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**ORIGINAL**

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

BURO STAIRE MILEATA 1913-21

No. **WIS.** 1493

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COSANTA.

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

DOCUMENT NO. **W.S.**..... 1493.

Witness

Sean Cotter,  
Junction House,  
Carrigrohane,  
Co. Cork.

Identity.

Adjutant, Bantry Battalion, Cork III Brigade,  
I.R.A.

Subject.

Activities of Bantry Battalion, Cork III Brigade,  
I.R.A. 1916-1921.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil.

File No ..... **S.2806.**

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ORIGINAL

4.8. 1493

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

-BURO STAIRE MILEATA 1913-21

No. W.S. 1493

STATEMENT BY SEÁN COTTER,

Junction House, Carrigrohane, Co.Cork.

I was born in Bantry on 3rd November, 1899. I was educated at Bantry National School until I reached the age of 16 when I went to work in the office of Messrs. G.W. Biggs Ltd., Bantry.

I joined Bantry Company, Irish Volunteers, before Easter 1916. The O/C. was Michael O'Donovan (Sonny) and Michael Murray was second in charge. Other members of the unit were :- Ralph <sup>KEYES</sup> ~~Keegan~~, Mark Sullivan, Dan Regan, Dan Mahony, Seán Lehane, Maurice Donegan, Chris. Walsh, Seán Cotter (witness). The strength of the Company about this time was in the neighbourhood of 30. The armament of the unit consisted of six Smith and Harrington .32 revolvers.

On Easter Sunday morning 1916, about nine members of Bantry Company cycled to Kealkil where we met some men from Ballingearry Company. After waiting in the district all day we cycled back home to Bantry in the evening as our orders had apparently been countermanded. As far as I can recollect the following men from Bantry travelled to Kealkil on Easter Sunday morning :- Ralph Keyes, Michael Murray, Mark Sullivan, Dan Regan, John J. O'Sullivan, Dan Mahoney, Seán Cotter (witness), and two others whose names I cannot recollect. There was no further activity in Bantry during Easter Week 1916, but I think that the six revolvers held by the unit were handed over to Canon Cohalan, P.P., for safekeeping.

Following the release of the prisoners from Frongoch and other English gaols about Christmas 1916, there was a revival of interest in Volunteer activities. The Irish Volunteers were reorganised in Bantry in the spring of 1917. The prime movers in the reorganisation were :- Michael Murray, Ted O'Sullivan, Ernest Blythe, Michael O'Donovan and Dan Mahoney. The strength of the new Company was in the neighbourhood of 80.

The only type of training carried on in the early stages was close order foot drill. Training was usually carried on in the Town Hall. I was at this time a Sub-Section Commander in Bantry Company. The officers of the Company were, I think :-

O/C. Michael Murray,  
 1st.Lieut. Ted O'Sullivan,  
 2nd Lieut. Dan Mahoney.

At this period several Croppy pikeheads were made by Tom Connors, Blacksmith, Market Street, Bantry. Shafts were fashioned for these pikeheads.

Towards the end of 1917 Bantry area was organised on a battalion basis. The Companies in the area surrounding Bantry were organised into Bantry Battalion, Cork Brigade, Irish Volunteers. The Companies in the Battalion were :- Bantry, Caheragh, Durrus, Kealkil, Comhola. The first officers of this Battalion (Bantry) were :-

O/C. Michael Murray,  
 Vice O/C.  
 Adjutant Dan Mahoney,  
 Quartermaster

Normal training, which consisted of close order foot drill and route marches was carried on by all units under their/<sup>own</sup>officers.

Early in 1918 there was a change in the officers of the Battalion when the O/C., Michael Murray, left the area. He was replaced by Dan Mahoney who in turn was replaced as Battalion Adjutant by Ted O'Sullivan. I cannot recollect the names of the Battalion Vice O/C. and Quartermaster at this period.

