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ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

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No. **W.S.** 1432

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21

STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

DOCUMENT NO. **W.S.** 1432.. ..

Witness

Patrick H. O'Dwyer,
Mantle Hill,
Golden,
Co. Tipperary.

Identity.

Captain, C. Company, 3rd Battalion, 3rd Tipperary
Brigade.

Subject.

Activities of Hollyford Company, 3rd Battalion,
South Tipperary Brigade, 1915-1921.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil.

File No ... **S.** 2762.

Form B S M 2

ORIGINAL

STATEMENT BY PATRICK H. O'DWYER,

Mantle Hill. Golden. Cashel. Co. Tipperary.

I was born in the parish of Kilcommon near Hollyford, Co. Tipperary, in August, 1898. My father, who was a farmer, must have been connected with the Fenian organisation, for I understand that after the collapse of the Fenian Rising in Co. Tipperary in 1867, it was he, my father, who guided the Fenian leader, Charles Burke, to safety after the attack on the R.I.C. barracks at Roskeen.

I attended the national school in Hollyford until I was eleven or twelve years old, and then for a few years I continued my education at the Christian Brothers School in Thurles. It was during my years in Thurles C.B.S. that I first commenced to take an interest in national affairs. One of my teachers there, a Brother Wall, was a sterling Irishman who hated everything English. He infused into his pupils a national spirit, and through him we learned to appreciate the history, language and culture of our country. Having completed my education, I resided at home in Kilcommon and assisted my father on the farm.

In 1914 I joined the Irish National Volunteers in Hollyford and remained a member of that organisation for some months. My association with the Irish Volunteers commenced in September, 1915, when I attended an Irish Volunteer recruiting rally which was then held in Dundrum. Speakers at the rally included the late Pierce McCann of Dualla, Seamus O'Neill, then a professor in Rockwell College, and Eamon Ó Duibhir of Ballagh. I was enrolled into the Volunteers by Pierce McCann, who asked me how many men I could get to join in Hollyford. I replied,

"At least twenty, but I am sure that if you came to organise there you would get as many as one hundred". He passed some remark to the effect that they seemed to be organising in the wrong districts, but no arrangements were made for the organisers to visit Hollyford. I did get about twenty or more men from my district to enroll, and for some time we in Hollyford, for organisation purposes, were linked as a section of the Doon Company. No officers were elected, but I may say that I was recognised by the officers of the Doon Company as the representative or leader of the Hollyford section. We had no arms at the time. Some drilling and training was done, and our activities at the time consisted in the main of sticking up anti British recruiting posters and distributing leaflets of a national character, including copies of letters of the late Most Reverend Dr. O'Dwyer, then Bishop of Limerick. The leaflets were printed for me by Seán Fitzpatrick in the printing works of the "Tipperaryman", where he was then employed.

During Easter Week, 1916, the members of the Hollyford section, on instructions from Dan Allis, O/C of the Doon Company, stood to to await orders. I went to Doon to receive the orders. There I missed meeting Seán Treacy, who at that time I only knew by repute. I learned that he and Dan Allis had just left Doon, and that they, too, were expecting orders, which up to that time had not arrived. I arranged with Packy Ryan and Bill Duggan of Doon to have any orders for me forwarded on to my home address, and I then returned to Hollyford. No orders were received by me during that week, and to my knowledge there was no further activity by our section then.

During the reorganisation of the Volunteers in 1917 our numbers increased, and it was about that time, as far as I remember, that the Hollyford unit reached the status of an independent company, of which Nicholas Ryan was elected Captain and I was elected Lieutenant. Then our company and a company at Cappawhite were affiliated direct to G.H.Q. by Ned Ryan of Cappawhite, popularly known as Ned the Smith. The fact that we were affiliated to G.H.Q. entitled us to representation at the Volunteer convention in 1917. For economy reasons, however, the Cappawhite delegate represented both companies at the convention. At that time the battalion and brigade organisation did not exist and orders or communications for the company were received direct from G.H.Q. and, later, from G.H.Q. via Seán Treacy.

After his election as a T.D. for East Clare, Eamon de Valera visited Tipperary Town and addressed a big Sinn Féin meeting there. This was made the occasion for the first public demonstration in South Tipperary of the Irish Volunteers in strength. Our company marched in military formation from Hollyford, headed by the local fife and drum band. Great enthusiasm prevailed in Tipperary as Volunteer units marched into the town. The Volunteers took over all stewarding and police work for the day, and Seán Treacy acted as personal bodyguard to de Valera. Although they were strongly reinforced for the occasion, the R.I.C. made no attempt to interfere and the day's proceedings were conducted in an orderly and dignified manner.

It was about this time, too, in the autumn of 1917, that I was sworn into the I.R.B. by Seamus Malone, then an Irish teacher in the district.

