

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21  
BURO STAIRI MILITARI 1913-21  
NO. W.S. 890

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 890.....

Witness

Edward Fullerton,  
23 'H' Fatima Flats,  
Rialto,  
Dublin.

Identity.

Member of Fianna Eireann, Newry, 1914 - ;  
Captain, Newry Coy. 1st Batt'n. 2nd Brigade,  
4th Northern Division, 1919 - .

Subject.

National and military activities,  
Newry district, 1914-1922.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil

File No. S.2187.....

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STATEMENT BY EDWARD FULLERTON,

23 H - Fatima Flats, Rialto, Dublin.

I joined Fianna Eireann in Newry in the year 1914. I was a member of the Newry Fianna Sluagh at the time that Countess Markievicz came to Newry in 1915 and inspected a parade of the Fianna in the Marshes on the Warrenpoint Road, near Newry. On this occasion, the Countess presented our Sluagh with a flag. As far as I can remember, Malachy Quinn was then in charge of the Fianna in Newry and Peter O'Hare was second in command. There were about 25 to 30 boys in Newry Sluagh before the Rising in 1916.

After 1916, when the Volunteers in most places got into a state of disorganisation, we of the Newry Fianna kept our organisation going. All our members joined the Newry Branch of the Gaelic League and we attended all Irish Ireland functions held in Newry and district. In the year 1917 we were still meeting regularly and keeping our organisation intact.

In 1918 I and about 20 other Fianna boys were transferred to the Newry Company of the Irish Volunteers. I think John Quinn was then in charge and ("Jeff") - J.J. O'Hare was a prominent officer then and during later years. We had one company in Newry at this time. I don't know now how many men were enrolled.

During 1918 and 1919 we went into country districts around Newry very often and carried out military manoeuvres. We had little arms. I got a lot of dispatch work to do during those years. I carried dispatches to such places as Corragh, Banbridge, Armagh City, &c. On one occasion I carried detonators to Armagh City and left them at a place

belonging to an O'Reilly family - a draper's shop. Training practices, drills, manoeuvres and dispatch work were the "orders of the day" with me up to the end of 1919.

#### RAID ON BALLYEDMOND CASTLE.

In about April or May 1919, we got orders to take part in a raid on Ballyedmond Castle, then occupied by a Captain Nugent, who had been an officer in the British army during the 1914-18 war. I and a number of other members of the Newry Company got orders to report on a Saturday evening at a mobilisation point in Newry. At this mobilisation we were divided into small parties of 3 or 4 each, with instruction to travel via Corragh, Burren, and through other districts, cutting out Warrenpoint so as not to arouse police or military suspicions, and be at Ballyedmond Castle about 11 p.m. that night.

I and three others started on our journey at 9 p.m. on cycles and on account of the circuitous route we followed, we arrived at our destination about 11 p.m. When we arrived at the vicinity of the Castle we met John Quinn, Jeff O'Hare, Peter Shields and other officers of the Newry Battalion.

There was a large number of Volunteers in the vicinity of the Castle that night. We got orders to get into the building and we proceeded to do so by forcing the catches on several of the ground floor windows and we gained admission at several points. When we got in we found that there was only a caretaker in charge of the place. The Nugent family were all apparently away from the Castle on that night. One extraordinary feature of my recollections of getting into the Castle was the amount of barbed wire fences that surrounded portion of it. It looked as if at some time preparations were being made to defend the place against attack.

We carried out a systematic search of all the rooms in the place. Many were engaged in this work, operating in different parts of the premises at the same time. Some started from the top of the Castle; others on the ground floor. I remember I was with the party who arrived in the basement and I was asked to take part in the breaking up of the concrete floor there. After a period of hard work we got the floor broken up and we found nothing underneath it. During the time this concrete floor was being smashed, the other participants in the actual raid on the Castle were outside, giving the outhouses and the grounds a thorough searching.

We remained in the vicinity of the Castle, continuing our search, up to about 5 a.m. on Sunday morning. We then all started on our cycles for Newry. We did not meet or see any police on our homeward journey. I have no knowledge of any arms being found on this raid. After this, and up to our next activity of an operational nature in April 1920, we continued our usual programme of drills, training, exercises, etc.

#### BURNING OF THE NEWRY CUSTOM HOUSE, APRIL, 1920.

I was mobilised on the night of the 3rd April 1920, for the burning of the Custom House in Newry. The Newry Custom House is a large building facing the Newry Canal and about 30 to 40 yards from Monaghan St. Bridge. This bridge is on one of the five main roads through the town. All approaches to the Custom House from the country west of Newry and from Newry town proper on the Co. Down side would have to pass over or near Monaghan St. Bridge. I and a number of others, none of whom I can now remember, had orders to take up a position at Monaghan St. Bridge as an outpost during the actual raiding of the Custom House. We remained in this position for about 3 hours and during most of this time a number

of officers were in possession of the Custom House, destroying all books, papers and records. Frank Aiken and the late Patrick Lavery were amongst those working inside the Custom House. Neither the military nor police forces made any move (suggesting that they knew the Custom House was being raided. About 12 midnight the men working inside the Custom House came out and we were told to clear off.

BURNING OF EVACUATED R.I.C. BARRACKS IN NEWRY.

Shortly after the raid on the Custom House we received orders to burn all evacuated barracks in our area. My part in these operations was in connection with the attempt to burn Hyde Market Barracks. I was ordered to do outpost duty at the corner of Hyde Market to prevent surprise by enemy forces on those engaged in the burning. I was accompanied by a young lad named Hughie Murphy who, I think, was a Fianna boy then. We remained in our position until we got orders from Paddy Casey who, I think, was in charge of the operation to clear off as the attempt to gain admittance to the barracks had failed. I can't now remember the full details of this affair.

RAIDS FOR ARMS ON PRIVATE HOUSES.