When the British threatened to enforce Conscription in the spring of 1918, there was a big influx of new recruits. There was no change of officers at this time. However, all units were instructed to collect

all arms in the area and several raids for arms were carried out. About twenty shotguns were taken in these raids in Bantry Company area. Several members of the unit took part in these operations. When the Conscription scare had passed towards the end of the summer of 1918, all the new recruits disappeared and the strength of the Company (Bantry) returned to normal - about 70 to 80.

The first operation undertaken in the area was carried out on 23rd September, 1918, when a cycle patrol of two R.I.C. men were disarmed at Donemark Bridge - about one mile from Bantry on Glengariff Road. About nine members of Bantry Company took part in this operation. All were armed with sticks. We took up a position inside the roadside fence and when the patrol approached we rushed them. We took the carbines and cycles of the R.I.C. men together with a small supply of ammunition and then decamped. Several other efforts of a similar nature were undertaken, but for various reasons - mainly the failure of the expected enemy patrol to turn up - they proved abortive. Some of those who took part in the successful raid on 23rd September, 1918, were :- Ralph Keyes, Jackie Begley, Seán Cotter (witness).

At this stage every available opportunity was availed of to secure arms. Every bit of information, which seemed to indicate that there were arms in an area, led to efforts of one kind or another to secure same. Every private house, where there was a likelihood of finding arms, was visited, while the stores at Bantry Railway Station were visited at irregular intervals as information came to hand from our Intelligence men that enemy stores, passing through to Bere Island, were being held overnight at the station. In addition to these activities normal training, which was now becoming more advanced - men being trained in the use of the rifle, revolver, scouting, signalling, engineering - was carried on.

Early in 1919 I was sworn into the Irish Republican Brotherhood by Seán O'Hegarty. Some members of Bantry Circle, at this time, were

Ted O'Sullivan, Ralph Keyes, Dan Mahoney, Seán Lehane, Pat Lehane, Maurice Donegan, Jerome Sullivan, 'Sonny' Sullivan, Michael Murray. Shortly after joining the I.R.B. I was appointed Secretary of Bantry Circle.

Normal training continued throughout the area during 1919. In addition, Volunteers were engaged in helping to organise and collect the first Dáil Éireann Loan.

When a training camp was set up at Glandore in August, 1919, I was one of those selected to attend. I recollect that the tent used at this camp by Seán Lehane, Moss Donegan, Michael O'Callaghan and myself was purchased by us in England. Others from Bantry who attended, were : Ralph Keyes, Seán Lehane, Maurice Donegan, Michael O'Callaghan, Ted O'Sullivan, Dan Mahoney. Dick McKee (O/C., Dublin Brigade) was in charge of the camp. Amongst the other officers of Dublin Brigade present was Leo Henderson.

The camp was assembled on Saturday, 9th August, 1919. Representatives from all Battalions in West Cork Brigade were present. The training officers were all from Dublin Brigade. Those attending the camp were trained in the care and use of arms, map reading, use of compass, lessons in tactics. Training went on each day from dawn to dark. Nearly all lectures were given by Leo Henderson.

When the Camp had been in progress about four days we all woke up one morning to find that the camp had been surrounded by a strong force of British Military and R.I.C. We were all rounded up, paraded for identification, and searched. Four members of the party - Gearoid O'Sullivan (G.H.Q.), Bernie O'Driscoll (Skibbereen), Seán Murphy (Dunmanway) and Denis O'Brien (Kilbrittain) were arrested, as some incriminating documents or notes were found on them. I should have mentioned that there was a strict instruction that no notes should be

carried by those at the camp, nor should any arms. The men arrested were removed to Cork and later sentenced to terms of imprisonment. I was also arrested on this occasion, but released after identification by the local R.I.C. The circumstances in which I was arrested were as follows :- C.P.P. Lucey from Cork City, who was in attendance at the Camp, had a revolver on which he had scratched his name. When the raid took place he dumped the gun; but it was found by the raiding party, who then began to search for the owner. I took Lucey's bicycle, on which he had painted his name, and went to pass through the encircling cordon. I was immediately held up and taken before the O/C. of raiding force and the local R.I.C. Sergeant. The latter identified me and stated that I was not Lucey, so I was released; but, in the meantime, Lucey had made good his escape.

