

**ORIGINAL**

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21  
BURO STAIRE MILEATA 1913-21  
No. W.S. 865

ROINN  COSANTA.

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.  
STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 865.....

**Witness**

John Plunkett,  
51 Eglinton Road,  
Donnybrook,  
Dublin.

**Identity.**

Member of H.Q. Engineering Staff;  
Brother of Joseph Plunkett who was  
executed in 1916.

**Subject.**

His national activities  
1916-1922.

**Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.**

Nil

File No. S.1100.....

# ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21  
BURO STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21

NO. W.S. 865

Statement by Jack Plunkett,  
51, Eglinton Road, Dublin.

Part 11.

George, myself and two or three others in Richmond Barracks were taken out at least twice for interrogation, the first time on the Tuesday morning after the surrender. There is a photo in the Museum, of which I have a copy, of Tom Hunter, Jack O'Brien, Seoirse and myself returning from one of these or the courtmartial itself. Jack O'Brien - a Dublin man who was certainly not afraid to say what he thought - got a five years sentence. The courtsmartial were so numerous that there were all sorts of incompetent dishonest people conducting them and the witnesses were coached by legal officers who often lacked competence. On one of these occasions while waiting outside after or before the interrogation - probably the first one - Joe came along and I spoke to him. The guard in charge of him asked us not to speak to him. They were quite nice about it, but they evidently got that order. I had met Frank Daly at the Pillar after the cancellation of McNeill's countermanding order. He was very shocked at the way things had gone, taking it that we were now certain of defeat and that Ireland would be down for two hundred years. His attitude had depressed me very much and I had quoted his remarks to Joe when talking to him in the gymnasium of Richmond Barracks. When I met Joe now at the time of the interrogation he said I was quite wrong in taking up that attitude

that if we had not come out Ireland might have been down two hundred years, but that we had now started a new advance.

Two British Officers and two privates who had been our prisoners in the G.P.O. were among the witnesses. Of course the main witnesses were the detectives, Hoey and Bruton of the G. Division of the D.M.P. We looked on these as our particular bane. They knew our haunts and were commonly to be seen wherever Volunteers collected. I remember Tomás McDonagh made a hare of two detectives once at a meeting held at the Fountain in James's St. While he was speaking they were taking notes and the crowd started to jostle and threaten them. Tomás restrained the crowd, saying "Leave them to God. Every one of us gets an opportunity at one time or another to go the right way. We should be sorry for them". The detectives put up their hands to cover their faces and slipped away as soon as they got a chance.

All these men pursued us persistently and at the courtmartial provided the major portion of the evidence against us, whether true or false. At one of the interrogations the British Tommies were brought in and asked did they recognise me, was I wearing a uniform etc. One of them may have admitted he had seen me. One of them certainly had seen me but said he did not recognise me. He said the same of others as far as I can make out. He was a Dublin lad who had been helping in the kitchen of the G.P.O., washing up etc. I had provided him with an apron or something else for this work. One of the officers also failed to recognise me at least. I heard

from others that he had done the same with everybody and that he had said he was a doctor not a policeman. It is possible that the detectives were present while the officers were giving evidence but my impression is that none of the military witnesses was present when the detectives were giving evidence. I was tried alone at the courtmartial. As far as I remember somebody, I think Hoey, made one rude and bitter remark during the interrogation. The courtmartial was awfully funny. There were at least three British officers. One of them, a general, who was President of the court and wore as many ribbons as his coat would hold, was a regular buffoon, whatever his military achievements may have been. His ignorance of his job was ludicrous. He must never have conducted a courtmartial before. The charge included some reference to aiding the king's enemies and when I asked him to define the king's enemies, he could make no reply. He said nothing for a while and then said "Well if you can't understand the king's English, there is no use talking. Do you plead guilty, or not guilty?". I said "If you can't explain who the king's enemies are, I am going to explain my position. If the people of Ireland are the king's enemies, I am guilty. If I fought it was for the people of Ireland I fought". The President made no attempt to stop me saying what I wanted to say but it was perfectly clear to me that anything I could say would not affect the issue in the slightest. When Hoey said he saw me marching in uniform through the city at the head of a party of Volunteers at various times going back months, I replied that I had never worn a

uniform before Easter Sunday. I asked him were we to take that as a sample of his evidence, but he made no reply. The court did not pursue the matter.

Bruton also gave evidence that he had seen me among the Volunteers on numerous occasions. Then, as far as I remember, the President of the court, who had been taking notes during the examination - there was no stenographer present - wrote out a final summary of the case, taking some minutes to complete it. There was no lawyer defending me and to the best of my recollection I was not asked whether I wanted one. There was a judge-advocate - one of the officers - present, but his function seemed to be to draw the attention of the court to any part of the evidence that was unfavourable to the accused. I was marched out of the courtroom and we waited outside it until a number of the trials were finished and then we were marched to a different room from where we had been before the trial. From this we were brought, probably on the same day, to Kilmainham.

Within a day or so our sentences were announced to us. A sergeant brought round an officer, a little Englishman who announced my sentence in a way that interested me at the time. He said "You have been sentenced to death". Then he paused for several seconds and went on "The sentence has been confirmed". Another pause. He seemed quite disappointed that I displayed no emotion and he spat out the last few words "and commuted to ten years penal servitude". The sergeant shook me by the arm and said something nice and kindly when the officer turned to leave. The officer shouted

to him to come on. My mother was able - I don't know how - to procure not very long afterwards a copy of the official record of the trial. It disappeared probably in one of the innumerable raids on our houses by the Free Staters. From Kilmainham we were brought to Mountjoy where we remained a few days. We were then brought in a cattle boat to Holyhead. As far as I remember - but I can't be certain - there were twenty-one of us, including Seoirse, Willie Cosgrave, Seán McGarry, Vincent Poole, Dick King of Wexford, young Walsh of Oranmore, imprisoned in Portland where we were kept more than six months.

We were allowed a letter a month each way. The food was not good but better than anything we got in any other English gaol. It was neither dirty nor carelessly put together. We were kept confined to our cells for the first month and not allowed to talk to each other. After that we were working in association sitting on stools but not talking at any time. There was no ill-treatment. We were unlucky in having an unsympathetic chaplain, although he was Irish. We could not understand how he could not appreciate our way of thought. His name was Fr. O'Loughlin. He used to read out the war news once a week in the Protestant Church which was a bigger building than the Catholic one and he could not understand why we objected to listening to it. He could not make allowances for the slight differences between his customs at Mass and ours and called us to order if we knelt down before the Sanctus.

My mother and father who had been deported to Oxford came to see us bringing Fiona who had accompanied them in

their exile. This was called a special concession.

When all the Irish convicts were transferred to Lewes we were too. There the set-up was quite different. The governor was a gentleman, the warders behaved merely like policemen and without the intense rigidity of the convict warders. Unfortunately our chaplain from Portland accompanied us. My impression is that there were about one hundred and twenty of us in Lewes.

About the end of May we started a strike. The warders tried to impose the rule of silence during work and we refused to obey. Our work was making sacks, weaving rugs, gardening and cooking and the usual repairing of boots and clothes. A principal warder called Stone who had come with the contingent of prisoners from Dartmoor was so upset by our efforts that he asked for a transfer back. Incidentally, I should have mentioned a warder called Denty that we had in Portland about whom J.J. Walsh made a crack, describing our wing as Denty's Inferno.

Orders were issued by our Prisoners' Committee to disobey the silence order while working. The warders picked on a 'softie'. He turned out to be infinitely tougher than he had seemed. He was taken off to the punishment cells and immediately a strike was called. It consisted of "No work and a sing-song". The governor was extremely nice. I wish I could remember his name. He conferred with the Prisoners' Committee, de Valera, Tom Ashe and some others, and eventually apologised for not being in a position to give our prisoner the dinner he

had missed. We were sorry we had to give this kind of governor such a hell. We should have done it to the man in Portland, who was a brute, and in fact the organisation in preparation for this was going on until Willie Cosgrave stopped it. One of the warders who was a Secret Service man got immediately in touch with the Home Office and instructions were given to withdraw all concessions and keep us confined in our cells pending the visit of an inspector from the Home Office. The weather being warm, instructions were given by our Committee to break all our cell windows, which we promptly did.

