

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

BURO STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21

No. W.S. 1478

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COSANTA.

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 1478.

Witness

Ted. O'Sullivan,
Glen House,
South Douglas Road,
Cork.

Identity.

Vice O/C, Cork III Brigade, I.R.A.
Acting O/C, Cork III Brigade, I.R.A.

Subject.

Activities of Bantry Company, Bantry Battalion,
Irish Volunteers, Cork III Brigade, 1916-1921,
and Battalion Flying Column, 1920-1921.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil.

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ORIGINAL

STATEMENT BY TED O'SULLIVAN.

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-2

BURO STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21

NO. W.S. 1.478

Glen House, South Douglas Road, Cork.

I was born in Bantry on 26th July 1899. My parents were farmers. I was educated at Gurtycloon National School where, on completion of my education, I was engaged as a monitor. I intended to enter the teaching profession.

I joined the Irish Volunteers in Bantry in 1914. The strength of the unit was about 120. The pioneers in the work of organisation were:- Michael Murray, Michael O'Donovan, Michael O'Sullivan and James O'Callaghan. Training in the form of close order foot-drill was carried out under - Gordon a reserve officer of British Marines.

When John Redmond, leader of the Irish Parliamentary Party, appealed in his speech at Woodenbridge, Co. Wicklow, for recruits for the British army, saying that "it would be a disgrace forever to our country, a reproach to her manhood and a denial of the lessons of history, if young Ireland confined their efforts to remaining at home and shrinking from duty of proving on the field of battle that gallantry and courage which have distinguished their race all through history" the members of the original Irish Volunteer Provisional Committee issued a manifesto to the Irish Volunteers repudiating Redmond's speech and expelling the nominees of the Irish Parliamentary Party from the Irish Volunteer Executive. This led to a split in the Irish Volunteers. The followers of John Redmond, to the number of about 30, now formed a new organisation - The Irish National Volunteers. They were trained in the Redmondite Hall under Denis O'Shea. The majority of the original company continued to serve as Irish Volunteers and trained in the Town Hall.

The members who now served in the latter body were mainly supporters of the All-for-Ireland Party, led by Wm. O'Brien, M.P. The O/C. of the Bantry Company of Irish Volunteers at this time was Michael O'Donovan. Ralph Keyes was also one of the officers, while, I think, Michael Murray was in charge of a number of companies in the area.

Parades of the Irish Volunteers were carried on at irregular intervals up to 1916. The main activity at this time being the holding of route marches and drill parades at which the members were instructed in close order foot-drill. As I was only a junior at the time, I have no knowledge of the arrangements or instructions received regarding Easter Week 1916.

In the autumn of 1916, there was a reorganisation in the area. At this stage, some of those who had been members of the Irish National Volunteers joined the Irish Volunteers, and there was no question of party politics. The Bantry Company, under Michael O'Donovan, O/C., held a big public parade on November 23rd 1916, in connection with the Manchester Martyrs Anniversary celebrations. Immediately following this parade I organised a section in my home area - Baurgorm - which was attached to Bantry Company. I was appointed section commander. Parades at this time were held two or three times weekly in the Town Hall. Parades of my section were held at Ardnageehy throughout the winter of 1916/17. There were no arms in the section.

Early in 1917 Ralph Keyes became O/C. Bantry Company and his appointment led to increased activity. The Bantry Company engaged in the manufacture of pikes in the summer and autumn of 1917. These pikes were handed over to my section where they were dumped for safe custody. Some members of Bantry unit carried out two raids for arms - one on the

Barytes Mines, and the second on Kelly's Hardware shop. In these raids they obtained a supply of explosives which were also handed over to my section for safe keeping. The dumps in my area were made by burying earthenware sewer pipes closed with concrete at one end, in the centre of a stone-faced ^{cross} fence. The open end of the sewer pipe was then sealed with the stones facing the fence so that there was nothing to indicate that the fence had been interfered with.

Normal training continued throughout 1917 and 1918. When the enforcement of conscription was threatened by the British in the spring and early summer of 1918, there was a big influx of new recruits. Public parades were held and the members of the Irish Volunteers attended anti-conscription meetings. They collected all shotguns - which were the only type of arms available - throughout the area. Bantry company had about 12 shotguns dumped with my section in addition to a large quantity of pikes. There was also a supply of home-made bombs which were made by filling paint tins, cocoa tins and suchlike with scrap metal and charging them with gelignite, detonator and fuse. The fuse protruded through a hole in the lid of the tin.

The Irish Volunteer organisation had been steadily growing in strength following Easter Week 1916. Units were now operating in Bantry, Glengarriff, Coomhola, Kealkil, Durrus, Kilcrohane, Caheragh and Droumsullivan. These units were now organised into Bantry Battalion, which became 14th Battalion, Cork Brigade. The officers of this unit, as far as I can recollect, were:- O/C. Dan O'Mahoney; V.O/C. (I cannot recollect); Adjutant, Ted O'Sullivan (witness); Q.M. (I cannot recollect).

Companies were later organised at Drimoleague, Inchingeragh and Durrus Road to complete the organisation of the area

Before I was appointed Battalion Adjutant, Bantry Battalion, I joined the I.R.B. I was sworn in by Dan O'Mahoney (Battalion O/C).

When America entered World War I in 1917, my brother Dan, who was serving in the American army, was sent to France. Some time towards the end of 1917, or perhaps early 1918, he came home to Bantry on ten days' leave. I arranged with him to send any war material he could lay hands on to me by other soldiers coming on leave to Ireland. At different times he sent me two Colt automatics (.45), puttees, American army blouses - these were later dyed green to make uniforms. The last supply was received from him in August 1918. The soldier who had taken along a .45 Colt, puttees and some ammunition had only just left my home when it was raided by a strong force of military and R.I.C. I managed to hide the gun and ammunition in a sack of flour while my father led the raiding party into a room in which I was alleged to be sleeping. I later appeared from my own room, which was also searched and in which the supply of An tOglach, which had arrived that day, was found. The officer in charge was placing me under arrest, but after a discussion with my father and the R.I.C. officer, he decided to leave me behind. However, he took away the parcel of An tOglach - the official organ of the Irish Volunteers. When they had gone, I learned from my father that they had asked him to prevail upon me to give up my activities with the illegal organisation. As I continued my normal activities as Battalion Adjutant, my home became subject to continuous raids from now on, and I was compelled to go 'on the run'. This situation continued to exist up to the Truce in July 1921 during which period I was on continuous service.

On 23rd September 1918, some members of Bantry Company disarmed an R.I.C. patrol in the vicinity of the town and

seized a carbine and a .45 revolver. These arms were immediately passed to my section for dumping.

Early in December 1918, the members of the Bantry Company - to the number of about 40 - mobilised on two occasions to ambush a military patrol at Sadler's Cross on the Bantry-Durrus road. We were armed with a carbine, a Martini-Enfield rifle (single), two or three revolvers, while the remainder of the ambush party had pikes. However, the enemy patrol did not put in an appearance. Several raids for arms - mainly shotguns - were carried out at this period. All arms obtained in these raids were dumped in Baurgorm area.

There was no contest in the area during the General Election to Dáil Éireann in December 1918. Sean Hayes - the Sinn Fein candidate - was returned unopposed.

Cork Brigade now contained some 20 battalions and it was decided to divide it into three brigades. Tomas McCurtain was O/C. at this time, but I cannot recollect the names of the other officers. Bantry Battalion now became a unit of one of the new brigades - Cork III. This new brigade was established on 6th January 1919, at a meeting held at Kilnadur at which Tomas McCurtain presided. As far as I can recollect, the following battalions in West Cork were represented:

Bantry	(Dan O'Mahoney, Ted O'Sullivan - witness)
Skibbereen	(Bernie O'Driscoll and Denis O'Shea)
Bandon	(Tom Hales)
Dunmanway	(Con Ahearne, Michael McCarthy)..
Clonakilty	(Cannot recollect)
Castletownbere	(I don't think they were represented).

The following brigade officers were appointed at this meeting: O/C. Tom Hales; Vice O/C. Sean Hayes (I think); Adjutant, Denis O'Connell or Michael McCarthy; Q.M., Denis O'Shea.

Normal training continued at this time, but the members of the Volunteer organisation were beginning to become more

military minded. Special services, such as intelligence, engineering, scouting and first aid were organised and, as Battalion Adjutant, the organisation of these services devolved on me. The training was also becoming more intensive and this necessitated regular visits to all companies to ensure that they were being properly trained. Regular meetings of company and battalion staffs were held.

