

ROINN  COSANTA.

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.
STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 1,260.....

Witness

Thomas Hussey,
3 Mechaló Terrace,
Tuan,
Co. Galway.

Identity.

Company Q.M.
and later 2nd Liout. Sylane Company
Irish Volunteers, Co. Galway.

Subject.

Sylane Company Irish Volunteers,
Tuan, Co. Galway, 1917-1921.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

N11

File No. G. 2570.....

I was born in July, 1902, at Belclare, Tuam. I attended Belclare national school until I reached the age of fifteen years. From the age of twelve and while still attending school, I did odd jobs for Mr. Frank Canavan of Belclare. Mr. Canavan was a farmer, publican and local postmaster. I continued to work for Mr. Canavan after leaving school.

I joined Sylane company of the Irish Volunteers in the year 1917. Sylane is a townland in the parish of Belclare. Usually, at the time, Volunteer companies at their formation were named after the parish. This practice was not adhered to in the case of Sylane company. I think that was because it was organised by Michael Walsh from Sylane who called it after his own townland instead of after the parish of Belclare. It has ever since been known as Sylane company. Michael Walsh was prominent in the Volunteer movement. At the time he organised Sylane company (1917), he was a student at University College, Galway, and I think he held a high rank in the Volunteers in Co. Galway.

The strength of the company in 1917 was about ten men. The greatest strength at any time was about eighty. That would have been about the end of 1920. The company captain in 1917 was Bernard Kelly (since deceased). Martin Bane, now a priest in U.S.A., was 1st Lieutenant, and Patrick Conway was 2nd Lieutenant. Patrick Conway afterwards became Quartermaster, North Galway Brigade.

He is now in U.S.A. Parades of the company were held once a week in the evening time after work. Foot drill was taught and some arms drill with imitation guns.

I remember that there was a Sinn Féin club in Belclare parish in 1917. It had been organised by John Costello and his brother, Thomas, of Killover and Martin Craven of Ballintlova. These men had been associated with Sinn Féin and other national organisations, including, I think, the I.R.B., for many years prior to 1917. I became a member of the Sinn Féin club in 1917. The membership number at that time was round and about forty. Later on, the number rose to about a hundred. I would say that some of the members joined the club in the hope of obtaining land. There was then a big estate (Castlehackett) in Belclare parish. It belonged to an absentee landlord named Colonel Bernard who, as far as I can remember, was at that time Governor of Bermuda. Many people hoped that Castlehackett estate would be divided amongst the local smallholders. The division did, in fact, eventually take place. About the year 1920, the estate was taken over by the Volunteers and set to local farmers for grazing. The proceeds went to Sinn Féin and Volunteer funds.

There is little to record of the years 1917 and 1918. As a member of the Sinn Féin club, I took an interest in the bye-elections in Co. Clare and other places. I took an active interest in the general election of 1918. Our constituency was North Galway. The Sinn Féin candidate was Dr. Brian Cusack who was then a prisoner by the British. I cannot remember how he came to be selected for North Galway. The Parliamentary Party candidate was Mr. Thomas Sloyan, a Tuam business man. I took part in a

canvass of the parish of Belclare on behalf of Dr. Cusack and helped on polling day to get our supporters to the polling booths. The result was in favour of Dr. Cusack.

I remember marching from Belclare to anti-conscription meetings in Tuam and signing the anti-conscription pledge outside the parish church at Belclare.

About November, 1918, some tenants and workmen of Colonel Bernard spent two days drawing turf and timber to the top of Castlehackett Hill. This activity came to the notice of the Volunteers and, on inquiring into the matter, we learned that the intention was to light a bonfire in celebration of the Armistice following the Great War. We also learned the date and time of day the fire was to be lighted and decided to prevent it. Lieutenants Bane and Conway, Volunteer John (Dick) Conway, afterwards Lieutenant, a few other Volunteers and I arrived at the top of the hill, armed with shotguns, just after the fire had been lighted. There were about thirty of Colonel Bernard's tenants and workmen present as well as two members of the R.I.C. from Castlehackett R.I.C. barrack - Sergeant Higgins and a constable.