During the summer of 1920 we carried out a series of raids for arms on private houses in Newry and district. My memory for even the houses I took a part in raiding is now vague. I remember being on a raid on the house of an ex-British army captain - Captain R. Stokes - where we got two revolvers. I remember our getting some shotguns in other houses raided. These raids for arms were carried out as a result of an order made by General Headquarters in Dublin. The raids were all carried out on one night simultaneously all over the country.

During the summer and autumn of 1920 we carried out on different dates a campaign of cutting telegraph and telephone wires in the districts surrounding Newry. I remember on one occasion Hughie Carrol, Dan O'Hare and myself going out to cut wire communications at the Red Bridge, Cloghue. We procured a ladder and got on the Great Northern Railway line and put the ladder up against one of the telegraph poles where there were scores of wires. We got on the pole from the ladder and started to cut all the wires. A train came along, collided with the ladder and took it down the line and left us hanging on to the pole.

In the summer of 1920, plans were made to stop and search a night train at Adavoyle. I and some others got orders to go out to the Red Bridge at Cloghue and to take up a position there, and to engage any enemy forces going that way in the direction of Adavoyle. No enemy forces came our way and we returned home after some hours waiting.

#### SHOOTING OF HEAD CONSTABLE KEARNEY, R.I.C.

In or about October 1920, orders were issued for the shooting of Head Constable Kearney. This man had been most active against the I.R.A. from 1916 onwards. He took a prominent and active part in raiding for and arresting men on the run in Newry district.

On the night of the shooting of this man I was detailed with some other men from the Newry Company to do sentry at various points in the vicinity of the Dominican Church, Queen Street. I was placed at the Markets, Needham Street. Armed with a revolver, my duty was to fire on any police or military forces approaching, to delay them and to give the alarm to the men engaged on the actual shooting.

Head Constable Kearney was shot coming from evening devotions in the Dominican Church about 8 p.m. on a Sunday night. After I heard the shooting, which took place about 100 yards from my position, I evacuated the position as I had been ordered to do. I then met a Cumann na mBan girl - now my wife - and I gave her my revolver. I had arranged with her to be in the vicinity. She took my revolver to her home and hid it there. She then came out on the street again and we both went for a walk. Soon after we started our walk, large forces of police and military got out on the streets of the town and commenced holding up and searching all the people on the streets. The girl and I were held up by a Constable Henry. He ordered my girl friend to go home and he held on to me. He carried out a most exacting search of my clothes and, as I had a large crop of hair, he felt all over my head, presumably looking for papers. He assaulted me by striking me on the face before he released me. This Constable Henry was subsequently promoted to Head Constable's rank. He was always most aggressive in his attitude towards the I.R.A.

Some time after the shooting of Head Constable Kearney I attended a Tuesday night's meeting of the men's confraternity in the Newry Cathedral, Hill Street. This confraternity was one of the largest in Ireland and on confraternity meeting the Cathedral was generally full. When we were leaving the Cathedral after the confraternity devotions some uniformed Special Constabulary who were in the vicinity of the Cathedral opened fire on the people on the street and a young man named Willie Carr was shot in the leg.

On this particular night all the Crown forces in the town seemed to "run amuck" and pedestrians on the streets were attacked and beaten in various parts of the town. On this

night I was intercepted on the street by a military officer who was accompanied by members of the R.I.C. I was taken to Canal Street R.I.C. Barrack. I was held in the barracks on the orders of the R.I.C. Officer, District Inspector James Ross. A few hours after my arrest a Sergeant Mulcahy of the R.I.C. came into the barrack and on seeing me he went to the District Inspector and told him that he knew me; that I was all right and should be released. I then got my liberty.

AMBUSH AT THE EGYPTIAN ARCH NEAR NEWRY.

Early in December 1920, I and Eddie O'Hare got orders to get a conveyance in Newry and to proceed to Rostrevor, and to call there with the local company captain, Barney Cole. We were to remove some arms which he held and to take them to Newry. We got a Model T. Ford van from Brady, fruit Merchant, Newry, and proceeded to Rostrevor. We contacted Cole, who lived in Rostrevor with his aunt. Cole handed us some shotguns and a few German Mauser rifles. We took this stuff to Newry to my mother's place and dumped the arms there for the night. My mother's place was not considered a safe place as some undesirable people, from the I.R.A. viewpoint, lived in the street and might have noticed something unusual about the load the van contained. On the following day we again took the van and removed the arms from my mother's place to Corragh, where we handed it over to Hughie Gribben and Peadar Barry to be placed with the Newry Battalion's arms which were mainly dumped in Corragh.

On the Saturday evening of the 11th December 1920, I was told to go to confession that evening. I knew then that some military operation was coming off soon. My sister Sanna, who was an active member of the Cumann na mBan, was also advised by her superior officer, Mary Boyd, to go to



confession on the next day, Sunday 12th December. "Jeff" O'Hare came and told me that I was to report to the Egyptian Arch at 8 p.m. on that Sunday night. I was to take my revolver, 6 rounds of revolver ammunition and a Mills hand grenade, which I had at my home, with me. I went up to the Arch at the appointed time and there I met Jeff O'Hare, John Quinn, Charlie Grant, Seamus Layng, Dundalk, Bob Savage, Peter Shields, Willie Cannon, Jack Delaney, Pat Lavery and Andy O'Hare. I have a clear recollection of all those men being with me on the parapet of the railway bridge. There may have been others whom I have forgotten.

Nearly all the members of the Newry Company turned up for the attack at the Egyptian Arch, but an account of the "mix up" which had earlier taken place and which prevented the supply of rifles and other arms dumped in Corragh being available at the Arch, the men who had been detailed to take up positions on the sides of the road on the Newry side of the Arch were sent home as there were no arms available for them.