My duties as adjutant of Bantry Battalion involved travelling considerable distances each week as the companies to be visited were distributed over a wide area, e.g., Kilcrohane (16 miles), Glengarriff (11), Coomhola (12), Kealkil (10), Droumsullivan (8), Durrus (6), Caheragh (6) and Bantry (5). I was continuously on the move at this time, travelling mainly by cycle. I was responsible for the training and organisation of the unit as well as the organisation of dances, aeriochts and other functions in order to raise funds. In addition, Battalion Council meetings were held each month at which the work of the battalion was discussed and arranged.

Early in 1919 I carried out a raid on Newtown House, Bantry, to search for two rifles and a shotgun which were reported by our Intelligence section to be held there. Despite a thorough search of the building we failed to find the rifles. We later learned from our Battalion I.O. (Tom Reidy) that the rifles were to be sent to Cork by rail, as they had been handed over to the R.I.C. I sent a member of Cumann na mBan - (Miss Christina Cotter) - to Bantry railway station to travel on the train by which the rifles were supposed to be sent so that she could signal to me at the next station - Aughaville - to indicate whether the box containing the rifles had been put on the train by the R.I.C. I had a party ready at Aughaville to raid the train if the box was on it. When the train arrived Miss Cotter signalled to indicate that the arms were not on

the train. I then travelled by the train to Cork, where I arranged with the staff of Cork I Brigade to raid the store at the Railway Goods Yard in case the box containing the rifles had been sent by an earlier train. There was no trace of the arms in Cork, so they must have been dispatched by road.

I was accompanied on the raid on Newtown House by Maurice Donegan, Paddy O'Sullivan and several members of Bantry Company.

As I was now more or less on full-time service, the work of the farm at home was inclined to fall into arrears. However, the local Volunteers dealt with this matter by moving in a body at busy periods, such as spring and harvest time, and performing the appropriate farming operations as they fell due.

The work of organising and collecting the loan floated by the Government of the Republic - Dáil Éireann - was mainly carried out by the Volunteers about this time.

There was no exceptional activity beyond normal training until a Training Camp was established at Glandore. The officers selected to attend this camp were assembled at Shorecliffe House, Glandore, on Saturday, August 9th, 1917. All battalions in Cork III Brigade were represented at this camp which was under the supervision of Dick McKee, O/C. Dublin Brigade. He was responsible for the general training. He was assisted by two other officers - Leo Henderson (signalling) and Tom McMahon (engineering). Amongst those who attended this camp were:-

<u>Bantry Battalion</u> -	Mossy Donegan, Ralph Keyes, Sean Lehane, Ted O'Sullivan (witness), Sean Cotter.
<u>Bandon Battalion</u>	Liam Deasy, Flor Begley, John O'Leary, Jim Moloney, Dan Santry, Denis Delane, Mick O'Herlihy, Denis O'Brien, Patrick O'Sullivan.
<u>Clonakilty Battn.</u>	Stephen O'Neill, John Nyhan, Tim O'Donoghue.

<u>Dunmanway Battalion</u>	Sean Murphy
Skibbereen Battalion	Bernie O'Driscoll, Sam Kingston, Pat O'Driscoll

There were a number of others in attendance whose names I cannot recollect. The total number present was in the neighbourhood of 100.

The men from Bandon Battalion were billeted in the gate lodge. All others were under canvas in front of Shorecliffe House. The camp opened with a talk by Dick McKee on the training and activities to be undertaken during the week. Training started in earnest on Sunday morning. We marched to Mass at Leap Church and spent the remainder of the day, except for a break for lunch, drilling and skirmishing in the country around Glandore. These activities continued as usual until Wednesday morning (13 August 1919) when we were alerted about 5 a.m. to find that the camp had been surrounded by a strong force of British military accompanied by some members of the R.I.C. All present were searched. Four members of our party were arrested - Gearoid O'Sullivan, G.H.Q., Bernie O'Driscoll, Skibbereen, Sean Murphy, Dunmanway, and Denis O'Brien, Bandon. As far as I can recollect, they were found to be in possession of illegal documents. They were taken away by the military and were later sentenced to terms of imprisonment varying from three to six months. The enemy raiding party left the camp about midday and when we had partaken of some food, training went on as usual. As another raid was feared that night, the whole party moved to a vacant house half a mile north of Glandore. The programme of training was nearly completed on Thursday evening (14th) when the camp was again moved to Connonagh Wood near Leap. On the morning of Friday, August 15th, the whole party was transported in boats across Glandore Harbour to attend Mass in Union Hall. On their return the camp was dismissed and

all men were instructed to return to their own units.

Although the work of the camp had been interrupted by the British raid and the arrest of some of our comrades, it was a great success. It was the first occasion on which representatives from all over the brigade had met. They had an opportunity of discussing the activities, which had been taking place in their areas, and of exchanging views with their colleagues on all aspects of the coming fight against the enemy.

A Brigade Council meeting was held in Caheragh on the night of Saturday, 16th August, following the termination of the camp at Glandore. Michael Collins, Director of Intelligence, G.H.Q., presided. At this meeting several organisational

changes were made in the brigade and battalion staff personnel.

The brigade officers at this time were:- O/C. Tom Hales, Bandon; V.O/C. Sean Hayes; Adjutant, Michael McCarthy, Dunmanway; Q.M. Denis O'Shea, Skibbereen. As it was felt that Michael McCarthy - the brigade adjutant - was needed in his own area, Dunmanway, he was appointed Vice O/C. Dunmanway Battalion. Denis O'Shea was also replaced as Brigade Q.M. The brigade officers now were:- O/C. Tom Hales, Bandon; V.O/C. Sean Hayes; Adjutant, Liam Deasy, Bandon; Q.M., Pat Harte, Clonakilty; I.O. Sean Buckley, Bandon.

At this meeting I was appointed O/C. Bantry Battalion. The other officers were:- Sean Lehane (Vice O/C.), Sean Catter (adjutant), Michael O'Callaghan (Q.M.), Tom Reidy, (I.O.)

Early in November 1919, I was approached by Mossy Donegan, an officer of Bantry unit, and Michael O'Callaghan (Battn. Q.M.) regarding the possibility of carrying out a raid on one of the British M.L. boats which were based on Bantry. We spent some time discussing the plans and collecting information.

Eventually, on the night of 17th November 1919, the operation was carried out by about ten men of Bantry Company under Moss Donegan, Michael O'Callaghan, Ralph Keyes and Sean Cotter. The boat was tied up at the pier beside the railway station. It was boarded by the four abovementioned who held up the members of the crew and placed them under guard belowdecks. The remainder of the party then came aboard and broke open the armoury. They seized six Ross Canadian rifles and three short Webley revolvers with a supply of ammunition.

Some time before Christmas 1919, I received written instructions from Michael Collins, G.H.Q., to proceed to Castletownbere Battalion and to interview the Battalion officers re a large supply of guncotton which had been obtained by the battalion from Bere Island. Collins became aware of the presence of the guncotton in the area because the Battalion Staff had been trying for some time to negotiate with G.H.Q. regarding the disposal of the explosives. The Battalion Staff offered to exchange the guncotton for a supply of rifles, but nothing definite had been settled. I was instructed to collect as much as possible of the guncotton and to arrange for its transportation to Brigade H.Q. I failed to reach an agreement with the battalion staff as to the disposal of the material. I then contacted Eugene O'Sullivan, Inchintaglen, and Eugene Dunne, Ardrigole. They arranged to let me have a supply of guncotton for Brigade H.Q. as they were anxious to see the guncotton used to advantage. I then returned to Battalion H.Q. to arrange transport. A motor-boat was made available by Tom Reidy (Battalion I.O.) at Bantry and, with Sean Lehane, I travelled along the coast to Ardrigole Pier where the guncotton was loaded by Eugene Dunne, Eugene O'Sullivan and their men. We then came along by sea to Ardnagashel where the explosives were unloaded and transferred by horse and cart to Kealkil.

At this stage I handed the stock of guncotton over to Liam Deasy (Brigade Adjutant), who arranged for its transport to Brigade H.Q.

