ORIGINAL

ROINN COSANTA.

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 1,388

Witness

John Hackett,
Toomevara,
Co. Tipperary.

Identity.

Intelligence Officer, 2nd Battalion,
North Tipperary Brigade.

Subject.

Toomevara Company Irish Volunteers,
Co. Tipperary, 1916-1921.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil

File No. S.2713

Form B.S.M. 2

ORIGINAL

STATEMENT BY JOHN HACKETT,

Toomevara, Co. Tipperary.

Formerly Intelligence Officer, 2nd Battalion,
No. 1 (North) Tipperary Brigade.

I was born on 12th November, 1899, in Coole, Toomevara, Co. Tipperary, on a farm of thirty-two Irish acres of good quality land. I inherited Fenian blood, as my father was a member of the Fenian Brotherhood.

I received my education at Toomevara National School and in the College of the Patrician Brothers in Tullow, Co. Carlow, where I finished just one week before the Rising in 1916. On coming home, I went to work on my father's holding.

My first association with the Irish independence movement began in November or December, 1916, when I joined the Toomevara company of the Irish Volunteers, started by Patrick (Widger) Meagher, the captain of the old Toomevara hurling team and known throughout the country as "the Toomevara greyhounds". The officers of the company at the beginning were:-

Captain	-	Patrick (Widger) Meagher.
1st Lieutenant	-	Jack Harty.
2nd Lieutenant	-	(Cannot remember).

Until the start of public drilling in August 1917, the Toomevara company drilled secretly in a field adjacent to Knockane Castle, outside the village, as we did not wish to attract the attention of the police. So far as I can remember, such were the orders from G.H.Q. in

Dublin at the time. The company captain acted as drill instructor, but he took lessons in drill instruction privately from an ex British soldier named Jack Leamy, Clooncannon, Toomevara.

When public drilling commenced in August 1917, the strength of the Toomevara company was considerably increased by a big influx of Volunteers from all over the parish, bringing the membership up to about one hundred and forty men. Two months or so afterwards, we obtained the services, as training officer, of an organiser named Sean McLaughlin, sent down from G.H.Q. He brought us on from foot drill to field exercises, and on St. Stephen's Day, 1917, marched the company, equipped with sticks and hurleys, to Moneygall where we spent a few hours at skirmishing. There was another motive in going to Moneygall - he wanted to impress the young men of that parish so as to induce them to join the Irish Volunteers.

Once the Toomevara company began to drill in public, it did so in the village street and under the eyes of the local R.I.C. There were no arrests made by the police until March 1918 when the company captain and 1st Lieutenant were apprehended and sentenced to three months' imprisonment for illegal drilling. While these two officers were in custody in Tullamore jail, the public drilling continued, but there were no more arrests for this form of activity.

Prior to the arrest of these two officers, other Volunteers in the area had been sent to jail or fined for shouting at the police, "Up the Rebels!", or other such slogans that displeased the authorities in those

days. Such petty tyranny, instead of frightening the people, only made them dislike alien rule and its minions all the more, and brought increased support to the Irish Volunteer and Sinn Féin movements.

The threat of conscription in the spring of 1918 did not bring many recruits to our company, as by that time practically every man of military age in the parish was already in the ranks. In compliance with a general order from Headquarters that every Irish Volunteer should equip himself with a gun or a pike, for use in resisting conscription, a number of pikeheads were made for the company by the village farrier, John O'Rourke. For pike shafts, suitable ash was cut on the lands of John A. Lewis, Clash, Toomevara, a loyalist. The steel for the pikeheads was obtained by raiding the farmyard of Tom Storey, Ballyknockane, another loyalist, for the springs of an old carriage. The pikes made to meet the conscription threat were never used.

The disappearance of the conscription scare brought no repercussions among the Irish Volunteers in the Toomevara company. Each man continued to attend parades as regularly as heretofore. Drilling went on, the company meeting twice a week, and sections once a week. One of the weekly company mobilisations always took place on Sunday when there was generally a parade through the village.

In the winter of 1918-1919, a Lee Enfield rifle, fitted with a Morris tube, was sent to the Toomevara company from brigade headquarters, with a big supply of suitable ammunition. This gun enabled the company to get a practical knowledge of the rifle and also

experience in target practice. A range was set up in Donoghue's fort in Drummin where about ten or twelve men were taken in turn each Sunday to practice on the range. Each man got about a half a dozen shots. Austin McCurtain, one of the brigade officers, attended to supervise the practice and to give instructions on the mechanism, care and use of the rifle.

