

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
BURO STAIRÉ MILÉIA 1913-21
No. W.S. 820

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 820

Witness

Lieut.-Col. Francis Tunnion,
McDonagh Barracks,
Curragh Camp,
Co. Kildare.

Identity.

Member of Irish Volunteers,
Co. Monaghan, 1918 - .

Subject.

National activities,
Coe. Monaghan and Cavan, 1916-1922.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

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ORIGINAL

W. S. 820

Lieut.-Colonel F. Tummon,

McDonagh Barracks, Curragh Camp,

Co. Kildare.

Recollections of a Volunteer in Irish Republican Army

1916-1921

Chapter 1.

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
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1916:

This is a story of what happened in a period of my life. It is written about 30 years after the period 1916-1921, or in the year 1952 to be exact. I clearly recollect one Sunday morning in April, 1916, having walked a distance of three miles from my home to attend last Mass in the town of Newtownbutler, Co. Fermanagh, an announcement was read by the Parish Priest during Mass to the effect that an instrument of unconditional surrender had been signed on behalf of the Irish Volunteers by P. H. Pearse. This announcement stuck in my memory. It evidently had been prepared by the local Sergeant of the Royal Irish Constabulary on behalf of His Majesty's Government and handed for publication to the Catholic clergyman.

While I've no doubt the majority of the congregation on that Sunday morning were aware a rebellion against British rule had been in progress during the previous week, few indeed knew who this man Pearse was or what he stood for. The older men shook their heads and expressed the opinion that the use of arms was a misguided action and doomed to failure from the start. Who dared to resort to arms when England was plunged in war with Germany? Some even thought this way.

Apart from weekly provincial papers, there was very little dissemination of news. Mass, on Sundays and holidays, was fully availed of to discuss topics of interest. The

older men, particularly, arrived early so that up to minute news could be collected. Even week-old papers were exchanged or loaned from one Sunday to next. The man who read the daily paper was regarded then as a real news agency and his up-to-date knowledge of affairs sought after. This fairly described the speed at which current events reached the majority of country folk. It is not surprising, therefore, that a topic of such nature as a rising even in Dublin was discussed and spare papers eagerly looked for on this particular Sunday. The war news faded into insignificance when this real hot topical stuff came.

It was anticipated that the British would not use white glove methods in their handling of the Rebellion. Gradually it was learned that all the principal leaders were arrested and would be courtmartialled; that the rank and file of the Volunteers not so prominent would also be collected and interned. Casement was arrested, it was learned, and transferred to London for trial. A month or so elapsed when the execution of leaders commenced and continued; some sentenced to death were spared at the last moment. Casement was sentenced to be hanged and was executed in Pentonville for attempting to land arms. It is correct to say there was little sympathy immediately subsequent to the Rebellion, but the continued execution of the leaders had the effect of changing public opinion in my particular parish.

My father's farm was situated in the townland of Derrykerrib, in the parish of Newtownbutler. It belonged to the Lanesboro estate, bordering on Co. Cavan, in which county the landlord had his resident seat. My father belonged to the Land League movement and was an adherent of the Irish Parliamentary Party. He was an active member and I can clearly recollect his attending regular Land

League meetings. This entailed walking a distance of four miles to Newtownbutler on Sunday afternoons. Hail, rain or snow did not seem to deter him attending. An admirer of the Old Fenian men, whose praises were sung when the occasion was opportune, often caused me to wonder what policy my father really subscribed to. He definitely appeared to support physical methods. An uncle of mine on my father's side of the house was a great friend of John Devoy when in America. He was a member of Clan na Gael, an organisation I did not then understand.

As with other boys of my age, I had absolutely no interest in politics when the Rising occurred. Politics were regarded as an interest for the older generations and a waste of time for me. As a rival organisation to the Land League, there was also the Ancient Order of Hibernians, which had a large following in my parish. When parties holding opposite political views met, an argument was certain to develop in fairs or markets particularly. This Hibernian organisation, as we called it, was very opposed to the Rising and, later, to the Sinn Féin movement.

My interests were centred in the Gaelic Athletic Association. A club had been established in my area about the year 1912 and continued to grow in strength. It was affiliated to Fermanagh Co. Board. It took part in League and Championship fixtures. In addition to these games, several friendly matches were arranged between the adjoining counties - Monaghan and Cavan. Our chief mode of conveyance on journeys in these early years was by horse brake; slow but reasonably certain to arrive. After early Mass the collection of our team commenced, and this entailed about an hour's work until getting on our way. Journeys were very pleasant; the particular lay-out of a brake lent itself to close association. Apart from placing the team

en route, certainly on way home, win, lose or draw, a concert usually developed. These trips proved very valuable later on; travelling being difficult, 5 miles radius could be regarded as about the average distance. Friendly matches, too, made contacts that later on proved of great value. Of all the groups, I believe none could be regarded so useful as the Gaelic Athletic Association in the organisation of the Irish Volunteers. Through the medium of the Club the earliest copies of 'Nationality', edited by A. Griffith, were passed around to each interested member. Later it served as a cover to disseminate information and plan meeting places amongst Volunteers.

1917:

Sinn Féin Clubs were springing up all over the country in the early part of this year. A club under the name of "Seán MacBride" was founded in my area and was affiliated to Fermanagh County Centre at Enniskillen. I joined the Club at its inception. Its first President was Jason Coulson of Wattlebridge. John James Fitzpatrick was elected Secretary and treasureship fell on my shoulders. Its members were for the most part of the younger generation, but the movement did attract some of the older politicians, notably from Land League followers. Hibernians, except for a few individuals, did not join and, in fact, remained more or less hostile to the end.

Frequent meetings of this club were held in an upstairs barn, the property of Mr. Coulson, Wattlebridge, where members were proposed and admitted and the organisation of the club perfected. Dances and concerts were organised under the aegis of the Sinn Féin Club, and these proved very successful in raising funds for the movement.

The election of McGuinness for Longford gave us the

first opportunity for a celebration which was organised. Later in the year (1917) the election of E. de Valera and W.T. Cosgrave were suitably emphasised by a few bonfires. These successes gained for our club quite an influx of recruits and could be regarded as a great fillip to the movement. This club eventually had a membership of 150 members.

Somebody suggested a band was necessary, and in due course this, too, came to pass. A flute band was organised. Its first conductor was Tom Woods, Landbrook, Newtownbutler. A small disused house (later burned by military), situated near to Wattlebridge National School, was used for a training room. The winter of 1917 was spent largely indoor endeavouring to master some music selections on the flute. Eventually, in the early days of 1918, the band emerged into the open and took to the public road. At this stage at least two simple marches were learned, but even though skill was lacking, enthusiasm never waned. Political meetings which were then a feature of the times, put quite a strain on the band, but all within a radius of ten miles were attended. Occasionally, our club band paraded in strength to church. All these factors tended to gain public attention and so the organisation grew from strength to strength. This is as I saw the growth of Sinn Féin in my locality. It may leave out a lot of detail, but the facts as I saw them were the sudden and spontaneous growth of this new political force Sinn Féin.

Chapter II.

1918:

The threat of Conscription early in this year had reached its climax. All parties more or less came together and the Redmond Volunteers were founded in my area. Almost every able-bodied man or boy in my locality joined this force. It was organised on a sort of parish basis. A Company was

formed in Wattlebridge, Newtownbutler, which I joined. Parades were held on two or three evenings of the week. Our parade ground was the public road. The instructor, an ex-British soldier, gave us plenty of marching practice at forming fours. With a Company of a strength of eighty (80) it can be imagined little individual attention could be given. As we progressed wooden guns were introduced, home-manufactured, crude, but useful for at least the introduction of variety. Now we were not marched so far or frequently, but the emphasis was on "arms drill" so that the commands of "slope arms", "order arms", etc., became quite familiar. I did at the time imagine our progress was rapid and our training on sound lines, but on reflection since, I must change these views. Our small weekly subscription, a couple of pence, went to defray our instructor's expenses for travelling. For a couple of months, attendances and enthusiasm were good and constant. A stiffening of older Volunteers in the ranks kept discipline on parade at high level. Of rifles proper we had none. Promises were made that these were on the way and we did eagerly look forward to these. However, no rifles were supplied and as far as I'm aware, none were available. A few parish mobilisations were held at Newtownbutler, Co. Fermanagh.

When the threat of Conscription lifted, enthusiasm waned and gradually this organisation lapsed.

The return of Arthur Griffith for West Cavan marks my first active association with electioneering. Through the Athletic Association of Clones, Co. Monaghan, a group of Volunteers were requested to lend a hand in the East Cavan election. There were no recognised Volunteers in my locality at that time. However, Matthew Fitzpatrick, Kilgarrow, Newtownbutler, organised a group for duty in East Cavan. I formed one of that party from Wattlebridge area for this duty. On the night before polling day (20th June, 1918), our small

party travelled by bicycles to Cootehill, Co. Cavan, arriving somewhere before dawn of polling day. The night was fine and we were in quite good shape for duty. In a hall somewhere in the town of Cootehill we located our arranged headquarters. There were about sixty to eighty Volunteers in the hall, drawn mainly from Co. Monaghan. Some of the group were lying sleeping on straw on the floor, others chatting around in groups. About 8 a.m. all were alerted and allotted to various tasks. I, with two others of our party, took up the first duty at a polling booth (a school) about a mile from the town of Cootehill. There was an R. I. C. Constable on duty when we arrived. He did not interfere with our presence. At this booth we remained for about six hours, when we were relieved by a further group. The election went off quietly.