Training continued after the raid for some days, but we were billeted in various houses in the area and not concentrated in one spot. The camp concluded on Saturday, 16th August, 1919.

A Brigade Council meeting, over which Mick Collins (G.H.Q.) presided, was held at Caheragh. At this meeting several changes were made in the officer personnel throughout the Brigade. The officers of Bantry Battalion now became :-

O/C.	Ted O'Sullivan (previously Adjutant)
Vice O/C.	Maurice Donegan (I think),
Adjutant	Seán Cotter (witness),
Quartermaster	Michael O'Callaghan.

With Seán Lehane, Maurice Donegan and Michael O'Callaghan I was passing through Caheragh on our way from Glandore Camp, when we were informed of the change in officers. I was now a member of the Battalion Staff as were Maurice Donegan and Michael O'Callaghan. In co-operation with the O/C. (Ted O'Sullivan) we set about an intensive organisation of the area. All Companies were visited by one or other of the Battalion Staff, and inspected. Lectures were given on various aspects of

military affairs, and selected men were trained in the use of the rifle and revolver.

The first operation of importance in the area was the raid on a British M.L. boat at Bantry on Sunday, 17th November, 1919. Plans for this raid were made at the home of Company O/C. Bantry (Ralph Keyes) after some months of observation of the movements of the enemy boats. It was noted that about 8 p.m. each Sunday night, the officers of M.L.121 went to pay a social call on some friends. They usually remained away about 3½ to 4 hours. The enemy boat was berthed usually outside the "Princess Beara" - a boat which plied between Bantry - Bere Island and Castletownbere - which was lying next to the Pier.

The night of Sunday 17th November, 1919, was selected for this operation. The raiding party, which consisted of Ralph Keyes, Maurice Donegan, Seán Cotter (witness), John Teehan, Michael Walshe, Tom Breen, Jerome Sullivan, Michael O'Callaghan, Tim Clifford (small), and Mick Crowley, left Ralph Keyes' home in groups about 8 p.m. We travelled via Old Glengariff Road, Cove Road and The Strand to the Pier. Mick Crowley acted as scout and Tim Clifford (small), who was a member of the crew of the "Princess Beara" was already aboard that boat. When we reached the entrance to the Pier Michael O'Callaghan was deputed to take up a position as guard at that point. The remainder of the party proceeded along the Pier and, having crossed the "Princess Beara", boarded the enemy M.L. boat. I should have mentioned that the only arms carried by our party were :- Donegan and Keyes (Smith and Harrington .32 revolvers) Cotter (witness - Smith and Wessen .45).

When we boarded the M.L. boat the crew were below decks having refreshments and did not have a sentry posted on deck. We immediately batted<sup>N</sup>ed down the hatch and so held the crew prisoners. We broke a pane of glass in the hatch and warned the prisoners not to move. The magazine was based near the crew's quarters but was not accessible to them

from their present position. We smashed our way into the Magazine to find that the rifles there were chained to their racks. However, with the aid of an axe, which we had taken along for the purpose, we cut away the chains. We then removed six rifles, three revolvers, a lot of other military equipment including Verey-Light pistols and cartridges, and a supply of ammunition. The rifles were Ross-Canadian rifles. The crew, who had been held under armed guard during the course of the operation, were now ordered not to move for at least thirty minutes. Having removed all available stores from the Magazine we withdrew along the Pier via The Strand, Cove Road and across Newtown on to the Railway line. We moved along the railway to the rear of the National School where we had made arrangements to dump the captured materials between the ceiling and the roof in one of the class rooms. The key of the school had been obtained by a ruse from the Principal teacher by Jack O'Mahoney - a pupil attending the school - so that we could dump the stuff. He (O'Mahoney) was at the school when we arrived and was ready to return the key when we had finished.

