

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

BURO STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21

No. W.S. 1494

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

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Witness

Michael McAllister,
Turvey,
Donabate,
Co. Dublin.

Identity.

Volunteer, Swords Company, Irish Volunteers.

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BURO STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21

No. W.S. 1,494

STATEMENT BY MICHAEL McALLISTER,
Turvey, Donabate, County Dublin.

I was born and reared where I now live at Turvey and went to school in Donabate and Swords. There was nothing of an ultra national nature in the curriculum of the schools then, and I felt it was from reading English papers that I developed any sense of patriotism I had. The English papers were very biased and hostile towards anything Irish. Any little concession tending towards further liberty for the people of this country was always the occasion for an outburst of hostility and puerile articles about Ireland.

The late Thomas Ashe was a frequent visitor to our house, where he used to play cards. On one occasion I mentioned to him that we in this country should have some kind of an intelligence organisation to counteract the propaganda about this country in the English Press. He said we had such an organisation here and asked me if I would like to join. I said I would. The organisation that I visualised was quite different from the one which I discovered that Ashe belonged to. He took me to a meeting of this organisation, which was the I.R.B. There were quite a number of men at this meeting whom I knew, including the Taylors of Swords and the late Frank Lawless of Saucerstown. I learned that this was a secret Oath-bound organisation and, as I had an objection to secret organisations particularly Oath-bound ones, I did not join.

When the Irish Volunteers were started in Swords in 1913, I joined that organisation. I think it was Frank Lawless who took me in. There was no Oath to take, not even a declaration of any sort. We were issued with membership cards and we paid a small weekly subscription towards the funds of the unit. There was a big number of men of all types in the Volunteers then and of very different ages. I think that Dick Coleman,

who later died in Usk Prison, was in charge of the Company. Parades were held every other evening and nearly every Sunday. A man named Emor Duffy used to come down from the city and put us through drill and other exercises, and also to give us lectures. We had no arms except a few .22 Sporting Rifles with which we had target practice. Most of the men were good natural shots, which is usual with young men from the country, while some of them were exceptionally good and could be said to be marksmen with a rifle. The .22 Rifles were the property of individual members of the Company and some few of the men also had revolvers. I had a small Calibre Revolver which belonged to our family.

The first major event that took place in the area was the Howth gun-running. All the Volunteer units in the North County Dublin area, as well as the city units, were mobilised for this affair and the Swords Company were also mobilised. It was not until the rifles were being handed out that we realised what was really happening. Our Company received a number of rifles that day. They were of the Mauser type with a large bore and were very cumbersome articles. They came to be known as "Howth Mausers" and, as far as I can remember, had no magazine, being single shot weapons. Yet in our innocence we were very proud of them.

On Sundays we took part in field exercises with the Dublin City units and all over the North County Dublin and around Rathfarnham and the Dublin mountains. When the first great War broke out in August 1914, things took on a different aspect. Quite a number of young men joined the British Army or were called up to that force of which they were members of the Reserve. The people's attention was distracted towards the War and there was a surge of pro-British feeling throughout the country. The Irish Parliamentary Party which

should have been forcing the issue of Home Rule for Ireland were also badly bitten by the pro-British bug and had really turned themselves into recruiting agents for the British Army. Finally, their leader, John Redmond, made a speech at Woodenbridge, County Wicklow, in which he said that it was the duty of the Volunteers to join the British Army, or words to that effect. The effect of this speech was to bring to a head a situation which had been brewing for quite a while, and overnight the Volunteer organisation was split in twain. The vast majority of the Volunteers continued to support Redmond and his party while the minority supported Pearse and MacNeill and the original executive of the Irish Volunteers. We had now the spectacle of two Volunteer forces in the country. The supporters of Redmond now became the Irish National Volunteers while the others continued to be known as the Irish Volunteers. In our Company in Swords, as was generally the case elsewhere, the greater portion of the Volunteers declared for John Redmond. I would say that about seventy per cent or more went on the Redmond side while about thirty per cent remained loyal to the Irish Volunteer executive. I remained with the Irish Volunteer Party. Whatever arms were available at the time were kept by the individual Volunteers to whom they were on issue so that in our case the greater portion of what we had went to the Redmond side.