Towards the end of 1917 Seán Treacy was arrested and served a term of imprisonment in Dundalk prison. During his imprisonment and while he was on hunger-strike, an I.R.B. meeting was held in Tipperary Town on a Saturday night, at which it was agreed to kidnap the sergeant of the R.I.C. who had arrested Treacy. This sergeant, whose name I cannot now recall, was then stationed at Limerick Junction, and himself and a constable were in the habit of walking each Sunday night to a publichouse at Boherkarine. It was at this publichouse that it was proposed to capture him. The decision to capture the sergeant must have been a foregone conclusion before the I.R.B. meeting was held. I was not present at the meeting, for on the Saturday Dan Breen visited me and asked me to arrange a suitable place for the detention of the prisoner and to provide means of transporting him from Boherkarine to the place of detention. I was to report back to him again on the following (Sunday) morning at Donohill.

With the assistance of James Murphy of Curreeny (generally referred to as the Station-master, although there was no railway within miles of his residence), I decided on what I considered to be a suitable place in which to hold the prisoner. I reported this to Dan Breen when I met him on the Sunday morning, and told him that I intended to use my father's horse and trap to convey the sergeant from Boherkarine. My arrangements were considered satisfactory, and on the Sunday evening, with Patrick Costelloe of the Hollyford Company, I drove in the trap to Boherkarine where Breen and some I.R.B. men from Tipperary Town were waiting. The sergeant, however, failed to arrive for his customary drink, and after waiting for some hours we were forced to return disappointed to our homes.

Again early in 1918, I remember being present at a meeting of company officers at which the 3rd Battalion of the South Tipperary Brigade was formed. Five companies, those of Knockavilla, Annacarty, Hollyford, Rossmore and Clonoulty, comprised the battalion. Tadhg O'Dwyer was elected Battalion Commandant; Michael Sheehan, Vice Commandant; Philip Fitzgerald, Battalion Adjutant; and John C. Ryan, Battalion Quartermaster. There was an idea to include the Cashel Company also in this battalion, but Seamus O'Neill and the late Paddy Hogan, who were present, told the meeting to leave the Cashel Company out of it, as it was their intention to form a further battalion based on Cashel.

Here I would like to place on record that, prior to the official forming of the 3rd or South Tipperary Brigade in October, 1918, there was a certain amount of cohesion in some undefined way between the battalions which were organised prior to that date. The term South Tipperary Brigade or Tipperary Brigade was then frequently used, especially during the period of the conscription crisis, and my recollection is that Dan Breen, with Seán Treacy as his principal lieutenant, was recognised as O/C or principal Commandant. I certainly clearly recollect carrying dispatches for him (Breen) to areas which were afterwards included in the 1st (North) and 2nd (Mid) Tipperary Brigade areas, for it was in this way I first made the acquaintance of such men as Frank McGrath of Nenagh. Treacy was then the dynamic force and brain behind the Volunteer movement in Co. Tipperary, and I spent a lot of time in his company on organising work.

One evening in August, 1918, on instructions from Seán Treacy I cycled to Tipperary Town to take part in a proposed raid on the Courthouse there. Rifles, the property of the National Volunteers, were stored in the Courthouse, and our objective was to break in and seize them. The iron gates leading in to the Courthouse were locked, and about midnight or 1 a.m. Seán Treacy, Sparkie Breen, Connie Power, myself and ten or twelve others were in a position near the Courthouse awaiting the arrival of Dan Breen, who was to bring along a jemmy to force the locks, when James Maloney (later Adjutant of the 4th Battalion) came along with word from Breen that we were to disperse at once. As Breen cycled into the town, he was set upon by a number of R.I.C. men who were guarding some shops and business houses where a strike was in progress. He had the jemmy in his hand, which he used to good effect on the R.I.C. men. Then, drawing his revolver, he kept the policemen at bay while he backed away from them. He succeeded in contacting Maloney, who was at a cell, and instructed him to get word to us to disperse, as in view of his encounter with the R.I.C. the proposed raid on the Courthouse would have to be called off.

During the conscription crisis period the strength of the Hollyford Company increased to about at least one hundred men, and it remained at that strength until after the truce in 1921. I might say that all young men in the Hollyford district were members. Shotguns, which at that time were the principal armament of the Volunteers, were collected from the owners - local farmers and sportsmen. In Hollyford there was no need to raid for and seize the arms by force. The owners co-operated with the Volunteers and willingly handed over the guns to us when we called to collect them.

Towards the end of the year 1918, probably at the time of the general election, Seán Treacy visited the Hollyford Company, and it was on the occasion of this visit that he appointed me to take charge of the company. Nicholas Ryan, the previous Company Captain, retired to the ranks. Treacy also appointed Jim Gorman, who later took a notable part in attacks on R.I.C. barracks, as 1st Lieut., and a namesake of mine, another Paddy O'Dwyer, as 2nd Lieut. All three of us held those ranks until 1922.

