

W.S. 1591

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COSANTA.

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 1591.

Witness

Richard Russell,
Ballymountain,
Innishannon,
Co. Cork.

Identity.

Battn. O/C Signals, Bandon Battn.,
Cork 111 Brigade, I.R.A.

Subject.

Activities of Bandon Battn., Cork 111
Brigade, I.R.A., 1917-21, & Brigade
Flying Column 1920-21.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil.

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ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
BURO STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21
No. W.S. 1,591

STATEMENT BY RICHARD RUSSELL,

Ballymountain, Innishannon, Co. Cork.

I was born at my present address on June 14th 1904. My parents were farmers. I was educated at Innishannon National School until I was 14 years of age, when I left to work on my parents' farm.

The Irish Volunteers were organised in the area about November, 1917, and at the same time a unit of Fianna Éireann was established. I joined the Fianna unit on its formation. Other members were: John and Bill Nolan, P. Kearney, Patrick and James Butler, Tim Cummins, Wm. Russell (brother). We drilled and trained in co-operation with the local company of Volunteers (Innishannon) which was organised by Liam Deasy. As far as I can recollect, the officers of the Volunteers at this time were: -

O/C - Liam Deasy
1st Lt.- Batt. Russell
2nd Lt.- Tom Kiely.

As the Innishannon Company was divided by the Bandon river, there was an additional 2nd Lieut. in the unit. His name was Daniel C. Crowley. The strength of the company in the early stages was about 40.

Early in 1918, the area was organised on a battalion basis by Liam Deasy. When companies had been established in Bandon, Innishannon, Kilbrittain, Ballinadee, Clogagh, Timoleague, Barryroe, Tinkers' Cross, Newcestown, Kilpatrick, Crosspound and Quarries Cross they were organised into Bandon Battalion, Cork Brigade. The first officers of this battalion were, I think: -

O/C - Seán Hales
 Vice O/C - Hugh Thornton.
 Adjt. - Liam Deasy
 Q/M - Pat Harte.

When Liam Deasy became Adjutant, Bandon Battalion, there was a change in the officers of Innishannon Company. The officers now were: -

O/C - Dan C. Crowley
 1st Lt. - Tom Kiely
 2nd Lt. - Con O'Sullivan
 " " - Jerh. Deasy.

The only type of training carried on at this time was close order foot drill, which took place in the fields in the district. The only arms held were about a dozen shotguns, for which we had a supply of ammunition loaded with buckshot. Parades were usually held twice weekly, and occasionally at week-ends we went on route marches to neighbouring companies at Ballindee and Kilbrittain.

When the enforcement of conscription was threatened by the British in the spring of 1918, there was an increase in the strength of the company, which now reached about 60. Our Fianna unit still carried on as an independent section. At this time, all available arms in the area - mainly shotguns - were collected by the Volunteers.

As far as I can recollect, four or five men from the Innishannon Company accompanied representatives of a number of the other companies in the battalion to Waterford City to do protection duty for the Sinn Féin helpers there in connection with the by-election in March, 1918. The Sinn Féin candidate was Dr. Vincent White. His opponent was Major Wm. Redmond of the Irish Parliamentary Party. The Sinn Féin candidate was defeated.

Normal training continued throughout 1918, and towards the end of the year our unit of na Fianna became amalgamated with the Innishannon Company of the Irish Volunteers and became Volunteers.

Cork Brigade of the Irish Volunteers was divided into three brigades in January, 1919. Bandon Battalion now became a unit of Cork III Brigade (West Cork). The other battalions in this brigade were: - Clonakilty, Dunmanway, Skibbereen, Bantry and Castletownbere. At a later stage, Bantry Battalion was divided into two, an additional battalion being based on Schull. The first officers of Cork III Brigade were, I think: -

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

There was no change in the position at this stage. Normal training and parades continued, but every Volunteer was becoming more alive to the necessity for procuring arms. No opportunity was missed to procure arms - shotguns, revolvers or other weapons - either by purchase or through raids. Our stock of weapons was growing slowly.

