

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
BURO STAIRE MILEATA 1913-21
No. W.S. 1399

ROINN



COSANTA.

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

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 1399

Witness

*Thomas Peppard,
Bookstown,
Tallaght,
Co. Dublin.*

Identity.

*Intelligence Officer,
Fingal Brigade,
I. R. A.*

Subject.

*National Activities
1914 - 1921*

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

nil

File No. S. 2722

Form B.S.M. 2

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
BURO STAIRE MILEATA 1913-21
No. W.S. 1399

STATEMENT BY THOMAS PEPPARD,

Cookstown, Tallaght, County Dublin.

I was born in the year 1894 at Brunswick St., now Pearse St., Dublin, but was reared at Lusk in north County Dublin. I attended the local national school at Lusk. Our teacher there - a man called Fenton - was very keen on teaching us Irish history and the Irish language. The Irish language was not one of the subjects catered for by the commissioners for education at that time and for this reason he had to teach us Irish after normal school hours. There was a hurling and football club in Lusk at this time and I was soon a member. The brothers John and Edward Rooney were the principals in the organising and running of this club.

In July, 1914, companies of the Irish Volunteers were started in Lusk. I say companies, because from the outset there were two companies. One company was started by the Rooneys and had its origin in the hurling and football club, and the other club was started by the Taylors and Murtaghs. I joined the Rooney Company. There was a local dispute between the Rooney family and the Taylors and Murtagh family and an amount of jealousy, and this gave rise to the formation of two companies of Volunteers in a small district where there was room for really only one. Edward Rooney was captain of our company and he also did the instruction of the company. Our company was somewhere between thirty and forty strong. We had no arms of any type then. The two Lusk companies paraded to Howth on the day of the memorable gun-running

there, but neither company got any rifles and were told by some of the executive officers of the Volunteers that they would not get any until they had reconciled their differences and become united in one company.

When John Redmond split the Volunteers through his pro British war efforts, our company remained loyal to the Irish Volunteer executive while the other company went pro Redmond and became the Irish National Volunteers. Thus our differences were solved for us by the march of time. A few of the Taylor-Murtagh company came over to us then and their company in a short time ceased to exist.

Some time prior to Easter Week, 1916, there were a few rifles available in the company. I do not know where they came from or what type they were.

On Good Friday of Holy Week, 1916, Tom Ashe, R.I.P., met me outside the chapel in Lusk and gave me a despatch for our company captain, Edward Rooney. Ashe told me to be sure to attend the parade on Sunday (Easter) as there was a very special event coming off that day. On Easter Sunday evening I went to Rathbeale Crossroads, which was our mobilisation centre. There were about one hundred men there. Frank Lawless of Saucerstown, who was our battalion quartermaster, came along and issued a lot of single barrel shotguns to us. The shotguns were new and of American manufacture. We then adjourned to Saucerstown House, the home of Frank Lawless, where we were served with tea. We were there until midnight that night, when Ashe told us that the big event we had been mobilised for had been postponed but that we were to hold ourselves in readiness as we would be called again. We were then dismissed.

There was a battalion organisation existing in Fingal area at this time. Tom Ashe was the battalion commandant, Dr. Hayes was battalion adjutant and medical officer, and Frank Lawless was battalion quartermaster. Dr. Hayes had been battalion commandant some time prior to this but had changed appointments with Ashe. The companies making up the battalion were Lusk, Swords, Skerries, St. Margarets and Donabate. The latter, I think, was attached to the Swords Company. This was the 5th Battalion, Dublin Brigade.

After the dismissal at Saucerstown on Easter Sunday night some of us went to a céilí in Lusk and turned in to our normal work on Easter Monday morning. On Easter Monday morning at about ten a.m. I received mobilisation orders for Knocksedan crossroads for that day. When I got to Knocksedan the battalion had moved from there to Finglas and I followed on and joined them there. There were only about sixty or so men mobilised now, or rather that was all that had answered the order.

