

W.S. 1,222  
**ORIGINAL**

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

BURO STAIRÉ MILÉATA 1913-21

No. W.S. 1222

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COSANTA.

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 1,222.....

Witness

Thomas Roche,  
Tullylease,  
Charleville,  
Co. Cork.

Identity.

Member R.I.C. 1913-1920;  
Training Officer Newmarket Battalion  
Cork II Brigade, 1920 - .

Subject.

Newmarket Battalion,  
Cork II Brigade, 1920-1921.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil

File No. S.547.....

Form B.S.M. 2

ORIGINAL

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STATEMENT BY THOMAS ROCHE

Tullylease, Charleville, Co. Cork.

I was born at Tullylease, Charleville, Co. Cork, on 1st April 1892. I was educated at Tullylease National School.

I joined the Royal Irish Constabulary in March 1913, and continued to serve in this force until 17th May 1920, when I resigned, having nearly eight years' service. At the time of my resignation I was stationed at Naas, Co. Kildare, and was regarded as a first-class instructor in arms and footdrill. I resigned from the R.I.C. because of my sympathy with Sinn Fein. When handing in my resignation to the Co. Inspector at Naas, I gave this as the reason.

When, following my resignation, I returned home to Tullylease, I immediately joined the Irish Volunteers. I was appointed battalion training officer of the Newmarket Battalion and later Battalion O/C. Police. In the course of my duties as training officer I visited regularly all companies in the battalion, instructing the members in the care and use of arms, scouting and the use of cover and foot-drill. In addition, I arranged for the holding of occasional training camps at which selected men from the various companies attended. One of the senior officers of the battalion was usually in charge. At these camps the trainees were mainly engaged on a little musketry practice (ammunition had to be conserved), scouting, use of cover, outpost duty. A regular routine of exercises, which tended to keep the men fit, was undertaken. Each camp continued for a period of about 10 days. Camps on the lines indicated were held in Ballingulla and Tureen in December 1920, and at Umerboy in March 1921.

The Newmarket Battalion was organised in the Spring of 1917 as a unit of the 19th Battalion of the Cork Brigade of the I.R.A. The battalion organisation was followed in September 1917 by a course of training given by Capt. Sean O'Sullivan, who was an organiser attached to the Brigade staff. This was

further followed by the training of the officers and some specially selected men at a training camp established at Derrygallon in November 1917.

A system of training, drills and bi-weekly parades was established. Communications were set between company, battalion and brigade headquarters. At this time, as a result of a series of raids made by the R.I.C., the battalion vice commandant, Patrick Murphy, the battalion quartermaster, Patrick McCarthy, and Volunteer Sean Nunan (who was later to command the brigade after July 1922) were captured and received long terms of imprisonment. Nunan and Murphy were released after 12 months. McCarthy escaped from Strangeways Prison, Manchester, in October 1919. While these arrests had a disrupting effect on the organisation for the time being, yet new appointments were made and the work pressed forward.

The battalion was utilised for organisation and recruiting purposes in the districts adjoining its own. Routine work of this nature was followed by the securing of all arms and ammunition in the district, of a listing of all transport and the organisation of an intelligence service. A constant watch was set on police movements and, later on, the movements of military, and arrangements were made for the capture of police carbines, revolvers and ammunition. These arrangements, after many disappointments, culminated in the capture of the first police rifles at Newmarket on the 17th March 1918. This capture was part of a battalion operation over a wide area, and was participated in by all the pioneer members of the companies forming the battalion, whose names I give herewith:

A. Company (Tullylease).

John J. Lenihan  
Patrick P. Murphy, R.I.P.  
Con Ring

Michael Barry  
John Cronin  
Tim Barry

John Newman	Jerh. Roche
John Fitzgibbon	Eugene Sullivan
	Ben Connors

B. Company (Freemount)

Tom Morton	John Costello
Robert Keane	Michael Madden, R.I.P.
D. O'Mullane	Denis Noonan
William O'Dwyer	Michael Collins
Sean Noonan, R.I.P.	Jerh. Brennan
Denis Rahilly	Richard Collins
John Sheahan	Michael Noonan
Simon Brown	John Brennan
	Patk. McCarthy R.I.P.

