

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

BURO STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21

No. W.S. 1571

ROINN



COSANTA.

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 1571.

Witness

James Dunne,
Greenhills,
Kill,
Co. Kildare.

Identity.

1st Lieutenant, Kill Company.

Vice Commandant, 1st Battalion, 7th Brigade,
1st Eastern Division, 1921.

Vice O/C, 7th Brigade, 1st Eastern Division, 1922-3.
Subject.

Activities of Kill Company, Irish Volunteers,
Co. Kildare, 1914-1923, and Brigade Flying
Column, 1921-23.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil.

File No S. 2892.

Form B.S.M. 2

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

BURO STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21

No. W.S. 1,571

STATEMENT BY JAMES DUNNE,

Greenhills, Kill, Co. Kildare.

Easter 1916:

In 1914, my father (Patrick Dunne), Kill, Co. Kildare, started a company of Volunteers in Kill, and was elected Captain. The company strength was about 30 to 35 men.

Sometime previous to 1916, my father received instructions from Dublin to mobilise his company for Easter Monday and to await instructions from Messrs. Tom Byrne and Ted Kelly. Word arrived on Easter Sunday night from the late Michael O'Kelly, Naas, that Byrne and Kelly would be at Bodenstown on Easter Monday at 11.30 a.m. He was to go to Bodenstown and receive instructions for Naas and Kill Companies. My father had eight men of the Kill Company under arms on Easter Sunday night, and on Easter Monday evening they were joined by two men from Naas Company - Thomas Traynor and Thomas Patterson - who reported that Michael O'Kelly had waited in Bodenstown from 11 a.m. until 1.30 p.m., and Tom Byrne and Ted Kelly did not turn up. He, Michael O'Kelly, then came back to Naas, where he was arrested with Alfie Sweeney and Dick Furlong.

On Tuesday of Easter Week, my father decided to send Rev. Father O'Brien, C.C., Kill Parish, who was with the company, to try and get to Dublin for instructions. Father O'Brien did not get back from Dublin, and it was decided to demobilise the Volunteers on Thursday evening.

The names of the members of Kill Company who mobilised on Easter Sunday night that I can remember were:

James Kelly, Patrick Magee and Peter and Philip Traynor.

1917-18.

Kill Company, reorganised by my father, Captain Patrick Dunne, had a strength of about 30 men. My father, through his cousin, Captain Nicholas Laffan, Dublin Brigade, purchased over 1,200 rounds of .303 ammunition, some revolvers and ammunition, and from other people, one long .303 rifle and a new 38 Colt Automatic. The company were trained in the use of all arms.

Between 1917-18, twenty extra police were drafted into Kill and housed in the local hall, to put down cattle driving in the area which was mostly carried out by Volunteers. It was planned to lure the police out by driving cattle and getting a Volunteer to report same, and that another batch of Volunteers would burn down the hall. This plan was carried out and the hall burned down. The brothers Domican (Paddy and Tommy), John Sullivan and Jer Kelly were some of the Volunteers who burned the hall.

I joined Kill Company in 1917 at the age of 15 years, and, with my brother, Richard, looked after the arms dump which we kept in a large tarred wooden box long enough to hold rifles and with its mouth opening in a well covered ditch. During this period and onwards, we did dispatch work, and this entailed long rides to Pitt's publichouse in Straffan, McLoughlin, tailor, Rathcoole, Co. Dublin, Monks, schoolmaster in Saggart, also to Newbridge and Two-Mile-House.

The officers of the Kill Company during this period were: Captain, Patrick Dunne; 1st Lieutenant, Thomas Domican; 2nd Lieutenant, John Traynor.

Kill Company were very active during the 1918 elections and marched into Naas to proclaimed meetings. During one of these meetings, at which Art O'Connor was to speak, the police were present in strength to arrest him. The Kill Company surrounded the platform while Art O'Connor addressed the meeting, and, although the police charged with batons, they did not succeed in arresting him and we got him safely to Traynor's house at Haynestown in the Kill Company area. That evening as Kill Company were leaving Naas, they were attacked by about 30 soldiers home on furlough, the soldiers' wives assisting with bottles. They had hoisted a Union Jack on a telegraph pole. Our men charged them, took down the flag and put them to flight. Captain P. Dunne received a stab wound from a knife, in the hand, and Lieutenant T. Domican received head injuries when struck by a bottle.