When the training camp was held at Glandore in August, 1919, the Innishannon Company was not represented at the camp.

There was nothing unusual during the summer and autumn of 1919. Training continued, but it was becoming more advanced. Selected men were being trained as scouts and signallers, while three or four neighbouring companies often assembled at week-ends and held manoeuvres, during which the units learned to move across country under cover of darkness and to make the best use of available cover during

daylight hours. These combined operations were usually carried out under the control of one or more of the battalion officers.

About this time, an important change took place in the Volunteer organisation. Up to this time the Irish Volunteers were controlled by their own executive elected at their annual convention. It was now agreed to become subject to the authority of Dáil Éireann - the Parliament of the Irish Republic - established following the general election in December, 1918. As a result of this change, the Irish Volunteers now became the army of the Irish Republic - generally called I.R.A. All members of the army now took an oath to support and defend the Irish Republic against all enemies, foreign and domestic.

Beyond normal training, there was no great activity in the area until April 25th 1920, when a patrol of three R.I.C. men was attacked between Upton and Innishannon. Two members of the patrol were killed. This operation was carried out by men from Crosspound Company under Charlie Hurley (Battalion V/C). The only representative from Innishannon Company who had any connection with this attack, was my brother - Wm. Russell - who supplied the intelligence reports and acted as scout.

During April/May 1920 about £200 was stolen from John and Patrick Jordan - two old men living in Innishannon area. The robbery was reported to the R.I.C., who made no effort to trace the culprits. Eventually the case was reported to the officers of Innishannon unit, and steps were immediately taken to investigate the matter. After some days it was discovered that two young men - John O'Brien and Richard Beasley - were spending money more freely than usual in the village (Innishannon) and it was decided to arrest

them. The whole company was mobilised for this operation, as there was a large force of R.I.C. in the barracks in the village and it was necessary to hold all roads in the event of a surprise sortie while the arrests were being made. Evidently the two men being sought had some idea that they were under suspicion, as they were not at home when called for. However, after searching three houses, the wanted men were found. They were removed to Crosspound Company area, where they were detained for about a fortnight. During this period they were interrogated on a number of occasions but refused to admit any knowledge of the robbery. At this stage it was decided to arrest two younger brothers of Richard Beasley. This was done, and while the new prisoners were being taken to a place where the others were detained they told all they knew. It transpired that the robbery had been carried out by one of the younger Beasleys, and that the money had then been taken from him by his brother, who had been spending it. They then disclosed where the unspent balance of the money was hidden - some 37 gold sovereigns in a stable at Beasley's home and the balance in notes in Beasley's grandmother's grave in Innishannon Churchyard. The hidden balance was recovered and the culprits were then placed on trial before a Republican Court of three judges - one of whom was Seán Buckley, Bandon. The prisoners asked to be defended by Liam Deasy, who agreed to their request. They were tried in Crosspound area. The finding of the court was that, on payment of the missing money, the prisoners would be released. The money was paid back by Beasley's father and the prisoners were released. The work of arresting, detaining and trying these prisoners had to be carried out under armed guards, owing to the close proximity of the area to Bandon - a strong military post - four miles away, and the large force of R.I.C. in Innishannon barracks.

During June, 1920, several houses in the area were raided for arms. Four shotguns and two miniature rifles were obtained in these raids. Amongst those who took part were: - Dan C. Crowley (O/C), Con O'Sullivan; Tom Kiely, Jerh. Deasy, Tom and Denis Kiely, David Buckley, Richard Russell (witness), Ted Deasy, Con Lane, James Kiely, Pat Butler and three or four others.

