

W.S. 1,304

**ORIGINAL**

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21  
BURO STAIGE MILICIA 1913-21  
NO. W.S. 1304

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 1,304.

Witness

William O'Donnell,  
Lower Gate Street,  
Cashel,  
Co. Tipperary.

Identity.

O/C. 'A' Company 2nd Battalion,  
3rd Tipperary Brigade.

Subject.

Dualla-Cashel Irish Volunteers,  
Co; Tipperary, 1915-1921.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

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STATEMENT BY MR. WILLIAM O'DONNELL,

Lower Gate Street, Cashel, Co. Tipperary,

O/C 'A' Company, 2nd Battalion, 3rd Tipperary Brigade.

I was born at Garranmore, in the parish of Dualla, near Cashel, Co. Tipperary, on the 24th May, 1901. I attended Dualla National School until I was 12 years of age, when I took up employment with a farmer in my native place of Garranmore.

In the springtime of 1915 I became attached as a Boy Scout to the Dualla Company of the Irish Volunteers. This company had then been in existence for about two years. It had been organised by, and was under the control of, the late Pierce McCann of Dualla, who died while he was a political prisoner in Gloucester Prison in 1919. The strength of the company was about 35 men, and at the time that I became associated with it my father was its drill instructor. Parades and route marches were held publicly. Wooden guns were used for musketry instruction, and I remember that when the parades were held a close watch was kept on the proceedings by two members of the R.I.C. from the local barracks in Dualla.

On St. Patrick's Day, 1916, the company paraded under arms to Mass at Dualla Church. On this occasion most of the men carried shotguns and a few had rifles, probably Martinis. Before entering the church the men stacked their arms outside in the chapelyard, and a Volunteer named Paddy Looby and myself were deputed to stand guard over the arms while the members of the company were at Mass.

On Easter Saturday evening, 1916, I was present at a parade of the company which was held in the grounds of Pierce McCann's house. Each man on parade was spoken to privately by McCann and given instructions for the following morning. As far as I can now recall, these instructions were to parade again with full equipment at McCann's house early next morning. That night 14 members of the company 'stood to' under arms at McCann's house all night.

I was again present at McCann's house on Easter Sunday morning when a dispatch rider arrived on a motor-cycle with a dispatch for Pierce McCann. I believe he (the dispatch-rider) had come from Dublin and I have an idea that his name was either O'Loughlin or McLaughlin. Pierce McCann then dismissed the company, informing those on parade that the fight was called off both in Dublin and throughout the country. I believe, and it was generally understood at the time by members of the company, that the plans for the Dualla Company on that Easter Sunday included the taking of Ballinure R.I.C. barracks by a ruse. The idea was to overturn a horse's cart near the barracks and then to send a messenger to the barracks seeking assistance to right it again, and while the R.I.C. or some of them would be engaged, for a hidden party of Volunteers to rush the barracks and seize it. After he had dismissed the company, Pierce McCann left in his motor car to convey the news that the Rising was off to companies in other areas.

At the time of the reorganisation of the Irish Volunteers in 1917, I joined a company which was then formed in Cashel. The late Paddy Hogan, who was a draper's assistant in E.D. Ryan's shop in Friar St., Cashel, was principally instrumental in organising the company

and he was elected Company Captain. The other company officers at the time were: Paddy Phillips and the late Paddy Casey. During that year of 1917 and the following year of 1918, our activities were confined to weekly parades, drilling, training and organising, every effort being made at the same time to secure any arms or explosives we could lay hands on. Towards the end of 1918, during the general election campaign, all members of the company were busily engaged making house to house canvasses and doing election work on behalf of the ultimately successful Sinn Féin candidate, Pierce McCann. On the following day, December 14th, 1918, with other members of the company I did police duty in the streets of Cashel and that night I was one of a party of Volunteers who guarded the ballot boxes in the Courthouse.

Late in 1918 or early in 1919 the battalion was formed and two of our company officers were appointed to the Battalion Staff, Paddy Hogan being appointed Battalion Commandant and Paddy Casey Battalion Adjutant. Paddy Phillips succeeded Hogan as Company Captain and I was then elected 1st Lieutenant of the company. It was during this year of 1919 that we commenced to raid private houses for arms. With four or five others, I remember raiding four houses, those of Colonel Murphy (an ex British Army officer) at Ballinamona, Jerry Murphy, Hill House, Cashel, Dr. Cusack's, Cashel, and Paul Cusack's of Mount Gudkin, Cashel. At Colonel Murphy's we got two shotguns, a blunderbuss and two swords, and we got a shotgun at each of the other three houses.

