

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
BUIRO STAIGE MILITAIRA 1913-21
No. W.S. 813

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 813

Witness

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Identity.

Member of Irish Volunteers, Celbridge, 1914 - ;
Section Leader F/Coy. 4th Batt'n, Dublin Brigade,
1917 - ;
2nd Lieut. i/c. left half-Coy. A.S.U. 1920.

Subject.

- (a) National activities, Kildare-Dublin, 1914-1921;
- (b) The A.S.U., Dublin, 1920-1921.

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Statement by Colonel Pádraig O'Connor,
9, Mangerton Road, Drimmagh,
Dublin.

VOLUNTEER COMPANY FORMED AT CELBRIDGE.

I joined the Volunteers in Celbridge in 1914 after a recruiting meeting addressed by Pearse. The Company was pretty strong at the start - almost 200. The Company officers were, Hubert O'Connor, son of Dr. O'Connor: Art O'Connor, the present Judge O'Connor, from Elm Hall near Hazelhatch. The Company went into training which was mostly composed of foot-drill.

A detachment of this Company went by car to Howth to collect the rifles on the day they were landed at Howth and to take them to Celbridge. About twenty-five rifles and ammunition were taken on this occasion.

The Company continued training and attended a review in Maynooth by Colonel Moore. They had the Howth rifles with them, and they also paraded at the big parade to Bodenstown at which Pearse made his address.

At the Volunteer split the bulk of the Company went Redmondite. Only thirty which were mostly from the country areas went Irish Volunteer including my father and myself.

Hubert O'Connor, who was responsible for the rifles and ammunition ordered that these should be handed over to the Irish Volunteers. At this time, Art O'Connor was the Company Officer of the reorganised Company. Hubert joined the British Army and was later killed in France.

At this time the Volunteers who were split paraded in two different sections and the parades continued up to about a month before Christmas 1915. Art O'Connor collected all

the rifles from the Company into a storehouse in his farm in Elm Hall, with the exception of the rifles held by my father and myself. That was the last time the Company paraded.

Christy Byrne, who was Lieutenant of "F" Company, 4th Battalion, at the time, informed me that he collected the ammunition held in Elm Hall from Art O'Connor and brought it to Dublin for the rising. I cannot say definitely what became of the rifles but I believe they fell into the hands of the R. I. C.

EASTER WEEK 1916.

My family moved to Dublin during Holy Week to reside there permanently in Inchicore. I didn't come with them. I didn't receive any instructions to mobilise for the Rising. It was obvious to me, however, from the happenings at Liberty Hall during the previous few days, where the police had been refused permission to enter and an armed guard of Citizen Army men placed on it, that this could not go on without matters coming to a head, and I also knew from the instructions in the "Irish Volunteer" for the mobilisation on Easter Sunday.

On the Wednesday of Easter Week I came to town and in company with my brother, Seán, tried to make contact with the Commanders of some of the posts held by the Volunteers. The first post we contacted was the South Dublin Union. They would not have anything to do with us as they considered us to be too young to be of use to them.

One recollection which stands clear in my mind about the South Dublin Union is that the flag flying on the South Dublin Union was a green flag with a harp, hoisted over the Master's Office facing James's Street, and that, outside, the bodies of three dead Volunteers were lying in the fields.

I did not recognise any of them.

I tried to penetrate through the city. When I got to the Fountain in James's Street the British had a very strong sandbagged barricade erected there, and it was very strongly manned. I was ordered back from the barricade and proceeded in the direction of Kilmainham. When I arrived there a battalion of Sherwood Foresters who were passing Kilmainham moved up towards the Royal Hospital. There was a party of five in charge of an officer giving covering fire to the body as they passed by. There was no firing from the Union but the officer gave his fire order for the windows where there was a man waving a green flag. Incidentally, none of the bullets hit the windows - they were firing rather high.

From Kilmainham we went back to Inchicore by Dolphin's Barn. There was free passage from Dolphin's Barn down Cork Street, so we went to Marrowbone Lane Distillery, but could not gain admission.

From Marrowbone Lane we tried to penetrate further into the city. All the principal streets, such as Meath Street and Francis Street, were barricaded and heavily manned by the British. The corner of New Street was barricaded and manned by Volunteers. We went on to Jacob's. There seemed to be a huge garrison there. There was free movement of Volunteers around Aungier Street but they refused our service there unless we could produce arms. The flag over Jacob's was the Tricolour and was flying off the Tower.

From Jacob's we went up York Street on to the Green where there was heavy firing. There was not much movement in the Green. The College of Surgeons was silent but the Tricolour was flying over it. We knocked at the door but got no answer. We went round by the Green by King Street.

There was a half completed barricade across the Green composed of two trams turned over, some carts, some bicycles out of a bicycle shop on the corner. This was more of an obstacle than a barricade proper - this was at the Memorial Gate. There was another one of the same description opposite the United Services Club.

Dawson Street was very heavily held by British military and we were turned back there, passed under the Shelbourne Hotel which was also very heavily manned.

We went then to Baggot Street and there did not seem to be any British movement there until we came to the signpost for Blackrock. Then we realised we were going out of the city again, so we turned back and the next place we found ourselves was at Grand Canal Street Bridge. There was an obstacle of two Bolands vans drawn across the street; at the top of Grand Canal Street Bridge there were two canvas buckets of grenades that had been apparently abandoned by the British and the marks of the Mount Street fighting were evident on the ground. The place was literally swimming with blood.

Mount Street was on fire and the British military were all over the place but they took no notice of us at all. There was no one on the bridge; they were on the canal. We went across the bridge, down into Pearse Street and we got along as far as Tara Street where there was a barricade and we were stopped again; a large party of military would not let us go beyond Tara Street.

Thursday we were again trying to get into Bolands but were prevented by the military at Baggot Street. We tried to get in communication with a Volunteer that was on the bridge at Barrow Street and he refused to talk. There was a

lot of casualties along the swing bridge outside Bolands. There was constant firing all the time and there seemed to be a lot of casualties around that bridge.

Friday, we were still pinned in the same area. That day we saw the looting of the Grand Canal Street stores by the civilian population.

At 4 o'clock on Saturday we were picked up by a British picket and taken to Beggars Bush Barracks and confined to the guardroom. There was a very heavy guard and the first to be brought to us was the Orderly Officer. I told the Orderly Officer that my address was Inchicore and that we had got lost, and he produced a railway veteran from Inchicore to identify us. The decent man did, although he did not know us - his name was Behan.

We were put in the big cell. Resident there were two prisoners, elderly men of about 35, one with a red moustache, who had fifty rounds of ammunition on him when he was caught, which he said he picked up. The other was a religious maniac. We were later separated and the two other prisoners were put in the small cell and we were left in the big one with two military defaulters.

There was a parade of the garrison about 10 o'clock. There was not more than 150 in the garrison already and they were composed of a very mixed lot of all regiments and Battalions, but the kernel of the garrison seemed to be in a small party of the Royal Irish Rifles. They were on quarter rations and they seemed to anticipate an assault on the Barracks and they expected it to last quite a long time. The two defaulters were working in the cook house, so they provided us with food.

On Sunday morning they investigated the cases of all the prisoners. The two men were taken away before us up to

"D" block and later on we were brought up. There were three officers there and they went through the interrogation of the whole story of all our doings. From "D" block we could see the Clock Tower. The flagstaff had been cut by rifle fire from either Bolands or the Distillery. As a British soldier was repairing the flagstaff with a side of a stretcher he was hit and he fell to the ground. We were released at 6 o'clock that evening. I had considerable difficulty in getting home because they had run a line of sentries all along Baggot Street or the road was manned by British military.

"F" COMPANY, 4TH BATTALION, REORGANISED.

Early in the spring of 1917 a reorganising meeting of "F" Company, 4th Battalion, was held at Chapelizod, and I was directed to attend. That was my first contact with "F" Company, 4th Battalion. Christie Byrne was elected Company Captain; Billy Power 1st Lieutenant and Larry Murtagh 2nd Lieutenant. The Company was about 75 strong at the time of this reorganisation.