I think it was in August 1919 that the men who had attacked the police at Soloheadbeg in South Tipperary in the previous January and who had since been on the run with a big price on their heads, offered through proclamations displayed outside every police barracks in the country, came into the parish of Toomevara. They were Sean Treacy, Seamus Robinson, Dan Breen and Sean Hogan. Their stay lasted four or five days, and they were accommodated in Donoghue's of The Hollow and in James Whelehan's of Knockane. An armed guard of four men, equipped with revolvers and shotguns, kept watch over the wanted men day and night during their sojourn in the parish. On leaving, they were driven in a pony and trap by Pat Donoghue to the Lorrha district.

The first revolvers obtained by the Toomevara company were a .45 and a .38, which were sent from Dublin to Paddy Whelehan by his sister who worked in the city, and were received about the end of 1918. The armament of the company was further increased during the following year by collecting shotguns from our supporters and by raiding the homes of local imperialists. In all, a total of twenty-five shotguns was procured, along with a couple of hundred cartridges. The homes of the imperialists, about twelve, were all raided on the

same night, the company having been divided into sections for that purpose, each section taking a number of houses. The section which went to Colonel Smithwick's, Woodville, were fired on by the owner's son-in-law, Captain Cameron, and failed to effect an entrance. The following evening at two o'clock, this place was again raided and, though thoroughly searched, no arms were found. Captain Rowley, also of Woodville, and Harry Bentley, Pallas, Toomevara, both refused to admit the raiding parties who then forced an entrance and removed a shotgun from each house. In December 1917, the company came into possession of a service rifle - a short Lee Enfield. It was taken from a British soldier named Edward Meagher on the night of his return home on furlough from France. Bill Meagher, Hugh Kelly and myself saw the soldier having a drink in O'Meara's pub in Toomevara. We went in to have a chat with him. Meagher and myself engaged him in conversation while Kelly quietly took his rifle, which was leaning against the counter, and walked out with it through the back door. The gun was taken for over five minutes before the soldier missed it but, when he did, he merely said, "Let it go to hell!".

During 1919 an arms dump was built on Rody Donoghue's lands in Drummin in which the arms were stored. The dump was built into the breast of a wide fence and was lined on all sides with timber and stones. It was about six feet deep, three feet high and three feet wide. It was fitted with a timber door, covered on the outside with a camouflage of stones and bushes. A couple of men from the Toomevara company were detailed once a week to clean and oil the guns in this dump, and, though in regular use up to the Truce, was never discovered by the enemy.

In the parish of Toomevara, the R.I.C. station in the village was the only enemy outpost. Up till the spring of 1920 when the garrison was trebled, it was occupied by a sergeant and five constables. Most of those policemen, especially the sergeant, a Kerryman, named Begley, and two constables, Scanlon and Healy, natives of Kerry and Clare, respectively, were viciously antagonistic towards the Irish Volunteers and, for that matter, towards every other national movement. The trio were all bullies by nature, and frequently overstepped their official duties, by beating up Volunteers or sympathisers and firing shots over men who were in no way interfering with them. In the month of September 1919, the 1st lieutenant of the Toomevara company, Jack Harty, was attacked by these three R.I.C. men on the main road, about a hundred yards outside the village. Harty received severe injuries from blows of batons and kicks all over the body.

This treatment of Harty roused much resentment not alone among the Volunteers but among the most of the civilian population in Toomevara. The matter was discussed by the quartermaster of the 2nd battalion, Paddy Whelehan, and about half a dozen members of the Toomevara company, including myself. It was decided between us that sanction to shoot the policemen involved in Harty's assault should be sought from brigade headquarters. Whelehan went in person to a meeting of the brigade council, but sanction was refused. This happened in October, 1919.