Early in August, 1920, plans were laid to carry out a surprise attack on Innishannon R.I.C. post. This was a battalion operation. It was proposed to take up positions around the building on a Saturday night and to have some men in position to rush the door when some of the garrison would open it next morning to go to 9 a.m. Mass, as was their normal procedure. When the party from Kilbrittain Company was moving toward the assembly point on Saturday night, a shot was accidentally discharged within hearing distance of the barrack. When this happening was reported to the officers in charge at the assembly point, it was decided to call off the attack as there was grave danger that the garrison would be on the alert. The men from Kilbrittain and the men from Innishannon Company who resided south of the Bandon river, now returned to Collier's Quay, where they crossed the river in fishing boats and returned to their home areas. Following the withdrawal of the main attacking party and the decision to abandon the job, I was instructed to go to first Mass in Innishannon and to ascertain whether any member of the R.I.C. garrison came to Mass. I found that some members of the garrison were at Mass as usual, so it is unlikely that they were expecting any attack. However, our officers would hardly have been justified in taking a chance, in view of the possibility that the enemy would be on the alert following the shot which was accidentally discharged.

The next activity of note in the area was an attack on a cycle patrol of four R.I.C. men armed with rifles and revolvers at Curranure, about three miles from Bandon on the main road to Innishannon. This patrol travelled each Saturday from Innishannon to Bandon and back, but on some occasions it travelled the old road to Bandon instead of the main road. It was decided to attack the patrol on Saturday, August 21st 1920, and for this purpose the Brigade O/C (Charlie Hurley) mobilised nine men from Innishannon Company in the early morning of the date fixed for the operation. The men were: - Dan C. Crowley, Company O/C, Con O'Sullivan, Richard Twomey, Jerh. Deasy, Richard Russell (witness), Patrick Dempsey, Pat Kearney, Dan Falvey and Ted Deasy. With the exception of Charlie Hurley, who was in charge and carried a rifle, all the others were armed with shotguns. We took up a position behind the roadside fence about three miles from Bandon on the old road about 8 a.m. We remained here until about twelve o'clock (noon), and as the patrol had not passed we decided that it must have travelled by the main road. It was now decided by Charlie Hurley (O/C) that we would move to the main road and take up a position there at Curranure, about three miles from Bandon.

As we were about to move off, the O/C (Charlie Hurley) decided to send myself and Ted Deasy into Bandon to ascertain if the patrol had, in fact, gone to Bandon. I was to report back to the new position at Curranure if the patrol was in town, and Ted Deasy was to follow the patrol when it had left for Innishannon. We had only entered Bandon when we observed the patrol on the street. I immediately left the town and came to the new ambush

position on the main road to report to the O/C. Here I found the ambush party divided into two sections, with an intervening space of about eighty yards. This was the approximate distance between the leading and rear sections of the patrol, which normally travelled in two pairs. Our ambush party was in position behind the roadside fence. The western section of our party - nearer Bandon - consisted of Charlie Hurley (rifle), Dan C. Crowley, Con O'Sullivan and Jerh. Deasy (shotguns). The eastern section - nearer Innishannon - comprised Patrick Dempsey, Con and Jerh. Kearney, Richard Twomey. All were armed with shotguns.

When I had reported to the O/C (Charlie Hurley) that the patrol were in Bandon, he instructed me to proceed to the eastern section and inform the men there to this effect. I had only just moved away to carry out this instruction when the leading pair in the enemy patrol passed into the position. They were allowed to pass through by Charlie Hurley's men at the western end to be dealt with by the eastern section. When the second pair in the patrol reached the western position, they were called upon to halt and hand up their arms. One of this pair halted and moved towards the fence to hand up his rifle. He was handing the rifle to Con O'Sullivan when his companion made a bolt across the road and jumped the fence on the opposite side. This man opened fire on the position held by Charlie and his men.

The leading section of the patrol had through an oversight been allowed to pass through unmolested. These men now took up positions and opened fire on the eastern section. Eventually, after an exchange of fire lasting

several minutes, both our sections withdrew in the direction of Ballinadee. We had captured one rifle and had no casualties.