The Company went into training which was carried out in sections by the Sergeants. There was a further reorganisation of the Company about June 1917. There was no change in the officer ranks. Training continued on during the year - training and collection of arms by various means. At every meeting there was found to be one revolver or rifle for sale and there was always a price put on it. Christie Byrne was a great man for finding out where arms could be got.

The Company was paraded under arms for the Cathal Brugha meeting in Beresford Place. All in possession of small arms were instructed to bring them. These instructions were subsequently cancelled but the cancellation notice did not reach the Company with the result that they did parade with small arms at Beresford Place for the Cathal Brugha meeting. That meeting was suppressed. D. M. P. Inspector Mills

was killed, being struck on the head by a hurley. As a result, there was some difficulty in getting the armed men of the Company away from this meeting safely with their arms.

LYING-IN-STATE OF THOMAS ASHE.

On the death of Thomas Ashe in September, 1917, a decision was taken that the City Hall should be procured where his body would lie in state. Permission was requested from the Corporation but it was decided that the ceremonial lying-in-state and ceremonial funeral would be carried out even in the face of opposition, and for that purpose they mobilised about 40 of the Brigade under Lieutenant Price, with small arms, in Parnell Square for the purpose of seizing the City Hall, if permission was not granted. Permission was granted for the lying-in-state and the party were moved from Parnell Square to take over the City Hall. There was a British military garrison in the City Hall at the time and after consultation with the British Staff Officers the British guards were withdrawn downstairs but they maintained the guard upstairs. The I.R.A. guard took up position before the funeral started. They were relieved later by the party that was detailed for the ceremonial proper. The funeral ceremonial went through without any interference from the British.

All during this time Seumas Murphy was O/C. of the Battalion and during that summer he had an inspection of the Battalion and inspected every Company.

CONSCRIPTION CRISIS.

With the threat of conscription the Battalion strength was greatly increased by an influx of new members. At this particular period we had Battalion and inter-Battalion manoeuvres. About this time also there was a change in the

Battalion Commandants. Ted Kelly replaced Seumas Murphy as Battalion Commander of the 4th.

During the threat of conscription the Battalion turned out under arms on one or two occasions. I cannot say why we turned out; we simply had orders to do so. Arms were coming in slowly at this time as new sources of supply were found by contact with the British military.

ARMISTICE CELEBRATIONS.

During the Armistice celebrations following the end of the 1914/1918 War unorganised and unauthorised opposition tactics to the British celebrations were carried out by individual members of the I.R.A. Soldiers were beaten up and decorations pulled down and destroyed. This became so prevalent that the police had to interfere with several baton charges with the result that at least three policemen were disarmed and shot by individual members of the I.R.A. The three policemen that were shot drew their guns and in the act of drawing were rushed, disarmed and shot. At least two were killed and one wounded.

British military suffered heavy casualties during these victory celebrations also. There must have been at least 500 casualties between killed, wounded and missing. The British military were not fired on. The casualties occurred mainly by soldiers being thrown from the top of trams from which they sustained serious injuries and succumbed; others were thrown into the Liffey and drowned. These riots continued for a week and they were finally finished up by the British military using ball ammunition from armoured cars and from which a number of civilian casualties occurred.

What led up to these riots was the attitude of the conscript soldiers who pushed civilians about in their sheer delight that the War was over. They were trying to create

the impression that any man who was not in British military uniform was nothing but a coward. Before these riots finished a number of British officers were disarmed in College Green by members of the I.R.A. and the arms were safely secured for further action. I think it was Noel Lemass' group that captured these arms.

Following this incident, a decision was taken and orders issued to attack the British official military parade to celebrate the ending of the European War. The victory parade was timed for a date about three weeks subsequent to the Armistice (11th November, 1918). Lord French took the salute in College Green. A group from each Company was stationed at various points along the route of parade. A group of ten men from my Company under the Company Captain took up a position at the corner of George's Street and Dame Street. The only instructions we received were to follow the lead of the Company Captain. We were all armed with small arms and grenades. Apparently the decision to attack the parade was cancelled at the last moment and the orders were switched to capture the films of the parade. As none of the films were taken in our area, no action was necessary on our part. We were dismissed afterwards from Bride Street when the parade was over.

Nothing further of interest occurred during the remaining months of 1918.

ARREST.

On the 30th October, 1919, I was training my own Section at the North Lock, Inchicore. I was Section Commander at the time. While we were carrying out some training, six members of the R.I.C. swooped on us and arrested nine Volunteers and myself. At the particular time that the R.I.C. took us by surprise we were in a sandpit and I was

giving a lecture on outpost work. The Sergeant in charge of the police shouted to us to surrender. They were on the top of the sandpit and I went up to them and they opened fire on me as I moved towards them. I dropped down immediately without being hit. Nine men of the Section followed me and the remainder made good their escape. We were taken to Chapelized police barracks and handed over to the military there. We were subsequently tried at Lucan courthouse, charged for unlawful assembly. I was sentenced to 12 months and the remainder to three months imprisonment.

I spent three months in Mountjoy and Derry Jail. I was then released as the authorities decided that my sentence was illegal. This was what they thought themselves. Evidently the resident magistrate had not the power to award a 12 months sentence. When in Mountjoy, Noel Lemass and whole Company were there. Other important persons were Dick Hegarty, Dick McKee, The O'Mahoney and Paddy Sheehan. Even while there, the Volunteers received military instruction in the form of lectures from Dick McKee. The warders didn't interfere because we were allowed free association for a number of hours each day and this period was availed of for lectures. McKee gave lectures on the art of Command, using the German Text "The Art of Command" by "Von Spoen", also Military History, using Myles Byrne's Memoirs and his own notes on sniping. I should say that McKee's notes on sniping were the most comprehensive that I ever read or listened to. When transferred to Derry Jail military instruction, even there, was continued. This time Noel Lemass was in charge. He succeeded in getting a compass smuggled into the jail and he gave many lectures on its use. Whilst we were in jail we were constantly visited by Peadar O'Donnell and he proposed a rescue or escape from Derry Prison. He wasn't interested that Lemass or myself should escape. His main idea was that an escape should be

staged in Derry. I suppose to raise the morale. His idea was to smuggle in guns to us on a visit and on the Sunday morning he would represent a priest accompanied by his altar boy. We would then, with the arms we had received, hold up the warders and so make way for a clearance of prisoners. In the meantime, it would be arranged that local Volunteers would be available outside to cover the get-away. It was decided that once we made our escape from the prison we should be taken to West Donegal and then travel to Dublin by a fishing vessel. My release was timed for Monday and the escape was planned for the Sunday. When Lemass knew this he thought it would not be fair to me to go ahead with the escape. I said I was quite willing to go ahead with it as already planned. However, he insisted that I should go out in the normal way with the result that the whole thing was called off.

During the year 1919 training continued and many houses were raided for arms in the Inchicore district. I think the overall collection of the Company would be about 20 revolvers, a couple of rifles and a host of shotguns.

BURNING OF POLICE BARRACKS EARLY IN MAY, 1920.

Instructions were given that vacated police barracks in the Battalion Area were to be destroyed. Our Company was detailed to burn down Crumlin Barracks. This Barracks was a strong building and it was decided that it should be blown up as well as burned. There was one party detailed for the burning and a small party of engineers were responsible for the mining of it, one of whom was Joe Larkin of Balbriggan. There was also a party in the telephone exchange to hold the telephone exchange and when the operation was over, to destroy it. After the building had been saturated with petrol someone made the mistake of opening a

dark lantern and the building went up in flames immediately. The engineer, Larkin, was trapped inside, setting his charges, and he was severely burned before he got out. There was an alarm given that military were approaching so the Company withdrew, bringing Larkin with them. Larkin was brought to Miss Bushel's house in Inchicore and as it was after curfew we couldn't get a medical officer to attend him until the following day. Three doctors turned up - Dr. Cox and Dr. Reddin, I brought him from the Coombe: I can't remember the third doctor. It was Doctor Cox handled the case. After consultation it was decided he should. They moved Larkin to a house in Bluebell - Miss Flood's - and he was in grave danger for about three weeks, but he recovered completely. The burning operation was a failure. The building was too strong to destroy without the aid of the mines.

