

W. S. 1,208
ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
BURO STAIRA MILEATA 1913-21
No. W.S. 1208

ROINN



COSANTA.

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 1,208

Witness

Daniel J. Stapleton,
"Hillcrest",
Skerries,
Co. Dublin.

Identity.

Lieut. No. 1 Company
1st Battalion Kilkenny Brigade.

Subject.

No. 1 Company 1st Battalion,
Kilkenny Brigade 1917-1921.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil

File No. S.1905

Form B.S.M. 2

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
BURO STAIRE MILEATA 1913-21
No. W.S. 1208

STATEMENT BY DANIEL J. STAPLETON,
Hillcrest, Skerries, Co. Dublin.

It would be difficult for me, after all these years, to definitely indicate when work on munitions first became associated with I.R.A. activities. It was more or less a gradual development rather than an actual establishment. My brother, Frank Stapleton, and myself had established a reputation, through the medium of a well equipped workshop, for repairs to shotguns and rifles, etc., of which there were a few in every farmhouse in the country.

The first contact for repairs, as far as I can recollect, came from the Column attached to the 7th Battalion, Kilkenny Brigade, of which the O/C was Eamon Aylward. The repairs were necessarily to rifles and the reconditioning of cartridges for both shotguns and rifles. Paddy Ryan, M. Dawson and S. Downey, members of the Column, were frequent visitors to the workshop at Tullemaine, Callan, where Frank did the mechanical repairs and I reconditioned the various types of ammunition, which was nearly always found to be in bad condition, whence the charges had to be drawn and fresh ones introduced. The experience gained during this period was invaluable at later dates, as, after the formation of the Volunteers, it was inevitable that it should be placed at the disposal of the I.R.A.

I had qualified as a chemist in 1912 and had opened my own medical hall at 23, High Street, Kilkenny. It was here that I was approached, shortly after the Sinn Féin elections in 1918, by the then Brigadier of the Kilkenny Brigade, George Dwyer, who enquired if I was in a position to secure supplies for use of the

I.R.A. The nature of the supplies was not, at that time, mentioned other than being asked if I could supply two hundred gallons of cod liver oil for use of the Columns. I pointed out that I had not such a large quantity in stock but that I would do my utmost to get it. George Dwyer told me to go ahead. Personally, I regarded this as something in the nature of a test and that, if successful, further orders and instructions would follow. I was very anxious to be of assistance and went about securing it right away. Furthermore, it gave me a chance to test certain channels for safety in case there should be other instructions. I immediately contacted a Mr. J.H. Miles, an Englishman and representative for Messrs. Harker, Stagg and Morgan, here in Ireland. I had no difficulty in obtaining the supply of cod liver oil through Mr. Miles. Once this contact was established, the Brigade took over and the oil was subsequently delivered to the Divisional Chemist, Mr. Coffey, at Limerick.

After this effort, I was taken into the confidence of the Brigadier, George Dwyer, who told me that he understood that I had a fairly extensive knowledge of firearms and explosives and that I was expected to place such at the disposal of the I.R.A.

I agreed, wholeheartedly, to do so and received instructions to prepare a plan through which various types of explosives could be made in safety and in absolute security. I was then assigned to No.1 Company, 1st Battalion, Kilkenny Brigade. Tom Neary was Quartermaster in No. 1 Company and, in the months which followed, it was Tom who made all the necessary arrangements whereby it was possible for me to begin on

the manufacture of explosives, the filling and reloading of cartridges, the making and filling of detonators as well as the re-making and rendering effective supplies of explosives which had been captured at different coast-guard stations and barracks.