During the afternoon a sort of concert was organised in the hall referred to earlier. Philip Marron, Carrickmacross I recollect, gave a recital of songs. Gen. O'Duffy paid a call to the hall during the course of the day.

Our job being completed, we returned to our homes on bicycles on the night after, satisfied we had done a good day's work. Before the actual results of the election were announced, it was learned Griffith had polled strongly and was fairly certain of being elected which, in fact, was confirmed towards evening of the following day. The official result was an occasion for our band to turn out and we celebrated until the small hours of the next day. This, I repeat, was my first association with electioneering but not the last.

As I've stated already, although we did this duty at East Cavan we were purely politicians, having then no association with official Volunteers. At Cootehill we learned, too, that our status was questionable and although utilised for duty, it was more or less in recognition of the

spirit in making the journey. This in our view, after being invited to assist, was a matter that should be put right. It was decided, therefore, to get in touch with Gen. O'Duffy who, we knew, was a Volunteer, with a view to our joining the army as it were. O'Duffy was approached by Matthew Fitzpatrick, Kilgarrow, Newtownbutler, on the matter, and he promised to come along and give a talk at our convenience.

One Sunday afternoon (June, 1918), O'Duffy arrived on a bicycle at Wattlebridge, Newtownbutler. Bicycles were then in fairly common use, and O'Duffy used one then for his journeys. His headquarters were then at Clones, Co. Monaghan, about five miles distance from Wattlebridge. Usually, on Sundays, all the Gaelic footballers turned out for practice on the adjacent grounds, the property at that time of Frank Coulson. On this particular Sunday there were about thirty boys of all ages but only about twenty assembled to listen to O'Duffy. The upper storey of one of the outhouses was our assembly area, and here O'Duffy laid the foundations of my Volunteer Company. In his talk, lasting roughly twenty minutes, O'Duffy outlined the objects of the Volunteers, how the organisation was built up and their ultimate aim, namely the overthrow of British rule in Ireland. Finally, he said that anyone present who was not prepared to use force should not join the Volunteers. His words left a lasting impression on me and, I'm sure, on all present. There were at least half a dozen who listened to O'Duffy on that Sunday afternoon but never joined the Volunteers.

The practice game of football from which we were summoned to listen to Gen. O'Duffy was resumed, but the foundation of a Company was laid. Subsequent to this lecture a small group was assembled, mainly from the ranks of the G. A. A., and elected Company officers as a first step.

These officers were: Matthew Fitzpatrick, Kilgarrow, Newtownbutler; Hugh J. Tummon, Derrykerrib, Newtownbutler; Tom Woods, Landbrock, Newtownbutler. The first named was designated as Company Captain.

It was agreed to affiliate the Company to the Co. Monaghan Volunteer organisation as Gen. O'Duffy had suggested. It was subsequently designated as "B" Company, 1st Battalion, Monaghan Brigade. The first assembly area of the Company was in an old disused house close to Wattlebridge National School, the property of Edward Fitzpatrick, Kilgarrow, Newtownbutler. This same house was used frequently by the Company after this date and was burned by British forces eventually.

Our Company was small numerically, about twenty active members, but it did gradually grow in strength to around forty. Parades were held twice weekly. At this time, no member had any military training and, moreover, lack of equipment was keenly felt. A few periods of signalling was introduced by one of the Clones Volunteers, but equipment here also had its effects. In the early months little notice was taken of our parades, although the public road was used. Gradually, precautions were necessary as it was then illegal to use military formations or even any great semblance of such. To some extent we evaded any great notice by frequently changing our assembly area. The police (or Royal Irish Constabulary then), in order to reach our area, had three miles to cycle and with unrest here and there appeared to be hesitant to venture so far from base.

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About July of this year (1918)/illegal assembly act was introduced and the R.I.C. became a little more active in our area. They endeavoured to interfere with football practice and I had a few skirmishes along with other boys

evading arrest. Football matches were fixed all over the country during the month of August (1918) in order to bring the illegal assembly act into ridicule proper. A match was fixed for our area at Wattlebridge, and when both teams took the field the R.I.C. arrived and stopped the game. Not to be defeated, a group of Volunteers took up the goal posts, moved them by boat to an island location, leaving the police on the opposite bank of the river. The game was played and the law thus broken. Names of the participants were taken as far as was known to the police, but no further action was taken by them. This particular incident is recorded in order to show the spirit that actuated the people. I may say there was only a couple of dozen Volunteers in the crowd that defied the law on that Sunday in August. The ban, however, continued to apply, but it was never taken very seriously and there were no arrests in my area although, as recorded earlier, it was disregarded.

In December (1918) the General Election provided a variety of work for the Volunteers. The Volunteers in my area helped to man the political machine. I took part in the collection of funds and did quite a lot of canvassing. The candidate in our area of South Fermanagh was Seán O'Mahony, who was elected on the Sinn Féin ticket. Canvassing was a real experience. It was difficult to convince some of the older folk that they should exercise the franchise. Usually we got a decided answer. Our area was well organised and no difficulty was experienced in filling all the various posts at polling stations. Transport, too, was kept running regularly, and there were few indeed that were not collected by the end of polling day.

We had our celebrations, not so much for the local success but rather to cover the over-all victory of Sinn Féin. Our Volunteer Company marched into Clones, Co. Monaghan, on

invitation, where monster demonstrations were held. The restrictions on assembly were relaxed on that day, wisely so.

Chapter III.

1919:

The success of the General Election, in addition to giving a fillip to the political side of the organisation, gained a little more sympathy for the Volunteer movement. Recruiting was slow and, moreover, all applicants were not accepted. Our Company Commander often said "he would prefer small numbers of reliable men" and applied this maxim consistently. Our parades continued but our equipment position had improved little. A couple of revolvers of an old obsolete type were received from supporters. Such weapons had little practical value, being useless for instruction and dangerous to use. The search for arms continued, but with little success. There were few modern shotguns in our area. The old muzzle loading type were still being used for wild fowl use. Cartridges for these weapons were also controlled during the war and even more rigidly after the 1916 Rebellion. We were aware that there were some of the Ulster Volunteer Rifles (Mausers) under loyalist control but could not locate where these were. It was assumed some were held in a castle owned by "Sanderson" along the border of our Company area in Co. Cavan. Plans accordingly were made to conduct a raid on this castle for these weapons or any others that we could find. During the summer months the owners of "Sanderson's" Castle were in residence, and at these times a large staff of servants, in addition to guests, would be present. At other times only a small airing and cleaning staff would be located there. The winter months were, consequently, considered more suitable. This sounded a bit similar to an estimate of the situation, but actually this process of reasoning and planning was gone through at

what may be described as a Company conference where the Company Commander and a sort of minor council studied the pros and cons. It was not anticipated that serious opposition, or, in fact, any would be met on our projected raid on this castle, provided the surprise element was observed. Further, it was felt that even with the few old firearms at our disposal the raid could be carried out. The Castle was a fairly large one containing about 50 rooms and situated about a quarter of a mile from the Finn river on rising ground. A couple of its approaches were by road. The river approach was considered the best route, having in mind surprise element. About 20 Volunteers of my Company took part in the raid, using boats in order to reach the point. It was known a steward lived a short way from the castle in a small residence, and this gentleman (McCauley, a Scotsman), was pressed into use. Aroused from his bed about midnight, he proved valuable to us in gaining admission. The search of this castle took about two hours, during which time a staff of servants were held up with a few old weapons.

The raid did not reveal any Mauser rifles, which we really expected to find, but it was not altogether unsuccessful. Five single shot Martin Henry rifles were found but a very limited amount of ammunition. The rifles were in good mechanical condition, and were used on several occasions on other activities. In addition to these rifles, some military equipment in the nature of helmets and haversacks was located and collected. The raiding party withdrew without incident. One particular defect hampered our raid and that was proper light. Candles, it was found, went out with draught and lamps, except the heavy hanging type, were not available. I've often imagined since that raid, if modern lighting equipment was available more rifles might have been found. It can be easily realised in a

building several hide-outs could escape attention.

Although we were a bit disappointed with our degree of success in this raid, it was our first operation and gave a necessary outlet to our enthusiasm to do something. It gave us, too, a problem that from this stage was ever-present, namely security of arms. Certain principles were recognised as necessary. Firstly, backward areas were used, and, secondly, at least two Volunteers would know the hide-out. Various places were used for our hide-outs, hay ricks, turf houses, dry ditches and cattlehouses. None proved satisfactory. Rust was an ever present enemy, and although oil was supposed to be effective "rust" continued to be the worst enemy. Lack of proper training on exactly what way to treat weapons did not help matters. The only real remedy was constant cleaning and attention, and often this was difficult to carry out and had the weakness of perhaps giving away the hide-out. Nevertheless, in all the raids conducted in subsequent years by R. I. C. and military no weapons were located, which must be regarded as a victory for us.

Towards the end of this year (1919) our Company travelled to Oakfield, about one mile from Clones, and here the Volunteer oath was administered to each member by Dan Hogan (then Battalion Commander). The night was very dark and rainy, but I recollect there were three or four other Company groups present on that night. There were protective measures taken at this ceremony, but there was no interference from police.