C. Company (Meelin)

Michael Sullivan	Ben Doherty
Dan Brown	Philip Cartin
Daniel Bourke	

D. Company (Newmarket)

Sean Moylan, T.D.	Willie Moylan, R.I.P.
Cha O'Reilly, R.I.P.	David Fitzgerald
Pat O'Connor	John D. Curtin
Willie Keeffe	John O'Connell
Con Moylan R.I.P.	Chris. O'Connell
Jim Collins	Mick Quinn
Jer Sheahan	Con Foley
M.J. Brennan	

E. Company (Rockchapel)

Tim Coughlan	John Rahilly
Martin M. Murphy	John Buckley
Denis Shine	Maurice Stack
David C.D. Curtin	John Duiney
Dan Riordan	Dan M. Murphy
Patrick Manley	Stephen Sugrue
John Murphy	

F. Company (Taur)

Michael Murphy	Patrick Shine
Denis McAuliffe	Con Sheahan

G. Company (Ballydesmond)

Jeremiah Keane	Joe Keeffe
John Ring	Dan Lucey
8Thomas Herlihy	Manus Moylan
John J. Jones	Sean Sullivan
Tim Corcoran	John O'Connor
Jeremiah O'Leary	

H. Company (Kiskeam)

Richard Dennehy	Timothy Moynihan
James Geaney	Nicholas Fitzgerald
Jas. Riordan	Jery. Scannell
(Reandullane)	
Con T. Murphy	Jim Riordan (Knockavorheen)
John D. O'Connor	John C. Murphy

Michael Riordan  
 Dan Kiely  
 John O'Leary  
 Cal. O'Callaghan  
 Tim J. Cronin  
 John O'Connor  
 Jerh. Mulcahy  
 Dan Guiney  
 Dan Flynn

Tom Collins  
 James Cashman  
 Tim D. Murphy  
 John Riordan (Knockavorheen)  
 Timothy Fitzgerald  
 (Reandullane)  
 Denis Kiely  
 Tim Guiney  
 Thomas Herlihy

I. Company (Knocknagree)

Jerh. Sheehan  
 Tom O'Connor  
 Eugene O'Keefe  
 Con Hickey  
 Denis O'Brien

Denis Cremin  
 Dan Hartnett  
 Denis T. O'Connor  
 Denis D. Sheehan  
 Michael Cronin

J. Company (Umerboy)

Eugene McCarthy  
 John Mahony  
 Michael Mahony  
 Jer Healy  
 Denis Sheehan  
 (Knocknagree)

Eugene Sullivan  
 Eugene Connor  
 Pat O'Connor  
 Phil Cremin  
 James O'Connor (Doon)

The facts in connection with this question are as follow:  
 It was the practice for parties of R.I.C. from all outlying stations to come into Newmarket on the occasion of the monthly fairs. On these occasions they were armed with rifle and revolver, and returned in the evening to their home stations. From September 1917 until December 1917 all roads leading from Newmarket to these stations were manned by Volunteers on the evenings of Newmarket fairs. Owing to the change of routes and times and other circumstances, the battalion had no success and the practice of carrying arms by the R.I.C. was dropped in January 1918. A constant watch was still kept on the R.I.C. movements and, on March 17th 1918, they attended from outside districts at Kanturk where a meeting was to be held. It was hurriedly decided that the attempt should be made again that night to secure their arms, and while nothing came of the attempt on several roads travelled by the R.I.C., two of them were held up west of Newmarket and disarmed.

During 1918 the battalion continued its drills and organisation. Volunteers paid weekly subscriptions and collected funds. The work of intelligence was perfected and intensified. British military, of which a large body was now

drafted into the battalion area, were obstructed, their bicycles destroyed or captured for use by the I.R.A. dispatch riders.

One such operation carried out by Knocknagree Company deserves mention. A cycling patrol of British soldiers, consisting of about 40 men, travelling between Knocknagree and Newmarket in July 1918 were attacked passing through Umeraboy Company area, and, even though the members of the patrol were armed with rifles and the attackers unarmed, all the bicycles were put out of action and some captured.

Some ammunition and arms were purchased from British soldiers.

During this year most of the R.I.C. barracks were closed and the police concentrated on central positions. A number of policemen resigned. This situation was brought about by the battalion, whose intense activity directed the popular mind along anti-British lines.