As far as I can now remember, Lieutenant Bane acted as spokesman for our party on the occasion. He inquired the purpose of the fire and, on being told it was in connection with the Great War, he said that Ireland was not involved, that she was being held down by the "champion of small nations" and that, when Ireland would win her freedom, the Volunteers would look after the question of appropriate celebrations, including bonfires, if necessary. Our party then fired a few shots in the air from the two shotguns we had with us. The R.I.C.

and the rest of the people who were with them when we arrived ran away as fast as they were able. We scattered the fire and extinguished it. To our great surprise, none of us was arrested after this incident. Sergeant Higgins and the constable knew us all very well.

Speaking of bonfires, I remember that, shortly after this, we lit many bonfires to celebrate Dr. Brian Cusack's victory in the general election of 1918. The whole countryside was ablaze with bonfires.

During the year 1919, weekly parades of the company were held regularly. At each parade, each Volunteer paid the sum of threepence towards the cost of arms and equipment. The strength of the company was about fifteen. The men were all specially selected which accounted for the low number. We had only two shotguns which were the private property of two Volunteers. About the month of October, we carried out raids for arms in our company area. As a result, our stock of arms increased to about eighteen or twenty shotguns, in good condition. Our stock of cartridges was good.

The guns were handed over willingly to us except at Colonel Bernard's place at Castlehackett and at Duffy's of Kilbannon. At Colonel Bernard's, the steward and gardener refused us admission and we had to force a door to gain admittance. They put up no further resistance, and we got two double and one single barrelled shotguns and a duck gun which was of no practical value, as we got no ammunition to suit it. At Kilbannon we met with stiff resistance at the home of the Duffy family. Two of Mr. Duffy's sons were then in the R.I.C. and two other sons were at home. When we

knocked at the door, the Duffy family began immediately to barricade doors and windows. We could see them from outside, making use of furniture and beds and bedclothes. We fired a few shots in the air and withdrew. While we were outside Duffy's house, a neighbour of Duffy's went on horseback to Tuam, about one and a half miles away, and there informed the R.I.C. of what was happening. We did not know that he had gone, and we had only just left the place when six R.I.C. arrived. One of the Duffy boys paraded the next day along the main road, with a shotgun on his shoulder, to show the defiance of the family, no doubt. Immediately after this, the R.I.C. took up any guns that had not been collected by the Volunteers.

We had more guns than Volunteers in the company for a while. We continued recruiting with discretion, taking only men who, in our opinion, were thoroughly genuine and absolutely reliable. We had no rifle and no instruction in the use of the rifle. All the members of the company were skilled in the use of the shotgun. The position at the end of 1919 was that we had a company of about twenty men, armed with twenty shotguns, with a good supply of cartridges.

At this time, an engineering section was organised by Lieutenant H. Bane, as far as I can remember. I assisted him in the making of hand grenades. We collected drain pipes, three or four inches in diameter, and cut them into nine-inch lengths. We made two caps for each length out of old shovels. The caps were attached by bolts, threaded at both ends, running through the centre of the cylinders, and fastened by nuts. Pieces of rubber or leather were put underneath the caps to make them fit tightly. The cylinders were filled with pieces of scrap iron and gelignite, and fitted with fuses. I remember that some of the fuse lengths were longer than others.

There was no handle for throwing the grenades which were to be caught by the centre and thrown that way. I received my instruction in the making of these hand grenades from Michael Joseph Ryan of Barnaderg company who, later on, became Brigade Engineer, North Galway Brigade. Lieutenant Bane and I made about fifteen of these grenades in my house at Belclare. We had a good supply of tools, including hack-saws, spanners, bolts and nuts.