Raids for arms were carried out; police were appointed and courts held at Kill and Killeel. In no case did any of the people brought before the courts inform the R.I.C., although the R.I.C. held barracks at Kill and Killeel. Captain P. Dunne presided over the courts.

1919-20:

Peadar McMahon, later Lieut-General, arrived in Kildare in 1919 to organise training and training centres for company and battalion officers. Training centres were established and Captain P. Dunne attended the training centre. Peadar McMahon inspected our company at Kill, where we marched in formation through the village and passed the R.I.C. barracks where twenty police were stationed. After the lecture by McMahon, he (McMahon) learned that 20 police were stationed only 100 yards away. He (McMahon) gave P. Dunne a severe talking to for exposing him to such

danger and then departed hurriedly.

Towards the end of 1919, some of the Naas Company - Jimmy White, Peter Gill, Gus Fitzpatrick, Tom Patterson and Mick Byrne - attacked the D.I.'s house (Kerry Supple) on the Sallins Road, Naas, which was under guard by some Naas R.I.C. After expending what ammunition they had, they departed.

From that date a patrol of four men would leave Kill barracks every second night to stand guard. P. Dunne sent scouts to watch this patrol, and on information received he decided to ambush them on the Monread Road, near Sallins, the ambush being set for the middle of August, 1920. Commandant P. Colgan, Maynooth, sent two boxes of shotgun slugs, per P. Tuite, for the shotguns.

On the 15th August, 1920, Captain P. Dunne returned from Battalion Training Centre, suffering from a chill on the kidneys and was confined to bed under doctor's care. He sent word to Commandant Colgan to postpone the ambush until he was up again, but as plans were so far advanced Colgan decided to send Thomas Harris to take charge. The whole Kill Company of 33 men were called out to take part and mobilised under Thomas Domican, 1st Lieutenant. We were instructed to wear masks. The ambush position was changed from Monread Road to main Naas/Dublin Road at Greenhills, Kill, and the date was 20th August, 1920. The main body of about 20 men, with ten shotguns and some revolvers, were placed behind a bank beside the main road with a small wood or screen with trees at their back. I was sent with five men under Jack Sullivan, Section Commander, to the Kill side of the main body, with instructions to close up behind the police patrol and not to

allow any of them to get back to barracks, which was only a $\frac{1}{4}$ mile away, and at the same time to watch out for enemy convoys travelling the main road. Only myself and Sullivan were armed. I had a shotgun and Sullivan had a Colt 38 Automatic.

William Daly, Section Commander, was in charge of the advance guard on Naas side of ambush position with five men, two armed, to stop police if any escaped in that direction. Three more men were behind the main body with the extra ammunition.

About 10.30 p.m., a cycle patrol of four police appeared, riding singly about 20 yards apart. We let the last R.I.C. man pass and closed up at about 100 yards behind. When the first R.I.C. man, a Sergeant, neared the end of the main body, he was called on to halt. He said, "All right, men". When Tom and Pat Domican jumped from behind the ditch, he opened fire on them. General firing broke out along the main body of Volunteers. At the time, I, with Sullivan, was close up to the rear of police. Two of them attempted to escape back to barracks and were captured by myself and Sullivan. P. Brady, although unarmed, rushed in and disarmed the two police, whom we took prisoners. The other two R.I.C. men were killed in the first volley. All the arms and ammunition were collected and given to unarmed Volunteers to dump. Myself, Sullivan and Brady then marched the captured police to Palmerstown Estate, 300 yards away, and instructed them not to report to barracks until the morning.

The whole operation was over in 20 minutes, as there was grave danger of enemy convoys travelling the main road and from 100 police and 400 soldiers stationed at Naas,

3 miles away, and from 20 police in Kill, $\frac{1}{4}$ mile away, who could be on the spot within a half hour.

None of our men was wounded. Men of the main body of Volunteers who were armed were: 1st Lieutenant, T. Domican, P. Domican, P. Magee, Harry Magee, Peter Traynor, John Traynor, Patrick Kelly, Jer Kelly, Tom Nolan and J. Kelly (Kilteel). Captured material - two .45 revolvers, 2 carbine rifles and a large store of ammunition.

Tom Harris returned to Prosperous after the ambush as it was too risky to remain in the Kill area. His revolver was dumped by my brother, Dick, who was with W. Daly's section.

After the ambush, police and troops combed the area but did not succeed in capturing any of our men, who had to go 'on the run'.

Sometime afterwards, Capt. P. Dunne was appointed Quartermaster of the 2nd Battalion, then formed under Commandant T. Harris. At the same time he remained in charge of Kill Company.