While the work of dumping the arms was being carried out the teacher arrived unexpectedly and created a scene. He insisted that the captured material be removed forthwith and threatened to report us to the enemy. As a result we had to make alternative arrangements at a moment's notice. It suddenly dawned on Ralph Keyes that, with his father's co-operation, we could dump the stuff in the Catholic Church temporarily. Ralph Keyes' father was Sacristan at the Church. We sent Jack O'Mahoney - referred to in previous paragraph - to call on Mr. Keyes. He came almost immediately and we appealed to him to allow us to dump the stuff in the Sacristy of the Church. At this time the military garrison had received news of the raid and we were within 100 yards of their headquarters. We were actually able to hear the orders



being issued to the troops to "Fall In". Mr. Keyes agreed to place the captured material in the Sacristy and, having done so, we all withdrew to our homes which we reached about 11 p.m.. At 11.15 p.m. the homes of the majority of those, who had taken part in the raid, were raided by the enemy forces.

The rifles captured in the M.L. boat raid were used in the attack on Durrus R.I.C. barracks on 31st March, 1920. This was a Battalion job. The Battalion O/C. (Ted O'Sullivan) was in charge. The barracks was the last house in a terrace. It was a two-storey building with a small garden in front and a yard at the rear. The garden was filled with barbed wire, bushes, tin cans. All windows were steel-shuttered. We planned to get into the house next-door where we would break a hole in the roof and so be enabled to get on to the roof of the barracks. It was then planned to smash a hole in the barrack roof through which home-made mines, Grenades and petrol would be thrown. Sections, armed with rifles and shotguns, were also to be placed in position at the front and rear of the building. The section in front occupied a house the property of Sam Ross - a publican - and were also under cover of the fence across the road from the enemy post. The section at the rear were under cover of walls and ditches. The armament of the main attacking and covering parties consisted of six rifles and about twenty-five shotguns, with buckshot loaded cartridges. In addition to these parties there were strong sections engaged on road blocks on all roads leading to Durrus from Bantry and Skibbereen.

Everything proceeded according to plan and the attack opened about 3 a.m. The covering parties at front and rear were in charge of Maurice Donegan (front) and Cecil Keyes (rear). The main attacking party to enter the house next door and smash the roof of the barracks was composed of Ted O'Sullivan (O/C), Tom Ward, Seán Lehane, John J. O'Sullivan, Sonny Spillane, Seán Cotter (witness) and another whose name I cannot

recollect. The door of the house next door to the barracks was smashed in by John J. O'Sullivan using a sledge. We dashed in immediately and ran upstairs to the room nearest to the gable of the barracks. We evacuated to safety three women, who were in the room. Standing on the shoulders of Seán Lehane and myself - who were standing on a bed - Ted O'Sullivan broke a hole in the roof of the house. He then climbed through and smashed a hole in the roof of the barracks. We then handed him up a few home-made mines, several grenades and some tins of petrol. The most of the mines failed to explode. The petrol was then poured into the hole in the roof of the enemy post and set on fire. While this was going on intermittent fire between the occupants of the barracks and our covering parties was taking place. Verrey lights were being fired by the garrison at irregular intervals. The garrison was called on to surrender on several occasions, but they refused. Eventually they asked for a priest and doctor for two wounded men, but we refused their request unless they were prepared to surrender. As there was no offer to surrender the attack continued until after daybreak when the barracks was ablaze. However, as it was necessary that numbers of our attacking party had to be back in time for work in Bantry we were forced to call off the engagement. Shortly after we had withdrawn the garrison were forced to evacuate the building. Enemy casualties were two men severely wounded while we had one man (John D. O'Sullivan) slightly wounded.

The men on the run after the attack on Durrus R.I.C. barracks on 31st March, 1920 formed the nucleus of a Battalion Column. The first members were Seán Lehane, "Moss" Donegan, Tom Ward, Ted O'Sullivan, Con O'Sullivan, Ralph Keyes, Seán Cotter (witness). We were armed with rifles taken in the raid on the M.L. boat in November, 1919.

