

W.S. 1,009

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

BURO STAIRÉ MILITIAIRÉ 1913-21

No. W.S. 1009

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 1,009.....

Witness

William Buckley,
Ballyhampshire,
Castlelyons,
Co. Cork.

Identity.

Member of Clan na Gael, San Francisco,
1915 - ;

O/C. Castlelyons Coy. I.R.A. 1919 - .

Subject.

- (a) Clan na Gael, San Francisco, U.S.A.,
1915 - ;
- (b) Fermoy Battalion I.R.A., Co. Cork,
1919-1921.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil

File No. S. 2309.....

Form B.S.M. 2

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STATEMENT BY MR. WILLIAM BUCKLEY,
Ballyhampshire, Castletyons, Co. Cork.

I was born at Francestown, Castletyons, quite close to Bawnard House, the home of the Kent family, made famous by 1916, on September 10th, 1886. My parents were farmers. My father was evicted from his holding on September 20th, 1911.

I left Ireland for New Zealand in March, 1912. For my first twelve months or so there, I worked at gold mining at Addison's Flats, Westport, West Coast, South Island. Not making any kind of a lucky strike at the gold mining, I moved to the North Island where I found work as a labourer on a waterworks undertaking at Ummatucka Range, where I worked until nearing the end of 1914 when I left for U.S.A.

I arrived in San Francisco sometime before Christmas, 1914, where I found work on the docks as a longshoreman. I was not very long in San Francisco when I made contact with the Irish crowd there. It was there I joined the Irish Volunteers in 1915 and became a member of Clan na Gael. The Senior Guardian of Clan na Gael in San Francisco at the time was Dan Harnedy.

There were about 800 members in the Irish Volunteers in San Francisco at this time. Drilling was carried out in the Knights of the Red Branch Hall, 1133 Mission Street. This hall was taken over by the American Army authorities during the late war. The Volunteers in San Francisco contributed to an Arms for Ireland Fund - the minimum levy on each member was

twenty-five dollars, but many contributed fifty and a hundred dollars. In San Francisco we had about 500 Springfield rifles which were used for drilling. The officers of the Volunteers at this time were:-

Captain John F. Waters (his father came from
Ballylanders, Co. Limerick);

and

Captain Tom McNabo.

As far as I can recollect, I think that one Volunteer from San Francisco took part in Easter Week. He was Michael O'Neill, a native of Kenmare, and he came to Ireland late in 1915.

After Easter Week, 1916, Mrs. Sheehy Skeffington and Kathleen Brennan visited San Francisco to get money for the Mansion House Fund. With Dan Harnedy, John F. Waters, Tom McNabo, Tom Moynihan (Ballyheigue), Hugh O'Connor (Kilcorney) and a number of others, witness (William Buckley "Bronco") helped in every possible way. Several big meetings were held in San Francisco, and the appeals for support for the Fund met with a satisfactory response. These meetings were presided over by Rev. Dr. Yorke, a great Irishman. He was a cousin of Sean McBride, one of the signatories of the 1916 Proclamation.

About this time the Volunteers were active in all Irish organisations in the western States. They continued their normal military activities (drilling and endeavouring to secure arms), and, as well, took a prominent part in the establishment of a new organisation - The Friends of Irish Freedom. The prime movers in the formation of this organisation were the Volunteers and Officers already referred to, as well as Jim Sullivan (Castletownbere),

Batt Kelleher (Kilcorney) and Barney Reilly (Cavan).

At the end of 1916 I left my job as longshoreman on the docks, because my name was mentioned in evidence given in a case in which de Lacey, Dan Harnedy and William Mullane were charged with planning to obtain the release of Von Schack and Von Bopp (two Germans who had promised to get arms for Ireland) from Angel Island. In this case de Lacey was sentenced to eighteen months imprisonment which he served in McNeill's Island, Puget Sound, while the others were sentenced to twelve months in the County Gaol. I then found work with the Western Pacific Fruit Express Company by whom I was employed for one year and ten months.

I remember that, while I was employed by the Western Pacific Fruit Express Company, I attended the trial of Ram Shandra and eleven other Indians who were agitating for freedom. These were closely associated with the Irish element, having the same objects - the overthrow of the British Empire. With Frank Dermody (Westmeath) and Paul Bernhardht (French, with an Irish mother), I went to see their trial one day during lunch hour. While we were in the courthouse, Ram Singh, one of the defendants, who was really a British agent, shot Ram Shandra dead while he was talking to his lawyer (Nathaniel Coughlan). Ram Singh was immediately shot by Marshal Holohan, who was of Irish extraction.