The hand grenades were first tried out in the attack on Castlehackett R.I.C. barrack in the first week of January, 1920. The attack came about in this way. When Michael Walsh, who had organised our company in 1917 and who was still at this time attending U.C.G., came home to Sylane for holidays at Christmas, 1919, he was most anxious to carry out an attack on the local R.I.C. I think his main object was the procuring of arms and ammunition. As I have already stated, my employer, Mr. Canavan of Belclare, was a publican and local postmaster. Part of my duties at Canavan's was the delivery of telegrams. I often delivered telegrams at the Castlehackett R.I.C. barrack, one Irish mile away from Belclare. The R.I.C. at Castlehackett got their groceries at Canavan's and I delivered them. I knew the lay-out of the barrack very well on this account.

I suggested to Michael Walsh that it would be possible for two or three men to go with me into the barrack and capture it at Christmas. I knew that the garrison consisted of Sergeant Higgins and five constables, and that one of the constables was going on leave for Christmas. Two other constables, I knew from experience, would come to Canavan's for refreshments on Christmas Eve and my plan was to walk boldly into the barrack and take the

remaining three unawares. Michael Walsh agreed with me but he insisted on having some Volunteers ready to hand outside, in case our plan miscarried. The question of revolvers was then discussed, and we decided to borrow from Barnaderg company. They refused to lend us any revolvers unless we agreed to let them in on the job. Before agreement between the companies was reached, Christmas Eve passed and, with it, the opportunity of taking the barrack as first planned.

A joint attack by the two companies (Sylane and Barnaderg) was then arranged. The principal officers concerned in the arrangement were Michael Walsh, who was, I think, at that time a brigade staff officer, and Michael Moran, O/C, Tuam Battalion. A great deal of responsibility in the matter of working out details was left in the hands of the Sylane company officers. The attack was carried out by about twenty-five men, divided into four parties or sections, viz., a party of four men at the rear of the barrack to cover off the back entrance, an engineering party of three men to lay and explode a mine at the gable facing towards Tuam, a party of four men inside the fence quite close to the gable to protect the engineering party, and the main party consisting of about fourteen men in position along the wall of the main Tuam-Headford road at a range of fifteen to twenty yards.

The main party was armed with shotguns and the home-made hand grenades. The party to the rear of the building was also armed with shotguns but no hand grenades, as far as I can now remember. The section of four, protecting the engineering party, was armed with three shotguns and one rifle. It was hoped that the engineers would succeed in blowing a hole in the gable, big enough to admit one

man at a time into the building. The party protecting the engineers at the gable were specially chosen, as they were to enter the breach. I volunteered and was accepted for this party. I knew the lay-out of the building, inside and outside. The three others in this section were Michael Walsh, armed with rifle and hand grenades, Captain Bernard Kelly, armed with shotgun, and Volunteer John Reilly, armed with shotgun. I was armed with shotgun and two hand grenades.

I showed the three small sections into their positions. The main party was the last to get into position. All got into position without being observed by the garrison. The roads between Belclare and the barracks were well scouted before positions were taken up. As Sylane company area did not extend past the barrack on the Beauford side, the road on that side was scouted only a short distance.

Shortly after the engineering section got into position, they set to work with a heavy hammer, an iron bar and a pick-axe to loosen stones at the foot of the gable to make a hole for the charge of gelignite. I and the others protecting them watched them at work. I remember them well. They were Michael Joseph Ryan of Barnsberg company, in charge of the section, Lieutenant Patrick Conway of Sylane company and Volunteer Michael Higgins of Sylane company. Michael Joseph Ryan afterwards became Brigade Engineer, and Lieutenant Conway, Brigade Quartermaster, North Galway Brigade. Very soon after they had commenced their work, the garrison must have heard them for Sergeant Higgins came to the gable window and drew back the shutter. The moment he appeared, I fired with both barrels at him. I saw him fall backwards and heard him

say, "Oh, my God!", as he fell.

The engineering section continued to work away for about an hour after this, removing stones to make room for the charge of gelignite. They laid the charge, lit the fuse and took cover at the rear of the building. I and the remainder of my section took cover with them. The charge exploded and we returned to our original positions. It was found that the explosion had cracked the gable but had not made a breach as was expected. I cannot say in what respect it failed, as I was never conversant with the use of explosives. The main party opened fire the moment the explosion occurred. They also threw hand grenades at the front door. At least three or four of them exploded but they failed to burst open the door. They cracked but did not break it open. The engineering section threw three hand grenades through the gable window where the Sergeant had fallen. As far as I remember, only one of them exploded.