A Battalion of the Irish Volunteers was now organised in the North County Dublin area. Doctor Richard Hayes was Battalion O/C, Tom Ashe was Battalion Adjutant and Frank Lawless was Battalion Quartermaster. Some short time before the Rising Doctor Hayes and Tom Ashe changed appointments and Ashe was then O/C and Doctor Hayes Adjutant. Doctor Hayes, I think, felt that on account of his medical training he could act better that way as he could combine the duties of Medical Officer and Adjutant.

The Companies comprising the Battalion were - Swords, St. Margarets, Skerries and Lusk. All the Companies were of skeleton formation and the whole Battalion would not be near a hundred strong. Training and field exercises were still carried out in conjunction with the City Battalions which, together with our Battalion, made up the Dublin Brigade. We were the 5th Battalion. In the course of those exercises I got to know a number of the leaders of the Volunteers including Pearse, McDonagh and De Valera and others.

Prior to the Rebellion we had acquired quite a good few Lee Enfield Service rifles. Where they came from I do not know. Frank Lawless the Quartermaster had obtained them, I suppose, from General Headquarters of the Volunteers. Each Volunteer had to pay for his rifle either in cash or in instalments. During Holy Week 1916 we were ordered to mobilise at Knocksedan on Easter Sunday about midday. Each man was to carry what arms and ammunition he had got and also to provide himself with two days' rations. We thought that some extended exercise was on the programme, but yet there was an undercurrent that something much bigger and more dangerous was afoot. There was quite a full mobilisation at Knocksedan that Sunday. Quite a lot of the Volunteers were armed with Lee Enfield rifles and each had a good supply of ammunition. I had about two hundred rounds. Again I do not know where the Lee Enfields came from. Quite a few of the Volunteers were also armed with brand new repeating shotguns of American type. Sometime before the Rebellion I remember a car loaded with rifles arriving at our house one day. There was a big number of rifles which we took in and hid in a field. They were subsequently taken away by Doctor P. McCartan. I do not know where they went to. At Knocksedan on that Easter Sunday Tom Ashe gave me the rifle he had which was a lovely Service Lee Enfield type.

We spent the rest of the day - Easter Sunday - around Saucerstown the home of Frank Lawless where we got some food. There was great coming and going of Battalion Staff Officers and it was quite apparent that something serious had gone wrong. We had got the Sunday newspaper and had seen MacNeill's countermanding order on it and we were busy surmising what had happened and, of course, there was the usual batch of rumours afloat. Late that night we were told to go home but to hold ourselves in readiness to mobilise again at a moment's notice. I returned home taking my arms with me.

On Easter Monday morning Dick Coleman arrived with orders for a mobilisation at Knocksedan at once. My brother and I packed up the work we were doing on the farm and set out for Knocksedan on our cycles and, on arriving there, we found men arriving from the other different areas. Doctor Hayes, Tom Ashe and Frank Lawless and his son Joseph ~~and [redacted]~~, two brothers Ned and Jem were there amongst many others that I knew. Tom Ashe was in charge of operations. Every man had a cycle and was armed with a Service Rifle or a shot gun. Roughly, about fifty men had mobilised. This was much smaller than the mobilisation on the previous day.

We soon realised that this was the real thing and that an uprising was in progress throughout the country. A small party of Volunteers were detailed to proceed to ^{ERSTOWN} ~~Rogansham~~ and destroy the railway bridge there. This bridge covered the Great Northern Railway which was an important link between Dublin and Belfast. They had some explosives for this purpose but, as far as I know, they failed to destroy the bridge, and only succeeded in dislodging a length of rail. Other men were detailed to cut the telephone and telegraph lines in the neighbourhood. That afternoon the whole party

moved on cycles to Finglas village on the Ashbourne ~~Dublin~~ road and on the outskirts of the city. Here we occupied positions and dug trenches covering the approach from the city. During the evening large numbers of people passed through our position returning to the city from Fairyhouse Races. We did not hold them up nor interfere with them in any way. During the night a party of Volunteers left Camp and proceeded to Blanchardstown to destroy the railway there. This was the main line to the West of Ireland and was the Midland and Great Western Railway at that time. I was not one of this party and I do not know what happened, but I don't think it was a very successful operation. We were not well up in the uses or power of explosives at this time. We remained in Finglas on that Easter Monday night which turned out very wet and, as we had no tents or shelters, we all got a good soaking. I can't remember anything about how we were fed. It must have been alright or some incident in connection with it would have stuck in my memory. It is peculiar that food is the one subject I cannot remember anything about during that eventful week.