I was arrested at Scart, Bantry, by a force of military and R.I.C. two days after the attack on Durrus. I was transferred to Cork and Belfast prisons and later to Wormwood Scrubbs where, with a large number of other I.R.A. prisoners, I underwent a twenty-one days hungerstrike. With all the others I was released from Wormwood Scrubbs about the end of May, 1920. We were taken to a number of London Hospitals. I went to St. Mary's Hospital, Highgate. It had been agreed amongst the hungerstrikers that we would remain in hospital until our fare home was paid by the British. After about two weeks in hospital, instructions were received from Michael Collins via Seán Hyde that Ralph Keyes, Mick Crowley (Castletownbere) and myself were to return to Dublin immediately. Our travelling expenses were made available by one of the Irish organisations in London.

On our return to Dublin we reported to Michael Collins. He wanted us to arrange for the transfer to Dublin of a stock of gun-cotton which had been removed from Bere Island by the men of Castletownbere unit.

We left Dublin next day and travelled by train to Durrus Road Station - about six miles from Bantry - where we were taken from the train by our colleagues Ted O'Sullivan, Seán Lehane, Maurice Donegan, who had ascertained that the R.I.C. were awaiting our arrival at Bantry to re-arrest us.

As we were not feeling too strong after the hungerstrike, Ralph Keyes and I were ordered to rest for some time. We moved around the area under arms and were engaged in organising and training the Companies in the areas where we billeted. While we were convalescing the other men 'on the run' were seeking engagements with the enemy.

On 12th June, 1920, an R.I.C. man - Constable King - was shot at Ardnagashel by a party under the Battalion O/C. (Ted O'Sullivan).

A cyclist patrol of R.I.C. was attacked at Clonee Wood by a party which included "Moss" Donegan, Seán Lehane, Tom Ward, Pat Lehane, Dan Lehane and <sup>Rin Leary</sup> ~~Dan Leary~~. One member of the patrol - Constable <sup>BRETT</sup> ~~BUTT~~ - was killed. I was not present at Ardnagashel or Clonee Wood, being still on the easy list.

Towards the end of July, 1920, the Brigade O/C. (Tom Hales) and Brigade Quartermaster (Pat Harte) were arrested. This led to a change in the personnel of the Brigade Staff as Charlie Hurley (Bandon Battalion) was appointed O/C, and Ted O'Sullivan (O/C., Bantry Battalion) Vice O/C. The new Quartermaster was Dick Barrett.

The officers of Cork III. Brigade now were :-

O/C.	Charlie Hurley,
Vice O/C.	Ted O'Sullivan,
Adjutant	Liam Deasy,
Quartermaster	Dick Barrett.

As our O/C. (Ted O'Sullivan) had now been transferred to the Brigade Staff, the officers of Bantry Battalion Staff were :-

O/C.	Maurice Donegan,
Vice O/C.	Seán Lehane,
Adjutant	Seán Cotter (witness),
Quartermaster	Michael O'Callaghan.

The Bantry Battalion, at this stage, included Bantry area and Schull peninsula. As the area was very scattered, it was decided to organise a battalion based in Dunmanus area - Schull Peninsula. Seán Lehane was deputed to take on this job and he proceeded in the area where he organised several units and later became O/C. of the Battalion.

During the month of August, 1920, the members of the Battalion Column in groups were going round the area - spending two or three days

with each Company, training, boosting morale and generally endeavouring to make soldiers out of civilians.

About this time it was noted that a lorry of military travelled from Bantry to Castletownbere one day each week. It was decided to ambush this lorry. On the night of 23rd August, 1920, a party consisting of "Moss" Donegan, Tom Ward, Con Sullivan and Seán Cotter (witness) left Bantry in a motor launch for Glengariff where we arrived early next morning. Here we met a number of men from Kealkil and Comhola Companies. We took up a position on the Glengariff-Castletownbere road about  $2\frac{1}{2}$  miles from Glengariff. Although we remained in position for several hours the lorry did not travel for some unknown reason.

