

W.S. 1448

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21  
BURO STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21  
No. W.S. 1448

# ORIGINAL

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 1448.

**Witness**

Patrick Breslin,  
Courthouse,  
Longford.

And Ardara,  
Co. Donegal.  
Identity.

Adjutant, No. 1 Donegal Brigade.

Chairman, Dungloe Sinn Féin Club.

**Subject.**

Sinn Féin and Irish Volunteer activities,  
West Donegal, 1914-1921.

**Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.**

Nil.

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ORIGINAL

STATEMENT BY PATRICK BRESLIN,

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

BURO STAIRE MILEATA 1913-21

No. W.S. 1448

Courthouse, Longford, and Ardara, Co. Donegal.

I was born at Killastever, Ardara, Co. Donegal, on the 8th February, 1893, and received my early education at Brackey National School near Ardara.

Having served my time to the grocery and hardware business in Ardara, I started work in Dungloe, Co. Donegal, in November, 1911, as an assistant in the stores of Messrs. John Sweeney & Son, Ltd., general merchants.

Having learned at an early age that Ireland was ruled by Britain by force and against the will of the Irish people, I was determined that on reaching manhood I would avail of any and every opportunity, within the limits of reason, to fight and strive and give my life, if needs be, to attain freedom from British rule. I read a good deal about the efforts made by valiant men in previous generations to right our country's wrongs. I very much admired the Fenians and their methods to achieve freedom.

On the formation of the Irish Volunteers in 1913 I felt that perhaps the long awaited time and opportunity was approaching to strike another blow and, with God's help, the final one. When on the 1st February, 1914, Padraig Pearse, who was later to become President of the Provisional Government and Commander in Chief of the Army of the Republic, came to Dungloe to organise a company of the Irish Volunteers, I freely offered my services and was quite proud to be accepted as a member. At that meeting James Boyle, Solicitor, presided. Others on the platform that day were: John Sweeney (father of Joe Sweeney), John E. Boyle and Murray Sweeney of Dungloe. This was the first and last occasion that I saw Pearse.

The company being organised, we commenced training on two evenings each week and every Sunday afternoon. At the commencement of our training we had an ex N.C.O. of the British Army as drill instructor, but on the outbreak of the European War, 1914-18, he again joined the British Army and we were left to our own resources. However, by this time, September, 1914, some of our members were capable of giving instruction in drill movements and we continued training until around the end of 1914.

Around July, 1914, the late John Redmond introduced a Volunteer organisation, known as the National Volunteers, through Ireland. In many parts of the country where there was no Irish Volunteer organisation a large number of young men joined Redmond's Volunteers, until at a later date when Redmond advised these men to join the British Army they realised they were in an organisation which had no national outlook and so drifted away. This organisation of Redmond's had a bad effect in Donegal, as many of the companies took their stand on his side and thereby caused a split in our ranks. A few members of the Dungloe Company, although not agreeing with Redmond, remained members until the company ceased to exist as an organised unit.

At this time Joe Sweeney (now Major General) was a student in St. Enda's College, Rathfarnham, in 1916. His two brothers, Danny and Barry, were also there at that time. When the college closed for the Easter vacation in 1916, Joe remained in Dublin and took his place with X Pearse in the General Post Office, where he fought throughout Easter. At the general surrender he was made a prisoner and then interned in Frongoch until July of the same year.

He joined the Volunteers at a very early age and was also a member of the I.R.B. He took a leading part in organising the Volunteers in Donegal.

Immediately after the 1916 Rising I formed a branch of the Irish National Aid Society, which later became known as the Irish National Aid and Volunteers' Dependents Fund. I was appointed secretary of the Dungloe branch, and in a very short time we succeeded in collecting a sum of £150 in the Parish of Upper Templecrone, which was duly forwarded to Headquarters. A similar branch was formed in Burtonport (Lower Templecrone Parish) in which Bernard O'Boyle, now Superintendent O'Boyle, Garda Síochána, Strokestown, was the principal worker. It was through my association with this organisation that I first made contact with Michael Collins, as he became General Secretary on his release from Frongoch.

About this time I was anxious to have a circle of the I.R.B. (Irish Republican Brotherhood) formed in Dungloe. In this connection I was strongly supported by Patrick Healy, a brother of Cahir Healy. Patrick was then in charge of the drapery department in Sweeney's, Dungloe. He contacted the county organiser, Dr. Gormley of Cloghan, and we succeeded in forming a circle, of which Healy became centre. Later on in 1917 we were directed to organise a branch of Sinn Féin at Dungloe, of which I was appointed Chairman.

I was appointed a delegate to the first Sinn Féin Árd Fheis held in the Mansion House, Dublin, in September, 1917, at which Mr. de Valera was appointed President. Shortly after my return from the Árd Fheis I asked the

young men of the Sinn Féin Cumann to join the Dungloe Company of the Irish Volunteers, which was formed by Joe Sweeney, James McCole, Anthony McGinley and myself. At this stage we commenced to drill openly again. James McCole was appointed Company Captain. A company was organised at Burtonport and later at Annagry, Lettermacaward, Kincasslagh, Meenacross, Loughanure and Arranmore, including Innishfree and other islands around the coast of the Rosses. Companies were also formed at Doochary, Loughanure and Mullaghduff. This area, comprising the parishes of Upper and Lower Templecrone, later became the 1st Battalion area, North West Donegal Brigade.

During the 1914-18 war many soldiers who were then serving in the British Army deserted while home on leave. Two such men from the Lower Rosses, one named Ward and another named Duffy, deserted. I succeeded in getting Ward's Lee Enfield rifle and bayonet. I also procured a quantity of .303 ammunition from another source and purchased a .38 revolver and some revolver ammunition of the same calibre. The rifle was the only service one in the Dungloe Company or any of the surrounding companies for a long period after their formation and came in very useful in musketry training in the area.

Early in 1918 Duffy and Ward were arrested by British forces and detained overnight in the R.I.C. barracks in Burtonport pending the arrival of a military escort from Derry. The officers of Burtonport Company, in conference with Joe Sweeney, Brigade O/C, decided that the two deserters should and must be rescued from custody. At first an attack on the barrack was contemplated, but eventually it was decided to hold up the train at Meenbanid

and release both men from their escort. A member of the Sinn Féin Club came to me on the evening of the arrest of the two men and asked me what action was intended with a view to an attempt at rescue. I told him to wait and see and say nothing. A few men from the Burtonport Company, armed with revolvers, boarded the train at Burtonport on which the escort with the two prisoners were travelling. At Meenbanid the train was held up. Two Volunteers entered the carriage containing the prisoners, held up and disarmed the escort and released Ward and Duffy.