In October, 1920, Captain P. Dunne asked Commandant T. Harris to allow him to start a flying column in Kill area, as he had ten or twelve men on the run and could arm them. Commandant Harris replied that he had instructions from G.H.Q. that a column in the Kill area would cut the line of communication to the South of Ireland, which must be kept open for dispatches. After this order, the activities of the company were reduced to blocking roads, raiding post offices, training, etc.

Captain P. Dunne was captured on 26th November, 1920, and after being interned in the Curragh was courtmartialled

for being in possession of ammo. and sentenced to nine months' imprisonment in Mountjoy Prison.

Messrs. T. Domican, P. Domican, J. Sullivan and nine other Volunteers were captured between September, 1920, and May, 1921.

Jack Sullivan died in Ballykinlar Camp from the effects of a beating he got when he was arrested.

In October, 1920, owing to the activities of the Kill Company, the R.I.C. holding Killeel Barracks were withdrawn to Naas and the barracks was burned by members of Kill Company. The barracks at Sallins was also burned by the Naas and Kill Companies. Police stationed at Kill and numbering 22 men, were withdrawn to Naas, and Kill Company policed the Kill and Killeel areas.

Police and military swept large areas in Kill with a view to capturing Volunteers on the run, but they (the Volunteers) were always warned of approaching raids by the wife of Sergeant Minihan, R.I.C. (who was a Fahy from Galway), and by a clerk in the D.I.'s office at Naas - Sergeant Jeremiah Maher, afterwards Assistant Commissioner Garda Síochána. Sergeant Maher always got the information of pending raids to me on time and I would then warn the company.

Captain P. Dunne and Lieutenant T. Domican were captured on the 26th November, 1920, when both came home together to see a daughter of Captain Dunne who was dying at the time and who eventually died on 29th November, 1920.

P. Domican and J. Sullivan were captured when they paid a visit to Domican's at Xmas, 1920, and seven more

were captured after the funeral of Jack Sullivan who died in Ballykinlar Camp in May, 1921. By the month of May, 1921, we had the company strength up to 36 men and all turned out to give a military funeral to J. Sullivan. The company marched behind the hearse, which had a guard of honour of six men on either side, and despite the presence of 200 police and Tans with rifles levelled, 2,000 people walked with the funeral from Kill to Naas, a distance of 4 miles, where Sullivan (a native of Tipperary) was buried in the Republican Plot.

All the officers now being arrested, Patrick Magee (Kilteel), was appointed Captain; William Daly (Kilteel), 1st Lieutenant; and I, James Dunne, 2nd Lieutenant. We commenced organising the company and again brought the number up to 36 through young men from 17 to 18 years of age joining up. Activities increased and mails were raided, main roads blocked, wires cut and raids for arms carried out. All the officers were "on the run" and avoided capture.

Sometime in June, 1921, the 7th Brigade was being formed and P. Magee was appointed to the old 2nd Battalion under Commandant Michael Smyth. William Daly was appointed Captain of Kill Company; I was appointed 1st Lieutenant, and Patrick Kelly, 2nd Lieutenant.

Early in July, 1921, the 1st Battalion, 7th Brigade, was formed and William Daly, Kill Company, was appointed Commandant. I became Captain of Kill Company. Sometime before the Truce, I was appointed Vice Commandant, 1st Battalion, and P. Kelly, O/C, Kill Company.

The six battalions forming the 7th Brigade came into force three days before the Truce. Thomas Lawlor, Halverstown, Naas, became Brigade O/C.

The 1st Battalion Staff before the "split" were:

O/C - William Daly
 V.O/C - James Dunne, Kill (myself).
 Adjt.- M. Flanagan, Sallins.

The Battalion Companies were (pre Truce Companies):
 Kill, Eadestown and Naas. Truce Companies: Sallins and
 Clane. Total, about 250 men.

From 11th July, 1921, to end of Civil War, 1923:

On the 11th July, 1921, six battalions formed the
 7th Brigade, 1st Eastern Division. 1st Battalion:
 Kill, Eadestown, Naas, Sallins, and Clane Companies.
 Sallins and Clane were formed after the Truce. The total
 strength was about 250 men. Battalion officers:
 W. Daly, O/C; Jim Dunne (myself), Vice O/C, both of
 Kill Company. 2nd Battalion: Newbridge area: O'Donoghue, O/C;
 S. Aherne, Vice O/C, Newbridge. 3rd Battalion: Ballymore
 area: M. O'Neill, O/C; T. Byrne, Vice O/C; A. Medcalf, Adjt.;
4th Battalion: Prosperous area: E. Treacy, O/C; T. McHugh,
 Vice O/C. 5th Battalion: Rathangan, Bracknagh:
 M. Ryan, O/C; Jack Kenny, Vice O/C. 6th Battalion:
 Brownstown-Kilcullen area: W. Byrne, O/C; P. Brennan,
 Vice O/C. Brigade Staff: Tom Lawlor, O/C; P. Tuite,
 Adjt.; Patk. Kelly, Q/M. Total strength, 1,600 men.