When Brigade H.Q. decided to arrange attacks on Mount Pleasant and Timoleague R.I.C. posts on the night of 25th February 1920, some of the guncotton taken from Ardrigole was used. The guncotton was made up in slabs about 9"x4"x1" with a hole in the centre of each slab. I should have mentioned that the guncotton was wet and could not be exploded without the insertion of a primer of dry guncotton with detonator in the hole in the centre of the slab. The explosion of the primer would explode the slab, but it was essential that the primer should be perfectly dry. We had no experience of the use of guncotton at this stage and we were of the opinion that, because the primer was enclosed in a thin damp-proof cylindrical case, it was dry. However, we found from experience that it was necessary to heat the primer before inserting in the wet guncotton if we were to get successful results.

I prepared the charge of guncotton to be used in the attack on Mount Pleasant Barracks at Hurley's, Laragh, Bandon. With a number of local men I proceeded across country towards Mount Pleasant about midnight on 25th February 1920. I remember that the first consignment of Mills bombs ever received in the brigade arrived the same evening. I carried two charges of guncotton - one under each arm - and a haversack full of Mills bombs. When we reached the vicinity of the barrack I was instructed to lay the charges of guncotton against the wall of a 'lean-to' at the back wall of the barrack. Various sections were in position in the vicinity of the barracks. Some were armed with rifles, but the main armament was composed of shotguns. Tom Hales (Brigade O/C.) was in

charge. I laid the charges against the wall of the 'lean to' and lit the fuses. I then dashed back to the cover of a fence at the rear where several shotgun-men were in position. Before I reached cover there was a mild explosion - the detonators in the primers had exploded, but the guncotton had not. Immediately following the small explosion the garrison of the barracks sent up Verey lights and opened fire. They were evidently on the alert. I then threw a number of Mills bombs on to the roof while, at the same time, fire was opened up by the I.R.A. covering parties. Intermittent firing continued for about two hours, but eventually, as daylight approached, we were forced to withdraw.

Amongst those who took part in this attack were:- Tom Hales (Brigade O/C.), Liam Deasy (Brigade Adjutant), Ted O'Sullivan (O/C. Bantry Battalion), Frank Hurley (O/C. Laragh Company) and Michael McCarthy (V.O/C. Dunmanway Battalion). There were, in addition, a considerable number of others - to the number of about 50 whose names I cannot recollect.

Training at this stage became intensified and members of all units began to realise that we were at war. All units were reporting regularly on enemy movements, and on the layout and activities at enemy posts in their area. Being now on wholetime service I was moving regularly around my area and, towards the end of March, had planned to arrange an attack on Durrus R.I.C. Barracks. Plans and preparations were proceeding throughout the month of March 1920, and on the night of March 31st the operation was undertaken. The men selected to take part to the number of 60 were drawn from Durrus, Caheragh and Bantry companies. The attacking party was divided into four sections:

- (a) covering party in position in the yard of Ross's stables directly across the street from the front

of the barrack. Moss Donegan i/c., 3 riflemen and about 6 or 7 shotgun men;

- (b) covering party at rere of barracks under Dan O'Mahoney - 3 riflemen and 5 or 6 shotguns;
- (c) covering party on the street under John O'Sullivan (Baurgorm), 1 rifleman and 4 or 5 shotguns;
- (d) storming party to enter house next door, get on to roof of barrack and, having broken in same, set barrack on fire. This party consisted of John J. O'Sullivan, Tom Ward, Sean Lehane and Ted O'Sullivan (witness).

There were, in addition, several men engaged on scouting, road-blocking and outpost activities. Our plan of attack envisaged the seizure of a house adjoining the barrack, breaking through the roof, and then climbing on to the roof of the barrack. We had prepared two mines from 6" metal pipes about 18" long. These were filled with broken metal and charged with gelignite which was detonated and fused. We also had made about a dozen canister bombs by filling cocoa and paint tins with scrap metal and inserting a stick of gelignite with fuse and detonator. The fuse protruded through a hole in the lid.

When the sections at (a), (b) and (c) above were in position, the group at (d) approached the house selected for seizure. It was occupied by three sisters who, when they saw us, created a bit of a racket. This must have helped to put the garrison of the barracks on the alert. However, we proceeded to make a hole in the roof of the house and succeeded without undue trouble. ~~With John O'Sullivan~~

I then got on to the roof of the barrack which I smashed in with a hammer. I immediately lighted the fuse of one of the mines and dropped it through the hole in the roof of the barrack. There was a deafening explosion and considerable damage was done to the interior of the building. I then dropped in a second one, but the fuse got caught in a nail on one of the rafters and the mine fell into the barrack, but did

not explode. A number of the small tin can bombs were then thrown and the garrison was called on to surrender. They refused, so we then poured some petrol through the hole in the roof of the barrack and set it on fire. We continued to feed small quantities of petrol to the fire until daylight intervened and we were forced to abandon our attempt to capture the post. I should have mentioned that the covering parties at the front and rear had opened fire on the building at an agreed signal - 3 shots - from me when we dropped in the first mine. All sections withdrew to their home areas at daylight. This enemy post was vacated next day.

When instructions were received from G.H.Q. at Easter 1920 to destroy all evacuated enemy posts, the following posts were destroyed: Kilcrohane (witness i/c.); Durrus (Tom Ward i/c.); Kealkil (local Coy. O/C.). These posts were all set on fire by the members of the local units.

After these operations, enemy activities were intensified. As a result of constant enemy raids, a number of men were forced to go on the run. There were about a dozen men on the run in the Bantry area and I decided to divide them into 2 sections - one to operate north of Bantry and the other in the south. As a large force of British military were landed at Bantry and accommodated in the Workhouse about this time, the men of these sections were mainly engaged in evading arrest, raiding mails and, occasionally, sniping R.I.C. and military posts. All mails seized were censored, endorsed accordingly and returned through the local post office. No information of any military value was obtained in these raids. In addition to these activities, ambush positions were taken up on several occasions, but the expected enemy patrols did not turn up.

About the end of May 1920, information came to hand that a large store of guncotton for fog signals was stored at Mizén Head Signal Station. I immediately made arrangements to carry out a raid on the station which was over 20 miles from Bantry. On 31st May all men on the run in the area - to the number of 12/15 - were mobilised in the vicinity of Bantry. We then proceeded to Mizén Head - about 3 miles west of Goleen - in Skibbereen area - which was still held by a strong force of R.I.C. We commandeered a motor lorry at Dunbacon and reached the vicinity of Mizén Head station without incident. The approach to the station was by a series of steps like a stairway down the face of a cliff. We succeeded in getting into the station unobserved and then held up the men in charge. We then removed about 30 cwt. of dry guncotton and a quantity of detonators. The guncotton was made up in packages of about three quarters of a cwt. each and had to be carried up the steps, a distance of about 200 yards, to the lorry. As this was dry guncotton, it proved very valuable later on. It was removed to dumps in Bantry Battalion area. After this raid the R.I.C. evacuated Goleen barracks next day. Amongst those who took part in this raid were:- Seán Lehane (Battn. V/C),

Tom Ward and the men who were 'on the run' and who formed the column at the time, with members of Goleen and Durris Companies.

Sean Lehane, who had been Vice O/C. of Bantry Battalion, was now appointed to organise the Schull peninsula area. This area afterwards became the 7th Battalion, Cork III Brigade. Sean Lehane, who became the first O/C. of the battalion, was replaced on Bantry battalion staff by Moss Donegan. The officers of the latter battalion now were:- O/C. Ted O'Sullivan (witness); Vice O/C. Moss Donegan; Adjutant, Sean Cotter; Q.M. Michael O'Callaghan; I.O. Tom Reidy.

The section of the men on the run operating north of

Bantry, of which I was in charge, took up ambush positions for a whole week near Glengarriff during the first week in June 1920. They were in position behind the roadside fence on the Glengarriff-Bantry road about from Glengarriff. They were waiting for a patrol of R.I.C. which normally operated in the area, but the patrol never came as far as the ambush site. We could not find a suitable position any closer to Glengarriff. However, on Saturday morning, one R.I.C. man passed through in the direction of Bantry. As we were expecting some others to follow, we allowed him to proceed. Although we remained in our position until about 4 p.m. there was no appearance by the enemy. We then decided to move on towards Bantry to meet the R.I.C. man - Constable King - who had passed in the morning. We met him in the vicinity of Snave and duly executed him, as it was reported that he had taken part in the murder of I.R.A. men at The Ragg, Co. Tipperary. Amongst those who took part were: Dan O'Mahoney, John J. O'Sullivan, John Wryne, Michael O'Driscoll, Denis O'Sullivan. At this stage, Dan O'Mahoney and Denis O'Sullivan returned to their home areas. The remainder of the party withdrew to the vicinity of Bantry.