In the summer of 1918 instructions were received from General Headquarters in Dublin to organise the companies on a battalion basis in West Donegal. Joe Sweeney called a meeting of company officers for this purpose at Dungloe Parochial Hall. At this meeting the following companies were formed into the 1st Battalion: Dungloe, Burtonport, Annagry, Loughanure, Lettermacaward and Doochary. Later Meenacross, Kincasslagh, Runafaste and the Islands were added to this battalion. A second battalion was also formed to cover the combined area of Gweedore and Clonganeelley parishes. A third battalion was organised to cover the parishes of Tarmon and Kilmacreman.

The following officers were appointed to the 1st Battalion: O/C, Commandant James McCole; Vice O/C, Frank O'Donnell; Adjutant, Patrick Breslin, and Q/M, Patrick O'Donnell.

The summer of 1918 was devoted to continual training and organisation. At this time the British Government proposed enforcing conscription on the young men in Ireland. This proposal was very strongly opposed by young and old alike. As a result, a large number of young

men joined the ranks of the Volunteers and Sinn Féin Clubs. The British, realising that it was not feasible to go ahead with the proposal in the face of so much opposition, decided to abandon the idea. As a result, many of the Volunteers ceased to attend parades and club meetings, leaving us, as before, with only the stalwarts who were determined to fight for freedom remaining in the ranks.

Prior to the general election of 1918 Joe Sweeney was selected as Sinn Féin candidate for West Donegal. His opponent was Dan McMeniman, representing the Irish Parliamentary Party. This party was very strong in the area and had the support of the A.O.H. (Ancient Order of Hibernians) who, at the time, considered themselves the only nationalist organisation in the country. Consequently, it was necessary for the Volunteers and Sinn Féin Clubs to work hard in order to secure the election of their candidate. In addition, Joe Sweeney was a very popular choice on account of his participation in the 1916 Rising. He was elected with nearly 3,000 of a majority, leaving him the youngest member to be elected in the whole country, being only twenty-one years of age at the time.

I would like to pay tribute here to one man who worked very hard to secure this victory for Joe Sweeney and Sinn Féin, namely the late Pat McFadden of Glen, Creeslough, who later became a T.D. for West Donegal. McFadden was an old I.R.B. man and worked for that organisation in Donegal as early as 1904.

In February, 1919, I took up a position as manager in a grocery business in Ardara. I was then appointed Adjutant of the 3rd Battalion, South Donegal Brigade, of which P.J. Ward, T.D., was Brigadier. I remained

with this battalion until October, 1919, when I again returned to Dungloe and was then appointed Adjutant of the No. 1 Brigade.

On the formation of this brigade the following officers were appointed: Brigade O/C, Joe Sweeney; Vice O/C, James McCole; Adjutant, Patrick Breslin; Q/M, Patrick O'Donnell. The position of the West Donegal Brigade was then as follows: It combined the entire area of the old constituency of West Donegal, except a portion of territory from the Owenca River north to the Gweebana River, which was attached to the South Donegal or No. 3 Brigade area.

Towards the end of 1918 Ernie O'Malley came to Dungloe in connection with Volunteer organisation and training. During his stay in the area I accompanied him on inspections and went with him to Meenacross, where we formed a company of Volunteers with Phil Boyle as Company Captain. While there we were entertained at the home of the curate, the late Fr. Charles McDevitt, a great supporter of the Volunteer and national movement. His brother, Joe, a Volunteer officer, was staying in the house at the time. This priest always kept an open house for Volunteers 'on the run'.

In January, 1919, after the general election, there was an election of officers of Dungloe Sinn Féin Club for that year. I withdrew as Chairman of the club in favour of John E. Boyle. Mr. Boyle was then elected Chairman and I was elected Vice Chairman, with Denis (now Lt. Colonel) Houston as Secretary.

On the 11th December, 1919, two Volunteers, Anthony



McGinley and Charles McBride, were arrested by British forces at Dungloe. They were detained in the R.I.C. barracks at Dungloe that night, where I visited them. McGinley had a revolver on his person at the time of his arrest, but a member of the R.I.C. named McGawley made an effort to have the gun put aside so that this fact could not be used in evidence against him at his trial.

The men were conveyed to Derry Gaol on the morning of 12th December. Joe Sweeney called on me that morning and instructed me to have Dungloe Company mobilised that night, every member of the company who had firearms to take them along. We discussed the possibility of the disarming of the prisoners' escort on their return from Derry. We were faced with three alternative situations, namely, (a) the possibility of holding up the train at Meenbanid, (b) the holding up of the escort on the main road from Dungloe Road to Dungloe, (c) to prepare an ambush position at a place known as the Rampart, about two miles from Dungloe in the Burtonport direction. After consultation with other officers of the battalion, the latter course was decided upon. The company was mobilised at the Fairhaill, Dungloe, at 8 p.m. on that night, and the following were detailed to take part: Commandant James McCole, Frank O'Donnell, Patrick Breslin, George Meehan, Patrick McCole, Patrick O'Donnell, Denis Houston, Dan Sweeney and Charles McGee. John Gorman, who owned a car, was detailed to go to Meenbanid to find out if the R.I.C. were on the train and if they would get off at Meenbanid and walk from there to Dungloe, or if they would remain on the train until it reached Dungloe. If the R.I.C. party left the train at Meenbanid, it would be necessary for our party to change our plans and carry out the ambush on the Dungloe-Meenbanid road at Leefin.

John O'Donnell was detailed to accompany O'Gorman in the car. The remainder of our party proceeded to march to the Rampart via Sheskinarow and Cruckamore. Our party arrived at the Rampart about half an hour before the train was due to arrive at Dungloe Road Railway Station. On arrival at the Rampart our party was reinforced by three men from Burtonport - Joe Sweeney, who took charge of the operation, his brother, Barney Sweeney, later Battalion O/C 1st Battalion, and John Molloy, now Sergeant, Garda Síochána, at Bray. Joe Sweeney allotted each man of the party to his firing position. Men with revolvers were placed in the centre, and shotgunmen on the flanks. John Molloy carried a few hand grenades. I was armed with a Lee Enfield service rifle with about twenty rounds of .303 ammunition. Joe Sweeney asked me to exchange my rifle and ammunition for his .38 revolver, as he had more experience in the use of a rifle than I had and was a good marksman. Gorman and O'Donnell soon arrived with the news that the R.I.C. party had gone on in the train in the direction of Dungloe Road Station. They were again sent to Dungloe Road to ascertain if the R.I.C. would get off the train there. As the distance from the Rampart to Dungloe Road is less than a mile, we had not long to wait until Gorman and O'Donnell returned with the information that the R.I.C. party had alighted at Dungloe Road and were proceeding in our direction. Shortly afterwards we could hear the tramp of the R.I.C. patrol coming towards us. We waited until they got into the line of fire. Having failed to halt when called upon to do so, fire was then opened on them. The District Inspector, a man named Wallace, a Sergeant named Farrell, and three constables were wounded. Sergeant Farrell had one of his legs amputated later

as a result of the wounds received that night. The R.I.C. rushed for cover to a bridge adjoining the scene of the action and replied to our fire from that position. They retreated from this position after a few minutes and ceased firing. Our party was then given the order to cease fire and the action was over. The night was very dark and it was decided to disperse.