During the night of Easter Monday a party of us moved across to Blanchardstown, where, I understand, the railway was destroyed. I was on duty on the road near the railway so I do not know what really happened there. On Tuesday morning about twenty men from our battalion were detailed as a party to proceed into the city to reinforce the Volunteer units there. The late Richard Coleman took charge of this party. He was, I think, company captain of Swords Company. Daniel Brophy was next in command to Coleman. We proceeded into the city without incident and reported to the General Post Office in Sackville St., now O'Connell St. Some of our men

were detailed to proceed to reinforce the garrison in Kelly's of Bachelors Walk. Ned Lawless, a brother of Frank, was one of this party. Another party was detailed for similar duty in the Mendicity Institute and I was among the party that went there. The garrison of Volunteers in the Institute was commanded by Seán Heuston, who was later executed. It commanded the approach from the Royal Barracks and Kingsbridge along the Quays to the city centre.

Our party arrived there on Tuesday afternoon, being brought there by devious by-ways by scouts who knew the city. All was quiet when we got there, although I understand that there had been some shooting there on the previous evening. The place had been barricaded but not very effectively. I do not know what the strength of the garrison was as I never got a chance of seeing them together. We who had come in from Fingal were armed with single barrelled shotguns, which were ineffective except at short range. While the position was good to the front, commanding a good view of both sides of the River Liffey and the Quays, it was completely dominated at the back by Guinness's Brewery buildings and towers.

On Wednesday the Institute was heavily attacked from all sides. The enemy were able to get close up on us and to use hand grenades against us. One hand grenade entered the room where we were and Volunteer Staines tried to pick it up and throw it out again. Before Staines got to the grenade it exploded, wounding him severely. It was soon apparent that we could not hold out much longer or else we would all die in the attempt of doing so. Commandant Heuston now decided to evacuate the place

and our men were ordered to proceed down to the yard. While doing so one of our men from Fingal was shot dead in the yard. His name was Wilson. Commandant Heuston now surrendered to the British. I had helped the wounded Staines from the building but he was quickly taken from me by the British military. We were now disarmed and marched across to the Royal Barracks and from there to Arbour Hill Barracks, where we were put in the gymnasium. All told now we numbered about thirty. There was supposed to be another party of Volunteers in the buildings at the rear of the Mendicity Institute to cover our rear and protect us from attack from that side, which was the real danger area. I don't think that this party was ever there, or if they were they had withdrawn early on, thus leaving us vulnerable to attack from that side and leaving the British free to occupy the brewery buildings which overlooked the institute.

We were kept in Arbour Hill Detention Barracks in the gymnasium until we were brought before a courtmartial consisting of British officers. This court was held in the Richmond Barracks. While we were in Arbour Hill we could see soldiers digging graves in a corner of the yard and also a lorry arriving with a man's leg sticking up over the side apparently dead.

We were marched from Arbour Hill through the Royal Barracks, Kingsbridge and Kilmainham, Old Soldiers' Home to the Richmond Barracks to be courtmartialled. Here we were charged with waging war and several other things against His Majesty the King of England. The whole thing was only formal and we were found guilty. Seán McDermott, afterwards executed, and the Countess were courtmartialled the same day. We were now brought to Kilmainham Jail.

After a few days there we were informed that we had been sentenced to death but that the sentence was commuted to three years' penal servitude. Heuston was sentenced to death and was executed.

We were now shipped to England and on to Portland Prison. At the time the ordinary prisoners were released from Frongoch Camp we were transferred to Lewes Jail. The prisoners from Dartmoor Jail had also been transferred to here. We were classified as convicts and were separated from the men who were doing lesser sentences, such as one year's penal servitude. We ran the prison ourselves and did our own cooking etc. We were allowed to talk. We had a weekly bath and occasionally what was called a dry bath. The dry bath meant that at irregular intervals, sometimes weekly, you were taken to the bath house and stripped naked. Your clothes were thoroughly searched and even your mouth, ears and the most private parts of your body were also thoroughly examined. What they suspected we might be concealing I don't know. The whole affair was very degrading. When you got back to your cell after this ordeal you usually found that all your belongings had been ripped up during an examination also.

