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STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

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Witness

Stephen Keys,
4 Connolly Gardens,
Inchicore,
Dublin.

Identity.

Section Commander "A" Company
Third Battalion, Dublin Brigade, 1918 - .

Subject.

"A" Company, 3rd Battalion,
Dublin Brigade, 1918-1924.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil

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STATEMENT OF MR. STEPHEN KEYS,

4, Connolly Gardens, Inchicore, Dublin.

I joined "A" Company, 3rd Battalion, Dublin Brigade, Irish Republican Army, late 1918 or early 1919. The Company usually met at No. 144 Pearse St. Seán Guilfoyle was Captain at the time.

The Company used to drill in the Brickworks in Crumlin and also at 41, York St. and Ticknock in the Dublin mountains. The Company had a miniature rifle range on the premises of Carroll & Company, Trunk Manufacturers, Cooke St. Mick Carroll, a son of the proprietor, was a Section Commander in the Company. We also had miniature rifle practice at Camden Row. On a few occasions the Company went out to the Dublin mountains for revolver practice and grenade throwing.

We were very short of arms and, shortly after the first World War ended, a job was secured for me by the battalion as a tallyman down at the North Wall Extension so that I would be in a position to make contact with foreign sailors from whom I might be able to get arms.

A boat came from Germany - the first German boat that came after the first World War to this country. Its cargo was timber. I got in contact with a German seaman named Hendrick Kruse. His address was Fitz's Street, 61, Keel, Germany. He was a young fellow and said he would bring in arms on his next trip to this country. I brought him to my home and while he was here I went sight-seeing in the city with him. He did not return and after some time I wrote to his people. They

said he would be coming back to this country but, to my knowledge, he never returned.

The Irish Republican Police force was formed a short time afterwards, and I was one of the five members of the Company selected to carry out police duties. Seán Condron was in charge of the 3rd Battalion police force at that time. We carried out normal police duties, including the investigation of crime. Members of the public sent reports to headquarters about houses being broken into, annoyances from corner-boys and so forth. I remember, on one occasion, the whole Battalion police force was called out to raid a house in Gloucester St. We went in a Ford eight horse-power van and pulled up outside this house, which had already been surrounded. We went inside and arrested a man named Corbally and another man who was English. They were brought to a house in Irishtown and detained there for a while. Later they were charged with housebreaking and tried by a Republican Court held at 41, York St. The Englishman was sentenced to deportation. Corbally was detained for some time and then released.

The criminal elements took advantage of the situation that existed and a wave of lawlessness spread over the city. On pay nights, workers when returning home were attacked and knocked on the head and their wages taken from them. Robberies and housebreaking were frequent occurrences. It was, in fact, this serious increase in crime that led to the formation of the Republican Police Force. However, the public co-operated with us and we soon had the position back to normal.

One of the places robbed was Hipps, men's outfitters, George's St. They reported the matter to us. I interviewed the manager concerning it and he gave me a pattern of the cloth which had been stolen. In this case we did not succeed in tracing the culprits.

Another police duty was to get girls of loose virtue off the street. We were sent down laneways and other places which they usually frequented and made them clear off.

I did not like the police force, and I requested a transfer back to "A" Company. My request was granted and I was transferred - I cannot remember dates - but it was after the first ambush in Camden St.

The man who was in charge of that ambush was a railway worker, named Lieut. Seán Doyle. One of the Section Commanders on this attack got windy and he was courtmartialled and expelled. I do not wish to mention his name here.

I took part in what was the first raid, I think, for Post Office equipment in the city - I suppose around 1920. It was on the Rathmines Post Office, which was at that time situated in Wynnefield Road - a narrow side road off the main Rathmines Road. Lieutenant Byrne was in charge. I remember Byrne saying that we would stay near the Post Office and stop the Post Office linesmen and take the equipment from them. Climbing gear and wire cutters were required for our men in the country. I remember being at the top of Wynnefield Road with two others. I think Jim Harcourt was one and Pat Foster. Three men came down with their equipment over their shoulders. We held them up and took the equipment from

them. We just told them who we were. We did not present guns. Just as we were going away, the stout man of the three of them said to me, "Excuse me! We are only working men and, do you know, we have to pay for these goods if we lose them?". "What do you want us to do?" we enquired. "Have you not the courage to come down to the Post Office and take them off us there, and we won't have to pay?" he said. "All right", said we, "put on your stuff". We walked down after them. They walked into the Post Office. We went in and took the stuff from them there, and walked away. We brought the equipment to Mr. Carroll's premises in Cook St.

I had been on ambushes around Camden St. on a few occasions, and had thrown grenades with success. This apparently had been reported to the Battalion Council and I was called to appear before a meeting of the Battalion Council held at Tumbleton's - a small cake shop in Francis St. At this meeting I was promoted to be a Section Commander.

The Company Council met in Tumbleton's in Francis St. very regularly, and I have photographs showing where "A" Company used to meet at the Dog Pond in the Phoenix Park and discuss company activities. Our usual activity about this time was ambushing in Camden St. area. The area covered by 'A" Company, 3rd Battalion, extended from Grattan Bridge, better known as Capel St. Bridge, to Kelly's Corner at the junction of Upper Camden St. and South Circular Road, and included Parliament St., Dame St. to the junction of South Great George's St., South Great George's St., Aungier St., Redmond Hill, Wexford St., Lower and Upper Camden Streets. It also included

portion of all the side streets along the route. Most of my activities were in Camden St., Wexford St., Redmond's Hill and Aungier St. The Company at that time consisted of from 85 to 90 members. Company meetings were held in the Phoenix Park. The Company Council meetings in Tumbleton's cake-shop in Francis St. were held at intervals of from two to four weeks and were usually attended by the Battalion Commandant - Joe O'Connor. The officers of the Company were Seán Guilfoyle, Captain; Paddy Byrne and Seán Doyle were Lieutenants. Later Jimmie Keogh became a Lieutenant. Seán Tumbleton was Company Adjutant and Peter McCormack Quartermaster. The four Section Commanders were:

No. 1 Section - Jimmie Keogh (later Lieut.)
No. 2 " - Mick Carroll
No. 3 " - Stephen Keys (myself)
No. 4 " - Martin Hoare.

Each Section Commander in the Company was given a special night in the week to be on duty in the Camden St. area to attack any enemy forces that might come along. However, this did not work out in practice, owing to sickness or other reasons.