From the end of 1917 till the end of 1919, when I left the U.S.A. for home, the members of the Volunteers in San Francisco were mainly engaged in efforts to procure arms and funds to enable the I.R.A. at home to carry on the fight. During this period the San Francisco supporters must have purchased between 1,400 and 1,500 small arms of various types and arranged for their transmission to

Ireland, mainly through the eastern ports of the U.S.A. A small number of rifles were also purchased - they cost about fifty dollars each - but they were not sent, as it was hard to get a sufficient supply of ammunition for them, being .4570 rifles. The principals engaged in this work at this time were Captain John F. Waters, Captain Tom McNabo, Dan Harnedy, Thomas Moynihan (Ballyheigue), James Sullivan (Castletownbere), Hugh O'Connor and Batt Kelleher (Kilcorney), Barney Reilly (Cavan), Con O'Donnell (Co. Mayo) and witness, William Buckley (Castlelyons).

During 1919 there was a chance of getting a large lot of German rifles, with suitable ammunition, which were dumped at Mattamovaz, Mexico. The German in charge was named Erksstrom. I got in touch with Harry Boland at the Waldorf Astoria Hotel, New York, in connection with these stores, and I understand that Mick Collins was made aware of the position, but it later transpired that, owing to some trouble in Mexico, the arms could not be got out of the country.

Towards the end of 1919 I decided to come back to Ireland. With the assistance of Ned Boland, Neil Kerr, Junior, Maurice Whelan and Tommy O'Connor, I got a job as a trimmer on the liner, "Cedric", bound from New York to Liverpool. I sailed on the voyage, which began just before Christmas, 1919, and arrived in Liverpool on December 29th. Here I met Neil Kerr, Senior, Ned Flanagan and Steve Lanigan. I left by boat for Dublin that night and arrived at the North Wall next morning, about 7 a.m. This was December 30th, 1919.

Before leaving New York I got instructions to contact Mick Collins and to explain the position about the

German war material at Mattamovaz, Mexico. I met Mick Collins at, I think, Vaughan's Hotel, Parnell Square. He was accompanied by Tom Cullen. They put me in touch with Barney Downes to whom I gave a letter of introduction to the men in San Francisco who were in touch with the German (Erkstrom). These were Barney Reilly (Cavan) and Jim Sullivan (Castletownbere).

Early in January, 1920, I came home to Castlelyons where there was a Company of Irish Volunteers already in existence. The strength of the Company was about twenty. The O/C was Jack Spillane. I immediately joined the Company and took part in all Company activities. I saw that there were very many possible recruits in the district and I began to do a bit of organising. About the end of April, 1920, the membership had increased to close on eighty. At this stage there was an election of officers, with the following result:-

O/C - William Buckley (witness).

1st Lieutenant - Jim Donovan.

2nd Lieutenant - Denis Long (He later fell ill and was replaced by James Godsell.)

Normal drill and training activities proceeded at this time. Some time in June, 1920, Dick Smith, John Barry and John Woods - merchants and farmers in the district - were held up by masked men on their way home from Fermoy. They had about £1,000 in notes on their persons, between them. Dick Smith put up a fight, and the hold-up gang were driven off. The case was reported to the Volunteers in Castlelyons district. They carried out a search of the area. They arrested two men (James Curry and James Murtagh). Both men were from Dundalk.

The prisoners were charged with the hold-up. They were tried by the Brigade Staff, and were found guilty. James Curry was sentenced to be deported to England, while Murtagh, who was a young lad and under Curry's influence, was detained. He was sent to work with a local farmer (Cronin, Ballinaglough, Glenville) for some time, and he was then sent home to Dundalk.

Following the reprisals by the British military in the Fermoy district on the capture of General Lucas on June 26th, 1920, a party of the enemy, dressed up as civilians, were led to the house of Geoffrey Rice, Strawhall, Fermoy, by an Englishman (Longhurst) who kept a fish and chip shop in Barrack Hill, Fermoy. They bombed and burned the house. Longhurst was later arrested by John Fanning and Paddy ("Powder") Moloney of the Fermoy Company and taken to Castlelyons where he was handed over to me. He was held prisoner in the area for about a month before being tried by the Brigade Staff. He was sentenced to deportation to England. Within a few days he was deported from Middleton railway station.

During the next few months several raids for arms were carried out in the area. Most of the shotguns had already been collected before this time, but it was ascertained that there were some small arms held by private individuals in the area. Naturally, the holders were not supporters or sympathisers of ours. I think that five revolvers and about a hundred rounds of ammunition were obtained in these raids. All raids were carried out without opposition, except in the case of Major Collis, Castlelyons, where the inmates of the house barricaded themselves inside and opened fire on the party of Volunteers. Six shotguns were also collected during

this series of raids. The raids were carried out by Jim Donovan, 1st Lieutenant, James Godsell, 2nd Lieutenant, Dan Cronin, Tom Barry, Dan O'Connell, Jack McCarthy, Mick Mansfield and witness (William Buckley, O/C).