On Easter Monday evening after we arrived in Finglas, Dick Mulcahy, Paddy Houlihan and another man named Blanchfield joined us. They really belonged to city units of the Volunteers, but said they could not get in contact with their own men and came out to us. Whether this is correct or, as some believe they had been detailed by Volunteer Headquarters to join us, I do not know but, from thence on Dick Mulcahy, without actually assuming command, was, to all intents and purposes, our Commanding Officer. He seemed to be in charge of planning and operations. While in Finglas nothing unusual happened and life seemed to be going on normally in the city.

On the Tuesday morning following our arrival in Finglas a party of our men, about ten or twelve strong, were sent into the city to reinforce the units there. This party included Ned Lawless, .. Kelly, Wilson and Jem Crennigan and others. Wilson was killed in the Mendicity Institute and Crennigan and some of the others who had been sent there were taken prisoners by the British forces on Wednesday evening.

We left Finglas about midday on Tuesday. By this time we could hear heavy firing going on in the city but we had made no contact so far with the enemy. We cycled to the Knocksedan area and went into camp at an old farmhouse at Kileek, sleeping on straw in the sheds. On Wednesday morning we left Kileek and cycled towards Swords, travelling via Mr. Ussher's training establishment and Knocksedan cross-roads. I was one of the rear party. We travelled in pairs, well dispersed out to guard against surprise. As we came near Swords a motor cyclist dressed in civilian attire came from that direction and travelling very fast. Frank Lawless shouted at me to stop him. He did not stop when signalled to do so but rode through, so I fired at him but, to my dismay, I did not hit him or at least he did not stop and got clean away. I do not know who he was but suspect that he was scouting for the British forces.

When I and the rear party arrived in Swords the garrison in the R.I.C. Barracks there had already surrendered to our foremost elements. They had put up no resistance. Their rifles and ammunition were collected by our men and they were warned not to take any part in the struggle which was now becoming very serious. The Post Office in Swords was also entered and the telephone and telegraph put out of action. There were only four or five police in Swords. We now remounted our cycles and in the same formation started for Donabate where

there was another R.I.C. Barracks. Here, I understand, the police refused to surrender when called on to do so, but did so when one of our men fired a shot through the window or door, which wounded one of the Constables in the hand. A few rifles and a small amount of ammunition were taken here also. We were joined here by Bernard McAllister. Bernard, or Bennie as we knew him, had thrown in his lot with the Irish National Volunteers at the time of the split. He was at Fairyhouse Races when the rebellion started but on returning home and hearing that we were out, he decided to join us. After searching around the countryside for us he caught up with us at Donabate. He was armed with a good rifle. Having finished our work at Donabate we returned to our billets at Kileek.

Very early on Thursday morning we left our billets at Kileek and set out for Garristown with the object of taking the barracks there. When we got to Garristown we found that the police had withdrawn to Balbriggan, leaving only one Constable in the barracks who was unarmed. The barracks was searched but nothing was found there. The Post Office in Garristown was also entered and the telephone and telegraph instruments destroyed. The whole party now went into billets at Baldwinstown near Garristown.

On Thursday morning there was some grousing among a section of our men who were complaining that the rest of the country had not risen and that we had no right to be out in view of MacNeill's countermanding order. Ashe paraded all the men and told them briefly of what he knew of the situation. He said that the rest of the country had not risen yet, but would do so and that our men had complete control of the city. He said that he was not going to keep any man against his will and that anyone who wished to leave was perfectly free to do so and without any hard feelings. Only a few men elected to leave and

went away leaving their arms behind them. While we were in this place a priest came to us and Ashe asked us to kneel down and that the son of a Fenian would bless us. We knelt down and received the priest's blessing. The priest was Father Kelvehan. At about 2 o'clock that day the whole party moved to Borranstown and went into billets there. Borranstown was between Ashbourne and Ballymadun and from here we could hear the Artillery at work in the city.