Now before going on to deal with the ambush at Soloheadbeg on 21st January, 1919, and my association with it, there are just a few points which I would like to mention. During the year 1918, or at least that part of it after Seán Treacy's release from Dundalk prison, Treacy and Dan Breen were continuously "on the run" and they were full-time engaged on Volunteer work. With Seán Hogan, they established, what I might call, their headquarters in a County Council cottage in which people named O'Dwyer resided at Greenane. I often visited them at O'Dwyer's cottage, and amongst other things I witnessed some of their experiments with explosives. An accidental explosion lifted the roof off O'Dwyer's cottage one day, and to avoid any publicity or embarrassing questions the cottage was repaired by some local trusted Volunteers. After this incident, Treacy, Breen and Hogan moved to a nearby vacant house on the farm of people named Hogan of Ardivalane, from where they continued their Volunteer work.

It was to this vacant house on Hogan's farm that, as a result of a message from Dan Breen, I reported one day about the middle of January, 1919. Breen, Treacy and Seán Hogan were there and they told me what they had in view.

Briefly it was as follows. A consignment of gelignite was due to arrive any day at Soloheadbeg quarry for the County Council from the military barracks in Tipperary Town, and they proposed to hold up the escort and seize the gelignite before it reached the quarry. The usual procedure in the case of such consignments of gelignite was for the County Council foreman to call to the military barracks in Tipperary with a hired driver and horse and cart to collect the gelignite, and it was then escorted to the quarry by a party of armed R.I.C. men who travelled on foot and who might number anything from two to six men. There were two roads, the Donohill road or the Boherkine road, by which the gelignite could be brought to Soloheadbeg, and my task for the next few days was to cycle to Tipperary each morning, watch out for the gelignite and its escort to leave the military barracks, and then to report back to the others, who awaited my return in a disused quarry at Soloheadbeg.

For five or six days I cycled to Tipperary each morning and returned each evening with nothing to report. At night-time we went to the vacant house on Hogan's farm to sleep. During those days some other Volunteer officers, including Seumas Robinson, Michael Ryan, Brian Shanahan, Paddy Deere, Arthur Barlow, ^{Samuel}~~Arthur~~ O'Keefe, Ned O'Reilly, Patrick McCormack, Laurence Power, ^{Hanna Crowe} and Tadhg Crowe, reported to assist in the operation, but for business reasons some of those were unable to remain for longer than a day or two at a time. A week-end intervened, and on the Saturday evening I cycled home to Hollyford for a change of clothing and cycled back to Solohead on the Sunday night.

My long watch in Tipperary Town ended shortly after midday on January 21st 1919, when I saw a horse and cart driven by a man named James Godfrey, accompanied by a County Council ganger named Patrick Flynn and escorted by two R.I.C. men, leave the military barracks. Seeing that they took the Boherkine road, I cycled via the Donohill road back to Soloheadbeg, where I reported to Seán Treacy in the disused quarry. On that day there were six others with Treacy awaiting my return. They were Seumas Robinson, Dan Breen, Seán Hogan, Michael Ryan, Patrick McCormack and Tadhg Crowe. We then went into the pre-arranged position, which was along a bank or ditch about five feet high overlooking the by-road which leads from the Tipperary-Dundrum road to the village of Solohead. A screen of whitethorn bushes and briars provided reasonable cover from the view of anyone passing along the by-road. This position, which was about 250 yards from the entrance to the quarry, was on the right-hand side of the road as one approaches Solohead village from the Tipperary-Dundrum road. Seumas Robinson and I were together on the extreme left-hand side of the position, about 25 or 30 yards from what I will call the main party of six, and the arrangements were that Robinson and I were to get out on to the road when we heard the others call on the men with the cart and the escort to halt and put up their hands, the idea being that if they did not halt, Robinson and I would be in a position to stop the horse and cart. At least seven of the eight of us were armed with revolvers, the exception being Seán Treacy. He, too, may have had a revolver, but at that time he was very fond of a small automatic rifle which he possessed, and I am almost certain that he had it with him on that day.

I should say that it was approximately 12.30 p.m. when the cart with its escort arrived, and I fix the time by the fact that as I cycled back from Tipperary I saw some County Council workmen going into a forge, obviously to prepare their lunch or dinner, for which they normally knocked off at 12 o'clock noon. Hearing Dan Breen and Seán Treacy shout, "Halt, put up your hands", Robinson and I immediately started to get out on to the road, and almost simultaneously either one or two shots rang out. I distinctly remember seeing one of the R.I.C. men bringing his carbine to the aiming position and working the bolt, and the impression I got was that he was aiming at either Robinson or myself. Then a volley rang out and that constable fell dead at the roadside. I am not certain whether it was that volley or the previous shot, or shots, which killed his companion. After the long wait, the whole thing happened very suddenly, in less, perhaps, than half a minute, and in much less time than it takes to relate. It was, as far as I am aware, definitely the intention to hold up the escort, disarm them and seize the gelignite without bloodshed if possible. The two R.I.C. men killed in this encounter were: Constables O'Connell and McDonnell, both then stationed in Tipperary Town.