During some of the raids for arms in Monaghan area, a Volunteer was killed, or rather died of wounds. The funeral of this Volunteer was attended by a group from my Company. I travelled by motor van to Monaghan where all Companies were marshalled into military formation. To the

churchyard at Corcaghan, about four miles from Monaghan, we marched. In the small cemetery there military honours were accorded to this Volunteer (Keenan). Rifles were used by a group of Volunteers who were in readiness, under cover, close at hand. This was the first time I saw military honours being accorded to any person and the procedure interested me. Strange no police appeared at this funeral. There was no attempt made to keep it secret. Indeed this would be very difficult to do in the middle of the day. I should say there were at least 300 to 400 Volunteers from evidently all over Co. Monaghan at this funeral.

Dan Hogan, who acted in the capacity of Parade Marshal, was in full uniform, over which he wore a light trench coat.

No interference of any sort by police was met and this to us was really amazing, because at the time the ban on assembly was in operation. It was, of course, an occasion to take note of those who were closely identified with the Volunteers and I'm certain the police took full advantage of this opportunity. For that reason I still doubt the advisability of giving the intelligence service first-hand information. In my particular area, it was difficult to go off in broad daylight without being identified by some loyalist.

This funeral was organised by the Volunteers and did give some indication of the members who would turn up if required. In this way it may have been regarded by Volunteer officers as of some value.

The remainder of this year (1919) was devoted to training and organisation. As I've pointed out already, our training was very limited, but at least our administra-

tion and, more particularly, our communication system for mobilisation was perfected. Our plans for rapid mobilisation was perfected. Our plans for rapid mobilisation depended on runners, and this system to some extent, supplemented by signals, worked reasonably well.

My political duties (Treasurer Sinn Féin Club) frequently demanded attendance and attention to various odds and ends associated therewith.

Chapter IV.

1920:

Early in 1920 our Company was mobilised on several occasions, but one particular parade in January brought us to a Battalion area. This was at Comberbridge, about 2 miles from Clones on the Clones-Scotshouse road. This parade was taken by the O/C of the Battalion (Dan Hogan). It was a disappointment in a way as most members, including myself, were under the impression some activity was planned. However, after assembly we were instructed to return. After walking a distance of roughly 6 miles and returning again, running the risk of being met by police patrols did not appeal to us as much fun. It was, of course, (we learned afterwards) a trial mobilisation and proved very successful from that point of view. I was informed by our Company Commander that our next mobilisation would be for the purpose of carrying out an operation.

Our next mobilisation was on the night of the 20th February, 1920. It was a dark, cloudy night, mild and showery but not cold, when a group of ten Volunteers from my Company travelled to Ballytrain, Co. Monaghan, to take part in the attack on the police barracks there. Five travelled by bicycles and five others, including myself, by car. It was a distance of 28 miles from our Company

area. We were instructed to carry any firearms available and, in addition, some pieces of rope. The rope would possibly be required to tie up prisoners, we assumed. The cycling group, which included Matt Fitzpatrick, Frank Fitzpatrick, J. Heuston, F. Sheridan and F. Conlon, moved off around 6 p.m. to contact the Clones group. The Volunteers travelling by car were John Mullen, James McCaffrey, John Conlon, another man whose name I cannot now recollect and myself. We moved off at 9 p.m. after a little excitement which, fortunately, did not interrupt plans. A week or so prior to the mobilisation, when making selections and discussing travelling arrangements, it was decided to order two cars from a garage owned by a man named Phair of Belturbet, Co. Cavan. At this time it was understood this man, Phair, was a Nationalist but it turned out he was the opposite. However, the cars having been ordered for a certain place at a certain time were later cancelled. A car from Clones was subsequently obtained at the same place and hour. On our arrival at appointed place (fortunately taking protective measures) a group of police were at the spot. This position demanded prompt and immediate action, and this was done by stopping the Clones car at a different point. Eventually our car got off safely, driven by a Mr. Cahill from Clones. We did not meet any opposition or incident of note on our way to Ballytrain, arriving there at, I should think, 11.30 p.m. When nearing the assembly area, our car overtook three or four others evidently on the same mission. There was no blackout as all cars had top lights on. Finally, all the cars halted on a rather narrow roadway and we dismounted. After a short time, less than a quarter of an hour, our Company Commander, who had arrived by bicycle, detailed our group to various tasks. I was instructed with six others, including my Company Commander who was in charge,

to put down a block, and man it, on the road leading from Ballytrain to Shercock, Co. Cavan.

We moved off to our task at once and at a point on the road about a mile and a half from the village of Ballytrain erected our block. This obstacle consisted of large stones removed off the top of a wall and scattered irregularly for about fifty yards. It would definitely delay a lorry for a considerable time but unless covered by fire could not be regarded as very effective. At this road block our party remained for what must have been four hours. In the distance the sound of rifle fire could be heard quite clearly. At times it sounded as fairly rapid; at others, more spasmodic. Eventually a heavy explosion reverberated through the darkness of the morning, followed closely by what appeared to be lighter blasts as of a grenade. A further half hour must have elapsed until a runner approached our position informing us to withdraw to our assembly positions. On arrival at the position I observed a number of rifles - assorted grenades and ammunition lying on a ground sheet on the roadside. I was informed by someone that the destruction and capture of the R. I. C. barracks had been successful. We were ordered to disperse as quickly as possible. As it was then about 6 a.m., it was desirable to get clear before daylight.

Exactly what time daylight broke I do not know, but on returning it was possible to drive without lights after passing through Ballybay town. At Clones it was necessary to stop to renew petrol, and here a delay of half an hour was not a bit welcome on this Sunday morning. The petrol was got and our journey continued along the main Cavan/Clones road. At Clooney Protestant Church I decided to clear off the roads so as to allow the car to return to Clones. Myself and the other member of the party moved across country

and branched off to our homes along route. It was clear daylight now and I should say around 8 a.m. Breakfast was a welcome meal to me, having eaten nothing from tea time the previous day. And now, to assist at the many tasks at any farmer's home before getting ready to go to Mass. At about 9.30 a.m., when doing some of the chores, I observed three or four police R.I.C. in uniform searching around an old disused house we used regularly for our meeting place. It at once struck me they had information from Ballytrain and at once proceeded out our way. There is little doubt that the cancellation of the cars earlier referred to in this gave them a valuable clue. In addition to searching this old house, the same group of police raided the house of the Fitzpatricks at Kilgarrow, Newtownbutler. F. Sheridan and J. Heuston on their way back from Ballytrain had remained there. A thorough search was conducted but no weapons or clues obtained.

On Monday morning, 21st February, when I was proceeding via Kilgarrow, Newtownbutler, to act as best man to a cousin getting married, our car was halted by military at the former place. Some local police identified my cousin and our car was allowed to proceed. At 6 a.m., at which time we met the military, Matthew Fitzpatrick and F. Fitzpatrick, his brother, were arrested. F. Sheridan and T. Heuston were also taken into custody at Newtownbutler on the same morning and all four removed to Belfast jail. These were the first arrests in the area. None of the prisoners taken were charged or could not be connected with the Ballytrain raid. All were eventually released in May after a short hunger-strike.

During March of this year I was present at a meeting of the Ulster Council G.A.A. Gen. O'Duffy was Secretary of this group. It was held in the town of Armagh. It was well known to the Volunteers that O'Duffy was then a

wanted man and 'on the run'. He expected to be arrested at this meeting as it was advertised in the press to take place. During the progress of the meeting police were observed keeping their look-out on the building. At about the half way stage military were observed in full battle dress halting at the main door. A military officer and a couple of police entered the room where the meeting was in progress. One of the police pointed out O'Duffy, who had vacated the normal secretary position. The military officer put his hand on his shoulder and stated he was arresting him. O'Duffy got up at once and in the hallway adjoining was handcuffed by military. He was taken from the building and under military guard, who marched on either side of him, was marched off to the barracks.

O'Duffy was removed to Belfast. There he organised the hunger-strike and was eventually released early in May.

The brothers Fitzpatrick of Kilgarrow, F. Sheridan and J. Heuston of Newtownbutler were also released after this six or seven day hunger-strike. The Company to a man paraded to Newtownbutler railway station to greet our jail companions on route home. The band, too, added a lot of noise, at least, to our enthusiastic welcome. The R.I.C. took no notice of our noise on this occasion but were evidently confined to barracks fearing their presence might lead to a breach of the peace.