We were not allowed to mix with any of the ordinary convicts in any way. If you happened to meet one of those on your way to your work or suchlike, that man had to stand with his face to the wall until you passed. The thing was ridiculous. After a while we were allowed to talk all day at our work. Generally you were allowed to select the kind of work you preferred to do and some of the bigger shots, including Mr. de Valera and others,

elected to work in the garden. I was in the workshops.

Jim Crennigan, who also worked in the shops with me, was about to be released and I was anxious to give him a message for my people. Another of our men, Kelly, and I went to talk to Crennigan and were immediately pounced on by a warder and marched before the governor, who ordered us to be punished for talking at work. We were taken to the prison doctor to see if we were fit to undergo punishment. Kelly was detained and I was released. When I returned I reported the affair to our leaders and a general strike was ordered by them and we now all refused to do any work.

All the prisoners, including de Valera, Tom Ashe and Hunter, were now assembled in the workroom. The prison governor now came in and asked what the trouble was. We all expected Mr. de Valera, who was recognised by all as our leader, to speak for us, but, to our amazement, he remained silent and eventually Tom Ashe spoke out and told him our grievance regarding the punishment of Kelly for talking. The governor said that this was the prison rule or regulations and that they would have to be observed and that was that. We were now returned to our cells. Next morning each prisoner was approached individually and requested to give an undertaking that he would not talk if allowed back to work. This request was refused by all and we were kept in our cells.

The prisoners were now broken up into batches and transferred to other jails in England. Only about twenty or twenty-five were left in Lewes, of which I was one, and the rule about talking was forgotten about. About June or July, 1917, I was released. We were first brought to Pentonville Prison and from there released and allowed home.

I was now given the job of reorganising the Volunteers and I.R.B. in the Fingal area by Michael Collins. I got companies restarted in Swords, Donabate, Lusk, Skerries, Balbriggan, St. Margarets, Finglas, Oldtown, Garristown, Ardcath and Duleek and other places. As yet we had no battalion organisation. Sometime early in 1918 a battalion was organised in the area and Michael Lynch, who was an employee of the Dublin Corporation in the Markets section and who had taken part in the Rebellion, was appointed commandant. I cannot remember now who the other officers of the battalion staff were then.

Early in 1918 the British Government passed a conscription act for Ireland and this only awaited the Royal assent to be put into law. Our strengths in the various companies now increased enormously and it became a big problem to handle such numbers. However, the services of ex British Army men and suchlike were availed of everywhere to whip the new material into shape. Parades and route marches were the order of the day and all such drilling and activity was performed openly, watched by the members of the R.I.C., who did not interfere. Other than drilling and the signing of the anti-conscription pledge and collecting money for the anti-conscription fund, there was little else done to meet the menace. The Volunteers awaited instructions from general headquarters. We did at this time commence the manufacture of slug or pellets for shotgun cartridges and the packing of same into cartridges after the ordinary shot had been removed. When the conscription crisis died down all, or practically all, of our influx of members took their departure again and we were back in the position regarding strength where we were before the crisis.

When the general election took place towards the end of 1918 we were in a more highly organised position and better able to tackle such a situation. By now Daniel Brophy was, I think, the battalion commander as Michael Lynch had been called back to the general staff at headquarters in Dublin. Archie Heron was, I think, the vice O/C of the battalion. The Volunteers were busily engaged in the election working for the return of Frank Lawless, who was the Sinn Féin candidate; canvassing voters, checking registers, collecting for the election funds and arranging transport were among the duties carried out by the Volunteers prior to polling day and protecting the Sinn Féin speakers at the various meetings. The R.I.C. took up a very biased attitude during the election. While openly hostile to the Sinn Féin movement, they were friendly towards the Redmondite side and closed their eyes to the many disorderly acts of that side. On polling day the Volunteers had parties on duty at the different polling stations to see that the supporters of Sinn Féin were allowed to record their votes with freedom, and they also escorted the polling boxes to their destination and mounted a guard on them during the night. The counting of the votes for the North County Dublin area took place in Balbriggan, and Lawless was returned with a big majority. The election went off quietly in our area and there were no serious incidents or clashes with the R.I.C.