The driver of the cart and the County Council ganger were, naturally, very frightened. Dan Breen spoke to them and assured them that nothing was going to happen to them. One of these men, Godfrey, knew both Breen and Treacy well, and I imagine that Flynn must have known them too. On Breen's instructions, Tadhg Crowe and I collected the two carbines belonging to the dead constables. Breen, Treacy and Hogan then drove away the horse and cart with

the gelignite. Michael Ryan and Paddy McCormack remained on the road with Seumas Robinson guarding Godfrey and Flynn until such time as the gelignite was a safe distance away. Tadhg Crowe and I took the two carbines with us and hid them at a spot on the railway line about half a mile from the scene of the ambush and where it was convenient for Tadhg to collect them later. We then parted and I went home to Hollyford on foot.

My bicycle was subsequently found by the R.I.C. at Mrs. Breen's (Dan's mother) house in Donohill. I have no idea how it got there, but they (the R.I.C.) failed to identify it as being my property.

Whilst I was purchasing a newspaper in a shop in Hollyford on the following day (January 22nd), two R.I.C. men came to the door and stood there. One of them appeared to be taking a keen interest in me and was looking me up and down. Opening the newspaper, I read aloud, with assumed amazement, the story which it carried of the shooting of the two constables at Soloheadbeg on the previous day. The policemen remained at the door listening, and as I wanted to give them the impression that I was in no way perturbed by their presence, I then read out the leading article, which, in no uncertain terms, condemned the shooting. Any suspicions which the R.I.C. men may have entertained of my connection with the affair were apparently allayed, for when a friend called me I left the shop without being in any way molested by them.

A few days later, Seumas Robinson, accompanied by Con O'Keefe, Glenough, came to my place. Seumas was anxious to get in touch with Treacy, Breen and Hogan, but as I had no idea of their whereabouts I was of no

assistance to him and he returned to Glenough. A week later Treacy sent me word to meet him at John Kinnane's of Finnahy near Upperchurch. Breen, Hogan and Robinson were with him when I met him there. Seán was anxious lest the R.I.C. had any suspicion of my part in the ambush and he pressed me to go away with him. I assured him that I was perfectly satisfied that the police in Hollyford did not suspect me, and I decided to remain at home. They remained in the area for a few days and I met them again on a few occasions before they moved off.

Well, the routine and training work of the company continued. I got some short arms and ammunition from Eamon Ó Duibhir at Kilshenane, who was acting Brigade Quartermaster. In addition, we had in Hollyford one solitary rifle which Seán Treacy gave me at the time he had the H.Q. in the vacant house on Hogan's farm. Tadhg O'Dwyer, the Battalion Commandant, had also got some revolvers, and between us we were able to arm a party of eight or nine men, including Paddy Costelloe and Jim O'Gorman, whom we took into Doon one night with the intention of disarming an R.I.C. patrol. I fear the police in Doon must have got information of our presence in the town, for none of them appeared out of the barracks that night.

Again at that time (early in 1919) I prepared for Seán Treacy plans of the lay-out of Hollyford R.I.C. Barracks together with particulars of the strength and movements of the garrison. At that early stage he was contemplating an attack on it, for his ambition was to get the fight started as early as possible.

It must have been, too, about this time that G.H.Q. made the arrangements to send Robinson, Treacy, Breen and Hogan to America. Martial law had been proclaimed in South Tipperary after the ambush at Soloheadbeg, and parties of military and police were still scouring the countryside, not only searching for the gelignite, but for the four men in particular, when I received a message to call at Packy Ryan's hotel in Doon. There I received a further message to call to Dan Allis's home. Dan invited me to dinner and then told me that I was to await the return of Packy Ryan from Limerick, where he was attending a meeting of the County Council, and that he was expected back about 4.30 p.m. On his arrival, Ryan asked me did I know where the four boys were, meaning, of course, Robinson, Breen, Hogan and Treacy. I said I had parted with them at 3 o'clock that morning, "but God knows where they are now". My recollection of the conversation that followed is that Packy Ryan said, "they must be found and you are the man to find them. Arrangements are being made to take them by car to Tyler Mackey's house in Castleconnel". He added that it was an order from G.H.Q., and then went on to say that they must be there by the following Monday, and that Tyler Mackey would take them down the Shannon in a boat to where, after a pre-arranged signal, they would be taken aboard a ship which would take them to the United States.