During 1919 the first blush of enthusiasm paled out but the work of intensive organisation went on. The original Cork brigade was divided into three brigades. A convention was held at Dromhane (Dromahane) on 6.1.1919, and the 19th Battalion became the 6th and attached to Cork 2nd Brigade. The battalion carried on its routine work of drills, parades and general training. It continued to collect funds and all arms in the battalion area, and was represented at brigade council meetings monthly. Its first real activity began in 1920 with the headquarters' order to destroy all vacated R.I.C. barracks and buildings likely to be used as enemy posts. This was done all over the battalion area. Five men of the battalion were wounded in one of these activities. They were: Charles O'Reilly, Liam Moylan, Michael Brennan (Newmarket Company), Con Murphy, Nicholas Fitzgerald (Kiskeam Company). With the withdrawal of the R.I.C. from

outlying districts a certain amount of lawlessness resulted. Robberies, assaults and land disputes occurred and threatened to increase. The battalion had to cope with these and, by way of arrest, deportation, warning and general dispensation of summary jurisdiction, did so. The fact that such outbreaks of crime were immediately dealt with resulted in the making easier the work of the battalion in the later days when the issue was more closely knit on the more purely military front. These activities, however, placed a very heavy burden of work on the battalion, but also developed an esprit-de-corps, and an independence in outlook and action which were needful to them in the days ahead.

The total number of men who joined the battalion approximated to the male population of the district between the ages of 16 and 45. The total number of Volunteers on roll remained practically constant. There were very few defections and only 3 fatal casualties. On the 11th July 1921, the number on the battalion rolls was 904, and on the 1st July 1922 the number was 843.

The battalion was originally the 19th Battalion of the Cork Brigade. Before July 11th 1921, it was the 6th Battalion of Cork 2nd Brigade, and on July 11th 1921, the battalion staff membership was:

O/C. Sean Nunan; V.O/C. Patk. P. Murphy; Q.M. James Reardon (replacing W. O'Dwyer, in jail); Adjutant, Dan Browne ( " W. Barrett, " " ); Column leader, Ml. O'Sullivan; Training officer, Thomas Roche.

On 1st July 1922, the battalion was the 2nd Battalion of Cork 4th Brigade and the staff membership was: O/C. Patrick P. Murphy; V.O/C. Dan Guiney; Q.M. Jas. Reardon; Adjutant, John Linehan; Column leader, Ml. O'Sullivan; Training Officer, Thomas Roche.

At this time Sean Nunan became Vice Brigadier, Cork IV Brigade.

Company staff as on 11th July 1921.As on 1st July 1922.A/Company (Tullylease)

Capt. Ben O'Connor  
 1/Lt. Eugene O'Sullivan  
 2/Lt. Maurice Nunan  
 Adj. & I.O. John Linehan  
 Q.M. Con Ring.

Capt. Eugene O'Sullivan  
 1/Lt. Maurice Noonan  
 2/Lt. Jer. Roche  
 Adj. & I.O. John Lenihan  
                   (Bn. Adjt.)  
 Q.M. John Newman.

B/Company (Freemount).

Capt. John Duane (in jail,  
                   replaced by Denis O'Mullane,  
                   attached to column and  
                   replaced by Robt. Keane)  
 1st Lt. Vacant  
 2nd Lt. Michael Collins.

Capt. Robt. Keane  
 1st Lt. Ml. Collins  
 2nd Lt. John Larkin  
 Q.M. Denis Nunan

C/Company (Meelin).

Capt. Phil Curtin  
 1st Lt. Batt Browne  
 2nd Lt. Thos. McCarthy  
 Adjt. Wm. O'Callaghan  
 Q.M. Ben Doherty

Capt. Phil Curtin  
 1st Lt. Vacant  
 2nd Lt. do.  
 Adjt. do.  
 Q.M. Ben Doherty

D/Coy. (Newmarket)

Capt. Jer Sheahan  
 1st Lt. Jas. Collins  
 2nd Lt. Denis Sullivan  
 Adj. & I.O. John O'Connell  
 Q.M. Chris Connell

Capt. Jas. Collins  
 1st Lt. Denis Mahoney  
 2nd Lt. Hugh O'Keefe  
 Adj. Pat O'Connor  
 Q.M. Chris Connell

E/Company (Rockchapel)