When the prisoners were released from jail, the
 officers did not get back their ranks and they formed an
 ex-internee association with Tom Harris as O/C. This
 position remained until the split. General O'Duffy
 visited Naas to put the Treaty position before the brigade
 and battalion officers. I did not attend the meeting
 that evening. W. Daly attended from 1st Battalion.
 I had made up my mind to take the anti-Treaty side
 and I had the whole Kill Company behind me. While the

meeting was in progress, I raided the police barracks in Naas, held by about 30 men of the Naas Company who had joined up after the Truce. I had six men from Kill Company and two men from Naas - Jim White and Gus Fitzpatrick. We captured the barracks by a ruse and captured about 20 shotguns, ammunition, a large quantity of explosives, some revolvers, etc. We were looking for four rifles taken up for inspection some time previously from Kill Company. The rifles had been removed and we did not get them. I took over Kill police barracks immediately and put in a garrison of 20 men. Tom Harris had been elected O/C Brigade on Republican side after the Naas meeting, P. Brennan, Vice O/C; D. Harris, Adjt., and A. Medcalf, Q/M. I was appointed O/C, 1st Battalion; Tom Dunne, Newbridge, O/C, 2nd Battalion. The 3rd Battalion went on the Treaty side. The 4th Battalion, with E. Treacy, O/C, and T. McHugh remained Republican. The 5th Battalion O/C, M. Ryan, went Republican, and J. Kenny, Treaty. In the 6th Battalion, W. Byrne and P. Brennan went Republican. The strength of the Republican forces was about 400.

The staff of the 7th Brigade went Treaty with the new Truce Companies. Nearly all the old pre-Truce companies went Republican. I held Kill Barracks until the outbreak of Civil War, and P. Brennan held a barracks in the 4th Battalion area. At the outbreak of Civil War, I had a column of 36 men in the field, from Naas and Kill Companies. We held Kill village and sent a section of men to reinforce the South Dublin Brigade holding Rathcoole.

On the evening of the outbreak of the Civil War, I was informed that the O/C, T. Harris, had been arrested in Naas and P. Brennan, Vice O/C Brigade, was in command. I went to Prosperous to interview Brennan, and a new Brigade Staff

was formed: - P. Brennan O/C; myself (J. Dunne), Vice O/C; M. Ryan, O/C 5th Battalion, Adjt.; A. Medcalf, Q/M.

I returned next day to take charge of my column and remained in Kill area for a week until ordered to Prosperous area to join the Brigade Column. I brought 30 men to Prosperous and linked up with the Brigade Column. The total strength was about 60 men. I was appointed O/C of Brigade Column. The Brigade O/C, P. Brennan, planned an attack on Rathangan Barracks held by about 35 Free State troops. The building was hard to attack, as it had a canal, a river and a high wall at the back. P. Brennan opened the attack from behind a wall about 100 yards in front of barracks. I took a party of 10 men around to the back but could not get in view of the barrack. After one hour I had to take my party around to the front of the barracks, and after consultation with P. Brennan I took charge of the riflemen. P. Brennan bombed the building from cover of a low wall in front. He succeeded in putting nine bombs through the lower windows and driving the defenders to the top floor, where they came under our fire and were forced to surrender after three hours' fighting. We captured 22 rifles, 20 shotguns, 70 bombs and a large supply of ammunition. Ten Free State troops were wounded. We suffered no casualties. We could only use seven riflemen during the attack, as there was no room for more from the only position available. The Prosperous men attached to the Column did guard duty around the town and did not take part in the actual attack. The attacking party was composed of men from Kill, Naas and Kilcullen. After the attack we went back to Coolcarrigan House, our headquarters.

The garrison of Free State troops (40 men) at Robertstown retreated to Naas when we opened the attack

on Rathangan.