During this engagement, a train passed along the railway line to the rear of our position and overlooking same. A man in naval officer's uniform was observed at one of the windows, and it was later reported that when the train reached Bandon he telephoned the military barracks there, so that we had only begun to withdraw from our position when a lorry load of military passed along the old Bandon road across our line of retreat. Had we been a few minutes earlier, we would have been on the road when the lorry, whose occupants were searching for us, arrived on the spot. As a matter of fact, Ted Deasy, who had been following the patrol from Bandon, was picked up on the main road about the same time.

Following the foregoing incidents, all those who took part were moving about the area for a few days. Early in the week the members of Innishannon Company, with representatives from Kilbrittain, Ballinadee, Crosspound and Kilpatrick Companies, to the number of about 60, took positions on the main Innishannon-Bandon road at Curranure in the vicinity of the position occupied on August 21st 1920. The main attacking party were in position at a dangerous corner where the road passed underneath a railway bridge. They were under cover of the roadside fence south of the road and extended over a distance of about 80 yards. This party was armed with shotguns and rifles. It numbered about 40. Flanking parties were also in position south of the road to the east and west of the main position, while two small

covering parties were in position - one on the railway bridge overlooking the road and the second north of the road along the river bank.

Positions were taken up about 8 a.m. and we were expecting an R.I.C. convoy to pass through. When we had been in position about three hours, a local land agent named Stennings was observed talking to some workmen in a quarry nearby and overlooking which some of our men were on outpost duty. After a short time, Stennings left the quarry and cycled back towards Innishannon. When he had gone, the O/C of the outpost position - I cannot recollect who was in charge there - reported the happenings in the quarry to the Brigade O/C, Charlie Hurley, who was in charge of the combined sections. As there was a danger that Stennings might report our presence in the area to the enemy, it was decided to withdraw from the position.

All sections were called in about twelve o'clock (noon). The men from Innishannon Company, with the exception of Dan C. Crowley (O/C), Con O'Sullivan, Jerh. Deasy, Patrick Dempsey, Richard Twomey and myself, were instructed to return to their homes, while we moved with the remainder of the column to Kilpatrick, where we again took up an ambush position. We remained in position until darkness set in, when we withdrew to Newcestown. We remained here for two days before returning to our Kilpatrick position, where we again remained in ambush throughout a whole day without making contact with the enemy. We withdrew from this position as night approached, and dispersed to our home areas.

Early in September, 1920, a feis was held at Ballinadee. It was anticipated that this event would be visited by a military patrol, as was customary at the time, all Irish Ireland activities being more or less banned. The Battalion O/C (Seán Hales) arranged for a strong force drawn from all companies in the battalion (Bandon) to attend the feis. A supply of arms and ammunition, for the provision of which I was made responsible, was taken to Ballinadee on the night before. I was assisted by Dan C. Crowley, Con O'Sullivan and Patk. Butler. The arms were to be used by a covering party, which was to take up a position behind the wall of the graveyard in the village (Ballinadee) while the remainder of the I.R.A. party would mingle with the crowd and, at a given signal, would jump on the patrol and seize their arms. There were about twenty men from Innishannon Company on duty on this occasion. I was posted as a scout at the top of Horse Hill - $\frac{1}{2}$ mile from Ballinadee - from which I could cover all approach roads for a distance of approximately two miles. The enemy patrol did not put in an appearance as expected, so all men returned to their home areas that night.

When the first training camp was set up at Clonbuig in Kilbrittain area in September, 1920, the officers of Innishannon Company - Dan C. Crowley (O/C), Con O'Sullivan (2nd Lieut.) and Jerh. Deasy (2nd Lieut.) - were amongst those in attendance. As far as I can recollect, the officers of all companies in the Bandon Battalion were present at this camp, of which Tom Barry - the newly appointed Brigade Training Officer and later Column O/C - was in charge.