Capt. Tim Coughlan  
 1st Lt. John Rahilly  
 2nd Lt. John Guiney  
 Adj. Denis Shine  
 Q.M. Dave Curtin

As opposite

F/Company (Taur)

Capt. Michael Murphy  
 1st Lt. Patrick Shine  
 2nd Lt. Tim Galvin  
 Adj. Tim Sheehan

As opposite

G/Company (Ballydesmond)

Capt. Tom Herlihy  
 1st Lt. John Jones (attached  
                   to column, replaced by  
                   Jerh. Keane)  
 2nd Lt. Dan Fitzgerald  
 Adj. Dan Lucey

Capt. Jos. O'Keefe  
 1st Lt. Jer. Keane  
 2nd Lt. Martin Murphy  
 Adj. Dan O'Keefe  
 Q.M. Wm. Sheehan



As on 11 July 1921.

H/Company (Kiskeam)

Capt. Con T. Murphy  
(Transferred to Active  
Service Unit in June 1921  
and replaced by Daniel  
Guiney)

1st Lt. James Cashman  
2nd Lt. Eugene Cronin  
Adjt. John C. Murphy  
Q.M. Denis Kiely

Sec. Commanders:-

Nicholas Fitzgerald  
John D. O'Connor  
Dan Kiely  
Michael Buckley

I/Company (Knocknagree)

Capt. Denis Cremin (replacing  
Thomas O'Connor, injured  
on active service).

1st Lt. Denis T. O'Connor  
2nd Lt. Eugene Casey  
Adjt. Tim McCarthy  
Q.M. Pat Breen

J/Coy. (Umeraboy)

Captain Eugene McCarthy  
1st Lt. John O'Mahoney  
2nd Lt. Jer. Healy  
Adjt. John O'Connor  
Q.M. Eugene O'Keefe

As on 1st July 1922.

Capt. Dan Guiney (appointed  
Bn.V/Comdt. and was  
replaced by Dan Kiely)

1/Lt. Jas. Cashman  
2/Lt. Eugene Cronin  
Adjt. John C. Murphy  
Q.M. Denis Kiely

Capt. Denis T. O'Connor  
retired when Bde. went  
into active service  
on 1st July, replaced  
by Denis Cremin).

1st Lt. Pat Sharpe  
2nd Lt. Eugene O'Keefe  
Adjt. Tim McCarthy

Captain John O'Mahoney  
1st Lt. Eugene O'Sullivan  
2nd Lt. Michael O'Mahoney  
Adjt. Tim Twohill  
Q.M. John O'Connor

With the coming into operation of the Sinn Fein Courts a good deal of work was placed on the shoulders of the battalion. The Courts had to be protected from enemy raids; judges, litigants and witnesses notified; Court decrees carried out and fines and costs collected. This eventually entailed the formation of a special section into a police force, but the Courts generally were held under such conditions as necessitated the protection and co-operation of all members of the battalion and the overwhelming success of the Courts was in a great measure due to such wholehearted co-operation. The raiding of mails was carried out by the battalion, and the amount of stuff seized was enormous and a special staff was picked to deal with it. The brigade commandant was so impressed with

the results obtained that he sent a special messenger to Dublin with a quantity of the stuff captured. All the letters &c. not sent to Dublin were delivered to the Post Office authorities safely. Apart from the information secured, the raiding of the mails had a useful effect in forming a deterrent to the practice of indiscreet talking and writing.

Afterwards the mails were raided on a few occasions in every company area, but, as after a short while no useful information was secured, the practice was dropped.

The Post Office authorities proceeded to collect telephones from all districts in which British forces were not stationed. Post Office officials were permitted to dismantle these. After dismantling, the I.R.A. took over the instruments.

This period of 1920 saw the imposition of curfew restrictions. A number of attacks were made on curfew patrols in Newmarket. These were successful insofar as they produced a discontinuation of the practice of patrolling by British military during curfew hours and prevented free movement of British military at any hour.

On the night of 15th August 1920, the following members of the Newmarket Battalion took up ambush positions in the vicinity of Newmarket Creamery with a view to ambushing a curfew patrol: Mick Sullivan, Pat McCarthy, Pat Murphy, John Linehan, Batt Browne, Ben O'Connor, Dan Browne, Phil Curtin, Tom Roche (witness), Con Ring, Denis Mullane, John Devane, Bob Keane, Jerh. Sheehan, Christie Connell, Jim Collins, Pat Barry, Con Brennan, Mick Collins, Wm.J.O'Keefe, Tom McNamara. Although the party remained in position until after midnight, it was the first night the patrol failed to turn out. An attempt to burn the Creamery stores was made next day by the enemy.