I will now deal with the events as far as I heard at the time, which caused the "mix up" and was mainly responsible for the failure of this operation. A policeman in uniform, who may have been a Black and Tan, was on Hill Street area under the influence of drink. This intoxicated man was armed and he commenced to fire his revolver in a wild and undisciplined manner. The noise of this shooting alarmed the police in their barracks and the police and military got out on the streets and pedestrians were held up and searched. When these enemy forces got on the streets all over the town it was impossible to get any supply of arms through the town as all the bridges over the Clanrye river and the Newry Canal passing through the town were strongly held and there was little possibility of getting the arms across from Corragh on the Co. Down side of the town to the ambush position on the Co. Armagh side.

My sister and I, on our journey out to the Egyptian Arch, had to pass through the town, as we lived on the Co. Down side of the bridges. We did not see any military or police on the streets in our locality although we heard the noise of shooting going on as early as 6 to 6.30 p.m.

To get back to what happened at the Egyptian Arch, which, for clearness and simplicity, I will in future call the railway bridge. As far as I know, the road at the bridge was not blocked to delay the passage of Crown forces in the direction of Camlough Barrack. I have no doubt that this blocking of the road was one of the most important parts of the general plan for this ambush, as a blockade at this point could be a great advantage to our attacking force by delaying the rapid passage of motor tenders through our position, and the stoppage or delay of the military on their way to Camlough would provide additional security for the men attacking the barrack there. I saw no blockade on the road.

When I got to the bridge I met the following men: John Quinn, Andy O'Hare, Seamus Layng (from Dundalk). These men appeared to be in charge. Some of the men assembled at the bridge were sent down to the Main Line (Bessbrook) Station as an outpost. This outpost would be about 200 yards on the Belfast side of the railway bridge. I don't remember who those men were. The remainder of the men at the bridge then went to the top of the bridge and took up positions behind the parapet of the bridge facing in the direction of Newry. The Cumann na mBan girls, including my sister, were under the command of Mary Boyd and Susan Lavery. They went into a small house along the main road on the Camlough side of the bridge and about 20 to 30 yards from the bridge. These girls were to act as a first aid unit. In addition to the three girls mentioned, I know that Brigid McCourt was with them and I think

a few others. These girls showed a high degree of courage by going into this position and they all deserve great admiration for this heroic action.

When we got to the top of the bridge we were each placed in positions to be able to make effective use of our revolvers and hand-grenades on any enemy forces approaching our positions and passing underneath the bridge. I was given a box of matches, a candle, a sack of straw and a bottle of paraffin oil. My duty was to saturate the bag of straw with the paraffin oil and if and when the Crown forces had forced their way through our position, to set light to the bag as a signal which was to be relayed by another man a distance away from the bridge and within clear view of the attackers at Camlough Barrack. This man, I understood, was equipped with a sack of straw saturated with paraffin similar to mine. This part of our plans - to give warning to the attackers at Camlough - was intended to safeguard against a surprise arrival of the military from Newry in Camlough, which would prove a death trap for many of the attackers who were liable to be attacked in the rear by the military.

From 8 p.m. when we first assembled at the bridge, we were awaiting the arrival of the arms etc. from Corragh. It was well after 10 p.m. when we became finally convinced that the Corragh men could not get through to us. It was then that a large percentage of our mobilised men, who were unarmed, were ordered to return home.

The night proved inclement. The weather conditions were arctic - frost, sleet showers and penetrating cold winds made our exposed positions at the bridge almost unbearable. Our plight was rendered more extreme by the fact that we could not move about, as any unusual movement so late at night would be noticed and might alert some persons who would relay the information about our presence at the bridge to the

military barracks, situated  $1\frac{1}{2}$  miles from us. We soon became cramped and almost petrified by the extreme cold.

About midnight we heard the shooting commence at Camlough Barracks and almost immediately we saw Verey lights being sent up by the police in Camlough. We had to remain inactive until about 12.40 a.m. when we saw the light of motor tenders moving through Newry town and, soon after, coming out in our direction. We got orders to prepare to use our weapons.

It is most difficult now to be definite as to what happened. As far as I can remember, young Cannon, who was a draper's assistant in Cahill's, Newry, and a native of Derry, had a hand-grenade in his hand with the safety pin withdrawn and, on the approach of the military tenders close to the bridge, he dropped the grenade at his feet. The grenade exploded, killing Cannon and seriously wounding "Jeff" O'Hare, Peter Shields and Charley Grant. I was standing at least six yards from where the grenade exploded and the concussion was so great that it nearly blew me off the railway line. As soon as the grenade exploded the military got out of their tenders, extended on both sides of the road and opened a heavy machine gun and rifle fire on the parapet of the bridge. They also got into the fields on both sides of the road and attempted to cut off our retreat. When the military arrived on the railway line they opened a heavy fire from the bridge in both the Dublin and Belfast directions to prevent us using the railway line in our line of retreat.

As soon as the shooting by the soldiers started, John Quinn gave orders to evacuate our positions on the bridge. I tried to light the signal fire but found doing so an impossible feat as the bag of straw had got saturated with sleet and rain to such an extent that setting it alight was almost impossible

in the open air and in the weather conditions which prevailed. My inability to light the signal proved providential, as a light on the bridge would show up our positions and make our "get away" more difficult.

When I was leaving the bridge I didn't know that some of my comrades had become casualties. It was later on, when I again got to Newry, that I heard the full story of our losses. "Jeff" O'Hare was, I understand, found by the military creeping down the railway embankment towards where the Cumann na mBan girls were posted. His body was a mass of wounds. He was taken into custody by the Crown forces and eventually taken to the military hospital in Victoria Barracks, Belfast, where he died, shortly after the Truce - about early August, 1921.