A place was secured by Tom Neary on an out-farm, the property of Mr. Joe Sweeney, in a locality called Dunningstown in the hills outside Kilkenny and in the direction of Tullaroan. Here, the facilities were primitive in the extreme, especially in consideration of the work which was to be carried out. I at once started about organising the place, purchasing pots and pans, etc.; there was an old stove already installed in an outhouse on the farm and this was reconditioned and made serviceable. I should have mentioned that I was assigned two Volunteers, S. Donnelly and P. O'Neill, both members of No. 1 Company, who worked under my instructions and carried on there during the blackest period of the Black and Tan regime, and right up to the time of the Truce. The supply of raw materials for the manufacture of the explosives and the powders for the filling of cartridges became a problem. At this time, the importation of Pot. chlorate and Pot. nitrate had been prohibited by the British and, while I had a fairly good stock of the potassium nitrate, we were very short of the potassium chlorate. I contacted Mr. Miles again and arranged with him to have Harker, Stagg and Morgan's to send to my own medical hall at Kilkenny a supply of the potassium chlorate, made up in 1-lb. packages and labelled "Condition Powders for Horses". This was very successful, and I was able to get in several gross of the 1-lb. packages without any questions being asked.

The potassium chlorate was an essential ingredient in many of our compositions, especially the famous warflour and the cheddar and paxo.

It was at Dunningstown that quantities of the warflour were first made. Small quantities on an experimental scale were always made first at the medical hall and then, when the method was established, the process was carried out on an increased scale at Dunningstown.

The formula for the warflour was received from the Brigadier through Tom Neary. I understood that it came originally from M.P. Collivet, O/C, Limerick City, and that it was brought from Chicago by a Franciscan friar. The method of manufacture of this explosive is of great interest and I record the process here for reference. The process has already been given by me to Major V. de Valera at the request of his father, Eamon de Valera.

The ingredients in the explosive consisted of the following:

Nitric acid
Sulphuric acid
Powdered resin
Wheaten flour
Potassium chlorate.

The nitric and sulphuric acids were first mixed together, a process which entailed the utmost caution and care as the acids were, through the excessive heat developed during the mixing, liable to explode themselves. The acids were cooled by placing the vessel containing them in running water for a while. When cool, the acids were then added to the resin in a mortar, and the nitrating of the resin began. To this mixture was then

added a small quantity of the flour which acted as an enzyme, starting a violent reaction between the mixed acids and the resin. A frothing and bubbling began which crept up the sides of the mortar, entirely filling it and forming into a brittle crust very like that on an ordinary white loaf. This crust was broken down into the mortar and powdered. At this stage, it was found that the volume produced was more than three times that of the original ingredients.

The nitrated resin was then transferred to muslin bags and washed free from any traces of acid. Our method for doing this was to tie the bags to a long pole, which was stretched across a small stream in the vicinity, and, with the bags suspended in the running water, were allowed to remain there for about twenty-four hours. The powder was then taken in and, after being tested for acidity, was dried. At first, we used artificial means by spreading the powder on the lids of biscuit-tins and drying over the stove. When this was complete, the powder was mixed, by hand, with the potassium chlorate. The strength of the explosive was regulated by the amount of the potassium chlorate which was added and, as it was used in quite a variety of ways, we were obliged to keep a stock of the different types. For instance, the explosive content of mines differed from that which went into the old No. 9 G.H.Q. grenade.

The casings for the mines consisted mostly of drain pipes, with a plate at each end and a long bolt through the centre which kept the plates in position. Sometimes these casings came in for filling from the different units and, at other times, the actual

ingredients were supplied and the units filled them.

No record of these transactions was ever kept, for obvious safety reasons, but I have a recollection that material went out as far as the 4th North Cork Brigade (Tom Barry, O/C), Mid Limerick Brigade, 7th Battalion, Kilkenny Brigade (Eamon Aylward, O/C) and to the three Tipperary columns, Denny Lacy's, Denny Sadlier's and Seamus Robinson's.

There was another type of casing which frequently arrived at Dunningstown for filling. It consisted of the iron lining or bearing of the hub of an ordinary farm cart. When this was filled and primed with detonator and fuse, it was a powerfully destructive weapon. It had the same action which, in later years, I found was possessed by an eighteen-pounder shell.

As the work at Dunningstown progressed, numerous enquiries were received in the form of despatches, asking for varying information, such as -

Could we supply detonators?

Was it possible to improve the range of shotguns?

Could we refill and re-cap fired cartridges? -

and a whole host of other enquiries.