On Friday morning, Ashe detailed a party of which I was a member and of which Charles Weston was in charge to proceed to Ashbourne and take the R.I.C. barracks there. Ashbourne was only a few miles from our camp. Our party consisted of eight men all told. Mounted on cycles we set off for Ashbourne. When we reached a bend on the bye-road which we were travelling and about a quarter of a mile from the junction with the main road at the cross of the Rath we came across a policeman armed with a rifle and, apparently, guarding a barrier which was comprised of a pole laid across the road. He made no attempt to resist and calmly handed over his rifle and ammunition and handcuffs and then asked if he could smoke. We sent him back with an escort of one of our men to our main body at Borranstown while we proceeded on towards Ashbourne. On reaching the road junction at the Rath crossroad we dumped our cycles and proceeded along the main road in single file towards the barracks. We kept well under cover of the road bank so that our approach could not be seen from the barrack windows. There was no sign of any activity around the barracks and no policeman to be seen. We took up a firing position along the road bank and only a few yards from the front of the barracks which was set back from the road. We now shouted at the police to surrender. There was no reply so we fired a volley through the windows and Blanchfield, who was with us, threw some kind of a home-made bomb. This made a terrific noise and let off a lot of smoke but otherwise did no damage.

The police now shouted out to us that they would surrender. We shouted back at them to come out with their hands up. Immediately after telling the police to come out we were the recipients of a volley of rifle fire from the cross of the Rath which was a few hundred yards in our left rear. On looking in that direction we could see a number of cars pulled up on the side of the main road just short of the crossroads and on the Kilmoon side of the crossroads. More cars were in the act of pulling up further back along the road and we could see figures of men jumping from them and, apparently, taking cover on the side of the road. There seemed to be a mile of cars halted north of the crossroads. Rumours had been prevalent during the preceding days, one of which was that a British Naval Brigade had landed in Dundalk and we now concluded that this was this Brigade coming for us. We now jumped up and ran across the road and jumped into the field on the opposite or west side. From here we made our way under cover of the roadside hedge back to the Rath crossroads where the firing was coming from. On getting to the crossroads we took up a firing position behind the banks of the roadside fence there. This position gave us a good view of the main road in the Kilmoon direction. There appeared to be about one hundred cars pulled up along the road leading back towards Kilmoon and the leading cars were only a short distance from the crossroads with the remainder close up in rear. We immediately opened fire on the cars. The road at this point slopes down gradually from the Kilmoon direction towards the cross of the rath so that from our position we could see fairly well under the cars along the road except where this was obstructed by wheels.

We could see that a number of the enemy force had taken cover underneath the cars and we also realised that it was a big force of R.I.C. we were up against. We proceeded to deal with the

policemen underneath the cars and those that exposed themselves on the roadside. We opened up with rapid fire on them and soon my rifle was burning my hands. This pinned the police to the ground and what fire was coming from them now became very erratic. Some of our men alleged that the R.I.C. in the barracks at our rear also fired on us. I doubt this. Under the circumstances it would be very hard to say if they did. If they did, their fire would, to a small extent, be a danger to their comrades. As I said before, our men were good natural shots and at this short range I knew we were decimating the enemy in their positions. After the initial burst of fire by us, our men settled down very calmly and, although this was our first experience of being under fire, they were behaving as veterans. They were not firing wildly or wasting their ammunition but deliberately picking their targets and dealing with them very coolly in their own time. I was satisfied that whatever would be the outcome of the fight the R.I.C. would have a lot of casualties.

Dick Mulcahy, who was with the main body of our force back on the Borranstown road, had come up to us prior to this and asked Charlie Weston how many policemen were up the road. Charlie replied that there were about a hundred. Mulcahy said "Pity it is not a thousand. I will deal with them fellows. Do not let them get down below the crossroads." He then crossed the ditch and the road as if nothing was happening and disappeared across country towards Borranstown. We continued to engage the enemy whose firing now became very spasmodic. They occasionally hit the bank we were behind but did not injure any of us and there was little or no movement on their part. They were, apparently, hugging mother earth for dear life. Some of them had realised their mistake in getting under the cars and tried to get out of that position but were promptly dealt with by us, while those that remained were either dead or so badly wounded as to be incapable of any movement.

This was the position for quite a long time. I do not know how long we were in position at the crossroads. It is impossible to reckon time under such circumstances. Some of our fellows say we were there for a couple of hours. At any rate it took some considerable time for Mulcahy to get back to the main body and take them across country to outflank the enemy. Meanwhile, eight of us were holding up this big force of R.I.C.