Peter Shields received several serious wounds. He was carried by his comrades from the top of the bridge and conveyed under most difficult conditions across fields and ditches to the Charity Fathers' Monastery, Omeath, Co. Louth. This journey was over 7 or 8 miles of difficult country and entailed great hardship and suffering for a seriously wounded man. He did not show any signs of recovery when an opportunity for treatment and care presented itself. He died about ten days after his wounding. Shields was a very strong young man of athletic ability, who might perhaps have survived had it been possible to give him immediate medical and nursing attention.

Charley Grant, who was wounded by a bomb splinter in the foot, had to be conveyed also to the Charity Fathers where his wound was attended to and properly dressed. After a few weeks it was possible to have him removed to Galway town where an uncle lived. Charley remained there for some weeks until he was convalescent enough to return home to Newry when he resumed his activities.

I made my way across the bridge towards the south, accompanied by Jack Delaney. We continued along the railway line in the direction of Meigh, and when we got about half a mile from the Egyptian Arch we staggered off the line in the darkness and fell down on to a by-road which led in the direction of Meigh. After proceeding on this road for some distance, we got into the fields with the intention of getting to the house of Edward Kelly, Killeen, whom I knew well. We became so exhausted that we failed to get to Kelly's and we went into a little cabin in which a man named McAteer lived. This house was at the back of Jonesboro' R.I.C. Barracks. We remained in this house until about 7 a.m. on Monday morning, 13th December, when McAteer got out his pony and trap and took Jack Delaney into Newry to start his day's work as a shop assistant in the Milestone Stores.

I made no attempt to get to Newry until Monday evening. From the early hours of Monday morning and all during the day there was great military and police activity on all the roads leading into Newry. Towards evening I started for Newry and when I arrived there I met Andy O'Hare and he told me to clear out of town. From what O'Hare told me, young Cannon, who was killed by the grenade explosion at the bridge, on being taken into Newry by the military, was wearing a coat similar to one I was also wearing. Some person who had seen Cannon's dead body went and told my sister that it was I who was killed. My sister immediately went to the barracks to view the dead body. On seeing the mutilated condition of poor Cannon's body, she received such a fright that her nerves are affected even to the present time. This rumour that I was killed naturally would direct the British authorities' attention to me if I were seen in town.

For a period after the Egyptian Arch affair the Crown

forces were raiding all over Newry town and district. As far as I was concerned, I had little activity for some short time. We were all trying to keep away from the danger places where we would be liable to be captured. We were holding our regular company meetings in the Gaelic League Rooms in River St. All the active men of the Newry Company turned up at these meetings, including the following:- Peter O'Hare, Mattie Gray, Peter McNulty, Tommy Campbell, Hughie Carroll, Mick O'Hare, Tommy Carr and John Joe Patterson. The battalion officers were always with us and active. These included Dominic Doherty, Paddy Casey, Ned Fitzpatrick, Malachy Quinn, etc.

Charlie Grant, who had been wounded at the Egyptian Arch ambush and had gone to Galway for medical treatment, returned to Newry about February 1921, and resumed his company duties. After his return from Galway, he was promoted company captain and I was promoted lieutenant.

Immediately after the Egyptian Arch ambush, the job of evading capture was a wholetime occupation with us. The Crown forces were continually searching and raiding for us all over Newry town and district. They were supplied with information by the B-men, and we had to be extremely careful about our movements and to leave no trace of where we were staying. A number of us were on the run continually from December and all through the months of January, February and March. We carried out all the routine work which was necessary to be done in Newry, such as looking after dispatch routes, changing dumps, cleaning and caring of arms, cutting communications and blocking roads on a few occasions.

#### AMBUSH AT MERCHANT'S QUAY, APRIL 1921.

The next major activity on which I was engaged was an ambush on Crown forces (R.I.C.) which took place at Merchants' Quay about the end of April 1921. This ambush was ordered as a reprisal for the shooting of Johnnie McCoy. On the first

occasion that this ambush was attempted I was placed at the Mall in O'Hagan St. and the ambush position was planned for Hill Street. We remained in position that night until all possibility of the Crown forces coming had passed. The next time I was mobilised was on a Tuesday night. I remember the day of the week as it was confraternity night in the Cathedral. On this particular night we were mobilised and waiting for instructions in the Union Hall on the Mall. We got word from some of the scouts that police were standing at McEvoy's corner, Merchants' Quay. We left the Union Hall. John Quinn, Andrew O'Hare, Dominic Doherty and Paddy Murray of Hilltown went across the Canal bridge in the direction of where the police patrol were standing, resting on their rifles. Pat Casey was in charge of a party which included myself, Jack Butterfield, Peter O'Hare, Jimmy Keenan, Peter McAnulty and Mattie Gray. When we got across the bridge, we took up position behind the little walls on each side of the bridge, facing where the patrol was standing. We waited in this position until the four men, already mentioned above, had arrived opposite the patrol. These four men then threw bombs at the feet of the patrol and cleared off. Then came the explosion of the bombs. When the smoke of the explosion had cleared, we saw that all the police were lying in a heap on the side of the street. One of the policemen fired a shot, but made no further effort to use his rifle. When we saw that they were all apparently knocked out and that the four I.R.A. men had got safely away, we evacuated our position without having to use our firearms.

The information available to us after this ambush was extremely vague regarding the number of casualties inflicted but, as far as I could see, the patrol was an exceptionally large one and all the men in the patrol were either killed or wounded. I should mention, in explanation of the large number of police involved in the bombing incident, that two patrols, who had been out in different parts of the town,



had met in this particular spot and were having a chat when the bombing took place. At the very lowest estimate, I would say that there were at least half a dozen police killed and that all the others were severely wounded.

One of the men who was in my party on that particular night - Jack Butterfield - when leaving that ambush position, separated from us. When crossing the Markets, he was intercepted by a patrol and was captured by them. He was searched and questioned. As he had disposed of his revolver by handing it to my sister at my home before he met the patrol, he was not suspected and he was released shortly after his arrest. This was a fortunate escape for him, as apparently the police in this patrol did not know at the time they stopped him that the other patrol had been wiped out.