At Maher's of Annfield I learned that Paddy Kinnane of Upperchurch had taken Treacy and the other three to Donnelly's of Nodstown. At my request, Kinnane returned to Nodstown with a message from me that I wished to see them urgently. On the Sunday night they came with Kinnane to Upperchurch, where I was waiting to meet them. I told the

four of them together about the arrangements to get them away, and mentioned that it was a G.H.Q. order which had arrived via Limerick to Paddy Ryan. I am positive that that was the first intimation that they got of it. They took it coolly, and Seán Treacy remarked, "Paddy, I thought you would be the last man in Ireland to deport me".

I handed them over to James Murphy of Greany, William Hanley and Paddy Doherty, both of Riska, and Yank McCarthy of Doon, who guided them in stages to Limerick, from whence they went to Dublin. Later Dan Breen told me that Michael Collins and Cathal Brugha were the only two members of the G.H.Q. staff who supported them in their decision to remain in Ireland.

Another item of interest during that year of 1919 is that Maurice Crowe, the Brigade Adjutant, asked me would I be prepared to go to London to take part in an attack on Lord French there. He was not prepared to give me any details, nor would he disclose to me at that stage the names of any other men who were being invited to travel. I agreed to go, and asked him if Jim O'Gorman (1st Lieut. of my company) could come with me. He was reluctant to ask O'Gorman, but when I pointed out that in my opinion Jim was one of our best men, that he was a crack shot and that he had the advantage of knowing London well, he agreed, and O'Gorman was then brought into the secret. He was only too willing to go, but, as far as I am aware, there were no further developments, for we heard nothing further about the matter. This conversation with Maurice Crowe took place some months before the attack on Lord French at Ashtown.

On a Sunday morning towards the end of 1919, two Volunteers called on me and told me that there were three men at Scanlon's of Riska and that one of them wanted to see me urgently. At Scanlon's I found that the three men were Seumas Robinson, Seán Treacy and Seán Hogan. They had come from Dublin a few nights previously to attend a brigade convention, and when they alighted from the train at Goolds Cross they were fired on by a party of R.I.C. men who were at the station. Treacy told me that, in view of the incident at Goolds Cross, the R.I.C. knew that they were down from Dublin, and he was anxious that they should get back to Dublin again as quickly as possible. He asked me to try and get a motor car to take them back. Cars were scarce and hard to get at the time, and it was arranged that I would go to Tipperary Town and Paddy Keogh would go to Doon to try and get one. If Keogh was successful in Doon, he was to send a code message by telegram to me to c/o Benn's, Tipperary. If I was successful in Tipperary, I was to ignore the telegram and take the car back to Scanlon's direct. My mission to Tipperary was unsuccessful, and Denis Lacey got me a horse and side-car to go to Doon. From Tipperary I brought with me a man named James Linnane, to whom a special word of praise is due for his action that night and for what was to follow. He was a mechanic employed in Benn's garage and I required him to drive the car if and when we succeeded in commandeering one. He had been up all night for the two nights previous and was in the act of undressing to go to bed when I called for him at his digs. Seeing me, he said that if it was only a raid for arms I wanted him to go on, to put it off for a night or two. I told him that Seán Treacy's life might depend on his

coming with me, so, remarking that he would willingly give his own life to save Seán, he dressed again and we started for Doon.

At Packy Ryan's in Doon I learned that a car could be commandeered at "The Glebe", the residence of O'Kelly-Lynch manager of the local branch of the Munster and Leinster Bank. Yank Carty, Bill Duggan, Dan Allis and some others, including a boy named O'Dea who worked for O'Kelly-Lynch, came with me to get the car. The latter was not a Volunteer, but we required him to handle a troublesome bulldog which was at "The Glebe".

As we took out the car, a mixed party of R.I.C. and military in three lorries passed, going towards Cappamore. We took the road for Croughmarkey, and as we came to Cumbergar I could see a blaze of light coming from the R.I.C. barracks in Kilcommon. It was then near midnight and it was evident that there was more than usual activity at the barracks. I asked Linnane to turn off the headlights on our car, but he considered otherwise. I next saw the lights of lorries moving along the Loughbrack road, which ran at an angle of 45 degrees to the direction in which we were going, and I judged that we would reach the road junction about the same time as the lorries. I then asked Linnane to pull up and allow the lorries to pass, but again he considered it better to keep going as if there was no secrecy about our mission. I asked him if he could use a gun - I had two - but he said: "I prefer to look after the car and you deal with the police if any attempt is made to halt us". As the lorries passed the junction, we could distinguish the R.I.C. men from the soldiers in the first and second lorries by the headlights

of the third. Then, for at least a mile and a half, we travelled, I might say, as part of the convoy with our lights playing on the rear of the third lorry. We parted with the convoy at Cunneen Cross. They turned south east towards Thurles and we turned north west towards Nenagh.