Joe Sweeney and his men from the Burtonport district went home. Commandant McCole and the Dungloe section of our party remained at the scene of the ambush for some time afterwards. About ten minutes after firing had ceased, a man named Michael Ferry came out from Hugh O'Donnell's house opposite and collected a quantity of ammunition dropped on the road by the R.I.C. He handed me twenty-five rounds of .45 revolver ammunition. Ferry was a member of the I.R.B. in 1917 but did not join the Volunteers. Before leaving the Rampart I consulted Commandant McCole as to whether Meehan and myself should return to Sweeney's and stop there that night or go somewhere else. McCole said that in his opinion it would be better to stay in Sweeney's that night as usual in order to avoid suspicion. Sweeney's Hotel was raided two days later at about 6 a.m. by a party of military forces. Meehan and I were questioned as to our movements and our room searched, but no further action was taken against us then.

On Easter Monday night, 1920, as a result of a general order issued from our General Headquarters, Dublin, a party of Volunteers from Dungloe, Lettermacaward, Doochary and Meenacross Companies destroyed the unoccupied R.I.C. barracks at Lettermacaward and Doochary. The unoccupied R.I.C. barracks near the Gweedore Hotel was destroyed the same night

by a party of Volunteers of the 2nd Battalion assisted by Volunteers from the 1st Battalion. A British military barracks known as Rutland Barracks, which remained unoccupied for many years, was also burned. This barracks was situated at Meenmore, a little over a mile from Dungloe.

On the 4th July, 1920, a returned American named O'Donnell from Cruckamore was proceeding home from Dungloe. When passing the R.I.C. barracks he was attacked by a few members of the R.I.C. and badly beaten, without any reason whatever. On the following day, O'Donnell gave a description of the R.I.C. who assaulted him to Volunteer officers. It would appear that one of the R.I.C. who assaulted him, did so in a very brutal manner. Two Volunteers from the company were detailed to deal with this particular member of the R.I.C., and he was fired at and wounded on the 10th July, 1920.

About this time it was customary for the R.I.C. at Burtonport to send cycle patrols, averaging from three to five men, to their district headquarters at Dungloe with dispatches. Joe, Bernard and Danny Sweeney were in a position to find out when such an R.I.C. patrol left Burtonport for Dungloe, and as there was a private telephone line connecting the business premises of Sweeney & Co. at Burtonport with their premises at Dungloe, the information could be quickly passed on to Dungloe. All the male staff in Sweeney's Dungloe house were members of the Volunteer organisation, with one exception, and even that one man could be relied upon to pass on information in an emergency. As Adjutant of the brigade, it was my duty to have men mobilised quickly for any emergency. It was no surprise to me to be called to the 'phone one day and told by Bernard Sweeney that three R.I.C. men had just left Burtonport in

the direction of Dungloe. I immediately sent a despatch to Dan Sweeney of Sheskinarone to get a few members of 'A' Company and hold up and disarm the patrol on their way back from Dungloe. A party of five Volunteers awaited the return of the patrol, held up and disarmed them without any difficulty, securing three .45 revolvers and thirty rounds of revolver ammunition.

This was repeated on two other occasions in the summer of 1920 with similar results, except that on one occasion there were five R.I.C. men in the patrol and only three revolvers and ammunition were captured, as two of the patrol cycled off while the other three were being disarmed. On this occasion a Volunteer named Willie Sharkey, now deceased, followed the two retreating R.I.C. men on his bicycle and kept firing at them until his ammunition was exhausted. Sharkey, although only 18 years of age when he died in the summer of 1921, was a splendid soldier and never missed an engagement in the 1st Battalion area from after the fight at the Rampart until the truce in July, 1921.

An R.I.C. Sergeant named Cafferty was disarmed three times on this road, and on being held up on the fourth occasion it was found that he was unarmed. His bicycle was taken, and he explained, when questioned about his revolver, that after being disarmed on the last occasion his superior officer would not allow him to carry arms on duty in future. He further stated that one of the revolvers which he had already handed over was borrowed from a Coastguard Officer. Amongst those who took part in the disarming of R.I.C. on the Burtonport Road were: Dan Sweeney, Dan Walsh, Jeff. O'Donnell, Willie Sharkey, James McGee, John McCole, Frank O'Donnell and Michael Walsh.

On the 6th August, 1920, members of Gortahork Company, 2nd Battalion, held up and disarmed an R.I.C. cycling patrol attending the fair at Gortahork, also capturing their bicycles. On the 11th August, 1920, Volunteers from 'B' Company (Burtonport) held up and disarmed an R.I.C. patrol at Lackenagh. In this action one R.I.C. man was wounded.

On the 17th August, 1920, Volunteers from the 1st, 2nd and 3rd Battalions invaded the village of Falcarragh for the purpose of removing the wireless telegraphy equipment. Joe Sweeney was in charge of this operation. There was a garrison of R.I.C. in Falcarragh and, as a result, it was necessary to provide a strong protection party for the men engaged in removing the equipment. I was detailed with a number of other officers and men to prevent the R.I.C. from leaving the barracks while the operation was in progress. Members of 'A' and 'B' Companies paraded at Dungloe at 9.30 p.m. on that night. Officers of the Brigade Staff, with Commandant James McCole in charge, led the party, which consisted of a cycle unit. We cycled to Falcarragh, a distance of over twenty miles, where we arrived at midnight. I took up the position allotted to me in charge of a section on the main road outside and in front of the R.I.C. barrack. This post, which is now the Garda barracks, is and was at that time surrounded by a wall. Positions were occupied along this wall all around the barracks and maintained until the operation was completed. No plans were made for the capture of the post. After about two hours I received a report that the operation at the post office was complete, which report I passed along, and we all returned to an assembly point at the Gortahork end of the

village. This operation was carried out without incident.

On the 11th August, 1920, an R.I.C. patrol of one Sergeant and two men was disarmed on the Dungloe-Burtonport road by a party of Volunteers from 'A' Company, 1st Battalion. I arranged this hold-up as a result of a "phone message from Barney Sweeney at Burtonport.