After a long period we could observe a commotion starting near the top of the incline in the Kilmoon direction and could hear the fire of rifles and shotguns and we knew that our main body was engaging the police at the other end of their position. Soon we could see some of the police leaving their positions and running towards our position. They would run a short distance and then throw themselves down on the roadside. Soon they would be up again and repeat this performance. All this time they were presenting beautiful targets to us and were crowding in on their comrades who were nearest to us and who were not in any happy position. It was soon apparent that the police were in a state of confusion, and some of them had already discarded their rifles. We now ceased firing and got up from our position and advanced up the road. The enemy fire had died out completely now and there seemed to be no further fight left in them.

The police now came out from their positions with their hands up and we herded them in together to a central position where we were joined by Mulcahy and Ashe and the remainder of our men. Their arms and equipment were now collected up and Doctor Hayes, who had now come up, set about tending to their wounded. They seemed to have a big number killed and wounded. I remember that District Inspector Smith was sitting in a car with what appeared to be half his hand

blown away. While Doctor Hayes was treating him he never winced and I remarked to Doctor Hayes that he was a brave man. The Doctor agreed with me.

Tom Ashe now asked me about the barracks and I told him what had happened there and he said, "Come on down there". I accompanied Ashe to the barracks but when we were about eighty yards or so from it, twelve policemen came out of the barracks unarmed. They were led by District Inspector Fitzgerald - I think that was his name - who, strangely, was wearing a white-crowned yachtsman's cap over his R.I.C. officer's uniform. Fitzgerald had a revolver in his hand and he walked up to Ashe and presented the revolver to him in the proper way, saying "Allow me to present you with my revolver Commandant". Ashe took the gun and thanked him. We then took them back the road to where the other prisoners were. The arms from the barracks were now collected by our men. All told, the police numbered seventy-five including the dead and wounded. County Inspector Gray of Meath, who was in charge of them and who was killed, was in civilian attire, or at least he wore a light civilian coat over his uniform. As far as I can remember they had travelled to Ashbourne in eighteen cars, which were provided by the gentry of Meath. They had assembled in Slane that morning.

The survivors of the police were put into any of the cars which were still ⁱⁿ running order and sent home to their stations. Doctor Hayes did all he could to relieve the sufferings of the wounded, using our medical equipment to do so. They had no medical equipment of their own. We had two men killed and three wounded. Some others of our men had slight wounds but not of any serious nature and not serious enough to stop their carrying on which would be a hard thing to do now. I cannot remember now what the police casualties were,

but from what I saw they were heavy. There were quite a few dead and a large number wounded. Our Quartermaster had a breadvan which we had commandeered in Swords the day we were there and this now arrived from Borranstown and was loaded up with the captured arms and ammunition and we all returned to Camp at Borranstown.

Meanwhile, the services of a Priest had been procured for the wounded police and a couple of civilian Doctors had also arrived and were tending to them. Father Dillon was the priest's name and he was very displeased with us and told us so in no uncertain manner.

On arrival at Borranstown we were given a good meal. Everyone was in good spirits and our morale had rocketed upwards. This was our first engagement and we had come out of it with flying colours. We now felt that we were ^a match for any force the British might send against us, even if we were reasonably outnumbered. We knew that the troops the British had in Ireland at that time were a poor lot and not comparable with the R.I.C. who were Irish and stubborn fighters even if badly led.

The R.I.C. on that day at Ashbourne were badly led. Initially, they had all the advantages. They had surprised us; they outnumbered us in the first stages, at least by ten to one, and they had the advantage of ground having caught us in low ground while they were on the high and had observation over us. Had they déployed into the fields from the road they could easily have outflanked us in the early stage before our main party got into action. After all, they had plenty of men to execute a wide turning while still leaving a party to keep us pinned down. Had this been done, the Battle of Ashbourne would have been a different story and I doubt if there would have been any victory for us. I think weight of numbers would have compelled us to retire and we would have suffered severe casualties as well. Instead of this they showed a complete lack of

initiative and, as they had no one capable of commanding in such a situation, their morale quickly cracked and they were only concerned with trying to live. Such is the way that battles and wars are won and lost.