The following activities were concerned with the destruction of illicit spirits (poteen). It was well known to the Volunteers that this traffic had developed to an alarming extent in a number of areas. Gen. O'Duffy issued orders that action would be taken if and when there was evidence. The first of these raids in the area was brought about rather accidentally. On Sunday night members of my Company joined in a dance at Clones. I was one of a small

group who took part in one of these. Towards the end of the dance one of the Clones Volunteers reported that some poteen was offered for sale by a certain gentleman. On investigation, it was further learned that a small quantity had been actually made by this man. Gen. O'Duffy, to whom the matter was reported, decided to hold him prisoner and use him as a guide to find the remainder of the stock. About twelve Volunteers were selected from those remaining at the dance and some small arms were supplied by the Clones Company. O'Duffy took charge personally and off we started on bicycles, taking our prisoner along. En route it was learned that the poteen was under control of a Protestant gentleman who would possibly resist us by force. Plans were accordingly made to use surprise as the chief weapon. A large pole was secured from a hedgerow, and on arrival at the "still house" it was used as a battering ram on the front door. I don't know if the door was locked but it did not stand up to this heavy assault and was driven in to the centre of the room. The occupant had no time to offer resistance. He was interrogated but for some time gave no information. A search of the place was ordered, and in a ditch close by a four gallon crockery jar was located, containing about half a gallon of poteen. With due ceremony Gen. O'Duffy smashed this jar on the laneway leading to the house. It was now daylight in the morning but O'Duffy was not satisfied until the still apparatus was located. Further enquiries led to our movement about half a mile to the house of the "salesman" of the dance. In the garden buried in potato drills the worm of the still was found. It was sawn into short lengths to prevent its further use. A shot-gun seized in the house where the poteen was found was ordered to be returned to the owner by Gen. O'Duffy, who stated it was a poteen raid he was conducting, not an arms one. My first poteen raid carried

out, we were ordered to dismiss. It was well into the morning when I arrived home, had my breakfast, and commenced my usual day's work.

My next poteen raid took place on a Saturday night. It was an operation organised under the leadership of Daniel Hogan (Battalion O/C). I should say there were about thirty Volunteers mobilised for this raid. The exact meeting point was near Oakfield Cross, about one mile from Clones. The night was very dark and rain was falling heavily when we reached our objective. It was learned poteen was being distilled in large quantities at the house of a Mr. X near to Roslea, Co. Fermanagh. The house was located in a country locality, with a short laneway connecting to the main road. One group was detailed to surround the living house, the other the outhouses, and conduct a search of those. I was attached to the latter group and before proceeding very far observed a flicker of light coming from a shed adjacent to the house. On my arrival at the entrance to the shed I observed a poteen still in full operation in one corner of the building. There was a young man in attendance who stood up but offered no resistance. Around the walls of the building stood a row of barrels filled for the most part with wash in different stages of preparation and fermentation. Right behind the door, which opened inwards, stood a large twenty gallon tin containing poteen, also a small churn full of finished spirit. It was a real brewery. We were ordered to destroy the lot and this was done by emptying all the barrels, tins and other containers. All containers were broken into pieces. The officers present in the meantime were ordered into the living house, and there a short courtmartial was held on the owner of the property. He was ordered to pay £10 to the parish priest

for charity, and given a limited time for same. Gen. O'Duffy was also present at this raid.

Several other poteen raids and searches were conducted in our Battalion and Company area. This interference by the Volunteers had the effect of limiting at least the traffic. In quite a lot of cases the equipment was captured and destroyed. It took a considerable time to replace equipment and, moreover, our Intelligence on these people was very accurate, which acted as a decided brake on this industry.

Three further activities in which I took part during this year are worthy of note. The first of these concerned the destruction of a boat on the river Erne, the property of the R. I. C. at Newtownbutler - or, rather, the Crown Forces and operated by them. This boat was used by the R. I. C. for visiting islands, or, to be more accurate, points along the river Erne which were more accessible by boat. It was known to us Volunteers that this boat was kept locked in a house on the river bank under the care of a loyalist, whose house was very close - located as it was near to Bunn Bridge close to Newtownbutler.

This operation was planned for as a night operation. A party or group travelled by road to secure control of the boat and take care of the loyalist who, it was assumed, would resist. The second group travelled by water so as to be in a position to take the boat, if captured, to a point for destruction. I travelled by boat. The first party, of which the Company Comdr. (M. Fitzpatrick) was in charge, secured the boat so that when the second party arrived no delay was experienced. No opposition was met and the boat was taken in tow to a point considered deep on the river. On reaching the selected place it was

necessary to land the boat and load it with stones so that it would sink when punctured. The boat was a fairly large type, operated by oars, and could easily accommodate twelve adult persons. A ton, at least, of stones was loaded into it and it was floated to a point in the river between the townlands of Goladuff and Galoon. Here, with the use of a crowbar, a few holes were punched in its sides and bottom, and in less than five minutes it went down.

Despite frequent searches and enquiries this boat was not seen again. It still lies in the bottom of the river in about twenty feet of water. This operation deprived the police of the means to carry out surprise raids by water. The boat was not replaced.

The second operation was the destruction of a military truck. This vehicle had been under observation for some time. It had a regular route between Enniskillen and Cavan and travelled once per week at approximately the same hour in the day, passing our area about 11 a.m., returning in afternoon. Plans were accordingly made to destroy the truck. What was known that helped decide the action was apparently that only two soldiers in uniform travelled each journey. The morning was selected when the truck was on its way towards Cavan. A small group of Volunteers, not to exceed eight, were detailed. The plan, as in all others, depended on surprise. The party were instructed to assemble underneath a bridge across the canal close to Wattlebridge N.S. Here, a light barricade consisting of a few strands of wire could be pulled across the road. Here, too, a reasonable chance of retreat, should serious opposition be met, offered itself. Light revolvers of rather doubtful type were all the weapons at our disposal, but these we carried.

As anticipated, the truck came along to time. The operation was favoured with a fog and the vehicle travelled slowly. The wire barricade, placed out of sight on the reverse side of the bridge, was sufficient to bring the truck to a halt. When covered off by one of the old revolvers the soldiers offered no resistance and dismounted as ordered. A search was conducted but no arms were found. A number of hampers were carried, and in one of these a pidgeon was enclosed. The bird was released minus a lot of wing feathers, which limited its flight ability. No time was lost. A tin of petrol carried as spare on the truck proved useful in getting it alight. In a very short time the lorry was burnt completely out and rendered useless. The two soldier occupants of the truck were directed to go on by foot to Cavan which, it was learned subsequently, they did do.

It was late afternoon on the same day a lorry load of troops from Enniskillen arrived on the spot. Evidently quite satisfied that the truck was useless, its remains were pulled off the road by the military. The following day police and military activities were continued and some houses were raided. A couple of arrests were made; none were associated with the burning of truck. One, John Tummon, a neighbour, was met on the road by military while drawing turf, taken into custody and brought to Enniskillen military barracks. He was detained there for two or three days and eventually released. From him it was found that a soldier could identify definitely one of those who took part in destruction of military truck from a scar on one of the fingers of his left hand.

I answered this description and from the activity it was necessary to go 'on the run'. On reflection I came to the conclusion that this soldier got an opportunity

to have these details. I searched both when taken off the truck, and in so doing certainly took no precautions other than turn them towards the road fence. No masks were worn either. Consequently, the only course lay in keeping out of the way on future raids.

Incidentally, on the night of this activity an attempt was made by military to burn our little meeting house. It had a thatched roof which was evidently too damp to ignite properly. It was subsequently burned.

The third activity was closely associated with the boycott of Belfast goods. A firm of bakers conducted a bread trade in my area and regularly delivered to retail shops. The Company Commander acting on orders from Battalion Headquarters, decided that the best approach was to notify the driver of one of these horse-driven vehicles to cease this delivery. Accordingly, one of our Company notified the van driver he would not be permitted to sell or deliver his goods after a certain date. No notice was taken of this warning and sales were continued in the usual way, generally at the same time and day of each week. These Belfast firms had got so well rooted through their efficiency and service that most shopkeepers at any rate regarded them as indispensable. However, following the ignoring of the notice to stop, various methods of approach were discussed as to what the next step should be. It was finally decided that the van should be destroyed as this action would have the best chance of bringing the matter to notice. The plan was, in short, to stop the van at some point on the main road and destroy it by burning.

A small party of six of the Company were mobilised for the operation. It was a daylight job and it was considered revolvers would be sufficient. I favoured rifles but did not get support on account of difficulty in

keeping our movement to assembly area secret. The place selected was a bridge crossing the canal near to Wattlebridge N.S. and here was the assembly area.

Our party arrived on the day as planned and the horse and van duly turned up to time as anticipated. On the horse and van reaching the top of the bridge our group stopped it, and after taking the driver off, proceeded to remove the horse. A look-out Volunteer, while this preliminary work was in progress, reported a car or lorry travelling rapidly from the direction of Newtownbutler. As this vehicle approached closer, it was identified as a Crossley tender. To all appearances the occupants were in civilian attire. The Crossley tender approached very fast, and the Company Commander, who was in charge, gave us instructions to disperse - it was less than 100 yards from the bridge. It pulled up when within 50 to 60 yards of our position, and it was then observed police with rifles dismounted and at once opened fire on us. I could clearly hear the sound of bullets travelling evidently high overhead. The group separated into three different routes. I found myself alone, endeavouring to find cover along the canal bank. The police endeavoured to cut my retreat off, but I travelled too fast and avoided this. The weapon I had was a .32 and quite useless for the range. However, after travelling about 500 yards towards the river Erne my escape was made good. My companions escaped, too, after one exciting chase culminating in one of the pursuers getting wounded. The police broke into different directions on dismounting from the tender, and two of these followed Volunteer Tommy Heuston and Matt Fitzpatrick (Coy. Commander). After exchanging shots en route across low lying ground towards Clonfad, the police got outstripped but continued the chase across country. The Volunteers being under the

impression that they had thrown the R. I. C. off their track, took shelter in the house of Pat Smith a couple of miles from scene of activity.

The R. I. C. arrived later at the house and surprised the Volunteers before they had time to clear. An exchange of shots with revolvers took place and one of the police, Constable Farrelly, was hit and wounded in two places in the arm. This stopped the chase.