On Sunday night, August 8th 1920, as a result of a general order from Headquarters, a general raid for arms was carried out in No. 1 Brigade area. Frank O'Donnell and I, with some Volunteers from 'A' Company, visited all the houses in the townland of Toberkeen, with one or two exceptions, and collected all the shotguns there. A large number of shotguns and cartridges were collected as a result. A few revolvers and sporting rifles and ammunition were also collected.

Early in May, 1920, instructions were received by the Sinn Féin Clubs in West Donegal to set up Republican Arbitration Courts (Parish and District) throughout the constituency. I was appointed Registrar of West Donegal District Court, and the following were appointed District Justices for that area: Daniel Walsh (now deceased), James Campbell, Bernard McCarron and John Ward, all of whom are now dead. A parish clerk and three parish justices were appointed for each parish in the constituency. It was decided at a meeting of Sinn Féin at Dungloe that all British courts then operating in the constituency be suppressed, and No. 1 Brigade was asked to co-operate in preventing any British courts from functioning in the district. All British courts listed within the area and all magistrates and Petty Sessions Clerks were notified

of the decision. Magistrates were warned not to hold courts, and litigants were instructed not to attend at Petty Sessions or country courts. All British Justices of the Peace were called upon to resign. On days appointed for Petty Sessions throughout the area, local Volunteer companies were detailed to prevent the attendance of magistrates and litigants, with the result that British Courts ceased to function in West Donegal from early May, 1920, onwards. The Republican Courts functioned very smoothly from that period until the end of October, 1922, when the present court system was set up.

In order to carry out the orders of the courts it was necessary to have a prison to hold prisoners sentenced to various terms of imprisonment by the courts established in the brigade area. The provision of a prison came about sooner than we expected, as Dr. Joe McGinley, a senior officer of No. 2 Brigade at Letterkenny, came along with a prisoner and escort shortly after the Republican Courts were set up and asked Dungloe Company to find accommodation for his prisoner. Captain Phil Boyle, who was then Company Captain of 'C' Company (Meenacross) was asked to provide a temporary prison. He decided that the herring curing station at Meenacross would be suitable for the purpose. The place was later known locally as Marghmeelan prison. Prisoners were held there continually from that period until 1922. It was necessary to provide an armed guard on the prison all that time, which guard was supplied by the 1st Battalion. British prisoners of war captured by the Volunteers were also detained in this place. Despite all this, the location of the prison was never discovered by the British forces.



On the 9th September, 1920, in consequence of a 'phone call from Bernard Sweeney that a patrol of one sergeant and four R.I.C. constables had left Burtonport for Dungloe, I sent a dispatch to Commandant McCole at Sheskinarone and to the Company Captain to have men on each of the two roads approaching Dungloe from Burtonport. Frank O'Donnell took charge of the men on the Lower Meenmore or Shore road, and Commandant McCole, with Dan Sweeney and a number of Volunteers, lay in waiting on the Upper Meenmore road. The patrol was held up at Milltown on the lower road and three of the five R.I.C. men were disarmed, including Sergeant Caffrey. Two escaped with their arms.

District Inspector Wallace, who was in charge of the R.I.C. at Dungloe and who was wounded at the Rampart ambush, became addicted to heavy drinking after that. He was regarded locally as a menace to our organisation and it was decided to have him executed. On account of his family it was decided that this should not be carried out at his home, and men were detailed to watch his movements. He was lucky for the reason that on two occasions when men from 'A' Company lay in wait for him to pass on his usual visit to the barracks, he failed to turn up. Later on he became very friendly and passed on vital information to the late Murray Sweeney, with instructions to have this information passed on to the officers of the brigade. He told Murray Sweeney of a forthcoming road by British forces in which it was intended to capture Joe Sweeney, Danny and Bernard Sweeney, James McCole, Anthony McGinley, George Meehan and myself. Joe Sweeney was actually captured and released some time

later as a result of a hunger-strike at Wormwood Scrubbs prison. All the "wanted" Volunteer officers around Dungloe were informed just in the nick of time as a result of the information passed on to us from D. Inspector Wallace. He was not interfered with after that. He was later transferred to Balbriggan and was dismissed shortly after the sack of that town by British forces at the end of 1920.

On the 4th December, 1920, a raid by British military forces was carried out on my premises at Dungloe. I escaped by the back entrance. Anthony McGinley, who was in business with me at the time, was gone out before the British forces arrived and so escaped arrest. I got out on to the street and saw Denis Houston, a Volunteer officer, being held up, searched and arrested. I was unknown to the military forces and knew I was comparatively safe so long as there was no member of the R.I.C. there to recognise me. Later that night Peadar O'Donnell arrived in Dungloe with an armed Volunteer Flying Column, but the British forces had gone, taking Houston with them.

The premises occupied by Anthony McGinley and myself and in which we carried on a small grocery business, was owned by a man named Henry Glackin and was used as Brigade Headquarters from the time I went there in November, 1920, until April 1st 1922. On every occasion on which the British forces visited Dungloe, the place was raided, and finally Glackin was arrested early in 1921 and served a term of imprisonment.

In October, 1920, the R.I.C. evacuated the barracks at Dungloe and by that time all the barracks held by R.I.C. in West Donegal were evacuated, with the exception of Dunfanaghy and Falcarragh. All the evacuated barracks were burned immediately.

In October, 1920, I received a communication to the effect that twenty Italian rifles were stored at Letterkenny and that these weapons might be of some use to us. Frank O'Donnell and I went to Letterkenny and took over these rifles from the Letterkenny Battalion. These weapons were heavy and clumsy and we could only procure ten rounds of ammunition to suit the rifles.

Early in January, 1921, it was reported to me that a stranger representing himself as a British civil servant had arrived in Dungloe and had visited a number of business premises. He had also visited a number of people who were under suspicion as enemy agents. He asked for statements of accounts in business houses for goods supplied or commandeered by British forces during their occupation of Dungloe. (In the summer of 1920 British forces occupied the parochial hall at Dungloe for about three months. During their occupation they burned a house near the hall, giving as their excuse for this action the fact that the house could be occupied by the Volunteers for the purpose of attacking their post in the hall and also that it obscured their view and line of fire in the event of an attack. They evicted the only occupant, a lady, before burning the house).

