ORIGINAL

ROINN COSANTA.

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913–21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 885

Witness

Sean Kennedy,
28 Bath Avenue Gardens,
Sandymount,
Dublin.

Identity.

Member of 'C' Coy. 1st Batt'n. Dublin Brigade, 1914 - ;
Lieut. same Company later;
Member of I.R.B. Dublin, 1918 .

Subject.

(a) His imprisonment in 1916;

(b) Reorganisation of Irish Volunteers, 1917, and activities up to 1921.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil

File No. S.212

Form B.S.M. 2

ORIGINAL

W.S. 885

Statement by Mr. Seán Kennedy,

28, Bath Avenue Gardens, Sandymount, Dublin.

formerly

1st Lieutenant of "C" Company, 1st Battalion
Dublin Brigade, Irish Volunteers and I.R.A.

Part 2.

When we reached Holyhead we were taken off the boat and placed on a train which was of the corridor type. In my case there were about four or five of us in the carriage with an armed soldier, and in the corridor were also a number of armed guards. The train left after some delay and, eventually, we reached a station adjacent to Knutsford Prison. We were taken from the train and marched under escort to the Gaol. On our arrival there we were again searched and our personal histories recorded. We were then each of us placed in a cell in solitary confinement. As we arrived after the ordinary prison fare had been served to the other inmates we did not get any food until the following morning.

The cell was equipped with a plank bed and as far as I can recollect there were two blankets. It also contained a stool and a tin basin, but there were no eating utensils for at least three weeks. We were compelled to eat our porridge and other meals with our fingers. In addition there was a copy of the Bible, New Testament, which we were expected to read for our

spiritual recreation and betterment.

Except for two hours each day, one in the morning and one in the afternoon, when we were allowed out on exercise, we were confined to our cells. When on exercise we were required by regulations to walk round the concrete circles which are to be found in all prisons, at four paces apart. When marching round in different circles, one within another, we were going in opposite directions.

We were forbidden to talk and after a short time it became very monotonous. As soon as we settled down we made attempts to communicate with one another while on exercise. On one occasion I was observed by one of the military guards who called me out and accused me of speaking. I denied it and he warned me not to let it happen again.

The sleeping facilities were primitive; we had no pillows and I used to roll my boots in my uniform jacket which I used to put under my head at night.

The food consisted of an earthenware tumblerfull of liquid porridge, a quarter of a loaf of bread on the side of which was stuck a pat of margarine, and some tea.

When we arrived at the prison we seemed to have struck a remarkably bad patch as the treatment we got was not up to the usual prison standard allowed for ordinary convicts. Incidentally, I may mention that the prison was used up to the time of our arrival as a place of internment for British military offenders and

others of a similar category.

After some time we were served with an internment order by a Sergeant of the Guard. The purpose of this order was to the effect that if we signed an application for release our case would be considered and we would be notified of the result in due course. The Sergeant referred to in my case was a man named Allen, and was a fairly decent type. He was very insistent that I should complete the form of application for release, but as this form was so worded that it implied the applicant had nothing to do with the Insurrection, I felt and I told the Sergeant so, that as I was dressed in a Volunteer uniform the thing was a huge joke.

Some time after this we were all marched out one morning into the exercise yard, and as we expected the same routine as heretofore, we were astounded when we got the order from the Sergeant in Charge to 'break up". We were so amazed that we continued to march round but we eventually realised that there was something in it. We were then informed that we could mingle together and that the prohibition regarding talking had been lifted.

While we were on this exercise and talking among ourselves we were "fallen in' and addressed by the prison Commandant, a military officer, who told us that the prison regulations in our case had been relaxed to permit us to talk and smoke while on exercise. We were also to be allowed one letter in and out per week.

In the course of his address he asked us not to throw our cigarette butts on the ground as there some of

his men in other parts of the prison undergoing sentence whose duty it was to clean up the grounds. He did not want any temptation to smoke put in their way. He knew they would be on the look out for butts thrown away by us.