ARREST OF BATTALION O.C. WITH LISTS IN HIS POSSESSION.

The Battalion O.C., Ted Kelly, returned from a Battalion Council meeting one night and on his way was arrested by detectives. He had in his possession a list of men of the Battalion, who were available for active duty. At that time, it was usual for a number of men from each Company to be detailed for any activities that the Battalion O.C. might decide. For this type of work men had to be available 24 hours of the day. The nature of the work might be an attack on British Forces planned quickly to meet an emergency. Men were asked to volunteer and, from the number who volunteered, selections were made. The men chosen could, of course, reside in their own homes but if they were away from home for any reason they had to leave their addresses to enable them to be located. In this way, the Battalion O.C. always knew where to get them if he required them. Such men were listed and this was the list that Ted Kelly had in his possession the night he

was arrested. It was a bad blow to us because all our names were mentioned. It seemed to completely upset the working of the Battalion for a long time. The detectives were quick to act. They raided quite a number of houses which had been on the list and in one case a revolver was found, the property of Volunteer MacElroy. The weeks leading on to the 21st November could be said to be the culminating point of British activity in the city of Dublin. A very big number of houses and places were subject to raids. The 4th Battalion suffered badly on account of the captured list, because British Military called at the houses of the Volunteers mentioned in that list and warned them that if anything happened in the area they would be held responsible. A week or so later they again visited the houses of Volunteers but this time made a big number of arrests. The overall result of these raids was that men had to go on the run and, as a result, the 4th Battalion and many other Battalions of the Dublin Brigade became, for the time being, badly disorganised.

BLOODY SUNDAY.

On the eve of Bloody Sunday, Company Commander Christy Byrne selected nine of us from his Company and gave us an idea of the work that we were to be engaged in on the following morning. We were to go to the Eastwood Hotel in Leeson Street. We were given the name of a British Major who was stopping at that hotel. We were told that he was an Intelligence Officer and that he was to be shot, and that the operation was to take place at 9 a.m. the following day - Sunday - and that Section Leader Bennet was to take charge. On the morning of the 21st November we assembled individually outside the hotel in question. We walked into the hotel in a body and Bennet approached the Manageress and asked for

the number of the British Major's room. She was not co-operative and we saw that she was getting signals from the Boots behind us. Evidently he was suspicious of us from the start. Three of us grabbed the Boots and made him take us to the Manager. The Manager gave us the number of the room, but said that the Major hadn't come into the hotel that night. We went to the room and found it was empty. The Boots evidently got into a state of panic and told us that there were twelve flying officers staying there and that if we wanted them he would direct us to their rooms. By this time the remainder of our party had withdrawn and we consulted amongst ourselves as to what we should do. We decided we had no instructions regarding procedure and we all withdrew. The Boots, whose name I cannot now recall, gave evidence subsequently at a courtmartial and identified a man as having been one of our party. The man he identified received ten years penal servitude.

BATTALION RE-ORGANISED.

Following the Bloody Sunday shootings British Military pressure seemed to have relaxed somewhat: raids were not at all as constant as they were prior to the 21st November. This gave the Dublin Brigade a chance to re-organise its battalions again. Oscar Traynor became O.C. of the Brigade and John Dowling was appointed O.C. of the Battalion.

ACTIVE SERVICE UNIT.

Around about Christmas 1920 the Company Commander, Christy Byrne, sent for me and told me that an Active Service Unit was being organised in the city and that he was recommending three of us, including myself, from the Company for transfer to this Unit. Some nights later I was instructed to attend a meeting of the Section in Dolphin's Barn. I was unable to go to that. Subsequently, I

received further instructions to attend on a given night at Oriel Hall. There was a big group of Volunteers in this hall when I got there. Oscar Traynor addressed all present and said that we were assembled there to be formed into a unit which was to be known as the Active Service Unit of the Dublin Brigade; that we were to leave our place of employment and be available for military work full time, and that we were to regard ourselves as regular soldiers - the first regular soldiers since the days of Sarsfield. It was really a pep talk. He then introduced the Company O.C. - Paddy Flanagan. We were organised there and then into four sections. Men of the First Battalion were to form No.1 Section; men of the 2nd Battalion No.2 Section, and men of the 3rd and 4th Battalions into No.3 and 4 Sections respectively. As I was a 4th Battalion man I was grouped with No.4 Section and Mickey Sweeney was appointed Section Commander. Lieutenant Johnny Dunne was in charge of Nos. 3 and 4 Sections. Our first meeting as a Section was at the Brickworks in Dolphin's Barn. We were armed at the time with revolvers and 18 rounds of ammunition. I should mention that all men reporting to the Active Service Unit had to bring these arms and ammunition with them from their own units. We had to carry our arms all the time. The operational policy was that all operations would be decided on by the A.S.U. Company staff; that no operations were to take place without their sanction. This resulted in the hold up of a number of operations, as by the time a likely operation was reported to Headquarters, the possibility of taking it on no longer existed. This resulted in, as far as our section was concerned, that we were waiting for orders, under arms, and doing nothing. I think one of the first operations of the Active Service Unit was carried out by No.1 Section at Tolka Bridge, which resulted in the capture of practically the whole section. Up to this we were more

or less a stationery Section, always standing to at the Brickworks or some other convenient place. When we knew of what had happened at Tolka Bridge we felt that it was not safe to be seen standing around at selected meeting places so we decided in our own interests to keep moving and we broke a Company Headquarters Regulation debarring us from taking part in activities without their sanction, by taking it on ourselves to attack any British patrol company or party that came our way.

Our first attack as a Section was on a truck load of British Military at Dolphin's Barn. This would be about the end of January. It was not, in fact, a serious attack. It was regarded as a street ambush - hit and run. On the day in question we were standing near Dolphin's Barn when we saw this Military lorry coming in our direction. We fired on it straight away. The British party returned fire and passed on. I cannot say if we caused any casualties. There was certainly none on our side.

A. S. U. ATTACK R. I. C. AT BALLYFERMOT.

About February, 1921, the local Volunteers of the Company became fairly active in seizing British Military Transport wherever it could lay hands on it and destroy it either by fire or by putting it out of action by smashing it up. One day a lorry was taken down to Bluebell Lane in the vicinity of the Nugget Factory at Bluebell and destroyed by burning. Four R. I. C. men went down to examine this truck. We were in the vicinity at the time and decided that we would attack this R. I. C. party. We took up a position near the railway bridge at Ballyfermot and as the R. I. C. were returning to their station at Lucan, we ambushed them, killing two and wounding one. The British Military arrived on the scene in a short time and we withdrew as quickly as we could.

We reported this operation to the Company Commander with the result that sanction for future attacks would no longer have to be sought from A. S. U. Headquarters.

ESCAPE OF PRISONERS FROM KILMAINHAM JAIL.