The other three Volunteers, taking a completely different route through the townland of Drumcrin, made their escape without further incident. These were John Mullen, John Donoghue and Patrick Tinneney. Every tragedy has its humorous side. On the night prior to the hold-up of the van it was decided to select some of the fancy buns or cakes and have a little celebration. However, this part was postponed.

Very frequent and searching raids followed this activity. Practically every house was raided several times. It became necessary to keep clear at night. With a few other Volunteers, including our Coy. Comdr., I moved off with a load of bed clothes and slept in a cow byre in the townland of Derryelvin. It was quite warm there at night with the heat generated by the cattle. This house proved quite a safe place and was used for a couple of months off and on. On several occasions during the autumn of this year (1920) I slept in hay cocks quite soundly. The vermin of the hay caused the most annoyance, particularly when getting into the hair of the head.

On one Sunday following this bread van activity, I crossed country to attend Mass at Connons chapel. It was a country place and seldom frequented by police or military.

Towards the time for Mass I waited outside until the exact time, being rather suspicious that military or police forces would some day check on this quiet place. As expected, they turned up in strength in six or seven lorries - military with a mixture of police. I waited long enough to see them turn off the main Clones-Cavan road before moving off under cover. In the direction of Drummully I moved, keeping under cover of hedges, etc., and crossed the road eventually heading for the townland of Gubdoo. Keeping on this route brought me to the Finn river, narrow but rather deep. After a search along the bank a flat bottomed boat was located, in poor shape, but after emptying out the water I took a chance and got safely across the river Finn. To the house of a friend named Conlon I went, and there remained until information of the "all clear" was received.

I learned subsequently that the military had a cordon drawn around the church and when the congregation came out they were closely examined. Six or seven arrests were made, but none were detained longer than a couple of days. None of those arrested had any association with the Volunteers although some had Sinn Féin sympathies, in fact a few were members of my Club.

In September of this year (1920) Volunteers were required for the formation of a Flying Column. As I've stated earlier, I was 'on the run' and at once offered my services. It appeared that two per Company in the Monaghan No. 1 Brigade area was sufficient. The second Volunteer from my area was Matthew Fitzpatrick - the Company Commander. One Sunday afternoon we both proceeded on bicycles to join a group at Clones. Here we proceeded to a cottage on the Roslea road where we collected rifles and ammunition. There were about ten others there, including

Dan Hogan, Jimmy Winters, Jimmy Murphy, Tom Cosgrove, John McGonnell and Tom Coffey. Dan Hogan was in charge. From this cottage our party proceeded through Roslea to Knockatalon area in Co. Monaghan, close to Scotstown. It was past midnight before arrival there but there were guides to take us off to various friendly houses in the area where we found accommodation.

Myself, Matt Fitzpatrick and Jim Murphy, the latter from Clones Company, were allotted to a house roughly a mile from the Roman Catholic chapel at Knockatalon - McKenna's. This was a neat country type residence where there were three boys and two girls in family, all fully grown. Our addition made quite a large family. Here we stayed during our service with the Column. Our rifles we retained in our lodgings close to hand.

Our ordinary day consisted of meeting with the remainder of the Column at a central point. This was at a Mr. McElwaine's where there was reasonable accommodation in an upstairs outhouse. On our first trip there I met others of our Column, including James McKenna from Glaslough, Tom Clerkin from same area, Paddy McGrory from Tyholland and Phil Marron from Carrickmacross. I should say there were fully twenty-five.

Daily programme consisted of foot and arms drill, mechanism, care and cleaning of arms and a lot of signalling (semaphore). Guard duties were also practised in daytime so that a surprise visit by Crown Forces could be counter-acted.

A Consignment of revolvers arrived during our first week. These weapons were of Webley make. Issues were made to those of the Column who had none, and I found myself now with a rifle and 25 rounds, plus a revolver and twelve rounds.

Fairly well equipped, but it took the bulk of the day cleaning weapons!

Our first activity as a Unit was a daylight raid on mails carried by train between Monaghan and Clones. It entailed holding up the train, going through all the mails and removing any official type met. Smithboro, a small station on the line between the two towns referred to above, was the point selected. Here the train made a normal stop. It therefore was an easy matter to detain it for the extra time for job at hand. The particular part I played was on arrival at the station to purchase a ticket to the next stop. On arrival of the train I took the engine driver and fireman down on the platform and held them prisoners. The balance of the Column, who were in the immediate vicinity of the place, rushed in and conducted the search. An interested spectator on the train was a soldier in uniform who was not interfered with. In about twenty minutes the mails search was finished and the Column withdrew by bicycles to the original locations.

The mails which were taken were opened during the afternoon of the same day and found to contain little of value. Phil Marron spent some considerable time in making a censor stamp and eventually succeeded. Letters opened were all franked with this stamp, "Censor I.R.A.", and dropped by Volunteers into a post box on the following night quite a distance from the operation.

Our second activity was also a raid on mails, this one at Glaslough, Co. Monaghan. It was a night raid. The mails were being conveyed by rail between Belfast and Clones. The train stopped each night somewhere around midnight at Glaslough so the question of its hold up was not so difficult a task. In order to be on the location in good time we left

our Column area at about 21.30 hours or at 9.30 p.m. The night was very dark and rendered cycling a bit difficult. We were armed with revolvers and cycled in extended formation in twos, taking a circuitous route on narrow, poor roads. Arriving at least half an hour before the train was due to arrive, we were detailed to positions and tasks. As on the earlier occasion of raid at Smithboro I, assisted by my Company Commander (M. Fitzpatrick), got the task of boarding the engine as soon as it came to a halt and holding it until the all clear signal was given. The only difficulty that arose was to know approximately at what point from the station the engine would stop. However, we took up what was considered to be roughly a point twenty to thirty yards from the station platform. Actually it turned out to be near the exact place. As the train steamed in, it was only a matter of seconds until the engine was boarded. The engine driver or fireman offered no resistance. They were taken down by us to the line and held there until the job of taking off the mails was completed.

The mails were taken off in bags and no attempt was made to do any sorting in the poor light available. The Column withdrew and returned without incident to record.

Next day was spent checking and opening any suspected letters. Phil Marron was in action again with his censor stamp and did a good job. When mails were examined they were dropped into post office collecting boxes, and in due time reached their original but delayed designation.

on another occasion
At midnight the Column moved off carrying our full equipment, on bicycles as usual. We arrived at dawn at a point on the road a couple of miles from Newbliss, Co. Monaghan, to prepare an ambush position. It was

anticipated that an R. I. C. patrol would pass the point as was their routine on each Wednesday. Positions were selected in an old ruin practically on the roadside. There was very little cover except from view, which was afforded by a low hedge. As in every other operation the plan depended largely on surprise. Our instructions were not to open fire until the patrol (on bicycles) got an opportunity of surrendering to a challenge. However, in this position we remained until 3 p.m. and the patrol did not turn up as expected. The Column Commander (Dan Hogan) decided to withdraw, as at that time we were in quite bad shape for food. Although the day was mild and dry, not being able to move around in the position we were all quite stiff. It took quite a considerable time on our bicycles to get proper warmth and movement into the limbs.

From this position our next move was to an old disused house about one mile from Scotshouse, quite the opposite way to our starting point. It was arranged that at this point we would remain and rest for the night before returning to Scotstown area. The house was an old disused one with some straw in one of the rooms, and here we enjoyed a good night's rest. As I've mentioned earlier, we had nothing to eat for roughly 20 hours, so the first essential was food. I was dispatched to Scotshouse by the Column Commander with some cash to purchase food. Tea, sugar, bread and milk were our chief requirements and these were easily obtained. Having got all these into a bag I moved off to the old house, where a rousing welcome awaited me. Some active boys left behind had got utensils, started a fire and boiled water, so the tea was soon ready. The loaves disappeared at an alarming rate, and at one stage our breakfast ration appeared in doubt.

Here the Column remained, rested, cleaned our weapons and made ready for return. Before quite dark on the following day we took off in our protective style and reached Clones about an hour after dark. Here a meal was ordered and enjoyed in Cara Street at the house of a Mr. McQuaid. The local Company had been made aware of our arrival and gave the necessary protection to our visit. It was past midnight before our Column got together once more and we headed off for our old location at Knockatalon, Scotstown. All the folk had gone to bed when we arrived at our temporary lodgings. Gen. O'Duffy visited us on a few occasions, calling at our mobilisation centre - the house of a Mr. McElwaine. On one of these visits he had one of his hands heavily bandaged. He had an accident with an automatic pistol resulting in the loss of one of the centre fingers of his left hand.

My Company Commander (Matt Fitzpatrick) sought permission, and was granted it, for us to return to our Company locality to plan and conduct some operations. Rifles had been promised to our Company and these were available for collection at Clones. We parted temporarily from the Column and John McGonnell, Newbliss, travelled with us to Clones. He had also got permission to return to his company at Newbliss. It was understood ^{that} /if and when required, we would be available at call. Stripped of our weapons, which were handed in to the Column, we returned to our Company area.