After the brigade council meeting, Whelehan met the brigade adjutant, Sean Gaynor, who told him not to take the decision of the meeting too seriously, and that he

was aware from his own experience that, though orders from G.H.Q. required the approval of the brigade O/C before any armed attack on the police could be attempted in the brigade area, some of the most prominent members of G.H.Q. staff would prefer to see the attacks taking place rather than having them abandoned for want of brigade approval. As proof of the sincerity of his statement, the brigade adjutant offered to come out to Toomevara to take part in the shooting of the police himself. After this conversation with Whelehan, Gaynor cycled from Nenagh to Toomevara on two different nights, bringing with him a Smith & Wesson .45 revolver, to help us in ambushing the R.I.C. patrol. On one of these occasions he was with Whelehan, myself and one or two others while we were waiting for the police to come along the main road to Dublin at about sixty yards distance from the village of Toomevara. The police came within about twenty yards of us and then returned back to barracks.

After the second night, Gaynor said it would be ridiculous for him to continue to come out from Nenagh any more, but he loaned his revolver to us so that we could have it for use whenever we needed it.

For months afterwards, Whelehan, myself and a couple of other men lay in wait on different roads around the village on an average of two nights per week, thinking we might get a chance to attack the police, but eventually gave up trying when we noticed that they had ceased to leave the barracks at night. However, we had by no means abandoned our project, and our chance came when it was observed that policemen were attending the evening devotions during Lent in the following spring.

On the evening of 16th March, 1920, Whelehan and myself, armed with two .45 revolvers and in disguised attire, waited outside the church gates in Toomevara until devotions were over. It was about half past seven when the congregation came out, two R.I.C. men among them. As the police passed the church gates, Whelehan and myself got in behind them. We had followed them for about forty yards, and then each of us taking a man, opened fire and shot them dead.

The crowd coming from the church gathered round, and in order to scatter them to prevent ourselves from being recognised, we fired a few shots in the air. After that, we made our way through Looby's gateway into the fields and to our own homes, hiding our revolvers on the way.

In an hour, police and military reinforcements began widespread raids and searches. After searching my home, they attempted to set fire to the dwelling house and the outhouses. The family put out the fire in the dwelling house, but the other premises were gutted.

Three days after the shooting, I was arrested by combined police and military forces who took into custody eleven others, including my two brothers, Stephen and Bill, Jack Harty and his two brothers, Paddy Whelehan and his brother, Jack, Patrick Meagher (Widger) and Jeremiah Troy. We were first removed to Limerick jail, and then after having spent short terms in Cork and Belfast jails, we were transferred to Wormwood Scrubbs prison in England. We were never brought to trial, like lots of the other prisoners from all over Ireland who were confined there. A

hunger-strike, on which I spent twenty-one days, led to our release.

On my return home from Wormwood Scrubbs jail about the middle of May 1920, I was obliged to go on the run, like my two brothers, Bill and Stephen. We had no sooner arrived back in Toomevara than the police began to raid our home. It was obvious that we were to be arrested, and rather than spend another day in jail, we decided to go on our keeping, and continued to do so until the Truce. I don't think we were more than a fortnight out of jail when the battalion staff learned that the brigade staff were planning an attack on Borrisokane R.I.C. barracks. Actually, the first steps in preparation for this operation took place in the Toomevara company area.

On orders from brigade headquarters, a petrol lorry was held up by a section of the company. The petrol, which was in two-gallon tins, was buried in a sandpit in Cullenwaine, Moneygall. During the week, the local Volunteers transferred the petrol into bottles, mostly whiskey and stout bottles which were firmly corked. On the eve of the attack on the barracks, this petrol, along with a number of rifles which had been sent into the area from brigade headquarters, were conveyed in horse carts from Cullenwaine to within a mile or so of Borrisokane where there were about one hundred and fifty men assembled under the command of Frank McGragh, Nenagh, then Commandant of the North Tipperary Brigade. The men were divided into a number of sections, and the part which each section was to take in the attack was explained to the men in that section. Some men were

handed rifles for use in positions at the front and the rere of the barracks; others were detailed to occupy outposts around the village of Borrisokane. Between fifty and sixty men were earmarked to form a continuous line between the assembly point where the petrol was stored and an archway in the village which ran at the side of the second house on the left hand side of the barracks. In the archway to where the bottled petrol was brought, a section of about half a dozen men under the brigade adjutant was given the job of taking it from there into the house next door which adjoined the barracks.