After the Soloheadbeg ambush Paddy Hogan and myself met Seumas Robinson and Seán Treacy at Walsh's of Ballyowen

and guided them through our company area, handing them over to members of the Rosegreen Company at Howard's of Boscabell. This was my first meeting with Seumas Robinson.

It was, I think, about this time too that Paddy Hogan figured in a sensational escape when he was about to be arrested. He was, as I have said, employed as a draper's assistant in E.D. Ryan's drapery shop in Friar St. Early one morning I was delivering milk to the convent, which is situated next door to Ryan's shop, when Mrs. Ryan came out of her hall door and told me that the police were raiding the house and that they would probably arrest Paddy Hogan. She then went back into the house and went upstairs to a warehouse room which had a large window overlooking the convent garden. She opened this window wide. Meeting Hogan coming down the stairs with the policemen, she remarked to him: "You will need a warm overcoat". She got the overcoat, and as she helped to pull it up on his shoulders she kept pushing him towards the open window of the warehouse room. Seeing the open window and sensing what was in Mrs. Ryan's mind, Hogan made a dash for the window and jumped down into the convent garden. As the window was about 10 or 12 feet from the ground, the R.I.C. men were loath to follow him. They hurried out of Ryan's and rushed to the convent door. All I could do was to shove the milk can in front of them as they rushed in, and one of them, a dark, swarthy man whom we had christened the "Ace of Spades", sprawled on his face over it. Inside in the convent the good Sisters further impeded the progress of the police by closing all doors in their faces, and meanwhile the late Sister Barbara had conducted Hogan safely through the garden and let him out by a rear entrance.

Sometime in 1919 or early in 1920 a consignment of 18 steel shutters arrived at Cashel railway station for the R.I.C. barracks in Cashel. At that time two of the most active members of the company, the brothers Dan and Tom Taylor, worked at the railway station. They reported the arrival of the steel shutters. That night, with five or six Volunteers, I went to the railway station. We got the railway bogey and unloaded the shutters from the wagon on to the bogey. We then ran the bogey along the tracks for about three quarters of a mile to where there was a deep pond and we dumped the shutters into the pond. They were never discovered by the R.I.C.

In May, 1920, on the occasion of the proposed attack on Clerihan R.I.C. Barracks, the company was out in full strength blocking the roads between Cashel and Clerihan. We felled trees at various points along the road and remained on guard on the road blocks, but the attack itself was called off at the last minute.

The following month, in June, 1920, we again blocked the road between Cashel and Fethard. This was in connection with the attack on Drangan R.I.C. Barracks. That night - June 4th, 1920 - I left Cashel accompanied by, as far as I can now remember, Dan and Tom Taylor, Paddy Hogan and Edmond Grogan to go to Drangan. Some of us were armed with shotguns and we travelled in an old Model T Ford van, bringing with us a pump from the railway station in Cashel which the Taylors seemed to think was required in Drangan. At St. John's Town the van crashed into a ditch at the side of the road and we were obliged to continue our journey on foot. When we arrived the attack on the barracks was well on and I was told, by whom I cannot say, but possibly by some of the Volunteers who were manning a

barricade which had been erected at the Cloneen road end of the village, that I should remain on the barricade. Hogan, who was well known, was permitted to go on into the village. I remained on duty at the barricade until the attack was over, and when we were dismissed it was a case then of making my way on foot back to Cashel.

In this month too - June, 1920 - I succeeded Thomas Taylor as Company Captain, and it was at this time that Cashel Courthouse was destroyed by fire to prevent its occupation by British troops. The destruction of the Courthouse was a battalion job and Volunteers from all companies in the battalion assisted. My position that night was with a party of about 20 Volunteers who, armed with rifles, shotguns and grenades, held John St. to engage any British forces who might come along. Neither police nor military left the barracks and the job on the Courthouse was completed without interference.