Early in the New Year (1919) the 1st Dáil met and reaffirmed its allegiance to the Irish Republic, making the declaration of 1916 its charter. The Dáil now floated a loan and here again the Volunteers played a major part in canvassing and collecting for this loan, although really, like the general election, it was the work of the

Sinn Féin organisation. It was not really easy to distinguish between the two organisations as many of the Volunteers were also members of Sinn Féin. It was surprising how well the people supported the First Dáil loan. I believe that most of them looked upon it as another subscription. The Dáil now took over responsibility for the Volunteers and all members were required to take an oath of allegiance to that body as the government of the Irish Republic. All our men and officers subscribed to this oath.

I had not been in any steady employment since before the Rebellion in 1916, so I now took up work with a firm called Graces in the city who were pump bore contractors. This necessitated my being away from home a lot as this company were successful in securing contracts from many public bodies and others down the country. I worked among other places in Wicklow, Galway and Kildare. Wherever I went I always made it a point to get in touch with the local Volunteers and gave them whatever assistance I could, and on periods when I was at home I resumed my activities with the local company.

On one occasion when I was in Galway the Volunteers planned to attack an R.I.C. barracks at Derrygonnelly and I assisted in the blocking of the roads in that area. On another occasion two wagon loads of barbed wire for the British military arrived at the railway station in Athenry. This wire was to be used in putting the aerodrome at Oranmore in a state of defence. We raided the wagons, on which there was no guard, and took all the wire and hid it in the ivy on the boundary wall of the local football grounds. The military and police raided all around the countryside looking for the wire, but never spotted where we had it hidden although they passed it several times per day.

At the end of the summer of 1919 or in the harvest time general headquarters ordered that all arms in the possession of civilians be taken up and kept under the control of the Volunteers. We later learned that this move had forestalled the police and military who were about to do so. I was at home at this time and took part in this operation. In most cases it was only a matter of asking the people for what guns they had and they handed them over. In many cases they were glad to get rid of them, but in others a bold front was necessary to convince them to hand up the weapons. We only got a lot of shotguns of both single and double barrel types, some of which were unserviceable, and a small supply of cartridges. We got no service weapons of any nature. There were no shootings in our area during this operation, but in the Naul area there were two shooting incidents and two Volunteers were wounded, being fired on by the occupants of the houses where they gone to collect arms. Both the civilians concerned in these affairs were arrested by the Volunteers and heavily fined.

Some attacks had been made by now on R.I.C. barracks throughout the country and the R.I.C. authorities, realising that they could not hold on to their small scattered posts, began to evacuate them and to concentrate their men in the larger stations, principally in the towns. In the Fingal area they evacuated their barracks at Lusk, Skerries, Donabate, Malahide, Garristown and the Naul, Finglas and Santry. This took place in the early part of 1920. On Easter Saturday night of that year some of these premises were burned by the Volunteers. I can't say definitely what places were destroyed, except Santry, of which I am definite.

This evacuation was a great relief to us as it gave us greater freedom of movement in the area. At the same time it had another effect also, as the withdrawal of the R.I.C. also gave freedom to lawless individuals to get working and prey on their neighbours. The Volunteers had now to take over the maintenance of law and order in the country. The Volunteers had been doing this to some extent even before the police withdrew. The people had to a great extent given up co-operating with the R.I.C., who were now looked upon as an enemy force holding the people in subjection. The Volunteers, although in most cases only able to give part time duty, made a great success of this police duty and soon had the situation well under control. They had to make arrests and detentions. Such places of detention were called "unknown destinations". They usually consisted of old unoccupied houses. There was one such place at Finglas, one in the Martello Tower at Donabate and another at the Naul and one at Balheary a few miles from Swords.

A brigade had now been organised in the Fingal area. Michael Lynch of Dublin was now back again as Brigade Commandant. Jack Shields was, I think, Vice Commandant; Vincent Purfield was Quartermaster. I cannot remember now who was Adjutant. There were four battalions comprising the brigade. The 1st Battalion comprised the areas Skerries, Ballbriggan, the Naul. Michael Rock was Commandant of this battalion. The 2nd Battalion took in the area Swords, Rush, Lusk, and James O'Connell was O/C here. The 3rd Battalion was Malahide, Santry, Coolock, Finglas and St. Margarets, with Thomas Markey of Finglas as Commandant. The 4th Battalion

was the Garristown, Oldtown, Ardcath, Duleek, Bellewstown area, and Walter Browne of Spring Hall was Battalion Commandant here.