Needless to say, this entailed a lot more work for us, and Donnelly and O'Neill were obliged to take up residence on the premises for varying periods. It is of interest to note, at this point, that the meals for the staff were supplied by the Dooley family living across the fields from the dump. Miss Dooley was a member of the Cumann na mBan and a great help to us. She afterwards married in Dublin and became Mrs. Daly and is living in Slemish Road, Skreen Road, Cabra.

During 1919, the heartening news of Eamon de Valera's escape from Lincoln Jail was spread through the country, and it would appear that this was a signal for intensive activity on the part of all our I.R.A. units throughout the land.

Already, the raid for explosives at Solohead had occurred a few weeks previously and, soon afterwards, came the Knocklong ambush.

I mention this position because we were informed that there was a shortage of ammunition for the variety of weapons in our possession and that it was imperative that we concentrate on the filling of fired cartridge cases for both rifles and shotguns. This necessitated the manufacture of fulminate of mercury as an ingredient of cap composition and for the making of detonators. The filling of cartridges was an easy matter. The fired caps were removed from the base of the cartridges, the indent, made by the striker, punched back into position and the composition pressed into it in the form of a paste made with acacia powder and cigarette paper pressed over it to keep away moisture.

This was a very successful procedure and merited praise from several quarters. The making of the detonators was a far more difficult and dangerous operation as the naked fulminate, an extremely sensitive explosive, had to be loaded into the tube direct and fixed in position, so that it would not fall out during handling. This was eventually accomplished but not without a few accidents, the more serious one being on an occasion when I had about one ounce of the fulminate in a mortar and was filling the detonators, when a

piece of plaster fell from the roof of the shed on to the fulminate and exploded it. I was blown through an old window but escaped with only a burn on the palm of my hand. My hand was bandaged, of course, and, as a result, I was paid a visit by the military from Kilkenny barracks and asked to account for the wound. I explained that I received it while making up a paste for footrot in sheep, in the medical hall. They seemed satisfied for the moment but were back next day to have me make up some of the stuff and demonstrate how the accident occurred. It was an easy matter to make up a composition which would produce the desired effect. Their hasty exit from my compounding department was a compliment as well as a proof of their entire satisfaction.

In the making of the detonators, the copper tubing was impossible for us to obtain, so an improvised method was established. The casing which we made consisted of fine parchment paper rolled around an ordinary pencil and dipped into melted paraffin wax; when the wax had dried on the outside the inside was also coated. They worked splendidly and hundreds of them were made and fitted into mines and grenades.

In the fall of 1919 there was an escape of prisoners or a liberation from Mountjoy Jail - I don't recollect which - but we received an instruction from the Brigadier that the utmost secrecy was to surround all work at Dunningstown and that we were not to mix freely with the recently liberated prisoners, as it was regarded as a ruse on the part of the British to trace those who were active while the other prisoners were in jail. At this time, transport became an acute problem as you had to have a permit to travel in restricted areas. We overcame this by the purchase of a motor-

bike and sidecar which was arranged by the Brigade to be registered in the name of Sir William Blunden's eldest son at the County Council offices, Parliament Street, Kilkenny. It was very successful and, although I was often held up by the military and subsequently by the Tans, I was always freely liberated and bid God speed.

Early in 1920, I was promoted to the Brigade Staff as Brigade Chemist with the rank of Lieutenant, and was given the number, 38, with which to sign any despatches or communications when necessary. Towards the end of 1919 and the beginning of 1920, there was intense activity on the part of the British. Arrests were going on night and day, and I think it was early in 1920, about February, that curfew was imposed. I was caught out on one occasion a few minutes after twelve. I happened to be in the company of a Mr. John Kerwick who was the local provision contractor for the barracks and, as he was identified by the officer in charge of the patrol, we were both conducted to our homes and told not to be caught out again - an advice which I afterwards took the utmost care to fulfil.