I reported the presence of this stranger to Joe Sweeney by 'phone, and he directed me to ask Peadar O'Donnell, who was billeted in the hall with his column at this time, to hold this stranger for questioning. Frank O'Donnell came along, bringing another man with him. They went to the hotel where this stranger was staying. They closed on him at lunch, and as he attempted to draw his automatic pistol they immediately disarmed him. On being questioned later by Peadar O'Donnell and others, he admitted that he was a

British officer but denied that he was connected with intelligence work and maintained that he was in Dungloe for the purpose of investigating claims against the British military while they were stationed in Dungloe. That night a Unionist commercial traveller intervened on behalf of the officer and he was released by order of Joe Sweeney.

On the 11th January, 1921, two Volunteers employed as guards on the Londonderry and Lough Swilly railway reported to Joe Sweeney that the station-masters and crossing-keepers along the line had been advised that a "fish train" would leave Derry at 1 a.m. and would arrive at Burtonport at 7 a.m. At that time there was no fishing in progress at Burtonport. The information led Joe Sweeney to believe that our recent prisoner was an intelligence officer and that his superiors were acting on some information that he had picked up. Joe Sweeney immediately contacted me by 'phone and told me to alert Peadar O'Donnell's column and to mobilise all the available men in the 1st Battalion to meet in Dungloe at 3 a.m. I had been out on the two previous nights waiting in ambush on the Glenties road, about two miles from Dungloe, with a party of armed men from 'A' Company. Information had been received that British forces were to come to Dungloe from the Letterkenny direction and a party of R.I.C. from the Glenties direction. As a result, myself and some of the men had not been in bed for two nights previously, although the British forces did not turn up.

I completed mobilisation orders before 12 midnight and went to bed, leaving instructions to be called at 2 a.m. By that time the men were beginning to arrive in Dungloe. We succeeded in getting 35 armed men together by 5 a.m. when we marched off towards Meenbanid Railway Station.

Phil Boyle, Captain of Meenacross Company, arrived later with a number of men from his company. A telephonist at Meenabanid Station tried to get in touch with some of the stations along the line, but the whole telegraphic system was earthed probably in Letterkenny or Derry. It was difficult to make a decision. Were we sure that British forces were aboard the train we could have lifted the rails at a nearby embankment and hurled them down some twenty feet, but if the train should have no troops aboard, any such action (which most certainly would have resulted in the death or serious injury of railway men, who, on the whole, were good friends of ours) would lower our prestige considerably with the civilian population.

Joe Sweeney decided to put up a road block in the cutting near the station and to post men in favourable positions on both sides of the railway. I was placed in a position on the Dungloe side of the railway to the extreme left with Bernard Sweeney, Patrick O'Donnell, Brigade Quartermaster, and Joseph O'Donnell, brother of Peadar. Peadar O'Donnell, with his column, was on our right. Our cover consisted of large boulders strewn along the edge of the cutting. Joe Sweeney sent a man armed with hand grenades about a quarter mile out the line to meet the oncoming train, with instructions to throw his grenades on to the train if he saw any troops aboard. We had not long to wait as we cut the time rather fine. The train came along at a fast pace, blowing its whistle to warn the crossing-keepers, and the engine struck the blocks with a loud bang. The crash was terrific. Fire was opened immediately on hearing the sound of bursting hand grenades and was simultaneous from both sides of the line. The

crack of rifle fire and bursting of hand grenades was deafening. I discharged five rounds rapidly into the first carriage and paused slightly to observe the effect. I observed soldiers opening carriage doors and trying to crawl out. I fired a further five rounds at the nearest targets.

It was now morning twilight and still a bit dark. Visibility was bad, even at such close range, and it was difficult to ascertain the effect of our fire. The train had cut through the block, left the rails, but still remained upright. We had about 13, or 14 rifles and the remainder of our men were armed with shotguns and revolvers. I soon heard the whine of bullets passing close to me and I got a glimpse of a straggling line of khaki clad figures running along the railway line. With other members of my section, I kept firing for some time longer, and Joe O'Donnell, who had passed by, asked me did I hear a signal whistle to retreat. I told him I did not, but when I had a look around I found that the four of us were all that were left on the Dungloe side of the line. Patrick O'Donnell then told me that he had heard the signal to retreat.

We retreated for some distance, when it occurred to me that a canvas bag containing about 80 rounds of .303 ammunition close to my position had been left behind. I returned for the bag of ammunition, and as I picked it up I could hear the rattle of machine-gun fire from the direction of the railway line. Bernard Sweeney helped me to carry the ammunition for some distance from the firing line until we reached a mossy cliff, where we hid it until the following day, when I came back and recovered it.

The report of casualties on the British side arising out of this engagement varied from six to twelve, killed and wounded. The windows in six of the carriages were all smashed and the carriages riddled with bullets and bloodstained. Bernard Sweeney, Patrick O'Donnell, Joe O'Donnell and I, who were the last to leave the scene of the encounter, came along the road in the direction of Dungloe. On reaching the hill at Leefin we saw Peadar O'Donnell's column resting near the road. Patrick and Joe O'Donnell left us at Sheskinarone, and Bernard Sweeney and I continued on our march to Dungloe. On our way to Dungloe, shortly after leaving Meenbanid we heard rifle fire in the direction of Kerrytown, but it was not sustained. We learned later that a few of our men who had gone astray had been engaged by the enemy but got away after an exchange of fire. One of our men was captured unarmed, having hidden his rifle beforehand. The British forces were unable to connect him with the ambush, and after being taken to Derry he was released. He was a native of Derry and was attached to the West Donegal Flying Column for a short time prior to this engagement. We later recovered the rifle.

The enemy later marched to Burtonport, where they occupied the old R.I.C. barracks, and remained there for a few days. One of their officers was the man already referred to who was held up and questioned by us in Dungloe, detained and later released. This officer, with some others, commandeered cars and went to the hotel in Dungloe, where he had been previously captured, allowed himself to be blindfolded as he was when taken prisoner by us, had the cars driven to the house where he had been detained, and his party examined the vacant house.

Following the attack on the troop train, British forces in great strength were drafted into the Rosses, but beyond the arrest of some sympathisers on the civil side we had no losses. This concentration of British forces in the area continued until January 24th 1921, when they were withdrawn to Derry.

On the 24th January, 1921, the train carrying the last detachment of troops from Burtonport to Derry was ambushed at Crolly by Volunteers from the Loughanure and Annagry Companies. On the previous day, January 23rd, a party of these troops who were billeted in Loughanure School were fired on by Volunteers from Loughanure Company. James Ward, now deceased, Company Captain, was in charge of the party.

Captain James Ward, with a party of local Volunteers, removed portion of the railway line at Drumnacart on the 7th February, 1921, and succeeded in derailing a troop train. Fifteen British troops were injured.