Immediately after the ambush at Merchants' Quay, the British military, the R.I.C. and Special Constabulary came out on the streets. They burned the Sinn Féin Hall in William St., fired into houses and generally created terror in the town.

#### AMBUSH AT CORRAGS, JUNE 1921.

About May 1921, Dominic Doherty, Battalion O/C., informed us that a police sergeant named Barrett, who was in charge of the barracks at Hilltown, Co. Down, had become notorious for holding up suspected I.R.A. men in the street, searching and abusing them. Doherty, Eddie O'Hare and myself went out to McPolin's in Hilltown where we remained for three days with the intention of shooting this Sergeant Barrett. Barrett did not appear in the streets during our stay and, before we left, we heard he had been transferréd to another post. So we returned to Newry.

During the Spring months of 1921 none of us stayed at our homes. We were staying at various friendly houses in the

vicinity of the town and in the town. The authorities were making strenuous efforts to locate us.

About the middle of June 1921, a number of Newry Volunteers and myself were in Corrag's area. On this occasion the following Newry men were with me:- John Quinn, Andy O'Hare, Dominic Doherty, Pat Casey, Ned Fitzpatrick and Eddie O'Hare. Frank Aiken, the Divisional O/C., was also in the area. Sometime in the evening of this particular day, information came that some members of the Special Constabulary had been seen cycling in the locality. Preparations were made to intercept them. Eddie O'Hare and myself were detailed to go to Burren Chapel, which is situated at a crossroads, and to wait for any Special Constabulary that might arrive on bicycles. Our instructions were also that, in case of shooting in any other local place, we were to act as an outpost in the Burren direction. We were in our position for quite a while when, about 8 o'clock in the evening, we heard a considerable amount of rifle fire in the direction of Corrag's. After some time we were called off from our position at Burren. O'Hare and myself went along towards the town of Warrenpoint and from there we made our way into Newry. When we arrived in Newry, we found that the town was in an uproar and Crown forces were rushing around everywhere.

ATTEMPT TO CAPTURE POST OFFICE EQUIPMENT NEAR CORRAGS, JUNE 1921

Shortly after the Corrag's ambush, Eddie O'Hare, Jimmy Corrigan and myself went out again to Corrag's district. On the instructions of Dominic Doherty, we were to cut wires at a place between Mayo Bridge and Corrag's and, when the wires were cut, to wait in the area and capture the telegraphic equipment that would be used by the repair gang when making good the damage. Having cut the wires, we remained in the vicinity

in company with Peadar Barry of Corragh, and the next day the repair gang came out in a lorry. They stopped at the point where the wires were cut and two men in dungarees climbed up on the poles. When the lorry had stopped on the road and the two men were up on the poles, we moved in towards the spot with the intention of holding up the workmen and taking their equipment from them. Our way towards the lorry was across the fields and when we got out on the road very close to where the lorry was standing, we saw that the men in the lorry - not the workmen - were armed Specials. We started to retreat from the vicinity and the Specials opened fire at us with rifles. As we were armed only with revolvers, we were at a great disadvantage and had to keep going. Corrigan, on jumping from a high ditch, landed on a sharp stone and smashed a bone in one of his feet. This caused him considerable inconvenience and pain and we had to help him along. The Specials made no effort to follow us. We heard afterwards that they looked upon our action as a decoy movement planned to attract them after us into a prepared ambush position.

RAIDS BY CROWN FORCES IN NEWRY & DISTRICT - MURDER GANG SHOOTINGS - JULY 1921.

Early in July 1921, a party of R.I.C. and Specials came along to my house at night time and demanded admission. On this particular night I had come home for a change of underwear and was actually in the house when the party of Specials demanded admission. In the house with me were my father and my three sisters. One of my sisters being married, her husband and family were also in the house. The Specials seeking admission were disguised with beards. When they rapped on the door and demanded admission there was no reply from inside. They had a discussion in the street and I heard one of them saying: "We were here the other night and he wasn't there, so there's no use in forcing our way in". The remark

apparently referred to me. They then went over to Bob Kelly's house, which was nearly opposite ours, and demanded admission there. While they were rapping at our door Mrs. Kelly - Bob's mother - even then an old woman, had heard them and she immediately awakened Bob and told him what was happening. Having put on his clothes, Bob left the house, went into the Clanrye River at the back, which was then in full tide, and so he was able to get to a neighbouring friendly house. When the disguised policeman rapped at Kelly's door Mrs. Kelly let them in. They rushed upstairs to Bob's bedroom and they felt the bedclothes, which were warm. They came back to the old woman, demanding to know where Bob had gone to, but she did not give them any information, and they abused and beat her in an effort to extract the information required.

When this party of disguised policemen left Kelly's house, they went around the corner into Kilmurry St. and went into the house of William Hickey, who was then manager of McAreyve's furniture store. They pulled Hickey out of bed, brought him out to the street and, putting him into the lorry that was waiting, they drove off with him. Next morning Hickey's dead body was found in a cattle shed on the Armagh road, Newry. The body was in a terribly mutilated condition. In addition to having been shot, he had been chained apparently to the back of a lorry and dragged for some distance along the road. His clothes were torn off and portions of flesh were also torn from his body. Apparently, when they left him in the cattle shed, they tore his heart out and left it lying on his breast. Poor Hickey had never been a member of the I.R.A. He was not even a member of the Sinn Fein Club. They wanted a victim that night apparently and, having failed to get either myself or Bob Kelly, as a last resort they picked on the unfortunate William Hickey.