The section operating south of Bantry had been operating on much the same lines, but made no contact with the enemy until 22nd June 1920. On this date a patrol of R.I.C. was ambushed at Clonee on the Durrus-Bantry road. One of the enemy party was killed and two were wounded. Amongst those who took part in this engagement were:- Moss Donegan, O/C., Sean Lehane, Tom Ward, Dan Lehane, Pat Lehane. Arising out of this operation, masked men raided the houses of several I.R.A. men and Sinn Fein leaders in Bantry on the night of 24th June 1920. They shot Con Crowley who was a member of Sinn Fein. None of the I.R.A. men was at home.

The members of the Bantry Company were practically on continuous service at this period. They were engaged nightly in raids of one kind or another on enemy stores passing through Bantry to Bere Island military post. Amongst the military goods seized at this time was a large consignment of boots, shirts, underwear, socks. These were seized in a raid on Bantry railway stores. They were carried around by the Strand to a dump in Newtown and were later removed to dumps where they could be used by the brigade column.

During July 1920, a number of ambushes were laid for a military curfew patrol operating in the town of Bantry, but the enemy never entered the ambush positions. At this period guards were posted on the homes of I.R.A. men and their supporters, which were likely to be burned as reprisals by the enemy. The provision of guards of this nature threw additional work on the members of the local companies as well as on the officers of the battalion staff who usually took charge. The normal training and organisation continued and all units were now, more or less, on a war footing - men being specially trained in the use of the rifle and small arms as well as in the manufacture of bombs and mines. Several raids were carried out during this period on the mails, both local and provincial, but no information of military value came to light.

At this stage the main Bantry-Glengarriff road had been under observation by me for some days to check on the routine of a British military convoy which travelled the road. I eventually decided that I had sufficient information and selected an ambush position at Snave, about 5 miles from Bantry. The column of men on the run were billeted at Connolly's, Holly Hill, where we made a road mine by filling a 12" sewer pipe with concrete, shrapnel. We charged it with about $\frac{3}{4}$ cwt. of

guncotton suitably set for detonation. Two lorries of military passed by Holly Hill towards Glengarriff while we were preparing the mine. If they followed their normal procedure they would be returning through our position at Snavé about nightfall. The men of the local company (Coomhola) were mobilised to co-operate with the column of men on the run. When the mine was ready it was transported to O'Driscoll's, Snavé, whence Denis O'Driscoll took it in a horse and cart towards the ambush position at Snavé Bridge. Just as O'Driscoll was approaching Snavé Bridge ^{where} with Moss Donegan, I was placing the men in position, the enemy convoy of two lorries drove towards us at a fast rate firing as they came. When the man with the horse and cart (Denis O'Driscoll) heard the firing he drove up a side road beside Snavé Bridge leading to Coomhola. Instead of continuing on to Bantry, the military followed the horse and cart up the Coomhola Road. The enemy had arrived at the ambush site at least two hours ahead of normal time. Having regard to the manner in which they approached our position and followed the horse and cart, it was quite obvious that they were in possession of information regarding our activities and we were taken completely by surprise. Denis O'Driscoll and Flor O'Sullivan, who accompanied him with the mine, were taken prisoners and removed to Bantry, while all sections of the ambush party dispersed - some to their home areas and the men on the run to new billets. The majority of the men who took part were members of Glengarriff and Coomhola Companies, in addition to the members of the column.

The Brigade O/C. (Tom Hales) and Brigade Q.M. (Pat Harte) were captured by the enemy on their way to a brigade staff

meeting on 27th July 1920. They were arrested at Hurley's, Laragh, Bandon. The vacancies created by these arrests led to a further change in the personnel of the brigade staff, which now became: O/C. Charlie Hurley; Vice O/C. Ted O'Sullivan (witness); Adjutant, Liam Deasy; Q.M. Dick Barrett.

I was now appointed Brigade Vice O/C. and was replaced as O/C. Bantry Battalion by Moss Donegan. I was immediately made responsible for organising special services which included intelligence, engineering, signalling, communications throughout the brigade. This duty involved journeys throughout the brigade, visiting all battalions, arranging meetings of Battalion Councils and selecting suitable officers for appointment to the new posts. In addition, it was part of my duty to organise operations in the various battalions and to assist and encourage the battalion officers in the carrying out of same on their own initiative.

I was also charged with the setting up and maintenance of a Brigade H.Q. This H.Q. could never be kept in a fixed place for any appreciable length of time. It was often moved within 24 hours of establishment in a district, but on occasions it was possible to maintain it for a period of two to three weeks at a time in the same area. Flor Begley, Bandon was officer in charge of records at Brigade H.Q. The establishment of H.Q. in an area necessitated the provision of scouts, dispatch riders and other security arrangements such as the provision of guards. Dumps to hold records, typewriters and important documents had to be constructed in close proximity to H.Q. so that all documents could be hidden at short notice in the event of a surprise raid by the enemy. All documents and typewriters were dumped at night. The scouts operating during the day were replaced at night by armed guards.

The organisation of this system occupied quite an appreciable amount of time. While working on the organisation of this aspect of the work I arranged call houses and dispatch riders for Brigade Communications. The men engaged on this work had to have suitable transport available at particular points, e.g., boats to cross rivers, horses to travel cross country and bicycles in good condition in every area. I can say with safety that never once during the progress of the war did arrangements on the communications lines fail.

At this stage Brigade Council meetings were held at monthly intervals. They were attended by the officers on the brigade staff and the O/C. of each battalion. As occasion demanded, other battalion officers with local or specialised knowledge were called in to assist and advise. As there was no fixed H.Q., the journeys to Brigade Council meetings often took two or three days. H.Q. was continually moving around the area, being located at various centres for periods of two to three weeks at a time. As stated in the previous paragraph, there were a few occasions on which it had to be moved at very short notice. Amongst the houses at which Brigade H.Q. was set up at one time or another were:- Delaney's (Coppeen), Farrell's (Clogher, Dunmanway), Hurley's (Shanacrane), Manning's (Shanacrane West), Nugent's (Dunbacon, Durrus), McCarthy's (Charagh), Kingston's (Toureen, Skibbereen), Humphrey Ford's (Ballymurphy), O'Mahoney's (Belrose, Upton), Crowley's (Trenamadree) and Nyhan's (Castletownkenneigh).

With Liam Deasy and Mossy Donegan I travelled to Cork City on the evening of 12th August 1920. We had been summoned to attend a meeting at the Courthouse, Cork, at 9 p.m. When we arrived at the meeting place we were met by Donal Óg O'Callaghan who informed us that a mistake in our notices had

been made, as the meeting was to be held at the City Hall. We immediately left the Courthouse and proceeded in the direction of the City Hall to find, when we reached Parnell Bridge - just beside the Hall - that the City Hall area had been invested by military. We remained in the vicinity, amongst the general public, until we saw a number of prisoners escorted from the Hall and placed in the enemy lorries. Amongst the prisoners taken were:- Terence McSwiney (O/C. Cork I Brigade); Sean O'Hegarty (Vice O/C. Cork I Brigade); Joseph O'Connor (Q.M. Cork I Brigade); Dan O'Donovan (O/C. 1st Battalion, Cork I Brigade); Michael Leahy (O/C. 4th Battalion, Cork I Brigade); Liam Lynch (O/C. Cork II Brigade); Patrick McCarthy (O/C. Mallow Battalion, Cork II Brigade). There were four or five others whose names I cannot recollect. We then withdrew quietly and were thankful for the mistake in the notice convening the meeting which saved us from capture.

The Oath of Allegiance to the Republic was approved by Dáil Éireann in August 1919. It was administered to all officers of the Irish Volunteers. We were now the Irish Republican Army. Throughout August 1920, I toured the brigade area administering the oath to all officers and men at public parades of the various companies. At the same time I was endeavouring to boost activities by organising attacks on enemy patrols and posts. I also utilised this trip to select suitable men in each area for call up to a training camp which was about to be established.