Another of our columns of 30 men, under Comdt. W. Byrne, had occupied Baltinglass with some men of the South Dublin Brigade. We decided to contact Ernie O'Malley at Bunclody with a view to uniting both columns. Myself and P. Brennan went to Bunclody and saw O'Malley. He instructed us to bring our men to Baltinglass and to occupy Tullow also. We interviewed W. Byrne at Baltinglass and then came back to Coolcarrigan. When we arrived back, Free State troops from the Curragh, Naas, Edenderry and Lucan were converging on our H.Q. The Prosperous men had already left when we arrived and only our men from the 1st and 6th Battalions, about 40 in number, were left. We formed them into defensive positions at Timahoe Cross to await outer ring of troops. While in position at Timahoe Cross, four men in Free State uniform in a car approached our position and were fired upon. One man, T. O'Reilly of Hollywood, was killed, and P. Tierney of Newbridge was wounded. We then discovered that they were coming to join us. As the Free State troops were closing in, we retreated to Curry's house on the south side of Prosperous and next day marched to Kilcullen, where a lorry was commandeered and took us to Baltinglass. We left our column under the command of W. Byrne, who sent some of them to occupy Tullow. Myself and Brennan came back to Kildare to arrange with our local companies, who had remained behind to carry out attacks on the enemy until we returned. After three days in Kildare, I left the area to take charge of our columns operating in Wicklow and Carlow. When I got to Dunlavin I met some of our men who had escaped from Baltinglass when they had been surrounded by 1,000 Free State troops. About half of our men were captured. I returned to Kildare

with the remainder, having reformed the column. I had instructions to blow up the railway bridge near Sallins where it crossed the canal. I took thirteen men on this job. Patrick Magee was our engineer. After examining the bridge, he informed me he would need guncotton to blow it up. I then decided to go back to our quarters at Alasty, Kill, and to send for guncotton to Div. H.Q. in Dublin. When we arrived at the 14th canal lock at Killeenmore at about 6 a.m., the morning was misty and visibility was about 60 yards. While resting on the canal bank we were surprised by a cycling column of State troops from behind and an armoured car at the bridge 50 yards away. We had no alternative but to surrender. We then discovered that about 200 troops surrounded the area. The date was the 4th August, 1922.

After being taken to Naas Military Barracks, we were sent to Dundalk Jail. Kildare 7th Brigade prisoners in Dundalk Jail numbered about 60 men. After eleven days in jail and on the 15th August, the jail, the police barracks and the military barracks - garrisoned by about 350 Free State troops, were attacked by Frank Aiken, Div. O/C of Northern area. After an all night attack, the town was captured and all prisoners, numbering about 300 were released and entertained to breakfast at the military barracks. About 250 Republican troops took part in this operation. About 400 rifles, two 18 pounder guns and a huge amount of war material were captured. I took charge of 60 men from Kildare. We were armed with 30 rifles and some explosives, etc. We then entrained with about 150 men from other areas to Dunleer, Co. Louth, and were instructed to blow up the railway bridge. This was carried out by P. Magee, Todd Andrews from Dublin H.Q.

was in charge at Dunleer. He instructed me to cut across country for Kildare as best I could. Mick O'Neill of Celbridge, North Kildare Battalion, 1st Meath Brigade, had charge of another column of 20 men from that area and took another direction home. After travelling two days, mostly without food or sleep, we were surrounded by 500 Free State troops at Skreen, Co. Meath. After a fight lasting from 6 p.m. to 10.30 p.m., I managed to break through the enemy ring with 20 men and rifles, and after travelling about five miles we put up at a farmhouse owned by two brothers named Duffy who lived near Fairyhouse Racecourse. We had our clothes dried, as it had rained all night and we were wet through. They also provided us with hot drinks and food. When we had got through the enemy ring, I had left a rearguard of ten men to hold back enemy troops. Those men were under the command of Patk. Magee, our engineer and officer of Kill Company. Other men I can remember with him were Peter Mills, Kill, Jim Collins, Kilcullen, Jim O'Keefe, Kilcock. I can't remember the names of the others. Each man of the rearguard had been provided with 250 rounds of ammunition and was armed with a rifle. When they surrendered at 10.30 p.m. they had only 7 rounds of ammunition left and the rifles were jammed and red hot. The Dublin Guards who had been attacking them had lost three men killed and several wounded. None of our men was wounded.

The prisoners were lined up by the Dublin Guards to be shot, when the officer in charge of the Guards, Comdt. Stapleton, arrived on the scene. He congratulated our men on the fight they had put up and accorded them good treatment.

