

W.S. 1567

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COSANTA.

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 1567.

Witness

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Identity.

2nd Lieutenant, Eyries Company, Castletownbere  
Battalion, Cork III Brigade,  
I.R.A.

Subject.

Activities of Eyries Company, Castletownbere  
Battalion, Cork III Brigade, I.R.A., 1917-1921.

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ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21  
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No. W.S. 1,567

STATEMENT BY JAMES MCCARTHY,

11, The Orchards, Glasheen Road, Cork.

I was born at Boffikil, Eyries, Castletownbere, on June 16th 1901. My parents were farmers. I was educated at Eyries National School.

I joined the Eyries unit of the Irish Volunteers in June or July, 1917. This unit was composed of four sections - Eyries, Inches, Urhan and Ballycrovane. The commanders of the respective sections were: Christy O'Connell, Con Sullivan, Dan Harrington ('Causkey') and Robert O'Dwyer. The O/C of the unit was John Driscoll. The strength of the combined sections was over one hundred. In addition to the abovementioned officers, there was a committee of older men, viz. Joe Foley, James McCarthy, John Michael Neill, Richard Donovan, Tim Kelly, Con Neill. I have an idea that all these were members of the I.R.B.

Towards the end of July, 1917, Eyries Company marched in a body to attend a sports meeting in Ardgroom, and following this parade a Volunteer unit was established in Ardgroom. The first officers of this unit were : -

O/C - Wm. O'Connell  
1st Lt. - Pat Mulvey  
2nd Lt. - Wm. Sullivan.

About this time companies were also organised in Kilcatherine (Ml. Lynch O/C), Castletownbere (Charlie Hurley O/C), Rosmacowen and Adrigole.

About September, 1917, the members of the Inches section objected to the "set up", arguing that there was no provision for a committee in the Irish Volunteer

organisation. Arising out of this protest, the full company paraded at The Forge and it was decided to appoint a commandant, a captain, two lieutenants and four section commanders. An election of officers was then held, with the following result : -

Commandant - James McCarthy  
 Captain - John Driscoll  
 1st Lieut. - Robt. O'Dwyer  
 2nd Lieut. - Dan Harrington ("Causkey")  
 Section Comdrs. - Chris. O'Connell (Eyries)  
                   Con Sullivan (Inches)  
                   Jim Sullivan (Urhan)  
                   Liam O'Dwyer (Ballycrovane).

About this time Volunteers were being arrested throughout the country for illegal drilling. Information was received that a number of men from Eyries Company were to be arrested. These men, with the exception of those concerned in Inches section, went 'on the run'. However, it was a false alarm and there were no arrests. This incident led to a further protest by the men of Inches section, who maintained that everybody should have remained at home and be arrested as was being done throughout the country. As a result, the Inches section broke away from the company (Eyries) and formed a new company on their own. The officers of this company were : -

O/C - Con Sullivan  
 1st Lt. - Denis Neill  
 2nd Lt. - Jack Sullivan ("Shandon").

During 1917 the only type of training carried out was ordinary close order foot drill. Parades were held at least once a week - usually at night. All sections trained separately under their own officers. Occasionally a public parade of the full company was held, and small scale manoeuvres in which the members engaged in scouting, advancing and retreating under cover were held.

Beyond normal training, there was very little activity until St. Patrick's Day, 1918, when Eyries Company marched to Castletownbere to join the local company in a parade through the town. John Driscoll (O/C Eyries) was in charge of the parade, while Charlie Hurley was in charge of Castletownbere Company. After the parade the Eyries Company marched back to the village (Eyries), arriving there about 6 p.m. I should have mentioned that the parade to Castletownbere had been accompanied by Sergt. Nugent and Constable Quinlan of Eyries R.I.C. garrison and that the other members of the garrison - Constables Dalton and Cahill - were left in charge of the barracks.