We were struck by the humour of the thing. In the first place there was not a butt of a cigarette among the whole lot of us and I in an effort to assuage my longing for a smoke emptied my pocket of any tobacco dust that might be in it, which I rolled in brown paper and made up a class of a cigarette. This I smoked while in my cell, using the air vent to disperse the smoke. It made me very sick and almost killed me.

The exercise hours were from 10 to 11 in the morning and from 3 to 4 in the afternoon, at which hour we were locked in our cells until the following morning. We were subject to hourly scrutiny by the guards in the corridor who watched us through the spy holes in the cell doors.

We had been there for about six weeks when our people outside apparently found out where we were. Parcels for some of us came through. The parcels when they reached us seemed to have been held in store for a considerable time and were to all intents and purposes unfit for consumption. One of my comrades who occupied a cell adjacent to me had got a cake from home and offered me some of it which I accepted, but when I had eaten it I found that its condition was anything but palatable and it caused me a good deal of upset. The same happened in a number of other cases and we were all before

the Doctor the following morning for examination.

Facilities were provided for the hearing of Mass on Sundays. The Mass was celebrated in a large hall which was, apparently, used for the conduct of the different religious services as I have a distinct recollection that when the Mass was finished in our case, the hall was taken possession of by Ministers of other denominations for the conduct of their religious services.

During the celebration of Mass we were guarded by soldiers who sat on raised seats, one soldier to every three pews. We were, therefore, under constant observation during the entire celebration and any attempt to communicate with each other would be observed at once.

We all, of course, underwent the ordeal of having our hair cut to the scalp by the prison barber, followed by a bath, and while the older members of our party were not particularly worried the younger men felt very cut up about it. Later on the prison hair cut was looked upon as the martyrs badge and the prison barber's time was kept fully occupied cropping the heads of the various prisoners. The short hair cuts were in a sense a relief as it obviated the necessity for either the use of a comb or hair brush. A number of us had none at all.

One thing that impressed me very much at the time was that when we had settled down, one of our number, Mick Lynch, who was untill some time recently Superintendent of the Dublin Market and who was for a number of years conductor of St. Michael's and St. John's Church choir, took over the conducting of the hymn singing during Mass

which he accompanied on the prison organ. Each Sunday we sang "Faith of Our Fathers" and "Hail, Glorious St. Patrick" with gusto, and the service always concluded with the playing of the "Soldiers' Song" but we did not sing the accompanying verses. The local residents of Knutsford apparently heard the volume of singing and, after some time, they used to gather outside the prison walls each Sunday morning to listen to the hymns being sung. I was speaking to a British Army Sergeant who was on duty in the prison and he told me that it was a regular feature enjoyed by the local inhabitants each Sunday morning.

On one occasion we were visited by a high-ranking Officers of the British War Office, whose function it was to enquire into our treatment and to ascertain if we had any complaints. He ended his discourse by asking, "Any man who has a complaint, take one pace forward", with the result that the entire body of prisoners, to the utter amazement of this gentleman, took a pace forward, and he withdrew in some embarrassment.

On another occasion a young prison colleague of mine, whose name I do not remember at the moment, had a pair of boots stolen from him, and he reported the matter to the Prison Commandant who interviewed him and asked him if he could identify the man he believed to have taken them. My comrade replied that he thought he could do so. The Prison Commandant ordered a parade of his entire staff, and sent for the prisoner to have him identify the culprit. The lad, apparently feeling that he would not like to get the individual into trouble,

failed to identify the thief. The Prison Commandant was very anxious that he should identify the man, pointing out that if any member of his staff had sunk so low as to steal boots belonging to a prisoner, what could he, the Commandant, expect from such a staff member, having regard to the facilities he would have for pilferage. There was a good deal of talk amongst us afterwards about this incident, and our respect for the Prison Commandant increased considerably.