During September 1920, a party under Paddy O'Brien (Bde. Q.M.) took up ambush positions near Milford R.I.C. Barracks

to await a patrol of R.I.C. The enemy failed to put in an appearance and, although the I.R.A. party had been in position from 4 a.m. to 12 noon, it withdrew without making contact with the enemy. The members of this party were: Paddy O'Brien, Paddy Murphy, Tom Roche (witness), Ben O'Connor, Denis Galvin, Dave McAuliffe, Bill Moylan, Maurice Noonan, Sean Noonan, Paddy McCarthy, Dan Browne, Mick Sullivan, Dan Vaughan, Maurice Clancy, Tom Coughlan, Eugene O'Sullivan.

The first actual engagement in which members of the battalion participated was at Ballydrocane ambush on 11th October 1920. This ambush took place between the towns of Kanturk and Newmarket, in both of which there were strong forces of police and military, and between which there was constant communication. The ambush was a success. Some British soldiers were killed, all were wounded, their lorries burned and their stuff captured. The men of the battalion who participated were armed variously with shotguns or rifles. Their names were:-

<u>Battalion staff:-</u>	Sean Nunan O/C. P.P. Murphy, O/C. James Riordan, Q.M. Dan Browne, Adjt.
<u>Column leader:</u>	Michael O'Sullivan
<u>B/Coy.</u> (Freemount)	John Larkin, Robt. Keane, Michael Collins, John Sheahan, Jerh. Sheahan, Denis Nunan and Jack Costello.
<u>D/Coy.</u> (Newmarket)	Jer. Sheahan, Pat O'Connor, David Fitzgerald, James Collins, W. O'Keefe, D. McAuliffe, Liam Moylan, and Con Moylan.
<u>G/Coy.</u> (Ballydesmond)	Jer. Leary, Dan Lucey, Joe Keefe, and Tom Herlihy.
<u>H/Coy.</u> (Kiskeam)	Con T. Murphy, John O'Leary, J.C. Murphy, Jim Riordan, Dan Guiney, Dan Flynn, John D. O'Connor, Tim Cronin, J. Cashman & Denis Kiely.
<u>Riflemen:</u>	Sean Nunan, Patk.P. Murphy, James Riordan, Dan Browne, Ml. O'Sullivan, John Larkin, Robt. Keane, Wm. O'Keefe, D. McAuliffe, Liam Moylan, Con T. Murphy, John O'Leary, J.C. Murphy, Dan Guiney, Dan Flynn, John D. O'Connor, Tim Cronin, Jas. Cashman and Denis Kiely.

The men of Ballydesmond Company - Jerh. Leary, Dan Lucey, Joe O'Keefe and Tom Herlihy - had the duty allotted to them of pushing a cart from a concealed gateway on to the road so as to collide with the leading lorry of British troops. The others mentioned from Freemount Company were armed with shotguns, and those from Newmarket Company not mentioned were engaged in road blocking after the ambush to prevent the too rapid approach of British reinforcements.

At this time, October 1920, a workshop and foundry had been set up in the battalion area where guns were repaired, cartridges refilled, explosives manufactured and grenade cases cast. This was further developed in 1921 and I shall again refer to it.

In November 1920, the Black and Tans were attacked in the town of Millstreet. In this engagement, Patrick McCarthy of Freemount Company and Battalion Q.M. was killed. Those who took part were:-

Freemount Company	P. McCarthy
Meelin do.	Ml. O'Sullivan & Dan Browne.
Newmarket Company	Liam Moylan & D. McAuliffe
Kiskeam do.	Dan Guiney, P.J. Dennehy, Jim Riordan and Dan Flynn.

I would like to advert to the fact that for 2 men in the line the British had - in France - four men on supply. The participation by one man of the battalion in any engagement such as Millstreet meant at least one other man's work behind the line, as well as the necessary co-operation and the direction of the company's officers.