The brigade adjutant (Liam Deasy) had attended a meeting of the Munster brigade O/Cs. with the members of G.H.Q. staff in Dublin at August weekend. The meeting was presided over by the Minister for Defence, Cathal Brugha. When he returned from this meeting, a meeting of brigade staff was held to discuss the best method of intensifying our activities. It was

generally agreed that before we could attempt any large scale attack, it would be necessary to intensify the training of selected men. The problem facing us was to find a training officer with experience. The Brigade I.O. (Sean Buckley) stated that he had received an offer to serve with the I.R.A. from a man who had served throughout the 1914-18 war. Sean Buckley, who had known this man before he left Bandon to serve in the British army, was strongly in favour of accepting the offer. He assured us that the man in question - Tom Barry - had helped him in his intelligence duties and he was quite satisfied with his national background. Although the majority of the members of the staff were not enthusiastic about the selection, it was decided that Tom Barry should be interviewed by the new Brigade O/C. (Charlie Hurley) and the Vice O/C. (Ted O'Sullivan, witness). We proceeded to Cork where we interviewed Tom Barry at the Camden Hotel, Camden St. We were satisfied that Barry's offer to serve with the I.R.A. was genuine and we reported accordingly to the brigade staff on our return to H.Q. After a lengthy discussion, it was decided to appoint Tom Barry Brigade Training officer.

Arrangements were then made to organise a training camp in Bandon Battalion area. Similar camps were later organised in other areas. The camp in Bandon area was established at Clonbuig, Kilbrittain, during the first week in September 1920. This camp catered for selected officers from the companies in the battalion. The camp was attended by about 30 officers as well as the Brigade O/C. (Charlie Hurley), Brigade Adjutant (Liam Deasy) and the Q.M. of Bandon Battalion (Tadhg O'Sullivan). The latter was appointed Camp Q.M. and Tom Barry was in charge of training. This camp was carried on for a week and all the men were then sent home with instructions to return in three days. When the men reported back it was decided to seek an

engagement with the enemy before calling up another group for training. Those who had attended the Clonbuig camp were then marched across country to Fanlobbus in Dunmanway area under Liam Deasy (brigade adjutant). At Fanlobbus they were joined by the Brigade O/C. (Charlie Hurley) and Brigade Training officer (Tom Barry). Positions were taken up on the Dunmanway-Ballineen road, 3 miles east of Dunmanway, in the early morning, but there was no appearance by the enemy. The column then withdrew to billets and the brigade officers returned to H.Q. to make arrangements for a second training camp. The column had been left in charge of Sean Hales (O/C. Bandon Battalion). Next day they moved into Newcestown area where that evening they ambushed two lorry loads of the Essex Regiment. There was a number of casualties amongst the enemy including two officers. The I.R.A. column which had no casualties was then disbanded and the members returned to their homes.

Training at the second camp was similar to that at the first. The same officers were in charge. The second camp was assembled at Ballymurphy. When training had been completed, the men trained at this camp took up an ambush position on the main Cork-Bandon road near Innishannon, but again, there was no appearance by the enemy. This was about the end of September 1920. This unit was then sent home with instructions to return to the camp in three days. In the meantime, a fresh position had been selected and, October 22nd, this party moved into position at Toureen on the Cork-Bandon road, about 3 miles east of Innishannon. The strength of this column was about 36. It was divided into three sections of approximately equal strength. They took up positions extending over a distance of about 150 yards south of the road. A mine was laid in the road and it failed to explode. As this explosion was to be the signal for opening the attack

the first lorry passed through unscathed. However, the second lorry was fired on by the main body stationed in the centre of the ambush position under the column O/C (Tom Barry) and halted. It came under fire of the western and middle sections. Five of the enemy party were killed. Four surrendered. The I.R.A. party had no casualties and captured eight rifles, a revolver and a large quantity of ammunition. The column then withdrew towards Ballydaly Pier and were ferried across the Bandon river to Kilmacsimon Quay. They then moved into billets. I was not present at this engagement as I was engaged in making arrangements for a training camp in Bantry battalion area at Kealkil.

The camp at Kealkil was attended by the officers of all companies in Bantry Battalion. It was carried on for a week - a similar routine to that employed at Clonbuig and Ballymurphy being followed. This column when trained took up positions in the area, but there was no appearance by the enemy.

At this stage, the Brigade O/C (Charlie Hurley) was of the opinion that a permanent brigade column should be established. His suggestion was discussed in detail at a Brigade Council meeting held at Kelly's, Gloun, Dunmanway. It was finally agreed to establish a column on the lines suggested and to place Tom Barry in charge as column O/C. The main difficulty was to lay down some rules governing the relations between the brigade O/C, column O/C, battalion and company commanders. Battalion and company O/Cs were instructed to facilitate the column and its O/C in every possible way when it was in their districts. It was suggested;

to the battalion O/Cs. that it would be advisable for them to be with the column when it was in their areas. It was also agreed at the meeting that only a limited number of battalion and company officers would be called for service with the column as the work of maintaining the local organisation was regarded as most important. It was agreed to invite as many volunteers to make up the first column as many men as possible who were not battalion or company officers. The area in which the column was to open operations was also selected at this meeting. The column O/C. (Tom Barry) was anxious to operate in Bandon area where he was more familiar with the terrain than he was with any other area. However, I strongly opposed this suggestion, pointing out that we were now handing over to this column practically the whole armament of the brigade, and that there was a better chance of operating with success in the mountainous area around Dunmanway, where the enemy forces were not so strong, than it had in the level country around Bandon where the enemy held very strong forces. After a long discussion, the brigade O/C. (Charlie Hurley) agreed with my submission. Eventually, it was decided to assemble the column at Farrell's, Clogher, Dunmanway, on Sunday, 21st November '20. Here the column was to undergo a week's training with a view to going into action in that area as soon as contact could be made with the enemy. The officers present at the brigade Council meeting were unanimous in the view that there would be no difficulty in finding volunteers for the column.

When the Brigade Council decided to put a column in the "field" on a permanent basis, it was the general opinion that some effort should be made to raise funds to supply the men of the column with clothing, cigarettes and suchlike necessities. We were of the opinion that, except when driven into the poorer regions where the people could not supply the food,

the feeding of the men would be attended to by the generous people amongst whom they were operating. It was, however, decided to impose a levy on the business and farming community of the area. The amount of the levy was fixed on the P.L.V. of business premises and on the number of stock carried on farms. The amounts varied from £1 to £50. The responsibility for collection was placed on the battalion O/Cs: who, in turn, held the company commanders responsible for the collection in their areas. The total amount collected was in the neighbourhood of £10,000. The first instalment of this levy was handed in at the Brigade Council meeting held at Kelly's, Gloun, Dunmanway, on 21st November 1920. This levy was called the Arms Fund Levy. It was used to provide the men of the column and those on wholetime duty with waterproof clothing, cigarettes, tobacco and other necessities. I was allocated the duty of organising and arranging for collection of this fund.

The column representative of the 6th (Castletownbere) and 7th (Schull) Battalions assembled as arranged at Farrell's Clogher, Dunmanway, on 21st November 1920. There was some difficulty with regard to the food supply and it moved after two days to Kenneigh Company area. By Saturday, November 27th, the column was at O'Sullivan's, Ahilina. The strength of this column was, I think, 36. All were armed with rifles and about 40 rounds. On Sunday morning, 28th November 1920, the column moved into an ambush position at Kilmichael and remained there without incident until about 4 p.m. About this time two lorries of Auxiliaries travelling from Macroom moved into the position. They were ambushed by the column. All, with the exception of one, were killed and the column captured 15 rifles, a number of revolvers and a considerable quantity of ammunition. I was not present on this occasion, being engaged on duties

in the Skibbereen battalion area where I had lain in ambush on numerous occasions in the vicinity of Leap without making contact with the enemy. I continued to travel around the area organising for the Arms Fund, inspecting companies and giving 'pep' talks to the officers of all units.