The R.I.C. escort of Sergt. Nugent and Constable Quinlan accompanied the parade on its return journey as far as Urhan Cross, where they left to accompany a young lady from the area, who was being courted by the constable, to her home. There were now at the most two men in the R.I.C. barrack and it was decided to attempt to capture the arms held there. Further investigation, at short notice, revealed that the barrack was only occupied by the barrack orderly (Constable Dalton), as his comrade - Constable Cahill - was drinking in a local pub with James McCarthy, who, at the time, held the rank of commandant in the Volunteers. A small section of five men - Christy O'Connell, Joe Foley, John Driscoll, Peter O'Neill and Con Dwyer - was immediately mobilised and they arranged to carry out the raid. The raiding party was led by Christy O'Connell, who held up the barrack orderly (Constable Dalton), who tried to close the barrack door when he observed the raiding party but was prevented from doing so by Christy. The other members of the attacking party then entered the barrack and seized four rifles and a quantity of ammunition.

While the operation was in progress I was engaged on scouting duty on the outskirts of the village (Eyries) with David O'Connell.

There was intense police activity in the area later that night when the District Inspector and a strong force of R.I.C. arrived from Castletownbere. However, the captured guns had been safely dumped by this time and those who had taken part in the raid were moving round amongst the public as if nothing unusual had happened. No arrests were ever made in connection with this raid.

On the night following the raid on the barrack, Constable Cahill met Peter Neill - one of the raiders - in a publichouse in the village. He referred to the raid, saying that he had been in Drimoleague when a bomb had been thrown into the barrack there and now the rifles had been taken in Eyries. His final remark was: "I jumped from the frying pan into the fire". Both Cahill and Dalton were dismissed from the R.I.C. following the raid.

At this stage the sections at Ballycrovane, Urhan and Eyries, which composed the Eyries Company, were each organised to company strength and a battalion organisation was set up in the area. These new companies, with those at Adrigole, Castletownbere, Ardgroom, Kilcatherine, Rosmacowen, Inches and Bere Island, made up Castletownbere Battalion, Cork Brigade, Irish Volunteers. The officers of the battalion were:

O/C - Charlie Hurley  
Vice O/C - John Driscoll  
Adjt.- Michael Crowley  
Q/M - Dan Sullivan.

About this time the R.I.C. raided for John Driscoll and Charlie Hurley in connection with the parade

in Castletownbere on St. Patrick's Day. It was proposed to arrest them on a charge of illegal drilling. They were not "at home" when the raids took place and both now went "on the run". Charlie Hurley, who was now Battalion O/C, spent most of his time in the Eyries district at this period.

When the British threatened to enforce conscription in the spring of 1918 there was a small increase in the membership of all units in the area. All members were actively engaged in organising the general public, raising funds and obtaining signatures to the anti-conscription pledge. Selected men in each area were engaged in making pikes and suchlike weapons in the local forge. Originally the pikes were fashioned from the levers of springs of side-cars and later from spades. Local smiths engaged on the work were Ned Connell and Dan Hanly. The pikes were fashioned in the rough in the forges and ground down in the local carpenter shops, where they were fitted with long shafts by the local carpenters and handymen. All available arms - mainly shotguns - were collected about this time and were kept in convenient dumps.

On June 29th 1918 an aeriocht was held at the Strand, Eyries. In order to impress the gathering, a strong force of military and R.I.C. arrived from Castletownbere and took up positions in an adjacent field. While the crowd was being addressed by Pádraig Hayes, the local Gaelic League organiser, an aeroplane - the first to be seen in the district - flew low over the field with the apparent intention of causing a stampede, but the crowd only jeered and boomed.

While the aeriocht continued, arrangements were made by the local company to attack the military and R.I.C. party at Parkmore on their way back to Castletownbere. It was proposed to arm the attacking party with the rifles taken at Eyries R.I.C. barrack on St. Patrick's Day, all available shotguns and the remainder with pikes. The pikemen were to take up positions on both sides of the road and to charge the enemy party at a given signal. The rifle and shotgunmen were to go into action should the surprise attack by the pikemen be not completely successful. Owing to a change of plans by the enemy, who left the area sooner than expected, the operation was called off.