During October, 1920, there were a number of men on the run in the Fermoy Battalion area, and it was decided to form a Flying Column. The members of this Column were: Michael Mansfield, Dan Cronin, David Kent, James Donovan, William Buckley (witness) (Castlelyons); Patrick Egan, John Egan, Martin Condon, Maurice Regan and Mick O'Connell (Bartlemy); Jim Brennock, Patrick Daly, Patrick Canavan, Tim Ring, Dan Daly (Rathcormac); Con Leddy, Seán O'Mahony, Mick Hynes, Thomas Brennock, Batt Joyce, Maurice Hyland, Sean Hynes (Araglin). All this Column were armed with rifles, mostly captured from the enemy at Fermoy (Wesleyan raid) and Araglin R.I.C. Barracks. The arms also included a few rifles purchased from members of the enemy forces in Fermoy.

The first occasion on which the Column moved into an ambush position was December 8th, 1920, at Blackstone Bridge, about three miles from Rathcormac, on the main Cork-Rathcormac-Fermoy road. It was proposed to ambush a convoy of Auxiliaries which travelled regularly between Fermoy and Cork. The convoy usually consisted of three to five lorries. The members of the Column, as recorded in the previous paragraph, were assisted by about thirty shotgun men drawn from Castlelyons, Bartlemy, Watergrasshill and Clondulane units. Moss Twomey, Brigade Adjutant, was in charge of the combined forces.

The Column and shotgun men were divided into two parties. The riflemen and shotgun men were interspersed in each section. One section took up a position behind

a stone-faced fence, about a field in from the road (less than a hundred yards) on the north-west side, while the second section took up a somewhat similar position to the south-east of the site, across the road. As the actual site of the bridge could not be effectively covered from the selected position, it was necessary to dig a small trench on the hill side to provide some cover for this covering party. With Maurice Regan, I was in one small trench, while a second, close by, was occupied by Martin Condon and Mick Keane. I omitted to mention that all members of the ambush party were positioned on high ground overlooking the road.

The ambush party had moved into position at dawn, and were still there approaching dusk - about 4 p.m. - when the approach of the enemy convoy was signalled by our scouts, but just at the same moment it was noticed that a large funeral party in forty to fifty horses and traps were entering the ambush position. Just as the funeral party reached Blackstone Bridge, the first lorry of the enemy convoy came into view. As to attack, in the circumstances, would lead to the annihilation of the funeral party, the O/C, Moss Twomey, did not give the signal to open fire. The convoy of Auxiliaries and Black and Tans were allowed to pass through.

When the funeral party and the convoy had passed, the ambush party withdrew from their positions. The representatives of the local Companies, who had been armed with shotguns, returned to their home areas as did the men from Clondulane and Fermoy, including Moss Twomey.

Information regarding enemy movements was usually obtained in the first instance from the reports of Company Intelligence Officers. This information was

then usually confirmed by the observation of the Column O/C, or Column Adjutant, before any steps were taken to plan an attack on the enemy. When plans were completed by the Column and Battalion officers, the details of the location selected for the attack, or other information regarding the arrangements for an ambush, were never released to the members of the Column, or others likely to be engaged until the party was ready to leave their billets to take part in the engagement.

The remainder of the Column billeted that night at Barry's (2) and Troy's, Monarig, and Leary's, Bartlemy.

On the afternoon of the following day, the party moved to Ballyard where they billeted at Dan Dooley's, Dan O'Connell's, Cronin's and Drummey's, Firmount. That evening Michael Mansfield - a member of the Column - came to Castlelyons for a change of clothes. He met Paddy Mackessey, who informed him that, from information received, the military were to raid Ballyneilo district next day.

Acting on this information, the Column moved to Leary's Cross, on the Aghern-Rathcormac road, where they took up positions about 8.30 a.m. on December 10th, 1920. Owing to the lay-out of the roads, it was necessary to divide the Column into two parties. One section of three (Martin Condon, Mick Mansfield, Jim Brennock) took up a position on Lane's Hill, south-west of Leary's Cross and covering the road to Rathcormac. The remainder of the Column were on the second road which led to Bartlemy. About twelve noon William O'Connell, who had been posted as a scout higher up on the hill, signalled the approach of the enemy and then joined the section on the Bartlemy road.