In addition to the shooting of Hickey, the following young men were taken from their homes and shot on the same night:- Peter Quinn, the two O'Reillys and a young man named McGinnitty. These boys were all active I.R.A. men. They were taken from their homes near Altnavey and shot. The house of William Carr, Water St., Newry, was also visited on two occasions during that week by armed and disguised men. On one occasion William Carr, senior, had a very narrow escape. While the raiders were breaking in he got himself on to the roof of his house and remained there while they were raiding and searching the house. After some time he slipped off the roof and got impaled on the sharp point of a gutter support. After the raiders had departed, he was found in this position hanging from the roof, his thigh having been penetrated. Mr. Carr's experience on that night was a physical and mental feat of endurance seldom equalled.

#### IRISH REPUBLICAN BROTHERHOOD.

About April 1921, I was approached by Andy O'Hare to join the Irish Republican Brotherhood. I expressed my willingness to join the organisation and Andy had me proposed and initiated into it. My membership of the I.R.B. made very little difference to the activities I had been carrying out previously in the I.R.A. The only difference that I could notice was that, after I became a member of the I.R.B., I was informed of activities that were to come off some time before they actually happened. Prior to this, we would not get any previous notice of intended operations. We would be told on the eve of the operations when it was necessary to mobilise for them. As far as I could see, the men who had been asked to join the I.R.B., and had joined it, were more trusted than the ordinary Volunteers.

m This takes my narrative to the date of the Truce.

TRUCE PERIOD.

The first incident of note in the Truce period was attending the Divisional Training Camp at Killeavy, Co. Armagh. As far as I can remember, this Camp started a few weeks after the Truce. In all, I was about four weeks there. We received a very intensive course of training in the use and care of all types of firearms, including rifle, revolver and Thompson gun. We were given instructions on the use and care of the Mills hand grenade. We did a lot of tactical exercises in the open country, such as attacking and defending positions, how to protect ourselves when camping out. During this period a public meeting was held in Armagh at which General Michael Collins spoke. This meeting was the occasion for a big review of the Volunteers from all over both the 4th Northern and the 5th Northern Divisions. In all, there must have been about four or five thousand men inspected by General Collins in Armagh. I, accompanied by the majority of Newry Company, attended and took part in this review.

When our period in the training camp had ended, we went back to our companies. At this stage the Volunteers in Newry were divided into two companies. Charlie Grant was O/C. of A/Company, and I was appointed O/C. of B/Company. There was a considerable amount of recruiting allowed into the Volunteers at this time and a large number of British ex-servicemen from Newry town joined up. From September 1921, onwards our energies were mostly directed towards training and equipping the Volunteers. All that we had learned in the camp regarding military matters we passed on to the men in the local companies.

In addition to this training programme, which was carried out during the whole Truce period, there was also the matter of the Republican Courts in which the Volunteers took a prominent part. These Courts were held at regular intervals

up to February or March 1921, and the Volunteers provided police for duty in connection with court work.

Immediately after the Truce an arms fund was taken up and a levy was made on business premises in Newry town. All the Nationalist business houses were asked to subscribe and, in some cases, Unionist business people were approached and a few of them subscribed.

Another activity that threw a lot of work on the Volunteers during the Truce period up to the Spring of 1921 was the enforcement of the trade boycott against the sale of Belfast goods. In all cases where traders refused to co-operate with the Boycott Committee by persisting in selling Belfast goods, fines were imposed and the Volunteers had in some cases the responsibility of collecting them.

Quinn's Stores, known as "The Milestone" was the property of John Quinn's father. John Quinn, who was O/C. of Newry Brigade at this time and also Divisional Quartermaster, was one of the most active I.R.A. officers in Newry area, or, I might say, in the north of Ireland. The whole family were republican, two of his brothers, Malachy and Padruig, being very active I.R.A. officers. The record of this family was wellknown to everybody, not alone in Newry and district, but over a wide area. When the Truce came, the shop and stores belonging to the family business were raided and looted a number of times by disguised Crown forces. A Volunteer guard was posted to prevent this wholesale looting. and so long as the guard was in position, there was no attempt made, but any laxity on the part of the Volunteers guarding the premises was taken advantage of. On one particular night a local clergyman, Fr. Gallagher, was coming home from a sick call and, when passing the Milestone premises, he heard some

noise inside. He met a young man named Hugh Carroll and both of them came to my home to report. I went back with them to the Milestone and, as we approached the premises, we saw a man climbing out. This man was a McLoughlin of Queen St. and there was nothing political in his entry to the premises. It was purely a matter of robbery. We arrested him and tried him for this offence.

About February or early March 1922, the Northern Government took up in a most aggressive manner the work of maintaining law and order. Measures were instituted to deal with the Irish Republican Army and other Republican organisations, and proclamations were issued banning them. A system of armed patrols was again set in motion on the streets of the town and also on the roads of the country districts. A new campaign of raiding and searching houses was commenced by the British forces in the north. Active I.R.A. men had again to go on the run and all semblance of a Truce disappeared.

In April 1922, Dundalk Military Barracks was occupied, mostly by men from Newry and Camlough Battalions and, in addition, armed camps were established at Ravensdale, Co. Louth, and in a few other areas in Co. Louth. I was amongst the party that took over the military barracks in Dundalk. When the military barracks had been taken over, my duties were mainly concerned with Newry town and I spent most of my time back and forth between Dundalk and Newry. At least three-fourths of my time was spent in Newry, however.

AMBUSH AT HYDE MARKET, NEWRY, 1922.