The Battalion O/C (Charlie Hurley) was arrested in the street in Castletownbere about this time by four R.I.C. men. The arrest was in connection with the illegal drilling on St. Patrick's Day, but plans for the destruction of Castletownbere R.I.C. barracks were found in his possession, so that, in addition to a sentence of two months imprisonment on the drilling charge, he got 5 years' penal servitude for having the plans. He was replaced as Battalion O/C by Michael Crowley.

Early in August, 1918, Sergt. O'Connell and Constable Cummins of the R.I.C. attempted to arrest Con Dwyer, who was accompanied by Michael Foley and Peter Harrington. Christy O'Connell arrived on the scene and, although unarmed, attacked the R.I.C. Constable Cummins, who was armed, fired a few shots and Sergt. O'Connell used his baton, but they were forced to retire to their barracks without carrying out the arrest. However, within a short time Christy O'Connell, Michael

Foley, Peter Harrington and John Driscoll were arrested in connection with this incident by a strong enemy party. They were later sentenced to varying terms of imprisonment. Con Dwyer escaped on this occasion and went "on the run". He was moving round the area until he got the "flu" towards the end of the year 1918 and died just prior to Christmas. He was buried with full military honours on Christmas Day, 1918.

At this stage a state of martial law was proclaimed in the area and a force of military was stationed in the village (Eyries), taking over a private house as their base. O'Connell's publichouse was closed by military order and all fairs and markets were banned.

My main duty at this time was taking care of the rifles captured at Eyries - cleaning them each Sunday and moving them from dump to dump. I was assisted in this work by David O'Connell, Michael Walsh and Peter Neill.

The rations for the military party at Eyries were usually transported from Castletownbere in a mule drawn cart accompanied by an armed escort. This party was held up by the members of the Inches Company and one Ross rifle was seized. This incident led to the enforcement of curfew in the area from 8 p.m. to dawn each day. At this time Volunteers were subject to arrest and search at any moment.

There was no activity in the area in connection with the general election in December, 1918, as the Sinn Féin candidate was returned unopposed.



Early in January, 1919, Cork Brigade, which embraced the whole county and included some twenty battalions of Irish Volunteers, was divided into three brigades. Our battalion - Castletownbere - became the 6th Battalion, Cork 111 Brigade. The other battalions in this brigade were Bandon, Bantry, Clonakilty, Dunmanway and Skibbereen. Another battalion was later organised in Schull area. The first officers of the new brigade (Cork 111) were, as far as I can recollect:

O/C - Tom Hales  
 Vice O/C - cannot recollect  
 Adjt.- Liam Deasy  
 Q/M - Pat Harte.

At the beginning of April, 1919, the military were withdrawn from the post at Eyries. Fairs and markets were re-opened. The R.I.C. now established a second barrack in a private house, the property of Mrs. O'Connell. A fair was due to be held in Eyries on April 9th 1919, but on the previous day a patrol of R.I.C. (Sergt. O'Connell, Constables Cummins, Quinlan and Ronan) were fired on at Parkmore by members of the Inches Company under Peter Neill. Constable Ronan was seriously wounded and two others of the patrol were slightly wounded. The attackers were armed with shotguns which were taken by me from the dump at Bours to the vicinity of Peter Neill's home. As a result of this attack martial law was again enforced and the fair due to be held on April 9th was banned. A strong force of military again arrived in Eyries and were camped under canvas in the vicinity.

When John Driscoll was released from prison - having served his sentence for illegal drilling and threatening the R.I.C. - about this time, he was appointed Battalion Vice O/C. The officers of the

Castletownbere Battalion now were: -

O/C - Michael Crowley  
 Vice O/C - John Driscoll  
 Adjt. - John Sullivan  
 Q/M - "Sonny" Mark Sullivan.

Peter Neill was now O/C Eyries Company, while, in addition to normal training, I was responsible for the care and maintenance of the rifles and shotguns in the dumps in the area. I recollect that at this period I had the pleasure, unknown to the O/C, of firing several rounds of .303 as musketry practice while caring the arms.

Christy O'Connell, Michael Foley and Peter Harrington were released from prison about July, 1919. Their release gave a boost to training activities in general throughout the area, but beyond this there was nothing unusual until the Spring of 1920.