On the evening of the 6th August, 1920, I went to Rosegreen to attend a Battalion Council meeting which was to be held in a barn at O'Neill's farmhouse. When I got there I saw the late Seán Treacy, then Brigade Vice Commandant, standing outside the barn door chatting with Paddy Hogan. Treacy was armed with a parabellum revolver, which was in a holster strapped to his leg. As subsequent events proved, I believe he was the only one of those present who was armed. He had a parcel under his arm which, I understand, contained another automatic revolver which he proposed to demonstrate to us that night. Scouts had been put out, but as all the delegates had not arrived there was no sign of the meeting starting. Those who had arrived were hanging around both inside and outside the barn. I had just gone into the barn when I heard Seán Treacy, who was facing the road, say

to Hogan, "Don't stir, quietly now, the military are here". A military cycling patrol of about 50 men had taken the scouts, who were listening for the sound of lorries, completely by surprise. I heard the military officer, a Captain Woulfe, give the order "Dismount and fire". Before the soldiers had dismounted, Seán Treacy had opened fire on them with his parabellum. The soldiers took cover and opened fire, but many of them were firing into the air. I distinctly remember Treacy coolly laying down the parcel he had on the floor inside the barn door and then, from the cover of the doorway, continuing to fire away at the soldiers. Those of who who were in the barn left singly by a rear door and crossed an open space between the barn and O'Neill's dwelling-house. This open space came under the fire of the British troops but, due to the manner in which Seán Treacy's fire kept them pinned down, we all succeeded in getting safely across. We were now in the position that we had ample cover not only from behind O'Neill's house but also from behind the walls around Rosegreen Church, and we could start moving off at any time, but Seán Treacy was still in the barn.

One of the Rosegreen Volunteers, a man named Paddy Aherne, heard the shooting and he came along carrying a rifle. It was, I think, one of the Howth Mausers, for it fired a bullet almost the size of a shotgun cartridge. He got into a position on the flank of the soldiers, and after he had fired three or four shots the soldiers commenced to leave their positions and run down the road out of Rosegreen village. As a result of Aherne's initiative and good work, Seán Treacy was able to leave the barn and get clean away. Captain Woulfe and one or two British soldiers were wounded in this engagement. The cycle patrol returned the way it



had come from Cashel and we had no casualties, either <sup>wounded</sup> or captured. Two R.I.C. men who were cycling at the rear of the military party, turned and cycled away as fast as they could when the firing first started.

The next incident of note which I can recall occurred on a Sunday early in September, 1920. A Brigade Council meeting was being held that day at Maher's of Blackcastle, about  $5\frac{1}{2}$  miles from Cashel. I was given the task of bringing a suitcase of revolvers and ammunition, which had arrived at E.D. Ryan's of Cashel, to Maher's for distribution at the Brigade Council meeting. The suitcase was pretty heavy - a bit too much for one man - but I managed to secure a lift from some people who were on their way to a hurling match and I got there in good time with it. At Maher's I met Seumas Robinson, Seán Treacy, Ernie O'Malley, Seumas O'Neill, Edward McGrath of Cahir, and some others whose names I cannot now recall. When I handed over the stuff, the Brigade and Battalion Officers went to Maher's haybarn where, I believe, it was distributed, and I remained talking to O'Malley at Maher's gate. At this point a party of about 120 Lancers from Cahir military barracks converged on Maher's house from two directions. I parted from O'Malley and got away in the direction of Rosegreen. I cannot say what exactly happened at Maher's afterwards, but I know that both Seumas O'Neill and Edward McGrath were taken prisoner, for late that same evening when back at my employer's place on the Clonmel road near Cashel I saw them in a waggonette being conveyed by military towards Cashel. The waggonette was halted later in the evening on the Main St. of Cashel for some time, and I remember seeing a lady who approached

the waggonette to speak to the prisoners being rudely ordered away by a Lancer. For a moment I thought that he was going to pierce her with his lance.

It was very shortly after the raid on Maher's of Blackcastle that, due to repeated raids by military and police on my employer's residence - on one occasion the raiders came in mufti - I considered it much safer to go 'on the run' than to remain in my employment. It was about this time too (September, 1920) that the Battalion Active Service Unit was formed, and I was a member of it from its formation. The late Paddy Hogan, then Commandant of the Battalion and whom I have referred to so often, took charge of the unit and he continued in charge of it until he was killed on March 6th, 1921. The strength of the A.S.U. was 14, and at the start only one was armed with a rifle, the remainder of us being armed with shotguns. Hogan and a few others had revolvers.

Our first attempt as an A.S.U. to engage enemy forces met with no success. For two days we occupied an ambush position at Heeney's avenue gate at Rockview, about 3 miles from Cashel on the Cashel-Tipperary road. We expected a patrol of 4 to 6 R.I.C. men who travelled that road on regular dates from Golden to Cashel for their pay. After two days it was considered unsafe to remain any longer in that district. Once during those two days a horsedrawn wagon with six British soldiers in it did pass by, but our scouts, hearing the sound of horses' hooves, assumed that it was farmers' carts on their way to the creamery, with the result that the wagon got safely past before we had time to get into a proper position to engage it.