I was now appointed intelligence officer to the brigade. Each battalion in the brigade also had an intelligence officer. Jack Ennis was intelligence officer of the 1st Battalion, Bernard McAllister of the 2nd Battalion, Thomas Taylor of the 3rd Battalion, and Christopher Browne, a brother of the O/C, was I/O of the 4th Battalion. There was also an intelligence officer or agent in each company area. All ranks of the brigade intelligence service lacked training and direction and we were left to plot along in our own way. No one then seemed to appreciate the value of an efficient intelligence service, and it was only when the whole thing was well over and finished with that the value of intelligence began to dawn on us and we realised what could have been done in this respect had we been trained and directed in the right way. Our intelligence service in the brigade kept a watch on all enemy movements and reported them. They also kept a close watch on all residents in their areas, with an eye to find out those that might be aiding or abetting the enemy forces. This was all more or less post dated information. What we wanted was information of intended enemy activities, and this we were not able to get as we had no one of any account inside the forces of the enemy who could acquire this information. Shortly before the truce I did succeed in enlisting the services of a sergeant of the R.I.C., O'Shea, who was on the staff of the Tans' camp at Gormanston, and had the fight gone on I believe personally

that this contact would have been very useful to us. Michael Rourke of Balbriggan was friendly with a girl who worked in the post office there and was able, through this source, to collect odd bits of information occasionally. The post offices at Balbriggan or Swords were not officially tapped for information. While people were sympathetic to us generally, it was a very different matter when you requested them to do something which endangered their lives or liberty.

In the spring of 1921 G.H.Q. began to organise the different brigades into divisions, and the Fingal Brigade was incorporated in the 1st Eastern Division which had its headquarters at Dunboyne, Co. Meath. Seán Boylan was the Divisional O/C, Eamon Cullen was Vice O/C and Director of Engineering, Mr. Clinton was Divisional Adjutant and also Director of Intelligence, and Seamus Finn was Director of Organisation and Training.

My home had been raided for me some time previous to this and I was obliged to go "on the run". I went to stay with friends at Mooretown near Oldtown called Sheridan's, and soon other men who were also 'on the run' were staying there also and from out of this group an active service unit or column was started which I joined. We had about ten or twelve men initially and this was augmented by Volunteers from the battalions as required. All our men were armed with .303 rifles and one hundred and fifty rounds of service ammunition. The rifles were some of the ones that had been obtained from the raid on Collinstown Aerodrome by the Dublin Brigade, which included the Fingal Battalion at the time.

The division sent Paddy Mooney from Trim to take charge of the column and to look after its training, and Seamus Finn also spent a good period with us. Soon our numbers were too big for our accommodation at Sheridan's and we moved into a camp (tents) at the Green Lanes a short distance away. We still continued to do our cooking at Sheridan's, where we were always welcome. Food was procured from shops in Swords and Oldtown and paid for out of brigade funds. Men from the different battalions were taken into the camp for short periods and underwent a course of training. We did our own guards and security patrols, and in this we were well assisted by Volunteers from the Oldtown Company. It was an extraordinary thing that although the column was in that area for some months - in fact until the truce - and within a few miles of Swords where there was a strong military garrison of military and Tans, they never got to know that we were there. The column mixed freely amongst the people of the area and attended Mass at the chapel in Oldtown, and it is a great tribute to the people that they never indulged in loose talk which would have given away the position. On one occasion the Protestant Minister at Oldtown sent for me and informed me that he had been at a dinner at which a number of the officers of the British Army and the police were present. He had gathered from their conversation that these gentlemen suspected we were in the Oldtown area and he was anxious that we should know that so that if anything happened the members of his church would not be suspected of having informed on us. This clergyman, apart from his anxiety for his flock, was a thorough gentleman and very honest and straightforward. Earlier on at a service in the church one Sunday he had addressed his congregation and told them this was a fight between England and Ireland, and that if their

sympathy was with England then it was their duty to get into British uniforms and fight on that side, and if they were not prepared to do this then they should keep their mouths shut.