Up to this we were in solitary confinement with the exception of the two hours daily exercise, when we were allowed to speak. After some time I was approached by a Mr. Millar, the Engineer in charge of maintenance for Knutsford Jail, who had ascertained from my prison record that I was a lock-smith by trade. He asked me would I be willing to work in the Engineer"s Workshop in the Prison, and it struck me as being very funny that I, a rebel, should be asked to work in, of all places, the Prison workshop on the repair of keys. I accepted, but before doing so, I asked him what I was going to get for this work. He told me that there were three of my colleagues in the workshop employed on carpentry, plumbing and painting and that the prison regulations in regard to speaking would be relaxed in so far as we were concerned. In addition, he undertook to provide us with extra rations, which he did. We got extra food each evening in addition to the ordinary prison fare, and the change was very acceptable.

One evening I was returning from my job in the workshop and, in passing the late Seán Prendergast"s cell which was 5B, I spoke to him from the cell door which was

open. An officious military Sergeant, who was in charge of the landing, came along and upbraided me for doing so, saying that I could not talk to prisoners outside the usual exercise hours. I told him that I had not spoken to my pal at all that day and that I was entitled to do so now. He said, "Could you not have spoken to him at exercise to-day?" I replied that I was not on exercise as I had been working in the workshop and that, if I was not allowed to speak to Prendergast, I would refuse to go back to the workshop in the morning. I said that I was entitled to speak to him regardless of what he might say. He then gave me permission to enter Prendergast's cell and have our usual conversation, saying that he would report the matter with a view to getting further instructions. I never heard anything more about the matter.

It was the custom for the prison staff to come aroun at about seven o'clock every morning, unlock all cells and open doors. We then assembled, each prisoner in his own cell doorway, and, on a command from the Sergeant in charge of the landing, we took one pace forward. This moment was availed of by all present to give a sharp, quick look around to ascertain if there were any newcomers among the prisoners, and I was highly amused by the variety of the faces which presented themselves each morning, drawn from all sections and walks of life, writers, businessmen, tradesmen, artisans, etc., some with fully grown beards, some with half beards and some barefaced.

I remained in Knutsford until my transfer to

Frongoch Camp (Distillery) at the end of May, 1916. All the other prisoners confined in Knutsford Prison with me at the time were also transferred.

Some short time before leaving Knutsford, we were visited by Alderman Alfred Byrne and Larry Ginnell, who were then Members of the British Parliament. They brought with them cigarettes and papers which they distributed to the prisoners, both of which luxuries were very much appreciated as we had not had cigarettes since our internment. They told us during the course of conversation that we would receive better treatment and that discussions were in hand for the granting by the British Government of a prisoner-of-war status for those of us interned. There was some objection by some of the prisoners to accepting the gift of cigarettes as they were of the Woodbine variety but, generally, everybody was glad to get them. There was a story going the rounds in the prison that Messrs. Byrne and Ginnell had to give an undertaking to the prison authorities that they would not take out letters from the prisoners and it was on this condition that they were allowed to visit us. Mr. Ginnell, in the course of conversation with some of my comrades, informed them of this condition. He was wearing at the time what was then known as a frock coat, the pockets of which were usually to be found in the tail flaps. He made this fact known indirectly to the prisoners by displaying the whereabouts of the pockets, and some of the boys, acting promptly, saw the usefulness of the implied hint which he had given them and, when he was not looking,

slipped the letters in the pockets, saying, "Well, he did not take them from us!".

When I arrived in Frongoch, in the latter end of May, I was placed with other prisoners in hutments adjacent to the Distillery premises, the latter being apparently full. We fell into the usual routine which was being observed by prisoners who had reached there before us, and the conditions from those obtaining in Knutsford were a complete change. We were allowed to associate and run the Camp under our own Commandant and his staff. The Camp Commandant's staff at the time, as far as I can recollect, were Michael Staines, M.W. O'Reilly and Eamonn Price. These are all I can remember at the moment. We were paraded in the forenoon of each day for inspection by the British Camp Commandant who had a rule that, when he would bid us good-morning, we would all come to attention and remove our caps, answering "Good-morning, Sir". We strongly resented this business of raising our caps each morning and, to get over the difficulty, our Camp Commandant issued an order that we were to parade without caps.

