

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

BURO STAIRE MILEATA 1913-21

No. W.S. 1,547

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COSANTA.

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21

STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 1547.

Witness

Michael Murphy,  
40, Belmont Park,  
Ballinlough Road,  
Cork.

Identity.

Commandant, 2nd Battalion, Cork No. 1 Brigade.  
O/C, Cork No. 1 Brigade Active Service Unit.

Subject.

Activities of B. and C. Companies,  
2nd Battalion, Cork No. 1 Brigade,  
Irish Volunteers, and Cork No. 1  
Flying Column, 1916-1921.  
Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil.

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STATEMENT BY MICHAEL MURPHY

40 Belmont Park, Bellinlough Road, Cork.

I was born in Cork city in the year 1894 and, when the Volunteers were started in 1913, I joined up. At the split in the Volunteers in 1915, I went with the Irish Volunteers under the command of Tomas McCurtain and Terence McSwiney. My company was known as B/Company, Cork City Battalion. The officers of the company were Donal Barrett, captain; Patrick Trahey, 1st Lieutenant; Donal Og O'Ceallachain, 2nd Lieutenant; Patrick Harris, adjutant, and Con Murphy, quartermaster.

After the split came, we drilled in a store in Fisher St., Cork. Later, the Irish Volunteers secured a hall in Sheares St., Cork, to be known afterwards as the 'Irish Volunteer Hall' (it is now St. Francis Hall). The hall was a large one with many rooms. Each company had a room allocated to it where drilling and lectures on training and first aid were given weekly. In the largest hall a miniature rifle range was set up where the companies practised with a .22 rifle. We had about fifty men in B/Company prior to 1916.

I remember 'Ginger' O'Connell coming to Cork early in 1916 so far as I can recollect. 'Ginger' was a G.H.Q. officer from Dublin and wore Volunteer officer's uniform. He lectured the companies on drilling, obeying orders, passing on communication promptly and accurately, the importance of guard duty and matters of military discipline in general. I know that Sean MacDiarmada and Padraig Pearse were in Cork some months prior to the Easter Rising of 1916, but I cannot say what was the purpose of their visit, as they were in touch with the brigade staff of whom Tomas MacCurtain was brigadier and Terence McSwiney vice-brigadier. I, being an ordinary Volunteer without rank, did not know what was happening.

Prior to 'Ginger' O'Connell's visit; I remember quite well, James Connolly coming to Cork. For some reason which I cannot now recall, I was selected with about 20 other Volunteers to attend a talk given by Connolly in a hall called "An Greanáin" then the headquarters of the Gaelic League, Queen St., Cork. The lecture was all about street fighting tactics. I remember quite well Connolly impressing on us the necessity of taking over a big block of buildings, not a small block. At this time I had, of course, no idea that a rising was planned to take place at Easter 1916.

About the month of February 1916, I was appointed treasurer of B/Company by Sean Jennings, the quartermaster, and, for about a week prior to the rising, I, with other picked Volunteers, did armed guard duty at the Volunteer Hall, Sheares St., Cork, by night and day for periods as instructed. Tomas MacCurtain, Terence McSwiney, Sean Sullivan (battalion vice-commandant) and 'Ginger' O'Connell used sleep in the hall at night. I remember being armed with a Lee Enfield rifle on these occasions. 'Ginger' O'Connell returned to Dublin (I presume) not long before the rising broke out. The Volunteer Hall was under constant surveillance by police and detectives for a considerable time before Easter 1916, hence the armed guard.

In the early months of 1916 I attended an engineering class in the Volunteer Hall, where I received instructions in the use of explosives. I cannot remember the lecturer's name. During the same period, a member of my company, named William Cahill, Hibernian Buildings, Cork, was leaving for England to work. He had a Martini rifle which he handed over to me and which I duly 'registered' with the company quartermaster.

On Holy Thursday 1916, every man who had a rifle was ordered to report to the Volunteer Hall, Sheares St., Cork, on Good Friday. I went there and was issued with a first aid

outfit, 150 rounds of ammunition in a hkaki sling and a box of Oxo cubes. We were also told to be at the railway station (for Macroom) on the following Sunday morning. On Easter Sunday I was also instructed by Sean Murphy, the battalion Q.M., to purchase all the electric batteries I could get in Cork and bring them to him. I did this. He also said to me to report to him on Easter Saturday night at the Volunteer Hall. I duly reported and was given a haversack full of gelignite which I was to bring to the railway station on the following morning.

On Easter Sunday morning 1916, I went to Capwell St. railway station carrying my rifle, ammunition, first aid outfit and Oxo cubes. I also was burdened with the haversack containing the gelignite and detonators. At the station entrance I was handed a railway ticket to Crookstown, which is about 17 miles west of Cork. With me on the train that morning were the members of the Cork City Battalion to the number of about 150. All the men were armed with rifles and carried slings of ammunition. We detrained at Crookstown, fell-in by companies and marched four-deep westwards towards Macroom led by Tomas MacCurtain, Terence McSwiney and our commandant, Sean Sullivan. The other brigade officers present I cannot now recollect.

On our way to Macroom, about seven miles from Crookstown, we were followed by two R.I.C. men riding bicycles. During the march when we had several stops for rest, the order was given 'man the ditches', at which two lines of men moved into the ditch at both sides of the road. Seeing this manoeuvre, the R.I.C. left us.

Arriving in Macroom, we were 'formed up' in The Square and after some time, were addressed by Sean Sullivan. I remember him telling us that the country for miles around us was honey-combed by the enemy and they funk'd the fight. He told us we were to return there and then to Cork by train from Macroom. He added that, on returning to Cork, each man was to report

unarmed to the Volunteer Hall, Sheares St., for further instructions.

We returned to Cork that evening and reported to the Volunteer Hall as instructed. I cannot remember seeing any of our officers there, but I do know we got no further directions beyond being told by somebody to 'go home and keep in touch'.

On Easter Monday I went again to the Hall and remember hearing that the fight had started in Dublin. However, there was no definite information available and I, personally, did not know what exactly was happening.

During the first few days of the Rising there were conferences between Most Rev. Dr. Cohalan, Bishop of Cork, and Tomas MacCurtain. I, or any ordinary member of the rank and file, did not know what was being discussed. It was, however, evident from what followed that Tomas had agreed with the Bishop's proposal to put the question to the Volunteers as to whether they would hand up their arms to save bloodshed.

Some day during that week (I cannot remember what day exactly it was), all the men who paraded at Macroom on Easter Sunday 1916, were called to attend at the Volunteer Hall, Sheares St., Cork. The Bishop of Cork and Lord Mayor Butterfield were present, as well as Tomas MacCurtain, Terence McSwiney and Sean Sullivan. Tomas addressed us, told us what the Bishop had told him about Cork being surrounded by the British and his (the Bishop's) anxiety that the Volunteers should hand up their guns - the surrendered weapons to be stored under lock and key in the Lord Mayor's premises on the South Mall, Cork. The Bishop had a guarantee from the British authorities that the arms would be returned to the Volunteers at a later date. Having said this, Tomas asked the Bishop and the Lord Mayor to withdraw from the room while the matter was being discussed. They did so.

Tomas then proceeded to put the position clearly to us.

He told us that the Rising was on in Dublin, but that he had received countermanding orders and that he had no further instructions from Dublin. He then put forward the Bishop's proposals as to handing up our arms and had a vote taken for or against. The majority voted to agree to the Bishop's proposal. I, and a good many others present, refused point-blank to agree and said we would hold our guns. We did not hand them over, but kept them ever afterwards.

The Bishop and Lord Mayor were then called into the room and told by Tomas that the majority had decided to store their rifles with the Lord Mayor who, there and then, arranged facilities for storing the rifles that very same night. Those who voted for handing up did so late that night. In justice to these men I understand that every man handed in his rifle minus the bolt. No ammunition at all was handed up. The store in which the rifles were kept was locked, but, on the following day, British military arrived in force, burst open the store and took all the guns away to Cork military barracks. Hence, there was no fighting in Cork at Easter 1916.

I cannot say how many of us held on to our guns, but I do know that three of us in B/Company did. We reported this fact to our O/C., Sean Sullivan.

At the end of Easter Week 1916, we got news of the surrender in Dublin, but any information we got was from the daily newspapers. Wholesale arrests of Volunteer officers and prominent men in the 'movement' followed, with the result that the Volunteer position in Cork was chaotic. The organisation was, however, kept intact, but there was no drilling or parading.

It was late 1916, or perhaps early in 1917, when our company captain called a meeting for the Volunteer Hall. I attended and heard a document being read by the quartermaster,

Con Murphy, which came from Volunteer H.Q. in Dublin. There was one passage in the document which I will never forget. It advised all Volunteers to stick together and keep the organisation going at any cost and added that we would "fight again and fight relentlessly". I well remember these last words; it was the brightest ray of hope I got after months of dormant torture and they had a stimulating effect on all Cork Volunteers.