Frank Teeling, Ernie O'Malley and Simon Donnelly escaped from Kilmainham Jail on the 14th February, 1921. When plans for their escape were being drawn up it only provided for two prisoners - Teeling and O'Malley. Paddy Rigney and myself were detached from the Active Service Unit to operate with selected men of the local Company in effecting the escape. Our particular part in the escape was to act as escort to the two prisoners. For this purpose we carried our own guns and two guns for them with ammunition. Our instructions were that we were to guard them against recapture. We were given a rough idea of the plans for their escape. We were told that they would be issued with a bolt cutter, to cut the padlock on the side door leading out into the open. This would bring them on to Sarsfield Road. We also knew that friendly soldiers would assist them but that the whole thing should be over within five minutes as the soldiers would then give the alarm. It was decided that in case the bolt cutter failed, a substitute method of escape was to be provided in the form of a rope ladder. I made the rope ladder, assisted by Barney Keogh, a local volunteer. We provided ourselves with the material from Inchicore Works. I cannot recollect how we were able to estimate the length of the ladder, but anyhow the dimensions were given to us. We made the ladder in a day of an inch hemp rope with spliced rope rungs. When this was completed, it looked like an ordinary ladder. To get this ladder into position on the wall, it was arranged that a light rope would be tied to the end of the ladder and the

rope thrown over the wall, giving plenty of slack so that it would be touching the ground on the inside. The prisoners then would escape from the inside by climbing up this rope and getting down the rope ladder itself on the outside. There was no date fixed for the actual escape. It all depended on particular conditions from within the Local Volunteers and Rigney and myself had to report down to the vicinity of the jail several mornings at 5 o'clock and every evening at 7 o'clock for a period of about a week. This didn't cause any suspicion as Volunteers posed as road workers. On the Sunday night when the first serious attempt was made at escaping, the prisoners, aided by friendly soldiers, got out into the exercise yard. The bolt cutter failed to work on the lock and they whispered through the gate to throw over the rope. It was dark at this time and four or five Volunteers were up close to the gate and immediately the guide rope was thrown over the wall the prisoners on the inside gripped it and started to draw up the rope ladder. The ladder topped the wall but the guide rope got stuck between two stones. With the pulling and hauling, the rope frayed, and it broke and fell back on the outside. The call came through the gate again saying "We will return to our cells and we will try again". Just at that particular time, accompanied by ladies, there were soldiers in the vicinity of the gate. One of the soldiers, a Corporal Willis, became alarmed and he shouted "I see what's happening now." He rushed towards the gate with the intention of warning the guard inside. He was set upon by the Volunteers outside and after a short scrimmage the Corporal and his two comrades were taken over by the Volunteers together with their lady friends. They were taken to a hut in the allotment behind St. Jude's Church and held there until near dawn the following day and they were then moved into the Sinn Féin Club on the corner of the Crescent, Inchicore. They were later removed

by taxi to Drimnagh Lodge, Fox and Geese, and there detained until the escape had taken place. The watch outside the Prison continued. On one of the nights before the escape a D.M.P. man became very suspicious and he held up three of the party that were to take part in the rescue. He drew his automatic and the Volunteers fired on him and wounded him. While this incident created a slight panic it didn't seriously affect our arrangements for the escape in any way. On the fourth night of our vigil I was lying at the jail watching for my comrades to come along, and I saw three men pass by me from the jail and I took no notice of them. A few minutes later the alarm went inside. I thought then that something had gone wrong. I contacted the remainder of the party as they were coming up and told them what I had heard so we moved out of the way. There was intense activity on the part of the military and we learned then that the three prisoners had escaped without any assistance from us. The three men that passed me out as I stood by the gate were O'Malley, Teeling and Donnelly.

To safeguard the interests of the three soldiers that were taken into custody by us on that Sunday night Paddy O'Brien "C" Company Commander gave them letters to the effect that they had been captured by the I.R.A. during operations in the vicinity of Kilmainham Jail. At the Sunday night operation described above, my sister Máire and another girl, Eibhlín Cooney, were present. They were brought there to avert suspicion.

GENERAL HIT-UP OF CROWN FORCES ORDERED.

Frank Flood and other Volunteers were executed in Mountjoy Jail on the 14th March, 1921. By way of reprisal the Active Service Units had instructions to shoot down British Military and members of the Crown Forces wherever it was possible to do so, irrespective of whether they were

armed or not. For three days my Section was in the vicinity of Dublin Castle but no members of the Crown Forces appeared. I think the authorities must have realised what was afoot because I believe soldiers and police were more or less confined to barracks.

DESTRUCTION OF MILITARY TRANSPORT.

At that time, the policy of the Active Service Unit was to carry out at least one operation per day. I remember some humourist from our General Headquarters drew up a list of the comparative costs of the various items of military equipment and transport. I remember he showed that a mule cost £100 and a Lieutenant was £120 and it was more expensive to destroy a truck than a Lieutenant. This gave us an idea that our activities could be usefully extended to the destruction of military trucks as well as to ambushes. From then on, we destroyed quite a number of military trucks and equipment. I can recollect two destroyed at the Brickworks, Dolphins Barn, two at Terenure and 19 taken at the Half Way House and destroyed in the mountains. All this came into our hands very easily. The drivers didn't resist. There were also attacks on despatch riders on various routes. Our system of attack was to spread our Section in pairs along the street with a line of retreat to a rallying point decided on beforehand. As a British Military or Police truck or van travelled down the street, the first pair opened fire on it. As it proceeded, each pair in turn would fire on it likewise. The British reaction to this was to provide street patrols on parallel routes to the one taken up by our men so that when A.S.U. men were escaping to a pre-arranged rallying point, the British had a chance of capturing them. The first of these patrols caused us a great surprise but after that we got wise to it and were on the lookout for them. They also instituted a system of Auxiliaries patrolling the

streets in civilian attire. The first time that we ran into one of these patrols nearly caused us heavy casualties. I remember we laid an ambush on a party of British Military Officers in Camden Street and when the fight started, the bulk of the return fire came, not from the occupants of the car, but from civilians lying on the ground. Paddy Rigney was wounded on this occasion and we had a job to get him away safely.

SNIPING ACTIVITIES.

In the local Company in Inchicore there were a number of young lads between the ages of 14 and 17, who through persistence were retained in the Company despite their age. The names of these young lads which come to my mind at the moment are my brother Seán, the two Doyles, Archie and John, Jack Fogarty and Tommie Ward. Their job was to look after the arms dump for the Captain and to keep the arms oiled and cleaned. This gave them access to arms which they availed of to the full. In fact, they accompanied us on many operations armed with revolvers taken from the dump. One of the tasks this group of boys took on independently was sniping and for this, of course, they used rifles taken from the same source. Paddy Farrel, who was much more mature than any of them, also took part in sniping activities with them. He was deformed in as much as he had a stiff knee but he was a great shot. One of the sniping positions was the window of a guards van on the bank at Inchicore near the top shops. The top of the window just cleared the railway wall and commanded the main Naas road from the corner just above the Oblate Church and on to the bridge, and on several spots further on. There were two positions on the road where a shot could be got at a truck passing. I should mention that I was instrumental in training these young lads

in sniping but they were all more or less instinctively good shots. This sniping position was occupied in turn by Farrel and myself and the young boys referred to after school hours. Any military vehicle that passed on that road was fired at. Farrel was such a good shot that he could kill a man in a passing truck at 400 yards. The sniping became such a nuisance that the British made several efforts to locate the position of the snipers, and on one occasion they used up 300 troops sweeping across the area. On that day my brother Seán, Farrel and myself were on the main Naas Road trying to get a position on their flank from which we could attack them. The military movements on the Naas Road were too heavy to permit our taking any action against them. In any case, the positions taken up by the military blocked any line of retreat that we would have to resort to. I was the only one armed. I had a medium parabellum. I sent Farrel and Seán on to the Third Lock Bridge and took position myself behind the Tower House on the opposite side of the road and they were to signal to me when the military were retiring, having finished their search. They gave me the signal as the military came back and the party wheeled on to the canal to return to Richmond Barracks by the canal. They had found the rope ladder that I had made for the escape of the prisoners from Kilmainham and were taking it back with them. I engaged them from a position in the rear of the tower. They took cover but didn't return the fire. After waiting a short time I went to change my position to see if I could get a side shot at them where they had gone behind the bank and I found that another large party had debussed on the main road and were coming across the valley and were practically on top of me. When I first opened fire on them from the Tower, I hit two of them in the legs. I retired as fast as I could across

the fields to the Crumlin Cross, stopping now and again at each intersection to hold them and firing bursts spasmodically. I crossed the road into the Windmill Lane just as a "cut-off" party arrived to intercept me. This party captured Joe McGuinness who was another A. S. U. man who was on another job that day. He was on his way home to his dinner but was not armed. He succeeded in getting into a house and making good his escape. I proceeded on to Dolphin's Barn to get in touch with the rest of the Section and at Donore Avenue I met Paddy Rigney who told me the rest of the Section had knocked off a number of horses that morning at Market Street. Whilst we were speaking a car with two mules came down Donore Avenue from Wellington Barracks. Paddy had no arms but I still had a parabellum. We decided to shoot the mules. We made the driver wheel his mules to the end of Brown Street and just as we proceeded to shoot the mules we saw a patrol in the immediate vicinity. This looked to me as if the mules were sent on ahead as a trap. The patrol opened fire and I don't know if it was a belt from the patrol or the rear of a mule but the gun was knocked out of my hand. The gun exploded as it hit the ground and struck me in the knee. I picked up the gun and I ran across the Square pursued by the patrol, but we held them with a few shots at the New