The first activity on arrival was the detention of a prisoner. In the Company area a disused house met our requirements. It was in a pretty backward area and offered a reasonable chance to get early information of any unwanted visitor. This prisoner was arrested and convicted on a criminal charge in Ballyconnel, Co. Cavan, and although not

in our military area was passed to us for detention. He was sentenced to detention for 14 days. The duties entailed in this prison put a heavy strain on our Company. Guards and look-out posts were established for day and night. The exercise of prisoners called for planning too. Rationing or feeding was simple: tea, bread and butter supplied by Volunteers was the simple fare. Our first prisoner gave us some valuable training in all these matters. He paid tribute to our attention to his comforts when he was released on completion of his sentence. His form of release came by his removal blindfolded in a car to a lonely point on a roadway some miles off. This man appeared to be quite young, around the 25 year mark, but I must say a very honourable prisoner. He had no idea of his locality, and to our knowledge did not divulge to anyone where he had been during his period of detention.

Our second problem was more difficult. A group of five railway officials arrested in Clones were imprisoned. These men, despite warning, assisted in the operation of trains carrying military and Crown Forces. Heavier guards, more rations and more precautions were called for. Fortunately, these men were in the middle age category and not the type to offer any resistance or attempt escape. They wore uniform, and this to some extent did interfere with their exercise periods so as to avoid observation in day hours.

Although guards were supplied from the other Companies of the Battalion, the problem of relief, guides, etc., was found by our local Company. Food requirements were supplied, too, by the local Volunteers. Home-made bread and tea formed breakfast, dinner and supper. Fortunately this group were detained only seven or eight days. They were released near to Butlersbridge, Co.

Cavan, about midnight or a little past, having gone through normal method re blindfolding. This group had some general idea of their location as disclosed to guards. Firstly from their intimate knowledge of roads when travelling, some of the more intelligent counted the sharp corners met and, in that way, assisted by time and speed taken, formed a general idea of their location. This was confirmed by their observation of the name of a trader on a tea bag as seen in our prison.

I do not know if the imprisonment of these railway officials had any deterrent effect on their activities subsequently. However, they were very glad to get their freedom. All were married men - taken from their homes by force of arms. The Crown Forces were very active to find their location, but I do not think they had any idea or intelligence to act on in the matter.

A further activity for which my Company was responsible also concerned a railway official named Wallace. He was a guard on a train and, despite repeated warnings, continued to operate troop trains. He resided in Clones, Co. Monaghan, but was under police protection and usually slept in the R. I. C. barracks there. It was planned to take him off the train in daylight at the small town of Newtownbutler, Co. Fermanagh. My Company Commander (M. Fitzpatrick) was in charge of the operation. It was necessary to travel in two separate groups. One of these was to move by bicycle to a level crossing on the Lisnaskea road about a quarter of a mile from the R. I. C. barracks. This group was entrusted with the arrest of Wallace when the train was brought to a stop at that point. A car from Clones was to be convenient to remove the prisoner if captured. The second group, of which I was in charge, were directed to proceed across country mainly and approach the

railway station on the outskirts of the town. Here we were to hold up station staff, get into ^{the} control cabin and put the points and signals against the train so as to stop it at the point desired. All were armed with heavy Webley revolvers as it was anticipated troops or police might interfere.

Our timing was rather cut finely as it turned out. My group, consisting of John J. Fitzpatrick, Edward Tinneny and myself, reached the railway line at what is called locally Brown's Bridge, to discover the train was signalled through from Lisnaskea 6 miles off. This meant running along the track as fast as possible so as to be able to do our job. Our first objective was the signal cabin, controlled by a rather oldish man. He looked scared, particularly when revolvers were produced. I knew nothing of signals, but between myself and John J. Fitzpatrick pushing and pulling all the levers seen out of true position, we observed the signals on the track move against the train. The job was not quite finished until the train appeared in sight. From our position in the cabin we could observe the guard (Wallace) being taken off and were satisfied the operation was successful. Our third man (E. Tinneny) took control of the station-master (Doherty), then an old man.

It was learned subsequently that the first group had occasion to hold up an R. I. C. Constable who happened to be out having a walk unarmed. His name was Lennon, and although familiar with those who held him up he did not identify them on later occasion. Still another Special Constable was located close to our approach on the embankment overlooking the line. He, too, was unarmed but cleared off the route and returned to barracks. All our Company returned safely - the operation a complete success.

Wallace (the guard) was retained for a short time, but on release he continued to act for the Crown Forces. An attempt was made to capture him at Newbliss station where shots were exchanged some time afterwards.

CHAPTER V.

1921:

On January 1st of this year our Company was instructed to lay down heavy road blocks to coincide with an ambush planned for Ballybay, Co. Monaghan. One section of the Company handled this job. The second group, to which I was attached, travelled to Lisnaskea to carry out an ambush of R. I. C. en route from town to the railway station. At this time we were all armed - all fifteen of party carried rifles. We travelled on foot via road and railway track, a distance of seven miles, arriving in good time. In a field just off the main street of the town, rather below the level of the road, positions were taken up along a ditch. Here we remained for almost two hours in hopes a patrol would come along, until finally a scout (Jim Reilly) informed us no police were out. Another unsuccessful mission! R. I. C. patrols were then irregular in their movements and it was a sort of hit or miss on our part. However, when they did not turn up our Company Commander decided to call it off. We returned without incident.

Activities of some nature were ordered to be carried out weekly. Our Company resorted to cutting telephone wires or blocking roads. The lines between Lisnaskea and Newtownbutler were the target one week, and those between Clones and Newtownbutler next. Except for the risk of running into troops, these tasks were simple. As a rule troops travelled on heavy lorries, which on a calm night were easily audible, but on a breezy or rough night could

very easily be close at hand without detection. A few Volunteers got trapped in this way. The most dangerous patrol of the lot, and most feared, was the cycle one. Still another system of patrolling used by both military and police was that of dropping off groups from a lorry and leaving them. It was assumed when the lorry passed all was well when, in fact, the occupants were dispersed widely. In daylight, too, lightning raids were carried out on houses close to the road where it was known Volunteers frequented. All of these were practised in my area. Still another that bore fruit once was awaiting hidden close to the home of a wanted Volunteer during the early morning. On his arrival to have breakfast the house was surrounded before he had time to make his escape.

In Roslea, Co. Fermanagh, following an attack on R. I. C., several houses of those having sympathy with the Sinn Féin movement were burned. This was about 21st February, 1921. I became aware through my Company Commander that reprisals by the Volunteers were contemplated but no decision had been made directly. The Battalion O/C (Dan Hogan) favoured action, but it required sanction from higher authority.

Finally, however, sanction was evidently got as plans for the destruction of a number of loyalists' houses in vicinity of Roslea was decided on. A number of Volunteers from my Company took part. I was instructed by my Company O/C to have the area patrolled so that Volunteers returning would not fall into enemy hands. On 26th March this activity took place. From first hand reports it was learned that plans for the destruction of houses were badly co-ordinated, resulting in fire being opened on the Volunteers in their approach on the objectives. The 'B' Specials were then organised and

at several houses rifle fire was met. The success of the operation was not, therefore, as anticipated.

On the return of the Volunteers of my Company I learned that the O/C got wounded by fire from a shotgun. It appears he was endeavouring to get a hand grenade into the bottom window of a house at the time. He was wounded by two shots evidently, one in the hip and the second in the hand. He (M. Fitzpatrick) was taken to the Newbliss area, where he was arrested on the following day by police and military. He was taken to the hospital at Monaghan where a guard of military was mounted over him.

At midday on the 28th March I got a verbal despatch from one of the Clones Volunteers (Dick McPhillips) that I was required to report to Geenan's Cross, Ahabog, by 9 p.m. At once I anticipated that a rescue of Fitzpatrick from Monaghan was probable. My directions coming direct from Dan Hogan also instructed that I contact Jimmy Winters, a member of Clones Company, on my way. Having completed my day's work for that day I collected a small pocket revolver and cycled off. At the point arranged I met Jimmy Winters and we proceeded to Greenan's Cross, Ahabog. Having met no delays we arrived in good time and reported to the spot arranged. A guide there indicated a house nearby where Dan Hogan and other Volunteers were. Those present included: Dan Hogan, Clones, O/C Column; Jim Donoghue, Ahabog; Joseph McCarville, Newbliss; John McCarville, Monaghan; John McGonnell, Newbliss; Phil Marron, Carrickmacross; Jimmy Winters, Clones; Patrick McCarron, Monaghan; Patrick Monaghan; Ahabog; Patrick McKenna, Scotstown; Patrick McGrory, Tyholland; Jim Flynn, Monaghan.

John McKenna, Newbliss, and Jim Nolan, both car drivers, were also there. We were told on our reporting to D. Hogan that it was the intention to carry out a raid during the night on the hospital and rescue M. Fitzpatrick. Further, he told us his information was that it was the intention of military to have Fitzpatrick removed next day to Belfast. We learned, too, that a military guard was in occupation in the hospital and, in addition, an armed R.I.C. man was located in the ward with Fitzpatrick. The guard room was located on the ground floor, with sentries posted - one inside of rear entrance and the second in the ward with the prisoner. Both sentries were armed with rifles and fixed bayonets. The building was locked after a certain hour, but with the co-operation of nursing staff and Dr. Con Ward, Monaghan, the keys were made available. Dr. Ward delivered the keys in person to Dan Hogan at Greenan's Cross that night and, in addition, gave him particulars of the lay-out of the building.