Early in 1917 I was appointed mobiliser for one of the four sections of B/Company, Cork City Battalion, and, later in the year, I was promoted section commander. Many new recruits began to come in and organisation, training, intelligence work and suchlike were carried on with enthusiasm. Our principal source for obtaining weapons at this period was from British soldiers home on leave in Cork. These men were allowed to take their rifles with them on furlough and we were not slow to avail of the opportunity to acquire some badly-needed arms. Some of these weapons we bought; others we captured in raids on the soldiers' houses.

Raid for rifles at Grammar School, Wellington Rd., Cork.

It was, I remember, on a Saturday evening in the first week of September 1917, when I received word to attend a meeting of Volunteers at the Gaelic League Hall, George's St., Cork. (now Oliver Plunkett St.) There were about 15 men present. We were addressed by a Cork Volunteer officer named Bob Langford who told us that we were to raid the Grammar School, Cork, for rifles on the following day. At that time, there was a military cadet corps in the school and the rifles for the corps were stored there. Langford outlined the duties to be allotted to each man present and, by diagrams drawn on a blackboard, explained the layout of the premises in a very lucid manner. When he had finished his talk, he invited questions. Some were

asked, particularly as regards possible opposition to be met and whether, in the event of such opposition, guns were to be used. I remember Langford saying definitely that, in such an eventuality, we were not to hesitate to shoot. We were then dismissed and told to report in the vicinity of the Grammar School at the positions allotted to us at about 5 p.m. on the following Sunday evening.

I arrived at the Grammar School on Sunday as instructed. I was armed with a .38 revolver. I met at the school door Bob Langford, 'Sandow' Domovan and Jimmy Walsh (the latter a brother-in-law of Brigadier Thomas MacCurtain). There were several other Volunteers there whom I did not know. Bob Langford opened the entrance door with a key and the four of us proceeded to the arms store. Again, Langford opened this with a key. We entered the store and saw the rifles carefully stacked in rifle racks. We took every rifle, numbering 47 in all (including one demonstration rifle), and passed them out along a line of Volunteers to waiting cars in the street outside when they were taken to some safe place in the country. The whole operation lasted, approximately, 20 minutes, and was a complete success. We met with no opposition despite the fact that at least three R.I.C. barracks were situated within striking distance of the Grammar School.

#### Rifles captured at Haulbowline

It was (I think) in the autumn of 1917, when I was employed by a contractor on carpentry work at the British naval base at Haulbowline, Co. Cork, While working on a repair job in the armoury, I met a Volunteer from Passage West who was also employed there by the British government. He used to cross by boat from Passage West to Haulbowline each day. Seeing some rifles in the armoury I asked this man - Tom Murray - one day



would he be game to raid the armoury that evening and use his boat to get the guns away. He agreed. The two of us worked overtime that day and, when dusk had fallen, I went to the armoury, prized open the door and inside the workshop got three Japanese rifles; I remember well the make of the rifles. Getting away unobserved, Murray and I took the guns down to his boat and 'made for' Glenbrook, a short distance east of Passage. I then contacted a man named Joseph Stewart, a Passage Volunteer and, under cover of darkness, brought the rifles to his house.

The following day, I reported for work to Spike Island where I heard from my foreman, Harry Hubbard, that the police and military were making inquiries into the disappearance of the rifles on the previous evening. Questions were being asked as to who was working in, or near, the armoury on the previous day. Hubbard was not a Volunteer, but he certainly was in sympathy with us. After a discussion with him I decided, in view of the fact that things were getting hot and I was in danger of arrest, to quit the job at once.

There is not a great deal else of special interest to record in regard to the year 1917. The usual drilling and training was carried on and occasional raids made for arms on private houses. In these raids we got quite a good number of guns, mostly of the sporting type, some of which were rather ancient and not of much use.

During the early part of the year 1918, raids for arms and on the mails were stepped up. Extensive raiding of County Council quarries for explosives took place and a considerable quantity of gelignite and detonators were obtained. From the raids on the mails valuable information was obtained on civilians with pro-British sympathies, who were corresponding with the British authorities in regard to Volunteer activities in general. It was as a result of the information we received

in this manner that many of these spies were subsequently executed.

So far as I can recollect, it was some time in 1918, or early 1919, that the Cork City Battalion was divided into two battalions known as the first and second battalions. This necessitated new companies being formed in each battalion area. My company was now known as C/Company, 2nd Battalion, with Ned Lynch as captain; Frank McCarthy, 1st Lieutenant, and myself 2nd Lieutenant. Later in the year 1918 I was appointed company captain.

It was also during 1918 that I was sworn in as a member of the I.R.B. by Donal O'Callaghan, Head Centre of the I.R.B. in our area. There were about 20 others from the 2nd Battalion in my Centre and, when things got 'hot' and activities became numerous, it was principally these men who were put on the various 'jobs' as they were considered to be most trustworthy.

In the year 1918 I was actively engaged training my own company and organising companies in Passage West and Rochestown.

#### Arrest and Rescue of Donnchadh MacNeilus

On 5th November 1918, an event occurred in Cork which, while causing considerable embarrassment to the British authorities, had a wonderful moral effect on the Volunteer movement here.

On the day previous, five armed R.I.C. men, under the command of Head Constable Clarke, raided the lodgings of a Cork Volunteer named Donnchadh MacNeilus (a Donegal man) with a view to his arrest. He was staying in the house of a man named Denis Kelliher at 28 Leitrim St. Cork. MacNeilus resisted arrest; he was armed with a revolver and, in the struggle, he shot and badly wounded Head Constable Clarke. MacNeilus was eventually overpowered and taken prisoner to Cork Gaol. I would

like to place on record the fact that Denis Kelliher, although a very old man at the time, helped in the struggle against the R.I.C. that morning. He, too, was arrested with MacNeilus. This, to my knowledge, was the first occasion since 1916 that a Volunteer had used arms in resisting arrest.

It now became obvious that if Clarke died McNeilus would almost certainly be hanged, so the Cork Brigade officers took steps to bring about his rescue as soon as possible. Visits to MacNeilus in gaol were made by various Volunteers and, in the course of these visits, a note was passed to him telling him to 'be prepared for anything'.

On the afternoon of 11th November 1918, six Volunteers, armed with revolvers, entered the prison. Two sought permission to see MacNeilus, two to see some other prisoner, and the remaining two to see yet another prisoner. The Volunteers came in at intervals of five minutes. The names of these Volunteers were: Joe Murphy, Martin Donovan, Chris MacSweeney, Paddy Healy, Frank McCarthy and Jerome Donovan. McCarthy was dressed in clerical clothes to allay suspicion. Meanwhile, picked armed men from the brigade were on duty outside the gaol here and there to hold up persons approaching the gaol at a time specified. Joe Murphy and Jerome Donovan saw MacNeilus in the visitors' cell and, when about to leave him, set upon the warder present and took his bunch of keys. The three men then made their way downstairs and out into the yard of the gaol. Meanwhile, the other four Volunteers who had been waiting in the main visiting room, had overpowered the warder who was with them and took his keys. These Volunteers then contacted MacNeilus, Murphy and Martin Donovan and, together, the party made for the main gates, being lucky to evade the sentry on duty. Unlocking the gates MacNeilus and the others got out on to the road and to safety. Intense police and military activity followed, but the rescued

man was now a considerable distance away in West Cork and out of harm's way.

Early in the year 1919, I was appointed commandant of the 2nd Battalion, Co. No. 1 Brigade. The other battalion officers were: vice-commandant, Paddy Trahey; adjutant, William P. Aherne Q.M., Paddy Donohue; Intelligence officer, Frank Mahony; O/C. Engineers, Gerald Daly; O/C. Signals, Michael Buckley. There were eight companies in the battalion with a total strength of, approximately, 1200 men. Of these I would say that not more than 5% had weapons - rifles, revolvers or shotguns.

The battalion area was bordered on the south by the River Lee and extended to Blackrock, Rochestown and Douglas on the east, adjoined Ballygarvan on the south and Ballincollig on the west, thence by Carrigrohane citywards on the south bank of the River Lee. The area covered about fifteen square miles approximately.

#### Raid on Passage West Docks for rifles.

In November 1919, I was informed by one of our lads named Steve Harrington, who worked as a carpenter at Passage West Docks, that he had seen rifles in the wheelhouse of a British trawler then under repair in dry dock in Passage. I decided to get these rifles. On 4th November, with a party of nine men armed with revolvers, I went by motor to Passage after dark. On arrival in Passage I detailed two men to cut the telephone wires; three others to keep a watch for possible intruders, while I, with Peter Donovan, Murty Sullivan and Jerome Donovan, climbed the wall into the dockyard. We were armed with revolvers. There was nobody aboard the trawler so far as I could see, so we proceeded to break the lock of the wheelhouse door. Inside, we got three rifles and two boxes of ammunition which we brought to the waiting car and then safely to the city. All the men engaged were members of C/Company.