When the camp at Clonbuig broke up after about a week's training, the men at the camp were sent home. They were told to return in three days and, on re-assembly, they moved into Dunmanway area to seek an engagement with the enemy. The expected enemy convoy did not travel, so this column returned to Newcestown area within a couple of days without an engagement. However, they had only arrived at billets in Newcestown when they were advised of the approach of two lorry loads of the Essex Regiment. They dashed from their billets and took up positions behind the roadside fence at Newcestown Cross. It was now quite dark. When the lorries came into view, they opened fire. The lights of the lorries were extinguished and confusion reigned amongst the enemy for some time. After an exchange of fire over a period of ten minutes or so, the I.R.A. column withdrew, having no casualties. Enemy casualties were:- one officer killed and several other ranks wounded. Innishannon Company was represented in this engagement by the three officers - Dan C. Crowley, Con O'Sullivan and Jerh. Deasy - who had attended the training camp at Clonbuig. After this engagement, this column dispersed and the members returned home.

During the week following the engagement at Newcestown, the enemy forces in Bandon burned the homes of John Lordan (Battalion V/C Bandon) and another private house as a reprisal for the loss of their men.

Innishannon Company was represented on the column which ambushed a military convoy on the main Bandon-Cork road at Toureen, about nine miles from Bandon, on the morning of October 26th 1920 by Dan C. Crowley. The majority of the members of the unit were engaged on scouting duty when the column crossed the Bandon river

on the night before this engagement and also when it withdrew from the area after the fight. In addition to these activities, the men of the company were also responsible for the dumping of spare wheels, tyres and other equipment taken from the enemy lorries. Amongst those who took part in these activities were: - Tom Kiely, David and Jerh. Finn, David Buckley, James Cotter, Mick Crowley, Tom Butler, Tom and Denis Kiely.

Late in October, 1920, a section of the company south of the Bandon river, under Jerh. Deasy, raided General Caulfield's in Innishannon and seized one .45 revolver. I cannot recollect the names of those who took part.

There was a full parade of Innishannon Company at the funeral of Mick O'Brien - a member of the Kilbrittain Company - to Murragh Cemetery on October 31st 1920. Next morning, the Company O/C, Dan C. Crowley, and three other members of the company - Tom Kiely, Denis Kiely and James Cotter - were arrested and charged with complicity in the ambush at Toureen on October 26th 1921. The arrest of the O/C led to a change in the personnel of the company staff, which now became: -

O/C - Con O'Sullivan
1st Lt. - Tom Kiely
2nd Lt. - Jerh. Deasy.

The decision to establish a permanent fighting force in the shape of a Brigade Flying Column at this stage led to the imposition of a levy on all landholders and business people in order to finance the maintenance of this fighting unit. The levy was based on the number of cattle carried on the farms, and on the Poor Law

Valuation of the premises in the case of business people. The amount of the levy varied from £1 to £50. The responsibility for collection in each company area devolved on the members of the various companies. There were a considerable number of hostile landholders and others in our area who were not prepared to subscribe voluntarily, so it was decided to collect the levy from all friendly residents in the first instance and to deal with the others later. The work of collecting the levy from our friends occupied our attention during the months of October and November, 1920.

When Pat Deasy (Battalion Lieut. of Signalling) was killed at Kilmichael on November 28th 1921, I was appointed to fill the vacancy. About the same time, Jerh. Deasy was arrested and his post as 2nd Lieutenant (Innishannon Company) was filled by Patrick Crowley. The company officers now were: -

O/C - Con O'Sullivan
 1st Lt. - Tom Kiely
 2nd Lt. - Patk. Crowley.

My appointment as Battalion Lieut. of Signalling necessitated my travelling around the battalion area and visiting the various companies to ensure that training was regular and that suitable lines of communication with neighbouring areas were in operation.

A lorry load of R.I.C. was ambushed at Clashanimud on the B r i n n y road by men from Innishannon, Crosspound and Ballinadee Companies on December 2nd 1920. Amongst the members of Innishannon Company who took part in this engagement were: - Con O'Sullivan, Tom Kiely, Jerh. Deasy, Tom Butler, Jack

O'Brien and Jack Kearney. In addition, several other men were engaged on scouting and outpost duty, as well as in transporting the attacking party across the Bandon river at Collier's Quay. Charlie Hurley was in charge of this operation. I.R.A. casualties were nil, while enemy casualties were unknown.