It was, I think, about this time that Paddy Hogan and myself met Sergeant Maher of the R.I.C. in Downey's publichouse in New Inn. Maher was at that time in charge of the R.I.C. barracks in New Inn but himself and Hogan were on very friendly terms. Hogan had a .455 Colt Automatic revolver with him and I remember Sergeant Maher advising him to throw it away, that it was a dangerous gun which might become jammed at the wrong time. Hogan pressed Sergeant Maher to send a patrol of Black and Tans down the Marlhill road, on which we had a prepared ambush position. Maher would not agree, saying that while there were a lot of things which he was prepared to do, he would not go to the extent of sending men out to their death. Before leaving, however, he remarked that the patrols would continue to go out on their normal routes.

In November, 1920, we (the A.S.U.) occupied a position at Newtown Cross between Dualla and Ballinure to ambush a patrol of R.I.C. men from Ballinure which were in the habit of visiting an ex R.I.C. man named Grant in Dualla and bringing him his pension. Tommy Donovan, Commandant of the 7th Battalion, had carried out a successful ambush in this same position sometime earlier in the year. We stayed in a field near the ambush position from about 8 or 8.30 a.m. until dusk that evening awaiting the patrol. We had scouts out all day watching to let us know when the patrol had passed on its way to Grant's house, our idea being to get into position to ambush them on their return journey. About 5 p.m. we left the field and moved off down a by-road, as we considered that the patrol would not come that day. We had gone about half a mile when one of the scouts, Dick Breen of Dualla, came along and said that a patrol consisting of six R.I.C. men had passed, going towards Grant's. We

sent the scout to shadow the patrol and to let us know when they were returning. Shortly afterwards Breen returned with the news that the patrol had left Dualla and were on their way back. They were on foot and were marching in twos, with a distance of about sixty yards between each two. Meanwhile, we had returned to the ambush position and, with the exception of Paddy Loughlin, Michael Croke and myself, all members of our party had occupied their positions behind the wall. We three were standing on the road when I saw two of the R.I.C. men coming to a stile about 30 yards to the rear of our men behind the wall. The patrol had left the road and were taking a short cut by a Mass path through the fields. I took aim with my rifle and fired almost off O'Loughlin's shoulder at the leading R.I.C. man as he approached the stile. I saw his cap fly off his head. Our party were now a bit confused as we had expected the patrol to come along the road. The police started to fire in our direction as they retreated back through the fields and they also fired a few rifle grenades, but the range was too far for these to be effective. We returned their fire for a few minutes, but, as I have said, it was dusk or almost dark at the time and the engagement broke off without casualties on either side. Next day the R.I.C. man's cap was found near the stile with a bullet hole through it.

Again in November, 1920, Hogan brought the A.S.U. into Cashel to attack a town patrol at Ladyswell St., but again we were disappointed for the patrol did not come out that night.

Once when the A.S.U. was billeted in the Dualla district, Hogan decided to bring the A.S.U. into Ballinure next day to attack a patrol of police who were in the habit

of going to the house of a Justice of the Peace named Darby Scully who lived in High St., Ballinure. On the morning of the day on which we were about to go to Ballinure, Paddy Hogan received a despatch from Tommy Donovan, Commandant of the 7th Battalion, warning him (Hogan) not to go to Ballinure as the police in Cashel knew of his intention. Donovan enclosed with the despatch a copy of a letter which he had captured in a raid on mails that morning. The letter was from the police inspector in Cashel to the sergeant of the R.I.C. in Ballinure, instructing him not to send out the High St. patrol as there was a party of I.R.A. men in Dualla preparing to go to Ballinure to attack this particular patrol. The letter also gave many of our names who were with the A.S.U. in Dualla. The original of the letter Donovan had sent on to the Brigade H.Q. in Rosegreen.

This leakage of information presented a baffling problem for Hogan. It was evident that the information had got to the police in Cashel from either a member of the A.S.U. or someone who was very intimate with us, as only very few were aware of the Ballinure plans. We were now in the position that we could trust nobody. Hogan took the late Paddy Casey, Paddy Loughlin and myself into his confidence, and from then onwards it was our job to try and discover the informer. The weeks passed and we got no nearer a solution, so we decided to go into Cashel and kidnap Sergt. Murphy of the R.I.C. to make him talk. Murphy was a Protestant and on Sundays he usually went to Service in the Protestant Church in John St. by himself. With this end in view, Hogan, O'Loughlin and myself went into Cashel and stayed on a Saturday night in Miss Nevin's in John St. Murphy would pass by Miss Nevin's door on his way to the Protestant Church and it was our intention to close with him as he