On the night of February 11th 1920 a party of about forty men drawn from Eyries, Inches, Urhan, Castletownbere and Bere Island Companies assembled at Inches - about one mile from Eyries - at about 8 p.m. They were armed mainly with shotguns, but we had eight rifles and also a supply of gun cotton. It was proposed to attack Allihies R.I.C. barracks which lay about 7 miles across country from our assembly point. We were now divided into a number of sections. I was detailed with John Murphy, "Neilus" Neill, Michael Walsh, Dan Murphy and two or three others to block the Allihies-Castletownbere road at Gour. To get to our objective we had to travel over the mountains between Miskish and Skeagh. In blocking the road we had one mishap - a large boulder rolled on to "Neilus" Neill's foot.

As a result, he was unable to walk and we had to carry him on our shoulders over the mountain and get him back into his home about 5 a.m. next morning. This operation had to be carried out very quietly as there was a garrison of R.I.C. in the village (Eyries) at the time.

The main attacking party, under Christy O'Connell, exploded a charge of gun cotton at the base of the rear wall of the R.I.C. barrack (Allihies) and demolished a section of the wall from floor to eave, but the garrison refused to surrender. Fire was then opened on the building by the covering sections in position all round it, but despite a continuous attack the enemy refused to surrender and, on the approach of daylight, our attacking forces had to withdraw.

There was intense enemy activity in Eyries area next day. The home of "Neilus" Neill was raided and the fact that he was unable to get out of bed, owing to the injured foot, made the raiding party suspicious. They examined his clothes, finding them dirty and wet, and he was subsequently arrested together with John Driscoll, Jerry Driscoll, Joe Foley, Patk. Neill, Sonny Mark Sullivan, Michael Crowley and Liam O'Dwyer. I may add that with the exception of the injured man - "Neilus" Neill - none of those arrested had any connection with the attack on Allihies R.I.C. post. As far as I can recollect, Liam O'Dwyer and Mick Crowley were in jail on the date of the attack.

Following the attack on Allihies R.I.C. barracks this post was evacuated, as was that at Eyries.

At this stage there was a change in the personnel of the officers of Castletownbere Battalion. The officers now were: -

O/C - Peter Neill  
 Vice O/C - Billy Neill  
 Adjt. - John Sullivan  
 Q/M - Dan Sullivan.

The officers of Eyries Company now were : -

O/C - Chris. O'Connell  
 1st Lt. - John Murphy  
 2nd Lt. - Jim McCarthy (witness)  
 Adjt. - "Neilus" Neill  
 Q/M - Michael Harrington.

When the general order for the destruction of evacuated enemy posts was received at Easter, 1920, the R.I.C. post at Eyries was blown up by the members of the local company. The evacuated post at Allihies was burned and the Customs hut at Castletownbere was similarly dealt with.

A few nights after the destruction of Eyries evacuated post, a stone seat which had been outside the door of the barrack was put standing on end and an inscription - "R.I.C. - R.I.P." - was printed thereon. A few nights later this stone was knocked down in the early hours of the morning by a patrol of R.I.C. from Castletownbere. In the hope that this patrol would return next night, about twenty members of Eyries Company, under Chris. O'Connell, took up position at Pollincha Bridge on the Castletownbere-Eyries road, but although we remained until dawn there was no sign of the patrol.

In May, 1920, a military lorry travelling from Castletownbere to Kenmare broke down about two miles on Ardgroon side of Eyries. When the news reached Chris.

O'Connell (O/C Eyries) he immediately mobilised a number of men and, having armed them, proceeded to Faunkil with the intention of attacking the lorry. However, when we reached Faunkil the lorry had been repaired and had gone on its way.

The next major operation in the area took place on July 25th 1920 when the coastguard station at Ballycrovane was attacked and a large supply of arms and ammunition captured. Normally there was only one officer and four coastguards - all unarmed - stationed here. However, about June, 1920, the garrison was increased to twelve. Early in July a destroyer arrived in the bay one morning and landed a party at the station. A day or so later my brother - Michael McCarthy - and Denis Leavy saw one of the coastguards cleaning what appeared to be a rifle. On hearing of this it was decided by the officers of the local companies to attack the station at the most opportune moment. The question of an open attack was ruled out and it was decided to endeavour to take the post by surprise.