Capture of R.I.C. Mails at Union Quay.

At this period the R.I.C. were particularly careful about their mails. They had been captured many times by our lads in raids on postmen and post offices, with the result that the R.I.C. had their correspondence specially sorted and put into a locked bag; this bag was called for to the local post office by an R.I.C. man each day.

It was observed that an R.I.C. man from Union Quay barracks went to the local post office each day to collect this bag of mail, and Peter Donovan of C/Company was detailed to hold him up en route to his barracks. About 9 o'clock in the morning the R.I.C. man appeared carrying the mail bag. Donovan produced a revolver and compelled him to hand over the mail. This was a particularly daring job as Donovan was within sight of Union Quay Barracks at the time of the hold-up. I remember we got valuable information from the capture, particularly regarding agents who were passing reports on Volunteer activities to the British authorities. The correspondence was passed on to the brigade. Following this incident, the police called for their mail subsequently in an armoured car.

Shooting of British spy - Quinlisk.

Early in the month of February 1920, I received information from Michael Leahy, a barman in Wren's Hotel, Winthrop St. Cork, that a man who called himself 'Quinn' was staying in the hotel and was doing a lot of <sup>loud</sup> talking about his connection with Casement's Brigade in Germany and the I.R.A. generally. He also said he wanted to contact Michael Collins who, he said, was down in Cork at that time. I went to see Quinn at Wren's and had a general chat with him. I took an instinctive dislike to him at the time and told Leahy to keep an eye on 'Quinn' and report his movements to me. When speaking to 'Quinn' I did not, of course, tell him who I was, or whether I had any connection with the I.R.A.

A few nights after my first seeing him, he arrived at the Thomas Ashe Sinn Fein Club at Father Mathew Quay, Cork, which was then the headquarters of the 2nd (my) Battalion. 'Quinn' told some members present that he had information that the club was to be raided by the police/military later that night and he advised everyone to clear out before the raid took place. The majority of those present did leave, but three men who were upstairs in a back room playing cards did not get the warning and remained on. About an hour and a half after 'Quinn' had given the 'tip off', a party of armed police left Union Quay barracks accompanied by a Crossley tender. (Union Quay barracks was directly across the River Lee from the Thomas Ashe Hall and clearly visible). Strangely enough, the police marched behind the Crossley tender right around the quay to the Hall. They did not drive in the tender, as was usual with raiding parties. It was quite bright at the time, it being late evening. Arriving at the Hall, the police searched it and found the three men card playing. They were taken prisoner and brought to Union Quay Barracks.

Not very long after the raid had taken place I heard about it and went along to the Thomas Ashe Club where I met a few men from my battalion who told me all that had happened. When we were discussing the affair, 'Quinn' arrived on the scene (it was, I remember, about 10 p.m. at this time). He asked if anyone was caught and was told that three men were arrested. He said to me: "That's terrible, after I giving the tip earlier tonight" he also added: "It takes a Dublin man to shake up your intelligence service down here". We then adjourned to our homes I having instructed a man to watch 'Quinn' and not to let him out of sight. 'Quinn' returned that night to Wren's.

The following day I met 'Quinn' again at Wren's, and, after a general chat, I asked him who he was. He said he was down from

G.H.Q., Dublin, with a special message for Michael Collins.

I said I could get the message to Collins if he (Quinn) would give it to me. This he refused to do, saying that he had instructions to deliver it to Collins personally and to no one else. I then said that Collins was in Clonakilty, Co. Cork, and would not be back in Cork City for a few days - (I knew Collins to be in Dublin at the time) - but that, when Collins did return to Cork, I would arrange to bring him (Quinn) to meet him. I remember then asking 'Quinn' if he had been told by G.H.Q. to get in touch with any particular I.R.A. officer in Cork. He replied in the negative - a most unusual thing for any courier from G.H.Q. to a brigade area. The suspicions I had of his bona fides were now strengthened by this latter circumstance, added to the fact of his loose talk (about his connection with the Irish Brigade in Germany and the I.R.A.) which he carried on with all and sundry in the bar of Wren's Hotel. His tip-off about the raid on the Thomas Ashe Hall was also suspicious, having regard to the manner in which the raid was carried out by the police. I then told him that, to save himself expense, he should discontinue his stay in Wren's but to 'put up' instead in the home of a Volunteer. He agreed to this and I got him to stay with a Volunteer named Albert de Courcey in Hibernian Buildings, Cork. I did this in order that a constant watch might be kept on him by de Courcey, who was instructed accordingly. After some days I was informed by de Courcey that 'Quinn' had written several letters which de Courcey offered to post (to see the names and addresses) but Quinn preferred to do the posting himself.

I now decided to lay the whole facts before the Brigade Council presided over by Sean Hegarty, Brigade O/C. Cork No. 1 Brigade. I suggested that 'Quinn' be shot and the Council agreed.

I met 'Quinn' on the morning of 25th February 1920, by appointment, and, in the course of conversation, asked him if he

knew anything about machine guns; he said he had used every class of a machine gun as a British soldier in the 1914-18 war. I then told him we had a Hotchkiss gun in separate parts and we wanted a man to assemble it - there would be £10 for him if he would do the job. He readily agreed. I then arranged for a Volunteer named Keyes to bring him out that night to our rendezvous on the Curragh Road, about 1½ miles outside the city boundary, when I would meet him. 'Quinn' and Keyes duly arrived at the place appointed, where Frank Mahony, 2nd Battn. Intelligence officer; Jimmy Walsh, one of my company captains, and I met them. We three were armed with revolvers. Keyes was unarmed. I told Keyes he could go home (he was, by the way, a most reliable man), and Mahony, Walsh and myself went in to a field, accompanied by 'Quinn' (I still did not know his real name). It was now quite dark. As we crossed the field 'Quinn' asked me where the house was in which the machine gun was kept. I pointed to a light in a cottage about quarter of a mile away in the direction in which we were travelling and said it was in that cottage. We had gone about 200 yards or so in the field when I stuck my .45 Colt automatic in 'Quinn's back and told him to put up his hands. He was astounded but quickly 'shot up' his hands. We turned him around and, while I had him covered, I told the other two Volunteers to search him for weapons and documents and take all his personal possessions from him. They took everything he had, including several letters, a cigarette case and a newspaper cutting.

'Quinn' protested that there was some mistake and said he had given us information about the proposed raid on the Thomas Ashe Hall. I asked him how he knew the raid was to take place - this question he could not, and did not, answer. I then said to him that he had arranged things too well and accused him of getting the police to raid the Hall so that he could get into



our good graces by giving us the tip, when, in fact, the police had no intention at all of capturing anyone in that raid. This was evident for the simple reason that while they (the police) had a Crossley tender which accompanied them, they marched after the tender, thus allowing plenty of time for anyone in the Hall to get clear away, as the raiding party was in full view of those in the Hall all the time. 'Quinn' made no reply to my remarks. When he was thoroughly searched, we shot him standing there. After the first few shots he fell and rolled around; my two companions also emptied their guns into him and, as it was by then close on curfew hour (10 p.m.) we left for the house in the city in which we were staying. I had gone a few yards when something made me turn back and I said to my pals: "That fellow may not be dead at all". I went back and struck 'Quinn' with the butt of my revolver; immediately I did so, he swung from his right side to his left in a half somersault; he was not yet dead. I then turned him over on the flat of his back and put a bullet through his forehead. We then departed. I might here state that on the same evening, following a raid on the mails by some of our lads, one of the letters written by 'Quinn' in de Courcey's house (presumably) and addressed to the County Inspector, R.I.C., was found. In that letter Quinlisk stated that he had got in touch with a prominent I.R.A. officer (meaning me, I suppose) who told him that Mick Collins was in Clonakilty, and this Volunteer officer was to introduce Collins to Quinlisk when he (Collins) arrived back in Cork.

On the morning following the execution of Quinlisk I took all the letters and papers we had taken from him to Florrie O'Donoghue, brigade adjutant. One of these letters was addressed to the R.I.C. authorities saying that he (Quinlisk) now had information about Michael Collins and would report again

in a few days when the capture of Collins seemed imminent. In the cigarette case which we had taken we found a cutting from a Wexford newspaper headed 'Daring rescue on the Nore'. The report went on to describe how a young boy had fallen into the river Nore and was "pluckily" rescued by one John Quinlisk". Up to the time of his death we knew him here as 'Quinn'.

The Cork No. 1 Brigade Commandant, Sean Hegarty, got in touch with G.H.Q. Dublin, immediately following the identification of 'Quinn' as Quinlisk, and word was received back from Mick Collins that Quinlisk was definitely a spy in the pay of the British, as he (Collins) had received, within the past few days, certain papers from a source connected with the British authorities in Dublin Castle, which included Quinlisk's application for service as a secret agent of the Castle and his acceptance as such by the Castle authorities.