As Section Commander, I had two Squad Leaders and from fifteen to twenty men under my control. I would send the two Squad Leaders to mobilise the Section. The mobilisation order would read something like this: "Parade at the back of Whitefriar St. Church at seven o'clock on such a date. Without fail". "Without fail" always appeared at the bottom of the notice. When I would parade the men, I might find three or four men. I remember I had to go on duty with only three men on many occasions. Our usual arrangement was to meet at the back of Whitefriar St. Church. We always had one fellow

who might be a bit old, or not capable of taking a gun, and I sent him out before us as a scout. His orders were to walk up Camden St., take notice of any individuals whom he thought were Black and Tans or any suspicious-looking strangers, and report back to me. It might seem queer to send out a man for that purpose, but we would nearly always recognise the Tans; there was something about them that you would know they were Tans.

As regards arms for the men, in the early stages some of the men would have their own guns, but very few, as they were very, very scarce. I arranged that the Quartermaster should report at the place of mobilisation and bring grenades and guns with him for issue to the men. As Section Commander I was armed with both a gun and a grenade. The men were issued with either a gun or one grenade..

I would then give my usual instructions to the men, that they were to follow me, stop about five yards behind me and wait until I would throw my grenade. The men then would throw their grenades and the men with revolvers cover off the retreat. It was a matter of "hit and run'.

When I got the "all clear' from the scout, we proceeded via Whitefriar Place and turned right into Aungier St., and if nothing came along continued on through Redmond's Hill and Wexford St. to our favourite place of attack in Camden St. If we met anything on the way from the place of mobilisation to Camden St., we always attacked them no matter where we were. We had no definite orders as to where we should attack the enemy; that was left to each Section Commander to decide for himself. I always turned right and went up towards Camden St.

for the simple reason that we had better ways of retreat in that area. From Camden St. there are a few side streets and off these are numerous narrow streets and alleyways, and as we knew the district very well it was ideal for retreat.

The attacks on the enemy forces were so numerous - almost a nightly affair - and the casualties inflicted on the enemy were so heavy in the Redmond's Hill - Camden St. area, that the place became known as (and was commonly referred to as) "The Dardenelles". It is also worth recording that not one of our men was captured when on duty in that area.

As I said before, I always turned right and went up Redmond's hill. That is why most of the ambushes took place in the Redmond's Hill - Camden St. area. As far as I know, the other Section Commanders did the same. I don't think it ever happened that I had to walk down towards the George's St. end, because I never had an ambush there. As I walked up Camden St., the suspense was terrible. We had to walk as we had no car at our disposal for making a quick getaway. I usually stood at the corner of Camden Row, facing Gorevan's drapery shop. Other members of the section took up position at the corner on the opposite side of the street. It was mostly soldiers in lorries that came along in the early stages. They came either down or up the street in the ordinary way, and we never let them go without attacking them. They never stopped. In my experience, they never jumped out of the cars nor did anything to try and catch the throwers of the grenades, with the result that they were an easy target going up and down

Camden St. I always had the feeling myself that I did not like hitting the soldiers. I always felt that I would rather see the Tans coming along.

After a short period, the British Army authorities felt, I think, that the soldiers were not doing their stuff - there was some report at the Council meetings about it - and the Tans started to come along. The soldiers usually travelled in big, heavy Army lorries and they were caged in, but the Tans came in open Crossley tenders. The Tans varied their tactics considerably. Sometimes when entering the area their tenders travelled at a very fast rate, and at other times they just crawled along. When we attacked them they stopped their cars suddenly, jumped out and shouted, "Halt, halt, halt, halt", with the result that everybody in the locality would stand because nobody knew whom they were calling on. They had the idea that, if we were there, we would halt too, but, of course, that never happened.

The Tans tried another plan. As they came into the area, they switched off the engine and switched it on again, causing an explosion in the silencer. Again, I think, their idea was to frighten the people off the streets. At any rate, I was very glad when they did that, because we would know when to get ready. We "hit them up" just the same.

The Tans never seemed to know from where they were being "hit up". I often noticed them as they drove along looking up at the roofs and upper windows, and that is why, I think, I was so lucky never to get a crack from them. They were always watching the buildings. They never seemed to realise that they were being attacked from the streets.

The Tans tried out yet another plan. Before the tenders left the barracks, a large number of Black and Tans, in civilian attire, would be sent down to Camden St. Then, when the tenders would be coming down the street, these men would hold up all the people on the street. That happened to me on one occasion when I was with my girl friend, who later became my wife. I was not on duty that night. However, the Tans were not successful in catching anybody that way.

The Tans tried another plan. They sent one tender of Tans down Camden St., another down Heytesbury St., and a third down Harcourt St. Both Heytesbury St. and Harcourt St. run parallel to Camden St. The idea apparently was that when the tender in Camden St. was attacked the Tans on the other tenders would close in on Camden St. and cut off our retreat. I happened to be on duty at my favourite position - the corner of Camden Row and Camden St. - the first night they tried this plan, but, of course, was not aware of it and, therefore, I was very nearly captured. We attacked the tender when it came along and, having thrown my grenade, I drew my gun and ran up Camden Row. When I reached Heytesbury St. I saw the Tans a short distance up that street. I dashed across Heytesbury St. and into Long Lane and got home safely. But it was a narrow escape!

On nights when we were not on ambush duty we engaged in other forms of training. I occasionally took members of my section on walks around the company area to get to know it more thoroughly and to familiarise ourselves with the numerous side streets and by-ways off the main thoroughfare. One night Jim Harcourt and I

were out walking. We were not armed. As we were passing the entrance to Dublin Castle, some Tans came out and held us up. Harcourt got impertinent. We were arrested and brought into the Castle and interrogated. Of course, as was usual, we denied all affiliations. After about four or five hours we were released.

There is another incident that I would like to refer to. I was working in Garrett's of Thomas St. at the time and there was a terrible loyalist also working there named Bill McMahon. He is dead now. Bill had an idea that I was in the Republican Army. He was an ex British soldier and his brother was an ex British soldier too, and the firm was a real loyal one as well.
One day Bill did not turn in for work and we heard that his brother had died and that his remains were to be removed to the church that night. I was in Camden St. on duty that night, and I saw an armoured car coming up from Redmond's Hill and a lorry of Tans coming up behind it. My system at that time was, when I saw or heard the cars coming, I walked up Camden Row, away from Camden St., took the grenade out of my pocket and pulled the pin from it. I would judge for myself as to what time the enemy car would take to reach my position. I then walked casually back to my position in Camden St., with the grenade in my hand and the pin out of it, and throw it at the enemy vehicle whether it was an armoured car, lorry or tender. On this particular night, I threw it at the second lorry. I saw another load of Tans behind them again, and I pulled the gun, which I usually carried up my left sleeve and ran up Camden Row. A day or two later Bill came in after the funeral and he said to me, "Well,

look, Steve, I know bloody well you are in the I.R.A. and that is why I was always hitting you up. But when my poor brother's funeral was going up Camden St. the other evening the Black and Tans started firing, for no reason whatsoever. There was not a sinner on the street. I don't care what you are", said he, "but from this on, I am a hundred per cent. for the I.R.A.!" I believe it was the fastest funeral that ever left the city of Dublin.