After about a fortnight or three weeks in Frongoch, we were informed, by each of our names being called out on parade, that we were being sent to Wandsworth Jail, from which prison we would be brought before a Commission to answer certain queries which would be put to us by the members of that Commission. At this time the British were using two prisons for the purpose of assembling internees for interrogation by what was subsequently known as the Sankey Commission. The two prisons concerned were Wandsworth and Wormwood Scrubbs.

The following morning we were paraded and marched to Balla Station in North Wales, which was the nearest rail centre to Frongoch. There we entrained under escort and arrived at Euston Station, London, some time in the afternoon of that day. On arrival at Euston we were taken from the train and placed in buses which conveyed us through London to Wandsworth Prison. We were provided with iron rations for the journey. On the whole, the journey from Frongoch to Wandsworth was uneventful.

The routine in Wandsworth was that of a convict prison, and we were informed by the prison authorities that we would have to conform to the rules and regulations laid down, it being pointed out to us that we would be only remaining there for approximately a day and a night. We were issued with the usual prison fare.

On the following day we were taken out of our cells and conducted to the room where the Commission was sitting, under the chairmanship of Judge Sankey. He was accompanied by four or five other gentlemen in mufti, but whether they were military or civilians I cannot say. While some of us were congregated in a waiting room adjacent to the room in which the Commission was sitting, we were approached by a gentleman, named Mr. O'Donnell, who informed us that he had been engaged by the Prisoners' Aid Society of the London-Irish Self Determination League to represent us and advise us on the attitude we should adopt in our dealings with the Commission. As we had no prior knowledge of this gentleman, we were inclined to view him with suspicion

and we all agreed that, in our own interests, it would be better for us to keep dumb and give him no information. His attitude in our case would seem to be that we should plead for leniency and say that we were misled by our leaders in taking part in the Insurrection and that we regretted the action which we had taken. When it came to my turn to be interviewed by him, I pointed out to him that I was dressed in Volunteer uniform and asked him how could I reconcile taking his advice with this fact. He replied that I could say that I had been mobilised on Easter Monday without prior knowledge of where I was going or what I was going to do and that, therefore, I found myself in a position from which I could not withdraw. I refused to take his advice.

When I went in before the Commission, they said, "Good morning" and offered me a seat. When I sat down, I was asked for my name, address and occupation. I was next asked how I became implicated in the Insurrection and I told them I was mobilised on Easter Monday and turned out as ordered. I subsequently learned that within a few days of the surrender in April of that year, a Detective of the Dublin Metropolitan Police had called to my house and asked my mother a number of questions which, strange to relate, were the very same questions put to me by the Commission. It struck me at the time that the Commission were very fully posted with information in regard to the activities of each man who appeared before them. I was not more than five minutes in all on interrogation and I was then returned to my cell.

On the following morning we were again assembled on a grass patch in the prison compound. After some short time there, the buses arrived and we were taken to Euston Station where we entrained for the return journey to Frongoch, which we reached some time in the afternoon of that day. We were provided with sandwiches for the return journey.

We resumed the usual daily camp routine and no untoward incident occurred during the remainder of my internment there which terminated about the end of July. I was in uniform all this time, but the day before I was released my uniform was taken from me and I was issued with a Martin Henry suit of shoddy. On the day of my release I and other Dublin men were assembled together and one of us was given a ticket to cover our journey from Frongoch to Dublin. A similar method was followed in the case of the men who had destinations in the west and south-east of Ireland; they also had been given one ticket to cover the lot for places such as Galway and Enniscorthy. We had an uneventful journey from Frongoch to Dublin and the sea passage was good. I was told afterwards that a member of the Detective Division accompanied us on the boat from Holyhead to Dublin but I am unable to say whether this is correct. When we arrived at Westland Row, I was amazed at the reception we got, having regard to the treatment we received from the population of Dublin on our way out to the North Wall from Richmond Barracks after the surrender. On our journey over on the boat and particularly on the train from Dún Laoghaire, or Kingstown as it then was, we expected a hostile reception

from the British element of the population. Consequently we were totally unprepared for the complete change-over that had taken place in the outlook of the Dublin people during the period, April-July, 1916. We had actually braced ourselves that, in the event of our being abused, we would retaliate and I remember my sister who met me at the station remarking to me, "Don't be worried. They are all with us now".