The filling of cartridges was now taken on as a first-time job. Pellets had to be made and bullets moulded for the different types of rifles and shotguns. The moulds were made out at my brother's place (Frank Stapleton, Tullemaine, Callan, Co. Kilkenny). Incidentally, this place was raided several times during 1920 and 1921, both by the military and the Tans. We had, however, effectively hidden away our equipment and nothing was ever found. They did, on some of the occasions, take away some fowl and eggs - I suppose by way of compensation. It was out here that the tests

on the shotguns were carried out. We had arrived at the exact size of the pellets which could be used with a certain degree of safety to the firer; this safety margin actually depended upon the degree between the initial impulse of the propellant charge and the inertia of and weight of the pellets. Needless to say, several guns were destroyed before we arrived at and acquired the requisite data. The pellets were quarter-inch round moulded lead, like ball-bearings, and were loaded, seven pellets to the charge, in the ordinary twelve-bore cartridge, with melted paraffin wax introduced to bind them together during flight. On actual tests, we succeeded in penetrating a half-inch deal board at a range of one hundred and twenty yards. This far exceeded our expectations and, as a result, I arranged for a demonstration with the Brigadier, George Dwyer, and other members of the Staff. This demonstration never came off, for the reason that I had made six rounds for the purpose and had placed them in a small despatch dug-out near Dunningstown for safety. When I went to get them, they were gone but, about two weeks later, a despatch came back from Carrick-on-Suir with the six empty cases and a query to know if we had any more like them. I informed the Brigadier what had happened. His reply was, "You can call off the demonstration! That's recommendation enough!".

Hundreds of these cartridges were made at this time, mostly out at Tullemaine and in a cellar beneath my medical hall in Kilkenny. I was held up by a patrol on one occasion when bringing a consignment of them out to the Quartermaster, 7th Battalion, (Thomas Meagher) at Callan for distribution to some of the columns operating

on the borders of Tipperary, Kilkenny and around Slievenamon. The identification of my motor-bike as that of Sir William Blunden's saved me from any serious attention and I was allowed to pass.

Extra precautions had now to be taken with regard to movements. The Tans had established a headquarters at Woodstock House, near Thomastown, and numerous arrests were being made. Alderman de Loughry, Ernie O'Malley and T.B. Cahill, Callan, were taken. The latter was carried around on the Tan lorries as a hostage for some weeks, and then imprisoned in Spike Island. Colonel Jim Hanrahan and Commandant J.J. Carrigan had narrow escapes, and it was with great difficulty that any movements could be made. The Tans were carrying out indiscriminate shootings and fired on men working in the fields. On one occasion, they drove through Callan firing all around them. They shot Mrs. Mike Ryan on her own doorstep and wounded several others in the streets.

Our own Brigade was also active, the staff including George Dwyer, Brigadier, Joe Rice, Vice Brigadier, J.J. Byrne, Adjutant, Tom Treacy, Quartermaster, and Joe Dardis, as well as all the Battalion O/C's. Preparations were made for the ambush of a convoy which travelled between the military barracks and the jail, Friary Street, Kilkenny, and for the Coolbawn ambush near Castlecomer. In the former, Volunteer Darmody and, in the latter, Volunteers Harley and Mullins were killed. In spite of all this activity, word came from the 2nd Southern Division (E. O'Malley, O/C) that the filling of No. 9 G.H.Q. grenades at their own plant was being held up because of the shortage of the proper explosive. I was instructed by the Brigadier to make arrangements to visit

the place, which was in from Limerick Junction, in the fields. I contacted Thomas Meagher at Callan as he was acquainted with the location of the plant. I had received instructions to report at room 15 in the G.S.R. Hotel at the Junction. After travelling across country, through by-roads and laneways, in my bike and sidecar, Tom Meagher and myself reported at room 15 where we found a pass awaiting us for admission to the plant. The visit was very illuminating as we found there, in the outhouses of a farmhouse, a complete blast furnace and moulding floors. The officer in charge of the place was, as far as I can remember, Tom Nagle or Nangle, but I dare say other records will be able to verify this. I found that an excellent job was being done here. The grenades were a perfect piece of work, the cases and the firing mechanism being of a practical and serviceable design. With proper filling, it was to become a formidable addition to our equipment. The grenade was fairly large and required a fairly fast explosive in order to break it into the proper number of pieces. There were three types of explosives which we were making at that time, any one of which would be suitable. They were warflour, paxo and Irish cheddar. I did not know then that a quantity of explosives had been captured down in Cork from the British, and one amongst the lot, known as subbulite - a mixture of aluminium and ammonium nitrate - would have been the ideal filling. As it was, we carried on with our own explosives and, when warflour was not available, we used paxo. Irish cheddar was scarce as one of the ingredients was D.N.T. which was difficult to obtain as it was held only in magazine and coastguard stations and was limited in quantity.