We had established a system of communication from cell window to cell window by means of string, so that written messages could be passed along. One of these messages fell and was retrieved by a warder, giving him the information that when returning from Mass on the following Sunday, we were to break the hinges of the cell doors, so that they could not be locked. We were, therefore, not allowed to go to Mass and we were kept locked up for a fortnight. That brought us to about the 10th June. I have an idea that it was on a Friday we - Seoirse and I - were brought in a batch of about eleven, chained into two gangs and brought off by train and boat to Parkhurst Prison on the Isle of Wight. While waiting for the train in Lewes Station, a well-dressed man came into the waiting room and was described in an undertone by one warder to another as a detective. In fact, he was Michael Staines and we got our best Irish speaker/slowly to describe and accurately the occurrences in the Lewes gaol and giving our names. Michael had a newspaper up and was probably



making notes. In fact, Michael was collecting information for Larry Ginnell who used it in his protests in the House of Commons. He accompanied us in the train as far as was necessary to indicate to him what our destination was. Of course we ourselves did not know.

The first morning after our arrival we were brought to exercise with the criminal prisoners, but Bob Brennan stepped out and said "We are not going to exercise with these men". Thereupon we were all brought back to our cells and then to the punishment cells. We were sentenced in most cases to three days' bread and water. We subsequently got another similar sentence. I don't know whether we got a third or not.

That week was extremely difficult coming as it did after our fortnight's strike in Lewes and we felt very depressed. This made the visit of the chaplain who was a lovely man all the more welcome. He made Bob Brennan laugh until his ribs were sore. I think the chaplain's name was Canon Conway. The curate too was a very good sort who did anything he could for us. We had spent just eight days in Parkhurst when the curate hurried round from cell to cell announcing that our chances of release were extremely good. We were all brought out and the governor told us in a few words that our release had been arranged and that we would be sent to London to expedite matters.

We were brought by boat and train up to Pentonville where the next morning we were dressed in Martin Henry clothing and were brought in charabancs to Euston Station

where there was a crowd of London-Irish waiting to see us off. Art Ó Briain was out in front and shook hands with us.

Seoirse, my brother, was with me in all the prisons. For one week we were in Parkhurst, for two other weeks we were locked up in Lewes. During the time we were in prison my father was elected to the vacancy in North Roscommon constituency. We must have been in Lewes at that time, if the election was in February. I remember very little about it except that there was a lot of snow about.

Before the Rising the man in the street heard very little mention of an Irish Republic. My father knew a lot of sound nationalists of all colours and he would have heard more about the Republican idea than I would or the average man. He had been editor of 'Hibernia', a literary periodical and in that way had been associated with many men of real sound national principles, who contributed to that paper. I still have some bound volumes of 'Hibernia' in the house somewhere, but I would find it hard to put my hands on them now. As far as I remember that paper went on for at least three years from about 1881. The sponsors found it very hard to get a man to take it on, as it needed money. My father gave up the editorship of 'Hibernia' before he married in 1884.

My parents went on a large-scale honeymoon for about a year. They travelled over about twenty states of America, California, Texas, Louisiana, New York, Utah etc. As a young man my father had spent some years in Italy,

studying art and also for the sake of his health. His brother and sister had both died of T.B. He visited Italy on numerous occasions after that, as well as various other European countries. He liked Italy, Austria and Hungary very much.

My father was a candidate for Parliament for a northern constituency - it might be Fermanagh - but he was not elected. I think as a matter of fact I remember him saying that he never had a chance, as he was put up as a stalking horse. He was always interested in every aspect of national life. For a great many years the men he always spoke of with respect were those outstanding national figures who still command our respect - and that was before 1916. After 1916 he was firm on the abstentionist idea and, of course, accepted fully the existence of the Republic. One thing that did a lot to solidify his idea was his journey to Rome to see the Pope and tell him of the coming Rising. Also the fact that he was chosen for the task and entrusted with the necessary information was an indication of the high opinion held of him by the Military Council. His arrival in the G.P.O. to do his part in the Rising is proof that he accepted fully the Republican idea. At the time of the Roscommon election, in spite of the fact that the opinion of the country had come over to Republicanism, the chance of success for the return of a Republican were extremely difficult to weigh up, having regard to the efficient organisation of the Parliamentary Party. Yet my father did not hesitate to take the chance. As far as I remember Joe told me among other things in Richmond

Barracks that my father had been sworn into the I.R.B. a short time before leaving for Rome.

A week after our release from gaol I went down to help at the East Clare election. My part was canvassing, stewarding and clerking. Each day that passed Paddy Lynch's chance of success seemed to recede while that of de Valera seemed to get more secure, in spite of the propaganda spread by Lynch's supporters. I remember being warned not to leave my post as guard because of the risk of a riot, should Paddy Lynch get in.

I had known de Valera in prison and early in 1916. I had removed 70 lbs. of ammunition when his house in Morehampton Terrace was threatened with a raid. I also had met him in G.H.Q. I must confess that his acceptance of Eoin McNeill after his action in regard to the Rising did not receive our approval. In fact, we thought it showed very bad judgement on his part.

I cycled to Connemara with Fergus O'Kelly after the Clare election. We spent a few weeks there in a place called Kilroe and attended the Irish College at Spiddal. Returning to Dublin I attempted to resume my studies at University College which I had entered in the autumn of 1914. I had previously abandoned them in 1915 owing to an attack of pneumonia.

I resumed my Volunteer work, first of all with C. Company 4th Battalion. I don't remember who was O/C. of the Company. It would have been the successor of Tommy McCarthy who had not finished the week's fighting in 1916. I was lent to another Company of the 4th to act as Q.M.

and Adjutant because one of its officers had been taken on the Battalion Staff. This was one of the Cosgraves, probably Phil.

In June 1919 I went to South Galway to carry out a crop survey for the Department of Agriculture. Though it was a British scheme organised by a British Department, a number of Volunteers, among them Fergus O'Kelly and myself were allowed to take part in it. The work took a couple of months. The only interesting features that I remember about it was that in order to go in and out of Co. Clare, a permit from the British military was necessary. Also I was visited after about six weeks by a Department Official, Mr. T.J. O'Connell, who is now a prominent official in our Department of Agriculture. He went very carefully through all my work and at last said: "Well, I can find nothing wrong with your work. I suppose you know why I am here". I said "No". He explained that sometimes they had to take the advice of another Department. He meant to indicate that the Castle authorities had informed the Department that I was not a suitable person to be employed on a government job.

In the autumn of 1919, probably in November, I was asked - I can't remember by whom - to collect a Dáil Loan propaganda film from Joe McDonagh who with his brother Jack and some others had been running a company called the Film Company of Ireland. This company had already produced one or two films. One "When love came to Gavan Burke" was shown in Dublin. Even if the title had not already condemned it, it was in itself a very poor piece of work. Seoirse and I had very minor parts in this film.

All the studio work was done in England and the outdoor location was in various places around Dublin. I may as well add that the studio work was very bad value. The plot was probably laid in 1798 period.

I don't now know who filmed the Dáil Loan film. It was very successful propaganda, although a small piece of work. It showed pictures of some well-known people buying Dáil Loan Bonds at, I believe, St. Enda's and the table used for the transaction was, as far as I remember the block on which Emmet was beheaded. I think Mick Collins sold the bonds in the film but cannot be sure if this was the case. It might have been someone, say, like Larry O'Neill, the Lord Mayor, who sold them.

The showing of the film only lasted a few minutes. This was partly in order to avoid the risk of its capture. Immediately after being shown it was removed. I was asked to take the film to Killarney and Cahirciveen and, as far as possible to arrange for its showing in any other worthwhile towns. I know it was also shown in Listowel. The chief people I contacted were Dickeen Fitzgerald and Tom Cooper of Killarney who afterwards produced the film dealing with the Tan war, called the "Dawn". There were a number of copies of the Dáil Loan film sent to other parts of Ireland. Some of those who went round with the film were unsuccessful in having it shown. I left the film behind me with Tom Cooper who was to arrange to have it shown in Listowel some days later. I was only three days away because I was under orders to report back to my unit within that time. I did no other work in connection with the Dáil Loan apart from collecting a small quantity of gold.