When everyone was fed and rested at Borranstown, the whole unit moved to new billets at Newbarn near Kilsallaghan where we put up in the out-offices and sheds of that place. The place was occupied only by a herdsman and his family. Outposts were established on the surrounding roads and everyone turned into rest completely happy with themselves and satisfied that they had struck a successful blow for Irish freedom and particularly that we had beaten the proud R.I.C. whom we considered Ireland's greatest enemies. Our happiness was short-lived.

The Ashbourne fight took place on the Friday of Easter Week. On the Saturday morning I saw a civilian come into the yard at Newbarn. I recognised him as the Sergeant of the R.I.C. from Swords Barracks. He went to Ashe and told him that the Volunteers in Dublin had surrendered. He wanted us to surrender also. Ashe would not believe him and he, Ashe, decided that Mulcahy and Frank Lawless should go to Dublin to have this verified with the Sergeant of the R.I.C. Mulcahy and Lawless travelled to the city and were not long away. They verified the bad news and informed us that a cavalry escort were on their way to take us over as prisoners. There was immediate reaction by the men to this news. There were groans and cat calls and some of them shouted that it was a trick and that even if the Dublin men had surrendered why should they do so. Mulcahy reminded them that they had come out as soldiers, had behaved as well-disciplined soldiers of Ireland and that Pearse, whom he had seen, was proud of them. It was his orders that they should now surrender as soldiers.

This had a quietning effect on the men and you could feel their pride returning.

What a contrast this was to the scene even early that morning when everyone was in good spirits. Now we were like the near relatives at a funeral. Some of the men were crying; every few were talking and everyone looked dejected. They had thrown away their rifles while some of them broke them up. I am quite sure that had anyone of the leaders stood up and said "We wont surrender" there would have been a rousing cheer and the men would have grabbed their arms again and rushed to follow him. But our leaders had too much honour, discipline and respect for higher authority to do a thing like that.

We hung around the place for some hours waiting for the cavalry to come for us, but so far they had not arrived and about 2 p.m. or so in the afternoon I went to Tom Ashe and told him that some of us were going to make a getaway before the escort arrived. I said to him that the Germans, I believed, would land in Ireland inside another week and that we could hold out until that no matter what happened. Mulcahy, who was standing by Ashe said, "If you are going don't bring anyone with you". Ashe said nothing. Tom Weston, my brother and I then left the camp taking our rifles with us.

We kept together for about a week, sleeping in barns and in the shelters of hedges in the fields and so forth and getting food from the people when we could. It was very few people that one could trust then and it must be remembered that the country, as a whole, had condemned the Rebellion. Every County Council and Board in the country were tripping over themselves in their anxiety to pass resolutions condemning us. Even ^{SOME OF} the priests of the Catholic Church were out against us. This made it all the harder for us and yet I

believe we could have gone on indefinitely living 'on the run'. My brother and I decided we would go home but that we would not sleep at home, which we did, sleeping away from the house in different places nightly. We learned that the military and police had been to our house after the surrender but had not returned since. They were looking for us.

After about a month of this sort of life I received a message one day from the late J.J. Keane, who was a forage contractor at the Haymarket, Dublin, and a large buyer of hay there. He was also president of the N.A.C.A. of Ireland. Mr. Keane had sent word to me that a number of the men who had escaped arrest were going to America and that if I wished to go there he could fix it up for me. I decided to go to America as life was pretty intolerable in Ireland and I knew it would be only a matter of time until I was arrested and imprisoned. Even unknown America was better than imprisonment or perhaps hanging. I got in touch with Keane and he sent me down to the North Wall, Dublin, where I was smuggled on board a Liverpool boat by a man called Kavanagh who took me to Liverpool. Here, through the good offices of a man called Kerr, I got signed on under the name of Bergin which was my mother's maiden name, on the S.S. Baltic as a coal trimmer. All the trimmers on the Baltic were men who were escaping to America to avoid conscription. I had been used to farm work, so working a coal shovel was no trouble to me, but it was not so with the other men who were not used to such work and the engineers were very dissatisfied with us. We were all taken individually before the first Engineer. He asked me my name and my mind went blank and I could not remember the name I had signed under. I played for time by saying, "Why are you always asking me that question". The second Engineer who was standing by said,

"This man is alright" and I was then told to go back.