During all this time also, repairs were being

carried out on numerous guns and rifles. There were Webleys, Colts, Smith & Wessons, Colt Autos, Styr's and a number of German and Austrian and Italian weapons. I had the honour at one time of overhauling the Styr carried by Seán Treacy and a Peter-the-Painter belonging to Denis Sadlier.

Early in 1921, I was administered the oath of allegiance to the Republic by the Adjutant, in the presence of the Brigadier and Eamon Aylward, O/C, 7th Battalion. This was not an oversight but was occasioned by Tan and military activity and the added difficulty of making an appointment for the purpose.

Prior to this occasion, I was instructed to take on intelligence work and endeavour to report on intended military movements. This was because I was a member of the local Golf Club and, as some of the military officers played there, it was thought that, in the course of conversation at any time in the clubhouse, they might drop a hint as to intended operations. I never succeeded in gaining any, except on one occasion when the O/C, Colonel Atkinson, happened to say to Dr. Stephenson, "By the way, Doctor, I will be unable to go up to the County Club this evening as there is a raid at a place called the Church Quarter". I thought I should never get away from the place, as I knew the Church Quarter to be the location of a dump belonging to the 7th Battalion. The raid, however, never took place, but the information was useful in that it disclosed the fact that the military were aware that stores of some description existed in the vicinity. The dump was subsequently changed to another locality.

In addition to the above activities, I was at

this period approached by members of the Cumann na mBan, including Miss Stallard, afterwards Mrs. T. Clarke, and asked if I could find time to deliver lectures on first-aid to their members. I agreed to do so, and they fixed the time for every Tuesday evening, and the place - Roche's Arch, the headquarters of the Gaelic League in Kilkenny. It was explained that instructions had been received from their Executive in Dublin that dressing stations were to be established throughout the country where requisite supplies and attendance would be forthcoming for wounded of the flying columns or the supporting Volunteers. The attendances at the lectures were extremely good, and intense interest in the various phases of the demonstrations was displayed by the members attending. I had occasion afterwards to visit one of these stations to have a few scratches dressed, which I received when returning from Limerick across country through Killenaule. I crashed into a gate, which had been left open in a laneway, in the dusk of the evening, and travelling without lights on the motor bike, I did not see it until just at it. The station was located at Larry Minogue's farm at Ballydoven, between Callan and Ballingarry, and was everything that it was expected to be.

About this time - early in 1921 - complaints began to come in that the cartridges, which we were re-filling, would not fit into some of the rifles. An examination of this position showed that quite a number of the cases being sent in had been fired in very old weapons in which the breeches were corroded and worn. As the result of firing, the cartridge case was expanded by the force of the explosion beyond the normal limit, and then, of course, would not fit into a more

recent or well-kept weapon. I explained this position and pointed out that we could do nothing about it and that the units would only have to use the ammunition in the weapons in which it fitted. About this time also, Tom Neary, Quartermaster, No. 1 Company, 1st Battalion, had got in about five hundred rounds of .303 ammunition. As far as I can recollect, it was through a Dr. Brennan, stationed in Swansea. Tom asked me to deliver two hundred and fifty of the rounds to Eamon Aylward, O/C, 7th Battalion, for use of the column attached to that Battalion. This I did. Tom also told me at this time that his hiding place for the arms and ammunition entrusted to him was the roof of the Protestant Bishop's palace at St. Canice's Cathedral. How he got in and out there would have to be disclosed by Tom himself!