In the autumn of 1917 the engineering staff of the Army was formed by Rory O'Connor who took me and Fergus O'Kelly/along with Liam Archer. Tom McMahon came along later. There may have been one other. Fergus left after a while. There was an awful lot of work especially in connection with railway sabotage which Rory and I practically laid out alone. We had a very large map of Ireland, an Ordnance Survey roll-up one which may be still in the New Ireland Assurance premises. It was in their office in 32 Bachelors' Walk that we worked. When they left those premises another Republican Army department - I think the Q.M.G's - moved in and we had to leave. We occupied various offices afterwards but there is where my memory fails me. One place we had only for a fortnight. I think it was in Abbey St. Another place - I think it was in Liffey St. - we had for three or four weeks. I used to call on Rory O'Connor in the Paving Department in the Corporation Offices. Later in 1920 I used to call on Rory in Exchequer St. where he was working with Kevin O'Higgins in the Dáil Local Government Office. I met Willie Cosgrave there once. I went there to use a duplicator for duplication of drawings and instructions for demolitions etc. for issue to various divisions. That must have been early in 1920 before the Engineering Handbook No. 1 was issued. This was a printed booklet compiled by Rory, Tom McMahon and myself. It is possible that Liam Archer contributed something to it. I think I have a copy of it if it was not taken away by the Staters.

Tom McMahon was in India for a while and it is likely that the following information came through him.

An exact copy of our demolition instructions on railways was seen in the hands of the local Indian insurgents. Tom McMahon was a civil engineer in India at the beginning of the Black and Tan war and when he came back, he joined our staff and I believe he told us this.

I think it was in March 1920 that Rory was arrested and brought to the Curragh. He was not long in; he escaped but was not able to return to his job in the Corporation. Then he worked in the day time in the Dáil Local Government Office in Exchequer St. and spent all his free time at Army work. I would like to say a good deal about Rory but it hurts too much.

I would say that immediately the 1914-18 war was over or even before that, there was a serious effort to procure really good modern arms. Mick Collins was very good at it. There were a lot of good fellows through the country too. Mick Staines was the first Quartermaster General that I knew. He was not very good at it. He was inclined to be satisfied with insufficiently high quality. He may have been good at the money end. Tommy Cullen was Q.M.G. at one time. He had a better appreciation of arms than most people but he was no good at accounts and they were always in a mess. Also it was easy enough to cod him. On one or two occasions I was present when Mick Collins blew the head off him about the state of his accounts. He knew enough about arms to bring a second gun when he was sent on an operation. For instance when he went to shoot D.I. Redmond he took two with him. He used an English round in his parabellum, which was against orders from the Q.M.G.. Of course it misfired and he had to use an old Webley.



I worked at the side at the quartermastering. I handled many hundreds of weapons during the considerable time that Frank Harding was either Q.M.G. or Assistant Q.M.G. At the later period of the Tan War there was a great drive for arms to send them to the country and most of the weapons passed through my hands. For instance I had to take the stock off most of the rifles during this period to facilitate transport. Compared with others I consider Harding was a marvellous Q.M.G. He kept very few records, but he knew what he had and where it was and the material was not sent out unless in good condition. I never heard of any of his records being caught. For instance one of his drivers who worked for a builders' provider in Dublin was arrested and searched, but nothing was found and I believe he was released after a few weeks.

As regards the distribution of arms throughout the country, it probably happened that Mick Collins favoured Cork. In his office at St. Enda's in Oakley Road, which he occupied for a considerable time at a fairly early stage, I heard him say "If they get some arms for themselves in their own area, I'll back them up. I heard him make some disparaging remarks about Galway in that respect. I also heard Mick Brennan grumble when Mick gave a small quantity of arms to Clare against six times the quantity to Cork. Another Q.M.G. I knew was Fintan Murphy. That must have been in 1918 or 1919. It was not the right job for him.

On one occasion I spent eleven days with the gap of the Sunday working in Frank Harding's dump in Baggot

Lane during the rush of arms to the country. I think that was in 1920. The place which was a stable and was occupied by an old cabman, was infested with fleas. Frank who was sensitive to fleas, used to bring in three shillings worth of Keating's powder. Frank asked the cabman one day just before we left the place what would he do if the Black and Tans came to raid. He answered "What could I do but tell them all I know". Frank was quite taken aback because he thought the cabman a decent old thing, and he was, but he was old and stupid and had been through a lot of hardship. Frank found another and better stable for him in another lane and shifted him to it. We stayed on a while but we had to leave at the request of the 3rd Battalion which had a dump further down the lane and were quite upset when they found out after a long time that we had a dump in the same lane. They took over our dump in addition to their own and it was raided within a month. The two Fitzgeralds must have attracted attention one day by driving up to the place in a motor car. I can't now remember where we went after that. I had a dump one time at the back of 23 Wellington Road which was one of my mother's houses. It was raided too but, apart from a couple of serviceable motorbikes which I was repairing and an 18 shot revolver which was of very little use, nothing was found. You would never know when Mick Collins would ask for a motorbike and they had to be ready.

In a raid on King's Inns we had acquired a Lewis gun which was being got ready for an attack on Gormanston camp. I had to O.K. it and fill the drums. The car carrying the Lewis gun which was driven by the young

Fitzgerald' lad - I think it was Leo - was a Hudson car which had been captured from the R.I.C. in Haddington Road where it was parked, by the simple method of one of our lads getting in and driving it away. I have forgotten who he was. There were three men in the car with the gun, Tommy Bryan, a grand lad, was the gunner. He was subsequently executed when he was taken with arms on him after an ambush - I think it was near Jones' Road. I can't think of the second gunner. The driver was this young Fitzgerald. He acquitted himself very well on this occasion, though in general I thought he had no idea of discipline. In common with members of the Headquarter's staff I was not allowed to go out on operations though sometimes I forgot to obey this instruction. The real reason I was concerned with this gun was that the Brigade Q.M. - his name was McGurk - had been giving trouble about money matters and was in fact a total loss. He sent what was supposed to be 1,100 rounds of suitable ammunition. In fact, it was about 950 rounds of at least eleven different kinds, 150 rounds in all being unsuitable. If one of these wrong rounds got into the gun it might jeopardise the whole operation. I had to examine every single round. That is why I came into the business. Incidentally the explosive kind of ammunition was coming in at that time. Z.Z. was one and R.R. another. The British had this specially made for us as a trap. Their method was, as far as I gathered, to sell this ammunition in public houses for instance to our men through their agents. I had the pleasant job of cutting one of these rounds to see what was in it. I think it was T.N.T. This would explode, blowing the breech of the

gun to pieces. I had to be on my toes all the time, which was not too pleasant, especially as I had been always since I was a kid, trying to get out of responsibility

The Fingal Brigade which was to be stiffened by some members of the Dublin Brigade, was to carry out the attack on Gormanston. Incidentally it was at a later period we heard the classic phrase "The Fingal Brigade was mobilised and he turned up". Mick Lynch was O/C. of this Brigade and was to be in charge of the operation, which was to take place at night. My opinion of Mick was that he was no shirker, but was rather slow and was oppressed by what we now call an inferiority complex in regard to military matters. He had not this in regard to other matters, for instance music. He was mad about that. He took the greatest care in preparing the Gormanston affair, consulting widely all his superior officers. At least that was my impression at the time. As regards this operation, the men turned up, were placed and ready for the attack, when Mick Lynch himself fired a rifle shot accidentally. Immediately the garrison were alerted and in an extremely short time tenders came out from the camp to investigate. I believe the camp was occupied by Auxiliaries which made the operation more important. Our men had to retreat, which they did safely. The Hudson car with the gun had to turn to get away and was very nearly overtaken at once by the outcoming tenders, but by very fast driving without lights the car got away safely also. Eventually the Lewis gun was returned to me in a very dirty condition after considerable delay. I can't remember the dates of these events.