Several meetings between the officers of Eyries, Inches, Kilcatherine, Ballycrovane and Ardgroom Companies were held before final plans were made. It was decided to carry out the attack on Sunday, July 25th 1920, while Mass was being said in Eyries. This hour was decided upon as some of the coastguards were Catholics and their wives would be at Mass at the time.

The coastguard station comprised a terrace of four houses running east to west. The house at the western end was the officers' quarters. The men from Ballycrovane and Kilcatherine, under Liam O'Dwyer, were detailed to

attack this house. The two houses in the middle were assigned to some men from Ballycrovane and Ardgroom. The house at the eastern end, which was the stronghold, was left to the men from Eyries and Inches under Christy O'Connell. Four men, each armed with a sledge hammer, were to lead for the purpose of breaking in the doors. I was a member of the attacking party on the eastern house and was armed with a rifle. Other members of this party were: Mike Sullivan (sledge), Mike Walsh (rifle), Dan O'Connell (rifle), John Murphy (revolver), John Driscoll (shotgun) - all from Eyries Company, while Inches Company was represented by Denis Neill (Ross rifle), Jack Sullivan ("Shandon") - revolver, and two others with shotguns. There were also armed men in the section under Liam O'Dwyer at the western house but I cannot recollect their names. The total number of armed men in the attacking party was nineteen. There were, in addition, thirteen unarmed men outside the wall surrounding the station, who were awaiting the capture of the building to remove all arms, ammunition and stores. Eight or nine men, extended over a distance of approximately three miles towards Castletownbere - which was the only place from which reinforcements could be expected, were engaged as scouts.

The whole party assembled at a cowhouse on Batt Neill's farm, about a quarter mile from Eyries on the Boffikil road, about 10.30 a.m. This was about half an hour before Mass was due to begin. All, with the exception of the scouts, were carefully masked. When crossing the road from our assembly point to get to the seashore, we unfortunately met some people who were on their way to Mass. They were certainly taken by surprise

and appeared awestruck at our appearance. We continued on our way to the seashore until we reached a point about 100 yards from the coastguard station. It was then necessary to cross an open field to get to the wall at the western end of the station enclosure. Unfortunately, while running across this field, the one and only dog which the coastguards had began to bark loudly, and as we were getting over the wall fire was opened from the officers' house at the western end. Our party, under Christy O'Connell, rushed to an allotted house at the eastern end. Mick Sullivan, who had the sledge for the purpose of breaking in the door, just pushed it in. He was confronted by an armed coastguard who was in the act of shooting when Christy O'Connell pulled Sullivan to one side, at the same time firing his rifle from his hip with one hand. This forced the coastguard to retreat behind a partition. Christy then fired a few more shots and the man did not put up any further resistance.

The main body of the garrison, who were upstairs now, began firing at us from the second storey windows. We returned this fire with rifle, revolver and shotguns, but our fire was more or less ineffective, as was theirs. They could not come close enough to the windows to shoot down directly at us as we were under cover close to the wall of the building. During the attack, bullets were ripping up the ground in front of the station, and two children who were running across the adjoining field had a miraculous escape.

When the fight had gone on for about ten minutes we heard that the other houses had been captured and the two officers killed. Christy O'Connell now ordered us to cease fire. He told the garrison that their officers

had been killed and he called on them to surrender. They replied with another hail of bullets and we returned ~~our~~ <sup>their</sup> fire. After approximately another ten minutes - during a lull in the shooting - Christy called on his men to get the explosives so that we could blow up the building. This was only bluff, but it had the desired effect as the survivors shouted "We surrender" and came out with their hands up.

The party waiting outside the wall were now called in. All arms, ammunition and equipment - 11 Ross rifles, 4 short Webleys, a good supply of .303 and .45 ammunition, field glasses, rockets, Verrey pistols and bandoliers were collected. At this stage the surviving members of the garrison requested us to increase the damage to the building so that their authorities would be impressed by the stiff resistance they had put up. We complied with their request by breaking up some more doors and windows, then, firing a few more shots, we withdrew south east to the hills. As we moved out a heavy fog settled over the district and helped to cover our line of withdrawal.