About this time, my girl-friend announced to me that her friend, Nancy Addely, was getting engaged to a Sergeant-Major in the British Army, and asked me would I go to the engagement party with her. She knew, of course, that I was in the Irish Republican Army. In fact, we were very well known in the area; even the corner-boys used always leave the streets when we came along, which made it rather difficult for us. The street dealers in the area would also move off. Anyway, I agreed to go to the engagement party. I asked her did the Sergeant Major know who I was. She said, "No". "All right", I said, "I will bring Jim Harcourt with me". I went to the party and met the Sergeant-Major, a very nice fellow. He was an Englishman and he had turned Catholic to marry this girl. He asked me did I drink and, when I said I did not, he invited me to accompany him and a few others to a pub at the corner. I agreed. I had a stone beer and they had a good few drinks. At any rate, I went to the pictures again with this chap, through my girl-friend. At this time I had ideas of using him to get guns for us, but I did not know him well enough and intended waiting a little longer before I'd make the suggestion to him.

At one time the British army authorities thought

they would try a different stunt in Camden St. They sent down a big lorry load of soldiers, with an officer in the back along with the soldiers and an officer in the front part. I might remark that our men were getting very slack about turning out for duty in this area when called on. On this occasion we had not enough men. There were four of us where we should have had forty between us. The four on duty this night included two Section Commanders - Jimmie Keogh and myself. A lorry came down the street, crawling at about four or five miles per hour. I saw it and Keogh saw it. I ran up Camden Row. As usual, I pulled the pin from the grenade and I walked down casually. The lorry was just a few yards away from me and I let go at the lorry. I saw my hand grenade going to the front aperture and exploding right in the lorry. I put up my gun to fire a few shots, as they were not getting out. Strange as it may seem, I had my eye too near the gun and I got a flash in my eye. There was an elderly man standing at the corner on my left - and he was shot. I saw him falling.

Keogh also threw a grenade from the far side, and the two grenades must have landed directly into the car because twenty-one soldiers and an officer in the back were wounded. The car stopped suddenly and I saw practically all the shots being fired up in the air, as if they pulled the triggers indiscriminately. There was no trouble getting away.

The next thing I met my girl-friend and her friend, Nancy Addely, and she told me that the Sergeant-Major, whom she was going to marry, had been killed in the ambush in Camden St. She said his head was actually blown off.

It is an incident that I feel very sorry for, even to this day.

In the early stages in Camden St., there was a time when the D.M.P. used to stand around on duty. One night Section Commander Carroll was on duty with me. I threw a grenade at a lorry load of Tans. The grenade went over the car and actually burst at Carroll's feet. Carroll used to say to me, "God, you nearly killed me the other night"! One night, he said, "Stephen, there was a policeman on my side of the street last night and he obstructed us. I saw him in Camden St. before, and we will have to do something about it". "What do you suggest we should do about it?" I asked. "Well", said he, "at least, we can go and see him, and if we find that he is there for the purpose of identifying or obstructing us, I think the best thing we can do is knock him".

We went out two nights afterwards, looking for the policeman. We picked him up. I might remark that this was unofficial; we could not do those things without getting sanction from the Council. We brought him down a back way and threatened him. We told him if he did not keep off the Camden St. area and if we thought he was out to obstruct us, we would shoot him. We never saw him again.

Section Commander Hoare, at a Council meeting in Tumbleton's place in Francis St., complained that there was a crowd of ex British soldiers who used hang around Redmond's Hill, and they were there, he thought, for the purpose of identifying and obstructing the I.R.A. men in Camden St., and enquired could anything be done about it. I was coupled with him to go out on his next ambush night.

Again, we had only a few men with us. We stopped when we got to junction of Redmond's Hill and Lower Kevin St. I had arranged with Martin Hoare, the Section Commander, that, when a car would come along, he would open fire on it and, at the same time, I would fire directly into the crowd of corner-boys who were standing around the place. Martin threw the grenade and I fired directly into those fellows. They never turned up there after that.

No one else in Camden St. ever attempted to obstruct us. In fact, they had great respect for us. Some of the shopkeepers in that area, including an Italian named Macetti who had an ice-cream shop, used to subscribe to our arms' fund.

Another job on which I took part was the attempted attack on Black and Tans at Dartmouth Road. The 3rd Battalion had information that Tans travelled that way from Beggars' Bush barrack at about the same time on particular nights with mails for other barracks. Our object was to attack the Tans and capture the mails. Dartmouth Road was outside our area. It was actually a "C" Company job, but some members of 'A' Company were called out to assist. Most of 'A' Company men on the job were placed at strategic points, including Portobello and Charlemont Bridges. Their instructions were to attack any enemy forces that might come along and also to help to cover the "get away" of our main attacking party. My position was at the corner of Dartmouth Square and Dartmouth Road. Other men, mostly from 'C' Company, had positions at various points along Dartmouth Road. Other members of the same company were on the overhead railway bridge spanning Dartmouth Road. Their job was to drop

down grenades on the enemy lorries as they passed underneath, and this was to be the signal for opening the attack. When the Tans came, one of the men on the bridge - McDermott was his name - threw a grenade. It hit the parapet and came back and exploded among our men. McDermott himself was wounded by shrapnel in the leg and so the job flopped. Some of "A" Company men, including Section Commander Martin Hoare, were captured that night at Portobello Bridge.

It was coming near the Truce when the next job occurred. I cannot give in detail the actual dates of all those operations I was on, but I do know that at that time things were getting on my nerves. It was no joke going out two or three nights each week for months, and the strain was beginning to tell on me. Still I continued to go out and I would not bring a grenade back. It was not so bad when our grenades exploded, but too often they were duds. When this occurred we were left in a very unenviable position as the grenade was our main weapon of attack.

A special meeting of the Company Council was held near the Dog Pond in the Phoenix Park. In addition to the company officers and section commanders, it was attended by the Battalion Commandant - Joe O'Connor - and the Battalion I.O. - Harry Ledwidge. The Battalion I.O. produced a postcard-sized photograph of a man named J. O'Neill. We were told to examine the photo carefully so that we would be able to recognise the man if we saw him again. It was then explained to us that O'Neill was on the British Intelligence staff attached to Dublin Castle and that he was responsible for the arrest of Simon Donnelly and some others, and that G.H.Q. had sentenced him to be executed. We were told that he frequented Kelly's house

in Back Lane, off Nicholas St., and we were instructed to keep Kelly's house under observation and to shoot O'Neill. We were surprised to learn that he visited Kelly's as two of the Kelly girls, Nellie and Nora, had served with the Fianna girls during the Rising in 1916. I have an idea that it was the Kelly's who passed on the information to our intelligence officers that O'Neill was a spy. Although we kept the place under observation until the Truce O'Neill never came there again, and so he was not executed.