My column, after two days forced march, arrived back in Kill area, where we had to rest for a week. I got in touch with the Brigade O/C, P. Brennan, and reformed the column. Several men who had come home with us from Dundalk were from the Edenderry and Rhode areas in Offaly. I put E. Mitchell from Castlejordan in charge of six men and armed them with rifles and sent them home to their areas to carry on operations as a small column. E. Mitchell sent me monthly reports of all activities. I also sent rifles to Bracknagh, 5th Battalion area, and a column was formed under Jer. Dooley. All rifles and dispatches were sent by canal boats to Miss Carroll, Cumann na mBan, who was a clerk in Murphy's Stores, Rathangan.

My column in Kill area in September, 1922, consisted of about 15 men. We had the co-operation of the Killeel section of Kill Company, about 9 men who returned home after Baltinglass and who were armed. We called them out on any large scale operation and they took part in the burning of ~~the~~ Lord Mayor's residence at Palmerstown and also in an attack on Free State troops at Sallins Station in which one Free State soldier was killed and two wounded. Several attacks took place on the main Dublin-Naas road. Two soldiers were killed and several wounded. One soldier was killed at Kill village when a convoy was attacked, and two more were wounded.

P. Brennan went to Dublin to take part in an attack on Oriel House, which housed a large body of C.I.D. men. I think it was towards the end of September, 1922. He was to convey the captured arms to Killeel, where I was to meet him with 30 men from Kill and Prosperous. After waiting in Killeel for three days, I got word that the attack was

a failure, that P. Brennan was captured, and that Capt. Mannin had been killed at Mount St. Bridge. Mannin was wounded in an exchange of fire and shot while a prisoner. The Divisional O/C, M. Price, sent me word to take charge of Kildare and sent Lieut-Colonel O'Kelly to help organise the country. Capt. E. Vaughan, Kill, took charge of the column while I was away. Myself and O'Kelly reorganised the county. My brigade took in Hollywood, Crehelp, Dunlavin, Ballitore, Ballyshannon, Kilcullen, the Curragh and Brackagh, and ran as far as Rhode, Edenderry, through Prosperous to Kill and the Dublin boundary. Our Brigade H.Q. was at Barnewall's, Lyons Cottage, Straffan, and all our dispatches went through the Misses Barnewall and Misses B. and Fanny O'Connor, Elm Hall, Celbridge. Misses May and Fanny Dunne, my sisters at Kill, and Miss Grehan, Naas, handled our despatches and carried arms etc. for our men. Miss Peg Daly was the principal Cumann na mBan girl in Kildare Town. Nearly all of these girls were afterwards interned.

Prisoners escaped through a tunnel from the Curragh, I think in October, 1922. About 15 of these men, from the west of Ireland and north of Ireland, were brought to me and were guarded by the column. One batch of 10 men from the west of Ireland I brought to Cardwell's of Celbridge, and while having tea at 6 a.m. we were surrounded by a column of Free State troops from Naas. Myself and Tom Kealy of Celbridge were the only ones who were armed. We managed to keep the Free State troops engaged for an hour while the unarmed escaped prisoners, after getting their directions for home, retreated. When we retired after an hour's fighting, we took one of the escaped prisoners with us, as his feet were swollen and he was

hardly able to walk. The troops did not attempt to follow us but went after the unarmed prisoners, whom they captured after a ten mile chase. The next escaped prisoners to reach us were: Seán McCoy, afterwards on the Military Pensions Board, Liam Ó'Callaghan, and Jim Colbert, afterwards T.D. for Limerick. I succeeded in getting these men through our area, and O'Callaghan and Colbert reached Limerick in safety - dressed as greasers - on a canal boat. Seán McCoy was captured afterwards in another brigade area.

Sometime in October, 1922, a big batch of prisoners escaped from Newbridge Internment Camp. This batch consisted of Tom Harris, former Brigade O/C Kildare, and a large number of Kildare men. Six men were former members of my column and reported back for duty. W. Byrne, Ballysax O/C, 6th Battalion, and a big batch of his men who were captured in Baltinglass, also escaped and reformed their column.