All the captured material was now dumped in some caves in the hills. The members of my section (Eyries) returned to their homes, changed their clothes and moved into the village (Eyries) with the minimum delay, so that they would be seen by the public. Later that day some of the coastguards came into the village and one of them remarked to Mike Walsh, whose mask had fallen off when getting over the wall prior to the attack, "Ye were very slow about carrying out that job". However, it would appear that he never passed on this information to the R.I.C. or military authorities. However, in order to make assurance doubly sure, all those who took part in



the operation slept away from home from that date.

The rifles taken in this raid were now divided amongst the companies represented in the operation. Three rifles and the four short Webley revolvers were given to Eyries unit, whose armament now consisted of four carbines (taken in raid on St. Patrick's Day), three rifles (share of coastguard station booty) and eight revolvers. All these arms were dumped in an old house belonging to Eugene Sullivan at Boffikil. This house was christened "Fort Jackson" by a member of the company. It was also used as sleeping quarters for men "on the run".

Normal training was now carried on by all units. Selected men were being trained in signalling, scouting and engineering, and things in general were becoming more warlike.

Acting on information that an enemy force intended visiting the area, a number of men drawn from Ardgroam, Ballycrovane, Eyries, Inches and Urhan units were mobilised at O'Neill's, Clash, towards the end of October or early November, 1920. The party, to the number of about forty, were armed with 16 rifles and about twenty shotguns. Several men also had revolvers. We moved to Bealnalappa on the Castletownbere-Eyries road, where we took up positions on high ground overlooking the road about 9 p.m. The main body - numbering about 35 - were north of the road while the remainder occupied a similar position on the opposite side. With Mick Walsh and Christy O'Connell I was south of the road. We were armed with rifles and carbines. Although we remained in position until 4 a.m., there was no appearance by the expected enemy convoy and all sections withdrew to their own areas.

About this time a number of men were selected from Castletownbere Battalion for service with the newly established Brigade Flying Column. As far as I can recollect, six men, including Liam O'Dwyer, Tom Dwyer, Christy O'Connell, Jim Sullivan, Jerh. McAuliffe and "Quinlan" Sullivan, left the area about the third week in November, 1920, to join the column. However, they returned to the area within a few days as they failed to contact the column at the appointed place. It later transpired that the meeting place was Clogher, not Togher to which area our men had gone.

The next operation in which I took part was an abortive ambush at Beal, Boffikil, on the main Castletownbere-Ardgroom road about one mile east of Eyries. On this occasion we were acting on information that the enemy proposed to raid the home of Liam O'Dwyer. About 15/16 members of Eyries and Ballycrovane Companies were mobilised at short notice and took up positions on high ground overlooking the road at Beal about 10 p.m. All were armed with rifles. The expected raiding party did not pass, although we remained in position until daybreak. Liam O'Dwyer, Chris. O'Connell and Peter O'Neill were in charge on this occasion. It was now a short time before Christmas, 1920.

The members of Ballycrovane and Eyries units, under Liam O'Dwyer, Chris. O'Connell and Peter Neill, took up positions at Faunkil, about  $1\frac{1}{2}$  miles east of Eyries on the Ardgroom road, towards the end of January 1921. The strength of the party - armed with rifles and shotguns - was about twenty-five. We moved into position on high ground at a bend on the road where we

had erected a barricade of stones about 10 p.m., but after an all night vigil there was no appearance by the enemy.

Early in February, 1921, Christy O'Connell and Jim Driscoll left the area to join the Brigade Column. They were both members of Eyries Company and took part in nearly all column engagements to the Truce.