Just prior to the Truce things had slackened off somewhat in Camden St. As far as I remember, there was no direct order to cease or curtail our activities in that area but we had less activity there.

I met Commandant Joe O'Connor one evening and he told me that there was a big number of jobs being arranged to take place all over the brigade area. He said that on a particular night, which had not yet been decided on, every company in the Dublin Brigade would have a job to do. He instructed me to attend a meeting in the Queen's Theatre, at which he said we would receive instructions of 'A' Company's job. There was a large attendance of men from the whole Dublin Brigade at the meeting.

The job assigned to 'A' Company was to attack Auxiliaries and Black and Tans in Fuller's restaurant. At that time Fuller's restaurant was in Grafton St. It was on a corner and was a favourite rendezvous for Auxiliaries and Tans, who were usually accompanied by unfortunate street girls. The men for this job were specially picked, and among those with me were Christy Murray, Willie Rowe and J i m Harcourt. The first order we got was to throw the grenades into the restaurant through the windows on the side-street. I recall this

very well. Then that was changed and it was decided that it would be better if our intelligence officers came into the restaurant with us and pointed out the Auxiliaries and Tans to us for us to shoot. I remember very well putting Willie Rowe at the corner of Johnson's Court and Grafton St. to cover our retreat. I stood near the restaurant waiting for our intelligence officers to come. After a while someone made contact with me and told me that the job was called off. We then dismissed. That was the last job I participated in before the Truce, which came a few days afterwards. As we were going away from Fuller's we heard considerable shooting in the direction of St. Stephen's Green. I heard afterwards that Tans had been ambushed that night at St. Stephen's Green. Apparently the order calling off all operations planned for that night had not reached our lads in time.

During the early part of the Truce I assisted at the training of the company at 41, York St. I spent the week-ends at similar work at the training camp at Loughlinstown Union. There was a large influx of recruits into the company. I intended to get married and I faded away from the company for a while.

Sometime after the Dáil had voted for acceptance of the Treaty a parade of the company was held at 41, York St. It was an exceptionally big parade and included a large number who had joined up during the Truce. Seán Goulding was Captain of the company at this time. He addressed the parade, saying we were all aware of the position in the country. "Those of you", he said, "who intend to remain loyal to the Republic stand fast, and those who accept the Treaty and wish to join the Free State

Army move to the left". Only about twenty members of the original company remained, but a large number of those who'fell out" went neutral and took no part in the Civil War. I was promoted 1st Lieutenant and Fintan Lawlor 2nd Lieutenant.

I got a mobilisation order to attend 41, York St. on the day previous to the outbreak of the Civil War. It was a battalion parade with arms. At about 12 midnight we were dismissed.

Next morning, a Volunteer named Micky Mulhall came to my place of employment. He had a written order from Commandant O'Connor for me to parade the left half-company in 41, York St. for the next morning - I think at nine o'clock.

After the parade on the first morning of the Civil War, Seán Goulding said to me, "Stephen, you had better go and take over premises for the company in York St. I think Beverley Smith's would be suitable". I went over with some men and took over Beverley Smith's.

Later I went out on street duty. I suppose I had twenty or twenty-five men. We walked up and down Camden St. I divided the party into two groups and put a group on each side of the street. A couple of lorries came up Camden St. with single drivers in them. I am not sure, but I thought there was an R.I.C. man sitting beside a Free State soldier. I fired a few shots just to let them know we were in the street and, if they came back, they would get the works. I remember Jimmy Egan, a Volunteer. He threw a grenade and there were a lot of shots fired too. This fellow, Egan, said, "Listen, that grenade I am after

throwing did not explode". I said, "Where is it?". "It is in a shop, in a bucket of water there" he replied. I went back with a few lads. There was a policeman standing near a fishmonger's shop beside the Protestant Church. I took the grenade out of the bucket of water. I said to myself, "Are we going to have the same trouble as we had with the Tans - dud grenades?". It was one of our own makes, a No. 9.

I went into No. 41, York St. and asked for the Battalion Quartermaster - Peter McCormack. I asked, "Is this what we have got to depend on again, another dud grenade?".

We ambushed during the daytime and again we had trouble with parabellums. The ammunition was sticking.

Captain Goulding said to me, "Stephen, you will have to go on outpost duty to-night, so pick your men". We had not our own particular men; we picked anyone that was there. He said, "You will want to take over some outpost around Camden St. in case the Free State come down to attack us during the night".

It was very hard to get around at night during that week of the Civil War, because the Free State had patrols everywhere. Eventually I got into premises from a lane at the rere of Camden St. I had about eight or ten men with me and found myself in a big furnishing store, which turned out to be the Star Furnishing Company, Camden St. I put two fellows on guard but nothing happened that night.

We went back next morning to Beverley Smith's, and we went out again that day, but I don't think I had any

ambush that day, as far as I remember.

That night again, I took over the same premises. When we went into the place first, I walked up through this long shop. There was a door on the left and, at the door, I looked and saw a light apparently shining. I opened the door and the minute I did so the light went out. I went very cautiously up the stairs and went over the building. There was nobody in the building. Some of the men got the idea that the place was haunted. It turned out afterwards to be a very shiny bit of brass underneath the door and, when the door would be closed, you could see the reflection. That second night then, when I was upstairs, someone woke me up and said, "There are some noises going on". I said "There is no noise", but they insisted that there was. I went around the premises. I missed the two North of Ireland fellows who were in our party, and I could not find them at all. I asked the guard did they go out. He said, "No". I then went down to the cellar and saw the two North of Ireland fellows breaking open the door of the safe. I put them under arrest and brought them back to 41, York St. and handed them over to the Company Captain to be dealt with.

Captain Goulding said, "There's trouble over these parabellums. You had better clean all the guns". My gun was a Smith & Wesson. I cleaned my own gun first, loaded it and put it on the table. After cleaning the guns I lifted up my gun. I saw that it was cocked and I automatically pulled the trigger. The bullet went right through my hand and went between the legs of a fellow named Graham. Captain Goulding came along. I thought

someone was after shooting me. I did not know what had happened. I stood up. It was all right until they put something on it and then the pain was bad. I said I would walk down.