I received intimation from the Brigadier about this time (I recollect that it was shortly after some executions in Mountjoy jail; Whelan was one, and I think Flood and Moran were others among those executed.) that warflour was being made at the 2nd Southern Division Headquarters at Limerick and that, whatever process was being used, it was stronger than that which we were making at Dunningstown. I immediately arranged to visit Limerick and my brother, Frank, from Tullemain came with me. We contacted J. Coffey at a medical hall in Limerick (Divisional Chemist), and he had us conducted to the old Art School, at that time abandoned but where, on entering, we found elaborate arrangements for the manufacture of the warflour. I noted the various phases through which the process was directed and found it to be exactly as we had been doing ourselves. The only difference was that, after washing free from acid

reaction, the powder was spread out on newspapers and allowed to dry naturally, while we had been drying it artificially. I took samples with me and, on tests afterwards, I must say that I found the Limerick samples the stronger. After that, we abandoned the artificial drying which proved to be more convenient, and adopted the natural drying. This placed us on a par with the Limerick warflour and there was only praise from all quarters about its destructive properties.

I don't think there is much more that I can relate with regard to the munitions side in our organisation. Formulas kept coming in to us from various sources. They were mostly ones for mild forms of gunpowder and were often of an impracticable nature. There was one which came in from Ernie O'Malley which, at the time, I pointed out, was of an extremely sensitive nature and would be dangerous even in handling. Nevertheless, Mr. O'Malley insisted on the formula being made up. Owing to its sensitive nature, I was obliged to make it up in small quantities, some of which blew up as I blended them. I eventually succeeded in getting a few pounds of it together and left it, as I had been directed, at a small newsagent's shop in Kilkenny where it was called for. What happened after that, I never found out. When reading over this record, I find that I left out a name from the Brigade Staff. It was Thomas Walsh who was in charge of the I.R.A. Police. Our Brigadier, who was an ex Australian policeman, was a stickler for that kind of organisation and, as a result, Tom was appointed to that work. What rank he held, I do not now recollect.

It strikes me that, in the course of my wanderings around through the country and contacting different

personalities in various localities, there were many incidents which came to my notice - incidents which, in the general recording of events, may have been overlooked or forgotten and in which your Bureau would be particularly interested.

There was the death of Tommy Donovan when he was surrounded by military at Mrs. O'Brien's premises in Killenaule, Co. Tipperary, and shot dead, but not before he had accounted for five of the military. This happened shortly after the capture of Drangan and Cappawhite R.I.C. barracks. I am sure that Dan Breen, T.D., or some of the Butler family near Ballingarry would be able to throw some light on this.

There was the taking of the Clancy brothers from their home at the "Rag", between Mullinahone and Killenaule. I think it was the Tans that carried out this job, as they were credited with binding the two boys together, tying them to the back of a lorry and driving along the road. The mutilated bodies were afterwards found on the roadside. The Clancy family could give an account of this.

There was the capture of a Major Good from Tipperary barracks who was accredited with the ill-treatment and death of prisoners brought in for interrogation and identification. He was executed by the I.R.A.

There was the capture of a convoy between Cahir and Clonmel and the retention of General Lucas, but I suppose you have plenty of information about the latter to fill a book.

There was the "Foxy Officer" in charge of the

Crown forces at Mullinahone, Co. Tipperary. Wherever this fellow got his information, it would appear it was always very accurate. On one occasion, he surrounded a house on the side of Cap-na-Graun Hill, one of the foothills of Slievenamon, where a Battalion council meeting was being held. All escaped except two who were clubbed to death and the bodies placed in a donkey and cart, and, with the heads hanging out at the rear, were driven through the streets in Mullinahone. I am sure there are still many people in that town who could give particulars about this officer. I would suggest the Brett family, bakers, the Mulally's or Cahill's.

There was the attack on Callan barracks when Paddy Ryan was wounded and his rescue by Eamon Aylward in the face of rifle fire from the military. Eamon carried him on his shoulder while firing back at the military, with a Colt automatic, and eventually got him to safety in the Convent of Mercy, Callan. I suppose Eamon himself would be the best to give an account of it but, if I know anything of him, he will be too modest to elaborate on such a heroic deed.

There were the activities of District Inspector Bainham, R.I.C., which drew on him the attentions of our own I.R.A. He was fired upon on several occasions but would appear to have had a charmed life. He received many wounds but survived them all, and later received compensation to the extent of £8,000. He was District Inspector in the Callan area, Co. Kilkenny.