When the lorry of military arrived at Leary's Cross, it halted and some of the party left the lorry. They moved up the hill towards Kilcor - this was a move we had not anticipated, in view of our information. With about seven others, I left the position on the Bartlemy road and moved towards a position from which we could ambush the party moving towards Kilcor. We had gone less than two hundred yards across two fields when a whistle was blown, and I saw the military on the Kilcor road moving back to the lorry at the cross-roads. We then hurried back to our previous position, which we reached just as the military party began to move from Leary's Cross in our direction. It had moved less than two hundred yards when fire was opened by the party on Lane's Hill. Our party immediately followed suit. The lorry was stopped by the opening volley. Some of the soldiers jumped from the lorry and took up positions in the dykes along the roadside fence. The interchange of fire continued for about twenty minutes and, as it was obvious that we would have to get into a position from which we could enfilade the road, I moved in the direction of the position held by the party on Lane's Hill, where I contacted Mick Mansfield and the others. We then divided into two parties, Mansfield coming with me, and proceeded to occupy positions on opposite sides of the road from which we could enfilade same. Martin Condon and Jimmy Brennock were still south-west of the road. On our way to our new positions, we were fired on by a small party of military (one officer and two men) from Morrison's field. We returned the fire, and the officer was seen to fall. He was later taken into Morrison's house by the soldiers. When we reached the pre-arranged positions, we called on the enemy to surrender. One

member of the military party on the road tried to fight. He was killed, and the others then surrendered. It was then discovered that there were four soldiers still in the lorry. These were called on to surrender and, after a threat of being bombed out, they did so. The enemy casualties were one killed, two wounded and six taken prisoner. We had no casualties. We captured nine rifles and 680 rounds of ammunition.

I was in charge of the party on the south side of the Bartlemy road, directly over the ambush position, while Patrick Egan was in charge of the party to the south-west. The members of the Column who took part in this engagement were:- James Donovan, Dan Cronin, Mick Mansfield, Wm. Buckley (witness), Patto Egan, John Egan, Martin Condon, Maurice Regan, Mick O'Connell, Jim Brennock, Patrick Daly, Dan Daly, Patrick Canavan, Tim Ring, Sean O'Mahony, Mick Hynes, Thomas Brennock, Batt Joyce, Maurice Hyland, Sean Hynes, .

The wounded soldiers were moved to Walsh's cottage beside the ambush position, while the prisoners were marched to Crowley's cottage, about three hundred yards away, where they were searched. They were later marched to Leary's Cross by Tom Brennock and witness, where they were released. The other members of the Column had moved away to dump the captured rifles at Lane's, Moneygown.

The whole Column then retired to Ballyard where they billeted at Dooley's, O'Connell's, Cronin's and Drummy's. They remained in this area until about 1.30 a.m. next day as they were expecting to hear news of possible reprisals in Fermoy, and proposed to move into Fermoy to deal with same. For this purpose, shotgun men

from Bartlemy and Castlelyons companies were assembled with the column to make up a combined party of about 75. As no news was received from Fermoy, the column moved on to Daly's and La^Wton's, Gurteen, while the shotgun men from the local companies returned home - those from Castlelyons to find that a party of Auxiliaries, Tans and military from Fermoy had burned Coleman's, Bridesbridge, Cotters and Mahoneys, Ballyneil^Ws, and Dalys, Hollyhill. They also set fire to Mulvey's, Rathcormac which was partly burned. When these burnings took place, the column and shotgun men were on the other side of the hill and were cut off from a view of the area in which the reprisals took place. The column only learned of the enemy activities when they returned to Daly's, Ardra, Castlelyons, next day.

As it was coming on to Christmas all the Araglen men on the column went home. On the Sunday preceding Christmas the military from Fermoy carried out a big round-up in the Castlelyons, Rathcormac, Bawnard area. Twenty eight arrests were made including Mick Mansfield (a member of the column). All the arrested men were released before Xmas Eve except Mick Mansfield, the four Coleman brothers and Jack Spillane. All the men detained were volunteers. Dan Daly then went home for Christmas and Martin Condon went to Bartlemy. Both were captured a few days after Christmas 1920. I was then left on my own and spent my first Christmas in Ireland since 1911 "on the run". We had been moving around the district since Leary's Cross on December 10th without making contact with the enemy.

On Christmas Eve 1920 I left Aghern in a rainstorm and moved towards Ballynoe. I reached Keeffe's, Newtown, Ballynoe, about 5.30 a.m. on Christmas morning. The door was opened to me by Peig O'Keefe - now wife of the General Secretary, G.A.A. I was soaked to the skin, but not for long, as the whole household were up at once to attend to my wants. I spent Christmas Day 1920 here.

I was on my own for a week after Christmas and early in January 1921, a communication came from Brigade O/C. (Liam Lynch) to the battalion adjutant (Michael Keane) requesting the attendance of Patrick Daly, Hollyhill and witness (William Buckley) at Mount Hilary near Dromahane. We proceeded to Mount Hilary and, having spent the night with Liam Lynch, I was instructed to get back and to get the column together as soon as possible. He also gave me dispatches for the battalion adjutant (Michael Keane). The latter was Creamery Manager at Castlelyons.