I was brought over to Stephen's Green to Madam Gonne MacBride's house. This is something that was never put on record. There were twelve or fourteen wounded men in this house at the time, and there were some students. There was a French girl. She was apparently Madam MacBride's niece. Madam Gonne MacBride came in and walked up and down, saying "Get those men out of here! Who authorised you to take them over to my place? Get them out!".

Apparently Headquarters got to know of this, and some ladies came. They walked around the beds. One lady came to me and she asked me what was wrong with me. I told her. She said, "What will I call you?". "Stephen Keys" I said. "Have you any rank?" she asked. I said, "Lieutenant". "Would you like to come to my place?". I said I would not mind. She said, "This place will be raided any minute". And that lady was the famous Mrs. Dudley Edwards, a woman who spent thousands on the I.R.A. She brought us to her home in Dartmouth Square. She engaged two nurses to look after us.

Mrs. Dudley Edwards paid all our expenses. There were four of us there. One fellow was hurt in the stomach when he was getting across a wall; one was wounded in the thigh; and one was swinging the lead. Surgeon Shaw was looking after us, and his fee for each of us was ten shillings a visit. She put the Red Cross outside her door and would not allow anyone inside her door - Free State

or anyone else. The Free State came to raid it, and she went outside and pointed to the Red Cross and said she was not going to allow anyone in. They respected the flag and did not raid. Mrs. de Valera used to visit there and she seemed greatly upset over the Civil War.

One of my men came to visit me at Mrs. Dudley Edwards' place. He said to me, "I am after finding a lot of stuff out at the Canal, and I don't know what to do with it". I said, "Bring it here". I decided that, when my wife would come, I would give her the guns. Mrs. Dudley Edwards used to bring us to the pictures, usually the Corinthian, and one day when returning from one of these visits I met Molly Hyland and her mother at Nelson Pillar. Molly said she wanted the guns as she knew the company they belonged to.

I was immobilised for six months. Before I was fit again I reported back to the battalion and was appointed Assistant Battalion Transport Officer. Gus Carthy's brother was Battalion Transport Officer.

We started ambushing here and there in Camden St., but, to tell you the truth, I did very little of it. I think I was on one or two in Camden St. At this time Brendan Considine - a Clareman - was O/C of the Battalion. Tommy O'Leary was O/C of the 4th Battalion Column.

O'Leary had been instructed to derail a fifty-wagon goods train travelling from the Kingsbridge Station and he asked me would I go and help him out with the job. I was not working at this period and my hand was not too well. I said I would go out and help him, although I knew nothing much about the work.

We started off one night at about eleven o'clock. Tommy O'Leary was in charge. Peter White, Joe Page and some others were in the party. We travelled along the canal and proceeded to an empty farmhouse, where it had been arranged we would meet two railwaymen who would show us how to remove the rails and the best place for doing it. We went out in ordinary shoes and were not rightly dressed for the job. Eventually the railwaymen came along, and having shown us what to do they left. The goods train was not due to pass until 5 a.m. Some trains were due to pass before that time. When the last train had passed, O'Leary said: "Come along now lads and get going". They started knocking out the chairs. The noise was very loud and I am sure could be heard a good distance away. O'Leary and I were on top of the bridge looking down on them. O'Leary wanted to remove the track. I said, "No, don't do that. This job has been tried twice before and it was not carried out. Let's do it right this time". The place selected for the derailing was at the bottom of an incline. I suggested that the rails be left in position and the train be allowed to pass over and continue to the top of the incline and stop it there, then remove the tracks and uncouple the rere engine and let it run down and go off the rails, then uncouple the goods wagons and let them crash down, and, finally, let the front engine down on top of the lot. This was agreed to.

I had a lamp which one of the railwaymen had given to me. With Peter White and Joe Page, I proceeded to the top of the hill. White and Page got up on the embankment. I remained on the tracks. Eventually the train came climbing the hill. It would frighten you

to look at the big engine. I stood on the track in front of the train and waved the lamp. I thought the engine was stopping. White shouted, "Jump, Steve". I jumped and the train continued without stopping.

White and Page, from their position on the embankment, had a clear view of the footplate and saw the driver and fireman sitting down drinking tea. Had we known in time, we could have stepped on to the train. We came back to town next morning very dejected because the job had not been carried out.

My next engagement was the blowing up of McCullough's in Dawson St. At that time McCullough was a Senator. He had been listed for execution but he could not be got at, so the next best thing was to blow up his premises. Surgeon Carty (now living in Lindsay Road, Glasnevin) was Brigade Munitions officer. Any time he would be testing mines, he would ask me to go out with him. On this occasion, he thought of putting ten pounds of cheddar into petrol tins, and sulphur on top of the fuse. Petrol tins were handy to carry through the streets. I was at a funeral one night when he sent me to get a car. I brought two men along with me and commandeered Kavanagh's van - of the Coombe. We threatened the driver not to report the matter.

We drove up to a place facing Griffith Barracks. Gus Carty came out and said, "Hello, Steve! Do you want petrol?" I said "Yes". I didn't know what we would want. "I have a couple of gallons inside", he said. He walked in and got the petrol. The next thing

who was getting into the car only Maud Phelan. I tried to stop her, and I said, "Is it necessary? Where are we going?". He said, "We are going to do a job in Dawson St. on McCullough's". Anyway, she pushed her way in on top of us. We drove away. I did not know what sort of a job he was doing. He forgot to tell me.

We drove down Dawson Street near McCullough's shop. I drove the van and stopped it on the right-hand side. He said, "Give me the petrol tin". I thought he was going to burn the place. I stopped the people from going down the street. I saw him putting his hand in his pocket, taking out something and doing something to the petrol tin. At that time the Free State Army were guarding buildings around the vicinity of Government building. Just as Gus and I got into the car and had gone about five yards, there was a terrific explosion and I was nearly deafened. I did not know what was happening. I got the impression that the Free State were attacking us from the top of the buildings. I drove to the left, turned right into Anne St. and right into Chatham St. Gus got a bit excited and said, "We will never get through here". I said we would. I turned left into Stephen St. and George's St., and stopped right behind Whitefriar St. Church. I said, "You get out, and I will put back the van". I had utilised the van before. I left the van where I had arranged with the driver to leave it.

I proceeded back to Dawson St. to see what kind of a job was carried out. There was a very big crowd around. The trams were stopped. All the windows in the vicinity were broken. After a few minutes, I got a tip on the shoulder. I looked round and saw the Inspector of

C.I.D. that time, Seán Tumelty. He said to me, "Are you coming back to look at the damage you have caused". I said, "Me? I don't know anything about it. I am not active at all". He said, "Now, get out of here. Get out of here". So, of course, I got away out of it and I was not arrested.