Some short time after my release I was approached by a member of the Company, who I think was Mark Wilson and who had fought with my unit in the Four Courts during Easter Week. He told me that steps were being taken to reorganise the Volunteers and that a serious endeavour was being made to get all the available members of "C" Company together as quickly as possible. I was ordered to report to the Fifteen Acres in the Phoenix Park, with a hurley, with a view to taking part in practice, this being the method adopted to cover our activities and also to ascertain how many would turn out for the first reorganisation parade. I turned out as ordered but I am unable to say how many were there. At this time we had no set venue for assembling indoors, but I do recollect that occasionally we were permitted to use the Printers' Hall in Gardiner Street and the Tara Hall in Gloucester Street (now Seán McDermott Street) which was then the headquarters of the Painters' Union.

From this period until the end of 1917 our efforts were mainly directed to getting the Company on a sound footing, and electing officers and N.C.O.s to

act pending the release of Captain Frank Fahy, Lieutenant Joe McGuinness and Lieutenant Peadar Clancy, who were still in internment. At this time I was appointed a Section Commander and the Company Captain was Seán Flood. I am unable to say who were the 1st and 2nd Lieutenants. On the general release in December, 1916, Captain Frank Fahy and Lieutenants McGuinness and Clancy returned to "C" Company. Captain Fahy resigned his Captaincy of the Company at our first full meeting of the unit subsequent to the general release, and Seán Flood continued Officer Commanding.

During the years 1917 and 1918 the Company was engaged in recruiting new members, training of men in the use of small arms, grenades, field exercises. A great part of our work was carried out in halls on the north side of the city and the Phoenix Park under the guise of social, hurling and athletic clubs.

In the early part of 1917 I was appointed Musketry Instructor for the Company, by reason of the fact that I had completed an armourers' course and had become proficient in the use and knowledge of small arms. I attended classes run by the late Captain Tom Meldon in company with other N.C.O.s from "A", "B", "D", "F" and "G" Companies of the Battalion.

Part of my duty during this period was in company with another Volunteer, named Robinson, to keep observation on an individual who had been noticed outside O'Mahony's Hotel in Gardiner Place which was used as a meeting place for leaders of the movement.

This individual had been seen for some time to have O'Mahony's under observation and we were detailed to watch him and report his movements. This we did and, about the fourth night, we were instructed by our Company Commander to approach this individual, interrogate him and, if his answers were not satisfactory, we were to warn him to clear out of the vicinity. We did as we were instructed and, when we interrogated him, he informed us that he had as good a right to be there as we had, as he was waiting for a friend. We told him that he must have had cold feet as he had been seen for the previous three or four nights in the same position and nobody had turned up, and that we had reason to believe that his action was not as harmless as he would make us believe. We, therefore, warned him to clear out of the locality and that, if we saw him there again, steps would be taken to have him removed. Strange to relate, we did not tell him who we were and he did not ask us. As he apparently took heed of our warning, he did not give us any further trouble.

In October, 1917, while the Irish Volunteer Convention was being held in Croke Park, myself and two others were detailed to keep the Royal Barracks (now Collins Barracks) under observation and report to our Battalion Headquarters any extraordinary movements of British troops in and out of the Barracks. The British Forces stationed in the Royal Barracks used the west gate and it was at this point we were stationed. No untoward incident occurred while we were there and,

as our Battalion Staff had apparently forgotten all about us, it was between one and two o'clock on the Sunday morning that someone remembered us, called us off duty and told us to go home. It struck me at the time that the Barrack staff must have regarded us as harmless individuals, as we had been there from three o'clock the previous Saturday afternoon, and they must have noticed us but failed to take any action.

I attended several matches at Croke Park as Battalion Police Officer, my main function being to prohibit bookies from taking bets.