At Kingwilliamstown in November 1920, the following representatives of the battalion remained in position for two days, but again the enemy failed to turn up: Mick Sullivan, Dan Browne, Tom Roche (witness), Maurice Noonan, Sean Noonan, Jack Jones, Con Finucane, Dan Lucey, Dan Shine, Tom Herlihy, Jas. Keane, Joe O'Keefe, Dan Fitzgerald, Jim Riordan, Jim Cashman, Dan Flynn, Jerome O'Mahoney, Con Murphy, Denis Mullane, John Devane.

Despite intensive activity in the battalion, it was not possible to engage the British again until January 4th, 1921. Ambushes laid miscarried. The British took no risks, never travelling twice on the same road and always in great strength. On 4th January 1921, the battalion column, under Sean Moylan, were moving into position on a byroad between Newmarket and Meelin with the intention of attacking a foot patrol of military which reports from the Battalion I.O. indicated operated regularly in the area. Before the column had taken up positions, word was received that two lorries of military had travelled along the 'Line' road (this was the main road between Meelin and Newmarket). The column immediately moved into a new position on Meelin Hill overlooking part of the 'Line' road. We took cover under cover of a low fence within about 200 yards of the road. When the enemy lorries arrived within our position, fire was opened on them by our riflemen as well as our Hotchkiss gun crew (Liam Moylan and Dave McAuliffe). The leading enemy lorry got through, but the second was put out of action and overturned. Fire was kept up by the column and returned by the enemy for about an hour, when the column were forced to withdraw due to the arrival of enemy reinforcements from Newmarket. Later that night, the column returned to Meelin with the intention of engaging the reinforcements, but they had withdrawn after burning three houses - Quinlan's, Murphy's and Browne's. The enemy returned next day and destroyed four other houses in the district. During the course of this engagement the enemy suffered a number of casualties. Amongst those who took part in this operation were: Tom Roche (witness), Mick Sullivan, Dan Browne, Maurice Noonan, Sean Noonan, Jack Jones, Con Finucane, Jim Riordan, Jim Cashman, Dan Flynn, Con Murphy, Denis Mullane and several members of the Tullylease, Freemount, Meelin and Newmarket companies.

A further attempt to ambush British military and police took place on 15th January at Scarteen near Newmarket. This proved abortive owing to the fact that the British carried a number of hostages in their lorries, making it impossible for the I.R.A. to attack. The members of the battalion who were present on both occasions were:

Tullylease Company: Tom Roche, John Lenihan, Con Ring, Jack Cronin, Ben Connor, Andy Scully, Dan Kenneally, Tim Bresnihan, Simon Stokes, Eugene Sullivan, Maurice Nunan, Jack Fitzgibbons, Mick Barry.

Freemount Company: John Duane, David O'Mullane, Rob. Keane, Con Aherne, W. O'Dwyer, Pat Barry, Michael Ahern, Michael Collins, Jos. Nagle, John Larkin, Michael Madden (R.I.P.), James O'Leary and Michael Nunan.

Meelin Company: Batt. Browne, Pat McCarthy, John Curtin, Michael O'Sullivan, James Callaghan, Ed. Doherty, Con Kennedy, Con Twomey, Dan O'Connor, Ben Doherty, Wm. O'Callaghan, Philip Curtin.

Newmarket Company: Officers and a number of men co-operated without being actually in ambush position.

In the same month - January - an ambush took place at Tureengarrive in Kerry. Two companies took part in this - a most successful operation. The men of Kiskeam Company who participated were: Dan Guiney, John D. O'Connor, Tom Cronin, John C. Murphy, Jim Reardon, Owen Daly, John O'Leary, Jerome O'Mahony, Denis Kiely, James Cashman, Con T. Murphy, Dan Flynn and Dan Kiely.

The men of Ballydesmond Company were:- Tom Herlihy, John Jones, Dan Lucey, Joe Keefe, Jerh. Leary, Con Finucane, Michael Murphy, Jerry Keane, Michael O'Leary, John Dineen, Manus Moynihan, Eugene O'Sullivan, John O'Connor, Martin Murphy, Daniel O'Keefe, Denis Dineen, John Sullivan, Wm. Doody, Wm. Sheehan and Dan Ring.

In January 1921, also came the H.Q. order to destroy bridges and make trenches in roads to obstruct enemy transport. Bridges were destroyed and trenches made in the battalion

area. The British filled the trenches and repaired the bridges on numerous occasions, but these were always reopened or destroyed by the I.R.A.