It was now moving on to Christmas and, as the column had been over three weeks under arms, it was decided to disband them and allow them to go to their home areas for Christmas. In the meantime, the various battalions were advised to make every possible effort to keep the enemy 'on the move'. There was no exceptional activity by the enemy in the area at this time, except in the region of Dunmanway where a strong unit of Auxiliaries had taken over the Workhouse. Their arrival was the prelude to a reign of terror in Dunmanway district in the course of which the Rev. Canon Magner, P.P. and Tadhg Crowley - a member of the I.R.A. - were shot dead. Conditions in the area were so bad that most people in the area with national sympathies were afraid to sleep in their homes at night. In some cases the morale of some members of the army was affected and it required constant attention to maintain a virile organisation in this district. This particular unit of the Auxiliaries were more aggressive than usual about this time. It is possible that this attitude was due to the fact that they had some knowledge that the column had been demobbed, and they felt that they had the I.R.A. on the run. However, the brigade O/C. (Charlie Hurley) decided to hold a Brigade Council meeting in Dunmanway Battalion area at Ballinacarriga on December 28th, 1920, to examine the position. This meeting was attended by:- Brigade O/C. (Charlie Hurley), Brigade V.O/C. (Ted O'Sullivan, witness), Brigade Adjutant (Liam Deasy), Brigade Q.M. (Tadhg O'Sullivan), Sean Hales (Bandon), Jim Hurley (Clonakilty), Sean Murphy (Dunmanway),

Con Connolly (Skibbereen), Tom Ward (Bantry), Liam O'Dwyer (Castletownbere) and Sean Lehane (Schull). This meeting decided to reassemble the column on 16th January 1921 and instructions were also issued to Battalion O/Cs. to organise battalion columns and to avail of every opportunity to strike at the enemy.

In view of the state of the army organisation in Dunmanway area, the Brigade O/C. now decided that the various companies in this battalion should be visited by some member of the brigade staff with a view to boosting up any loss of morale that may have resulted from the enemy's reign of terror during the period prior to Christmas. I was delegated to visit the companies in the area north of the Bandon river, viz: Derrynacaheragh, Coppeen, Aultagh, Togher.

I was accompanied by Paddy Crowley. The companies south of the river were to be visited by the brigade adjutant (Liam Deasy) and column O/C. (Tom Barry). With Paddy Crowley I visited all companies ^{NORTH} ~~south~~ of Bandon river and discussed with the officers and members of each unit the general position in their area - advising them that the column would again be operating in the near future and that the enemy forces in the area would meet with plenty of opposition provided the local units carried out the duties allotted to them. Having spent nearly three days on this tour, I again made contact with the other members of the brigade staff at O'Neill's, Shanavanagh. Here we reviewed the results of the inspection of Dunmanway Battalion and decided on the programme for January 1921. After this meeting the brigade adjutant (Liam Deasy), brigade Q.M. (Tadhg O'Sullivan) and column O/C. (Tom Barry) moved away to brigade H.Q. which, at the time, was at O'Mahoney's, Belrose, Upton. The brigade O/C. (Charlie Hurley) moved to Kilbrittain where

an attack had been arranged on the local R.I.C. post. I moved into Bantry, Castletownbere and Schull areas to see what progress was being made on the formation of battalion columns, etc.

On my way back to brigade H.Q. after this tour, I made contact with the column in the vicinity of Crosspound. When it moved in to attack Innishannon R.I.C. Barracks on the night of January 26th, 1921, I was in charge of a section at Brinny Bridge with instructions to hold off any enemy reinforcements coming from Bandon. Our party numbered about forty and were armed with rifles and shotguns. Dick Barrett was second in command.

Two other sections of the column under the brigade adjutant (Liam Deasy) and column O/C (Tom Barry) were deputed to carry out the attack on the barracks. The mine laid at the door of the barracks failed, and despite intense rifle fire by the attacking party we failed to make any impression on the garrison. There was no attempt to send reinforcements via my position. When the signal to withdraw was given I moved with my section to Crosspound where I joined up with the remainder of the column.

Following this engagement I was deputed to go to Castletownbere and Bantry Battalions on a tour of inspection - the other brigade officers being similarly engaged for some days in the other battalion areas. I was back again in the Kilbrittain area for a Brigade Council meeting on 5th February 1921. This meeting continued throughout the night, ending some time about 1 a.m. At this meeting the brigade O/C (Charlie Hurley) insisted that there should be increased activity in all battalion areas in the immediate future. Leaving this meeting, I proceeded to Bantry area where I discussed plans for intensifying the campaign with the O/C

Tom Ward. He left me to arrange some sniping activities in Bantry. I returned to Drimoleague where I met the company O/C. (Dan O'Driscoll) and we arranged to ambush a patrol of R.I.C. in Drimoleague that night (Tuesday). It was, I think the first Tuesday in February 1921. Accompanied by Dan O'Driscoll (O/C. Drimoleague Coy.), Michael Harrington (adjt. Bantry Battalion), Sonny Sullivan (Bantry Coy.), Tom Collins (Inchingeragh Coy.) and Con Keane (O/C. Inchingeragh Company) I moved into Drimoleague about 7 p.m. We took up a position about 50 yards from the R.I.C. barrack behind a stonewall. All were armed with rifles. There was no appearance by the patrol at the expected hour, so I sent Dan O'Driscoll into the village to ascertain whether there were any R.I.C. in the village. When O'Driscoll returned, he informed me that four R.I.C. men were drinking in Beamish's publichouse. This had been confirmed by an I.R.A. man - Tom Young - whom he had met on the street. In the circumstances, we remained in our position and, after about 30 minutes, the enemy party made their appearance. They walked down the street towards the barrack in two pairs. As they passed our position we opened fire. Constable O'Connor was killed and his companion, Constable Griffin, was wounded. The other pair escaped. We immediately withdrew to Castledonovan where we went into billets.

Shortly after our withdrawal from Drimoleague, strong forces of military arrived from Bantry (10 miles) while a force of Auxiliaries arrived from Dunmanway (10 miles). The military were apparently first on the scene, otherwise it is likely that Drimoleague would have been burned out that night by the Auxiliaries. Both enemy parties returned to their bases that night, but the military returned next day. They rounded up all available members of the civilian population

and formed them into a "Civil Guard". They appointed officers and divided the 'guard' into a number of sections, allocating periods of duty to each group. During duty periods the sections were to report to the R.I.C. barracks at fixed intervals.

A meeting of Bantry Battalion Council was held at Colomane Wood on the night of 10th February 1921. I was present to hear a report on the efforts being made to carry out the brigade O/C's (Charlie Hurley) orders to intensify the campaign against the enemy. While the meeting was in progress, the brigade adjutant (Liam Deasy) and column O/C. (Tom Barry) arrived. They had been with the brigade column which had invested Skibbereen on the previous night. The column was now billeted in the neighbourhood. A discussion took place on the prospects of capturing Drimoleague R.I.C. Post and it was decided to attack this post on the following night (11th February 1921). Arrangements were made for the column O/C. (Tom Barry) to drive through Drimoleague next day to inspect the position. He was driven into the village in a horse and trap by Miss Bridie Manning, Colomane, a member of Cumann na mBan. Here he held a consultation with Dan O'Driscoll (O/C. Drimoleague) who had been arranging scouts, outposts and road-blocking sections since he had left the Battalion Council meeting the previous night.

While the column O/C. (Tom Barry) was engaged on these duties, the members of the column were preparing for the engagement that night. A large mine was constructed by the engineering section and was mounted on a frame so that it could be carried by four men. I believe that this mine weighed between 3 and 4 cwt. and, as it had to be carried practically one mile, four of the strongest men in the column were selected for the job. Three of the men selected were John J. O'Sullivan

(Q.M. Bantry Battalion), Jack Corkerry (Ballinadee) and Tim O'Donoghue (Kilmeen). I cannot recollect the name of the fourth man.

The column men, led by local scouts, moved into Drimoleague about midnight, while I was detailed to take a section of the column to the vicinity of Inchingeragh Bridge where we were to take up positions to hold the Bantry-Drimoleague road against the possible arrival of enemy reinforcements. This section numbered about 20. All were armed with rifles. The attack on the barracks was not a success as the mine, although it exploded, did not breach the wall to enable the I.R.A. party to rush the barracks. Immediately following the explosion, fire was opened on the building by all sections. This was replied to by the garrison who sent up Verey lights to call for assistance. Having besieged the place for an hour all attacking sections were withdrawn, and I withdrew with my protection unit to Castledonovan area where we made contact with the main attacking body. Shortly after the withdrawal of the attackers, a strong force of Auxiliaries arrived in Drimoleague from Dunmanway. They rounded up a number of civilians and compelled them to knock down the wall separating the barrack yard from the public road. This party then moved out in the direction of Castledonovan, where the column were billeted, but did not come close enough to be engaged.

The column now moved on to Kealkil area and, after a few days, it travelled back to Bandon Battalion area. I was engaged during the remainder of the month of February at brigade H.Q. and touring the brigade area arranging for the cutting of enemy lines of communication, the demolition of bridges, blocking of roads, as well as my normal duties of inspecting and training personnel.