With the co-operation of the battalion adjutant, the following members of the column were assembled within the week - Jimmy Brennock, Pat Egan, Pat Canavan, Pat Daly, Mick O'Connell and witness. In conjunction with the members of the local company we decided to attack the Tans who usually moved round the village of Rathcormac at night. This attack did not come off for, just as we were about to move into the open to shoot up the enemy, two lorries and an armoured car of military arrived outside the R.I.C. Barracks at the other end of the village. This would be about the second week in January 1921 on Sunday night.

We withdrew from Rathcormac in the direction of Castlelyons and on to Daly's, Ardra, to find on arrival there that the woman of the house (Mrs. Daly) was dead. We remained at the wake that night.

In the meantime word had been sent to the Brigade O/C. (Liam Lynch) that all members of the column had not reported. In reply, he informed the battalion adjutant (Michael Keane) that he would be in the area about mid-January and instructed him to have the full column assembled. I think Liam Lynch was at Dooley's, Ballyard, on the night of January ^{14th} 1921. He was accompanied by Paddy O'Brien, Liscarroll. The full column had not assembled at this time although a few more

members were on the spot.

A Battalion Council meeting was held that night and the following appointments to battalion staff were made:-

O/C. Tom Griffin, Ballynoe; Vice-O/C. Michael Keane, Castlelyons, Adjutant, Tom Barry, Pellick. Witness was appointed Column O/C. and Pat Egan was appointed column adjutant. The new battalion O/C. (Tom Griffin) was captured next morning in a round-up in the Ballynoe area, while David Kent was arrested at Boultha on the same morning as well as Pat Leahy and Wm. Leahy (who took part in Wesleyan raid), and Martin O'Keeffe.

Liam Lynch and Paddy O'Brien left the Castlelyons district following the meeting, but returned again in about a week or ten days. They were again at Dooley's on this occasion and the full column had assembled. The whole party left Dooley's and moved same night to Tom Scanlon's, Barrafunna, where a meeting was held and plans laid to ambush the Fermoy military on the road between Rathcormac and Fermoy. It was proposed to stage an attack on Rathcormac R.I.C. Barracks with a view to getting the military in Fermoy to come to the assistance of garrison. The main ambush would then be laid on the Rathcormac-Fermoy road.

About this time the enemy were very active in our area and the column had to be continually on the move. Following the meeting at Scanlon's, we moved across the hill to Keeffe's and Morrison's, Glounthane, Ballynoe, where we billeted that night. When we reached Keeffe's, where Liam Lynch and Paddy O'Brien were staying, it was discovered that Liam had left a bag with some important papers at Scanlon's. I went back towards Scanlon's at daybreak to collect this bag but, just as I got within about 100 yards of the house, I met Maggie Scanlon. She had the bag and was going to take it along to dump it as the military were searching the houses all around the district. I took the bag and returned to Liam at Glounthane

which was just outside the round-up area. Charley Paye, Fermoy, arrived at Dooley's, Ballyard, to report to the column that night but was captured in the round-up.

Next night the column with Liam and Paddy O'Brien moved to Rathcabbín and Bartlemy areas where plans were completed for the attack on Rathcormac and the ambush of the military referred to previously. With a number of the column and some locals armed with shotguns I took part in the sniping of Rathcormac Barracks, while the remainder of the column and local shotgun men lay in ambush, under Paddy O'Brien, on the Fermoy-Rathcormac road. The party engaged in sniping the barracks included the following members of the column:-

Pat Egan, Tom Brannock, Jack Egan, Mick Hynes, Pat Canavan, Owen McCarthy, Maurice Regan, Pad Cotter (Gortroe), and about three others. Witness was in charge of this party. The sniping went on for about $1\frac{1}{2}$ hours but the military did not come from Fermoy, so the snipers and ambush party withdrew. It was now about the last week in January 1921.

At this time a Battalion Council meeting was held at Daly's, Bushypark, Rathcormac, at which Liam Lynch presided. The following officers were appointed at this meeting: O/C. Con Leddy, Araglin; V-O/C. Wm. Buckley, Castlelyons (witness), Adjutant, Michael Keane, Castlelyons; Q.M. Michael O'Connell (Bartlemy). While this meeting was in progress, the column was on outpost duty on all roads in the area. After the meeting the column with Liam Lynch and Paddy O'Brien moved on to Keam, Glenville where, on the only road in the area open between Fermoy and Cork, the column took up a position to await a convoy of military passing to and from Cork. About 30 members of the Glenville Company were also included in the party but the enemy did not turn up. This was a very wet day. Liam Lynch and Paddy O'Brien left the area next morning - this would be February 2nd or 3rd, 1921.

At this time the main Fermoy-Cork road was trenched above Kilshannig by a trench 18-ft. wide, $4\frac{1}{2}$ -ft. deep and the full width of the road. This trench was dug by members of the Watergrasshill, Bartlemy, Rathcormac and Glenville companies - members of the column carrying out guard and outpost duties while the job was in progress.