About mid February, 1921, the Battalion O/C (Peter Neill) informed me that an order had come from Brigade H.Q. to shoot two R.I.C./Tans in each town in the area. Chris. O'Connell and the others from the battalion had returned from the column for some reason. I casually mentioned to Chris. O'Connell that this job was to be carried out. He asked me where I had got the information and I told him "from the Battn. O/C". His (O'Connell's) immediate reaction was summed up in his statement to me: "He should not have told you. Only the men taking part should be informed. Tom Hales and <sup>Pat.</sup> ~~Peter~~ Harte were tortured for the purpose of extracting information from them, so the less one knows in advance the better". He also warned me not to tell any of the others. To carry out this order Chris. O'Connell and Liam O'Dwyer went into Castletownbere one night towards the end of February, 1921. They were armed with revolvers. They were wearing trench coats and were dressed in Auxiliary style. They took up positions in the town, but the patrol of Tans travelled in such a formation that Liam O'Dwyer would have been cut off had Christy opened fire, so, in the circumstances, Christy allowed the patrol to pass and with Liam he later withdrew from the town.

I met Christy O'Connell next day. He was on his way back to the Brigade Column with re-inforcements. He told me about the trip to Castletownbere the previous night and informed me that arrangements had been made to take another party into the town that night. It was to be composed of two riflemen and five revolver men. The riflemen were to cover off the R.I.C. barracks from a position at the rear. The revolver men were to take up positions at Swanton's Lane to await a party of Tans who were usually drinking in a pub nearby.

The party for this job met in Eyries about 7 p.m. They were - Liam O'Dwyer, Jim McCarthy (witness), David O'Connell, Mike Walsh, Patk. Neill (Batt), Jim Driscoll and Mike Shea - the latter pair were the riflemen. We arrived in the vicinity of Swanton's Lane about 8.30 p.m. Shortly afterwards Liam O'Dwyer instructed Mike Walsh and Patk. Neill to go into town unarmed to collect any information available on the movement of enemy forces. On arriving at Murphy's corner, they met some locals, one of whom enquired where they were going. They said that they were going for a doctor. They were then advised to be very careful as the town (Castletownbere) was surrounded by military and police. Our scouts (Mike Walsh and Patk. Neill) then returned to us at Swanton's Lane as quickly as possible and reported the fresh facts. Having regard to their information it was decided to withdraw.

While crossing a field adjacent to the lane where we had been assembled, we heard a movement of what appeared to be troops to the right and left of our position. It looked as if we were being surrounded. Liam O'Dwyer

ordered us to lie flat and hold our guns at the ready. After a short time we moved on slowly and eventually got through a gap at the end of the field. We still felt that the enemy were closing in but could not see any movements. Moving under cover of a fence in a semi-crawling position, we eventually got to Toormore and from there to the old Bealnalappa-Castletownbere road. As we were approaching Bealnalappa we saw a man on the skyline. We took cover and as the man approached we recognised him as the Battalion O/C (Peter Neill). He had earlier in the day gone to Lauragh to see the men who were going to the column with Christy O'Connell, and on arriving back in Eyries he had learned that we had gone to Castletownbere. Had we not come by the old road he would have gone on to Castletownbere and would, in all probability, have been killed or captured. All our men eventually reached Eyries safely. It was now, I think, the last week in February, 1921.

Christy O'Connell returned from the column in the early days of March, 1921, and on the night of March 3rd he slept with me. Next morning he left to go to Mass in Eyries. When he had gone I met Fr. Daly, P.P., who informed me that a strong force of military from Furious Pier were carrying out a round-up in the area. They were in Ballycrovane at this time and were moving towards Eyries. In the hope of avoiding the round-up, I moved towards the seashore with Michael and Murt McCarthy. I had only gone a short distance when I was held up as I was endeavouring to make my way back to my home to collect a gun which I had hidden in a hayshed. This was March 4th 1921.

I was then taken to Furious Pier, where I was tried by an officer and sentenced to six months imprisonment. I was removed to Bere Island and later to Spike Island, where I was interned after completing five months of my sentence. I was released from Maryboro (now Portlaoise) Prison on December 8th 1921 following the signing of the Treaty.

My rank at the Truce - 2nd Lieutenant, Eyries Company, Castletownbere Battalion, Cork 111 Brigade. The strength of the company at the Truce - about 60.

Signed:

*James W. Bartley*

Date:

*26<sup>th</sup> January 1934*

Witness:

*P. Donnell*

(Investigator).

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
BURO STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21
No. W.S. 1567