I was one of a group of eight or nine men, made up of the following:-

Jim O'Meara	-	Toomevara company.
Jack Whelan	-	" "
Paddy Harty	-	" "
Joe O'Brien	-	" "
Mick Kennedy	-	Nenagh "
Andy Cooney	-	Silvermines and a member of the Dublin Brigade -

and one or two others whose names I forget. This group, under the leadership of the brigade commander, Frank McGrath, gained entrance by the back door to the house next to the barracks. We entered the place about a quarter-past eleven at night, 26th June, 1920. As far as I now can remember, each man was armed with a revolver, and we also had with us a supply of hand grenades. I was ordered to stand on guard at the front door to admit the men from the archway under Seán Gaynor who were to bring in the bottles of petrol and deliver them to a relay of men posted from the

stairway to the roof of the house. A few of the men in my group - Jimmy O'Meara, Paddy Moloney and Mick Kennedy - using light hatchets, broke their way through the roof, from whence they got on to the roof of the barracks where they broke another hole.

Just as they started breaking the slates on the roof of the dwelling house in which I was posted, the groups of riflemen opened fire on the front and rere of the barracks, at a signal given by Frank McGrath on a whistle. The police, taken by surprise, were not long in manning their own firing positions behind steel shutters at the windows or loopholes which had been cut at points of vantage through the walls of the barracks. They started sending up Verey lights through the chimneys, throwing bombs through the loopholes and met the fire of our riflemen with a vigorous reply from their own rifles. The bombs thrown by the police on to the street in front of the barracks soon made matters very unpleasant for Sean Gaynor and his section who, in order to bring the bottles of petrol from the archway into the dwelling house next door to the barracks, had to come along the main street, and were thus exposed to being hit by bomb splinters. Gaynor soon found a way to avoid this risk. He got a hole bored through the wall between the archway and the dwelling house through which his men were then able to pass the petrol to the men inside who were transmitting it on to those on the roof.

Incidentally, as soon as the hole was broken in the roof of the barracks, the men who had done so then flung a number of bottles of petrol through the hole, followed by some hand grenades. It was expected by

those who planned the attack that the exploding grenades would quickly cause the petrol to set the barracks aflame. This, however, did not happen as the police had spread a liberal coating of sand on the floor of the garrett, which prevented the woodwork from taking fire. There were plenty of explosions and very dense smoke inside the building, but little or no flames. In order to counteract this precautionary measure on the part of the police, it was decided that another hole should be broken in the wall between the barracks and the dwelling house, a few feet above the first floor. This appeared to me to take a long time, as the job had to be done by the use of the crowbar and pickaxe. When eventually the hole was completed, more petrol and hand grenades were thrown through it into the upper storey of the barracks. Again the police had forestalled us, as the floor of the room into which our missiles were flung was treated with sand in a manner similar to the garrett, and all we appeared to have for our efforts again were explosions and more smoke.

By four o'clock in the morning or soon after dawn, the signal to retire was given by the brigade commander. Two of our men who had been operating on the roof of the building were wounded, Jimmy O'Meara, slightly, and Mick Kennedy, so severely that he died a few days later in a Limerick city hospital. I don't think the R.I.C. suffered any casualties, but the barracks was left in such a damaged condition that it had to be vacated at once. Instead of withdrawing from Borrisokane, however, the police commandeered another house in the village which they occupied until the Truce.

Following the signal to retire, the section to which I was attached made our way out by the back of the house to the fields further in the rere. As we were doing so, we were observed by the R.I.C. who subjected us to rifle fire. By availing of cover and crawling part of the way on our hands and knees, we all managed to get safely out of range. We went on to Crowle, on the Nenagh-Borrisokane road, where most of the remainder of the attacking party had gathered, and after a drink or two in Bill Dwyer's "pub" in that village, I went home accompanied by about half a dozen other Toomevara men.

Apart from the death of Michael Kennedy and the commandeering of another building to house the R.I.C. in Borrisokane, I have no recollection of any other sequel to the attack on this barracks.

Towards the end of October, 1920, an order from brigade headquarters, issued as far as I know on the instructions of G.H.Q. in Dublin, required each battalion to shoot at least one member of the enemy forces stationed in the battalion area on the night of 2nd November, 1920. At the time, I remember hearing that the order was issued as a reprisal for the death of Terence McSweeney, the Lord Mayor of Cork, who died while on hunger-strike in Brixton prison in England. In our battalion area, it was decided to put the order into effect in the village of Cloughjordan where there were some very aggressive members of the R.I.C.