After the departure of the Brigade O/C. and Paddy O'Brien the column returned to the Bartlemy-Castlelyons area where it billeted for about a week. We then returned to the Glenville area where we again took up positions on the Fermoy-Cork road about midway between Cork and Fermoy at daybreak on morning in mid-February. The column was supported on this occasion by members of the Glenville and other companies. The strength of the full ambush party was, I think, 79 - this included 36 riflemen from the column while the others were armed with shotguns.

With the exception of about six, all members of the ambush party were in position on high ground on the same side of the road about 60/80 yards from same and overlooking a trench at a bend. One half of the party under the Battalion O/C. (Con Leddy) were on the Fermoy side of the trench while the remainder under witness (Wm. Buckley) were on the Cork side of the trench. About 10 a.m. an aeroplane made its appearance over the area and circled round the district a few times but then flew away in the direction of Fermoy. While the plane was in the vicinity one of the shotgun men in Con Leddy's party discharged his shotgun accidentally. As a result, Con Leddy decided to withdraw his party. He did not inform me of the move until he had taken up a position to the north of his previous one. In order to regularise the position I withdrew with my party to a new position in contact with Con Leddy's party, but the new positions were entirely unsuitable should the enemy convoy come from Fermoy. This is, in fact, what happened, before alternative positions

could be selected the enemy convoy - one armoured car, eight lorries and one private car - stopped at the trench, but from our positions we were powerless, so we had to withdraw in parties of seven and were lucky to get out. Dick Willis, Jackie Bolster and Joe Curry, with the Hotchkiss, were in the first party to withdraw. The column withdrew in safety to Bartlemy, while the local Volunteers returned to their home areas.

The column billeted in Bartlemy for about 36 hours when it moved on to Ballyard, Castlelyons and, later, to Payfield between Castlelyons and Lisgoold. It was on Saturday, February 19th, and with a big section of the column I moved into Tallow to shoot up some Tans who usually paraded around the town at night. This was the night before the Clonmult fight where a party of I.R.A. were surrounded by British forces and shot down. There were no Tans to be seen in Tallow, so we returned to Walshe's, Ballynoe, where we met Willie Ahearne, Mick Cronin, Wm. Meade and another from the Middleton Battalion, Cork I Bde. They were staying in the Clonmult area at the time and we advised them to leave that area as we considered it dangerous. We also advised them that we were moving on to Kilcronat where we suggested they should join us.

The Cork I Brigade men (Willie Ahearne, Mick Cronin, Wm. Meade and another) moved on to Clonmult while we continued on to Kilcronat where we billeted at Mulcahy's, Higgins's and Mahoney's. Next evening (Sunday) John Lawton who was, I think, captain of Clonmult Company, arrived at Kilcronat on a bicycle. He informed us that our Cork I colleagues were being attacked at Clonmult. We immediately mobilised our column and proceeded across country on foot to the relief of Clonmult, but when we reached the Cork I billet we found the house on fire and the fight over. With the exception of 3 or 4 left to act as guards at Kilcronat, the whole column as well as Frank Ryan and Pad Ronayne, Tallow, took part in this endeavour to help our

colleagues in the neighbouring brigade. I should have mentioned that Willie Ahearne, referred to in the opening sentence, was killed at Clonmult. This was Sunday, February 20th 1921.

We returned to Kilcronat that night and moved next day to Payfield where we billeted. We then contacted the Middleton Battalion, Cork I Brigade, with a view to arranging an ambush of one of the enemy parties still carrying out investigations in connection with Clonmult. On or about February 22nd, we moved into position on the glen road near Walshestownmore between Middleton and Clonmult, where we remained from daybreak to dusk, but we failed to make contact with the enemy. This attempted ambush was planned in co-operation with the Middleton Battalion, Cork I Brigade.

The column then withdrew to Longueville, Ballynoe, from where we moved about midnight to Garrynagoul in Ballyduff area. We had only left our previous billets when the area was surrounded. We moved next day to Araglin area where we remained for a few days before taking up an ambush position at Mocollop on the Fermoy-Ballyduff road about $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles from Ballyduff. The full column to the number of about 36 were on the north side of the road and were extended over a distance of about 400 yards. The enemy party of twelve Tans with Sergeant Cullinane, R.I.C., were walking into the ambush position from the east. They had only just entered the position when fire was immediately opened by some members of the column. One of the enemy party was killed and two wounded. The remainder took cover behind the fence on the opposite side of the road and replied to our fire. Within a few minutes enemy planes were sweeping the area (we were within 7 or 8 miles of Fermoy) and as enemy ground forces were reported by our scouts to be approaching in large numbers we were forced to break off the engagement after about 20 to 25 minutes. We had no casualties.