An interesting point is that when I had filled the drums for the operation and wished to wrap them up for the journey in the car, the only papers I found handy were Bearer Bonds value £1,000 each to the number of thirty-six or thirty-eight. These had been captured in a raid on the Castle mails in which I had taken part. I believe that was the first of these raids. The horse mail van had been stopped in Parnell St. and driven to a spot near Bolton St. Technical School, where we were waiting with a motor van driven, as far as I remember, by Pat McCrae. While we were transferring the sacks to our van, a man in civilian clothes walked past the opening of the cull-de-sac lane where we were working. Some of our men brought back a report and description of this man. From this he was recognised by our Intelligence Department to be an ex-R.I.C. man, living as far as I remember, in Portland Row or Upper Gardiner St. A watch was kept on him and very shortly after he went to post a letter in a neighbouring pillar box. Our man took the letter from his hand saying "I would not do that if I were you". He got a proper fright. His letter which was brought to our Intelligence, contained an accurate description of our car and of the participants in the raid. His clothes and his eyes were features that attracted our attention. Probably the fact that he was in the habit of wearing uniform made his choice of clothes peculiar. We drove away our van and its contents, leaving them in a dump at the back of Hardwicke St. I don't know where the contents of the mailbags were examined but we were told to clear off at once and evidently the Bearer Bonds along with some of the other stuff were brought to

the 3rd Battalion dump in Baggot Lane. The man who drove away the horse van from Parnell St. was Tom Keogh. He had taken part in many operations during the Tan war. He was afterwards killed in the Civil War, I think in North Cork, while removing a barricade across the road, on which a trap grenade had been set. Dan O'Brien from Dunmanway was also killed on the same occasion. I have an idea that Tom Keogh had some connection - maybe only as a messenger - with the bomb factory in Parnell St.

On the way back through town after this operation I dropped into Peadar Clancy's shop in Talbot St. Very soon after my arrival at least two British officers, a number of soldiers and several D.M.P. men walked quickly into the shop to raid it. The officer in charge very busily started examining boxes, cases, shelves and so on and Peadar shortly objected to the Tommies doing likewise. The D.M.P. men had gone out during the search. The officer in charge then sent out the second officer and the Tommies and brought in a number of the D.M.P. men. The officer continued to search very actively though possibly not very cleverly for quite a considerable time. The only thing he found - and it seemed to give him satisfaction - was a very old postpag with a hole in it, obviously a scrapped one. It was no credit to his intelligence if he connected it with the recent raid. During all this time I had the wind up properly, as I had a gun - a .45 Colt automatic - in my belt. Peadar would know this. So he pretended I was a customer and before being taken away with Tom Hunter, he turned to the officer saying quite blandly "Do you

mind if I serve the customer first" and to me: "Size 15 $\frac{1}{2}$  I think you said". He took out two collars from a box, wrapped them up and gave them to me. "You can pay another time" he added.

Previously I had wondered whether I should dump the gun in the pocket of a raincoat that I saw hanging up near me, as the coats were not being searched by the officer. The D.M.P. man nearest to me was very close and did not move away during the search, so I had to keep the gun where it was. The policeman filled a pipe with tobacco. I offered him a box of matches to test his reaction. I may mention that during the whole time all the D.M.P. men stood there without appearing to take the slightest interest in the search. They obviously did not like taking part in a military operation. He was a Lad Lane man whose barrack was immediately behind our house. So he probably knew me. He took the matches and thanked me in a perfectly non-committal way. I knew then he was not going to call attention to me.

When I realised the raiders were coming, I had no way of escape because there was no back entrance to the shop and it would have been impossible to walk out the front door, as it was guarded by the military. I was told there were forty military and twenty D.M.P. on the raid. I can't remember how long Peadar and Tom were kept in prison.

I was very often in the grenade factory which was camouflaged as a bicycle shop in Parnell St. under the name of Heron & Lawless. That was the time Peadar Clancy was Director of Munitions. I was not familiar with it

until it was a going concern. It had taken a considerable time to get going, because the gas-fired portion of the foundry - that is for brass - gave trouble at the start. The iron foundry was apparently an excellent piece of work. I think our people worked in the place for about eighteen months. The best persons to give information about it would be Joe (?) Kiernan who is now maintenance engineer in Boland's Mills. Joe Lawless might also know something about the beginning of it. I believe the three men who later started the motor repair workers in Rider's Row under the name of R.M.C. Garage were working there. Mattie Furlong was the man in charge and did he work! His heart was in everything he did. Later on when an effort was being made to develop a bomb thrower similar to the Stokes Mortar, he was killed during an experiment in the neighbourhood of Dunboyne, as the result of a tragic error he made in removing the shear wire from the firing pin of an impact bomb. This caused the grenade to explode before it had left the barrel of the mortar. I never could understand how he made the error, because I had urgently warned him and Peadar Clancy under no circumstances to remove the shear wire before firing. They had already fired at least three rounds but had had trouble with the firing pin getting bent instead of operating the detonator. The shell fuse was clearly not perfected but Mattie's remedy was certainly the wrong one. Peadar and another man had taken cover behind a wall while Mattie did the experiment in front of the wall. The actual occurrence is known because he told Peadar after the accident what he had done. The earlier experiments were unsuccessful



owing to the difficulty of getting the shell to fly straight. When the shell failed to go straight, the striking mechanism did not operate. This probably led to the mistaken withdrawal of the pin.

The original mortar though possibly not the one that was used on the occasion was cast in brass in the Parnell St. foundry. The mortar in the Museum looks very like it. A later type was made from a gas cylinder, but I do not know if this was used.

After the accident the experiments were suspended, because both the technical loss and the personal loss were terrible. A lot of confusion occurred at the time as to how Mattie had met his death, because a very short time before that the frightful explosion had occurred in the south of Wexford, and everyone from the ambulance drivers to the casual inquirer was given the impression that Mattie had been in the Wexford explosion. The public were purposely left in doubt in the matter. I think it was in the Mater Hospital he died.

Mattie's brother, Joe, who also worked in the bomb factory was not a patch on Mattie. Mattie was an outstanding person. It was he also who started the development of the grenade that was intended to hook on to the wire netting that covered in the Crossley tenders.

There had been D.M.P. men in the foundry at an early stage, ostensibly looking for stolen bicycles. Work was going on in the brass foundry and the grenade necks were explained away as portions of plumbers' ball cocks. Nobody but an expert would be able to contradict

that and the policemen went away satisfied.

Astonishingly few people knew about that workshop in Parnell St. and when it was eventually found it was the result of an accident. The police were looking for somebody - presumably a criminal - in the house over the workshop and they saw the door which separated the shop from the rest of the house and opened it. It may not have been securely fastened, possibly to allow our fellows an alternative get-away. While searching the basement they came across some recognisable portion of a grenade which should have been hidden. In the morning, I think one of our workers either tried to get in and was turned away by a policeman or noticed something peculiar and stopped the others from going in.

The Saltmills accident happened to the best of my recollection, a few days before the Dunboyne affair. I understand there was an empty house on a promontory on the south coast of Wexford. It was used by our men as a workshop for completing the assembly of grenades and the windows towards the land were all boarded up so as to make it possible to work at night without the light being seen.

It is possible that the grenades were manufactured locally but I believe that the material for the firing sets came from Dublin unassembled. What happened was this. I think it was at night the accident occurred. One man was at a table at the fireplace assembling the firing sets of grenades, that is the assembling of caps, fuses and detonators. He had besides a number of completed

grenades, two bags of gelignite under the table and on the table detonators and Morris tube cartridges. For light he had a candle on the mantelpiece which was a wooden board. As he stood up to take a rest from his work his shoulder struck the wooden mantelpiece and the candle was dislodged and took a header, flame first, into the gunpowder. As far as I understand a man standing in the doorway saw this happen. The gunpowder flared up and live sparks fell into the detonators which exploded. Immediately after there was a second explosion. All the occupants of the room were killed with the exception of the man who was standing in the doorway and he was blown a considerable distance away, something like 60 yards. He was injured but he managed to make his way to some place where they helped him. I heard the story from Peadar Clancy a few days after. I heard part of it from Mick Collins too and further details from somebody else, possibly Tommy Cullen. As far as I remember there were six persons killed.

We also lost another man, a very good man, Seamus Rafter. He was terribly badly hurt by an explosion while he was experimenting. He would not admit that he was badly injured but he died. He was in Lewes after 1916 with me. He was a great loss, because he spoke little and did everything he could. I remember either Mick Collins or Peadar Clancy making a most complimentary reference to him. Bob Brennan or Seamus Doyle would be able to tell about this.