The next job was a raid on Held's, the tinsmith, of Francis St. for gas cylinders to make mines. This was all battalion work. We broke into this place and secured the cylinders. Then I drove up to premises in Marrowbone Lane, knocked at the door, but no one would open it. I tried to open the big gate without success. I said, "The best thing to do with this is to throw them over the gate". We threw the cylinders over the gate, but they were captured afterwards by the Free State Army.

There were various Companies out on the next job, the attempted burning of Oriel House. It was on a Sunday. It was a battalion job; Ben Carty and another fellow - he works in Dockrell's - were also on the job. We met at 41, York St. and commandeered a car. We brought sacks, gun cotton, a tin of petrol and some other stuff for burning the place. We drove to Westland Row where we stopped. A whistle was to be sounded. We were to drive up in our car with the stuff.

I was standing at the car, waiting to drive up, when Free State troops came down from Westland Row Station. I remember an officer - he had an impediment in his speech - got out of the car and wanted to know what I was doing there I said I was waiting for passengers coming from the train. He fell for it. I had all the stuff in the car. I went up into the railway station. This other boy that was with

us happened to be in the lavatory in the railway too. When I met him, I felt ammunition in my pocket and I put the ammunition at the back of the cistern, to be collected at a later date. This fellow had his gun. I told him to leave it in the lavatory and that we would come back later on and collect it, that the place was surrounded. We walked out of the station. When we got to the corner at the end, we were stopped by the Free State. I was searched and he was searched. After walking up Pearse St., about twenty yards, he said to me, "I got away with my gun". I said, "Where had you it?" He said, "I had it here hanging under my coat". "Where do you live?", I asked. "North Circular Road", he said. "Get on a tram", I said to him, "and get home".

At the next attempt to blow up Oriel House, my job was to take away the men and cover the retreat of the men who were to occupy the publichouse on the corner opposite Oriel House. I commandeered a car from Leeson St. I was not able to crank the motor and I always had to leave the engines running. The mine went off with such force that you would be blown off your feet. I waited. The lads ran by. I still hung on. The last to come was Kruger Graham. The engine stopped. Kruger Graham jumped into the back of the car, and said, "Drive on, Steve. They are all out. I am the last". I could not re-start the engine so we had to walk.

The next engagement was sticking up an armed guard at Harcourt St. railway. This was a battalion job and mostly "A' Company men were on it. I had another car on this occasion, an open car. They were to bring down the rifles from the railway and load them into the car. I said, " Make sure you don't throw them with the

muzzles facing me!" Willie Rowe was on this job and he shot someone, which disorganised the plan and spoiled the job. I drove around, thinking I would pick up some men who might be straggling around the place. In the meantime, Kruger Graham, was captured by the Free State Army in Leeson St., and they shot him dead on the street. They got a gun on him.

There were two brothers, Jack and Jim Harper, both officers in the Free State Army. We used meet in Harper's house, down where I was born, in John Dillon St. Any time Tommy O'Leary, O/C 4th Battalion Column, had a job, he would ask me to give him a hand with it. We went out to Thomas St. for an ambush. There was a Free State private car coming up at the Church, with two or three officers in it. I was with O"Leary. The others fired at the car. I did not fire a shot. Jim Harper, whose house we had just left, was one of the officers in the car.

A couple of days afterwards, O'Leary and myself were down in Harper's house. O'Leary was after dyeing his hair red. We left the house and went over to the gardener's tool house in St. Patrick's Park which was used to store clothes before being sent down to the I.R.A. in the country. The man in charge of the tool house was sympathetic to the cause. O'Leary went back to Harper's that evening, and the Free State came along to raid it. They knocked at the door. One of the women was sick in bed. One of the Harpers called O'Leary and said, "Go and get into the bed". He got into the bed beside her. She was so stout, and he was so small and thin that he was covered up in the bed beside her. He got away that time.

He had been seen going into the house. The Free Staters passed a remark before they left the house that they would never see O'Leary alive again. The Free State troops captured O'Leary that night and his body was found next morning outside Tranquilla Convent, Upper Rathmines, riddled with bullets.

During the Civil War I was told to move off to the country for a rest. I decided to go to my father's old home, and where my aunt still lived, at Moate, Co. Westmeath. I was very lucky. At the Kingsbridge station, I met Captain Fulham and he stopped me as I was getting on the train. He asked me where I was going. I said I was going to the country for a rest. "All right, go ahead", he said. At Mullingar station, who did I meet only Jack Harper. He used to search the trains at that time. He called me out of the train. I got out. He wanted to know where I was going. I said I was going to the country for a rest - to Galway. He said, "Galway? On this train?" "Yes", I said. That was a slip up. "I am going to meet the brother and going by car". "Do you mind if I search you?", he said. "Don't search me here", I said, "people will think I am a criminal". We went to the lavatory. I had nothing at all on me. I was going to Moate, Co. Westmeath, where my aunt lived.

While I was in my aunt's place, a first cousin of mine said to me one day, "We are going on a big job to-morrow. Would you like to take a hand in it? I said, "No". "You might as well", he said. "No", I said, "I am taking a rest. I am not going to be active at all. I know nothing about country fighting. What is the job?" "We are going to get the pay going to Athlone Barracks

to-morrow, hold up the paymaster",, he said. "That is one job", I said, "I won't go on. Had it been anything else, I might have gone along, but not on that". A crowd of men went to do the job. They shot the driver and I think they killed the paymaster, and they left the money behind them. That was the way the job was carried out. About midnight, when I was in bed, somebody came to the door - it was a little farmhouse - and wanted to know was there a stranger there. He was told there was not. He said, "There is. I am so-and-so. You had better tell him to get out. They are coming down for him". I had to get out. I did not know where to go. I walked across the fields towards Dublin, and I got lifts. What happened was that Fulham and Harper reported they saw me going down. They would have shot me dead, because they were under the impression that I went down to organise that job. I stopped in Mullingar where I knew some people and got home as best I could after that.

I was arrested at the very end of the Civil War. I was living in Hanover Street, West, at the time. A strange thing about it, they were Belfast fellows who came along to arrest me. They were looking for Peter White. I did not know they knew I was living there at all. I was arrested about two or three o'clock in the morning. I remember it well, because arrangements had been made to get the Castle mails coming from the Post Office in Dame St. on Friday morning. Captain Gorman was in charge of 'A' Company at the time and, as I said before, I was on the Battalion Staff. Any of those jobs that Gorman would get, he would request me to go out with him and give him a hand. We had arranged to capture the Castle mails on Friday morning between six and seven o'clock, and I

happened to be arrested that Friday morning at three o'clock. Our system at that time was to get the postman as he was going through Dame St. We were to stop him straightaway, hold him up, get the mails and bring them back to the shop in Francis St., Egan's, where we used to meet. Apparently the job fell through when I was arrested, because I asked Gorman afterwards and he said the whole thing was disorganised as somebody else was arrested too.