On the 25th February, 1921, acting on orders received, I mobilised all armed men of the 1st Battalion for an attack on Glenties R.I.C. barracks. This enemy post was in the 3rd Brigade area and arrangements for its attack and capture were in the hands of the officers of that brigade. Having mobilised the men of the 1st Battalion, motor cars were commandeered. As the number of cars available was small, the majority of the Volunteers had to cycle a distance of twenty miles to Glenties. I took charge of 'A' Company. Joe Sweeney was in command of the 1st Battalion with James McCole second in command. After a short rest in Dóochary, where we commandeered further transport, we proceeded to Glenties, and after a rest near the railway



station we were informed that the attack on the barrack was cancelled. So all our trouble and hardship was in vain! On our return journey to Dungloe, a car, the property of Charlie Bonner of Dungloe, broke down and had to be abandoned. It was recovered after about two weeks where it had been lying on the roadside.

It was part of my duty in those days to send monthly returns to the Chief of Staff, General Richard Mulcahy, of all Volunteer engagements, activities and operations carried out in the brigade area. These reports were sent direct to the Chief of Staff under a covering address. Covering addresses were also supplied to me by the Minister for Home Affairs, the late Austin Stack. Sometimes I made use of army channels to report court cases to the Minister concerned, and I was always reminded by him when this happened that army channels of communication should not be crowded with reports of a civil nature.

Anthony McGinley, who stayed with me when he was not absent on army organisation work, also compiled and forwarded his reports to the Director of Organisation, Diarmuid O'Hegarty, from Brigade Headquarters in Dungloe. McGinley was appointed Staff Captain on the staff of the Director of Organisation in October, 1920, and continued in that capacity until he joined the National Army in October, 1922. He was attached to Nos. 1, 3 and 4 Brigades as organiser. The late Phil Doherty of the Illies, Buncrana, was organiser for No. 2 Brigade. After the troop train ambush at Meenbanid, McGinley, with some others, took a wrong turning and got engaged again with the British forces that morning. They came under enemy fire while retreating but they eventually got away, with the exception of the one man already referred to

Anthony McGinley and Cissy Doherty went to Dublin and succeeded in getting a quantity of arms from our G.H.Q., quite an assortment, with some ammunition. These arms were packed in cases and addressed to the Templecrone Co-operative Society at Dungloe and consigned as hardware. We took delivery of the goods on arrival, mostly small arms and ammunition.

A Brigade Council meeting was held each month, usually at Dunlewey, Gweedore or Gortahork. Patrick O'Donnell, the Brigade Quartermaster, never missed one of these meetings. He usually was one of the first to arrive, generally making the journey on foot, never having ridden a bicycle. He also made periodical inspections of the various companies, and on almost all of those visits he accomplished the journey on foot. He also managed to be present at nearly all the engagements against the British forces in West Donegal, and on many such occasions he walked all the way.

On the 3rd January, 1921, the Brigade O/C issued an order for the destruction of the unoccupied R.I.C. barracks at Dungloe and Burtonport. Both barracks were burned to the ground on that night. The Coastguard Station at Burtonport was also destroyed by fire on the night of the 3rd/4th January, 1921. These operations were carried out by the 1st Battalion.

Early in 1921 a second Flying Column was organised at Dungloe, with Daniel Sweeney from Sheskinarone as Column Commander. This column was composed entirely of men recruited from the 1st Battalion, No. 1 Brigade, and was known as No. 2 Column. An unoccupied house was taken over at Sheskinarone in the vicinity of Dungloe and this column billeted there for some time.

On the 24th March, 1921, Falcarragh R.I.C. Barracks was fired into by a party of Volunteers. One member of the R.I.C. who was in an outhouse in front of the barracks was shot dead. On the following day, British forces visited the houses in the town and compelled a number of merchants and other inhabitants of the village to attend the dead R.I.C. man's wake. Merchants were also ordered to close their doors and draw the blinds on their shop windows. People were threatened they would be shot if they failed to carry out these orders. I never received a detailed report on this operation.

In March, 1921, as a result of orders issued by our G.H.Q. it was decided to organise a Division comprising the four Donegal Brigades and Derry City Battalion. A meeting representative of the brigades was held at Hugh O'Donnell's of Dungloe, at which the following were appointed on the Divisional Staff: Divisional Commandant, Frank Carney; Adjutant, Bernard Doherty, and Quartermaster, Frank Martin. Later Denis McNelis was appointed Divisional Engineer, Dr. Farrell, Divisional M.O., and McCluskey Director of Training. Frank Carney was in charge of the operation in which Belleek R.I.C. barracks was captured on the 27th December, 1920. The arms captured on that occasion included two machine-guns.

Denis McNelis was a native of Glencolumkille, Co. Donegal, and was an electrical engineer. He was working in Ford's Motor Company in Cork and joined the Volunteers in that city in 1916. He was appointed an officer on the staff of the Cork City Brigade in 1918, and was the first in Ireland to carry out the "resist arms" order. It was only after a fierce fight, in which one of the R.I.C. party sent to effect his arrest was severely

wounded, that he was captured and imprisoned in Cork Gaol. While awaiting trial there, he was rescued by a party of Volunteers from the Cork Brigade. He visited the United States of America on orders from G.H.Q. and remained there for a short time and again returned to Cork, when he was appointed Brigade Engineer there. He was then sent to Donegal by order of G.H.Q. On arrival in Dungloe, he reported to me at Brigade Headquarters and I secured a place for him to stay at Denis O'Donnell's of Caravan, Dungloe. Denis O'Donnell and his wife, both of whom are now deceased, were always glad to keep Volunteers 'on the run' and their house was always at our disposal. I often slept there with other wanted men. In this connection I would like to mention the names of some other people around Dungloe whose houses were always at our disposal day or night, viz. - James Doran's of Crovigh, Edward Sweeney's of Meenmore, Dan Sweeney's of Sheskinarone, Dan O'Donnell's of Derrydruail, James McPaul's of Dungloe, Neil Sharkey's of Diamond, Mrs. Brigid O'Donnell's of Dungloe, and O'Donnell's of Craghyboyle, to mention but a few.

McNelís, who was known locally and to his comrades as Seán Murray, started to work next day after his arrival. He organised a good unit of engineers, who helped him in the construction of dug-outs for storage of arms and to accommodate men in an emergency. He removed the wires from the Londonderry and Lough Swilly railway line and rewired the telegraph line from Dungloe to Doochary. He constructed a dug-out at Doochary and another on the outskirts of Dungloe on the Mill Road, and connected both by telephone so that in case the enemy was approaching in the Doochary direction, Brigade Headquarters could be

notified at Dungloe, eight miles away. He intended to complete a similar network of communications all over the brigade area so that each Company Headquarters could be in telephonic communication with Battalion and Brigade Headquarters and vice versa. Divisional Headquarters could also be linked.

