Those funds, so generously subscribed by the vast majority of the people, was the only way in which the I.R.A. could form a fund for the procuring of arms or explosive material.

I wish also to state that North Cork Columns, like most other areas in the country, had to rely principally on their ability to arm themselves, at the expense of the enemy. In this they succeeded fairly well, seeing that in spite of the enemy's strength in the area, they were able to put approximately 130 men, armed with rifles, into action if required on the date of the Truce.

This, I feel, is a definite contradiction to statement appearing in after years - that the I.R.A. were a beaten force at the Truce. My own opinion, and also the opinion of the majority of the Officers in my Brigade, was that we were a stronger fighting force at the date of the Truce than at any time since we had started. Every fresh move of the enemy had been met successfully and men were continually offering themselves for service with Columns.

(Signed) P. O'Brien.
Brigade O.C.,
Cork 4 Brigade.

(December 10th, 1952).

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
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No. W.S. 764