The day following our shooting of Quinlisk, a herdsman going out to the fields for cattle found the body and notified the police who, in turn, notified the military. The latter arrived on the scene in three lorries and took Quinlisk to the Cork City morgue where he lay for at least three days with an R.I.C. man on guard. There were daily notices in the papers by the R.I.C. asking people to go and view the body for identification. Hundreds of people viewed it, but, of course, nobody identified him. He was then taken from the morgue by police and military and buried in the burial ground for paupers at the top of Carr's Hill, Cork.

About two weeks elapsed when a man arrived at the Cork Union and said to Dan Egan, the clerk, that he had reason to believe that the unknown man was a son of his. The inquirer refused to give his name. I had previously arranged with Dan Egan that, if anybody 'claimed' the body of Quinlisk, I was to be notified at once. I arrived at the Union and recognised

the man from a photo found on Quinlisk. There was no doubt he was the same man, although in the photo he was dressed in an R.I.C. man's uniform. I asked this man his name, but he refused to give it to me. I said to him: "Now, Mr. Quinlisk, I know you well; your son John was shot here as a spy and you had better take him and yourself out of this town within twenty-four hours or you will meet with the same fate".

I never saw Quinlisk senior afterwards. I do know that he got permission to remove the body of his son and took it by train that same evening for interment in Wexford, his native place.

Murder of Tomás MacCurtain, Lord Mayor of Cork.

The details relating to the murder of Tomás MacCurtain on the morning of 20th March 1920, have received much publicity; nevertheless, it may be well to record certain facts related to me by Mrs. Tomas MacCurtain and by James Walsh, his brother-in-law, the latter an officer of my battalion who was in MacCurtain's house on the night in question.

On 19th March 1920, Constable Murtagh of the R.I.C. was shot dead by men of the 1st Battalion at Pope's Quay, Cork. Murtagh was shot early that night. At about 2 o'clock on the morning of 20th March 1920, a party of R.I.C. men, under the command of District Inspector Swanzy, left King St. Barracks for MacCurtain's house. They were armed with rifles and revolvers, some of the party having blackened faces. Before reaching the house they were clearly seen by a Corporation street lamplighter who was, at the time, extinguishing the lamps (gas) in the vicinity of MacCurtain's house. This man gave evidence subsequently at the inquest on MacCurtain. He was told to clear away by the R.I.C. who surrounded the block of buildings in which was MacCurtain's house. They then knocked at the door of the Lord Mayor's home. Mrs. MacCurtain came

downstairs and inquired "Who is there?" A voice replied: "Police on duty". Mrs. MacCurtain opened the front door and was immediately 'held up' by two R.I.C. men with blackened faces, carrying revolvers. Two more R.I.C., also similarly armed and disguised, rushed into the house and up the stairs. At the top of the stairs they called out to MacCurtain to come out. He answered from his bedroom: "All right, I'll be out". He partly dressed and came out from his bedroom on to the landing wearing only a shirt and trousers. Without any more ado, the two R.I.C. men shot him, then turned to run down the stairs. Just at that moment James Walsh, brother-in-law already mentioned, appeared on the next upper flight of stairs, being aroused by the shouts of the police. The two R.I.C. men who had shot MacCurtain turned and fired at Walsh who threw himself flat on the landing. The bullets missed him. The two R.I.C. men then ran out of the house and joined the party outside; the lot then returned to King St. Barracks. Walsh gave evidence at the inquest as to the description and accents of MacCurtain's murderers.

The following morning, having heard of the murder, I went to Tomas's house where I saw his body laid out on a bed. I spoke to Mrs. MacCurtain and Jimmy Walsh who told me the facts I have related.

At the inquest, a jury returned a verdict of 'wilful murder' naming the British Prime Minister, Lloyd George, and other British Government officials in Ireland, including District Inspector Swanzy.

Shortly afterwards, Swanzy was transferred to Lisburn, Co. Armagh, where he was shot dead by two Cork Volunteers on 23rd August 1920. A revolver used on the occasion by one of these Cork men was that owned by the late Tomas MacCurtain.

Burning of Income Tax Offices in Cork City.

Early in the month of April 1920, an order was received from G.H.Q. Dublin, to the effect that all income tax offices should be burned at the same time on a fixed date. This action was to be taken all over the country, the object being to destroy all records and thereby cause a considerable financial loss to the British Exchequer, as well as completely disrupting the collection administration.

There were two income tax offices in Cork City - one at the South Mall which was in the 1st Battalion area, and one at 33 South Terrace in my area, i.e., the 2nd Battalion.

For days before the operation took place, I placed men on watch near the offices to note the number of staff employed; the times of arrival and departure of the staff, and the number and location of the rooms in the building occupied by the income tax authorities. Petrol was commandeered some days prior to the burning and stored in two gallon tins which had to be collected here and there throughout the city, (the petrol being more easily carried to the 'job' in tins). All the petrol was stored in the builders' yard of W.L. Kelliher in Drinan St, Cork, which was about half a mile or so from the income tax offices.

Shortly before 8 p.m. on 5th April 1920, the petrol was taken in horse carts to the vicinity of the offices and I, with about twelve other men, entered the building. The offices occupied the first and second floors over which were offices used by the British Pensions Board. Our first job was to get all the record books out on the floors, loosen the pages and spread them out. When this was done, the books, papers, fixtures, floor and stairs were thoroughly saturated with petrol. I then ordered all our lads off the premises (there was no staff in the building at the time), Peter Domovan, Frank O'Mahony and

myself remaining on the first floor landing. We then set fire to the place and, when I was satisfied that it was well alight, I withdrew to the street with the other two men. Seeing that the place was on fire, I blew a whistle as a signal for all Volunteers to withdraw from the area. The fire brigade arrived on the scene, but their efforts were in vain, the building was a mass of flame and was completely gutted,

About 50 to 60 men of the 2nd Battalion were engaged on the job that night filling petrol tins and doing armed guard (carrying revolvers) in the area. The operation, so far as we were concerned, was a complete success.

Early on the same day - 5th April 1920 - Togher R.I.C. barracks (also in my area), which had been evacuated a short time previously, was burned on my instructions by men from my battalion.

On 24th June 1920, Blackrock R.I.C. barracks, having been evacuated, was also burned by men of B/Company, 2nd Battalion, on my instructions.

#### Attack on King St. R.I.C. Barracks.

The R.I.C. barracks in King St., Cork, was occupied by a garrison of from 20 to 25 policemen and Black and Tans. I decided that an effort should be made to destroy the place and, on 1st July 1920, the attempt was made. To my mind, the best way to do the job was to explode a land mine from the adjoining house. I fixed the time for the explosion at about 5 p.m. when I knew that the garrison would be inside at tea. At about 4.30 p.m. a few of us entered the dwelling house adjoining and, having removed the occupants elsewhere, placed a large mine at the dividing wall between the house and the barracks dayroom. The mine was exploded and blew a large breach in the dividing wall, hurling debris into the dayroom of the barracks. This being done, I signalled to the Volunteers to withdraw, as we

could not possibly hope to engage the garrison with any chance of success.

The operation was considered satisfactory by reason of the fact that the British garrison evacuated the barracks very shortly afterwards. I cannot say what casualties we inflicted on the police on this occasion. All our men got safely away from the scene of the explosion,

Before the job came off, the whole district around King St. was manned by armed Volunteers of the 2nd Battalion carrying bombs and revolvers. The vicinity of Union Quay barracks and Blackrock Road barracks was patrolled by our men and all bridges crossing the River Lee were similarly held by our lads prior to the mine explosion. Upwards of 50 men of the 2nd Battalion were engaged that evening.

On 12th July 1920, two further R.I.C. barracks in my area which had been evacuated, were burned on my instructions, as was King St. barracks. The garrisons of all these barracks were transferred to the Bridewell at Cornmarket, to Elizabeth Fort in Barrack St. and to a temporary barracks at Empress Place

On 14th July 1920, Blackrock Road R.I.C. barracks was evacuated by the R.I.C. and was burned on my instructions a half an hour after the garrison leaving. The R.I.C. garrison was sent to the Bridewell and Union Quay barracks, which meant that Elizabeth Fort and Union Quay were now the sole remaining occupied barracks in the 2nd Battalion area.

#### Attack on Farran R.I.C. Barracks.

Early in July 1920, I was instructed by the Brigade O/C. to attack the police barracks at Farran which was situated about 15 miles west of Cork City on what is known as the old Southern Road leading from Cork to Macroom and about nine miles west of Ballincollig where there was a strong military garrison. I was to provide the attacking party from my battalion and the local

battalion was to provide scouts, block roads in the vicinity and help generally, without actually participating in the attack. A day or so before the operation we had a Volunteer out in Farran who made a sketch of the barracks and the houses and countryside adjoining. On the night before the attack I called those men of my battalion taking part to the Thomas Ashe Hall, Father Mathew Quay, Cork, where, with the aid of the sketch, I illustrated by diagrams on a blackboard each man's position in the proposed attack.