When I was arrested, I was brought to Portobello Barracks. They kept me in the car. There were about two or three cars, but I was the only prisoner they had. When they brought me into Portobello, I wanted to get out of the car for a few minutes, but they would not let me out. They turned the car around and drove out of the barracks again. Driving away, I got a bit of a start. I thought I was going to be shot.

Incidentally, I forgot to say that I had my gun in the house with me for the Friday morning's job. It was not captured. I put it into the bed with my wife. The kiddies were in the bed beside her, and they did not get it. They did not bother my wife who was in bed. I had also a .32 revolver which I got during the Tan scrap. I was after taking it from my own dump that I had, that day to clean it. I took it asunder and I put it under a butter cooler and forgot all about it. They were all Free State officers who were raiding. One officer picked up the lid of the butter cooler and looked underneath. He looked over at me and then at the revolver, as if to say, "Well, you are looking for trouble". He walked away, leaving the cooler uncovered. I put my hand out and took some part of the gun and threw it under the bed.

He came back and asked me where did I get the gun. The Intelligence officer was in plain-clothes. I said it was a souvenir I had during the Tan scrap. "You are making a mistake, as far as I am concerned. I am not active at all now", I said. They told me that I was active, that they knew I was active. I said I was not. The Intelligence officer happened to be a G-Company, pre-Truce, man and I cannot think of his name. They passed no more remarks but they took the gun away. I was not questioned any further. Driving away from Portobello Barracks, I thought I was going to be shot.

They brought me to Wellington Barracks, stopped there for a few minutes, and turned the car again. Needless to remark, I was not a terribly brave man, but I was not going to lie down under it. I felt very jittery about it. I asked one of the sergeants in the lorry what was going to happen to me. He was from the North of Ireland and he said, "You are all right. There will be/knocking off, as far as we are concerned". no That relieved me, of course. They brought me up to Keogh Barracks.

I was put into the cell, that is, the guardroom in Keogh Barracks. I thought I was there by myself. I could hear a noise somewhere in the cell. It was a big place. I could get a bad smell from the place. The sergeant in charge opened the door. He asked me did I know him. I said I didn't. "You are Stephen Keys?", he asked. I said, "Yes". He said, "It looks bad for you to be put in here. I know you and I know your wife". I asked why. "We have a compound here, and there are five or six huts here. . All the prisoners are usually put in there. They have a place here, a coal yard. I am not

trying to put the wind up you, but they often knock off a few fellows here in the coal yard", he said. He told me he went to school with me. I asked him what was the chance of getting away. "There is no possible chance", he said, "but I would not let you out, in the first place. I'll see you have comfort and that". He threw me in blankets. I said, "There's an awful smell here". He said, "There's another fellow there". "I can't see him", I said. "There are three or four cubicles", he said, "I don't think he is an I.R.A. man. He's for the coal yard. He was caught with a gun in a stick-up, and he lives in Francis St."

When daylight came, this man came out; and he had some terrible disease. He came over to me. We were talking for a few minutes but I could not stand near him the smell was so bad. I requested to see the officer in charge. This same Sergeant happened to be still on duty. About two hours afterwards I was brought up to an office inside the barracks, and the I.O. that I knew or who knew me well was there with some other officers. I asked why I was not put into the huts. One of the officers said, "We don't want you to disorganise or be corrupting the people in the huts." I appealed to the man in civvies. I asked him to put me anywhere else except where I was. I said, "There's a man beside me. I don't know what is wrong with him. But will you put me somewhere else?" He said, "Oh, yes. I forgot all about that fellow. You should not be with that fellow". They took me out and put me into a hut.

I met a fellow in the hut, named Seán Caffrey. He was a Colonel in the Free State Army and he was a

prisoner. He was one of our Intelligence officers. He knew my name. I did not know him at all. He said, "The best thing for us to do is to try and escape, because I might get the works the same as yourself". When you would be going to the toilet, of course, there would be a soldier sent along with you, and there was barbed wire keeping you in. I went twice or three times that day. I kept lifting up this barbed wire. The soldier would not come in with you. I had everything ready to get out. There was no trouble to get out. As a matter of fact, it was quite simple. I told Caffrey I was going out that evening over the lavatory wall. I said, "I don't know if there is a big drop down on the outside, but it leads to the canal". He came with me to the toilet, and I was half-way across the wall when some other prisoners came in and asked, "What are you doing?", or something like that. The soldier came in and got me back again.

I was removed to Mountjoy prison then. I was put into A. Wing, which was the capital charge wing that time. We were treated the same as the ordinary criminals. There was one man in each cell, and we had to walk so many paces behind each other.

One man started a hunger strike in A. Wing. He was Dr. Con Murphy. He came from Keogh Barracks with me. He had a son in the organisation as well. When we went into A.Wing the first day, I was standing beside Dr. Con Murphy, and Paudeen O'Keeffe came in and, with his usual shouting, told us what he would not do to us and what was going to happen to us. He walked down the line and said to Dr. Con Murphy, "I believe that you are on hunger strike. Well, I'll knock you off hunger strike".

He struck Dr. Murphy a blow in the face and knocked him flat on the ground. The P.A's came along and we were put into our cells, after getting a lecture from Paudeen O'Keeffe, the Commanding Officer of the Prison.

The suspense in A. Wing was, needless to remark, as far as I was concerned, very great. If you happened to use your chamber in the night and were not at the cell door in the morning holding it in your hand when the P.A. came along, he would bolt the door again and lock you in, and you were locked in all day. If you got out you would have to stay in the compound until dinner time no matter how heavily it rained. We got the same food as the criminals.

I might remark that all the men in the other wings were singing and having dances, and saying the Rosary at night; and they were getting parcels and all that. Sometimes one of the criminals, if you happened to be in the hall at all in A.Wing, would get cigarettes from the far side and pitch them in for anybody at all to get them. I must say some of the P.A.s never bothered about them, but some would pick them up and take them away.

Some time afterwards, there was a big move out, and I moved over to D. Wing. After being transferred to D. Wing, the prisoners made me Q.M., D.3. Dr. Jim Ryan, Professor Joe McDevitt and General Michael Kilroy were on the same landing in D.3, and afterwards Mr. Seán Lemass was put into the same cell as myself when he was arrested.