Street end of the Square and then we made our way to our "safe house" which was Harpers in John Dillon Street.

Flanagan, our doctor, was quick in attendance and attended to the wound, and during the time I was convalescent there six more mules were shot by Simon MacInerney at Harolds Cross.

Lissonfield House near Portobello Barracks was occupied by the Auxiliaries. We decided that we could effectively snipe them from the roof of the Catholic Church at Rathmines Road. One evening in April, 1921, I took up a position in the Church roof and waited for the Auxiliaries to come out in front of Lissonfield. After about two hours wait one of the Officers came out of the house onto the lawn in front and sat on a swing. I fired at him, hit him and made my escape. On another occasion before this I was also in position waiting for the Auxiliaries to come out of the house when Sweeney, our Section Commander, rode up on a bicycle, stopped at the gate leading to Lissonfield House, drew his gun, shot the sentry and made good his escape on a bicycle.

HALF WAY HOUSE AMBUSH.

Following on the destruction of military transport by the Active Service Unit, the British authorities provided

armed guards for all their transport. In the case of troops going on local leave from Baldonnell into the city they were taken in by two trucks and an armed guard was provided for them in a third truck. The soldiers going on leave were not armed. Hitherto these soldiers usually travelled into the city by civilian transport. On one occasion they were taken off the bus by younger members of "F" Company, 4th Battalion, and deprived of their uniforms. The British then decided that they would have to provide military transport for them. From observation on our part we saw that these trucks travelled to the city about 4.30 p.m. so we decided to stage an ambush on the armed truck when returning to Baldonnell, having left the other two trucks in town. On the evening of the 5th May, 1921, the Section Commander, Mickey Sweeney, ordered every man of his Section to mobilise at the Half Way House on the Crumlin Road, at which position he had decided to stage an ambush. His plan was to put two good shots, with a peter-the-painter and a parabellum, inside the wall of the lane going to Lansdowne Valley which infiladed the road. Their particular job was to concentrate on the driver and put him out of action. The remainder of the Section lined the hedge from the Half-Way House to the corner of that lane. The Section Commander and Jim McGuinness, armed with grenades, were to take up positions in the public lavatory adjoining the Half-Way House and immediately the lorry came abreast of them they were to walk out and throw their grenades into it at short range. I should mention that Sweeney was carrying with him a big and special type of grenade, much bigger than the ordinary hand-grenade, about the size of a pineapple. He felt that he could not miss with this grenade on a short throw. That was the reason that he took up the position so close to the passing truck. On the evening in question the entire Section took its positions as planned and didn't have long to wait before a truck came along. It contained

about ten armed soldiers. As the truck came abreast of our positions McGuinness and Sweeney stepped out on to the roadway, Sweeney throwing his grenade at the truck. It hit the canopy of the vehicle and fell back exploding on the road. The two men in position behind the wall opened up on the driver with the result that the truck gave a wide swerve on to the bank on the side of the road and was tilted into the main ambush position. Simultaneously, the main ambush party opened fire with everything they had. The truck righted itself and went on. Evidently the driver was only wounded. We withdrew from our positions but we were told later that we had caused heavy casualties. As a matter of interest, I met the driver of that truck later in our Army in 1922. He started to tell me of the Half Way House ambush, not knowing that I was one of the ambushing party. Our Section Commander, Michael Sweeney, was badly wounded and McGuinness was slightly wounded by the bursting grenades. They exploded on the roadway.

A controversy arose between Michael Sweeney, our Section Commander and the O.C. 4th Battalion, John Dowling, as to the party who would carry out this ambush. Dowling felt that it was a job for his unit and that we should have nothing to do with it; that our operational area should not be extended to the country. He said that, at the time, he had a number of unemployed men in his Battalion and he considered it would be good for morale and prestige to have them take part in an operation of this nature. The argument became rather prolonged and the result was that Sweeney would not give way to him. Dowling knew we were going to attack on the day we brought off the operation but, seeing that we were so determined about doing it, he withdrew any further claim. His chief argument in favour of leaving this operation to his unemployed 4th Battalion men was that we

had interfered with a big operation that he had in mind some short time previously by sniping a horse-drawn convoy on the canal from a position at the back of the pipes, which was in his area. Our particular sniping operations had caused a certain amount of casualties amongst British troops.

Gus Murphy was made Sergeant after Sweeney went to hospital and shortly after he was made Sergeant he was in a scuffle with two soldiers in Charlemount Street. He was badly wounded and was taken to the Meath Hospital, where he died almost immediately.

A. S. U. ATTACK BRITISH PARTY AT SALLY'S BRIDGE.

Sometime before the Half-Way House ambush No.4 Section attacked a British column marching on the canal from Portobello Barracks. On this occasion we took up positions inside the graveyard wall at Mount Jerome Cemetery and, as the rearguard of the British column topped Sally's Bridge, we opened fire on them and caused a number of casualties. The main body thought that they were being attacked on the South Circular Road and fired indiscriminately at windows there.

BURNING OF THE CUSTOM HOUSE.

On the morning of the 25th May, 1921, we were all summoned to meet in the dump in Little Strand Street. The whole Company were assembled there. Paddy Flanagan was captain and he outlined the operation that was coming off by a diagram on the blackboard. He told us that the Custom House was to be burned that day at 1 o'clock and that the operation was timed to commence at 12.55. The other Units taking part in it, in addition to our own, would be the Squad and part of the 2nd Battalion of the Dublin Brigade. All were under the command of Tom Ennis. Paddy Flanagan told us that Tom Ennis's plan was to divide his forces into

two parts, one inside for the destruction of the Custom House, and one on the outside for protection duty. The Active Service Unit was to be divided up between the two. Our Section and No. 3 was detailed for protection duty outside. Our instructions were that we were to take up a position at Butt Bridge and attack any British Forces approaching the Custom House. When Paddy Flanagan was discussing the plan with us I criticised it and said that I felt it was faulty; that the protection line was too close in to the Custom House itself and that no provision was made for occupying the railway line crossing over the Liffey and I felt if men were posted there they could give effective fire power. He said that he could do nothing about it (that he had been given a plan) and that, anyway, the thing would come through without a shot. We moved into position in pairs and were on Butt Bridge at the appointed time. Everything went quiet until about 1.20. Jim McGuinness said to me "You were wrong about your protection line and Flanagan was right. This thing is going to come off without a shot being fired." With that, an armoured car came down the quays and pulled up at the main Custom House door on the Quay side. One of our sentries outside the door opened fire on the armoured car and made his get-away down the quays towards the Suspension Bridge firing as he went. He was pursued by a British Officer who got off the car. That was the opening shot as we saw it. McGuinness and MacInerney and myself moved across the bridge to the north side and just as we started a stream of Auxiliaries had debussed in Eden Quay passing the end of the bridge running towards the Custom House. There would be about three truck loads - about sixty altogether. We retired off the bridge behind the quay wall on the south side, and from there we engaged them across the river. The party of 2nd Battalion men outside Liberty