Bridges and trenches:

<u>Tullylease Company:</u>	Castleishen Bridge, Cooles Bridge and 8 trenches.
<u>Freemount Company:</u>	John's Bridge, Freemount Bridge, Malachi's Bridge, Cromogue Bridge, Matt Fitz's Bridge and Reardon's Bridge. Ten trenches.
<u>Meelin Company:</u>	Meeneeshal Bridge, Meencaragh Bridge, Limerick Bounds Bridge. 7 trenches.
<u>Newmarket Company:</u>	Barley Hill Bridge. No trenches.
<u>Rockchapel Company:</u>	Guiney's Bridge, Knockaclarig Bridge, Milleen Bridge. 6 trenches.
<u>Taur Company:</u>	Geashakinleene Bridge, Barnacurra Bridge, Gortnalough Bridge, Inchatotane Bridge, Glenlara Bridge. 4 trenches.
<u>Ballydesmond Company:</u>	Kingwilliamstown Bridge, Newquarter Bridge, Glounawadda Bridge. 14 trenches.
<u>Kiskeam Company:</u>	Lisrobin Bridge, Knockrounke Bridge, Clamper Bridge, Kiskeam Bridge. 6 trenches.
<u>Knocknagree Company:</u>	Nohoval Bridge, Duncannon Bridge, New Quarter Bridge, Farrankeal Bridge. 7 trenches.
<u>Umeraboy Company:</u>	Doon Bridge, Loumanagh Bridge. 3 trenches.

This made a total of 34 bridges and 65 trenches. The bridges were demolished with ordinary quarry man's tools, as no explosive was available. It was in many ways a dangerous and wearisome job. The trenches were never less than 12 feet wide and sometimes were 18 feet wide, and 4 feet deep, and were cut completely from fence to fence. The cutting of each trench meant the displacement of at least 50 cubic yards of material, or in all, 3,750 cubic yards. This, as I said before, did not complete the work, as the trenches had to be constantly re-opened and the roads made impassable for lorries.

Another activity which engaged the battalion at this period was the making of waterproof dumps for arms, etc. Members of the battalion were busily engaged in the collection of scrap-iron for grenade manufacture and the provision of sand for casting, setting up of machines, etc.

Dumps and Dug-outs:

A/Coy. Tullylease	4 dumps, 2 dug-outs.
B/Coy. Freemount	4 dumps
C/Coy. Meelin	one dump
D/Coy. Newmarket	3 dumps
E/Coy. Rockchapel	5 dumps
F/Coy. Taur	3 dumps
G/Coy. Kingwilliams- town	4 dumps
H/Coy. Kiskeam	6 dumps and 7 dug-outs
I/Coy. Knocknagree	1 dump
J/Coy. Umeraboy	2 dumps

Standard size of dumps - 5' x 2' x 2', wooden and proofed with felt, embedded in fence generally.

After the ambush at Tureengarrive the Black and Tans burned Kingwilliamstown. Two attempts were made by members of the G & H Companies in co-operatinn with the battalion staff to ambush them. They avoided this by going west to Kerry instead of returning. Con T. Murphy, Tim O'Callaghan, Owen Daly, Jerh. Scannell, James Riordan and Dan Guiney took part in this activity, as also did J. Jones, G/Coy., L. Moylan, M. Moylan and D. McAuliffe of D/Coy.

Several other attempts were made to ambush passing troops at this period.

In February 1921, the Active Service Unit left Kiskeam for Kerry and lay in ambush at the Bower. After four days they moved on to Clonbanin, where a fight occurred on 5th March 1921, resulting in an outstanding victory for the I.R.A. This was column activity, the officers and men of Knocknagree Company co-operating. The men of this company concerned were: John O'Mahony, Eugene McCarthy, W. Keeffe, Eugene O'Sullivan, Tim Twomey and Phil Cremin.



The members of the column lay in ambush at Guiney's Bridge on 21st and 22nd April 1921, awaiting a patrol of Tans which travelled regularly from Brosna, but the patrol failed to turn up. Amongst those present were: Mick Sullivan, Dan Browne, Bill Moylan, Dave McAuliffe, Tom Roche (witness), Denis Mullane, Jack Devane, Wm.L. O'Keeffe, Tom McNamara, John Buckley, Dave Curtin, John Guiney, Tim Coughlan, Mick Callaghan, Thade Galvin, Jim Riordan, Dan Guiney and Jim Cashman.