Some time in the latter part of 1917 I was detailed to attend a course of lectures for officers conducted by the late Colonel J.J. (Ginger) O'Connell in 41 Parnell Square. It was about this time I was elected 2nd Lieutenant of the Company, and in this capacity I assisted the other officers in getting the unit ready for active service conditions. The greater part of my time was taken up with the usual Company routine, attending lectures and classes and giving instruction to other members of the unit. Our meeting place was usually the Tara Hall in Gloucester St.

At the Conscription crisis in April, 1918, the late Captain Seán Prendergast and myself, in an effort to attract new members for our Battalion and at the same time cover up our activities, organised the O'Flanagan Sinn Féin Club, named after a member of our Company, Patrick O'Flanagan, who had been killed in the Four Courts in Easter Week. The Club had its headquarters in a room in a shop owned and run by

Maurice Collins in Parnell Street. Our activities in this connection were successful and we got sufficient numbers to form part of a new Company. Our Company Commander, Seán Flood, working on similar lines had established a Sinn Féin Club in a house in Margaret's Place, North Circular Road. He succeeded in attracting a number of new recruits to the movement and these, with the number we had obtained through the activities of the O'Flanagan Sinn Féin Club, were formed into two Companies, namely, "H" and "Grocers" Companies. The late Kevin Barry, who was captured in King Street and executed in November, 1920, was a member of "H" Company which was commanded by Captain Seamus Kavanagh, Lieutenant T. McGrane and Lieutenant Red Flanagan.

In the latter part of 1917 or very early in 1918 I was sworn in as a member of the Irish Republican Brotherhood by Martin Conlon at 41 Parnell Square. The Circle was named after the Brothers Sheares. The Centre was Martin Conlon. A man named Flanagan, Treasurer of the Printers' Union, was Secretary. He was later succeeded by Jimmy McArdle. There were also in the Circle Oscar Traynor, Tom (Boer) Byrne, the brothers Holland (printers by trade), Michael Flanagan, the late Seán Prendergast and Kit O'Malley. These are all I can remember.

At this time a number of our men, who were also members of the I.R.B. and who had attained to high positions in Trade Union circles, had under consideration the question of separating Irish Unions from English control. With this object in view, a Committee was

set up, composed of members of the different Irish Unions, to examine ways and means of smashing English control of the Irish Trade Union movement and at the same time bringing about the setting up of an Irish Trade Union movement with its headquarters in Ireland. In actual fact, the first body to break away and form a completely Irish Union was that of the Irish Engineering Workers' Union who had their headquarters in Gardiner's Row. I would emphasise at this stage that this Union, which had its headquarters in Gardiner's Row, was distinct from that of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers, an English Trade Union. The Committee referred to met practically every Sunday evening to report progress and to plan further infiltration. As a result of our discussions at these Committee meetings, we were in a position to inform the different Circles of the I.R.B. as to the progress made and the likelihood of getting supporting action by way of strikes.

Like all other units of the Volunteer movement in Dublin, I, with other members of "C" Company of the 1st Battalion, was actively engaged in all matters connected with the 1918 elections, at which the Sinn Féin candidates were returned by an overwhelming majority and the Irish Parliamentary Party were practically wiped out.

During 1919 we were using a house in Frederick Street, beside Mark Wilson's place of business, for drilling, lectures and classes. One night while we were engaged in training, we were raided by a party of

detectives who had got off a tram and rushed the building. The first man in was a detective officer named McNamara who was one of our Intelligence officers and in the confidence of the General Headquarters Staff. He came to the stables at the back of the premises, where we were engaged at drilling, and told us to break up and destroy any incriminating documents we might have. He told us that the raid was not for us but for an engineering class which was being held in one of the front rooms upstairs. The detectives proceeded upstairs and arrested all men attending the class and conveyed them to the Bridewell. These men were subsequently tried and sentenced to one month's imprisonment This raid resulted in increased police activity and surveillance of our movements. A big number of our men who were members of the 1st Battalion were subsequently arrested, and I have reason to believe that the detectives captured a roll of the 1st Battalion, as they were able to pick up a number of its members from time to time without any great difficulty. Our Adjutant, Liam O'Carroll, had a nominal roll in his possession by which he could check the attendance on parade, and it was this roll which was found on him and subsequently used by the Detective Division to track down men whose names appeared thereon.