The plan for rescue as explained to us at Greenan's Cross, Ahabog, before moving off was dependent on surprise. Dan Hogan, who was in charge, stressed that no shooting was to be resorted to except in emergency situation. Twelve were selected to enter the building. Three of these were detailed to secure the first sentry on the ground floor. Six others of the party were to secure the occupants of the guard room, the remaining three to disarm the sentry and R.I.C. Constable in the ward where prisoner was. Stretcher bearers were to take up the rear and be ready to take the prisoner off. Monaghan Company formed this latter party. Having been all briefed in our particular roles we got our weapons. I was armed with a double-barrelled shot gun.

Travelling in three cars commandeered earlier in the night, the party arrived on time (1 a.m.) and stopped about half a mile from the hospital. At this point all dismounted and removed their boots. The party then set out in single file along the sides of the road. At the gate house we were admitted, by arrangement with local Volunteers, into hospital grounds. The night was dark and very cloudy but dry and still.

The back entrance to the hospital was reached. I was close up to the leader (D. Hogan) at this stage and carefully he opened the door with the key delivered at Greenan's Cross. Cautiously the party followed slowly into the corridor dimly lighted. Before advancing far I observed a sentry sitting on a chair (apparently asleep), his rifle standing against the wall close to hand. Dan Hogan, carrying an automatic pistol, pressed it against the soldier's chest, having secured the rifle first. The soldier woke up with a start and a shout.

Directly I passed on to my particular role which took me up a stairway. On reaching the top landing I heard a muffled report of a shot from what I took to be the guard room, followed by a scuffle or noise. There was a light on the landing, and not being quite sure where the ward door was I opened one but it evidently led to a surgery. In my further movement on the top corridor a door at the opposite end from me opened, and I observed a soldier with his rifle appearing. The soldier made no attempt to use his rifle although I covered him at once with my shot gun. As the soldier was about to back into the ward again Phil Marron, who just then arrived, fired a shot in his direction with a revolver. The bullet struck the wall over the door. The soldier then closed the door and went inside. At this stage Phil Marron suggested collecting some of the soldiers,

and instructed me to remain covering the door. After the lapse of a minute or so Marron returned with two soldiers, whom we instructed to open the door and precede us into the ward. This they did, and the soldier inside, on being requested put up his hands, did so, and laid his rifle against a bed in the ward. I checked up on the R.I.C. man and after a few seconds found a large Webley revolver loaded in all chambers. This I took along. Dan Hogan had now arrived, and between his and my efforts a telephone was disconnected by tearing from the wall.

The patient, or prisoner (Fitzpatrick), was then collected by the stretcher party and taken out to a waiting car whilst we moved off to assembly area. No time was lost in getting into our cars and moving off. Paddy McCarron I then learned had been wounded in the arm by a bullet fired by a soldier in the attack on the guard room in the hospital. He travelled in the same car as I did and was losing blood despite the application of a bandage. Our route took us out past the Monaghan Seminary and here our car, from lack of power, failed on a hill. We got down, and still in our sock covered feet (our boots were in some other car), succeeded in surmounting the hill and pushed on. The local Volunteers had done very good scouting and guide duty and were to be seen at every crossroads on our way to Clontibret. Here our cars halted whilst we proceeded to a farm house. The cars later were directed so as to mislead any followers. The prisoner (M. Fitzpatrick) was taken to a different area. A local nurse was procured who dressed P. McCarron's wound, which was right through the upper right arm, fortunately missing any bones.

At the farmhouse the rescue party remained all next day, some resting, others playing cards. The captured seven rifles, revolver and Webley equipment, all in good

condition, were well examined. The rifles bore the stamp of K. R. R. on butt disc, representing "King's Royal Rifles" Regiment. I recollect examining the barrels which were bright and spotless. In the evening we were in pretty good form again and some of the party were ordered to return.

After dark Paddy McKenna, P. Monaghan, Jimmy Winters, Joseph McCarville, Jim Nolan (car driver) and myself moved off on foot to Greenan's Cross, Ahabog. In addition to a shot gun and a small revolver, I carried one of the captured rifles and a set of equipment. All the other members of the party carried other items. We kept to narrow by-roads, guided by some of the local Volunteers, for portion of the route. At about 2 a.m. a stop was made at a friendly house. Here a welcome cup of tea was prepared. I took the opportunity to have a foot bath as my feet had got quite sore from the long march. It was very beneficial. We set off again, and at dawn reached Greenan's Cross, Ahabog. The rifles and equipment had been handed over at the earlier halt to my great relief.

Our bicycles provided a rest, so bidding farewell to our comrades, Jimmy Winters, Jimmy Nolan and myself set off towards Newbliss. Here Jimmy Nolan parted company towards Clones. We continued towards Ture area or Scotshouse. When about a quarter of a mile from Newbliss Winters hit a large stone on the road, fell off his machine, broke a couple of front teeth and his bicycle. Back to the town we went and a good Volunteer friend, P. McCabe (a tailor) took in the damaged bicycle and lent his own for replacement. On the road once more (it was now clear daylight), no further mishaps, and I parted company with my great friend Jimmy Winters at what is referred to as the "Annies" near Clones. At 7 a.m. I arrived at my home and had a real good breakfast. In spite of the long journey on foot and

bicycle I was in real good form and delighted to have successfully accomplished the mission set. I learned subsequently that R.I.C. and military were out in force around Monaghan district. Their early movements by road were severely hampered by the excellent job of road-blocking carried out by the Monaghan Company. Apart from locating the commandeered cars, they never had a clue to what direction raiders or prisoner went.

About a month elapsed before our Company Commander (M. Fitzpatrick, who was the prisoner rescued) returned to the Company area. The bulk of the Company had been mobilised and it was decided to have Fitzpatrick move into the townland of Goladuff, a pretty backward area near to Croom Demesne, Co. Fermanagh. Other members used an old disused house in the townland of Derrykerrib near to Wattlebridge - used and referred to earlier as our prison.

At daylight on the morning of the 29th April, 1921, I was awakened by the sound of rifle fire from military. The Volunteers, who were using an old house, had been surprised but managed to get out, and it was at their endeavouring to make their escape that the fire was directed. I got up at once, and not taking much time to dress endeavoured to get into hiding. Before going far I came under heavy rifle fire at point blank range from police and military. In spite of that I continued on, hoping to make my escape into Co. Cavan across a narrow river, but ran into the arms, as it were, of a military officer (one Captain Gibbons), who pressed an automatic pistol to my chest. This ended my run and my chances of escape were gone. I was not armed, although one of our rifles was concealed in a haystack beside the house. Some further firing by police and military, quite a lot of which was unnecessary and indicated very bad discipline, continued for about

twenty minutes. I then learned that six members of the Company were captured. Those included: F. Sheridan, Newtownbutler; F. Conlon, Clonfad; J. Heuston, Newtownbutler; J. J. Fitzpatrick, Kilgarrow; H. J. Tummon, Derrykerrib and myself. In addition, J. F. Tummon, Derrykerrib, who was not a Volunteer, was arrested.

The raiding party included military, R. I. C. and Special Constables, the latter well known Orangemen and neighbours of our own.

Securely bound with light cord on the wrists behind the back, in a group similar to animal security, we were taken off under escort to the local town of Newtownbutler. Here, evidently under police control, we were lodged in cells (two in each) for the remainder of that day and night. During the course of the day our captors took us out individually for interrogation. One Volunteer, Fitzpatrick, J. J., who was wounded by a revolver bullet in the round-up was attended by a doctor. His wound was, fortunately, slight. One Volunteer, T. Heuston, was abused and struck by police and his eyes were badly swollen on next day. F. Sheridan was also abused by some of these police. These police were Special Constabulary, and these incidents indicated the poor type who were in the force and also the lax discipline that allowed these things to occur. A dummy grenade was also hurled into our cell windows from the yard - a bit unpleasant for a moment.

Fortunately our stay in this station - the Courthouse, Newtownbutler, lasted only one night. The military took over, and although they were stern and firm they had some discipline and were controlled. In Enniskillen military barracks we arrived, and again put in pairs into small cells. I was accommodated with F. Conlon, Clonfad. Cells were

cold and damp, and the couple of dirty blankets supplied were totally inadequate. Food supplied was terrible to say the least; cold, of poor quality and not even a spoon was supplied for use. I doubt if a dog would be too pleased to get the meal offered. It was a relief indeed to be informed the next morning we were being removed to some other detention area. Into handcuffs once more, on to a military lorry, in the back of which we were instructed to sit. The railway station at Enniskillen was our departure point, but still no information until after a train journey we read 'Londonderry' and then we knew our destination.

Once more into the bottom of a none too comfortable truck and a bumpy ride to military barracks at Ebrington, Derry. Whether for want of space or other causes, we were removed directly to the prison at Ship St. Our wounded companion was kept in the military hospital. The prison was a welcome change in spite of our arrival on All Fools' Day. After the usual procedure of reception, handing up of money, etc., was gone through and our cells were allotted. The first meal at the prison was a welcome change from our experience of the couple of earlier days. Food was well cooked, served clean and warm. This continued over my stay at prison.

It took some time to get accustomed to prison life, but it followed a routine every day. Breakfast at 8 a.m., exercise 10 a.m. to 12 a.m., lunch at 1 p.m., exercise again from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m., tea at 5 p.m., after which doors were master-locked for the night. On Sundays the exercise period in the forenoon was devoted to attending Mass.