During the months of December, 1920, and January, 1921, I was engaged with the members of Innishannon, Crosspound and Ballinadee Companies in the seizure of cattle and other goods from a number of retired British officers and other loyalists living in the Innishannon area who had refused to subscribe to the arms levy fund. The principal parties concerned were Peacocks, Godleys, Caulfields and Connors. The cattle seized from these parties were usually sold at fairs in the area - mainly Timoleague. In addition to seizing the cattle on the night before the fair selected, it was necessary to post armed guards on all roads leading from the area in which the seizure took place, as well as on any loyalist houses in the area, to ensure that information regarding the seizure was not conveyed to the enemy authorities in Bandon or Innishannon.

The men from the local companies - Innishannon, Kilbrittain, Ballinadee - under Tom Barry, carried out an attack on Kilbrittain R.I.C. post on January 3rd 1921. The mine which was laid at the door of the barrack failed to explode, and after firing a few rounds the column withdrew. The O/C Innishannon (Con O'Sullivan) was one of the men who carried the mine to the door.

The Brigade Column, under Tom Barry and the Brigade O/C (Charlie Hurley), moved into Bandon on the

night of January 24th 1921 to attack a curfew patrol of British military. They failed to make contact with the patrol, which did not operate that night. Covering parties then opened fire on some of the enemy posts, and the column then withdrew from the town. They were scouted through the area and transported across the river following their withdrawal by members of Innishannon unit. During the engagement, Dan O'Reilly, a member of Kilbrittain Company, was killed.

On the night of January 26th 1921, the Brigade Column was in Innishannon area and preparations were made to attack the R.I.C. barracks in the village. I was delegated the duty of ensuring that all roads leading to the village from Bandon on the south side of the river were blocked. All roads north of the river were covered by ambush parties. With the co-operation of Con O'Sullivan (O/C), Richard Harris, Jack O'Brien, Wm. Hogan, J. Kearney, Patk. Kearney, Patrick Dempsey, Wm. Russell, Patk. Crowley, Jack Butler, Patk. Butler, Ml. O'Riordan, Dan and Tom Falvey of Innishannon unit I was able to report to Tom Barry (Column O/C) at 10.30 p.m. that the road blocking assignment had been completed. I was then instructed to take off my boots and go in my stockinged feet with a party to the rear of the barracks. Before this party moved off, this order was countermanded and I was sent with Patk. Crowley and an outpost party to Innishannon Bridge. Shortly after midnight there was an outburst of firing in the village, which ceased after about 15 minutes. We were then ordered to withdraw. The mine, which was laid at the barrack door, had again failed to explode, so the main attacking party had fired a few rounds at the building. The fire was replied to by the garrison, who sent up Verey lights.

The main body of the column now withdrew to Brinny, where an ambush party lay awaiting possible reinforcements from Bandon, but the enemy did not put in an appearance.

Early in February, in co-operation with O/C Innishannon (Con O'Sullivan) and some members of his unit, I took part in an attack on an R.I.C. patrol at Innishannon Bridge. This patrol of two R.I.C. men armed with rifles was reported by our intelligence officer to have left the village via Innishannon Bridge. The following members of the Innishannon unit were hurriedly assembled - Con O'Sullivan, O/C, Patk. Crowley, John Kearney, John Dempsey, Richard Twomey, Patk. Twomey, Patk. Butler, Dan Falvey, Jack Murphy, Tom Falvey and Denis O'Connell. We took up position on high ground overlooking the bridge and opened fire on the patrol as it returned to the village. One member of the patrol was wounded but both succeeded in reaching the barracks. We had no casualties. We were all armed with shotguns.

Several raids on the mails in the area were carried out about this time. The raids were mainly undertaken by the officers of the company, and, after seizure, were usually transferred to Battn. H.Q. for examination. After being censored, they were reposted at one or other of the post offices in the district.