After the Newbridge escape, I was informed by Div. O/C Price that T. Harris had asked for his command back and was resuming duty as Brigade O/C. In November, 1922, I got word to report to Celbridge area to co-operate with the North Kildare Meath Brigade Column of 30 men under Column O/C Patrick Mullaly. This operation, the capture of Baldonnel, was planned by P. Mullaly, and he was to be assisted by the Dublin Brigade under G.H.Q. officer Todd Andrews. All the drivers in the district were rounded up to drive away the armoured cars etc., and two I.R.A. officers who were ex British army airmen were to man two planes and bomb Leinster House. I reported to Celbridge, where we were joined by T. Harris with men from 4th Battalion (Prosperous) and W. Byrne, O/C 6th

Battalion, with that Battalion Column. We had about 50 men all told, and Mullaly's men brought the total strength to 80 men. One hundred men were promised from the Dublin Brigade but only twenty men turned up.

Baldonnel Camp was manned by about three hundred men and thirty officers. P. Mullaly had the co-operation of about thirty soldiers in the camp, and his men were in the guard room ready at the signal to take over the camp with the guard. As only twenty men turned up from Dublin, Todd Andrews decided to call off the operation as he had not enough men to take away all the material and to attack Dublin with the help of the planes. We returned to our areas. We were called to carry out the same operation on two more occasions within two weeks, but the operations were cancelled owing to the Dublin Brigade not turning up. On the night of the third attempt, some of the guards at Baldonnel deserted to Mullaly's column, and Mullaly cried when Andrews called it off. Shortly afterwards his column was surrounded at Leixlip and captured after a four hour fight. Three of the deserters, Lieut. Dowling, Suncroft, Kildare, O'Reilly, Celbridge, and S. Heeney, Dunleer, were captured and executed.

A section of the 6th Battalion Column returned to Kill with me, where I supplied them with rifles as I had bought twenty rifles from a soldier stationed at Naas Barracks. This section of about seven men, under Comdt. Brian Moore, returned to Kildare, where they had a dug-out near the Curragh. In December, 1922, I had a visit from Tom Behan, who was our Brigade I/O and stationed with the 6th Battalion Column. Behan informed me that the column in the dug-out were in danger of capture and that he

had informed Tom Harris of the situation. Harris would give him no directions as to what action he should take. I informed Behan that, as Harris was Brigade O/C, I could not give him any instructions but that in my opinion he should put the matter before M. Price, Div. O/C. He wrote to Price immediately and I sent it through Miss F. O'Connor. Behan returned to the dug-out and some days later the dug-out was surrounded and the men captured. Behan was shot in his cell at the Curragh, and Brian Moore and his five comrades were executed on the Curragh about a week afterwards.

Towards the end of December, 1922, I had a visit from Lieut-Colonel O'Kelly from Div. H.Q., who informed me that Tom Harris had resigned his command and I was appointed to take charge of Kildare Brigade. I reorganised the Brigade Staff - Jer. Dooley, Bracknagh, Adjt., and Seán Cullen, Bracknagh, Q/M. The same staff remained in office until a short time before the cease fire, when we were attached to the South Dublin Brigade under Paddy Brennan, Dundrum, Co. Dublin.

In December, 1922, I had a report from our intelligence that an enemy intelligence officer visited a dance hall at Johnstown in Kill area. Acting on the information, I went to this hall with one man, a cousin and namesake of my own who was a member of the Glasgow Brigade and who had come over to fight. While inspecting the hall, we ran into a motor load of C.I.D. men and officers from Dublin who had called at the hall to dance. We had no cover and had to stand our ground on the open road. Fire was opened on us at twenty yards by the eight men who comprised the motor load. We returned the fire from our

revolvers and, after emptying same, we retreated around a bend in the by-road and on to the main road. As it was 10.30 p.m. and dark at this time, the enemy did not follow and we escaped unwounded. The enemy lost one officer killed and one E.I.D. man wounded. We then rejoined our column and moved about to escape the round-up which followed. This ended 1922.

1923:

In January, 1923, I had about ten men on the column, assisted by the Kilteel section of Kill Company. Two of this section had been arrested, leaving about seven men. Owing to enemy activity, I had to split up the column in twos and threes and billet them in different places in the battalion area. Some of these men were captured from time to time, and when I called them together for an operation we had to leave the battalion area and retreat to Celbridge, North Kildare, and vice versa. Owing to the capture of Mullaly's column, North Kildare came under my command. There were only two men left in Mullaly's brigade area - Tom Kealy and P. McKenna. These two men assisted us in all operations. I brought eight men to Celbridge early in 1923 and was joined by Kealy and McKenna. We hoped to ambush a cycling patrol of troops from Lucan who were constantly raiding the district. I billeted the men for the night in Oakley Park, a big house on the edge of the town. At daybreak next day Celbridge was invaded by about 200 troops from Naas and Lucan and every house was searched, with the exception of Oakley Park, as it was owned by an ex British Colonel. We knew that most of the staff were loyal to us and our presence was not detected. The troops left about 6 p.m. and we marched through the town at 6.30 p.m. We had to return to Kill area as Celbridge was surrounded by hundreds of troops next day.