As the ambush had not come off we decided to pay the R.I.C. garrison in Glengariff a call. We felt that this step was imperative as, on the previous night, the R.I.C. in Glengariff had run "amok" and shot up the home of the local Company O/C. About 4 p.m. we proceeded towards Glengariff and made contact with some members of the local Company in order to ascertain whether any enemy forces were abroad in the village. We learned that three R.I.C. men were drinking in John O'Shea's public house. Three men, whose appearance in Glengariff, was unlikely to create suspicion, were armed with revolvers and sent in to shoot the three R.I.C. men in O'Shea's public-house. In the meantime the remainder of the Column (six riflemen - 'Moss' Donegan, Tom Ward, Seán Cotter, Dan Mahoney, Seán Lehane, Con Sullivan) took up positions behind a fence at the end of the street to cover off the three revolver-men and to attack the R.I.C. garrison from the barracks which we hoped would venture out when they heard the shooting. The men who went to O'Shea's public-house (Mick Driscoll, Mick Lucey, Comhola Company, and Bill Dillon, Kealkil Company) operated according to plan.

One R.I.C. man (McNamara) was shot dead, another (Cleary) was wounded, but the third member of the enemy party (Cleary) dashed upstairs and escaped. We were still in position at the end of the village street awaiting the return of the revolvermen, but there was no appearance of the R.I.C. garrison via the front gate of the barracks. However, we soon discovered that some of the garrison had made their way from the rear of the building and were endeavouring to enfilade our position. After an exchange of shots our party, including rifle and revolver men, withdrew across the mountain to Comhola. Glengariff R.I.C. post was evacuated next day.

On 25th August, 1920, following the Glengariff incidents, a party comprised of Ralph Keyes, John Keohane and Cornelius Sullivan, attacked a patrol of R.I.C. in Bantry. One R.I.C. man - Constable Hough - was killed. The I.R.A. party suffered no casualties.

About the end of August it was decided to ambush a military convoy, which had been passing at fairly regular intervals, between Bantry - Castletownbere or Kenmare. The convoy usually consisted of two or three lorries. An ambush position was selected in the vicinity of Snavo Bridge on the Bantry-Glengariff road about five miles from Bantry. The convoy usually passed through the selected position on the way from Bantry about 10 a.m. and returned about 5 p.m. The timing of the convoy had been confirmed by Moss Donegan, Tom Ward and myself who had stayed in the Eccles Hotel, Glengariff, for a couple of nights before the date selected for the ambush.

It was decided to lay a mine in the road at Snavo Bridge. This mine was manufactured at Ardnatrush, Glengariff, by filling a 12" sewer pipe with scrap and charging it with about 100 lbs. of Tonite suitably detonated.

On the morning of the day selected for the ambush - it was Fair Day in Glengariff - three lorries of military passed through <sup>to</sup> Kenmare. <sub>^</sub>

It was decided to ambush them on the return journey. I was delegated to mobilise the men of Comhola Company in whose area the ambush site had been selected, and to arrange for the transport of the mine to Snavo Bridge. The Battalion O/C., in the meantime, commandeered the motor car of the local Protestant Minister. All available men were mobilised. With the exception of six riflemen, all were armed with shotguns, and reached the vicinity of Snavo Bridge safely about 12.30 p.m. The mine was taken along the road in a crib and cart by a brother of Mick O'Driscoll's who was accompanied by Florence O'Sullivan.