Farran Barracks was a three-storeyed, slated, stone building; the windows were fitted with steel shutters; the walls loopholed and sandbagged. It had a garrison of about 20 Black and Tans and R.I.C. mixed.

I left Cork about 9 o'clock on that July night with four motor cars containing six men in each. All were armed with revolvers, rifles or shotguns, as were the drivers of each car, making a total complement of 28 men. We brought a quantity of gelignite also. Darkness had fallen when we arrived by a circuitous route about a mile from Farran at approximately 10 p.m. I met men of the local battalion at a crossroads there. When I satisfied myself that the local arrangements for outpost duties and road blocking were carried out, I moved with my party into the village of Farran.

My plan of attack was to enter the house immediately adjoining the barracks, blow down the dividing wall with gelignite and open fire on the barracks with shotgun and rifle fire from positions in front and rear of the building, thereby forcing the garrison to surrender. Our first job was to evacuate to a safe place the family of the house immediately adjoining the barracks on its west side, which was Murphy's publichouse. Having done this, we entered the publichouse and placed a charge of gelignite (already prepared) on a board and against the west gable wall of the barracks. Bags of earth,



which had been got ready by the local Volunteers, were used to 'tamp' the charge in position against the wall. I had placed rifle- and shotgun men in equal parties on the northern side of the road facing the barracks and on a southern ditch bounding the barrack garden at the rear. Both of these parties were from 10 to 12 yards distant from the barracks on either side. All this was accomplished without the garrison suspecting that anything was amiss.

Before the attack commenced, I instructed the men that no shot was to be fired until they heard one blast of a whistle from me. Two short blasts would indicate 'cease fire' and three short blasts meant 'retire'.

When all was ready, the gelignite was exploded from inside Murphy's pub, blowing a hole in the gable end of the barracks. I called on the 'Tans' to surrender, but they replied with rifle fire and dropped bombs through the loopholes in the walls. I blew one whistle blast and our lads opened up with rifles and shotguns from their positions as described. The police still kept up a very heavy fire and, after some time - perhaps a quarter of an hour or so - I could see that we could not force a surrender. Here I should state that, as a result of the explosion the roof was blown off Murphy's house and the windows and doors blown out.

To try and compel the garrison of the barracks to surrender I ordered petrol (in tins), which we had ready, to be poured in through the breach blown in the wall dividing the barracks from Murphy's house. About half a barrel of petrol was thrown in but, when being carried through Murphy's house, some of the petrol was spilled on the floors; this wasn't noticed in the darkness. We then lit pieces of waste and threw them into the breach in the barrack wall. Immediately both the barracks and Murphy's began to blaze furiously, almost trapping some of our lads who, luckily, escaped through broken windows.

I then gave two whistle blasts to cease fire and again shouted to the Tans to come out and surrender, but met with the same reply, a hail of bullets and bombs. At this time Verey lights to summon assistance were being fired by the garrison in the barracks, whilst the fire was now raging inside the barracks on the lower floor and Murphy's pub was a mass of flames. I again blew one whistle blast as a signal to resume the attack and we kept up the firing for about another twenty minutes. The police still stubbornly held out, firing from the upper floors of the barracks as the lower part of the building was well on fire. All the time the Verey lights were going up.

At this stage, I decided that, as there was no possibility of taking the place by assault because of the fires and also because of danger of an enemy relieving force coming along from Ballincollig - where by this time the Verey lights must have been seen - I would give three signal blasts for our attacking force to retire. It should here be mentioned that in Ballincollig there were stationed a few thousand soldiers with armoured cars, artillery and cavalry. As the distance between Farran and Ballincollig was only about nine miles, there was great danger to my small party, now almost out of ammunition and 15 miles from our base. In all the circumstances, therefore, I deemed it advisable to break off the action. I lined up the Volunteers about 100 yards from the village, counted them, found all correct and marched westwards towards where our cars were stationed. It was now about 11.30 p.m. and I remember as I looked back at the Verey lights still going up from the barracks an ex-British soldier who was one of my party telling me that these signals indicated 'immediate danger'. We returned to our cars and came back to Cork by a roundabout route, but we met no enemy force on the way back.

Cork No. 1 Brigade Staff arrested.

On 12th August 1920, a special meeting of the officers of Cork No. 1 Brigade was being held at the City Hall, Cork, at which I was to attend. The meeting was fixed for 8 p.m., so far as I can remember. As I approached the City Hall, I noticed large parties of fully-armed British troops in the immediate vicinity. It was plain to see that a raid on the City Hall was in progress, so, naturally enough, I proceeded no further. I soon learned that practically all the brigade staff who were present in the building had been arrested and taken prisoner to Cork military barracks. Amongst those taken into custody were Terence McSwiney, Lord Mayor of Cork and Brigadier of Cork No. 1 Brigade. He had been appointed Brigadier following the murder of Brigadier Lord Mayor Tomas MacCurtain on 20 March 1920. Also captured were Sean Hegarty, vice-Brigadier; Joseph O'Connor Brigade Q.M.; Dan Donovan, O/C. 1st Battalion; Michael Leahy, O/C. 4th Battalion, and about six other officers whose names I cannot now recall.

After about a day or two, all the men arrested - with the exception of Terence McSwiney - were, to our great amazement, released. Apparently the military authorities did not realise the importance of the capture they had made and, in the absence of any identification, released their prisoners.

As is wellknown, the man retained in custody, viz: Terence McSwiney, went on hunger strike from the effects of which he died in Bristol Gaol, England, about two months later.

On the death of Terence McSwiney in October 1920, Sean Hegarty was appointed Brigadier, Cork No. 1 Brigade, in place of McSwiney, and Michael Leahy, O/C. 4th Battalion, took Sean Hegarty's place as Vice-Brigadier.

### Raid on American Oil Company's Store

On 3rd September 1920, about 50 men of my battalion took part in an all-night raid on the store of the American Oil Company situated at Victoria Quay, Cork. The purpose of the raid was to secure a supply of petrol for use by the brigade generally. I was in charge of the operation. We filled numerous tins and barrels with petrol and loaded them on to waiting carts. Whilst some of the party were engaged filling and loading, others were on armed patrol duty in the neighbourhood of the oil store. The operation was begun about 8 p.m. and had concluded about 7 a.m. on the following morning. Shortly after we had left the scene, lorries of Black and Tans arrived, but all of our lads were safely away.

### Attack on British General Strickland.

About the end of September 1920, an attempt was made by men of the 1st and 2nd Battalions to ambush the British General Strickland who, at the time, had his quarters in Wellington (now Collins) barracks, Cork.

Occasionally at irregular times, Strickland left the barracks in a motor car accompanied by an armed escort. For fully a fortnight I, with others, watched for his coming. Every day, different Volunteers took up duty at various street corners in the vicinity of the barracks. All were armed with revolvers and some with grenades.

On 25th September 1920, when I happened to be on duty, Strickland's car appeared, travelling at a fast pace along King St. Our lads were taken somewhat by surprise, but we opened fire on him and his escort with revolvers and grenades. Our attack was, however, not a success. Due, I suppose to the unexpectedness of his arrival at the particular time, he was not as heavily attacked as he should have been. At any rate, the convoy got through safely with Strickland. I cannot say now what casualties we inflicted on that occasion.

Attack on military at Barrack Street

On the night of 8th October 1920, I happened to be in a shop owned by Nora and Sheila Wallace, sisters, in St. Augustine St., Cork. This shop was used as a clearing house for I.R.A. dispatches and was a regular meeting place for I.R.A. men generally. The Wallace sisters were most trustworthy and were always in the confidence of the brigade officers. Whilst in Wallace's with Sean Hegarty, Brigade O/C. on the night in question (I remember it was an hour or so before curfew, i.e., about 9 p.m.) a Volunteer named Conroy came into the shop. This man was a civilian employee in the military barracks, Cork, where he worked as a clerk in the British Military Intelligence office. On many occasions Conroy had passed us on information of very great value. Conroy now told us that a lorry of armed soldiers would be leaving Cork barracks the following morning about 9 a.m. and would proceed across the city to Elizabeth Fort, Barrack St., which was in my battalion area. I discussed the possibility of attacking the lorry with Sean Hegarty and it was agreed that I should undertake the job on the following morning, 9th October 1920.

That night, after curfew, I contacted about 20 men from my battalion area and told them to be at the Thomas Ashe Hall, Father Mathew Quay, the following morning about 8 a.m. They were to come armed with revolvers and grenades.