There was the accidental death of Denny Sadlier, O/C of one of the flying columns in South Tipperary. It appears that the column was resting somewhere in the vicinity of Mullinahone and, during the cleaning of some

of the weapons, the accidental discharge of one of the guns occasioned Denny's death. He was a most lovable personality and his death caused widespread grief. After the Truce, his body was raised and re-interred in Drangan graveyard. I was present at this service and never in my life did I see such a huge concourse of people. It was indeed a fitting tribute to one of our glorious dead.

Then came the reports of a truce between the British Government and Dáil Éireann which was to operate from July 11th, 1921. A certain amount of uncertainty existed for a few weeks but eventually it was established, and all the old haunts were abandoned for a while and we went back to our normal way of life.

Shortly after the Truce had been declared, I received a communication from Harry Boland, asking me to meet him at Croke Park on a Sunday in September. I met him as requested and, at the half-time interval, he took me out on to the playing pitch where he introduced me to General Michael Collins. I was flabbergasted for the moment, but the General soon put me at my ease with a hearty handshake and a commendation for my work on explosives. He asked me several interesting questions which showed me that he had quite an intimate knowledge of explosives himself.

It would be of interest to record here a description of some of the equipment which was being used during that period. All of it had to be of an improvised nature, since there were very few sources from which a supply could be obtained with the required safety and secrecy.

The equipment for making the moulded pellets for shotguns consisted of:-

The mould proper - this was made from heavy half-round and flat aluminium beading. This was easily obtained from any local garage in strips as, at that time, some car models were being decorated with it, i.e., the Chevrolet, the Clyno and others. Two of these strips were forced together with quarter-inch steel ball-bearings between the flat surfaces; when these surfaces came in actual contact, small holes were drilled at each end of the strip of beading and bolts put through, in order to register exactly and synchronise the holes made by the ball-bearings when the beading was closed over them. Small holes were then drilled in these impressions; through them the lead was poured when making the casting. When the pellets were removed from the moulds, a small protuberance appeared around the surface which coincided with the joining between the two strips of beading. This and any other small irregularities were removed by polishing the pellets on a flat steel surface by rotating them beneath a circular disc which had been recessed to a depth of half the diameter of the pellets. A perfectly spherical pellet was obtained in this way, which functioned in the tests with great accuracy and range. Some sketches are attached to this statement, illustrative of the above description.

Years afterwards - after the outbreak of the last World War - I was requested by the Army authorities to give a demonstration of this work on the shotguns. Colonel Collins-Powell and General W.R.E. Murphy were among the officers present at that test. Amazement

was expressed at the result, as, on each occasion, the seven pellets registered on the centre of a six-foot target of half-inch plywood and with complete penetration.

The implement, which was used for removing the fired caps from cartridges and replacing them with freshly renovated and refilled caps, was as follows:-

A small steel column, slightly longer than the cartridge case, with a short needle protruding from one end, was introduced into the cartridge case, needle first, and, being tight fitting, it directed the needle into the cap chamber. At this point and on the outside, a hollow tube was tapped down over the cap when the latter came up on the top of the needle, with the anvil in place in the cap. The anvil was removed and retained for replacement when reloading with the fresh cap. The reverse process was used when putting the cap back in position, except that the needle was removed, so as to allow the anvil and chamber to go back into place.

The position with regard to the registration of the Harley-Davidson motor bike and side-car, which I was using during the period under the name of Sir William Blunden, was of interest. When I went to the County Council offices, where Tom Drew was Secretary

and after the Truce had been fixed, I found some difficulty in obtaining a new number and no one would take any responsibility. However, after some weeks, during which time it was brought up at a Council meeting, I was granted a fresh registration. The interest lies in the fact that the transaction was recorded by Tom Drew, in order to safeguard himself. It must still be on the books.

SIGNED: Dan J. Stapleton
(Dan J. Stapleton)

DATE: 7th July 1955
7th July 1955.

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
BURO STAIRE MILEATA 1913-21
NO. W.S. 1208

WITNESS M Ryan Comdt
(M. Ryan) Comd't.