About 1 p.m. I crossed to Bantry side of Snavo Bridge with Ralph Keyes and "Moss" Donegan (O/C.) to select a position for the mine. On the way back to the main assembly point, the cart with the mine arrived and at the same time the three lorries of military, which we were not expecting until 5 p.m., approached the position. The military opened fire before they saw anybody. Our men, at the assembly point, scattered. The military dismounted from their lorries and endeavoured to round up the I.R.A. force which, with the exception of the man with the mine (O'Driscoll) and his escort (Florence O'Sullivan) managed to escape. With Ralph Keyes and "Moss" Donegan I was at the opposite side of the river to the main body. We withdrew in a north-easterly direction until we reached the skyline where we fired some shots from our revolvers in order to distract the military in their endeavours to round up the main body to the south. We then retired from the area and disbanded for the time being. Having regard to the change in enemy routine, it was quite evident that on this occasion somebody - apparently in Glengariff - had contacted the military and advised them of our activities. The men who were engaged in this operation were, with the exception of the members of the Battalion Column, all drawn from Comhola and Glengariff Companies.

We were moving round the area for about a fortnight following this incident without making contact with the enemy. At this period the members of the Battalion Column (Tom Ward, 'Moss' Donegan, Ralph Keyes, Seán Cotter (witness), Con Sullivan, John Keohane) with Dan O'Driscoll (O/C. Drimoleague Company) and some of his men lay in ambush for R.I.C. patrols on two successive Sundays in Drimoleague area, but there was no appearance by the expected patrol.

While I was in London, following the hungerstrike in Wormwood Scrubbs in May, 1920, I made contact with Paddy O'Sullivan, who was second in charge of the I.R.A. in London. I also met his brother Joe - later executed for the shooting of Sir Henry Wilson. Their father, who carried on a very successful tailoring business, was a native of Bantry. I ascertained from this family that regular supplies of arms were being sent to Dublin from London each week. I asked them if they could manage to send any "stuff" to West Cork. They agreed to examine the feasibility of this suggestion.

When I returned to Bantry I reported to Brigade Headquarters that there was a possibility of getting some arms through the O'Sullivan family. I was later selected to go to London to try to arrange to obtain some guns. With Michael O'Callaghan (Quartermaster, Bantry Battalion), I left Cork for London on the night on which Terry McSwiney's funeral arrived in Cork. This was, I think, 28th or 29th October, 1920. We were supplied with £100 by the Brigade to cover our expenses. We travelled to London via Dunlaoghaire (Kingstown then) and reached London safely. We stayed with the O'Sullivan family at 21 Little James' Street, London. While we were in London the men of the I.R.A. there obtained a Lewis gun, and a number of rifles from sympathetic Irishmen in the Irish Guards and other Irish regiments. It was then arranged that, at a later stage, these arms would be sent in small quantities consigned to Messrs. G. W. Biggs Ltd., Bantry, as agricultural machinery.



I had arranged that when the goods arrived they would be sent to Brigade Headquarters and not to <sup>the</sup> ~~the~~ firm. Incidentally, the receipt of the consignment would be checked at Bantry Railway Station by Michael O'Callaghan, who had accompanied me to London, and who was employed on the Railway.

We remained in London about ten days and on our return reported to a training camp at Lackeragh, Kealkil. We arrived at the Camp on Sunday morning but the Camp, of which Tom Barry (Brigade Training Officer and Column O/C.) was in charge, broke up that evening. Between this date and the end of November, 1920, we were moving round the area endeavouring to make contact with enemy patrols, but failed to do so. In addition, we were training the members of the local Companies where we billeted, and organising special services.

On Sunday 28th November, 1920, I left Durrus Company area - about six miles west of Bantry - for the purpose of inspecting Donemark Company - two miles east of the town. I was accompanied by 'Moss' Donegan (Battalion O/C), Ralph Keyes (O/C., Bantry Company) and Con Sullivan. Within a short time of our arrival in Donemark area we were surrounded by a strong force of military and taken prisoners. We were removed to Cork and later to Ballykinlar, County Down, where I was interned until after the signing of the Treaty in December, 1921.

My rank at the Truce was Adjutant, Bantry Battalion, Cork III. Brigade I.R.A.

The strength of the Battalion at the time was approximately 900.

SIGNED: Sean Latta  
 DATE: 13<sup>th</sup> Sept 1956

WITNESS: P. L. Dornell

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