On a number of occasions I was held up and searched but, as I was the officially appointed lock-smith to the British Post Office of the day, I availed of my pass and an armlet which I wore to get me out of my difficulties. My job in this connection entailed the

opening of pillar boxes which resisted the efforts of the collecting postmen and, after the usual red tape, I was called in to perform the job. On one occasion my duty as lock-smith took me to Ballsbridge Post Office and while there I noticed that the floor was very oily. This struck me as peculiar and I came to the conclusion that it could only be in that condition due to the fact that a motor bicycle combination had been stored there. I reported the matter to Seán Flood, my Company Commander, and he told me that Ballsbridge was outside the 1st Battalion area and that the destruction of the bicycle was really a job for the 3rd Battalion. After some discussion, it was agreed that my Company should undertake the job. With that end in view, I made keys for the doors which I used myself when detailed for the job, but the raid proved abortive as the bicycle on that particular evening was not there.

During the early part of 1920 very little of note took place as far as I was concerned. I was present at the usual Company parades, small arms training and field manoeuvres in the vicinity of James's Castle, Finglas, Co. Dublin. Myself and the late Seán Prendergast, who was Officer Commanding 'C' Company, while not officially detailed, were in the vicinity of North King Street on the 1st September, 1920, when a party of 'H' Company of the 1st Battalion ambushed a British ration car and on that occasion Kevin Barry, one of the attackers, was wounded and captured. The attack took place outside Monks's Bakery in Church St. and, at the time, we were just round the corner in King Street. As soon as the attack was over, one of the attacking party, Murphy by name, came in our direction

and we escorted him from the vicinity. I met Seamus Kavanagh who was in charge of the ambushing party coming away from the scene of the attack and I asked him if he had got all his men away. He informed me that he did not know. As you are no doubt already aware, Kevin Barry was subsequently courtmartialled and hanged for his part in the attack. On the afternoon of that day, I met Seán Prendergast and Seamus Kavanagh by appointment, and accompanied them to a house in Lower Abbey Street, where Bob Flanagan, a Lieutenant of 'H' Company, was staying. Flanagan had received a slight wound in the attack on the British Forces in Church Street that morning and it was our job to see that he was safely conveyed to a taxi. This we did and he was taken away for medical attention.

Subsequent to this date, with a number of others I attended lectures in the use of the Lewis machine gun in a house in Blessington Street, which was owned by Seán Mooney, then a member of the 2nd Battalion of the Dublin Brigade. The lecturer on these occasions was Joseph Byrne, later a Colonel in the National Army. Incidentally, I may mention that this Lewis gun was the one which was captured in a raid carried out by members of the First Battalion on British Forces stationed in the Kings Inn, on the 1st June, 1920. Later, myself and Thomas McGrane were detailed to bring this particular gun from its dump to the Banba Hall, Parnell Square, where it was used to give lectures to officers of the First Battalion. Strange to relate, on each occasion when we carried the gun from the dump to the Banba Hall we had not a round of ammunition nor a weapon on us to

defend ourselves in the event of being held up. We pointed this out to the Battalion Commander and asked him how we stood in the event of being captured, and he, seeing the stupidity of carrying a weapon of this nature through the streets, arranged an armed patrol to ensure our safety in our journey to and from the Banba Hall. Sometime later, the venue for lectures was changed from the Banba Hall to a house in Ballybough Avenue which was owned by a carpenter whose name I cannot remember. He had rigged up a recess on the first landing where he kept the gun, and which he had camouflaged with wallpaper. This recess was so constructed that only those who knew of its existence could locate it.