As far as I remember there were eight workshops

throughout the city - not necessarily all simultaneously - one off Thomas St., a fine one off Townsend St., another in Percy Place. There were several others that I did not know. Most of the fellows who worked in all these places were very good at keeping their mouths shut. Though there was a fair amount of movement in and out of these places and a certain amount of complaint was caused as a result, the general impression was that it was better to make an unnecessary move than risk the loss of the workshop and its contents. The Parnell St. workshop was the first such workshop set up. It had a foundry and manufactured and machined all the grenade parts. That was most unusual, because in the later workshops only one part of each grenade was made in any one workshop.

Fintan O'Kelly, a brother of Fergus, worked in Percy Place. He had served his time in the tool room in the Lucania works. Old man John O'Neill, the owner of the firm in Pleasant St. was very discreet and actively helpful, if the right man brought him a job to do. I think Fintan is now working for the "Independent". Gabriel McGrath was working in the Percy Place workshop. I think he was working in some other place before that. As far as I remember I was only once in Percy Place. I would occasionally be asked by Peadar Clancy and others to visit those places with a view to giving advice or an opinion on certain aspects of the work. It was not really my job, but I just happened to have a deep interest in mechanical production works. It occurred that the keenest workers in those places had not the necessary all round mechanical knowledge or experience of that

business. I had been attending the Technical Schools from the time I was fourteen, while attending the ordinary secondary school in the daytime. Even Peadar Clancy himself started without any mechanical training. I was only a young fellow, but my experience would be very different, for instance from that of Mattie Furlong. We used to have long arguments on all these matters. Paddy McGrath and myself used to walk home together arguing all the time on such matters. He was very different from Gabriel and in fact all those McGrath boys were different from each other. Three of them got on awfully well together. Paddy, Lorcan and Josephine were very close friends. I was finished for ever with Gabriel when I found he had put his machine out of adjustment before joining the "Bush" in 1922. That was not discovered until a considerable amount of time and material had been wasted.

I was out with the boys on the night that Paddy got the bullet in the shoulder that caused him to be in hospital for a couple of years. As far as I remember, it was early in 1920. The weather was not very cold, just cold enough to be noticeable. A consignment of rifle ammunition had been expected for the British.- I think from Bristol. It was to be unloaded into the B. & F. sheds about 9 p.m. in the evening and collected the next morning by the British. The information was obtained by our Intelligence. We arrived some time in the middle of the night. We came by every sort of transport. We had two cars. Both of them were in a dump of mine, probably 40 Elgin Road which was empty at the time. Some of the lads arrived on foot. There

were about 20 of us. I cannot remember who was in charge. It was almost certainly Peadar. There was a little group in the charge of Peadar who were kept ready for little stunts of that kind. It had several advantages. It was spread over the whole city and we could turn up at short notice. As well as myself, I think Seoirse was in it too. There were Paddy McGrath and Gabriel. I can't remember who else. The only way we could get into the B. & I. premises was by breaking a plate glass window. We searched the stores but the ammunition was not there. It turned out that an unexpected fog had delayed the boat which did not dock until daylight. So we had to go away empty handed. We were, of course, all armed. We dispersed. One of the lads said it was a pity it was so late or he might have got across on the ferry. Paddy McGrath went off with Gabriel towards their home at 55 Belgrave Square, Rathmines. I had a car and gave a lift to a couple of the lads for a short distance. It was quite late the next day that I heard the McGraths were halted by two policemen in plain clothes in the vicinity of the Irish Times office in Westmoreland St. As far as I remember one of the policemen fired at Paddy first. He fell into the gutter. Gabriel had the good fortune to get out of the line of fire and immediately fired back, hitting one of the policemen. He realised he could do nothing for Paddy, so he cleared away. As far as I understand it took the unwounded policeman a good while to summon help. It is strange how I could forget the details of an event like that which were told me so often by Paddy himself. He did not lose consciousness though he was badly wounded. He often

told me afterwards that the taste of dried figs always brought back to his mind that night he was lying in the street, because at the B. & I. premises there was an open case of figs, some of which he had eaten and the taste was still in his mouth when he met the policemen.

I knew Paddy very well, because he was an officer in the 5th Battalion, I think No. 4 Company, while I was Vice Commandant of the Battalion. At one time Liam Archer, the O/C. and I were given the option of remaining with the 5th Battalion or going wholetime on the Engineering Staff of Headquarters. We took the latter offer.

Paddy was brought to King George's Hospital and was very well looked after there by some very enthusiastic military doctors in spite of the attempted interference of the police authorities. I suppose you heard the rhyme "Take out your bloody bullet, just catch a houl and pull it. I can do without your dirty bit of lead". My recollection is that Paddy wanted the doctors to take a chance by operating for the removal of the bullet, but they refused as the position of the bullet made the risk too great. He was, I think, unexpectedly released on the very strong recommendation of the doctors who must have grown fond of him, as everybody did. He was then treated in Jervis St. hospital for some considerable time and eventually sent home. He went back there again in the hope that the doctors would operate to remove the bullet, but they too were afraid of the risk involved which he himself was more than willing to take.

The day after that B. & I. raid curfew was imposed.

There was no other arrest as a result of that night's activity.

This raid and its consequences got great publicity and called attention to what had been going on systematically - but in a quiet way - in Dublin for a considerable time. G. Company of the 1st Battalion, which was Peadar Clancy's Company, had been collecting arms from various sources, chiefly raids. There were British outposts, guards etc. whose arms were taken. There was one at least at the North Wall, and there were some hotels occupied by the British, that had small guard posts which provided opportunities for arms raids. I remember going in one day to Peadar Clancy's shop and when I congratulated him on the success of a certain raid, he said "That is only one of many and there are more to come".

Our headquarters had made arrangements to have a small demonstration in the use of explosives on Kilmashogue mountain one Sunday morning in September 1920. At least two Companies of the 5th Battalion Dublin Brigade, that is the Engineers, were to take part. The use of explosives applied more to the Engineers than to any other unit. The night before and again on Sunday morning somebody - I have forgotten who - brought me urgent warnings that the British were prepared to take action against us. I passed on the warnings to Rory, but the orders were left unchanged. On Sunday morning a number of us met at a place about one-third of the way up Kilmashogue behind St. Columba's College grounds. There was nothing unusual to be noticed except the



quietness of a fine Sunday morning. The place where we met had often been used by the 5th Battalion for camping and training. The two Companies had not arrived punctually, so we went up to the top of the hill. We were Rory O'Connor, Dick Mulcahy, Liam Archer, myself and about four guards. These included Tommy Bryan and, as far as I remember, Georgie Hampton. He was a fellow who, if he had been properly ticked off as a youngster, might have made a good soldier. Unfortunately he did not come under the influence of Volunteer discipline early enough.

When we arrived at the top we made preparations for the demonstration and a few more men, possibly about six, arrived. As no more came we started our demonstration and exploded several small charges. One of them was gelignite, two were tonite and at least one was ammonite. We knocked off about eight or nine charges. Between two of these explosives we heard quite a fusillade of shots and later on several more which we found difficult to account for. After some delay we knocked off at least one more charge. I think one of our men had gone down to investigate before this last explosion. When one of the charges which had a large stone on top of it, was fired, the stone went straight up in the air and came down almost on the spot where one man, who had stood too close, had thrown himself down with the fright. So near to him was the stone when it fell that I was able to touch it and the man's leg with one hand. The stone which weighed about 30 lbs. was almost completely buried in the earth. Nobody was hurt.

When the first man sent down did not come back we sent a second who returned fairly soon with a fairly complete account of what had occurred at the lower level. The two Companies had drawn up and were preparing to march up to us when a considerable number of Auxiliaries appeared behind the wall of St. Columba's College. I should mention that this was the very first operation carried out in Ireland by the Auxiliaries. An order to put their hands up was given to our men and Seán Doyle who had a grenade in his pocket immediately proceeded to take it out and throw it. He was at once riddled with bullets and fell dead. The Auxiliaries came over the wall and took off as prisoners our two Companies leaving Seán Doyle where he lay. There is a monument to him marking the spot.