About the end of May 1922, orders were issued by the Divisional staff that patrols of armed forces in the town and country were to be attacked. As a result of this order, a number of Divisional officers accompanied by Newry Officers came into Newry, and plans were made to ambush a patrol in Needham Place. The late John Quinn was in charge of this



operation. Ned Fitzpatrick got in touch with me and asked me to get a few of my men and take up a position at the Abbey Yard, at the foot of Courtney Hill. This point controlled the entrance into Needham Place from The Commons, a very hostile Orange area where all the young men were armed members of the Special Constabulary. At about 11 o'clock myself and a number of my men took up the positions assigned to us. We had earlier passed into the town through the Commons district. We were in position for about two hours and nothing of interest took place in our vicinity. We then heard shooting near the Presbyterian Church, Hyde Market. When the sound of the shooting had ceased, Jimmy Goodfellow, an officer of the Newry Battalion, came along and told us that the attack was over and to clear off. We proceeded up Courtney Hill and got into the Abbey grounds where we dumped our guns. We slept out on the grounds that night. Any of my party who were safe to go home next day went home. Early next morning the remainder of us went down to McCann's Bakery where we were supplied with fresh buns and buttermilk as a breakfast. I cannot now remember how many of the Crown forces were killed or wounded in this ambush, but there was a number of casualties inflicted.

#### SHOOTING OF MR. WOULFE-FLANAGAN, R.M.

On the 3rd June 1922, I was in the military Barracks, Dundalk. I got an order that evening to proceed to Newry and, on the following morning, to arrest or shoot Mr. James Woulfe-Flanagan, Resident Magistrate. I was told that Mr. Woulfe-Flanagan was in the habit of attending 11 o'clock Mass in the Cathedral in Newry and that he could be got coming from that Mass. I took Eddie O'Hare with me from the military barracks and we proceeded to Newry. Next morning I made contact with Pat McEvoy, who had a Ford car, and I asked him to have his car available for us in his garage from 9 o'clock onwards,

as we had a 'job' to do in Newry. We had scouts out from 10 o'clock onwards to find out if Mr. Woulfe-Flanagan attended any of the earlier Masses. Shortly after the 11 o'clock Mass had started the scouts reported that Mr. Woulfe-Flanagan had gone to that Mass. At about a quarter to twelve we got the car parked as close as possible to the Cathedral steps, at Fox, the barber's shop, and immediately in front of Mr. Woulfe-Flanagan's parked car. Eddie O'Hare and myself then waited on the Cathedral steps until the congregation started to come out after the 11 o'clock Mass. When Mr. Woulfe-Flanagan and his two sisters came out, I approached him and informed him that I had orders from the I.R.A. to arrest him and that, if he resisted, he was doing so at the peril of his life. Having warned him, I took hold of him on one side and O'Hare took hold of him on the other. He violently resisted our efforts to force him to come with us. As he was a powerful man of over six foot in height, when we found we were not able to force him to come with us we both fired and mortally wounded him. We then ran in the direction of where we had the car parked. O'Hare got into the car and the car drove on for a few hundred yards further before it stopped to pick me up. We left Newry town and proceeded in the direction of Omeath. When we arrived at Omeath we informed the local captain, Paddy Oakes, of what had occurred in Newry and advised him to mobilise his company in order to prevent any attempt by the northern forces crossing the border into Co. Louth after us. We then drove on to Dundalk and proceeded to the military barracks to make a report of what had happened. On our arrival at the military barracks, we met John Quinn who informed us that he knew all about what had happened, as the police officers in Newry had rung up the military barracks telling them that the shooting had occurred and to look out for the men that had carried it out.

On that Sunday evening after the shooting of Mr. Woulfe-Flanagan, the British authorities in Newry closed all the five bridges across the Newry Canal leading from the Co. Down side of the town into Co. Armagh. From Monday, 5th June, Canal St. (Sugar Island) Bridge was opened for about two hours each day to allow traffic and pedestrians to pass through. When this bridge was opened, it was manned by a platoon of B.Specials who questioned and searched all persons passing through. This closing of the bridges lasted for a period of about two weeks.

In the week following the shooting two local weekly newspapers - "The Reporter" and "The Newry Telegraph" - gave very detailed and accurate descriptions of the shooting, without, however, mentioning any names of participants. In the same edition of both papers an advertisement appeared offering a reward of £1000 for information that would lead to the identity of the men engaged in the shooting. (See Appendix for newspaper reports).

For weeks after the shooting both Eddie O'Hare's house and my house were raided and searched by B.men at least twice a week. On a few occasions both houses were damaged by floors and ceiling being ripped up.

#### EVENTS IN DUNDALK - JULY 1922 - CIVIL WAR.

From the time of the shooting of Woulfe-Flanagan up to the middle of July 1922, I remained with the garrison in Dundalk Military Barracks.

About the middle of June 1922, I was asked to accompany Captain Frank McMahon, who was vice-O/C. of the barrack garrison in Dundalk Military Barracks on two journeys to Dublin to transport military equipment to Dundalk. At this time munitions were being handed over in Southern Ireland for use by the I.R.A. in the Six Northern Counties. This mission of

McMahon and me to Dublin was apparently to secure munitions for South Down area. We had a Crossley motor tender and lifted two truck loads of military equipment at the Post Office Stores in Brunswick St. and took the stuff to the military barracks, Dundalk. Later on, I procured from Mr. Harry Brady, Fruiterer, Canal St., Newry, a motor van. With Mr. Brady's conveyance Eddie O'Hare, Joe Lambe and myself transferred the stuff McMahon and I took from Dublin and other munitions from the military barracks to Omeath, Co. Louth, where we delivered it at McCourt's Hotel, situated on a height overlooking Carlingford Lough. The material we transported included rifles, ammunition, revolvers, hand grenades, etc. We were engaged on this work each day for a whole week. During the time that we were delivering this equipment at Omeath it was being transferred from McCourt's place on the next stage of its journey, as I noticed on several mornings that that material had been removed from where we had previously stored it during the night.