passed Miss Nevin's, bundle him into a waiting motor car and get him away out into the country, We arranged for Jack Morrissey of Rosegreen to be waiting with Dr. Quirke's car in readiness to drive us and Murphy away. We also arranged with a prominent Volunteer in Cashel to act as scout. He was to call to Miss Nevin's in the morning and report when the car had arrived, and he was then to keep watch at the end of John St. and tip us off when Murphy had left the barracks on his way to the church. Next morning there was no news from the scout, so we sent a messenger - one of Miss Nevin's boarders whom we knew could be trusted - to the scout's house. Our messenger returned with the news that our scout had gone off walking out the country with <sup>his</sup> ~~the~~ dogs, and his mother had stated that he (the scout) had been in sufficient trouble already and she did not want him getting into any further trouble. We then asked our messenger to act as scout. He reported that the car was in readiness, and later on he told us that Sergeant Murphy had left the barracks, but instead of going towards the church he had gone into the Protestant Deanery. To add to our disappointment over Murphy, a Black and Tan named Whip, whom we had been seeking to shoot for a long time, passed alone by Miss Nevin's while we were there that morning. We could easily have shot him then, but as we were intent on Murphy we had to let Whip pass. The mystery of who gave the information about Ballinure away was never solved.

On the night of January 21st, 1921, we attacked the R.I.C. barracks in both Golden and Ballinure. Paddy Hogan took charge of the party that went to Golden and I was in charge of the party at Ballinure. These attacks were not planned to capture the barracks. We were not strong enough for that. They were just feint attacks, lasting

for about 15 minutes or half an hour, to keep the garrisons' nerves on edge and to draw their fire.. We had arranged to start both attacks at exactly the same time, but Hogan got going first at Golden as I experienced some delay in Ballinure while Paddy O'Loughlin was getting in touch with a Cumann na mBan girl named Burke to find out whether there was a patrol out of the barracks or not. In Ballinure we could hear the firing at Golden and we could see the Verey lights there as the R.I.C. sent them up. There was no patrol out in Ballinure, so for about 15 minutes we peppered the barracks with rifle fire. The police replied and they also sent up Verey lights and fired rifle grenades. Even long after we had withdrawn, the police were still firing from the barracks. Both parties of the A.S.U. met again next day at Nodstown.

The next incident of note was in February, 1921, when the A.S.U. marched to Golden Garden, on the railway line between Dundrum and Limerick Junction, to assist in a proposed attack on a troop train. I went to Golden Garden with Seumas Robinson, the Brigade O/C, Tom Nagle and Paddy Keane. Although by far the smallest of the four of us, Robinson was easily the best walker; he set a pace which Keane, Nagle and myself found difficult to keep up with. At Golden Garden, in addition to our A.S.U. there were either two or three flying columns assembled. I know that both Dinny Lacey's and Seán Hogan's columns were there, and I believe there was also an East Limerick Brigade Column present. When we occupied our positions along the railway bank for the ambush the man nearest me on my left was Bill Allen of Tipperary Town. His brother, Seán, had been executed that morning by British forces in Cork, and I can still picture the determination to fight on Bill's face as we awaited the expected troop train.

Again nothing happened. After waiting all day we were withdrawn towards evening. Some of us had only moved a short distance from the railway line - a field or two - when we were hurriedly summoned to resume our positions as a single engine had passed along the line. This subsequently proved to be a pay engine and not the pilot engine of a troop train.

One night shortly after returning from Golden Garden we went to the village of New Inn and occupied a position behind a stone wall in front of the R.I.C. barracks and about 50 yards from it. From one of the local Volunteers who acted as scout, we learned that a patrol was out from the barracks. We had a party of about 14 men, all members of the A.S.U. Most of us were then armed with rifles and a few had shotguns. Paddy Hogan's instructions were that no shot was to be fired until the patrol entered the square or green in front of the barracks. It was a windy, stormy night and we did not hear the patrol until they were well into the green and almost entering the barracks. We then opened fire on them, but it was a bit late and, with the exception of one policeman who ran to the priest's house, the patrol got into the barracks. We continued to fire at the barracks for about half an hour before withdrawing. One R.I.C. man was wounded in the encounter. We were fortunate to escape casualties, as one of the rifle grenades fired from the barracks actually hit the wall behind which we were taking cover.