Myself and Capt. E. Vaughan were spending the evening at a friend's house in Rathmore, Kill area, when it was surrounded by a column of troops from Naas. We were unarmed as we had dumped our revolvers when entering the house. We were having a game of cards at about 11 p.m. when we heard the soldiers surrounding the house. We ran into the yard, which was surrounded by a ten foot wall with a door leading out on to the road and another door leading on to the lawn. The night was dark and we decided to make a break through their lines. I opened the door leading to the lawn and ran out. The soldiers outside did not expect us to make a break and I was twenty yards away before they could fire. They missed me but kept firing. When I got across the lawn and across the railing they did not follow me. I did not know what happened to Vaughan until next day, when I was told that when I was fired upon he ran back into the yard and up a stone steps to a loft which was empty. He got behind the door, which he left open. Troops searched the loft, but ^{he} was not discovered and so escaped being captured. I went to Kiltel, one mile away, to mobilise the men we had there. When we arrived back at Rathmore the troops had left.

Shortly afterwards I was in Kiltel with eight men in two different houses. The house where myself and Tom Kelly were staying was surrounded by a cycling column at about 11.30 p.m. as we were having tea. We rushed out the back door into the yard and opened fire on the troops who were entering by the gate. The officer in charge had his tunic pierced by two bullets but was not wounded. They did not return the fire and we retreated to the other

house where the rest of the column were staying. They had heard our fire and left the house to take up position in a field at the back, where we joined them. The Free State troops left and we were not attacked, as Killeel was close to the Wicklow Mountains where the Battalion O/C of that area, Pat Carroll of Naas, had a column of about 30 men under Column O/C, Neil Boyle, who was afterwards shot dead when his column was surrounded and captured in the Wicklow Mountains.

The strength of the Free State troops stationed at Naas during 1923 was about 400 men, and a column of about 40 men were out day and night raiding the battalion area. Our men had a hard time escaping capture. We only took off our boots when resting, and we had to make many a quick getaway. Our activities could be only carried out after dark, and our houses and the houses of our friends were raided everyday.

The same situation prevailed in all the battalion areas. I got reports from all active battalions every few weeks, which I sent to Div. H.Q. About April, 1923, our brigade was attached to South Dublin Brigade as a battalion, as we had only about 50 active men on the rolls by this time. The rest were interned. Our activities from this time until the cease fire were confined to sniping the enemy on Naas road and Naas barracks. I remained on the run with a few men until August, 1924, when I returned home.

The following were the members of the 1st Battalion Column on the first day of the Civil War:

Capt. E. Vaughan	-	Kill Company
Lieut. John Burke	-	" "
John Behan	-	" "

Joe Burchell	-	Kill Company		
Andy "	-	"	"	
Tom Snow	-	"	"	
Dick Dunne	-	"	"	
Denis Whelan	-	"	"	
Peter Mills	-	"	"	
Jim Whyte	-	Naas Company		
Thos. O'Callaghan	-	"	"	
Gus. Fitzpatrick	-	"	"	
Ned Kelly	-	"	"	
Watt. Halligan	-	"	"	
Jack Rafferty	-	"	"	
Jim Slevin	-	Clane		
Tom Slevin	-	"		
Patk. Magee	-	Kilteel Sect., Kill Coy., Battn. Engineer.		
Harry Magee	-	Kilteel Sect., Kill Coy.		
John Nolan	-	"	"	"
Jim Kelly	-	"	"	"
Patk. Woods	-	"	"	"
Kit Dignan	-	"	"	"
Jim Grainger	-	"	"	"
Patk. Walsh	-	"	"	"
Patk. Byrne	-	"	"	"
Patk. Domican	-	"	"	"
Thos. "	-	"	"	"
Bill Whelan	-	Dublin Brigade.		
Peter Elliott	-	"	"	
Mick Byrne	-	Naas Company		
Peter Gill	-	"	"	
Patk. Brady	-	Kill Company		
Phil Vaughan	-	"	"	
Kit Mills	-	"	"	
Harry Behan	-	"	"	

Signed:

James Dunne

Date:

4-2-57

Witness:

Sean Brennan Lieut. Col.

(Investigator).