Firing continued for two further hours at least. It was then noticed that we were being attacked from the rear of the barrack. It took some time to realise fully what was happening. It was certain the fire was not coming from inside the building. It was felt that the attack on us from the rear of the building was serious when the coping stones of the wall beside some of our main party were splintered by bullets. Commandant Michael Moran and Michael Walsh then had a consultation, after which we got the order to withdraw. The Volunteers suffered no casualties in the attack, of which Michael Walsh was in charge. There were no road blocks made in connection with this attack but telegraph and telephone wires were cut.

Next day, I went to work as usual at Canavan's. At

about 10.30 a.m. I was told to deliver a telegram addressed to Sergeant Higgins at Castlehackett R.I.C. barrack. When I was within a quarter of a mile of the barrack, on my way to deliver the telegram, I met a party of about ten British military. They stopped me. I showed them the telegram and they allowed me to pass. When I reached Castlehackett, there was a large force of R.I.C. and British military at the barrack. They stopped me but, on learning my business, they allowed me to pass in. I entered the barrack and handed the telegram to Constable Meaney. He told me of the attack and showed me the gable that had been damaged by the mine. There was a crack in it, extending from the ground to the chimney. Constable Meaney showed me one of our own unexploded hand grenades, deep down in a bucket of water for safety. He told me that the Sergeant was badly wounded in the head and that he was just then being attended by doctors from Galway.

The second day following the attack, we learned about the fire on our positions from the rear of the barrack. We heard that a party of four R.I.C. was travelling in a van from Headford to Tuam the evening before the attack. Their van broke down about two miles on the Headford side of Castlehackett. They got a lift to Tuam and, on the way, called in at Castlehackett R.I.C. barrack and arranged that two of the constables there would guard the van until it could be towed away the next day. The two constables were on this duty when they heard the firing, and came to the assistance of their comrades through the fields to the rear of the barrack. As far as I know, Sergeant Higgins was the only one of the garrison wounded in the attack. I do not know if he survived, as the barrack was evacuated the day after the attack. It

was completely destroyed on Easter Saturday night, 1920, by the Volunteers.

The next incident of importance that I remember was the attack on Castlegrove R.I.C. barrack, situated on the main Tuam-Ballinrobe road, about six miles from Tuam. The attack was planned by Michael Moran, O/C, Tuam Battalion. I do not think the North Galway Brigade had been formed by this time - March, 1920. Lieutenant Patrick Conway and Michael Joseph Ryan, whom I have already mentioned in connection with the attack on Castlehackett barrack, and James Moloney, afterwards O/C, Dunmore Battalion, were prominently identified with the attack on Castlegrove barrack.

I myself heard of the proposed attack about a week before it occurred. I was told about it at a meeting of Sylane company officers. By this time, our company (Sylane) had gained a good number of recruits, following the attack at Castlehackett, and about forty men of Sylane company took part in the attack on Castlegrove R.I.C. barrack. We had a test mobilisation one night shortly before the attack at Castlegrove, and the result was very satisfactory. On the night of the attack, forty men turned out. The majority of them were engaged in blocking roads and guarding the road blocks which were made, by felling trees. There were two road blocks on the main Tuam-Ballinrobe road, one on each side of the barrack. There were two further road blocks on bye-roads. There may have been one or two others - all for the purpose of delaying the approach of reinforcements from Tuam, Galway, Ballinrobe and Claremorris.

I and about fifteen men of the Sylane company were

engaged in the attack proper. We were in position along the wall of the main Tuam-Ballinrobe road, facing the barrack, at a range of from twenty-five to thirty yards. We were all armed with shotguns. The barrack was a very big, two-storey building, with many windows. I remember that we were to open fire when the mines at the gables exploded. I think that there was no explosion at one gable and that there were two at the other gable.