Hall also engaged them and the engagement became general all round. There was firing in all directions. The armoured car that had gone down to the doorway backed up the quays and swung the turret in our direction. They fired a few burst that put us down under the wall. From then on it was a question of bobbing up and down from behind the wall and firing when we got a chance. After a time things quietened on the Liberty Hall side. The Auxiliaries succeeded in getting cover behind barrels from which they concentrated on us. We retired into the door of the station at Tara Street, and partly closed the door which was an iron one. We fired a little from there and then we moved up to the top of the station on to the bridge. At this stage the ammunition was very low. We had some grenades left and we considered the possibility of crossing the bridge and dropping the grenades from there. We noticed the smoke coming from the Custom House and firing had practically died down everywhere except in odd bursts. The Custom House clock at this time was ten minutes to two. We decided to retire. The Custom House was well on fire, judging by the volume of smoke that was coming from it. We went along the railway line to Westland Row and walked out through the station there into the street. We had lost two of our men but they rejoined us afterwards. Joe McGuinness joined me late that night. Some time later, Tom Ennis paid us the compliment that the assistance we had given by keeping up constant firing at the Auxiliaries had helped considerably in making the operation a success and had allowed the large party to escape. The fact that our fire had been so effective distracted the Auxiliaries completely from the building.

AUXILIARIES SNIPED FROM SKIPPERS ALLEY.

On the day following the burning of the Custom House the Active Service Unit again re-assembled at the Dump in

Little Strand Street. Only twelve men answered roll call. A check up revealed that one had been killed and the remainder were captured. Flanagan escaped and he was anxious that there should be a show of activity straight away. He took Jim McGovern and myself to a position in Drumcondra to snipe passing military traffic. We both disagreed with the position selected, particularly as this position had been a matter of dispute between two members of the unit and Paddy Flanagan. The chief drawback was that it provided no line of retreat. He then suggested a position on Skippers Alley and although that was not ideal, we fell in with his plan. We occupied the position which was in the window of a workshop, the owner of which made wire mattresses. He was called and known to us at the time as "The Wire Man". His workmen were all round us that day and carried on their work. We weren't long there when an Auxiliary Company passed on the north side of the quays. We opened fire on them. We caused several casualties. They halted, debussed, lined the Liffey Wall and opened fire all round. We retired without being located. We went up by St. Audeons and across High Street on to Cork Street and they were still firing on the quays when we got to Cork Street. It might be of interest to record here that both at the Custom House operation and on the Quays on the day we sniped them, the Auxiliaries seemed to be loosing their nerve. They didn't appear to us to have the same confidence that prevailed amongst them prior to the burning of the Custom House. Even after that, they never seemed to get it back.

RAID ON DUMP IN LITTLE STRAND STREET.

From the time Gus Murphy was shot, the Section officially didn't have a Section Commander. I was regarded as being in charge. I felt most uncomfortable about the

safety of the dump at Little Strand Street. Whenever we assembled there I felt most anxious for the security of my men. My chief objection to it was that if we were over-attacked, we were completely trapped and could not hope to fight our way out. The result was that I never allowed the men of my Section to remain there for any length of time. I kept them on the street as patrols as often as I possibly could. The Dump was eventually raided and Michael Stephenson was captured. With him was captured our famous parabellum which we used for sniping. This gun had several nicks on it - 12 in all - each man who used it had put his own nick on it. In the end it could be taken as a Wild West gun. One of the Auxiliaries spotted the nicks and gave Michael Stephenson all the credit of putting the whole 12 on although he had, in fact, nothing to do with it. The arrival of the military saved his life and he was subsequently sentenced to five years' penal servitude.

STREET PATROLS.

On one of the days we were on patrol we ambushed a military car in Thomas Street. We adopted the usual system of putting two men on each corner and a Colonel Winters was wounded in this particular ambush. We had a pretty busy time in the Thomas Street Area, particularly with the holding up of despatch riders and relieving them of their weapons, bicycles and despatches. Any despatches captured were usually passed on to headquarters. I doubt if much valuable information was obtained from them. As our operations in the form of street ambushes progressed, the British reinforced their street patrols (already referred to) by the addition of two armoured cars working anti-clockwise in a circle. The foot and cycle patrols patrolled the areas of the Quays, Thomas Street, The Coombe and the South Circular Road. The armoured car did James Street,

Kilmainham, South Circular Road, Camden Street, George's Street to Dame Street and back up to Thomas Street again. The second armoured car worked in the opposite direction. We timed these cars and found that when the first armoured car passed a given point, the second armoured car passed the same point in exactly 15 minutes. This gave us the idea of how well these patrols were being worked and we felt that in our own interests we would have to take greater precautions in future. Future operations were worked out with due regard to time. We always had to calculate the time that was left between the passing of one armoured car in the area and the coming of the second.

GRENADERS AND HOME-MADE AMMUNITION.

I should have mentioned that in some of the street ambushes in which I took part the 7 seconds grenade was not in fact effective because it did not explode until the vehicle attacked had moved out of range, with the result that when it did explode it was always a danger to civilians. We sent in our report of this matter, with the result that future grenades given to us had the fuse reduced to two seconds. These grenades had the disadvantage that they could not be fired in the open. They had to be fired from cover because almost immediately a grenade was thrown it exploded.

The supply of ammunition was running very low - 45 ammunition particularly. A large quantity of 45 rifle ammunition had been shipped from America in mistake. There was only a few rifles in the country to fit it. The Ordnance Department decided to experiment in the cutting down of this 45 ammunition to suit revolvers. The tests were successful with the result that the Ammunition Department decided to cut down the full supply of 45 ammunition with the least possible delay. The cutting down,

however, was not as successful as the original tests had proved. Due to a technical mistake in the cutting down process, however, the ammunition proved faulty. The first time that we fired it at an ambush in Thomas Street it put all the guns out of action. I believe that a mistake had been made originally by the purchasing committee in America when they asked for 45 ammunition. It must not have been clearly specified that it was 45 revolver ammunition that was required. As already said, the ammunition that did arrive was rifle ammunition.

SHOOTING OF TWO AUXILIARIES.

A man by the name of Donney, who resided at Robinhood Lane, Bluebell, Inchicore, who was an ex-service man of the Australian forces and was serving with the Auxiliaries in Trim, was home on leave sometime around the middle of May, 1921. Instructions were issued by Brigade that this Auxiliary was to be executed as it was believed that he had taken part in the sacking of Trim. Simon McInerney, Paddy Rigney and myself set out one evening to take off Donney. We went to Farren's garage, Red Cow, where we commandeered a car and driver who was a local Volunteer - Frank O'Connor. We drove up to Donney's door. Paddy Rigney and McInerney got out of the car and knocked at the door which was opened by Donney's sister, who recognised Rigney and said to him, "Hello, Paddy". They dragged Donney out into the car and his sister followed him and when she saw that I was in the car she recognised me also. As a matter of fact we were quite good friends at the time. She said, "I hope you are not going to do anything to him". I made some kind of evasive reply. We now found ourselves in the position that we had been recognised and we thought it advisable to report the matter to Brigade Headquarters before taking any particular action

with regard to Donney. We had a discussion on the matter in the back of the car and during this discussion Donney, who was sitting beside the driver, jumped for it and as he was making his escape we opened fire on him, killing him instantly. The shooting had no repercussions as far as we were concerned for, although Miss Donney identified us positively, she evidently kept the matter to herself.