The column withdrew in a north-easterly direction towards Ballysaggart, then, turning north west, moved over the mountain to Ballyheaphy, Araglin. We billeted that night in Doon, Araglin, moving next day across the Blackwater to Castlelyons.

It was now early in March, I think, and about a dozen members of the column moved into Fermoy one night to carry out reprisals for some executions which had taken place in Dublin. Only two soldiers were to be seen in Fermoy. Both were fired on and wounded, I think. The members of this party were, I think, Con Leddy, Mick Keane, Jim and Thomas Brennock, Jim Mahoney, Michael Hynes, Owen McCarthy, Pat Daly, Pat Canavan, Denis Hegarty, Bill Twomey and witness.

This party now returned across country to Ballynoe and next night moved on to Kilcronat where Dan Breen arrived the same night. As a result of a report received that an ex-British soldier from Tallow had been seen in the area it was suspected that he would report our position to the enemy and it was decided to move the column to Ballyard, Castlelyons. It was lucky that we had moved as the Kilcronat area was surrounded by the enemy that night (38 lorries and eight armoured cars) but the column was outside the ring. This was the night of March 22nd when Arthur Mulcahy (a native of Currabeha, Conna) was shot. Dan Breen was driven to Glenville in a horse and trap and from there he was taken to Burnfort by some members of the Glenville company.

A few days later the column moved again into the Glenville area. On our way we billeted at Arderrow but information was received that the enemy was in the district, so we moved south west to Keam, Glenville, near Bottle Hill. We took up an ambush position at Carriganaffrin but the enemy did not turn up. We had been in position here from early morning and had only moved away on the approach of nightfall when a party of "Auxies" was reported on its way along the road from Ballyhooley

to Carrignavar. We tried to get back to our position but the enemy passed through before we could reach same. It was now the end of March.

Early in April I was engaged with other members of the column as well as local Volunteers in the preparation of a dugout at Barrafochenagh. This was dug out of the mountainside. It was 22' x 18' x 10'. The roof was ceiled with sheet iron and covered with natural sods of heather. The entrance was by means of a trapdoor covered with growing heather amongst which was hidden a hook to enable the door to be lifted to permit one to enter.

It was about this time that a meeting was held at Hickey's, Tubbereenmire, Glenville, at which first steps were taken to form the 1st Southern Division. The whole column was engaged for two nights and a day on outpost and guard duty while this meeting was in progress. After this meeting, accompanied by Jim Brennock, I escorted Dan Breen and Con Moloney across the Blackwater at Kilbarry and went on with them beyond Araglin. Here we met Ernie O'Malley and we had to return with him to Payfield where the column was billeted. After a day or two we moved with Ernie O'Malley west to Glenville. We were driven in a horse and trap by Bill O'Connell. Others in the party were Dick Willis, Jackie Bolster, Dan Daly and Con Leddy. We proceeded to Forde's, Graigue, where the others billeted and I went on with O'Malley and John Forde to Mick Nagle's, Burnfort. When I returned to Forde's we decided to move to the north side of the mountain (Ballyhooley area). We reached Leahy's, Ballyhooley, at 1 a.m. to find a meeting of Cumann na mBan in progress. We billeted that night at Burke's and Lombard's, Ballyhooley.

While on our way with O'Malley to Glenville I noticed a man washing his socks in the river at the bridge south of

Glenville. As the enemy were at this time sending members of their forces, dressed in civilian clothes, into the area to act as spies, I became suspicious of this individual. I suggested to O'Malley that we should arrest him but he would not agree. Early next morning this area was surrounded by enemy troops.

About this time one of the agents referred to in the previous paragraph was arrested by members of the local company near Watergrasshill. His identity was established as Lieut. Vincent - a member of one of the British units stationed at Fermoy - who was engaged on intelligence work. He was held prisoner for about a week and at the end of this period he was shot by his guards when he made an attempt to escape during the course of a round-up by his own forces in the district where he was being held a prisoner. This happened at Toor, near Glenville.

It was about this time also that David Walshe, Shanagarry, was arrested by members of the Glenville Company on suspicion of having given information to the British which led to the massacre of I.R.A. forces at Clonmult on February 20th. He was held prisoner for about a week when he eventually admitted his guilt. He was tried by members of the battalion staff and sentenced to death. The sentence was confirmed by the Brigade staff. He was executed at Doon, Glenville.

Having rested at Ballyhooley, the members of the column moved on to Dan Barry's, Sheepwalk, where we met 4 or 5 members of the Glanworth Column. The combined party moved on to the Aerodrome at Fermoy which we approached from the north west side. The party opened up with rifle and machine gunfire on the huts and hangars and eventually on the searchlight tower. The attack was continued for about 15 minutes when the party withdrew in Glanworth direction. Amongst those who took part were Con Laddy, Dick Willis, Jackie Bolster, Jim Brennock, Dan Daly, witness (Wm. Buckley) and 4 or 5 members from Glanworth.