The appointments of the officers of the Divisional Staff would appear to have been made by General Headquarters before the meeting at Dungloe was called, and the meeting was in the nature of an introduction of the Divisional Staff Officers to the Brigade Officers and approval of the appointments. However, Frank Carney's record was well known to us and for that reason the appointments met with our approval.

Arrangements were made for an attack on Falcarragh R.I.C. Barracks on the 20th March, 1921. No. 1 Flying Column was notified and men from the 1st, 2nd and 3rd Battalions were mobilised. Falcarragh and Dunfanaghy were the only R.I.C. posts held in West Donegal by the enemy at that time. There was a British military post at Bunbeg for the purpose of protecting the radio station there. The garrison at Falcarragh was composed in the main of Black and Tans. These men were recruited from the British Army and were so named from the mixture of khaki and police uniforms they wore. The R.I.C. evacuated from other posts in West Donegal were stationed in Letterkenny and Derry. The barracks at Falcarragh was a large two-storied building situated on the Dunfanaghy side of the village, detached, and some 200 yards from the village. It was difficult to approach from any angle. It was well protected with barbed wire entanglements and there were apertures in the walls at various points for dropping

grenades. It was decided to place a mine at one of the gables. The wire was constructed to be exploded with an electric detonator and battery. The mine was placed in position, but through some fault in the construction, or perhaps due to faulty explosives, the mine had not the desired effect as the explosion failed to breach the wall. The only alternative for us was to open rifle fire on the windows and doors of the building. The windows were well protected by bullet proof steel shutters and the fire had little effect. The doors and approaches were well protected by sandbags and fire in this direction was not effective either. We failed to take the barracks. The only casualty was one R.I.C. man killed. Our party suffered no casualties.

On the 20th April, 1921, an attack was planned by No. 3 Brigade on Glenties Barracks. The 1st Battalion of No. 1 Brigade took part in this operation. Cars were commandeered to take some of the officers and men, and as there was only a limited supply of motor cars the majority of the men from the 1st Battalion taking part had to make the journey on bicycles. In some cases the distance was over thirty miles each way. The same tactics were employed as at Falcarragh, with much the same result. Two of the enemy were wounded in this operation; the Volunteers suffered no casualties. Joe Sweeney was in charge of this operation.

On the 21st May, 1921, Glenties Barracks was again attacked by Volunteers from No. 3 Brigade, assisted by the 1st Battalion, No. 1 Brigade. Much the same tactics were employed as in the previous attack on this post. No casualties were suffered by the Volunteer force and it was not known whether the British forces suffered any casualties.

In May, 1921, British forces in large numbers were brought by sea from Derry and landed at Burtonport at dawn one morning. Sweeney's Hotel at Burtonport, where the Divisional Commander, Frank Carney, the Divisional Adjutant, Bernard Doherty, Divisional Quartermaster, Frank Martin, and Joe Sweeney, then O/C No. 1 Brigade, were staying at the time, was surrounded. The Divisional Staff was arrested but Joe Sweeney succeeded in escaping. This detachment of British military then advanced to Dungloe and remained searching the Rosses area for nearly a week, but made no further capture of Volunteers. John E. Boyle and Murray Sweeney were taken prisoners at Dungloe, also Frank Sweeney, a local solicitor, Murray and Frank Sweeney were released a few days later and John E. Boyle was interned in Ballykinlar. Boyle was Chairman of the Dungloe Sinn Féin Club at this time and was later a parish justice of the Republican Courts.

Patrick Breslin, a national teacher in Meenmore School, was arrested and brought to Derry but was released on being identified by the R.I.C. at Derry. He was arrested in mistake for me. The British officer, on leaving Dungloe Road Station with the prisoners, remarked to the station-master that he had at least one <sup>S.R.A.</sup>~~R.I.C.~~ leader from the Dungloe district, namely, Patrick Breslin.

A British officer, a Lieutenant of Engineers, Lieut. William Lindsay Loutelle, of Scotch and French descent, who came to Dungloe at this time was held up and detained at our prison at Marghmeelan. He was suspected of espionage. He was detained in the prison for more than six months and was released some time after the truce in July, 1921. He appeared to be harmless. He returned again to Dungloe many years afterwards as a civilian

to visit the place where he was confined for so long a period. He was very well satisfied with his treatment during captivity and held the I.R.A. officers and men with whom he had been in contact during that period in high esteem.

After the arrest of Frank Carney, Joe Sweeney was appointed Divisional Commandant of the 1st Northern Division. James McCole replaced him as Brigade O/C No. 1 Brigade. Frank O'Donnell was appointed Vice O/C of the Brigade to fill the vacancy created by the promotion of McCole.

Frank Martin, who was detained as a prisoner for a fortnight, was released and resumed his duty as Divisional Quartermaster. Later on, after the truce, Tom Glennon was appointed Divisional Adjutant to replace Doherty.

Towards the end of May, 1921, Sergeant Duffy of the R.I.C. stationed at Killybegs carried out a surprise raid on the village of Dungloe and its surroundings early one Sunday morning. He was in charge of a party of R.I.C. and Black and Tans. On this raid one of the party was a man named Collins, who, for some time previously, had been going around the Rosses with a horse and van selling herrings. Collins was an ex-British soldier who had served with the British Army during the 1914-18 war. He evidently had been in touch with the British Intelligence Service before coming to the Rosses. After leaving the army he lived for some time at Ramelton with his wife. During his time as fish vendor in the Rosses he became friendly with the people and he evidently collected some information about the Volunteers. At all events, he reported in Enniskillen to the Intelligence section there and joined the Auxiliary section of the R.I.C., was supplied with a



uniform and sent along to Killybegs to accompany Sergeant Duffy and his raiding party to Dungloe. The Divisional Engineer, Denis McNelis, with a few helpers, was completing a telephone connection on that morning outside Dungloe when he was surprised and held up by the British forces. He was beaten with the butt ends of revolvers and rifles and kicked so badly that the enemy probably thought he would not live. He was left on the roadside, unable to move hand or foot. The only weapons in his possession at the time were a spanner and a pliers. He was on his way, unaccompanied, to his digs after a night's work.

Brigade Headquarters was raided but nothing was found. The private part of the house was also raided, but Anthony McGinley, who was sleeping in the house at the time, succeeded in evading arrest. His revolver, however, was found, and the owner of the house, Henry Glackin, was arrested and sentenced to a term of imprisonment for having firearms in his house. A Volunteer named Boyle was arrested at his home at Caravan, and his rifle which he had in his home at the time was captured. This man was also beaten. Daniel Walsh, a member of the Dungloe Sinn Féin Club and a District Justice, was badly beaten at his home but was not taken prisoner.