We opened fire on the windows and door in front of us, the moment we heard the explosion. Fire was returned immediately from the barrack and Verey lights went up. The attack lasted two hours at least and, during that time, there were several shouts of, "Surrender", to the garrison to which they invariably answered, "Never". I cannot remember any hand grenades having been used in the attack. I think it was James Moloney who gave the order to withdraw. Eight or nine men of Sylane company, including myself, with Captain Bernard Kelly in charge, covered the withdrawal of the remainder of the attacking party. The reason we were asked to cover the withdrawal was that we were from the locality and knew the lay of the land better than the others. There were about seventy or eighty men engaged in this attack, in which all companies of the Battalion were represented. The garrison consisted of about eight men and a sergeant. No casualty was sustained by the Volunteers. I don't know if any of the garrison was wounded. I would very likely have heard about it if any of them were killed or wounded. There was a good deal of blood on the road near the barrack the morning following the attack, and it appeared in the newspapers that the I.R.A. suffered casualties. We heard afterwards that the R.I.C. killed

hens and spilled their blood on the road near the barrack as evidence of the "casualties". We heard this from the people who delivered milk at the barrack. Several people told us that they saw the blood on the road. The attack took place in March, 1920, as well as I can remember. Castlegrove R.I.C. barrack was evacuated the day after it being attacked, and it was destroyed by the Volunteers a week or two after Easter, 1920.

Late in May, 1920, a prisoner was brought to my house in Belclare by James Moloney, O/C, Dunmore Battalion, and Mr. Alfie O'Dea, a well-known Sinn Feiner and a brother of the late Mr. Louis O'Dea, Solicitor, Galway. The prisoner's name was Martin Connolly, nicknamed "Oighre". He was a native of Milltown, Co. Galway, and was arrested there by the Volunteers for demanding money in the name of the I.R.A. I think that Mr. Alfie O'Dea was then a judge of the Republican courts. In any event, our Company was to keep Connolly a prisoner pending his trial. After about three or four days, he escaped from custody. I knew nothing of his escape until I saw him with a big force of R.I.C. and British military, surrounding the field where I was working at the time. They arrested me and three other Volunteers. The other three were Volunteer Henry Hussey, who was my brother, and Volunteers Michael Higgins and Martin Conneely. We were tried in Tuam R.I.C. barracks where Oighre identified us as the men who held him prisoner.

We did not recognise the authority of the court and said so. During the trial, we chatted amongst ourselves and smoked cigarettes to show how little we cared about the proceedings. Oighre said that I was in charge of the men who held him prisoner and that I gave orders to

National Archives Act, 1986, Regulations, 1988

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**Form to be completed and inserted in the original record
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- (i) Reference number of the separate cover under which the abstracted part has been filed: WS 1260/A
- (ii) How many documents have been abstracted: 2pp
- (iii) The date of each such document: 28 Sept 1955

(iv) The description of each document:

WS 1260 Written Statement Thomas Hursey P 14 x 15.
names of individuals

(Where appropriate, a composite description may be entered in respect of two or more related documents).

(v) Reason(s) why the part has been abstracted for retention:

(c) Would or might cause distress or danger to living persons on the ground that they contain information about individuals, or would or might be likely to lead to an action for damages for defamation.

(These will be the reasons given on the certificate under Section 8(4).)

J. Moloney
Name: (J. Moloney.)

Grade: Col.

Department/Office/Court:

Date: 7 March 2003.

shoot him if he attempted to escape. We were remanded for a fortnight and then tried in Galway city where we were sentenced to two months imprisonment with a further two months in default of bail. The charge was unlawful assembly.

I was released at the end of September after serving the four months in Galway jail. I remember that there were only two political prisoners in Galway jail at the time. They were Volunteers Joyce and Furey from Oranmore and they were serving sentences for buying rifles from British military at the rifle range in Oranmore.