Sometime later I was detailed to accompany the late Seán Treacy to the house in Ballybough where I withdrew the Lewis gun from its hiding place, dismantled, assembled it, and showed him how it worked. When we had finished this job, after about 2 hours, and arrived on the street he asked me what would be the best way to get to Drumcondra. I told him that he could go via Richmond Road and he gave me the impression that he would like a less public route. I suggested then that he should go by way of the canal which would take him out to Drumcondra Bridge. This he did and arrived safely at his destination. Treacy struck me as being a very superior type of gentleman and I could see his point of view in following a less public route. He was an individual who stood out in a crowd. On this occasion myself and the late Lieutenant Tommie McGrane had previously received instructions to pick up Treacy

at the Republican outfitters in Talbot Street where, sad to relate, Treacy was later engaged in a gun fight with British forces and killed in action.

I was arrested on the 2nd December, 1920, at 22, Parnell Street, where I was then living. The house was raided some time after curfew by British military and I was taken to the North Dublin Union, where I was kept for about a fortnight. I was next transferred to Arbour Hill Prison and kept there for a short time before being transferred to Ballykinlar Internment Camp.

The journey to Ballykinlar was by sea and on our arrival at Belfast we were met by a hostile Orange mob drawn from the shipyard workers in Queens Island and the docks generally. Prior to disembarkation we were handcuffed in pairs and, added to this we discovered we had to carry whatever luggage we had brought with us. I remember distinctly a British officer saying to us that if we wanted to die for Ireland, now was our opportunity. As the boat was coming into dock we saw we were in for a rough time of it and one of our fellows, with more bravado than discretion, shouted "Up Dublin", and was answered by somebody else "Up the Republic". This appeared to arouse the anger of the Orange mob who pelted us with nuts, bolts and any other refuse they could lay their hands on. The officer in charge of the sloop which brought us from Dublin to Belfast was prepared to protect us to the extent that he ordered the crowd on the quayside to disperse and from what I could gather from his gestures to others of

his officers he was even prepared to go so far as to fire upon them. On getting off the boat we were marched across the docks to where a train was waiting. We were placed in carriages with an armed soldier in each and as soon as the train was full with prisoners I heard the officer in charge giving orders to his men that if any of us put our heads out of the window they were to fire on us. He told us that if any of us felt like dying for Ireland then, all we had to do was to disobey these orders. When we arrived at Ballykinlar Internment Camp we were searched and our personal histories recorded. As soon as this was done we were allotted a space in each hut and given three bed boards, a palliasse case which we filled with straw from a bale which was allotted to so many prisoners, and two blankets. After a few days in camp we were served with an internment order, the gist of which was that His Majesty regarded us as disloyal subjects, members of an unlawful organisation and likely to cause disaffection. It also provided that if the recipient wished, he could appeal against the order for internment within 21 days. Needless to say, very few of us took advantage of this doubtful privilege. While I was interned in Ballykinlar there were 2 of our prisoners shot, presumably for disobeying camp orders in some way or another. One, I remember, was a very big man from County Kerry, of strong physique, and as communication between the two camps Nos. 1 and 2 was forbidden, this man was used by our camp staff to get the messages over into the next camp. This he did by rolling the message in a large stone which, with his great strength, he threw well into

the compound of the other camp. It was on one of these occasions that they were killed.

I remember on one occasion I took part in a football match for a set of medals, one of which I still hold as a treasured possession. These medals had been struck presumably in Dublin and sent to the camp by our sympathisers outside.

While we were in Ballykinlar our time was put to good use as we attended lectures and classes in military subjects and took part in training of a military nature. I remember on the first occasion which we turned out for foot drill the British authorities got very panicky and doubled the guards in all compounds. We also had music lessons and I tried my hand at learning how to play the piano, but I never got beyond the elementary stages as I have an injured right hand which prevented me from covering a full octave.

The camp was run completely by the internees and controlled and administered by a camp staff selected from among the prisoners.

I was released in December, 1921.

Signed: S. Kennedy
(S. Kennedy)

Date: 19th August 1953

Witness: M. F. Ryan Comdt.
(M.F. Ryan, Comd't.