Robinson, Treacy and Hogan, having learned of this enemy activity, had left Scanlon's when we got there. They were gone to Jeremiah Burke's of Templeberry. With the aid of William Hanley/^{of Riska,} Paddy Murphy of Curreeny and Danny Ryan (Barrack) of Curreeny, I located them at Burke's a few hours later.

In Templeberry we got some petrol from the Creamery Manager, sufficient to bring us (Robinson, Treacy, Hogan, Paddy Murphy, Linnane and myself) to Borrisoleigh. There we had to knock up in the early hours of the morning the owner of a car, who lived next door to the R.I.C. barracks to get some more petrol. Murphy and I parted from them at Summerhill, where, with Linnane still driving, they took the Templemore road to go to Dublin via Rathdowney. Before parting, Seán Treacy pressed me strongly to go to Dublin with them, but I refused as I considered I was better off at home. Linnane drove them to somewhere near Naas or Newbridge, where they abandoned the car. He (Linnane) returned by train and was arrested by the R.I.C. on his way back at Limerick Junction. He was sentenced to twelve months hard labour, which he served in Waterford Prison. During his imprisonment he was often offered his freedom and a large sum of money to divulge the names of the men he drove on that trip, but to his eternal credit he steadfastly refused.

I returned on foot to Kilcommon, reported to Packy Ryan, who was waiting for me there, and then went to a dance in Hollyford.

Early in 1920 the attacks on R.I.C. barracks commenced. On the 18th January of that year Jim O'Gorman, John Fitzpatrick, Patrick Ryan and myself (all from the Hollyford Company) assisted the Upperchurch Company in an attack on Drumbane Barracks. This was in the Mid Tipperary Brigade area - the Upperchurch Company being a unit of that brigade - and either Paddy Kinnane or Jim Stapleton, both of Upperchurch, was in charge. The Mid Tipperary Brigade were also staging an attack that same night on Holycross R.I.C. Barracks and, as a result, we had not sufficient suitable arms to launch an all out attack at Drumbane. We had very few rifles, and the main portion of our party were armed with shotguns and had only a limited supply of ammunition. The R.I.C. garrison refused to surrender when called on to do so. They replied to our fire with rifle fire and sent up Verey lights for assistance. I am unable to say whether the R.I.C. suffered any casualties inside the barracks or not. We had none, although we were under fire for at least two hours before the attack was called off.

On the night of March 7th 1920, a joint party of the 3rd Battalion of the 3rd Tipperary Brigade and of the neighbouring battalion of East Limerick Brigade attacked Doon R.I.C. Barracks. As Doon was situated in the area of the East Limerick Battalion, "Yank" McCarthy, Commandant of that battalion, took charge of the operation. With me from the Hollyford Company for that attack were James O'Gorman, Patrick Costello, Patrick Ryan, John Fitzpatrick and some others. Others present from the 3rd

(Tipperary) Battalion included the Battalion Commandant, Tadhg O'Dwyer; the Battalion Vice Commandant, Ned O'Reilly; the Adjutant, Phil Fitzgerald; and the Quartermaster, John C. Ryan. The idea on this occasion was to blow a breach in the gable wall of the barracks and to rush a party of men through the breach and into the barracks. The men setting the charges of gelignite at the gable wall had, of course, to be covered by a steady rifle fire from men in position around the barracks. My position was at the front of the barracks and I was armed with a Service rifle.

It was snowing heavily that night. Tadhg O'Dwyer, Ned O'Reilly and Jim O'Gorman placed the charges of gelignite between planks and the gable wall and stanchioned the planks in position with props. This act had been rehearsed shortly before and the rehearsal worked successfully, for the gelignite, when fired by lengths of fuse, breached a gap in an old castle wall. On the night of the attack, however, the charges failed to explode, and it is my view that the reason for this was that the fuses got damp in the snow and failed to ignite the gelignite. The failure to breach the wall of the barracks was a big disappointment to us, for the plans to capture the building and its occupants lay mainly on its success. The exchange of fire with the garrison continued for some time, but eventually the attack was called off.

A few nights after the attack on Doon Barracks, my house was surrounded by a mixed party of R.I.C. and military and I was taken prisoner. I was "on the run" at the time but, unfortunately, on that particular night I chanced to go home. The sergeant of the R.I.C. from Hollyford was with the raiding party and he identified me.

The raiders found, behind a picture, a copy of the scheme of organisation of the 3rd Tipperary Brigade, which I had hidden there some time previously and which, unfortunately, I had forgotten to remove when I went "on the run".

I was placed under arrest and taken to Tipperary Military Barracks, where I was interrogated in, I must say, a kindly and gentlemanly way by a military officer. I was, however, to receive some rough treatment at the hands of the R.I.C., who questioned me about my knowledge of Seán Treacy and Dan Breen. One of them drew a gun and threatened to shoot me, but the military guard interfered and, with fixed bayonets, forced him to leave the guard-room.