On that Sunday morning, during the raid I was in the house of James McPaul at Quay Road, Dungloe. The house was a labourer's cottage in the centre of a row of cottages along the road. The cottages on each side of McPaul's were raided, but, luckily for me, McPaul's house was overlooked. When I got up to prepare for Mass, I was informed of the raid. I immediately sent word

to Commandant McCole and got all the local Volunteers mobilised, but the British forces had gone from the immediate vicinity of Dungloe before sufficient men could be got together to follow up. We were also in the unfortunate position of having loaned a number of rifles to the 2nd Battalion a few days prior to this and we were handicapped through lack of arms and ammunition. The British forces had left their lorries at Cloughwally, about six miles from Dungloe on the Glenties Road, and had walked to Dungloe by a by-road through Drumlaghdrid, Derrydruel and Diamond. As they had to walk back to Cloughwally, it was possible to follow them up and engage them on the Derrydruel road. A number of officers, including myself, were in favour of this course, but Commandant McCole decided otherwise and took up positions in the town of Dungloe, expecting the return of the enemy. I am still of the opinion that an opportunity of a successful counter attack was missed on this occasion.

To get back to Collins, we found out that he was in the habit of coming home to his wife at Ramelton for an occasional week-end. We got in touch with the Volunteers there, had Collins captured at his home and taken to our prison at Marghmeelan. On being questioned, he admitted espionage activities. He said he became attached to the British Intelligence Service before joining the Auxiliary police force. He admitted he had been spotting Volunteers during his rounds when selling herrings. He told an amazing story of his experience, while acting as an intelligence agent, involving at least three very respectable citizens. He said he was given the names of these people by his

superior officers as men on whom he could safely rely for useful information. He also gave the name of an itinerant who, he alleged, had received a considerable sum of money from Sergt. Duffy of the R.I.C. for information supplied. He asked that the men he named be brought before him so as he could accuse them to their faces and challenge them to deny and prove that they were not attached to the British Intelligence Service. The itinerant mentioned was arrested and brought before Collins at the prison camp, where he accused him of being a spy and intelligence agent. It was difficult to believe Collins's story about the other three people he named and no action was taken against them, and for that reason I have no intention of revealing their names now.

Collins was tried by courtmartial and sentenced to death, but, as it took some time to have the sentence confirmed, the truce intervened and he was set free, only to be shot by others almost a year later. He was asked, after sentence was passed, if he desired to have a priest or clergyman before the sentence was carried out, and he replied that he did not want a clergyman of any religious denomination. He asked the Company Captain of "A" Company, Patrick McCole, to hold his hand on the square until the firing party was ready to fire as he might feel a bit nervous towards the end. The itinerant was also held a prisoner until after the truce, when he was released.

The last big British forces round-up before the truce took place in June, 1921. On this occasion the British forces came from Derry, which was headquarters

of a British Brigade, in several train loads. I was at Brigade Headquarters when I noticed a British officer and some soldiers coming towards the front door. I ran out the back door, went through a barn and into a field at the rear of the premises. I was spotted by an officer and a number of soldiers who were on the Carnmore Road. I was called on to halt and I was fired on when I failed to do so. I continued on towards the Chapel Road, pretending that I did not hear the shot or the order to halt. I was allowed to proceed until I reached the Chapel Road. I then turned off the road towards the shelter of the chapel wall. Immediately I turned, a volley was fired in my direction. I could hear the whine of the bullets but was not hit. On turning towards the Diamond road, I saw a number of soldiers holding up and searching a man there. I stayed in the shelter of the wall until the party of soldiers on the road moved away and then I continued on my journey towards Denis O'Donnell's of Caravan. On arrival there I met a Volunteer named Dinnie McCole. He was a dispatch carrier attached to Brigade Headquarters. Dinnie and I remained at O'Donnell's until after dark. We then proceeded in the direction of Craghyboyle, skirting Dungloe on the Carnmore side. The British soldiers had camp fires on all the roads approaching Dungloe a short distance from the town. A party of armed troops with an N.C.O. in charge remained at each fire.

We made a short detour so as to avoid these road patrols. We got across the Chapel Road without being noticed and had just crossed the second road at Carnmore when the party of troops on that road must have

heard or seen us, because as we approached the wooden bridge crossing the river in the direction of Craghyboyle, fire was opened on us. We lay in the field for some time until the firing ceased and then made our way cautiously towards the bridge. We were not noticed again but we feared being noticed while crossing the bridge. However, we got across without further incident and managed to get to O'Donnell's house at Craghyboyle. On our arrival there we found a number of Volunteer officers and men who had also escaped the net, and after consultation it was decided that we should separate so as to avoid, as far as possible, all of us being caught together.

Dinnie McCole and I went across the bogs to the parish of Gweedore, arriving there about 3 a.m. The remainder of the party went to Meenbanid. We called at the home of Denis Conaghan of Thorr, and after getting refreshments we were given a bed, but we were again called at 5 a.m. to be informed that a large party of British forces were advancing towards Thorr from the Crolly direction. We got up, dressed and crossed the mountain to Brocklagh, and on reaching the summit of the mountain overlooking Brocklagh we could see troops entering the houses in that townland. We remained on the mountain until about 9 a.m., when we could see the British troops marching away from Brocklagh across the mountain towards Doochary. We then went to Phil O'Donnell's home at Brocklagh, and after some time there we continued our journey in the direction of Dungloe. On our arrival again at O'Donnell's of Caravan, we were informed that the British forces were still in Dungloe but were preparing to leave. No

Volunteers were captured in this raid but a number of civilians, mostly farmers, were rounded up and taken to Derry, where they were released after a few days.

The officer in charge of the British forces who carried out the raid at Brocklagh, rounded up all the men in that townland, brought them to a bridge on the outskirts, where he addressed them and asked them to advise the Volunteers to discontinue the fight. He stated that he would ask the British Government to make an offer of peace to the Irish. He further stated that he was opposed to this form of interference with the Irish people and that personally he would welcome peace. As a soldier, he said, this was not the kind of warfare that suited him.

This officer may still be of the opinion that his appeal was responsible for the cessation of hostilities in the area. There was no further operation by either side after this raid. The truce on the 11th July, 1921, coming at a time when ammunition was becoming very scarce, was a welcome respite to the active Volunteers in West Donegal.

Signed: P. Malpas

Date: 27. June 1956

Witness: James Donway, Colmd.  
(Investigator)