It was the practice of these policemen to drink at night in Tooher's Hotel, Cloughjordan. Plans were made that a party of four, armed with revolvers, Joe

O'Brien, Bill Kelly, Bill Meagher, with Paddy Whelehan in charge, - would enter the bar, stick up the police and bring them outside to the gateway of the hotel yard where any objectionable characters among them would be identified by a local Volunteer, Jack Williams, and then shot. Williams and myself, also equipped with revolvers, were posted at the back exit in the hotel yard to prevent any of the police from escaping.

At about nine o'clock at night, 2nd November 1920, the four men entered the hotel. There was only one policeman inside, Constable Maxwell, and he attempted to draw his gun. He was fired at and shot dead. There were no other policemen about at the time, and after the shooting we dispersed.

I omitted to mention earlier that during the summer of 1920 - July, I believe - the R.I.C. authorities decided to make the barracks in Toomevara more secure from attack by demolishing a house which adjoined it and which was owned by people named Flannery. While the police were engaged in knocking down the house, an ex British soldier, Daniel Doherty, passed the place. He was after having a few drinks at the time. On seeing the roof of Flannery's house being broken, he flung a stone at one of the R.I.C. men. For this action, he was reported by the authorities to the British Ministry of Pensions, and that department at once annulled his pension of £1 per week which had been awarded to him for twenty-six years continuous service in the British Army.

The two R.I.C. men who were shot by Paddy Whelehan and myself in Toomevara on the 16th March, 1920, did not

include Sergeant Begley whom we were particularly anxious to shoot. He was transferred to Templemore by the time Paddy Whelehan and myself had returned home from Wormwood Scrubbs. We made up our minds to get him in Templemore. On four nights subsequently the two of us walked from Toomevara to Templemore, and waited in a big gateway near the post office in the latter town, hoping that the sergeant would be going to the post office. In a final effort, Whelehan and myself, along with Big Jim Ryan of Upperchurch and Jim Devenney, Pallas, Toomevara, went again to Templemore on a Sunday expecting that the sergeant would attend eleven o'clock Mass. We took our stand outside the church gates. Again, we were disappointed as he was not at Mass. That occurred on 27th January, 1921.

As we were returning home from Templemore after the last attempt, we rested at John Meagher's, Lahaun, Moneygall. One of the North Tipperary A.S.U. members, Paddy O'Brien, called at the house. He asked me to go to Gortagarry to collect two rifles and some ammunition and bring them on to Kilruane where the brigade commandant had planned to bring off an ambush. O'Brien and the other three men went on to Kilruane. On arriving in that village, the four of them went into O'Meara's pub for a drink, leaving their bikes outside the door. A lorry of Black and Tans came along unexpectedly and, on seeing the bikes, quietly dismounted and rushed into the bar. O'Brien and Devenney got out the back door, and managed to reach the fields at the rere. They had been observed by the Tans and came under heavy fire. Devenney was hit by a bullet which severed a main artery in the thigh.

The wound prevented him from retreating any further. O'Brien continued on through the fields until he got clear.

The Black and Tans did not follow the retreating men at that stage, but went to Nenagh where they obtained strong reinforcements, and then came back to Kilruane to start a search and round-up. They found Devenney's corpse in the fields. He had bled to death for want of attention.

Whelehan was suffering from tuberculosis at the time and, instead of trying to get away, concealed himself behind the bar counter and, with his revolver at the ready, determined to fight it out with the enemy. The shop was not searched, presumably because the Black and Tans were under the impression that the owners of the bikes had all rushed out through the back door. As soon as the police lorry moved off for Nenagh, Whelehan left the pub and got away unmolested. He, of course, was not aware of the fate of his friend, Jim Devenney.

The brigade active service unit,which disbanded for holidays a few days before Christmas 1920, had left their guns in a dump in Trenche's of Laughton, Moneygall. Andy Cooney, who was then a student at the National University, Dublin, happened to come home on holidays for Christmas. He was a well known I.R.A. man in Dublin as well as in his native county, and unless I'm mistaken, at the time in question was attached to G.H.Q. in Dublin. During his Christmas sojourn at home, he mixed with the local I.R.A. men. In the early part of January, 1921, we heard in Toomevara that a lorry bringing pay to the police in Ballingarry would

be coming from Birr on the following Friday. Cooney and Patrick Meagher (Widger) regarded this piece of news as a splendid opportunity which should not be neglected and, selecting about a dozen men from the Toomevara company, they equipped them with the guns - nearly all rifles - dumped by the active service unit, and on a Wednesday evening marched across country to Shinrone, Ballingarry, a distance of over sixteen miles. I was one of the party. It would not have been possible to remobilise the A.S.U. in view of the short notice.