During the first week in March 1921, I travelled to Castletownbere to select 12 replacements for men who were to be demobbed from the column. I travelled in a small boat across Bantry Bay to Ardrigole over the road now known as the Healy Pass to Lauragh in Kerry and then on to Eyeries. Here I met Sean O'Driscoll, Christy O'Connell, Michael O'Sullivan, and nine others whose names I cannot recollect.

The whole party, armed with rifles, then travelled to Ardrigole by the same route. We now loaded a large stock of guncotton on a boat and travelled with it to Gearhies Pier near Kilcrohane. Here we unloaded our supply of explosives and took it by horse and car to brigade H.Q. which, at the time, was north of Dunmanway at Coolmountain.

This party from Castletownbere joined the column at Ahakeera and, within a week, were at Shippool in the vicinity of Innishannon. It was now 16th March 1921. On the morning of March 17th the column, to the number of about 100, took up positions at Shippool with the intention of ambushing a military convoy which was expected to travel through the selected position, on the Innishannon-Kinsale road. The column remained in position from daybreak to dusk on a cold wet day, but there was no appearance by the enemy.

While the column were in the Shippool area I was instructed to proceed to Cork I Brigade H.Q. and to endeavour to obtain a supply of .303 ammunition which was getting scarce at this time. I made contact with some officers of Cork I Brigade in the Cork City and obtained 2000 rounds from Sean Mitchell. This ammunition was dispatched by rail to Wm. Barrett, Killeady. It was packed in a butter box and consigned as parts for a steam engine. It was delivered to the column before Crossbarry on 19th March 1921.

In the meantime, I had proceeded to Bantry on organisation work and was operating there when I received news of the fight at Crossbarry. This was conveyed to me in a dispatch from Liam Deasy (brigade adjutant) in which he requested me to provide a machine gunner for the Lewis gun captured at Crossbarry. I immediately contacted Wm. O'Sullivan, a member of the Bantry Company who had experience of this gun, and escorted him to column H.Q. where he took charge of the Lewis gun.

As Charlie Hurley (brigade O/C) had been killed on the morning of Crossbarry (19th March 1921) when he endeavoured to break through a force of military which surrounded the house in which he was billeted, there were now further changes in the personnel of the brigade staff. Liam Deasy's name was now submitted for approval to G.H.Q. for appointment as brigade O/C. and authority for the appointment came through in due course. The officers of Cork III Brigade now were:- O/C. Liam Deasy; Vice O/C. Ted O'Sullivan (witness); Adjutant, Gibbs Ross; Q.M. Dick Barrett; O/C. Column, Tom Barry; O/C. Engineers, Mick Crowley; I.O. Sean Buckley; Asst. Brigade Adjt. Flor Begley.

Within a short time following these changes, the brigade Q.M. was arrested and he was replaced by Tadhg O'Sullivan who had been Q.M. of the column.

Many officers and men of the column which fought at Crossbarry were now demobbed for duty in their own battalion areas. They were replaced by a mixture of new recruits and some veterans who had previously served with the column. The new column assembled in the vicinity of Ahichill about the last week in March 1921. Some of those with this column were:- Christy O'Connell, Sean O'Driscoll, Ted O'Sullivan (witness), Jim Hurley, Tim O'Donoghue, John (Flyer) Nyhan, Stephen O'Neill,

"Neilus" Connolly, Denis Lordan, John Lordan, Sean Hales, Pete Kearney, Tom Kelleher, Mick Crowley, The strength of this column was about 60.

This column moved around the area for about a week without making contact with the enemy and, on the morning of March 30th we were in the neighbourhood of Benduff, 3 miles west of Rosscarbery. It was then decided to attack the R.I.C. Barracks in Rosscarbery that night. The day was spent in preparing for the attack. A mine which had been assembled by Tim O'Donoghue V.O/C. Clonakilty, and Dan Holland, Q.M. Bandon Battalion, was taken to the assembly point by Tim O'Donoghue (V/C. Clonakilty Battalion). The column was then divided into a number of sections as follows:-

- (1) a storming/^{party}of 10 men to lay a mine at the barrack door and rush the breach;
- (2) a group of 10 men carrying torches to be lighted when the breach had been made and the storming party had rushed the barracks;
- (3) a group of 10 men to occupy positions north and east of the barracks to prevent the garrison breaking out;
- (4) 12 men, divided into 3 groups of 4 each, to hold the roads leading to Rosscarbery;
- (5) 15 men, divided into 3 groups of 5 men each, to cut communications on all roads in the area.

All sections moved into their positions about midnight.

I was a member of the storming party at (a) which included Tom Barry, Mick Crowley, Denis Lordan, Jim Hurley, Christy O'Connell, Pete Kearney, Jack Corkery, Tim O'Donoghue, Tom Kelleher, Ted O'Sullivan (witness). The barracks was a strongly fortified isolated building at the eastern end of the town. A pathway led from the footpath to the door and, with the exception of this pathway, the area around the barrack was filled with barbed wire entanglements. The storming group and the section with the torches reached their position round a corner near the post office about 30 yards from the barrack

about 1 a.m. When the column O/C. (Tom Barry) had ascertained that the gate leading to the barrack was not locked, the mine was raised on to the shoulders of Peter Kearney, Tom Kelleher, Christy O'Connell and Jack Corkery. The two fuses were lighted by Denis Lordan and we started off at a trot to the barrack door. The mine was kept in position on the shoulders of the bearers by myself and the Vice O/C. Clonakilty Battalion (Tim O'Donoghue). The gate leading to the barrack door was opened by the column O/C. (Tom Barry) and we carried the mine to the door against which we laid it. We then dashed back to the corner and threw ourselves on the ground. I should have mentioned that, while moving into the selected positions and approaching the enemy post, the members of all sections were moving in their stockinged feet and were armed with revolvers carried in their free hands with their rifles slung across their backs.

We had hardly reached cover when the mine exploded with a deafening roar. Our party and the following section with the torches dashed immediately for the barracks. By the light of a torch we saw that the mine had not damaged the barrack to the expected extent. It had, however, blown a hole in the door and sent the steel shutters on two windows flying. Before we had completed the examination of the damaged door the garrison were firing through the door and windows. Our storming party replied to this fire as did the sections north and east of the building. We then threw Mills bombs and some canister bombs through the hole in the door, but the enemy replied with Mills bombs. After nearly two hours fighting we succeeded in driving the garrison from the ground floor. It was then decided to try to set the barracks on fire and I was instructed by the column O/C. to procure a supply of paraffin from a shop close by. I arranged a human chain of ^{column} men with buckets and

cans to carry the oil from the shop to the column O/C. who poured it into the barracks, having set the first lot thrown in on fire. The stairway leading to the upper floor of the barrack was now on fire and the continuous supply of paraffin helped to increase the flames. While the fire was being fed by our section, the other sections were shooting at loopholes and anywhere the garrison appeared to be active. Eventually, after about 4 hours fighting, the enemy were forced to evacuate the barracks, but they had thrown all their arms down the burning stairway and they could not be saved. Two members of the garrison - Sergeant Shea and Constable Bowles - were killed. Nine members of the garrison of 23 were wounded. The column had no casualties. All sections were now assembled in the Square, Roscarbery, where we delayed for some time before moving off in a westerly direction in order to mislead the enemy. When we had gone a few miles we turned north and, a short time later, wheeled east to Rossmore where we went into billets. We remained in Rossmore until darkness set in that night and then marched a distance of over 20 miles east to billets in Newcestown.

I continued to serve with the column for a short period in the early part of April during which we endeavoured to make contact with enemy patrols but, for one reason or another, all our arrangements at this stage proved abortive. It was about this time that word was received from G.H.Q. that it was proposed to land a cargo of arms from Italy in West Cork area. The spot selected was Union Hall. The brigade O/C. was busily engaged in organising arrangements for this operation and I was recalled to Brigade H.Q. At this period the column entered Bandon and held the town for practically a whole night without meeting any opposition. When it was decided to withdraw, a few shots were fired at enemy posts, but there was no

reply.