After a few days in Tipperary Military Barracks, I was removed to Cork Prison, where I went on hunger-strike and thus secured my release. As a matter of fact, I think that was the last occasion during the War of Independence in which Irish political prisoners secured their release by the hunger-strike weapon. During my absence in prison, Hollyford R.I.C. Barracks had been attacked and destroyed by fire, and the R.I.C. garrison had been withdrawn to other stations.

After my return from prison, Jim O'Gorman, Paddy Costello and myself were invited by some of the Doon Volunteer officers to go to Kilmallock to assist the East Limerick Brigade in an attack on Kilmallock R.I.C. Barracks. My mother was very seriously ill at the time and I was unable to go, but my two companions, O'Gorman and Costello, went.

On June 4th, 1920, I went with the Hollyford Company to assist in an attack on Cappawhite R.I.C. Barracks. As I was still very weak and suffering from the effects of

the hunger-strike, I was unable to take an active part in the attack. There were twenty-three members of my company engaged in that attack, which had to be abandoned when reinforcements of British military from Tipperary Town arrived for the R.I.C.

The next engagement in which I was concerned took place in Tipperary No. 1 Brigade area. It was the attack on Rearcross R.I.C. Barracks on Sunday night, July 12th 1920. The plans for this attack were prepared by Paddy Lacken, the local Battalion Commandant, but sanction for the operation was withheld by his brigade officers. Lacken then came to Hollyford and contacted Jim O'Gorman and myself. He was very keen to go ahead with his plans, and I promised him every assistance. I got in touch with Seán Treacy, Dan Breen, Seumas Robinson and Tadhg O'Dwyer, and all were in favour of carrying out the attack. A selected party of about forty men, drawn from the Knockavilla Annacarty, Rossmore and Hollyford Companies, were mobilised to go to Rearcross, and other men from these units were detailed for road-blocking and outpost duties. All members of the Hollyford Company were engaged in one capacity or another during the operation.

We marched from Hollyford to Rearcross. Ernie O'Malley was in Rearcross on our arrival at the assembly point, and I would say that he was the officer recognised as being in charge. At least, it was he who directed me to take charge of a small party of four men to cover the front of the barracks from a position behind the wall of the chapel yard. All five of us were armed with rifles. My party included three men from my own company and a local man, Dan O'Dwyer of Rearcross. Access to the roof

of the barracks was gained through Flannery's shop, which was situated next door, and the appearance of O'Malley, Jim O'Gorman and John Fitzpatrick on the roof was the signal for the attack to begin. It was then about 11 p.m. Our instructions were to fire only an occasional shot at the door and windows of the barracks, and one of my difficulties that night was to see that this order was carried out, for the four boys were inclined to blaze away for all they were worth. Only a few shots had been fired when the sergeant and two constables made their appearance at the door. The sergeant advanced outside the door. He had a rifle in his hand, and as he looked in our direction one of my men took aim and fired at him. We saw him throw up his hands and collapse. He was then dragged inside the door by some of his colleagues.

Before the sergeant made his appearance at the door, O'Malley, O'Gorman and Fitzpatrick had succeeded in breaking holes in the roof and had set it alight. The R.I.C. had been called on to surrender, but they refused to do so. Two men from my company, Jack Ryan and Paddy Ryan, who were engaged in Flannery's house pumping petrol on the roof of the barracks and carrying explosives to men on the roof, received rather nasty burns.

By morning the barrack itself was ablaze, and about 9 a.m., when the attack was called off, the police had taken shelter in an annexe at the rear, where they were being hard pressed by some of our men from rooftops. I believe the R.I.C. could not have held out much longer and would have had to surrender, had not the signal to withdraw been given at that time. The decision to call off the attack may have been given as the result of the

incorrect reading of a distance signal. Again I heard it explained that a scout mistook at a distance a funeral party for a party of British reinforcements, and signalled his message accordingly.

About August, 1920, a Battalion Active Service Unit, of which I was a member, was formed. Ned O'Reilly, the Battalion Vice Commandant, took charge of this unit. We occupied ambush positions in various places, but without result, as the expected British forces did not show up.

Towards the end of September, information was received through the Brigade Intelligence Officer, Tom Carew, that military and police would raid the house of James Carew, father of the Brigade I/O, at Goldengarden on the following morning. The Battalion Commandant decided to attack the raiders on their way back from Goldengarden to Dundrum. As the enemy had a choice of returning to Dundrum by either of two roads or along the railway line, we occupied a fairly central position between all three routes. The railway line was, however, considered the most unlikely route for their return, and when our scouts reported that they had gone that way we had to scramble through fields and fences for a distance of 300 or 400 yards to reach the railway embankment. There was no time to get into proper position, for the police and military were passing along in extended order. We opened fire on them from the embankment and an officer and two or three private soldiers were wounded. We suffered no casualties.