I must now go back again to some time between Easter and the end of May, 1920, to relate an incident that occurred at that time. A letter from an R.I.C. man, stationed somewhere in Co. Cork, was captured in a raid on the mails by the I.R.A. in Co. Cork. It was addressed to a young girl in the _____ company area. The R.I.C. man's name was _____ and he was a native of the Tuam district. The girl was _____ The letter was sent to Brigade O/C Con Fogarty from the Co. Cork unit that captured it. In the course of the letter, Constable _____ said she was lucky that her last letter to him was not captured because, if it was, she would be having her hair cut like some of the girls in Co. Cork. He told her not to send him any further information as he expected to be home on holidays in a fortnight. He mentioned that she probably knew who burned _____ Barracks and referred to other local incidents that I cannot now remember.

Brigade O/C Con Fogarty, a few members of Sylane

company and I visited the home of

on a Sunday evening. We read the letter for her and her uncle. The girl admitted that she was corresponding with Constable and giving him information. Her uncle said he knew nothing about the girl's conduct and, if he had known, he would not have her in the house. He said she was about to go to America and pleaded on her behalf. The seriousness of the girl's offence was impressed on him and he was informed that she was being treated very leniently by having her hair cut off, which was done before we left the house. This girl left the district shortly after.

Towards the winter of 1920, maybe about the end of October, on a Saturday evening, I remember, Thomas O'Grady, Battalion Engineer, Tuam Battalion, came to me at Canavan's of Belclare. He told me that Michael Moran, O/C, Tuam Battalion, and Patrick Conway, Quartermaster, North Galway Brigade, had sent him to me to tell me to collect a box of rifles that had arrived from G.H.Q., Dublin, at Tuam. I assumed the box was at the railway station at Tuam but, on the way in from Belclare to Tuam, O'Grady said the box was at MacTigue's shop, right opposite the R.I.C. barrack. I had a very young horse that was only once yoked before this. I pointed this out to O'Grady and he said that a few Volunteers would be at MacTigue's to help me.

When I arrived at MacTigue's, there was no Volunteer there that I could see. A neighbour held my horse while I was making inquiries at MacTigue's shop. With the assistance of Jack Moran, one of the assistants in MacTigue's, and of Joseph Grady of Cloonmore (now deceased), I loaded the box of rifles on the cart and

headed back again for Belclare. On my way through the town, I met my employer, Mr. Canavan, who was surprised to see me. I told him that I had not a big load in the cart and that, if he wanted any stuff for the shop, I would bring it for him. He said he wanted bran for Kilgarriff's shop. I loaded a half-ton of bran on top of the box containing the rifles and felt much happier that the box was hidden from view. I arrived at Belclare without mishap and dumped the contents of the box - six Lee Enfield rifles, six hundred rounds of .303 and three dozen Mills bombs.

Very late in 1920, or early in 1921, I took part in an attack on two R.I.C. at Kilconly, about six miles from Tuam, on the Tuam-Ballinrobe road and not far from Castlegrove House. I remember that I got a despatch from Thomas Dunleavy, O/C, Tuam Battalion, following the death of Michael Moran, our first Battalion O/C. He told me to be at Newell's forge, near Kilconly, at 9 p.m. and to be armed. I went to the appointed place on a bicycle, armed with a revolver. When I arrived at Newell's forge, the Battalion O/C and about ten men had left for Kilconly. I followed and caught up with them a few hundred yards nearer to Kilconly.

The Battalion O/C sent a scout (Volunteer Michael Cregg, now in the Garda Síochána) into Blake's public house at Kilconly, for find out how many R.I.C. were within. He returned with the information that two members of the R.I.C. were inside. We then took up positions inside the wall of the road, about one hundred yards from Blake's public house, and waited there for the R.I.C. to pass on their way to Castlegrove House; at that time Castlegrove House was occupied by a Colonel Lluane who always had an

R.I.C. guard, very likely because he was a magistrate or held some official position of that kind. Members of the R.I.C. guard at Castlegrove House often went to Blake's public house in the evenings for refreshments.