On 4th May John C. Murphy, James Riordan, John O'Sullivan, James Cashman and John D. O'Connor of Kiskeam Company took part in a successful ambush of the Black and Tans at Rathmore.

In consequence of a H.Q. order for a general attack on the British on 14th May, all companies sent men to Newmarket on that date to co-operate in the proposed operation. British military and police were confined to barracks and, since Volunteers arms were inadequate for a successful attack, nothing came of the operation.

On 16th May 1921, British troops and police made a round-up in the battalion area. This was the biggest operation up to that period undertaken by the British. The Brigade O/C. (Sean Moylan) was captured, as were Volunteers John Riordan, John Bradley, Dan Flynn and George Flynn. One dump was discovered together with its contents - a Hotchkiss machine gun and some minor equipment.

The battalion took part in a successful attack on the R.I.C. at Abbeyfeale, Co. Limerick, on 4th June 1921. This was a column engagement in co-operation with the Rockchapel Company. Tim Coughlan, Daniel Riordan, John Buckley, John Guiney, Aneas Guiney, David Curtin, Martin M. Murphy, Denis Shine, Patrick Coughlan, James Lane, Michael D. Mulcahy were the men from Rockchapel Company.

In June 1921, Auxiliaries were successfully ambushed at Rathcoole. Only those members of the battalion who were attached to the A.S.U. participated, and their names are included in the column list.

In the same month an intensive round-up of the brigade area was undertaken by the British. Over 6,000 troops were engaged. The battalion area was not surrounded and was used as one of the bases from which the final attack by the brigade on the British at Abbeyfeale was arranged. This attack was not carried out, as the British came through the ambush position one hour after the truce of July 11th 1921 was declared. During the whole period of 1921 up to the truce, a whole-time system of guard duty was in operation. This consisted of placing outposts at strategic points in company areas. These, in turn, kept in touch with outposts in adjoining company areas. This prevented any movement of the British troops to take place unknown to the I.R.A. in any part of the brigade district. As this system operated on a 24-hour day, it meant the utilising of every member of the company, each Volunteer doing at least 24 hours in each week. Besides this outpost duty, there was the work of dispatch carrying to and from the company, as well as inter-battalion and inter-brigade work. Linked with this also was a system of intelligence work.

With the truce of 1921 the general training of Volunteers was intensified. Training camps were set up, lectures delivered by men who had a good deal of fighting experience, and a special attempt was made to develop the engineering services.

After Rathmore ambush of May 1921, the local creamery was burned by the British. During the truce, the shafting &c. of the creamery was dismantled by the men of H. Company and brought into the company area. The brigade staff purchased

new machinery, and the old foundry in the company area was transformed into a much more up-to-date and efficient factory under brigade control. The work here occupied a number of men full time: Dan Corbett, D/Company; Con Kennedy, C/Company; Jerh. Scannell, H/Company; Michael Bohan, H/Company; and John Ring, 5th Battalion.

This factory was afterwards transferred to Buttevant Barracks, which was taken over by the I.R.A. in February 1922, and into which all the staff of the foundry, with a number of members of the battalion, were transferred. At the outbreak of the civil war this battalion took part in fighting in Cork, Limerick, Kerry, Tipperary, Clare, Waterford and Wexford. Its members were on active service up to the cease-fire order, and after that were either on the run or in prison until 1924.

When the truce arrived I took charge of a party of I.R.A. in Newmarket R.I.C. barracks and remained there until the post was occupied by the Free State army. I was surprised in ambush position with a number of others and arrested by Free State forces on 16th November 1922, and was interned in Newbridge until November 1923, when I was released on parole, owing to the serious illness of my mother, and following 21 days' hungerstrike. The parole was afterwards made permanent.

My rank at the truce and on 11th July 1922:- Battalion Training Officer, Newmarket Battalion, Cork IV Brigade.

The strength of the battalion at the Truce and on 11th July 1922, - about 900.

Signed: Thomas Roche P.C.  
(Thomas Roche) P.C.  
Date: 3<sup>rd</sup> August 1955

Witness: P. O'Donnell  
(P. O'Donnell)