After resting in billets in the local farmers' houses on Wednesday night and Thursday, positions were taken up about four o'clock on Friday morning, just one hundred and fifty yards outside the village of Ballingarry, on the road between Ballingarry and Birr. We were still there at eleven o'clock when scouts reported that eight lorry loads of military were coming from Birr. As we could not cope with a force of that size - up to a hundred men - we vacated the position and returned home, having put back the guns and ammunition we had taken from the dump in Trenche's place. The military must have received word of our presence in the Ballingarry country, as there was a widespread search of that area after we had left it.

In March, 1921, the commander of the brigade active service unit, Jack Collison, notified the officers of the 2nd battalion that he was bringing his men to Gortagarry, and requested that arrangements be made by the local company to have billets provided. I went off myself to Gortagarry and met the company officers, and with them fixed up the billets. The active service unit contained about twenty men, and we decided to

distribute ten of them among the houses in the townland of Ballinlough and the remainder in Gortagarry. In the vicinity of Glenaguile was a big house owned by the Lanigan O'Keeffe family which was vacant at the time, and it was arranged that, while in the district, the active service unit would meet each day in that house for training and lectures.

I stayed for the night with the commander of the A.S.U. in the house of a family called Donovan. Scouts provided by the local Volunteer company reported to Collison about half-past ten o'clock next morning that the noise of lorries could be heard in the distance. Collison sent off two other local Volunteers to investigate the report and to make their own observations. In about twenty minutes, the two men returned to say that everything was alright and that they could find no sign of enemy forces.

On hearing this news, Collison started off with the party who had stayed with him in Gortagarry for Lanigan O'Keeffe's. We had to cross a road which runs from Glenaguile to Templemore. Collison had stepped on to the road from the field we were after crossing, and I was coming immediately after him, when he suddenly backed towards me, whispering, "Back! Back! Military!" He had seen two soldiers standing near the road fence, about twenty-five yards away. They were on sentry duty while their comrades, about nine strong, under a lieutenant, were preparing a meal in Ryan's yard, Glenaguile, two hundred yards or so from us.

Before Collison and myself were able to get back into the field, we were observed by the two sentries who

promptly opened fire. After jumping inside the fence, we found ourselves with very little cover. The fence consisted of a bank of clay, slightly over a foot high, out of which grew a whitethorn hedge that provided only cover from view. We remained behind the shelter of the bank of clay for some minutes, during which the enemy kept cutting the hedge, a few inches above us, with well directed fire.

Realising that, unless we moved out of our position, we would soon be trapped when the rest of the military party up at Ryan's yard got properly into action, Collison ordered the party to make their way by alternative groups on to a fence which ran at right angles to the road across the fields, known locally as the Black Meadow, and to go along by that fence until we reached the Gortagarry road. The movement worked successfully, one group covering the retreat of the other until all the party got across the Gortagarry road into safe custody. During the course of the day, contact was made with the other section of the active service unit. By nightfall, all the unit were comfortably billeted in the townland of Annameadle, and I went back to my own district.

I have no definite idea when I was appointed to the post of Battalion Intelligence Officer, but it was probably about the time that Austin McCurtain became Brigade Intelligence Officer in the autumn of 1920. As intelligence officer, my principal duties were to report movements of enemy forces in the battalion area to the brigade intelligence officer. These reports had to be submitted weekly unless something very

special occurred and this had to be reported immediately.

As I now look back on this system of reporting, I think it lost a great deal of its value by reason of the frequency with which the enemy varied his movements, either by lorry or on ordinary patrol. Our method of forwarding reports was by the use of bikes, the quickest and safest method available in those days but not rapid enough very often. For instance, as it happened a few times in some areas, a party of police might come eight or nine miles from its base to raid a village or on some special mission. Instead of returning to base immediately the raid was over or as soon as the mission was accomplished, the police adjourned to the local publichouse and spent a few hours drinking there. Unless the brigade active service unit was in the vicinity, the local Volunteers were not sufficiently well equipped to attack any enemy party comprising more than four or five men. By the time a despatch, giving news of the police drinking in the local pub, reached brigade headquarters, or certainly by the time that the people there had an opportunity of bringing any forces to deliver an attack, the police had gone back to their barracks.