On the morning of the 9th October I met the men in the Hall as arranged and explained my proposed attack on the military lorry. It was my intention to attack the military lorry myself along with Tadhg Sullivan, one of my company captains. We were to engage them with grenades and revolvers. The remainder of our party were then dispersed to positions covering the British military garrison at Elizabeth Fort and the police barracks at Tuckey St. and Union Quay. All of these posts were, I might add, within a couple of hundred yards radius of the point in Barrack St. where the proposed attack was to take place.

I, with Tadhg Sullivan, had taken up position at a corner on the junction of Barrack St. and Cove St. where there is a steep incline which we knew would slow down the lorry when it reached that particular point. At about a quarter to nine the lorry came into view. When it reached our position and had begun to slow down as we expected I saw that it contained three soldiers in the driver's 'cab' and 8 to 10 inside in the open lorry. I threw the first grenade which hopped off the side of the lorry and exploded wounding O'Sullivan and myself, but not seriously. O'Sullivan and I then hurled grenades into the 'cab' killing a Private Jones. Our third grenade got into the back of the lorry causing casualties amongst the soldiers there. The lorry continued on up the hill and was met by a volley from our revolver-men stationed further up the road. Those of the soldiers who were not wounded now jumped out of the lorry and took refuge in nearby houses. The scrap lasted about fifteen minutes when I ordered our lads to break it off, due to our lack of ammunition.

#### Capture of British Intelligence Officers at Waterfall.

On 17th November 1920, as a result of information received, a few of our lads armed with revolvers were watching the trains. Four British Intelligence officers were seen to enter a first-class compartment and the 'boys' got on the train with them. When the train stopped at Waterfall Station, which is the first station on the way to Macroom, our lads ordered the British officers out and shot them there and then.

#### Volunteers killed by grenade in Cork.

On 25th November 1920, following a Volunteer meeting in the Thomas Ashe Hall, Cork, five men of the 2nd Battalion were standing at the corner of Princes St. and Patrick St. having a chat, when a Black and Tan in civilian dress came along and threw a grenade into the group. As a result, three of our lads

were killed outright, viz: Paddy Trahey, Vice-Commandant of the 2nd Battalion; M. Donohue, 2nd Battalion Q.M., and Volunteer Mehigan. Of the two others, Volunteer Sean Bawn Murphy had his arm shattered and Volunteer Reynolds had his thigh fractured.

Visit to London to purchase arms.

Early in the month of December 1920, I was instructed by the Brigade O/C. to go to London to purchase arms. In London, our contact man was Mick O'Brien, a Cork Volunteer who was then representing his firm, Messrs. Dowdall O'Mahony & Co. in London. O'Brien had written to Sean Hegarty, the Brigade O/C telling him that guns could be bought in London, and Hegarty sent O'Brien a sum of money to purchase the guns. O'Brien, however, would not do any buying until I went over to him, so I set off for London with £100 or so.

At this particular period, in order to build up a strong arms fund, the brigade 'levied' each company in the battalion to the extent of £150. This money was to be collected in each company area. The response, so far as the 2nd Battalion was concerned, was excellent.

When I arrived in London I met Mick O'Brien by arrangement. He brought me around to secondhand gun shops where I inspected and bought a quantity of revolvers and ammunition. I also was lucky enough to be able to purchase two Lewis guns and a very good supply of ammunition for them. In all, my purchases when packed filled two barrels.

Before leaving Cork, I got in touch with Sean Óg Murphy (a wellknown Cork Gael) who was a clerk in the Cork Steampacket Company, and told him to expect a consignment addressed to Messrs. Swanton & Co., North Main St. Cork (this was a fictitious name - there was no such firm in Cork). On the arrival of the goods by boat in Cork, Sean Óg was to notify me

and I would arrange to collect them. When the two barrels of 'stuff' came to Cork (I had returned to Cork by this time), they were taken out of the Cork Steampacket Company's store for delivery to Swanton's, unknown to Sean Óg. When they were returned to the store, undelivered, somebody there opened the barrels, discovered their contents and notified the police at Union Quay Barracks. (Here I should state that at that time the Cork Steampacket Co. were noted for employing Protestant loyalists on their staff. Sean Óg was one of the few Catholics employed.)

Some how or other, Sean Óg got news of what was happening and immediately sent word to me. I went in haste to a haulage contractor named David Desmond, who gave me a horse and car, and, armed with a revolver, I proceeded to the Steampacket Company's store. Producing the revolver, I ordered the barrel to be loaded on to the cart and made a hurried departure with my precious cargo. On my way back, I passed a party of detectives from Union Quay Barracks who were en route to the store to collect the stuff, but 'the bird had flown'.

#### Explosion at Thomas Ashe Hall.

During the later months of 1920, it became a practice of the Black and Tans to set fire to Sinn Fein Clubs in the city during curfew hours (since March 1920, curfew was imposed in Cork City from 10 p.m. to 6 a.m.) The two principal Sinn Fein Clubs in Cork were the Tomas MacCurtain Club in Shandon St., situated in the first battalion area, and the Thomas Ashe Club at Father Mathew Quay in my (2nd) battalion area. In anticipation of an attempt being made by the enemy to burn the Thomas Ashe Hall, I decided to prepare a surprise for the Tans in the shape of a 'trap' mine inside the door of the Hall. I obtained about three cwt. of gelignite and placed it immediately inside the Hall and against the outer wall. The



gelignite was then well tamped with clay. Six electric detonators were fixed to the charge of gelignite and connected with electric wires attached to a switch at the inside of the front door; the switch was so arranged that it came into operation and fired the charge of gelignite when the front door was opened. We also loosened the 'keeper' of the lock on the front door, so as to make it easy to be broken, which, we anticipated, the Tans would do.

Shortly after midnight, on 30th November 1920, about 20 Black and Tans came to the Tomas Ashe Hall. Two of them hammered on the front door with the butts of their rifles while the remainder lined the wall just outside where the trap mine was laid. Eventually, the Tans burst in the door and a terrific explosion took place. I noted the time - 12.40 a.m. - as I was in a house fairly close to the scene. For the rest of that night, military and police were dragging the River Lee for bodies of the Black and Tans killed in the explosion. The River Lee at this point is only about ten yards from the Thomas Ashe Hall and many of the Tans were hurled into the river by the force of the explosion.

I cannot say with any accuracy how many of the enemy were killed that night, but it is safe to assume that practically all the force was wiped out and either killed or wounded.

This trap mine was laid for three days and nights before the Tans arrived and blew themselves up. It was necessary, therefore, to put a Volunteer guard on duty near the Hall during the day to warn those of our men who might go into the Hall. The fact that the trap mine was laid was known to only very few of us. At the time of the explosion there was nobody living in the Hall building as it was a lock-up premises.

Shooting of Blemings and Parsons.

Some time during the month of November 1920, word was brought to me that a youth named Parsons was seen very often in the vicinity of my home (where I rarely slept now). I put a Volunteer watch on Parsons and came to the conclusion that he was acting as a spy for the enemy. I reported the matter to Sean Hegarty, the Brigade O/C., who told me to pick up Parsons for questioning. This was done and I personally interrogated Parsons.

After a considerable amount of questioning on my part Parsons admitted he was a spy. He told me he was a member of a junior section of the Young Men's Christian Association (a Protestant organisation) in Cork and that in this organisation there were two sections, senior and junior, whose purpose was to report to the British authorities details of any I.R.A. or Sinn Fein activity which came to their notice. Parsons gave me the names of those most prominent in the Y.M.C.A. spy sections and these I duly reported to the Brigade O/C. Parsons also told me that it was he who had notified District Inspector Swanzy of the R.I.C. that Tomas MacCurtain had returned to his (MacCurtain) home on the night of 19th March 1920. Swanzy was the officer in charge of the police party who murdered Tomas MacCurtain in the early hours of 20th March 1920.

Having reported all these facts to the Brigade O/C., he ordered that Parsons be shot. This was done.

On 1.12.1920, the house of a man named Blemings was raided on my directions and Blemings and his son taken away. They were both shot. These two were members of the senior spy section in the Y.M.C.A. Their names were given to me by Parsons. We also had information about them from letters captured by our lads in raids on postmen for mails.

"Cork Examiner" Office raided.

On 28th December 1920, by orders of the brigade, men of the 1st and 2nd Battalions entered the newspaper premises of the "Cork Examiner" and broke up the printing machines with sledge hammers. At the time, the "Examiner" was in the habit of publishing news of the fight which was decidedly pro-British in its outlook and it was thought necessary to teach the proprietors of the paper that such tactics would not pay. As a result of our action, the paper considerably modified its anti-Irish tone. About 50 men in all took part in this operation. The majority were on armed duty in the vicinity of the printing works, Patrick St., Cork, while the demolition was being carried out.

Parnell Bridge Ambush.