About the 1st March, 1921, Paddy Hogan received an order from Brigade H.Q. (which was issued to all battalions) that a Black and Tan or an R.I.C. man was to be shot in each area. I remember Hogan remarking when he read the order that he would be the first Battalion Commandant in the brigade to carry it out. We were in the New Inn Company area at the



time and Hogan selected Paddy Keane, Tom Nagle and myself to accompany him into Cashel. All four of us carried revolvers. Keane and Nagle stayed in Miss Nevin's in John St. and Hogan and I stayed in E.D. Ryan's of Friar St. Local Volunteers, who acted as scouts, kept us informed of the movements of the police.

At about 7 p.m. on the night of the 4th March, 1921, a scout reported that two R.I.C. men were drinking in Cantwell's publichouse at the corner of John St. and Main St. They were separate, one was drinking in the kitchen and the other was in the shop. Hogan then decided that Tom Nagle and himself would enter Cantwell's by the side door, Nagle to go into the kitchen to deal with the policeman there, while he himself would attack the policeman in the shop. Paddy Keane and I were to stand on the footpath just outside Cantwell's shop to deal, if necessary, with an R.I.C. patrol which might be expected in the vicinity around that time. During the time which elapsed from the scout seeing the policemen until our arrival at Cantwell's, the two policemen had left and another policeman - Constable Besant - had entered the shop. The patrol too had arrived in the vicinity and were standing at the railings of Corcoran's Hotel about 50 yards away down the street. Hogan was unaware of the patrol's presence when he entered Cantwell's, but Keane and I saw the police patrol as they stood chatting to each other when we took up our position. Hogan fired point blank at Besant, who was sitting in the shop, but it had no effect. Hogan fired four more shots at him but, except for a slight scratch wound, the shots still had no effect. Besant then closed with Hogan and grasped his right arm. Hogan changed the gun to his left hand and fired again, but still without effect. Meanwhile, Tom Nagle, seeing no policeman in the

kitchen, came back out to the shop, where he saw Hogan and Besant struggling with each other. Nagle fired, hitting Besant in the head, and the latter then fell dead. Keane and I had not expected to hear more than two shots or three at the most, and after hearing the fifth shot Keane remarked to me that the boys must be in trouble inside and suggested that we should go in. I told him that we had better watch the patrol, who, by the way, if they heard the muffled sound of the shots, did not take any notice but remained where they were. After the pause and hearing Nagle's shot, we did go to the door to see what was happening and, to our relief, met Hogan and Nagle coming out.

We got out of the town immediately and, taking to the fields, reached Woodenstown early next morning, where we rested in a farmer's house. Here we met Seumas Robinson, the Brigade O/C, who remarked that he had just heard that a Black and Tan had been shot in Cashel the night before. He added that he also heard that a girl had been wounded in the shooting. This was the first intimation we got that Miss Julia Cantwell, who had been hiding behind the counter at the end of the shop, had been wounded.

In view of his experience the night before, Hogan decided that we should test our revolver ammunition. The test revealed that the ammunition was, due, perhaps, to damp cordite, bad. Even at close range the bullets would not pierce a thin piece of wood. We then went on to the dump near New Inn to get our rifles where we had left them, but found that all the rifles belonging to the A.S.U. had been borrowed by Chris. Tobin, O/C of the New Inn Company, and some others who were gone to assist Seán <sup>Hogan's</sup> ~~column~~ column at some proposed ambush near Cahir.

We decided to go to Derryclooney and billet there for the night. On our way we met three other members of the A.S.U., Edmund Grogan, the late Paddy Casey and the late Paddy O'Loughlin. Hogan and Keane went to Dagg's house in Derryclooney to stay for the night; Grogan, Casey and O'Loughlin went to Byrne's, and Tom Nagle and myself went to Walsh's. All three houses are situated in a boreen, and there is a distance of about half a mile from Dagg's, the first house, to Walsh's, the last house.

About 7 a.m. next morning - Sunday, March 6th, 1921 - Mrs. Walsh called us and told us there was firing going on in the direction of Dagg's. We got dressed at once and heard rapid fire, so we sent word to Byrne's asking Grogan, O'Loughlin and Casey to join us at Walsh's. All five of us then went in the direction of Dagg's, and when within about two fields of the house we could see that the place was completely surrounded by British military. Without rifles we were powerless to do anything. The firing had then ceased, and, as military were coming in our direction, we retreated back towards the River Suir, about 300 yards away, and by the only way which was open to us. We saw more soldiers on the Moat of Graffan on the opposite side of the river, and to escape detection we now had to lie down in the mud on the bank of the river, where we were screened by rushes. So close did the soldiers come to the bank of the river that we could hear every word they said. After a considerable time and when we could hear no further sounds of the military, we returned to Walsh's and sent a workman to Dagg's to find out what happened there. He returned with the news that the stout man had been killed and that the dark-haired man had been captured. We knew then that Hogan was dead and that Paddy Keane was a prisoner.