Around about the same time, another Auxiliary living in Dolphin's Barn was on his way from Trim to Carlow with dispatches and broke his journey to visit his own house in Dolphin's Barn. Information of this fact was received and transmitted to Brigade Headquarters and the house picketed, but before any instructions could be received from Brigade Headquarters, he left for the train at Kingsbridge, going down by "the back of the pipes" on to the canal. We decided that there was no use waiting for instructions. We followed him down the narrow passage on to what is known as "the back of the pipes". He was, however, suspicious for as we drew close to him he turned and drew a revolver and opened fire on us. We returned the fire and in the exchange of shots he was killed.

CRICKET MATCH AT TRINITY COLLEGE STOPPED.

During the summer of 1921 a Cricket match was held in Trinity College between the Gentlemen of Ireland and the Military. We were instructed to stop this match taking place. Our instructions were that we were to go down to the vicinity of Trinity College and fire into the grounds. Jimmy McGuinness and myself cycled down as the match was just starting. From a position behind the boundary wall of Trinity College at Lincoln Place, the two of us opened fire in the general direction of the players. After the first couple of rounds were fired, a lady spectator jumped up from one of the seats and got killed

by a stray shot. The match was not proceeded with.

REORGANISATION OF THE ACTIVE SERVICE UNIT - KILLESTER
AMBUSH - "STAND TO" TO INTERCEPT MCEOIN C.M. WITNESSES.

About the first week in June 1921 it was decided to reorganise and bring the Active Service Unit up to a substantial strength. It was very much depleted, being only about 11 strong at this particular time and, in addition, the Company Commander and G.H.Q. were not in agreement regarding one or two operations carried out by the Active Service Unit. We were given to understand that there was a spy named Byrne fired at, wounded and taken into Jervis Street Hospital where he proceeded to make a statement which was reported to G.H.Q. Intelligence straight away. Paddy Flanagan, the O/C., gave instructions to a party to proceed to Jervis Street and finish the shooting. So they took him out on a stretcher and shot him outside. There was a violent reaction to this in other city hospitals, particularly the Mater Hospital which had a number of our men under treatment at the time. In fact, I believe from what I heard at the time that the Mater actually ordered the removal of our men immediately for breaking the sanctuary of the hospital and it was only "the big fellow's " plámás was able to get over the situation. Collins reprimanded Paddy Flanagan severely for this. He was also rather upset over Flanagan's failure to carry out instructions to attack immediately the British cordon surrounding the area of Charles Street. There was someone of importance residing in that area and Collins wanted a diversion created to give him a chance of getting through the cordon. Flanagan evidently did not react fastly enough. This displeased Collins very much. In the reorganisation which followed, Flanagan left the Active Service Unit, also Jacky Dunne who was

2/Lieutenant and 'Onion' Quinn. Paddy Daly was appointed the new O/C, Joe Leonard 1st Lieutenant and myself 2nd Lieutenant. The A. S. U. was again filled up by new men from various Companies and whatever was left of the Squad was incorporated in the A. S. U. This meant that the Active Service Unit and the Squad from then on were to be identified as one unit. The old identity of the Squad disappeared. In any case, the Squad had by this time dwindled down to a few. The Active Service Unit was now divided into two half Companies; the right half operating on the north side of the city under Joe Leonard, and the left half on the south side under myself.

When I became O/C of the left half-Company, I was instructed to report to Paddy Daly at Brigade Headquarters every morning for orders at the Plaza. On the way back I would report to G.H.Q. Intelligence at the Antient Concert Rooms in Pearse Street. They would have collected all the Intelligence reports of the area and I would go through them there and select anything I wanted in the way of regular enemy movements that might provide a suitable target for attack. This, in short, was the system that obtained from the time that the unit was reorganised up to the Truce. Whenever the two half-Companies were required for what I would call a major operation, Joe Leonard and myself would receive our instructions jointly from the O/C. This only occurred once for an ambush at Killester. This was an attack that was planned on a troop train carrying troops back from Belfast on the occasion of the opening of Belfast Parliament. This ambush was to take place at the railway station in Killester. The ambush position ran from the road bridge on past the signal box and it comprised all of Leonard's half-Company with the addition of Engineers. There were six 30-lb. land mines set on the railway line the night before and there were men

working on the track to remove a loosened rail when the pilot engine preceding the main train had passed. My half-Company were extended on the left of the bridge. Their job was to throw pint-bottles of petrol at the train as it passed and on the parapet of the bridge we had a five-gallon tin of petrol which we would dump on the train to complete the burning. None of my section was to use arms at all except myself and this was more or less as a signal to the main ambush party to notify them that the train was coming. We had been instructed to watch out for the heavy train which was due a few minutes before the military special. The Active Service Unit was in position at the appointed time and Paddy Daly was in command. When we were actually in position a truckload of Auxiliaries passed across the road bridge going in the direction of Killester. They did not notice anything unusual we were so well concealed. We had not long to wait when the Howth train came along. It passed through my half-Company and I took no action regarding it, as I knew it was the Howth train, but two men in the main ambush position became excited and fired two grenades at it. The train kept on going and, fortunately, no one was injured. I got up on to the parapet of the bridge and I could see the pilot engine of the military train further up the line and I could see our men of the main ambush party withdrawing from their positions. I then gave instructions to my men to withdraw. As I was one of the last to leave the site of the ambush, I saw a British military patrol coming up the railway line so I got out as quickly as I could. The Active Service Unit got safely away and, despite a thorough search of the area by the British military, the land mines were not discovered. They were retrieved later on by our engineers. Paddy Daly was very annoyed over the failure to bring off this ambush satisfactorily and he ordered an inquiry with a view to fixing responsibility on the members of the unit

responsible for attacking the wrong train or firing without orders. The two men concerned were later identified and it so happened that they were not members of the Active Service Unit, but that they were simply brought along to augment the unit on this occasion.

The only other occasion on which the Active Service Unit operated as a whole was the time Seán MacEoin's courtmartial was pending. It was proposed that the witnesses in his case should be attacked and eliminated on the way to Dublin. With this object in view, a number of the Combat Unit of unemployed men of the 4th Battalion were in readiness at the Strawberry Beds Road and the A. S. U. were to occupy a position on the main Lucan Road above Palmerstown opposite "Glenawley", which was the residence of the late Tim Healy. We did not actually occupy the position except once, but we "stood to" in the city, not engaged in any other operation, waiting for information that the witnesses were on their way to the city. There was one very funny thing about that operation. There were two mines on the road and no one was supposed to know about these two mines but it was very amusing to see the farmers leading their horses around them. We found it very difficult to keep the men 'standing to' inactive. They were under arms and they spent most of their time travelling from Public house to public house, although they were mostly teetotallers. I think that the authorities must have got wise to us in the end as, on one occasion, we were nearly walking into a trap. This happened at a public house in The Tenters where there was a billiard saloon. I let 12 of my men go to this saloon one day to play billiards and I accompanied them. As we drew near the place, I saw that the blinds were drawn. Sensing danger straight away, I ordered my men back. This was fortunate as it later

transpired that the British Military were in the public house waiting for us. The 'stand to' lasted round about a week and we were never ordered out to fulfil our main objective, i.e. the interception of the courtmartial witnesses.

PLANS FOR SHOOTING OF CROWN FORCES IN GRAFTON STREET AREA - TWO AUXILIARIES SHOT.

On the 24th June, 1921, an operation was planned for the entire Active Service Unit plus selected men from the Battalions of the Dublin Brigade to shoot members of the Auxiliaries and British Forces in Grafton Street area at a fixed time - 7 p.m. that day. The plan for this operation was as follows:-

Small parties of about six men with an Intelligence Officer in each were to patrol small areas of Grafton Street and shoot all Crown Forces in the area. The purpose of the Intelligence Officer was to identify Auxiliaries who might be in civilians.