One of the first operations carried out by men of the column was to raid the British Army Remount Depot at Lusk and to seize the money for paying the staff there. The staff of this depot were all civilians and the manager was a retired officer of the British Army. Horses were broken and trained for remounts for the British cavalry regiments. The pay money was taken from Dublin in an armoured car. This car sometimes just dropped the pay bag in the office and went off again, while at other times it waited until payment was made and then returned to the city. Jack Shields, the "Bok" Maguire, Jim Crennigan, another man called Mason and I waited outside the depot, and when we observed that the armoured car had left immediately on delivering the pay we proceeded into the office and held up the manager - Major Beamish - with revolvers which we were carrying. We took the key of the safe from the Major and opened it, removing the money. Meanwhile Maguire put the phone out of action by pulling it from its connection. We got about three hundred pounds approximately which was handed over to the brigade. I do not know if this money was retained to augment brigade funds or if it was forwarded to G.H.Q. We all got away safely and without incident.

Later on we returned and burned the depot to the ground. The most of the column were engaged in this operation, of which the Brigade O/C, Michael Lynch, took charge, and all carried rifles and revolvers. The Major

and grooms who were present were held up and made prisoners and held under guard in the riding ring. The remainder of our men let the horses out of the stables into the adjoining paddocks and then saturated the place with paraffin oil which had been dumped locally by the local Volunteers. There was also some oil available on the premises. When the premises were set alight it was found that a few of the horses were still in their stables, and as they could not now be let loose and were mad with fright it was necessary to shoot them to prevent their being burned to death. No opposition was met with as the British did not keep a guard on the place. The whole affair was carried out very quickly and without incident, and as we started our trek back for our camp our way was lighted for a while by the beautiful blaze from the place.

Orders were now received from G.H.Q. to capture the outgoing mails from the Tans camp at Gormanston. Collins, who was Director of Intelligence, G.H.Q., required the home addresses of members of the Black and Tans so that their homes in England could be burned as a counter reprisal for the homes they burned here. The matter of procuring the mails came up at a brigade council meeting and I was in a position to inform the council that the mails were taken under escort to the post office in Balbriggan, where they were handed over to the post office staff for sorting, the escort then returning to camp. When the mails were sorted they were taken by a member of the staff on a handcart to the railway station and put in the automatic loading device to be collected by the upgoing mail train.

It was decided to take the mails from the railway station when they were being delivered there and for this purpose a car was used. A few men went in by car to Balbriggan and when the post office man arrived in the station yard with his cart of mails he was held up and the mails put in our car, which then sped off through the country towards the Naul. Our car had been observed by the Tans from the barracks in Balbriggan and they quickly gave chase in one of their Crossley tenders which were very fast. It had been arranged that the O/C 1st Battalion (Rock) would be at a certain point on the road to take over the mails. When our car got to this point it could not wait to hand them over and could only push them over the side and speed on. Rock got the bag and dragged it under cover just in time as the Tans tender came in sight. The Tans followed our car into the Ballymadun area, where they eventually lost the trail and abandoned the chase. The mails were now censored and the necessary information extracted, after which the whole lot, including an amount of money and postal orders, were burned. There were no officers' letters amongst the mails and nothing of note otherwise. After this affair the mails from the camp were always brought to Dublin by car, using different roads. We lay in ambush a few times for this car but unfortunately were never on the right road.

The officer in charge of Gormanston Camp, accompanied by some other officers, was in the habit of proceeding to Dublin at night in a car and it was decided to ambush this car at Hedgestown on the main Dublin-Belfast road on its return from Dublin. The column moved to Hedgestown under cover of darkness and occupied positions there. Men armed with revolvers and grenades were placed in the dyke on the roadside while others armed with shotguns

took up firing positions on the rising ground on the roadside. Men armed with rifles were positioned further back on the hill where they could fire effectively on to the road without endangering the men on the lower levels near the road. A wire rope was to be tied across the road to bring the car to a standstill. ~~Only~~ One end of this rope had been made fast when the car arrived, thus preventing the wire rope obstacle from being completed. The car had arrived earlier than was anticipated and earlier than usual. One of our men fired at the car and the driver immediately switched off the headlights and increased speed to, I would say, its maximum and literally flew through our position. When the car had proceeded some distance past where we were the lights were switched on again and it continued towards Balbriggan with all speed. Our men fired at the car as it sped away and we were afterwards told that it had been hit several times but that none of the occupants was injured. We kept a careful watch on the road for this car afterwards but the gentlemen apparently changed their habits and did not travel that way to Dublin again.