When we parted with the Glanworth section we doubled back towards Ballyhooley, reaching Glenville early next morning when we continued on without a halt to Bartlemy. After a few days here we had to move on again to Rathcabbin area as enemy raiding parties were very active in the area.

During May 1921, the column lay in ambush on four separate dates on the Fermoy-Lismore road but failed to make contact with the enemy.

On June 1st 1921, with other members of the column, I sniped Rathcormac R.I.C. Barracks and during the subsequent week (on June 8th, I think) we entered the village in the hope of getting a shot at some of the Tans in the street. On this occasion only one Tan made his appearance and he was shot as he dashed in the door of the barracks. Faulkiner was (I think) his name. Jackie Bolster, Tim Ring, Mick Keane, Maurice Regan, Paddy Cotter, William Cotter, Dan Daly and witness were on this job.

During the month of June the column were considerably harassed by large scale round-up attempts by the enemy but managed to evade the net on all occasions.

On July 2nd the column moved in on Tallow to ambush an R.I.C. and Tan patrol which usually patrolled the town in the forenoon. About 3 a.m. four members of the column (Dan Daly, Pad Egan, Jim Donovan and Wm. Buckley (witness) moved into position in the old barracks with the intention of cutting off the retreat of the patrol when fire would be opened on them by the remainder of the column who were in position on a hill overlooking the Main St. This party were armed with rifles as were the party on the hill which also included the machine-gun crew (Dick Willis and Jackie Bolster).

The patrol of ten came out at 10 a.m. and moved towards our position. They had not reached us when the party on the hill opened fire. The party of Tans broke up and took cover with the result that our party were unable to get into our

prearranged position so that we could enfilade the street. In addition, the fact that two loads of hay were being taken along the street at the time helped to upset the plans completely. One Tan was killed in this engagement. We suffered no casualties. The exchange of fire lasted about 10 minutes. The ambush parties then withdrew to Boultha, Ballynoe, and later to Castlelyons area.

Next day with Con Leddy and Dick Willis, I went to ambush some officers who were reported to be visiting at Brownings, Rathealy Road, Fermoy. We got into position for some time but the officers had not arrived at midday. Suddenly the O/C. Fermoy Company (Hackett), at the time, made his appearance. He told us to clear out immediately as the enemy were aware of our whereabouts. We left at once and had only got about half way to Clondulane (about $\frac{3}{4}$ mile) when the place (Brownings) was surrounded.

On Tuesday, July 4th 1921, the column with members of the Castlelyons, Fermoy, Clondulane and Conna companies took part in the destruction of the railway line between Clondulane and Ballyduff. There were about 100 men engaged on this job and practically every fishplate and chair on this stretch of railway was smashed. In this connection we heard that when a patrol of military from Fermoy, who were on the Fermoy-Tallow road - heard all the noise, the officers in charge decided that the I.R.A. party engaged was too strong, otherwise they would not be making so much noise. This information was obtained from a civilian who had been picked up by the military and was later released before the patrol returned to barracks. However, on the following night large forces of the enemy carried out a large-scale round-up in the Castlelyons district, but the members of the column in the area had retired to the dugout at Barrafohoenagh and so escaped encirclement.

During the week prior to the Truce we were engaged nearly every night in endeavouring to contact enemy patrols operating in the area but we failed to make contact.

The strength of the Battalion (Fermoy) at the Truce was 650. My rank at the Truce was Battalion Vice-O/C. and Column O/C.

I feel that this statement would not be complete without paying tribute to the people throughout the area who by their hospitality and co-operation helped us to carry on the fight. I would like to refer particularly to the following whose homes and resources were always at the service of the columns and the Volunteers:-

Thomas Scanlon, Barrafohoenagh	Mrs. Forde, Glenville
Dan Dooley, Ballyard	Jas. Fenton, Raheen, Rathcormac
Dan O'Connell do.	Mr. Murphy, do.
Mr. Cronin do.	Dan O'Callaghan do.
Jn. O'Connell, Knockasticane	Mr. Dorgan do.
Rchd. O'Keefe, Ballynoe	Batt. Twohig do.
Paddy O'Keefe do.	Jas. Sheehan, Glentrasna, Ballynoe.
John Daly, Ardra.	Tim O'Keefe do. do.
Tom Adams, Keam, Bartlemy	John Barry, Monarig, Bartlemy.
Jn. Cullinane do.	Wm. Hegarty, Kilcor South
John Foley, Graigue, Glenville.	Matt Drumney, Firmount.

Signed: William Buckley

Date: 20th September 1954

(William Buckley)

Witness: Phil O'Donnell

(Phil O'Donnell)

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

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