This material stored by us in McCourts was, I presume, taken into Co. Down area across Carlingford Lough. I know that a constant traffic in I.R.A. men and I.R.A. material crossed the Lough whenever conditions favoured crossing. The danger involved in this crossing of the Lough was due in the year 1922 to the presence in the Lough of a British naval destroyer with a small fast motor tender. Those naval vessels were equipped with searchlights and any movements by sea or near the shore were investigated by naval personnel in the motor tender. Notwithstanding all this vigilance, wanted men and warlike material were transported across the Lough to and from Co. Down. I don't remember having heard of any active I.R.A. men or any stuff being captured crossing here.

On the night of the 16th July, the 5th Northern Division,

under the command of General Dan Hogan, entered the town of Dundalk and captured all the posts held by the 4th Northern Division, including the military barracks, Anne St. and Bridge St. police barracks and the County Jail. In connection with the taking over of Dundalk by the 5th Northern Division, it is well known that some of the officers in the military barracks at the time had associated themselves with this invasion and had been a party to the opening of the gates for Hogan's men. After the barracks was captured, we were all taken prisoners. Next morning we were given the option of either joining the army or going out the gate. Nearly all the officers who were hostile to the pro-Treaty forces were made prisoners and were sent to Dundalk Jail. Among these officers were Frank Aiken, O/C., and the majority of the Divisional staff.

I availed of the option to remain on in the barracks as I had no place to go to as Newry was out of bounds to me, and I did not exactly know where we stood in the confused civil war situation. Several other officers remained on, including Sean O'Rourke, Eddie O'Hare, Charley Grant, Pat Casey and Jimmy Goodfellow. Dominic Doherty, who was involved in the preliminary negotiations with Dan Hogan for the handing over of the barracks, and had taken part in the handing over, left Dundalk the morning the barracks was captured and had gone to Dublin.

After a few days in the barracks in Dundalk, I was put in charge of a company of men and was sent to the Curragh Camp, Co. Kildare, to get uniforms and equipment. After some discussions and arguments with the authorities in the Curragh, we staged a sort of mutiny and, as a result, we were all placed under arrest. We were then placed on a special train at the Curragh railway siding which made a non-stop run to Dundalk. When the train arrived in Dundalk, I went into a

telephone booth and rang up the military barracks. I got in touch with a 5th Northern Divisional officer by the name of Winters, who was Orderly Officer for the day, and told him that we had been sent back from the Curragh. He asked me if we were in uniform and carrying equipment and I told him we were not. He warned me that, if I made any attempt to approach the military barracks, he would issue orders to the troops to open machine gun fire on us. Coming out of the telephone booth, I informed the men of the position and I told them that I was taking no further part in the Civil War on either side. Another man took charge of the company then. This man took the company down to the sentry at the barracks and, at the Soldiers' Home which is only 20 or 30 yards from the gate, they were ordered to halt by the man on guard and told to disperse or they would be fired on. The man in charge of the company then entered the Soldiers' Home and dispersed a number of refugees from Belfast who were in possession and settled down to occupy the place.

After this, several officers of the 5th Northern Division approached me with offers of a commission in the army if I would throw in my lot with them. I told them I was taking no part in the Civil War as my attitude was a neutral one. I knocked about Dundalk for some weeks and had no resources. I was practically starving except for the charity of people who knew me. Charlie Grant, who was then serving as an officer in the military barracks, came to me and told me he could get me fixed up in a non-military job in the Marine Investigation Department. I agreed to take up the position offered and I was posted to Clogherhead in the Co. Louth.

Whilst I was in Clogherhead, Andy O'Hare, who was a

prominent anti-Treaty officer, and was then serving with the 4th Northern Division against the pro-Treaty forces, got in touch with me. He slept in my digs for a considerable time and I helped him in various ways.

Signed: Edward Fullerton

(Edward Fullerton)

Date: 16<sup>th</sup> Sept 1953.

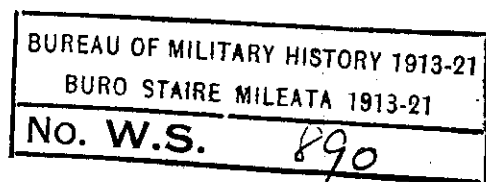
16th Sept. 1953.

Witness:

John McCoy.  
16/9/53.

(John McCoy)

16/9/53.



APPEND IX.

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

BURO STAIRE MILEATA 1913-21

No. W.S.

890

NEWRY REPORTER - June 6th 1922.

"On Sunday morning, Mr. James Woulfe-Flanagan, R.M., was foully murdered as he was leaving the Roman Catholic Cathedral in Hill Street, Newry, immediately after 11 o'clock. Mass, the perpetrators of the deed being three gunmen who had arrived in a Ford motor car.

Deceased gentleman, who was accompanied by one of his sisters, Miss Mary Woulfe-Flanagan, was coming out of the Cathedral when he was approached by one of the gunmen who asked him to "come along with us". Mr. Woulfe-Flanagan promptly declined whereupon his assistant pointed a revolver at him and deliberately discharged several bullets into him. One of the bullets ricocheted and injured a lad named Toman in the thigh. The shooting took place within a few yards of the Cathedral gate adjoining the residence of Mr. Peter Fox. Miss Woulfe-Flanagan caught the murderer by the coat collar, but he roughly flung her aside and made for the motor car, which by this time had commenced to move, and jumping into it made away with his companions in a southerly direction .... Mr. Woulfe-Flanagan was carried into Mr. Fox's where he expired in about ten minutes".

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NEWRY REPORTER - June 8th, 1922.

"On Tuesday all the bridges across the canal which runs through the centre of Newry were closed to the public except the Ballybot Bridge, over which all vehicular and pedestrian traffic had to pass under the supervision of a strong police patrol. At night the Ballybot bridge (the only bridge suitable for heavy traffic) was closed to the public and Sugar Island bridge opened to the public. This action was taken by the authorities in view, it is believed, of the frequency of the visits of gunmen from the Free State".