We came down from the top of the hill, Rory O'Connor and Dick Mulcahy taking a different course from us. Liam Archer and I came down to where the shooting had occurred. I first ascertained that the man on the ground was dead and then tried to recognise him, but I did not know him at all. I asked Liam Archer to have a look at him and was quite disgusted that he wouldn't. The man's shirt was completely soaked in blood. He was a son of Peadar Doyle, as I found out later.

The first messenger we had sent down had followed the Auxies with their prisoners - at a distance. He met a latecomer of our men, who had avoided capture and when the two of them went back separately into Dublin, they warned as many as possible of the prisoners' homes of what had occurred. It was feared that the names of the

whole Companies might have been captured. It seemed evident to our messenger that we were in no danger on the top of the hill, because the sound of the explosives was not inviting. I can't say how many prisoners were taken but it must have been, at least, forty. We heard the most extraordinary rumours for days after. It was a lucky "bag" for the Auxies on their first operation.

The latecomer I mentioned - I think he was Peter McGrath - overheard the Auxies discussing the sending for transport to bring away all the bicycles and he busied himself salvaging and hiding as many of the bicycles as he could before returning to Dublin, but he could not save the motorbike on which I had ridden to the opening of the lane up the side of the mountain. I was sorry to lose this; we had taken it with two cars and at least one other motor cycle on a raid on Aldboro" House.

The Auxies were hidden in the grounds of St. Columba's College from late the night before. They prevented anybody leaving the grounds. There were very few places in Ireland from which we would not have got word of an occupation of this kind. The gatekeeper was very indignant at the way things had turned out. He explained to one of our men subsequently that he would have been forcibly prevented and possibly killed, if he had attempted to leave the place to give warning, though he was really mad at what the Auxies were doing. My impression is that a number of these prisoners were released on some grounds or other and that the D.M.P. tried to have their bicycles restored to them but without success.

Rory O'Connor had got another warning besides mine, but the demonstration was deliberately proceeded with in the absence of definite and detailed information as to the proposed attack. I see no alternative to believing that these warnings originated from the Castle and possibly before the Auxies left it.

It must have been a couple of months before the events I have just described - say in July '20 - that we carried out a raid on Aldborough House which contained Post Office stores. We collected at least one van, two motor-cycles and a motor-cycle and side car. Tommie Bryan and Georgie Hampton and other members of the 5th Battalion were on the operation. We got the information through the 5th Battalion. Brigade had to give permission for all operations not directly carried out by G.H.Q. and in this case had to be informed.

One of the many anticipated difficulties was the starting of all those vehicles. That was my chief preoccupation. The outer gate was secured by a padlock which we cut with an ordinary bolt cutters. We did the operation after dark when we knew the watchman was not at our end of the building. We did not want to drag him into it, as he was a really decent poor man. We met with no difficulty. We loaded the two motor cycles on the van and the other vehicles started easily. I was behind with the motor sidecar in case there was any trouble. We parked all the vehicles at an empty house belonging to my mother, No. 40 Elgin Road. The van, as the most useful item, was left in possession of the 5th

Battalion. It was the best value ever. Finally it was in the Four Courts in 1922 and probably met the same fate as everything else there. It was called O'Connor's Van after Blimey O'Connor who used to drive it. He was one of the Liverpool Lambs or refugees. It was very convenient to be able to accommodate all the participants in the raid on the van except, I think, Tommy Bryan, who came with me in the sidecar. One of the motor cycles was later in some dump that was raided by the Auxies who confiscated it and the motorcycle and sidecar were taken with another motorcycle and some ammunition and equipment, together with an ancient 18 shot double-barrel revolver in a dump at the back of 23 Wellington Road, a house which also belonged to my mother. I think I have referred to that raid before.

One time we carried out a raid on some goods yard near the East Wall where a load of ammunition was thought to be. While the raid was entirely unsuccessful we got away without any serious inconvenience. The only man who came out of it badly was a railway pensioner who was acting as guard at a level crossing. Mick Brennan of Clare was on the raid and went to the house of the crossing guard to warn him to stay in his house. The guard had, unknown to us, noted our presence and in terror slashed at Mick with an axe. Mick very luckily escaped and took the axe from the poor man who later on left the country in a panic and went to Canada. Mick realised that he was frightened out of his wits and tried to calm him down.

Mick was at his best in those days. He often came to Dublin to try to scrounge equipment and arms for his Volunteers. In fact, he rather tired Mick Collins with his importunities. Mick Collins after standing it for a long time eventually said "You have enough to carry out some serious operations. Carry them out and you'll get plenty of arms". It was probably as a result of these remarks that they prepared to attack a police barracks with a very large charge of gelignite. They did not know that gelignite should not be handled with bare hands and three of them at least, including Mick Brennan himself, suffered severely from gelignite head. As far as I remember the explosion - and possibly the whole attack - was called off, probably to prevent the destruction of the whole village. I can't remember the name of it.

At a much later date, almost certainly in 1921 Mick Brennan raided the Post Office in Limerick, getting away with about £2,000 from under the very noses of the British. He wanted it for the equipment of his troops. There was a fair amount of damaging criticism of this operation even on the part of our own people. It had the unfortunate result of tying Mick Brennan's hands afterwards. At the time of the Treaty he was inclined to follow the Republican side, but Mick Collins threatened that if he did he would have him courtmartialled on the charge of making an unauthorised raid and failing to account for the money. As Mick Brennan was unable to produce a complete record of the accounts, he took the easier course and threw in his lot with the Treaty. Mick Collins in

order to tie him more securely, gave him a further £1,000 with the stipulation that it be spent within a certain short time. This account is pieced together from information from various sources, largely from Mick Brennan himself, though he did not say it was Mick Collins that supplied the money or would he say who supplied it. He refused to give that information.

Mick Brennan was a frequent visitor to our house and stayed with us regularly. I was very fond of him but when he visited us after giving in to Mick Collins I showed him plainly that he was no longer welcome.

I was a tremendous admirer and a convinced supporter of Mick Collins always, thinking him innocent of ulterior motives, in spite of better informed criticism by other people who tried to put me on my guard. Though I was elected by the Dublin Centres' Board to membership of the Leinster Council of the I.R.B., I think during the Truce period, I never actually attended a meeting, as Mick Collins "very kindly" appointed a substitute - quite unconstitutionally. I think it was Máirtín Conlan took my place. Mick made the excuse that I was too busy at other work. Of course the few hours I would spend at a meeting would not make much difference to my other activities. My feeling at the time was that I was glad to shed the responsibility, but reflecting on it afterwards I came to the conclusion that Mick deliberately excluded me from knowing the members of the Leinster Council. Mick was always anxious to prevent the spread of information lest it should interfere with his plans. An outstanding example was the shooting

of Harry Boland because he knew too much. Harry had represented the I.R.B. in America and was very well received there and being a very likeable man and confident and trustworthy, he got on very well with the important men in America. Harry could have wrecked the Treaty and all Mick's plans, with the Clan in America. It would have been a major factor against the whole Treaty position. Though Mick Collins may not have directly ordered or instigated this shooting, it was carried out by some person or persons who were under the influence of Mick's outlook and were anxious to please him. I don't know who they were though I must have heard it.

As well as those who were keen followers and those who believed that what Mick Collins was doing was the right thing, there were a few who were disinterested in the sense that they were prepared to do what they were told to do regardless of any consideration. A few - very few - of his immediate followers were critical. For instance, after some important coup, involving the shooting of a spy, was brought off, Mick turned up at the Squad headquarters to congratulate the men who had carried out the action. He distributed a considerable sum of money among them and only one - Peadar Breslin - refused to accept the money, saying, "Mick, if it is blood-money you are handing round, I am not having any". Mick was very well able to laugh that off with the others, but Peadar Breslin picked up his things and walked out. Peadar told me about this episode in Mountjoy in 1922. He was shot by a sentry at whom he was firing in an attempt to get out of the gaol.