Each evening, shortly after 6 o'clock, it was the custom for a party of from 25 to 30 police and Black and Tans to leave the barracks at Union Quay, cross the River Lee at Parnell Bridge and there disperse to points in the city. I decided to attack this party, using only the company officers in my battalion, the idea being to give all of them experience under fire. On the evening of 5th January 1921, I, Peter Donovan, of C/Company, and Christy Healy went by a motor car driven by Michael Coonan to Morrison's Island. In the car we had a Lewis gun, one of the two I had got in London a few weeks previously. We parked outside Moore's Hotel which is almost directly opposite Union Quay Barracks - the River Lee being between - and at a distance of about 50 to 60 yards. The remainder of our men were posted at Parnell Bridge, Anglesea St. and at points in the neighbourhood, covering approaches to the enemy barracks. Our lads were armed with revolvers and grenades.

At, approximately, 6.15 p.m. the police and Tans came out of Union Quay Barracks and, by the time they were ready to move

off, we fixed the Lewis gun in position on the roadway outside Moore's Hotel. As the enemy party proceeded towards Parnell Bridge we opened fire with the Lewis gun. The first burst killed seven of them and wounded others. Of those not hit some ran back to the barracks and those at the head of the party ran towards Parnell Bridge where they were met with revolver fire and grenades by our lads stationed there. We gave the fleeing Tans a few more bursts from the Lewis gun and, when all had disappeared - either shot or gone to cover - we got our Lewis gun back into the car and 'made for' the house of Sean Hyde, a Volunteer officer, in Ballincollig, about eight miles south of the city, where we left it for a few days. We subsequently brought the gun back again to the city for use by the brigade flying column which was then being organised to go to the country.

The enemy suffered heavy casualties in the engagement to which I have referred. There must have been at least ten killed and as many wounded. The affair lasted no more than ten minutes. None of our lads was even wounded on the occasion.

#### Shooting of Detective Officers in Washington St. Cork.

In Cork military barracks at this period (December 1920/ January 1921) a detective named Mailiff was causing the brigade untold worry by the manner in which he interrogated I.R.A. prisoners. He was repeatedly guilty of brutal ill-treatment of prisoners and, when this news got to the ears of the brigade, orders were given that Mailiff was to be shot.

For a long time there was no sign of Mailiff until 17th January 1921, when I was informed that he had gone to the Mardyke rugby ground to see an inter-provincial rugby match between Munster and Leinster. Mailiff was an ex-rugby player himself. I met a man from my battalion named Denny Hegarty, told him to get revolvers and to contact Frankie Mahony, also of my battalion, and meet me at the Mardyke rugby ground. This he did. When we were entering the pitch, a Volunteer

working on one of the turnstiles told me that Mailiff had passed in and had gone on to the sideline seats. We searched the ground and eventually found him in company with another detective named Ryan. It wasn't possible to shoot him there and then as there might be danger to the many people near him, so we decided to wait until the match was over, follow him out of the ground and shoot him when the crowd had thinned out.

After the match, Mailiff left the ground with Ryan, while O'Mahony, Hegarty and I followed close behind them. We all walked citywards and, when we reached the courthouse in Washington St., I decided that the opportunity had arrived. The three of us walked up behind the two detectives and fired at their heads and backs. Although badly wounded, they staggered away out into the street; again we fired at them and then left. Both Mailiff and Ryan were severely wounded but did not die. Both of them left the district, however, on recovering, and the torturing of the prisoners ceased, at least for a while.

#### Shooting of other spies.

During the month of February 1921, the following spies were shot in my battalion area on instructions from the brigade:

10th February 1921. Riley, living in Douglas, was shot in his home at night. This man was a member of the senior secret service of the Y.M.C.A. He was manager of the large grocery premises of Woodford Bourne & Co., Patrick St., Cork. With Riley that night was a retired British army officer named Major O'Connor. He, too, was shot and killed.

On 14th February 1921, a civilian employee in the office of the British Military Intelligence Officer (Captain Kelly) in Cork military barracks, named O'Leary, was shot in Nicholas St. Cork. He was known to be bringing information to the enemy.

On 15th February 1921, William O'Sullivan, a water-cock in the Cork Corporation and an ex-British soldier, was shot and killed in Tory Top Lane.

On 16th February 1921, Charles Beale, a Y.M.C.A. senior secret service agent, was shot and killed.

On 19th February 1921, Michael Walsh, Douglas Road, was taken out of the Cork Union and shot dead. Information about this spy was discovered by us in captured mails. He was also observed by some of our intelligence men going into police barracks.

On 21st February 1921, ... Mulally, a civilian spy, was shot on the Blackrock Road.

On 22nd February 1921, Finbarr O'Sullivan, a civilian spy, and an ex-British soldier, was shot dead.

On 23rd February 1921, D. McDonald, a civilian spy, was shot and seriously wounded in Evergreen St. This man was caught through letters captured in the mails.

#### Reprisals for the Dripsey Shootings.

Late in the month of February 1921, in an ambush of British troops at Dripsey, Co. Cork, six of the attacking Volunteers were captured, tried by drumhead courtmartial and shot. A local resident named Mrs. Lindsay, a Protestant, and her coachman were known to have given prior information of the Volunteer position to the British, with the result that the Volunteers were taken by surprise. Both the informants were shot by order of the Brigade O/C.

Following the execution of the six Dripsey Volunteer prisoners, orders were issued by Brigade H.Q. that, on a certain night, every British soldier, sailor, policeman or Black and Tan found out of barracks was to be shot at sight. On 1st March 1921, this order was carried out in the Cork 1st and 2nd Battalion areas. We of the 2nd Battalion combined with our comrades

of the 1st Battalion in attacking every uniformed member of the British forces to be met with. Many encounters took place here and there in the city. My recollection is that at least seven soldiers were killed and a number of other wounded. We suffered no casualties.

About 50 men took part in the attacks that night, revolvers being used in all cases.

On the following day, i.e., 2nd March 1921, Charlie Daly, a member of my battalion, who was a prisoner in Cork military barracks, was shot to death in his cell by one of the military.

#### Shooting of John Good - spy.

On 11th March 1921, John Good, a clerk in the Labour Exchange, Cork, was shot dead at Tower St. He was convicted of spying and shot by orders of the brigade.

#### Attempt to rescue prisoners from Cork Gaol.

Near the latter end of March 1921, I was instructed by the brigade to attempt the rescue of certain prisoners of ours held in Cork Gaol and who were on hunger strike. I cannot now remember the names of these men, but I do recollect that the brigade were very anxious that an attempt should be made to get them out and the job was assigned to my battalion.

By arrangement, I met the Very Rev. Canon Duggan, Kinsale, - then chaplain to the gaol - in the house of the Misses Wallace, St. Augustine St., Cork. I told him what we proposed to do and he readily agreed to help. He took in to the gaol at various times daggers, revolvers and a wooden mallet which he passed on to the prisoners who were to make the attempt to escape. The plan was that one of the prisoners, William Eager, was to knock out a certain warder with a blow of the mallet, take his keys and release the other hunger-striking prisoners. All were to come through an inner iron gate and approach the outer wall.

I would be on the top of the outer gaol wall at a specified point and, when the prisoners appeared, I had a rope ladder to drop in to them. Having climbed the rope ladder, they were to descend the outer wall by another ladder which I had used to get to the top.

The evening of 25th March 1921, was the date fixed for the escape. The escaping men were told of the arrangements by Very Rev. Canon Duggan. The time fixed was 4.30 p.m.

Just prior to the actual hour, about 50 men from my battalion (2nd) were engaged, some cutting telegraph and telephone wires leading to the gaol; others doing armed guard duty in the neighbourhood of the gaol. Four men, armed with revolvers, accompanied me to the spot where the escape was to be made. I got up on to the wall at the time appointed and watched for the prisoners. There was no sign of them. Minutes went by; a quarter of an hour passed; a half an hour, but still nothing happened. By this time, I was convinced that something had gone wrong inside the gaol and, as time was running against us, I had, reluctantly, to get down off the wall and order all the men to disperse.

I learned shortly afterwards the reason for the failure of the attempt. It appears that a warder - a man named Griffith - a decent fellow in his dealings with the prisoners, was the one whom Eager was to knock out with a blow from the wooden mallet and this same warder had the keys which would enable the boys to escape. When the time came for Eager to use the mallet he could not bring himself to knock out Griffin; in fact, he didn't use the mallet on Griffin at all, with the result, of course, that the plan was a complete flop, but through no fault of ours.

#### Shooting of the Traitor - Connors

On 24th March 1921, six Volunteers were caught in a dugout by British military at Ballycannon, just outside the city.



Information was given to the military by a former comrade of the boys, a man named Connors. The six lads, when captured unarmed, were brutally murdered by the soldiers. Arms and legs were cut off some of them and one poor chap had his stomach ripped by a bayonet. The brutal British then poured petrol over him and set him alight. I saw the bodies, horribly mutilated, when they were in coffins.