We had our own organisation in the prison. There were three or four men in each cell usually. We had an intelligence staff there and I was on it. How that

happened was, I was walking around the compound one day and I saw a Sergeant who was a first cousin of mine. He was in charge of the guard. I had not spoken to him for years. He called me over and said, "Is your name Keys?". I said, "Yes". "I thought", said he, "that you were knocked off long ago". I said, "No". "Well", he said, "anything I can do for you, I will do it". "Well", I said, "Give me in some tea and sugar and a few cigarettes, if you can get them". "I will get anything you want", he said.

In the meantime the Four Courts fellows in C. Wing were planning to escape and I knew about this. We used have little Council meetings. Dr. Jim Ryan was on them. He was in the same wing. Professor Joe McDevitt said, "Well, Q.M., seeing that you know this man, we will be able to use him". I said, "Yes". "Well", he said, "get him to bring me in a bottle of whiskey". I asked my cousin and he brought in a half bottle of whiskey.

I don't know who told me to approach my cousin about getting out letters, possibly Dr. Jim Ryan or some of the big shots. I asked him about taking out a few letters. "Yes", he said, "I will take them home to your wife". I said, "I want you to take some others. You will be paid for this. Don't forget, it is a dangerous thing". He said, "I understand. Don't forget, I was in the British Army". I got a letter - I think Professor Joe McDevitt gave it to me to send out. My cousin had taken out ordinary letters in the meantime and he had taken out some blank letters from our own people, as a test, and he delivered them apparently all right and he got paid. I got this particular letter. I don't know what was in it,

but I know it was appertaining to the escape, and it was addressed to somebody at Morehampton Road, or Ballsbridge district. I gave him the letter and I said, "Don't open the letter. I have it here and I want you to deliver it to the address. If you carry out your instructions, you will be paid £40 or £50". He said, "That will be all right. I will deliver it". He brought out the letter.

I did not see my cousin for three months afterwards. He had been transferred to Howth, in charge of the guard in Howth. He came back as a prisoner to the guard room where he had been in charge. I tried to get him over, and he shouted he was a prisoner. I thought he had been caught with the letter.

I met my cousin years afterwards and asked him what happened about the letter. "Well", he said, "I delivered the letter all right. I went in civilian clothes. A woman took it from me at the door and asked me to go in. When I went in, I saw a crowd of men at a meeting, and who did I see only de Valera. When I saw de Valera, I got the wind up and said I would come back for the answer". He did not realise what he was doing until he saw de Valera. He was nearly always drunk. "I was in charge of the Howth section", he said, "and I pinched a few rifles and was arrested.

I was transferred from Mountjoy prison to the Curragh and I was Q.M. of Hut 12 or 13.

There was a P.A. in the Curragh by the name of Bergin. He was shot afterwards. I knew he was one that could be approached on matters of escape, if you could possibly approach him through the big shots. I heard of

that. One evening I was told to be up at the cook house early in the morning "and don't bring any orderlies with you". I was told that by our Camp Adjutant; Malone, I think, was his name. I went up next morning to the cook house or dining room, early. As I went up, the Camp Adjutant came up and said, "Come on quick". I went to the side of the cook house. There was a horse-drawn vehicle standing there, with rubbish. Commandant Malone, the Camp Adjutant, and our Camp Commandant got into the car and they lay down on the bottom of it. The P.A., Bergin, was standing beside it. Myself, Bergin, the P.A., and two other people covered up the Camp Commandant and the Adjutant with cabbage leaves and all the refuse from the cook house. When they were covered up, they were driven right out and escaped.

The next escape from the Curragh was made by Joe Wilson, a former Commandant of the Free State Army. I used knock around with him a lot because he was able to get a great lot of cigarettes from the soldiers. He said to me one day, "I am going to escape". We were sitting on the grass. He mapped out the whole Curragh on the grass. I said, "Let me have your cigarettes before you go". One evening while I was talking to him, he said he was going to escape the next morning. He told me how he was going. There was a very, very big hut which held about five or six hundred men. It was a riding school one time. The morning paper was secured in some way, and the O/C of the hut called all the men that were there down to one end of the hut, telling them he had the paper. Of course, everybody was anxious to hear the news. I was at the top part of the hut. I saw Joe Wilson walking in and he waved

his hand to me. He climbed up on top of a platform where the guard was placed to keep an eye on the men. It was raised above the hut. The same man again, Bergin, was there waiting for him and gave him a uniform, into which Wilson changed. He walked on out and got away.

After an escape like that, in order to give the escapees time to get away, we did our best that they would not be missed for a few days. We were counted every night by officers. When they would have gone up one side of the hut, it was arranged that one or two fellows, after being counted, would get as quickly as possible over to the two empty beds on the other side. It was possible to keep the authorities in ignorance of the escape for a few days, and that gave the boys a chance of getting away.

While I was in the Curragh, a hunger strike was called, and I thought to myself that I would not go on hunger strike. I was married at the time and I said, "I am not going on hunger strike and have to go out of this place as a cripple". Dr. Jim Ryan was Medical Officer of the Camp, and any men with any repute that did not want to go on hunger strike would have to go before him. There was a lot of people there who were not in the I.R.A. at all, mixed amongst us. There was quite a good queue of us outside, awaiting medical examination. I went into him. "Well, Keys, what is wrong with you?", he asked. I said, "Doctor, I have an awful bad stomach, and I had an operation" - which I had not at all - "and I would not be able to go on this hunger strike". "You are Q.M.", he said. I said, "Yes". "Strip off", he said. I stripped off. He did examine me. He said, "Go back. Give a good example to the men". I had to

go on hunger strike. I had the experience of four days' hunger strike in Mountjoy.

We went on hunger strike, and I said I would not stop on it any longer than fifteen days, because there was a rumour around the Camp that, after fifteen days on hunger strike, you lived on the marrow of your bones and that you were likely to be a cripple for the rest of your life. On the fifteenth day, I was ready to break it the next morning. The way you broke the strike was: you went up to the cook house; You told them you were off the strike. That morning when I went up, there were five or six hundred of us breaking it because of the rumour. You got a little drop of Bovril for a start. Some of the men from the country did not understand this. I saw one man in particular going over to the swill bucket, taking food from it and eating it, and, within a short period, he was lying on the ground and the orderlies were taking him away on a stretcher. The rumour came that he was dead. Two or three men happened to die from the same thing, eating too much and not being able to get to hospital quick enough.

I was released at the end of spring 1924.

Signed: Stephen Keys
(Stephen Keys)

Date: 13/7/55
13/7/55.

Witness: Sean Brennan Lieut. Col.
(Investigator) (Sean Brennan) Lieut.-Col.