The military had also burned a rick of straw belonging to Dagg's.

Sometime after this incident at Derryclooney I was standing at Nagle's gate at Garranlea with four other members of the A.S.U. when a British Army plane flying very low came overhead. It just cleared the treetops at Nagle's and we assumed that it was on a "spotting" mission, otherwise there appeared to be no reason why it should be flying so low. It flew directly over our heads, and between the five of us I should say we got about 15 rifle shots at it before it banked away to the left and flew off in the direction of Tipperary Town. I heard afterwards that this plane crashed near Limerick Junction.

One day on the Cahir-New Inn road at Kedra, we held up two R.I.C. men who were cycling back from Cahir to their station at New Inn. We were surprised to find that they were unarmed. We searched them for dispatches but found none, and then, after taking their bicycles and warning them of their fate if they ever identified any of us, we permitted them to go. About a week afterwards on the Cahir road at Lackfedora, we again held up two R.I.C. men cycling from Cashel, one of whom was one of our acquaintances of the week before at Kedra. This time they were armed with revolvers. After disarming them we asked them if they were carrying dispatches and questioned them about their business in Cashel. They denied they had any dispatches, but on searching them we found a dispatch inside one man's sock. It was not of great importance, just a note from the Inspector in Cashel to the Sergeant in New Inn warning him of the danger of sending out men in such small numbers. The policemen apparently thought we were going to shoot them, for they started to crave for

mercy. After taking their bicycles and, of course, their revolvers, we warned them to get out of the R.I.C. as quickly as they could, and I believe they resigned shortly afterwards.

Sometime in June, 1921, eight of us (all members of the A.S.U.) called at Cooney's house at Garranlea. This house was surrounded by high walls and we had entered the gate when we saw British soldiers all over the place. It was bright daylight at the time and the soldiers were apparently as surprised to see us as we were to see them. They had apparently been raiding Cooney's house, and at the time of our arrival many of them were busy searching outhouses for eggs, poultry or anything they could take with them. We had to beat a fairly hasty retreat but not until after there had been an exchange of fire with the soldiers. The whole thing did not last very long, only a few minutes, and we had no casualties. I don't believe the British had any either.

It was about this time too that we burned a lorry load of laundry belonging to the British military on its way to a laundry in Fethard. At the time the British military occasionally hired a lorry in Cashel to convey their laundry to Fethard. One night a Cashel Volunteer named Jack O'Brien tipped me off that he expected to be driving a lorry with the military laundry next day. He could not say whether there would be an escort with the lorry or not. I met the lorry at Rathoran Cross. There was no escort, so O'Brien drove the lorry to Ballyfoladh, where we burned laundry, lorry and all.

Shortly before the Truce, to be exact on the 14th June, 1921, a man named George Wallis was executed as a spy on the Clonmel road about 2 miles from Cashel. Wallis, who was

a process server or civil bill officer, was an Englishman who lived for many years in Cashel. He may have been an ex-British soldier. He was an old man at the time of his death. He was very outspoken, often saying that if he ever saw any I.R.A. men in hiding or doing anything, it would be his duty to inform the police or military. He was in the habit of visiting the house of James Ryan Connor (Ryan Connor we called him for short), The Commons, Clonmel Road, who was one of our best friends and whose house was frequently visited by members of the I.R.A. Ryan Connor generally gave him a glass of whiskey and a few shillings on his visits, and Ryan Connor himself told me that he had spoken to Wallis about his threats to give the I.R.A. <sup>away</sup> and advised him to have sense. Wallis's reply to this was for Ryan Connor to have some sense himself and not to have the I.R.A. about his place. The question of Wallis's integrity must have been under consideration for a long time, for I remember that before Paddy Hogan's death in March, 1921, in reply to a query from the Brigade H.Q. Hogan stated that there was no evidence against Wallis, that he looked on him as an old man with a mistaken sense of loyalty, and that the thing to do was to make sure that Wallis neither saw nor heard anything and then he could not give anything away. I shared Hogan's views and had the same views up to the time Wallis was shot. On the other hand, I often thought that the reason there was no evidence against him was perhaps that he had never seen anything to give away. .