The Brigade No. 1 Flying Column, under the command of Dinny Lacey, was formed some weeks before Seán Treacy was killed in Dublin. On the day after Seán's funeral,

Ned O'Reilly discussed with me the question of getting the A.S.U. and the column to join forces, as he was very keen on carrying out, as early as possible, some worthwhile operation against the enemy forces as a reprisal for Seán's death. I brought Seumas Robinson, the Brigade O/C, to meet Ned to discuss this point, and, as a result, on the eve of the ambush, which took place at Thomastown, Co. Tipperary, towards the end of October, 1920, seven members of the A.S.U., viz. Jack Ryan (Master), James Ryan (Dalton), Daniel O'Keefe, Rody Hanley, Patrick English, James O'Gorman and myself reported at Con O'Sullivan's house at Grantstown, where we linked up with Lacey's column. Next day we moved to the ambush position at Thomastown on the road between Golden and Tipperary Town. The ambush was intended for a party of British troops which passed that way regularly by lorry. Before we had taken up our final positions, an unexpected lorry, carrying troops to the rifle range in Tipperary, arrived. A cart was pushed out on to the road at the head of the ambush position by some of our men. The driver of the army lorry must have had an early view of the cart being pushed across the road, for he suddenly braked and stopped the lorry in a position which left us at a disadvantage. The troops were to our right and we had to fire from the left shoulder. Michael Fitzpatrick of Tipperary Town, who was a member of the column, received a nasty leg wound. He was our only casualty that day. During the engagement it was discovered that two of our A.S.U. men, Dan O'Keefe and Pat English, were cut off from the main body and were under heavy fire from the troops in the lorry.

Four of us then went on to the road to inflade the troops position. Before doing so, we suggested that the main body be divided into two sections and that one section be sent across the road to a position in a quarry on the opposite side and thus bring the troops under fire from three points. I believe, had this suggestion been acted upon the troops would have been forced to surrender, but instead the whole main body crossed the road to the quarry, from where they renewed the engagement with the troops.

We remained on the road, and from the prone position kept up a rapid fire on the lorry until the order for the final withdrawal was given. O'Keefe and English succeeded in withdrawing in a different direction and later rejoined the main body. Jim O'Gorman, who had war experience with the Australian Forces in France during the 1914-18 Great War, considered that it was a miracle that some of the four of us were not hit by the intense fire with which the British troops sprayed the road. He went so far as to examine each of us individually, lest we had been hit without realising it. I am unable to say what casualties were suffered by the British on that occasion.

After Thomastown, we (the A.S.U.) returned to our own battalion area, where we resumed our activities. The A.S.U. did have some engagements with parties of British forces, but I cannot now recall having been present at any of them. The position from then until the truce was that the British held only two posts in the battalion area. These were at Dundrum and Annacarty. Both were strongly garrisoned and fortified, and patrols rarely, if ever, moved out from these barracks.

British forces travelling through the area moved in large convoys, accompanied by armoured cars, and it was not unusual to see an army aeroplane scout from overhead before the convoy moved along.

We frequently sniped the posts at Dundrum and Annacarty to keep the garrisons' nerves on edge, and small affairs such as raids for arms, raids on mails and disruption of lines of communication, such as telephone and telegraph wires, were almost of daily occurrence.

The final incident to which I will refer occurred some short time before the truce. I was present one evening at the headquarters of the 2nd Southern Division, which had been set up near Donohill, with Dan Breen, Seumas Robinson, Ned O'Reilly, Jas. O'Gorman and some others, when a scout reported to Breen that a party of British troops, about fifty strong, were on the road near the Cross of Donohill. Breen took O'Gorman and myself with him and we went towards the Cross. Near the chapel of Donohill we met another scout, who told us that the military - a cyclist party - were holding up people on the Tipperary road which was about two fields away. As we approached the road, Breen told O'Gorman to take cover and to fire at anything he saw with a uniform on it. I got a presentiment that Breen intended to attack the troops single-handed on the road, and to be killed, if he was to be killed, in his native place of Donohill and within sight of his home. He warned me to keep back, but I followed him to the road. The troops had, fortunately, disappeared as suddenly as they appeared. Taking O'Gorman with us, we went to the Cross, where we were welcomed by Jack O'Dwyer, the local publican. He invited us into the shop,

where he produced a bottle of whiskey. Breen told him to take the whiskey away and to give us three bottles of lemonade. Toasting the publican, with the lemonade to his lips, Breen remarked: "Macready's troops held the Cross of Donohill an hour ago, but Michael Collins's troops hold it now."

Signed:

Patrick J. Dwyer

Date:

13th June 1956

Witness:

K. Grace
(Investigator)

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