Commander Kenworthy came to Cork while we held the bodies of the murdered men until he arrived. The coffins were opened and he was shown the horribly mutilated corpses of unarmed prisoners. He expressed horror at what he saw.

Meanwhile, all our intelligence service was alerted for information leading to the person who 'tipped off' the British as to the location of the Volunteer dugout. Finally, the informer was discovered to be a man named Connors who was actually a comrade of the murdered Volunteers at one time and who, possibly for monetary reward, decided to sell his friends.

Connors went into hiding in the military barracks, Cork. Day and night, a watch was kept for him by Volunteers, but he never left the barracks. Eventually, we got word that he had gone to New York and, immediately, contact was made with Cork men there to locate him. He was duly found and his address sent on to the Cork Brigade. Two Cork Volunteers - Danny Healy and Martin Donovan from my battalion - were sent out to New York. They watched for Connors, noted the times of his coming and going from his residence and, one afternoon when Connors opened the door of the house in which he lived, he was confronted by Healy and Donovan carrying revolvers. The traitor then and there met his just deserts.

#### Formation of Cork No. 1 Brigade Flying Column.

Preparations to form a flying column from the 1st and 2nd battalions of Cork No. 1 Brigade were begun in January 1921.

The column was to operate in North West Cork in the Ballyvourney-Macroon District. Men picked from the 7th (Macroon) and 8th (Ballyvourney) battalions were also to be included. The column numbered about 40 men under the command of Dan (Sandow) Donovan, O/C. 1st Battalion. The men were armed with rifles, revolvers and shotguns together with the two Lewis guns I had obtained in London in December 1920. The 1st and 2nd Battalion men moved out westwards in February 1921, and went into training under a training officer named Sean Murray, an ex-British Irish Guardsman.

#### Spies shot.

Meanwhile, in my battalion we were still taking our toll of spies.

On 18th April 1921, an R.I.C. constable named McDonald, a particularly obnoxious individual, was shot and killed.

On 20th April 1921, one of my best company captains named Tadhg Sullivan was held up in Douglas St. by two British intelligence officers in mufti. He made a dash to escape and got into a house - No. 80 Douglas St. He ran upstairs and got out on the roof through a landing window, closely followed by the two British officers. Sullivan got on to the roof of the adjoining house when the officers appeared at the landing window and shot him dead. He was unarmed.

On 9th May 1921. A Black and Tan intelligence officer named Sterland was shot dead. This Sterland was an able intelligence man brought over from England specially as a secret service agent for the British. He invariably went for a drink in the Rob Roy Hotel in Cook St. every night. I was told about this, got in touch with him and arranged to meet him the following Sunday night in Desmond's Hotel, Pembroke St., Cork. Two of my men - Frankie Mahony and Bob Aherne - also went to Desmond's Hotel that Sunday night and had a few drinks with

Sterland. After a time we suggested he should come with us over to the Rob Roy. He did so and was shot dead at the door of that hotel.

On 9th May 1921, a civilian named Purcell was shot for spying. He was traced through letters captured by our lads in the mails.

#### Reprisals.

In the month of May 1921, I received orders from the brigade to burn the houses of certain wellknown loyalists in my area. This was by way of reprisals for the burning of houses of I.R.A. sympathisers and homes of known I.R.A. men by the British authorities in Cork. In addition to burning houses of loyalists named Dobbin and Pike, we also burned out the Douglas Golf Club premises. This latter was a regular den of imperialists.

#### Flying Column Activities.

As I have already stated, the Cork No. 1 Flying Column had moved out west during the early months of 1921 with "Sandow" Donovan in charge.

In late April or early May 1921, "Sandow" came back to the city and I went out in his place as O/C. of the column which was then located in the district north of Ballyvourney in North West Cork,

During my short stay with the column I took part in one operation which proved abortive. The object for attack was the headquarters of a large force of Auxiliaries stationed in Macroom Castle. These fellows were particularly shy of venturing out at night for fear of being attacked, and it was with the idea of forcing them out that I moved with the column into Macroom at night, about the middle of May 1921. We had with us a trench mortar and some shells and with this weapon we hoped to 'flush' the Auxiliaries into the open where we could

attack them with every hope of success. Alas, the mortar refused to function; it was a failure. We 'opened up' on the Castle with rifle fire, but the garrison were much too wary to be taken in by this ruse and refused to come out. Seeing that our efforts merely resulted in waste of ammunition, I withdrew the column from Macroom.

We were, at this time, attacked by another insidious enemy for whom we were ~~not~~ quite unprepared. Practically every man on the column became affected by itch. Sean Hegarty, the Brigade O/C. who was with us at the time, became similarly affected and the column was put out of action just as surely as if it had been wiped out by the enemy. The men were in a deplorable condition and, as a result, Sean Hegarty decided to disband the column for the time being until the men were cured. Doctors and medical students came out from Cork and treated the lads with sulphur ointment.

Luckily, I, Dr. Paddy O'Sullivan, O/C. 8th Battalion, and his brother Michael, escaped the disease; so, when the column disbanded, the three of us went south of Ballyvourney to Kilnamartyra. In addition to rifles, revolvers and grenades we had a Lewis gun and ammunition.

After about two weeks or so, the Auxiliaries from Macroom made an unexpected raid on a place called Reananaree, a small village between Kilnamartyra and Ballyvourney. They raided with six lorry loads of Auxiliaries. We got word that they were after passing through Reananaree and, picking up two or three local Volunteers (one armed only with a bayonet), we took up a position behind a ditch about a mile on the eastern side of Reananaree. Mick Sullivan was in charge of the Lewis gun. It wasn't long until the lorries came into view approaching our position in what might be termed 'extended formation', i.e., intervals of about 20 yards between each lorry. Prior to their

arrival, we had arranged to let the first five cars go by and attack the last one. When the first five had passed, we opened up with the Lewis gun, grenades and rifles on the occupants of the last one. A few who escaped our first salvo jumped out and took cover in the ditch underneath us. We hurled a few bombs down on these fellows. Meanwhile, we could hear the other lorries stopping and returning to help their stricken comrades. As the odds against us were tremendous and we would be hopelessly outnumbered in a prolonged fight, we made our way from the ambush position quickly and safely. I cannot say with any accuracy what casualties we inflicted, but I venture to state that there were few survivors from that last lorry.

Return to Cork and Arrest.

As the column was still disbanded (early June 1921) I was ordered by Sean Hegarty, Brigade O/C., to return to Cork. I did so on 13th June 1921, and, on my arrival in the city, sent word to some of my officers to meet me in Stenson's public-house in Douglas St. I was out of touch with affairs in the city and I was discussing with the officers the general position ~~when~~ <sup>when</sup> British Intelligence officers in mufti burst in the door of the publichouse. It was, I well remember, about 10 a.m. We all ran out the back where we were pursued by the British and fired on; two of our lads being wounded in the head. As we were all unarmed we had no option but to surrender.

A Crossley tender arrived and took us prisoner to the Bridewell. Later that night we were taken to Cork military barracks. Luckily for me, they did not know who I was or I would never have got that far. We remained there all night in what was known as the 'cage' (a compound with huts surrounded by barbed wire and armed sentries). There were hundreds of other prisoners in the 'cage'.

The following day, 14th June 1921, a British Intelligence officer arrived and paraded those caught in Stenson's the previous day. After carefully scrutinising each of us for several minutes, he told two to return to the 'cage', leaving myself and another. After a further long scrutiny, he told the other prisoner to go back to his hut and marched me under a military guard down to the cells in the barracks. I had given the name John O'Brien. I was kept in the cell until 20th June 1921, during which time several spies were brought to view me through a slit in the cell door. (Apparently I was not recognised).

On 20th June 1921, I was brought before a courtmartial of three officers and charged with attempting to evade arrest. For this I was sentenced to six months' imprisonment with hard labour and recommended for internment after the expiration of my sentence. That night, during curfew, I was removed by military lorry with other prisoners to Cork Gaol where I spent a few weeks. I was then taken with others to Spike Island where I was imprisoned in the convicted side of that prison. I was there until 14th November 1921, during which I helped with other prisoners to break up everything breakable in the prison, with the result that I was finally transferred to Cork Gaol from which I was released on 20th November 1921.

The following special services were operating in the 2nd Battalion since March 1919:

<u>Service</u>	<u>O/C.</u>	<u>Number of men.</u>
Engineers	Gerald Daly	30
Intelligence	Frank O'Mahony	8 company intelligence officers who had civilians in all walks of life engaged in this work.
Signals	Michael Buckley	15
First Aid	Daniel O'Riordan	who lectured all companies on first aid.
Transport	James Geran	--

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Signed: Michael Murphy  
 Date: 17-12-1956

Witness: [Signature]