My half Company of the Active Service Unit were in Grafton Street. The area was divided up from Suffolk Street to Wicklow Street; from Wicklow Street to Johnson's Court; from Johnson's Court to Harry Street and from Harry Street to ^{SOUTH}~~NORTH~~ King Street. Parties were also taking in Stephen's Green, Dawson Street, Nassau Street and Suffolk Street and a special party were going to Kidd's Cafe. The instructions were given out to all taking part and as far as I can remember they were assembled in either Oriel Hall or the Plaza Hotel. On that occasion some of the Intelligence Officers were placed upon a table so that all could view them in case they might be accidentally shot or mistaken for any auxiliaries. Two who, I remember, were Joe Guilfoyle and Joe Dolan. The men were to find their own way from the assembly point to Grafton Street. All were armed with revolvers. They proceeded in pairs. There was

intense military activity in the city. There were cordons everywhere and it was very difficult to make our way across the city, with the result that only my half Company got into position. They were in position five minutes before zero hour. I was myself in the section - Wicklow Street-Johnson's Court. The Intelligence Officer was Dan MacDonnell. The streets were bare, which was unusual for 7 o'clock in Grafton Street at that time. When we started to move no one was on the street. It was bare and empty in the Sectional Area Chatham Street-North King Street. My Section, under the command of Simon MacEnerney with Ned Kelliher as Intelligence Officer, encountered two Auxiliaries, and they were fired on straight away and killed. A similar operation was planned for the Thursday night before the Truce on the same style but on a wider scale, taking in the entire Brigade and the entire City, with extra heavy parties moving to where there were known concentrations of Auxiliaries such as Kidd's Café, Jammets, The Royal Winter Gardens and there were also parties to take reinforcements coming out from the Castle. That operation was cancelled at 4 o'clock as it was then known that the Anglo-Irish Truce was in operation. Some parties had not received the cancellation orders and had actually moved into position.

MAYFAIR HOTEL - AUXILIARY OFFICERS SHOT.

A G.H.Q. Intelligence report gave information that two Auxiliary Officers were in the habit of having tea in the Mayfair Hotel in Baggot Street and instructions were issued to eliminate them. The Intelligence Officer was Paddy Drury and he was in touch with one of the maids in the place. I assembled the Section to do that job in Leinster Lawn on the evening of the 26th June, 1921. Drury contacted the maid and he came back with a full description of the men and

where they were. I issued instructions to the party and we proceeded to the Mayfair Hotel. It had been arranged with the maid that I should give four rings on the bell and a knock, and in this way she would know it was we who were coming. I did this and she answered the door. She told me the room in which the Auxiliaries were. The party divided as I had instructed them to do. We entered the room where the Auxiliaries were seated at a table, having tea with their wives and children. They jumped to their feet and, as they did so, we opened fire and shot the two. We got away all right but we were pursued by an armoured car. The car we had set to take us away broke down as we were about to enter it so we retired on foot on towards Holles Street. As we turned into Holles Street the armoured car turned in from a back street in pursuit of the party but we succeeded in escaping. It seems the wives of the shot Auxiliaries rushed into the street and attracted the attention of a British armoured car which was passing at the time. Evidently its crew must have spotted us as it wheeled round and pursued us. However, we got safely away.

DOLPHINS BARN AMBUSH.

Information had been received that the Igoe Gang passed regularly through Dolphin's Barn and arrangements were made to ambush the car on the 30th June, 1921. We planned to attack the car in the Square at Dolphin's Barn by parties of men placed around the Square: two at the corner of the Bank; two in the centre of the road under the Cross and two on the Chapel. We put an extra party of six at the Laundry in case the car got through the first party,

We had our men so placed that the car would come under the concentrated fire of three pairs, and if they were missed, the six men at the Laundry would then take them on.

The car was signalled and at the last moment it was found that it was not the correct target. The civilians had become alarmed at the display of arms and the Square was cleared of civilians, but we decided to remain on. After a delay of roughly ten minutes the correct car arrived but, by this time, the civilian population had decided that there was no danger and had taken to moving about again, with the result that the Square was crowded with people coming out of the Chapel and passing about their business. The first shots wounded the driver of the car which was a "T" model Ford. It stopped in the centre of the Square for a few minutes while the occupants were changing drivers. They hauled the wounded driver from behind the wheel and put another man in. They had suffered quite a number of casualties - about six in the car. The car moved on again. One officer in the back was returning the fire all the time. Our party at the Laundry opened fire on the car when it came abreast of their position, but the driver brought the car to Wellington Barracks. Most of the occupants of the car were either killed or wounded. The return fire from the car wounded one civilian who was passing at the time. Our party got away safely. It was definitely established that the party we attacked was part of the Igoe Gang but the much wanted Sergeant was not amongst them. We were badly handicapped, as I have already said, due to the many civilians who were in the Square and we had to be very careful when diverting our fire on to the car.

MILITARY GUARD ATTACKED AT RICHMOND BARRACKS.

It was the habit of the British to change all the military guards at the various posts in the Phoenix Park area at the same hour in the morning, such as, the Viceregal Lodge, the Magazine Fort, Islandbridge Barracks, Hibernian Schools,

Under-Secretary's Lodge, etc. All these guards were supplied from what was then Richmond Barracks, and the guards were mounted at 9 o'clock. We arranged to attack this combined guard as it left the Barracks. We had a position behind the wall of the railway line in the vicinity of what was the Remount Depot. I had six men with me, armed with peter-the-painters and parabellums. We had a direct view on to the gate of Richmond Barracks at a range of 375 yards. On that morning the guard marched out with the usual advance guard and we opened fire on the main body as they filled the main gate. Altogether, we caused 15 casualties, including an officer. Some of the casualties were fatal - the officer was killed. We retired up the railway line and utilised a railway engine and tender, which was passing, to bring us to Ballyfermot.

AMBUSH OF TROOP TRAIN AT BALLYFERMOT.

Information was received that a party of troops with stores would be travelling on the 1 o'clock passenger train from Kingsbridge on Friday, 8th July, 1921. Plans were made to attack the train at the railway bridge at Ballyfermot. My half-Company assembled at the Tenters Fields, Cork Street, and cycled to Ballyfermot. They lined the embankment on the left-hand side of the bridge and there was a scout put on the timber bridge - the Pass Bridge - to signal what portion of the train the military occupied. Arrangements were also made to get this information at Kingsbridge and bring it up by motor-cycle. Arrangements were made to fire the stores by pouring petrol on the passing train from the parapet of the bridge. We were also using a Thompson gun for the first time, which was brought to the scene of action by Pat McCrae in a van. Jimmie McGuinness was the gunner. I was in charge of the entire operation. The train arrived on time: the petrol was decanted on one side of the bridge

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and a lighting sack soaked in petrol was cast on to the wagon-top, and the wagon went on fire. The main party in the ambush opened fire on the military part of the train and McGuinness with the Thompson gun opened an oblique fire from the side of the bridge. There was very little return fire from the military. The train went on: we did not succeed in stopping it. We had greased the rail to stop the train but it stopped at Clondalkin Railway Station to put off a badly wounded civilian and the military part of the train was detached at the Curragh siding in order to remove their wounded. From reports received from the Curragh Hospital the military casualties were heavy. I examined the railway carriages afterwards, and it would seem to bear out that the shooting was very low, concentrated and effective. My party suffered no casualties and retired safely back to the City.

A larger ambush planned for the Crumlin Cross that evening, where we intended to use two large mines and the three Thompson guns, was cancelled on orders of the President on account of the close proximity of the Truce..

The final activity was an order from the Director of Munitions to supply three tons of foundry coke and three tons of pig iron. At 8 a.m. on the morning of the Truce we commandeered these supplies from Inchicore Works and we had them conveyed to the place instructed by the Director of Munitions which was, as far as I can remember, a Depot in Luke Street. The material was loaded on to the railway motor trucks and conveyed to the Depot. We had to employ the whole half-Company on this job.

I have given, to the best of my recollection, a true account of the activities with which I was connected during the fight for the independence of our country.

Signature

Padraig O'Connell

Date

(Padraig O'Connell)

Witness

W. Ivory

(W. Ivory) Comd't.