When we got to New York we all deserted the ship and a new set of trimmers had to be recruited. I made contact with the late John Devoy and he sent me to Judge Cohalan, who is also dead now, and he got me employment in a seed store in New York. Here again I was lucky, having come from a farm previously which was a help. I spent a year in New York and while there I met a lot of the men who had taken part in the Rebellion including Donal Hannigan, Pat Brazil and many others. I met a man named Sullivan who told me he owned a ranch in Dakota and he offered me the position of Manager of this ranch, which I accepted. Before leaving for my new employment I informed Devoy and Brazil and the others of my new location in case they wanted me. I was in my new job until April 1918 when I received a telegram from Brazil informing me that Conscription was being enforced in Ireland and that all the boys were returning there for the fight which was about to take place. I immediately chucked up my job and set out for New York. It took me four days to get there.

On arriving in New York I found that nearly all the boys had left for home. I got in touch with Sean Donovan, who was still there, and through him I got a seaman's book, the description of the rightful owner tallying with mine. I had to get my own photo put on it, and I was now James Burke of Youghal, Ireland. The police and detectives in New York were very largely Irish and members of "Clann na Gael" there, and I did not anticipate any trouble from them. However, America was now in the war as an ally of England and that put a different complexion on matters. I was anticipating that I would get a handwriting test. The American emigration authorities asked me what I had been doing in the United States and why I was now going to sea again. I told them that I had been working in a Brewery but

that was closed down now owing to Government restrictions. The British agents asked me to sign my name and compared this with the signature of Burke on the book. I had spent some time practising Burke's signature and I got through alright.

This time, in accordance with my book, I was a fireman on the ship on which I sailed. I got into London on the 18th May, 1918 and one of the first things I noticed there was a huge poster for the 'Daily Sketch', a London newspaper which proclaimed "De Valera betrays Ireland". I travelled to Liverpool and there I met Donal Hannigan whom I had last seen in New York. He was about to try and make his way to Germany to arrange with the German Government to smuggle explosives into the country by submarine. The explosives were to be used for sabotage work against British installations here. I gave Hannigan my seaman's book as it was of no further use to me. I heard afterwards that the British did find out that a man named Burke had made his way to Germany and were trying to trace his family here.

I smuggled aboard a B. and I. Cattle-boat at Liverpool and got to Dublin. I had to stay on the boat in Dublin until late at night before I could chance going ashore. I returned to my home in Turvey but I did not sleep there at night. By this time the Conscription threat had died down as England flinched at enforcing the measure. I came to my home regularly in the daytime. One day I was in the house for a short period and, on looking out the window, saw that a force of military and police had surrounded the place. I went to the front door and opened it and was confronted by Lieutenant Small. Small was the Intelligence Officer from Swords where the British Army had now established an outpost. Small said, "Come on I want you". I asked him what he was arresting me for and he replied "Murder",

to which I replied that I had not murdered anyone. I was put up on a lorry on which there were already two other prisoners named Doyle and Devine. I was brought to Swords Barracks (Military) and from there to Collinstown Camp at the old aerodrome. Here there were a number of prisoners detained including ^{EMMA} ~~EMMA~~ O'Duffy's father. We were kept a long time at Collinstown and I was then moved to Arbour Hill Prison, Dublin. Here I met Mr. Quigley who was County Surveyor for Meath and who had got a courtmartial over the fight at Ashbourne. He was a prisoner ~~there~~ also.

While the Christmas festivities were still taking place we were taken to the North Wall and put aboard a Destroyer and shipped to Belfast. We were met by a military escort at the Quays in Belfast with a supply of handcuffs. We were met in Belfast by a very threatening situation. The Orangemen from the shipyards had armed themselves with bolts and nuts with which to attack us. On seeing this, the officer in charge of the military escort ordered that we should not be handcuffed and he let the Orange crowd know that he would tolerate no interference with us. We were escorted to Ballykinlar Camp in the County Down. Here I met a number of the men whom I had got to know in New York. I was in Ballykinlar Camp until about a week before the Treaty was signed when I was released and I came home and that finished my soldiering. Prior to this the British had released some other men also.

Signed: Michael W. Allister

Date: 19.9.56

Witness: Matthew James

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
BURO STAIRE MILEATA 1913-21
NO. W.S. 1494