In the autumn of 1920 the house where Dick Mulcahy was staying was raided and he barely escaped capture, leaving his attaché case with all his papers behind him. These papers contained various plans of proposed operations against the British, one of which was Dick's own proposal to put typhoid germs in the water supply of Portobello Barracks. Dick had been a First-Medical student and somebody remarked about his suggestion, "What else could you expect from a First Medical". A plan prepared by Seóirse was among the captured papers also. It was a proposal to damage the lock gates of the Manchester Ship Canal. I had prepared a fairly complete plan for an attack on the Liverpool docks - mainly the lock gates and control equipment. I spent a week in Liverpool with Tom Kerr going over the whole docks. My main difficulty was the enormous distance we covered on foot, about twenty miles a day. Kerr was an ordinary docker who knew every inch of the docks. He was very good and did everything he could for me. He went into the greatest detail discussing the proposal from every point of view. No matter how difficult he might consider a piece of work, he considered it as if it had to be carried out. He foresaw - but was not deterred by - all the obstacles. He was a sound man. When last I spoke to him he was working here, driving a lorry for a petrol company. He was a very tall strong man. He was the son of Neil Kerr. The first time I saw him was in Dublin. The matter having been discussed with Rory, it was decided to send me over to make the necessary preparations for the job. This was at the time when our Headquarters had

decided to carry the war into the enemy's country.

Having collected on the spot all the information I could, I came back and completed the scheme on paper. A copy of it was sent to Dick Mulcahy. Fortunately, in view of the capture, Rory refused to send the original which was all in my handwriting. As a result of the capture none of these schemes could be carried out, but Tom Kerr had pointed out to me the tobacco and cotton warehouses in the docks area. I had, therefore, a considerable amount of information about these, as to position, vulnerability, accessibility etc. This information was subsequently used in the burning of the cotton warehouses. I did not take part in any of these burnings which went on for a considerable time. The value of the material destroyed went into many millions of pounds.

The Fire Brigades were wondering how our men got through the fireproof doors so quickly, so as to gain access to the buildings. We used bolt cutters to remove the padlocks and a receipt for a pair of bolt cutters was found in Neil Kerr's house and he was arrested, tried and sentenced to imprisonment. A number of others were arrested on direct or indirect evidence. One man was found in possession of a pair of bolt cutters.

The rope ladder used in Bob Barton's escape and the subsequent escape of the other prisoners from Mountjoy, as well as the ladder used in the Strangeways escape were both made in McCann and Verdon's workshop on the quays. Frank Curran who worked in the shop was a friend of mine

and arranged for their manufacture. On at least one occasion he was questioned by police, but he had anticipated this and had arranged accordingly. The transactions were shown in the books as having been with the B. & I. Company.

After Bob Barton's escape the ladder was recovered, the only loss being Bob's glasses which fell off when he was jumping off the wall into a dark rug which was used, as a blanket might have attracted attention. It was my rug which I still have upstairs. This jumping into a rug was necessary when there was only one man escaping and nobody co-operating with him inside the wall. In the other cases prisoners remaining behind were able to hold down the rope ladder.

After Bob Barton's escape alterations were made in the ladder in the light of the first experience. The ladder, of course, was lost in the second escape. The ladder used in Strangeways, which was also lost, had further improvements with a view to making things safer for prisoners who were likely to be softened by long imprisonment. One thing was - the wall was very high and the necessary accuracy of aim made a light lead rope desirable. The actual weight was attached to a light blind cord, this cord was followed by a sash cord which drew over the thick rope to which was attached the ladder. The weight was a lump of lead I cast in a Lucan Dairy terra cotta cream jar. My first weight was much too heavy to be thrown over the high wall and I had to reduce it considerably. The Strangeways rope ladder was very bulky, as it had wooden rings and two pairs of restraining

ropes, one pair outside and one pair inside the wall, and it had to be carried through Manchester on a handcart with a piece of sacking thrown over it.

Piaras Beaslai has a lot of information about this. He had some good articles recently in the newspapers dealing with it. Rory O'Connor who was O/C. Escapes frequently talked to me about it and he got not only pleasure but amusement out of it. During the operation passers-by were told to stand with their faces to the wall. The only one who showed any resistance was an ex-soldier. I think it was Owen Cullen covered him with a gun and he submitted. I heard that when the man who was holding him up with a gun had gone off without the ex-soldier noticing, the latter on discovering that there was nobody holding him up, slunk away rather shamefacedly. I believe some Cumann na mBan girls had been watching the whole operation and told these details.

When crossing the brickfield outside the prison, Rory's gun fell out of his pocket and was picked up by I think, Owen Cullen who returned it to him. I was interested in this item because I had given Rory the gun.

In these cases of escapes Rory, while being extremely reticent, gave me all the information I needed to obtain the necessary material and as was the habit in those times, I always refrained from asking unnecessary questions. The following is an illustration of this caution on the part of the Volunteers. I was present in 46 Parnell Square when Dick McKee was making preparations for the unsuccessful attempt to rescue Bob Barton on his

way from his trial in the Castle to Mountjoy gaol. A number of the Volunteers that were to take part in it were awaiting final instructions. As I was not to be in it I cleared out of the room while the instructions were being given. Rory afterwards told me that Dick remarked to him: "I notice your staff don't ask any questions".

Dick remained near 46, waiting for news of the operation. We were both on the point of going away, when someone - possibly Paddy Daly - arrived and reported to Dick that the attempt had been unsuccessful and that one of our men had accidentally put a bullet through his ankle and that he - Paddy Daly - had brought him to a place where he could be attended by a doctor. Dick, having ascertained that the man was away safely and in good hands, went to inspect the scene of the occurrence. Dick was the best staff officer we ever had. He had a head on him and I must agree with Piaras Beaslai that his death was the biggest blow the Auxies dealt us.

Before the Strangeways escape Rory told me to see Peadar Clancy about some necessary preparations for the job. The rope-ladder was my end of the job and it was imperative that I should have everything as right as I could. Peadar told me a good deal more and I met the man who was to throw the weight. He was a sailor, a low-sized man with a great pair of shoulders. The important point to be considered was that the part of the wall over which the rope had to go was only about six feet long and, I think, twenty-eight feet high. Incidentally Peadar himself practiced throwing the rope over a wall of a similar height in case of any accident to the sailor.

I have not yet mentioned the efforts to get Kevin Barry out of Mountjoy, after he was condemned to be hanged for his part in the Monks Bakery affair. I came into it very late. I was in Brigade Headquarters; I think it was in Gardiner's Row. I think it must have been Dick McKee that told me to go down to Mrs. Barry's in Fleet St. and ask her not to take the visit that she had arranged for that - Sunday - afternoon; the Headquarters wanted to reserve the visit for two members of the Brigade who would enter the gaol dressed as priests. The Barrys were getting ready to go to the gaol when I arrived at the house. Katty, Mrs. Barry and Michael were in the dining-room. The younger members of the family were not visible then, though two of them appeared before I left. After some discussion during which Katty suggested that the change in arrangements was likely to arouse suspicion, they asked me to return to Headquarters to get a definite decision. I did this and found that a message had been left in Headquarters for me, asking me to tell the Barrys to take their visit as originally arranged, as there was not enough time for the other plan. I cannot remember at all how the visit of the two priests was to effect the rescue and it puzzles me even now how it could be attempted since an unsuccessful attempt would be such a loss, as Kevin would be surely killed as well as his would-be rescuers.

I waited for the Barrys, as arranged, at the tram stop opposite the Mater Hospital and when the three of them alighted, I gave the message to Katty. They proceeded with their visit to Kevin.

As far as I remember, I went back to Headquarters where I was told to go to a stable on the north side of Merrion Square to prepare a charge of explosive to blow up the outer wall of Mountjoy. The material - 200 lbs. of gelignite, some commercial detonators and some electric detonators - were there on the upper floor. There were three or four guards on the premises, while I worked alone on the job which, I think, took less than an hour. Everything went well as far as the preparation of the charge was concerned. There was one awful incident, however. One of the guards who could not stop fidgeting, started to swing some of the detonators by the wire. I said to him "Put those down, they are dangerous". He obeyed me, but he came back and started again. As he swung the detonators they came down with a hard crack on the table beside a boxful of commercial detonators. I grabbed the detonators and another of the guards grabbed him. He brought him into the next room. There was a small amount of noise and a thud. I heard somebody say in a querulous voice some distance away "What did you do that for"? The man who had relieved me of my post came back and when I asked him what had happened, he said he had thrown him down into the yard, adding "Sure he was only a fidget anyway".