Towards the end of April, a meeting was held at Kippagh near Millstreet at the direction of G.H.Q. with a view to discussing the formation of the three Cork, three Kerry, West Limerick and West Waterford brigades into a combined unit to be called the 1st Southern Division. This meeting was attended by the brigade O/C. (Liam Deasy) and column O/C. (Tom Barry) representing Cork III Brigade. The division was established as from 27th April 1921. Liam Lynch (O/C. Cork II Brigade) was appointed Divisional O/C. and Florrie O'Donoghue (adjutant Cork I Brigade) Divisional Adjutant. At this meeting it was decided that some action should be taken against the enemy forces as a reprisal for the execution of I.R.A. men taken prisoner under arms. Accordingly, instructions were issued to all units to concentrate on a shoot up of all enemy personnel found abroad and to attack as many posts as possible on May 14th, 1921. I was deputed to organise this action in the western battalions of the brigade. In this connection I arranged for attacks at Castletownbere, Furious Pier, Skibbereen, Bantry and Dunmanway. At Furious Pier, five enemy personnel were killed, while at Castletownbere enemy casualties were 3 killed, 2 wounded. At Skibbereen and Bantry, enemy posts were sniped, while at Dunmanway I took charge of the operation myself, being assisted by Sean Murphy (O/C., Dunmanway Battalion) and Paddy O'Brien (battalion adjutant). About 50 men were assembled in the vicinity of the town about 2 p.m. on 14th May 1921. Sixteen were armed with rifles and the remainder with shotguns. This column was divided into four sections - riflemen and shotgun-men being interspersed. It was proposed to enter the square of the town at 3 p.m. when it was expected that a lorry of Auxiliaries would be at the Market House there, as was usual each day. Three sections

of the column were to enter the town from the north where there were three roads to be held. I took charge of these sections with Seán Murphy (battalion O/C) as second in command. The section to enter from the south was in charge of Paddy O'Brien (battalion adjutant). Each of the sections from the north took with it a horse and cart loaded with bags of earth to block the roads, on which they were operating, at the entrance to the Square, and to provide cover for our men. All sections from the north reached the Square on time. The horses were moved into position and shot, effectively blocking all exits on the north side. A small section had also blocked the road leading to Auxiliary H.Q. by felling a tree. This was done in order to prevent the arrival of reinforcements or the return of the lorry to its H.Q. However, the only enemy in sight were two R.I.C. men who made their escape through a house on to the river bank before they could be shot. The section under Paddy O'Brien entered the town from the south and took up its allotted position. However, there was no lorry of Auxiliaries on the Square, so, after holding the town for about an hour, the column withdrew without an engagement. The sole result of our activities was the insult to the Auxiliaries in that the general public saw that we held the town for over an hour while not an Auxiliary dared to make his appearance. This general operation had the effect of curtailing the activities of the small raiding parties of one or two lorries which had operated up to now. As a matter of fact, the enemy forces in the area only moved about the district in strong columns on foot between May and the Truce on 11th July, 1921.

A couple of days prior to the visit to Dunmanway, I attended a meeting of Bantry Battalion Council at which final

arrangements for the activities in connection with the general shoot-up were discussed. While the meeting was in progress, a report was received that the force of Auxiliaries stationed at the Eccles Hotel, Glengarriff, were to evacuate the post next day. They were to travel by train from Bantry. It was decided to attack this train at Inchingeragh next day.

Towards the end of May 1921, a strong column of British military under Major Percival of the Essex Regiment moved out from Kinsale on foot. It travelled across country searching houses and fields as it progressed. The activities of this column made the maintenance of lines of communication more difficult. Increased scouting and intelligence services were necessary in order to keep Brigade H.Q. in touch with the enemy movements. Many civilian prisoners were taken in this operation, and, in some cases, the houses of supporters of ours were destroyed. This action led to counter-reprisals by us on the homes of British supporters in the area. Amongst the houses burned by the I.R.A. as reprisals were Castle Bernard, the home of the Earl of Bandon. The activities of this column were only the forerunner of a big encircling movement undertaken by troops operating from Bandon, Kinsale, Cork and Killarney in an endeavour to surround our column which, at the time, was in the vicinity of the Skibbereen area. The column withdrew to Bantry area, but here information was received that the British were preparing to land troops on the coast. This appeared to be borne out by the presence of a number of enemy naval vessels in Bantry Bay. As a result, the column moved on to Coomhola and from there to Gougane Barra in Cork 1 Brigade area. At this stage, all intelligence

reports indicated that the enemy movement appeared to have been called off and the column returned to its own area. It was now the end of the first week in June 1921. We were now satisfied that we held the initiative in the area as the enemy seldom moved out except in columns of 300 to 400 and then only on foot.

During the month of June I was engaged at Brigade H.Q. and throughout the area on various administrative and inspection duties. The men in the various battalions were ensuring that the enemy were harassed as much as possible by constant sniping - a few shots at a time - at enemy posts, the cutting of lines of communication and suchlike activities. About mid-June, information was received that large reinforcements were to be drafted into the area by the British. As these forces were likely to be accommodated in Bandon and Skibbereen where two large buildings - both Workhouses - were available, it was decided to destroy both buildings. Each of these was capable of holding close on 1000 troops. The column under the O/C. (Tom Barry) was in Clonakilty area. The night of 23rd June was selected for the operation and the column was divided into two sections. Tom Barry took one section to Bandon, and the Brigade O/C. (Liam Deasy) moved into Skibbereen with the second section. The operations were a complete success and, next morning (June 24th) both Workhouses were only smouldering ruins. Both in the case of Bandon and Skibbereen large enemy garrisons were holding each town, but they failed to make the slightest effort to save the buildings. This was further proof that the initiative lay with the men of the I.R.A.

The British had been executing men found in possession of arms or taken prisoner in the course of engagements since

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February 1921. These men were being tried by courtmartial which would seem to indicate that they were prisoners of war, but, despite this fact, a number had been executed. So far no man from Cork III Brigade had been dealt with in this manner - it appeared to be the policy of the military (Essex Regiment) and Auxiliaries operating in our area to shoot anybody found engaged in military activities out of hand. However, some men from Clonakilty area were surprised by enemy forces while engaged on the demolition of Jones's Bridge on the Clonakilty-Ballinascarthy road. After an exchange of shots William Daly, Shamonvale, Clonakilty, was captured. He was removed to Victoria Barracks, Cork, where he was to be court-martialled. As a counter-stroke, it was decided to seize as hostages some of the leading supporters of the British in the area. On 21st June 1921, the following were taken prisoner and removed to an "unknown destination" - words used to describe the place of detention of prisoners taken by the I.R.A. :- The Earl of Bandon, Deputy Lieutenant of Cork County; Mr. Sealy King, J.P., Bandon; Mr. J. Fitzpatrick, J.P., Clonakilty; and St. Leger Gilman, J.P. Clonakilty. They were held prisoner in various houses throughout the area and the O/C. of the British forces in Cork was informed that they would be executed if Daly or any other prisoner from Cork III Brigade was executed. There was no statement in reply from the British, but Daly was not executed. The hostages were detained until the Truce on 11th July 1921, when they were released.

The organisation of the 1st Southern Divisional activities was now proceeding on smooth lines. A meeting of the representatives of Cork and Kerry Brigades was held at Togher near Dunmanway towards the end of June. Liam Lynch (Divisional O/C), and Florrie O'Donoghue (Divisional Adjutant) were present. Cork III Brigade was represented by Liam Deasy (O.C.) and Tom

Barry (Column O/C.) At this meeting it was decided to establish a Divisional Training Camp in the Clydagh Valley south of Rathmore, and to initiate a campaign on a divisional basis following this camp. Three officers from each brigade were to attend this camp. The camp was to open during the first week in July 1921, and the officers from Cork III Brigade, who were selected to attend, were Liam Deasy (O/C.), Tom Barry (Column O/C.) and Denis Lordan (Column Adjutant). Arrangements were then made for their journey to the camp about 1st July 1921 and, in the absence of Liam Deasy, I was deputed to take charge of the brigade. The officers proceeding to the camp in Clydagh Valley had actually left the brigade area when word was received that the arrangements for the camp had been cancelled. On Saturday, 9th July 1921, I learned for the first time from the "Cork Examiner" that a Truce was to be arranged with the British for 12 noon on Monday, 11th July 1921.

My rank at the Truce - Acting O/C. Cork III Brigade, I.R.A.

The strength of the brigade at the Truce - About 8,000

At a later stage I propose to submit a statement covering the Truce period and the Civil War.

Signed: Jed O'Sullivan

Date: August 24 1956

Witness: P. Donnell

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