A short while after we had taken up our positions, the two R.I.C. men left the public house and came in our direction. The night was pitch dark. The Battalion O/C was beside me and he gave me his flash-lamp and asked me to shine it on the two R.I.C. as they passed. I did so, and fired two revolver shots at them at the same time. Fire was opened on them at the same time by six rifle-men and four shotgun men. The two R.I.C. men threw themselves on the ground. In a minute or two, we were ordered by the Battalion O/C, who was in charge, to withdraw across the fields. I heard afterwards that one of the two R.I.C. men (Sergeant Begley) was wounded.

When withdrawing from our positions after firing at the two R.I.C. men, we were all under the impression that they were both dead, and the Battalion O/C ordered us to protect my house and three other houses in Belclare as he expected reprisals. For three nights in succession, I and about twelve other Volunteers under the command of Lieutenant Bane protected the houses but there was no attempt at reprisals by the R.I.C.

In the first few months of 1921, I remember that Brigade Quartermaster Patrick Conway sent me word to meet him at Belclare. I cannot remember what it was that he wanted me for, but when we had finished discussing whatever it was, he said he would go into my house to see my mother. We both went in but my mother only spoke a few words to us, as she said she felt very uneasy and anxious about our safety. She said she thought she

heard unusual noises, but could not make out what they were. In order to please her, we left the house - P. Conway some yards in front of me. I stood listening for the sounds my mother had been talking about and, in less than a minute, I was surrounded by six R.I.C. men who had been lying in hiding quite close to me.

They questioned me about the man who was with me. I said I didn't know him. They spoke about my having been in jail and asked me where we had the arms hidden. They told me to go on my knees and say an Act of Contrition as they were going to shoot me unless I told them the spot where the arms were concealed on Castlehackett Hill. They boxed and kicked me before they told me to go on my knees.

When I said nothing to their questions, one of them stood in front of me and fired several shots out of a revolver. None of the shots touched me but they were very close. I heard the blast of a whistle from the direction of my own house, and four of the six R.I.C. left. The two that were left thought I had been shot and attempted to lift me up. I pretended to be worse than I was, although I felt bad enough from the boxing and kicking they had given me before they fired the shots. One of them said to the other, "Leave him there a while", and they turned in the direction of my house. I crawled away as well as I could and was delighted to learn that Conway also had got clear away. I heard that there were about fifty R.I.C. in the raid on my house that night.

About a week or two after this, two lorry loads of R.I.C. and British military came again to my house. They told my mother that I would be shot at sight and the house burned unless I cleared out of the country. They also, on that occasion, visited my employer, Mr. Canavan,

and told him that, if he continued to employ me, his house would be burned.

I then went to Ballygar and reported there to the Battalion O/C, Andy Lohan. I remained in Ballygar Battalion area up to the time of the truce in July, 1921. While in Ballygar Battalion area, I took part in raids on the mails. I told the Battalion O/C of the experience I had gained in the attacks on Castlehackett and Castlogrove P.I.C. barracks and volunteered for any duty he might assign to me in connection with the attack which was then being planned on the Ballygar R.I.C. barrack. The truce date arrived before the plans for the attack were completed.

I cannot remember any branch of Cumann na mBan in Sylane company area prior to the truce of July 1921. There was a branch of Cumann na mBan in the area later on. The local R.I.C. were neither sympathetic nor helpful. The local people were very good and assisted the Volunteers in every way they possibly could. I am rather hazy about the Republican courts. I did not take a very keen interest in them. I remember, though, that Mr. Alfie O'Lea was a justice and heard cases in Sylane Hall before it was burned down by the R.I.C. Mr. Thomas Costello of Killover was also a justice of the Republican courts. There were Republican police in our company. The only kind of duty they did, as far as I remember, was looking after the closing of public houses at night and on Sundays.

The first captain of our company was Bernard

Kelly who was followed by Patrick MacHugh. The lieutenants were Patrick Conway, afterwards Brigade Quartermaster, North Galway Brigade, Martin Bane, now a priest in U.S.A., John "Dick" Conway, still living in Ballintlewa, and myself.

SIGNED: Thomas Bussey

DATE: 28th September 1955.

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
BURO STAIRE MILEATA 1913-21
No. W.S. 12/00

WITNESS C. Moynihan