When the charge was ready, we waited for information and after some considerable time a messenger turned up who told us that the attempt had been abandoned and we could go home. We were to leave everything there just in case it might be required. I later heard that the number of patrols round the prison had been increased. I personally thought that the attempt to blow in the wall

would have been futile and would have been seized as an opportunity to kill Kevin "while attempting to escape". Mick Collins said: "If Kevin is to be killed, it should not be through any act of ours". The whole situation caused him intense anxiety and at a time too when he had other very serious preoccupations.

I had nothing whatever to do with the operations of Bloody Sunday, although I was aware that something was coming off.

Two girl friends of ours and their brother, the Powers from Cúlnagun, four miles from Tipperary town, had a house No. 1 Avondale Terrace, Harold's Cross. I think the Terrace now forms part of Harold's Cross Road. The brother, Dan Power, who was a medical student, was in G. Company, 4th Battalion. They invited a number of us Volunteers to stay in their house, when we were on the run and had no place else to stay. There were six of us, including Dan. The others were John Dowling, Fergus O'Kelly, Johnny McCurtain from Nenagh, Seóirse and myself. John Dowling was O/C. 4th Battalion. Fergus was some time O/C. Howth Company, Johnny was O/C. G. Company, 4th Battalion, of which Dan was a Volunteer. Seóirse was Staff Captain in the Organisation Department.

We enjoyed the greatest freedom in the house which had the advantage that it could be approached from a number of different directions.

During the spring of 1921 things became noticeably more difficult, a number of the neighbouring houses being



raided by troops in lorries. An armoured car stopped outside the door of our house one night during curfew, giving us something to think about. On another occasion one of the lads was coming home, when he was stopped by a British officer and asked where he was going. He said "Home". Just then Tessie Power who had been watching and taken in the situation, opened the door and kissed him affectionately, saying "you are very late, darling".

Eventually the house was raided when no one but Dan Power was in. Nothing incriminating was found as we were careful to leave no arms there. All the same Dan was arrested but he was released after three weeks.

During our occupation of that house there was one funny incident which might have turned into a tragedy. We had been filling grenades and there was a bag of gellignite in a cupboard beside the kitchen range. While we were out the charwoman found the bag and decided it was rubbish that should be destroyed. She was on the point of throwing it into the fire when one of the Power girls saw her and stopped her.

We got word of the raid and of course we did not return to the house. Seoirse and I had been held up once when going out to that house after dark. We were searched by a British officer. We had no arms on us. If we had there would have been just enough time to turn back and avoid the search, because I had spotted the Crossley tender some distance away. The officer found a large spanner in a leather case in Seoirse's pocket and

he remarked "I thought I had something there".

During the Truce a two valve B.T.H. receiving set was purchased in England and after occupying various temporary positions, it was permanently established in the house of Dick Macauley in Nelson St., who was one of our fellows for I don't know how long. He was always doing something for us. He is now a Clerk of Works in the Office of Public Works.

After some time a regular operator was employed, to see what he could get, particularly in transmissions from the British stations. His name was Jack Delargy, a brother of the Professor of Folklore at University College, Dublin. He is now employed in the E.S.B.

We succeeded in getting a fair number of messages from the British stations but very little of importance. I just remember one bit of jubilation, but I can't now remember what the message was. I think one value the experiment had was that it enabled our Intelligence to reasonably anticipate their code difficulties. They got additional prompt information on code changes. Delargy had been trained as an operator, but he knew nothing at all about the mechanism of the set. Dick Macauley and myself had to deal with that. Dick was a great skin; he would never let you down and was always determined and able to get us out of any difficulty whatsoever. The machine was only useful for short distance routine work.

We bought several transmitters and receivers from members of the R.A.F. Of course these had been stolen

from Army stores. One of the sellers had the nerve to make a claim in the courts for the purchase price of some of the material which he maintained we had not paid for.

At least one set was set up in various places. A permanent position for a transmitter was not feasible, because the British Communications having very little to do, were continuously on the look-out for other stations. One such erection was at Bob Barton's house in Annamoe, Co. Wicklow, another in St. Enda's, Rathfarnham, a third in North Co. Dublin in the open. I have several very bad photographs of this. I'll look them up some time. While all these experiments were very interesting, they were not very fruitful.

We sent one of our sets to the 3rd Southern Division. It was erected in Irane House, Roscrea. McCormack was Divisional O/C. and Paddy Mulcahy was also there. McCormack was a versatile genius and astonished us sometimes with what he could do in the mechanical line, but he had no knowledge of radio, so I don't know who operated the set.

I think it was while I was still in the 5th Battalion that I got instructions from Rory to organise and have carried out the destruction of Maynooth Town Hall. I was not to go down there myself. It looked to me as if it was a try-out. As far as I remember - but I can't be certain - Jim Ryan carried out the work. The reason for its destruction was that it was anticipated that it would be occupied by the British. My recollection is that only two men were engaged in the operation. Possibly

one of the locals got them into the place. There was first an exploratory visit and I had given the man in charge an idea of what to look for and when he came back it was decided how much and what sort of explosive would be used.

I was engaged indirectly in numbers of attacks on trains, that is to say I was never present at the attack. I gave full instructions in regard to some of them. The most successful and interesting ones were where a length of rail was removed or displaced. There was one north of Dundalk. This was the last of three trains, each with a pilot engine in front, coming from Belfast with cavalry after some state occasion. I think it was the opening of the Northern Ireland Parliament which was made a provocative gesture.

Orders were issued to me by Rory to arrange for the destruction of the three trains. Subsequently the destruction of the first one was taken over by the Dublin Brigade. "We'll do it the simple way" they said, "we'll blow one rail out". This was not a success. I arranged with the Fingal Brigade to derail the middle train between Skerries and Balbriggan. This did not come off either and I don't remember why.

The third train was derailed very successfully in Frank Aiken's area, North Louth. I was brought to him by one of the Gormleys of Dundalk. I discussed the whole plan with Frank the night before the event and described to him the sort of place I wanted him to look for. He found exactly such a place near Fr. Sorahan's Bridge.

When Frank and his party chose their spot there was very close to it a tool shed. They got everything ready during the night and removed the rail after the pilot engine had passed, with some of the tools they found in the shed. When the train was derailed a considerable number of horses were killed and to dig a grave there the local men were pressed into service by the military. It was said that the military, in order to hide the number of their casualties, buried the dead men with their horses. At least, the British filled in the grave and the public were not allowed to look on.

I had taken Mick Lynch with me in a hired car driven by Batty Hyland to inspect the place where the middle train was to be derailed. Mick in the course of our drive interviewed someone in the Naul - I can't remember his name - who was to take part in that operation which, as I have said, did not come off.

What little information I had about the purchase of arms in Italy has gone out of my head. One thing I remember definitely is the amazement of many people at the delay. We knew definitely that the project was afoot but our information was scanty. Another thing that I learned later was that Mick Collins blamed the messenger for the delay and persuaded, I think, Cathal <sup>Brugha</sup> of the truth of his own assertion, while in actual fact the messenger seems to have been the injured person.

During the Truce, I went with Paddy McGrath, Dick Macauley and a fourth man in an old motor car to some house in Ballymun where Paddy McGrath had an appointment

to meet a British soldier who wanted to sell a British car that he meant to appropriate. We got out in front of a large entrance gate leading up to some residence. A few British soldiers in uniform appeared very quietly and held us up. In the van in which they brought us to the Bridewell were two British Tommies, presumably the very men who intended to sell us the car. Looking out the trap in the door of the cell probably the next morning, I saw Charlie Dalton. He was so extremely standoffish and unco-operative that he would do nothing for us. He would not have anything to do with us prisoners. My interpretation of his attitude was that he had taken one side and we had taken another. Mick was much more diplomatic. When he heard about what had occurred he said if we were not released he would call off the Truce. He took steps through his liaison officers to have us released at once. Any suggestions that people were making that the war was now over for good seemed to us quite ridiculous and we never ceased our efforts to improve our supply of arms and ammunition. However, many of us had an uneasy feeling that there were powerful interests at work in the other direction.

Signed:

*John Plunkett*  
(John Plunkett)

Date:

16-6-53

16.6.53

Witness:

*S. Ni Chiosain*

S. Ni Chiosain.

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
BURO-STAIRE MILEATA 1913-21
No. W.S. 865