In my battalion area, there were no regular contacts between friendly members of the enemy garrison and the I.R.A. Undoubtedly, there were individual members of the R.I.C. who, as the struggle became embittered, showed signs of becoming friendly towards the I.R.A. In Toomevara three members of the police garrison, Sergeant O'Brien, the officer in charge of the station, and two constables, Hardiman and Roddy, repeatedly sent word to us regarding impending raids

by the military and police during the latter end of 1920 and in 1921. The Sergeant, who of course was better informed of the enemy's intentions, used a local farmer named Bob Smith as the contact man between himself and the I.R.A.

In April 1921, at the request of Constables Hardiman and Roddy, the battalion quartermaster, Paddy Whelehan,and myself met them one night in O'Meara's publichouse in Toomevara. The policemen explained that their authorities had reprimanded the local sergeant and men for lack of activity against the I.R.A., pointing out that no I.R.A. men were being arrested and that no raids were being conducted by the Toomevara R.I.C. The constables suggested that we should start sniping the barracks, especially at night time, and that this would be regarded by their authorities as evidence of the unpopularity of the R.I.C. in the district. Nothing came from the discussions as the constables declined to agree to supply us with a few hundred rounds of .303 ammunition which we asked for in order to carry out the sniping.

About April or May 1921, word came from the Toomevara R.I.C. barracks that the military in Nenagh intended to burn the village of Toomevara and also the creamery on the outskirts of the village. On four different nights after the receipt of this message, about thirty members of Toomevara company, equipped with shotguns and revolvers, took up positions around the village for the purpose of attacking any enemy forces who might attempt to set fire to houses. The villagers themselves, other than the men in the I.R.A., were so frightened over the whole business that they decided to

evacuate their homes en masse each night for a whole month, and went to stay with friends and relations in other parts of the parish, returning back home each morning. This state of affairs lasted for about four or five weeks, and by the end of that period when the enemy made no attempt at incendiarism, the people felt they were safe and remained at home at night. I do not know if there was any justification for the police message, but it certainly was responsible for the villagers of Toomevara going through a very trying time.

About April or May 1921, on orders from G.H.Q. in Dublin, a collection was made in North Tipperary for funds in aid of the I.R.A. The collection was supervised in each company area by the company officers who also decided the amount expected from each householder. In the parish of Toomevara the amount collected reached about £180. On the completion of the collection, the money was handed over to the company quartermaster, James Whelehan, who, pending its transmission to brigade headquarters, placed it for safe custody in the arms dump in Knockane. The money disappeared and was missing for some weeks.. This had an unpleasant sequel for the battalion commandant, Jeremiah Collison, the battalion quartermaster, Paddy Whelehan, and myself. On the day on which the money was taken, we had left revolvers in the dump while going to attend Mass. The money was certainly in the dump when we left in the guns, but it was taken between that and three or four o'clock in the evening when the company quartermaster went to inspect the dump and to check the money. Myself and the two other battalion officers were held responsible by the brigade and divisional commandants, and we were

removed from our posts and reduced to the ranks. About three weeks later, the missing funds were handed in to the parish priest who arranged to have it handed back to the appropriate I.R.A. officers. The parish priest refused to disclose the name of the person who ~~did so~~ gave him the money. Only in my case was there an effort made to make amends for the unfair decision to reduce us to the ranks. The captaincy of the Toomevara company became vacant, due to the transfer of the old company captain to the battalion staff, and I was appointed in his place. This happened sometime around 11th July 1921 when the Truce was declared. I referred above to the divisional commandant. He was a captain, Michael McCormack, a Dublin man who had been sent down from G.H.Q. as an organiser and instructor a few months previously. The division to which he was appointed was known as the 3rd southern, and embraced the counties of Leix and Offaly and the North Tipperary brigade. It had only been formed just prior to the Truce.

SIGNED: John Hackett

(John Hackett)

DATE: 30th March 1956

30th March, 1956.

WITNESS D. Griffin

(D. Griffin)