Practically every day saw some identification parades. I took part in several of those in the reception area. In a number of these we were formed into a line in front of a

building, but the person actually responsible for identification did not appear. When police were doing identification they usually moved along the line and placed their hand on the shoulder of those selected. It came my own turn to appear on one of these parades. Again, the usual packing process took place in the exercise yard before going up on parade. However, the R.I.C. had little difficulty in identifying all my group - which included F. Sheridan, J. Heuston, F. Conlon, J.J. Fitzpatrick, H.J. Tummon and myself.

The next step following identification was the taking of a summary of evidence. This was a very formal procedure when evidence was given and recorded by a military officer. At this stage questions may be addressed to witnesses, but it was not the intention to recognise the procedure of Court and so we did not use this practice. In the space of a week or ten days the summary was served personally on each individual with an indication that you would appear before a military court on a certain date. Our trial took place before a military court at Ebrington Barracks, Derry, we having been conveyed under military escort from the jail. The trial lasted the most of one day and followed the normal court procedure. Seven of us were tried together as indicated in earlier paragraph, with the addition of John F. Tummon. All were put back for sentence except the last named who was discharged on day of trial. The evidence submitted was in all cases untrue, but evidently sufficient to persuade the military court to bring in guilty verdict.

Promulgation of the findings, too, followed a fixed routine in jail. It was delivered to the governor of the prison who, in turn, summoned those to receive sentence to his office where it was read out. In roughly a fortnight after trial I, with my companions were paraded and informed of the findings and sentence. Two years hard labour was

the information I got from the governor. Actually this was comparatively short in relation to several other sentences, but nothing was definitely proven against me. On account of having my finger prints taken I did imagine that it would lead to my identification as a participant in an earlier activity. The taking of finger prints was obviously a prison procedure intended for criminal classes.

When sentenced, jail procedure varied somewhat. Penal servitude prisoners were housed on the top corridors of the jail and others on the second floor. The bottom cells were reserved for criminal class prisoners. Separate exercise yards were provided for each class. I was sent when on exercise, to a small yard fitted with open cubicles where we were supposed to split timber blocks into kindling wood. Privileges such as receipt of parcels, and what was still worse - smoking - were denied us. This made for discontentment and the law was observed in the breach more frequently. Our governor was an oldish man, obviously an ex-military type who did not inflict any extra punishment for breaches which he was made aware of. However, the splitting of timber did not last long. We downed tools and refused to work. Threatened with confinement during exercise hours, we were eventually put out into the exercise yard where we continued to play rounders or football. In the cells at night work in the nature of what was termed "picking okum" was supplied. A short piece of hard tarred rope about nine inches long would take hours to tease into okum. After attempting to do this, more to while away the time than anything else, I threw it out the window into the exercise yard. Other prisoners on this task followed suit, so after a few nights no rope was supplied to the cell.

Penal servitude prisoners at night were supposed to make mats. This was a little more interesting work, but

they, too, struck and the mat industry failed.

Negotiations were conducted with the governor for some concessions, in particular smoking and receipt of parcels. This was eventually conceded to hard labour prisoners. From this concession, of course, we could receive parcels from the relations of penal servitude prisoners and pass the contents on in small lots as required. Our system for the transfer of these parcels is worth noting. As I've mentioned earlier, the penal servitude prisoners were located in the top cells of the prison. On each night these prisoners lowered a line from the window of their cell to those underneath, resembling a fishing operation. A note attached to the end of the line indicated the requirements, and according to this demand a small parcel was made up and attached to the cord which was duly fished up to prisoner on top. I supplied a prisoner named P. Tully from Roslea, Co. Fermanagh, who was undergoing a life sentence. The governor was well aware of this traffic, but it would be very difficult to control and continued up to the time of my release.

The truce on 11th July, 1921, did not alter the ordinary routine of the prison. A military photographic section, which was in operation before this date, returned to complete the work, but the prisoners when called would not agree to go except forced to do so. The military did not insist and so the operation was called off. Visits were continued and the prisoners followed closely the debates of the Dáil from newspapers. There were indications that the Treaty, when negotiated, would not be ratified. This was conveyed to us through John Ward, a prisoner (Donegal), whose brother was an elected member of the Dáil.

Previous to the truce date, plans had been put into effect for an attempted escape. The chief engineer in this

was Tom McShea, Bundoran, assisted by Paddy Johnston from same place. John Ward, Burtonport, Donegal, also gave considerable help. All these three prisoners were serving a term of imprisonment without hard labour and had their exercise in a small area off the reception yard. Except when we came together each day preparatory to exercise, they had little association with us. They had, however, special privileges in the nature of what they could receive from outside the prison and had more contact with the staff. Their exercise yard lay on the main route used for relief, postal and normal routine of prison. These three prisoners were, therefore, well placed to conduct plans. The position of their cells, too, on the centre floor of the prison very close to the exercise yard was an advantage. I was not aware until two days before the attempted escape from Derry Jail that any plans were being considered for such. It is not my intention here to go into details of the organisation as this, I am aware, is covered by my friend, Tom McShea, Bundoran, who just escaped the scaffold for his share in the operation. It is true a limited number were selected, and I was one of these, to attempt to gain our freedom during the period of the truce. A key which was manufactured failed to open my cell door, despite repeated attempts, and so my chance to obtain freedom was shattered. Briefly, plans worked for the operation up to a certain point. The warder (Leonard) who gave assistance, opened the door, released T. O'Shea and Johnston who, in turn, opened the doors of those as selected. Two special policemen and a warder (Finnegan) were overpowered. The policemen were gagged and received a dose of chloroform, from which they did not recover. The outer wall of the prison was reached despite a military squad, and actually a prisoner reached the top of the wall. A patrol of police on the outside of the prison upset plans there, gave the alarm and so the attempt failed.

At least one of those identified was not associated with the attempted escape. This operation had the effect of tightening up discipline in the prison. A large number of the old warder staff were replaced by a younger type, recruited largely from Royal Ulster Constabulary. Six of those who attempted to escape were originally charged with "murder", identified by Finnegan, the warder, who was the second warder of those on duty that night. The balance were charged with the charge of "attempting to break jail". Finally, the murder charge was withdrawn, with the exception of T. O'Shea, Johnston and Leonard, in which case they were found guilty of "murder" and barely escaped the scaffold. The sentences were on the eve of execution commuted to penal servitude for life. Six months imprisonment was passed on the balance who took part in the attempted escape.

Eventually the Treaty was ratified, and on the 14th January, 1922, after our normal retirement, a warder came to my cell and told me to get up and prepare to move as soon as possible. Needless to say, I was up quickly and my cell door was opened. I was joined by a further 80-90 prisoners in collecting our few odds and ends from the reception area. Handcuffed in pairs, we were next put into military lorries and bade farewell to Derry prison. At midnight we boarded a train at the railway station, still not made aware of our destination. Our guards consisted of Royal Ulster Police and military. I was handcuffed to a fellow prisoner by the name of T. Donnelly from Omagh, Co. Tyrone, a good singer who did quite a good musical job en route. Dundalk, Co. Louth, was the first point I recognised. Here, a train load of prisoners from Belfast joined us. About half a dozen explosions occurred as our train steamed into the station - evidently line signals placed by some of the Dundalk

Volunteers. Dublin (Amiens St.) was our next stop. Here military awaited our arrival, and still wearing our handcuffs we were packed closely on to lorries. Dawn was breaking over the city of Dublin as we wended our way through lighted streets and finally came to a halt outside the gates of Mountjoy prison. Our prison guards had disappeared at Amiens St. and we were now in the hands of the military. Soon the gates of Mountjoy were opened and we were in jail once more. However, after dismounting from our trucks we were allowed to wander at will inside an enclosure. Our breakfast was welcome when it arrived at 8.a.m., and the remainder of the morning was whiled away in small groups talking. Before lunch travelling vouchers were being issued, evidently following alphabetical order. It was 3 p.m. before I got my travelling voucher, and in a group of about 20 other prisoners from various places I was released.

On leaving Mountjoy Jail, Dublin, we were easily identified as prisoners with our suitcases or more common bundles under our arms. It was rather surprising to us to be branded at the jail entrance by a crowd, mainly of women, as cowards and traitors. We had some indications at once that the acceptance of the Treaty had met with a mixed reception. That this little group at Mountjoy jail gate was the forerunner of Civil War could not be then foreseen, but frequently in after life I did ponder on this incident.

Returning to my home at Derrykerrib, Newtownbutler, Co. Fermanagh, on the day of my release from Mountjoy jail, namely 14th January, 1922, I resumed farming duties. Suffice it to say that subsequently, owing to my participation in organised activities against the Forces of the Crown in Northern Ireland, I was forced to go

'on the run'. I joined the Regular Army Forces in the south as a private soldier at the formation of the army.

Finally, I wish to record the debt of gratitude to those who gave us support in one way or the other, who offered and gave us lodging and food, who stood up against the raids of the Crown Forces and denied any knowledge or information. Were it not for these supporters in various forms, our operations, however small they contributed to the final outcome of the movement, could not have been undertaken.

Signed: Francis Tummon
 (Francis Tummon)
 Date: 28 March 1953
 28th March, 1953.

Witness: John McCoy
 (John McCoy)
28/3/53.
 28/3/53.

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