That was, as I saw it, the position when an order was issued, by whom I cannot now say, for Wallis's execution, and when two other members of the A.S.U. and myself were detailed for the job. On the morning of his death Wallis called to Ryan Connor's house. I was there at the time,

and, seeing Wallis coming up the avenue, Ryan Connor told me to step inside until he was gone. After Wallis's departure I was again speaking to Ryan Connor outside the house when I heard two shots and I assumed, rightly so, that he had been shot on the road by my two comrades.

To conclude this narrative, I would like to record a few instances when I had fortunate escapes from capture by the British forces. There was one morning late in 1920 when Paddy Keane and myself were taking it easy in bed in Mahony's house at Lagganstown. A scout reported that there was a party of Lancers on the road. We sent him out again to see if the Lancers were leaving the road. Meanwhile, we started to dress, and the scout was back almost immediately to say that the Lancers were in two parties and that one party was coming up the boreen to the house. Getting out of the house, we had to cover a distance of about 150 yards without any cover and then the only cover we could get was a furze bush and some high grass in a field in which we lay. While his comrades were raiding the house, one of the Lancers rode his horse out into the field to within about 40 yards of where we lay. We watched him as he stood up in the saddle to have a good look all around. He then rode back and joined his comrades. What saved us that morning was that the Lancers, when on their way up the boreen to Mahony's house, stopped for a few minutes to raid a little hut of a house in which an old woman lived alone.

In April, 1921, when on my way to Cashel for a parade of the company I called to Ryan Connor's house. That evening when I called Ryan Connor was entertaining some American Naval Officers on his lawn. These officers seemed delighted to meet an I.R.A. man. We chatted for some time and exchanged cigarettes. The officers appeared to have heard a lot about the I.R.A. but I was the first I.R.A. man they had met.

After some time a maid came out and said I was to go inside for a meal. I was sitting inside for less than five minutes when one of Ryan Connor's daughters, who was with the American Officers on the lawn, rapped the window and told me the military were outside. Under cover of a laurel hedge which lined the avenue, a cycle patrol had almost reached the house without being observed. I just got out the kitchen door as the soldiers passed by the window. I was quite familiar with the house and its surroundings, and by taking a few sharp turns to the right and left and then getting over a high wall into a corn field, I succeeded in eluding the soldiers. I remained lying in the corn field until the raid was over, when I returned to the house for my meal. When the military had finished searching the house they turned their attention to the American Naval Officers, questioned them and insisted on seeing their papers. The Naval Officers commented on the rude manner in which they were questioned and interrogated and said they proposed to have a complaint lodged with the British Government.

Again I was sleeping one night in a bedchair in the kitchen of that same (Ryan Connor's) house. My boots and leggings were off, otherwise I was fully dressed. About 2 a.m. I was roused by one of the maids, a girl named Mary Moody, who told me that the house was surrounded and that military lorries were coming up the avenue. At that time the British strategy, when raiding houses, was to send a party quietly to surround the house and then for another party to approach the house firing shots and making as much noise as possible, so that if any men ran out of the house they were victims of the party who had surrounded it. This was what had happened that night. The maid dumped the bed chair, took my boots and leggings and brought me up to her own room.



She hid my leggings and boots in the sleeves of coats hanging in a wardrobe, pulled out her bed and pulled the sheets of the bed down to the floor at the wall side. She then put a suitcase or two under the bed and I went into hiding between the sheets and the wall. Just then the notorious Captain Lichfield and five of his men came up the stairs and searched the room. They actually looked under the bed behind which I was hiding and searched the wardrobe without finding my boots and leggings. They also searched the room nextdoor where the cook and her niece were sleeping. After about 10 minutes they or another party came back again, and although they pounded the door, this time Miss Moody refused to let them in. She said the officer and his men had already searched the room, that they were trying to get in because there was only a girl in the room, and that if they did not go away she would complain to an officer. Had I been caught that night, as I surely would only for Mary Moody's presence of mind and quick thinking, I am sure I would have been a dead man, for I subsequently learned that, in addition to Lichfield, the raiding party was accompanied by seven members of the murder gang in mufti.

There was another occasion when six of us were sleeping in a shed on Cooney's farm at Garranlea. We had no scouts out that night. Early in the morning one of our men left the shed and, hearing noises in the next field, looked over the wall and saw soldiers' tents pitched in the field. While we slept, a party of troops had encamped in the field nearest to the field in which the shed was situated. I might say we were almost camped side by side. It did not take us long to slip quietly away.

Signed: William O'DonnellDate: 6<sup>th</sup> December 1955Witness: J. Grace (J. Grace)

(Investigator)

(William O'Donnell)

6th December, 1955.