The Tans were in the habit of frequenting the publichouse in Stamullen and the Naul to procure drink and it was decided to shoot them up when they were on the premises. When all our plans were set and the Tans were on the premises and just as our men were entering the publichouse, one of them unfortunately pressed the trigger of an automatic pistol he was carrying, with the result that all the bullets entered the ground. The Tans made out through the back door and succeeded in escaping back to camp. The Tans never came back near the publichouse again.

The brigade also planned to attack the Black and Tans coming back off local leave at night. Large numbers of them went by train to Balbriggan and Dublin from the railway station at Gormanston. The station is a short distance from the camp and is connected to the main Dublin-Belfast road by a short by-road. This by-road would be crowded with Tans coming off the train and it was here that it was decided to shoot them up. A Lewis gun was procured from G.H.Q. and this was mounted or rested on the windscreen of a car. On the night selected for the ambush the car, which was waiting at the Delvin Bridge, proceeded to the road junction when the train had arrived at the station. Unfortunately there was either an armoured car or some other vehicle stationed at the road junction and our party decided to retreat, which they did, and nothing was accomplished.

On another occasion I went home to Lusk from Mooretown but did not stay at my own house. I went to a place near the village where a few men who were "on the run" were staying. I was outside the place on look-out duty and I spotted the lights of a car or lorry approaching the village. I immediately warned my comrades that the enemy were approaching. By now the vehicle had reached the village and apparently halted. I went carefully towards the village to find out what was happening and found that the enemy (Tans) were raiding a publichouse there and had now gone towards Balbriggan. I immediately called the men whom I had been with, about nine or ten, all armed with shotguns, and made with all haste to the main Belfast-Dublin road. We had just reached Ballough crossroads and were in the act of rounding up some horses to let out on the road to cause an obstruction when a tenderload of

Tans arrived. We hurriedly occupied positions and opened fire on them as they passed. They did not halt, just fired back at random as they sped away. We quickly learned that we had shot dead an R.I.C. man named Lynch who was acting as guide for the Tans that night. This man had formerly been stationed in Lusk and knew the country and people around there. This was a bit of luck to have got him. We arranged to defend Lusk against reprisals by the Tans and for four nights we occupied positions around the village but they never came back.

Some couple of months before the truce an order was received from G.H.Q. for the destruction of all coastguard stations along the coast between Howth and Drogheda. The column was divided into small groups for this operation, corresponding to the number of stations to be destroyed. The groups which numbered only two or three men each were augmented by local Volunteers. I was detailed for the Loughshinny station. Our whole party numbered about twenty men, mostly armed with shotguns. The column men carried rifles. We had no trouble in getting into the station, which only consisted of a few dwelling-houses and stores. We removed the guards and their families from the houses and their furniture was then sprinkled with paraffin, as was also the premises, and the whole lot set alight. There was no opposition encountered. The coastguards were not an armed force. Seamus Finn of Divisional Staff took charge of our party and the whole affair went off without incident. The timing of this operation was all important as all the coastguard stations were in view of each other and all had to go up at the same time. When we had finished the operation we commandeered a car to take us back to Mooretown, the local Volunteers dispersing to their own districts. I understand that the destruction of the

coastguard stations was to facilitate the landing of a consignment of Thompson sub-machine guns from America. Loughshinny was, I believe, the place selected. The guns never came, being seized by the American customs officials before they got away from the United States.

When Balbriggan was burned by the Tans consequent on the shooting of a couple of that force in a publichouse, there was a man named Hemstraw who was either a serving or an ex-British soldier, who led the Tans around and pointed out the houses of Volunteers and Sinn Féiners to them. We were very anxious to pick up this man and eventually did so. He was courtmartialled and shot.

On several days we lay in ambush for the Tans or military forces on different roads, but in this respect we had no luck as they never seemed to come the roads on which we were positioned. Although they were continually making surprise raids on our members' homes and when one did not want to meet them, it was a whole-time job trying to avoid them. I had a very narrow escape on one occasion at Roganstown a few miles west of Swords. I was proceeding back to Mooretown on a cycle and had on me some .45 ammunition and £20 in notes belonging to brigade funds. I had just rounded a bend on the road when I met a lorry of Tans. As the lorry passed me they shouted at me to halt and I dismounted from my bicycle. As the lorry came to a standstill I made a dash through a gateway into the field. They fired at me and gave chase, and realising that I could never get away from them that way and feeling almost exhausted I concealed myself in the mud and vegetation of the Broadmeadow River. They searched the area for me thoroughly and several times passed quite close to where I lay.

I could see their boots on the bank as I lay face downwards in the mud. When I got a chance I concealed the money and ammunition in a rathole in the bank. Eventually they tired of searching for me and got on their lorry and went off. I immediately got out of the area and back to Oldtown to the column. Later on James Grennigan and I returned to look for the money and after a lot of searching we found it and the ammunition where I had concealed it.

I joined the I.R.B. sometime in 1915 at Turvey near Swords. The O'Rahilly and Tom Ashe swore me in. Later a circle of this organisation was established in Lusk. I can't remember now who was centre of the circle. We had about twelve or perhaps fourteen members, the most of whom were Volunteers. I remember I used to call on a man named Dwyer who had an office on Arran Quay, Dublin, and collect from him for conveyance to the Lusk Circle small amounts of ammunition and a few revolvers. The circle lapsed for a long period after the Rebellion but was revived again in 1917 or 1918 and held regular meetings. Prior to the Rebellion in 1916 I served the purpose of developing a spirit of independence and determination to fight for it. After 1916 it did not seem to serve any particular purpose and developed purely into a talking shop. Mick Collins was very keen on it. Had the Volunteers failed in their task to procure our freedom it would have served to perpetuate the Fenian tradition.

There were no spies shot in the Fingal area, with the exception of Hemstraw already referred to. I do not think that the enemy had any agents of any value in the area and the information they worked on was what was supplied to them by the R.I.C. who were familiar with the area and the

people living in it. The Volunteers had exposed themselves during the anti-conscription period and during the general election of 1918 and also during the period they were doing police duties openly. The men who had taken part in the Rebellion were, of course, well-known to the R.I.C. The British Army authorities had developed a plan of sending some of their men wandering throughout the country under the guise of being deserters but really to pick up information. It was really very hard to establish whether such men were genuine deserters or spies. We caught one such deserter wandering in our area but could not establish to which category he belonged. We held him as a prisoner at our camp for some time and then put him on the boat for England. We never heard of him afterwards.

Another man who lived at Arcath and worked in the British recruiting offices in Dublin was also found wandering near our camp at Oldtown. He was arrested and detained also and very carefully interrogated, but pleaded innocence, stating that he was making his way home across country. Nothing could be proved against him and he was released. He must have been genuine because the British forces never seemed to have learned of our whereabouts.

We never attempted to make any munitions in the area other than filling shotgun cartridges with slugs. Hand grenades and such things were being made in secret factories in the city and we could always procure at least a few of such items as we required them. I do not know if any road mines were made in the area. On the whole the Fingal area was very unsuitable for guerilla warfare, being very flat and open and honeycombed by roads.

Sinn Féin and the Sinn Féin Courts were well organised in the area. The courts were well supported by the people and the British Petty Sessions Courts and suchlike were almost completely deserted. The advent of the Black and Tans almost completely stopped the activities of the Sinn Féin Courts. Crimes of all sorts then became the prerogative of the Black and Tans and, to a lesser extent, the British military forces also.

Signed: T. Pappard.

Date: _____

Witness:

Mattie Lacey
(Investigator)

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
BURO STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21
No. W.S. 1399