The members of Innishannon unit, in common with those of all other units in the brigade and, I may say, throughout the south, were engaged at this period on the trenching and blocking of roads and the cutting of enemy lines of communication. In all areas this work had to be carried out under armed guards in order to prevent surprise by enemy raiding parties. During the

months of February and March, all men south of Bandon river took part on six occasions on the cutting of roads at Farnagow, Knockroe, Rockhouse, Horsehill and Knocknacurra (twice). These activities necessitated the employment of every available man, either on guard duty, scouting or on the actual work of trenching the roads. The material taken from the trenches had to be carted away a considerable distance so that the enemy could not secure at a convenient spot material with which to fill in the trench. This work was usually carried out at night and, in most cases, those engaged were working until dawn. As an indication of the amount of excavation work to be performed, I set out below the measurements of trenches opened south of the Bandon river at this time: -

At Farnagow, Innishannon	20'X10'X6'
Knockroe "	20'X15'X8"
Bandon - Kilmacsimon-Ballinadee road	21'X15'X8"
Rock Castle - Ballinadee road (two trenches cut)	21'X8'X7"
Bandon - Dundurrow-Kinsale road	25'X10'X6'
Ballinamona-Kinsale road	21'X10'X7"

The men engaged on this work had to work hard and never knew when they would be attacked. As a matter of fact, four men engaged on this work in an adjacent company area were shot at Cros na Leanbh on February 17th 1921.

The O/C Innishannon Company (Con O'Sullivan) was arrested in my home on February 28th 1921. He was replaced by Tom Kiely. The officers now were: -

O/C - Tom Kiely
 1st Lt. - Jack Murphy
 2nd Lt. - Patk. Crowley.

While on my way to attend a parade of the Innishannon Company which was being held north of the Bandon river on March 13th 1921, I met Liam Deasy (Brigade Adjutant) and Tom Barry (Column O/C). They were on their way to inspect the Innishannon-Kinsale road to select an ambush position in the Shippool area. The men north of the river scouted for them that day and then took them to Crosspound. The scouts on this occasion were: - Tom Butler, Tom Cummins, David Buckley, Mick Crowley, John and David Finn. Before leaving the brigade officers, I got instructions to mobilise all men south of the Bandon river and to transport them with a supply of tools to lay mines on the Shippool road on the night of March 16th.

The Innishannon Company, to the number of about 40, mobilised at Coolmoreen on the night of the 16th and met the Brigade Column at Slievegullane. The whole party moved to Shippool, where the men of the company laid three mines in the road at regular intervals over a distance of approximately 300 yards. The position was about $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles from Innishannon on the Kinsale road.

The Brigade Column, with a strength of about 100, all armed with rifles, took up positions behind the roadside wall about 5 a.m. on March 17th (St. Patrick's Day). They were extended over a distance of approximately 300 yards covering the space where the mines had been laid. The local men were engaged as scouts and outposts on the flanks and to the rear of the main body. On this occasion I was acting as "aide" to Tom Barry and engaged on relaying his orders to the column section commanders. Although we remained in position until darkness set in,

the expected enemy convoy did not appear and the whole force was withdrawn to billets in Skough area.

Next morning, the members of the Innishannon Company who resided south of the Bandon river were taken back to their own area by me, crossing the river at Collier's Quay. The members of the unit who lived north of the river remained with the column and acted as scouts on the journey to Crossbarry that night. Before leaving the column on the morning of March 18th 1921, I received instructions from the Battalion Q/M (Tadhg O'Sullivan) to collect three or four arms fund levies which were due by shopkeepers in Innishannon. The outstanding items, to the amount of about £600, were collected by me before the end of March, 1921.

The Brigade O/C (Charlie Hurley) was killed when he endeavoured to fight his way through a party of enemy forces which surrounded his billet on the morning of the fight at Crossbarry - March 19th 1921. Following his death, the personnel of the Brigade Staff was: -

O/C - Liam Deasy
 Vice O/C - Ted O'Sullivan
 Adjt. - Gibbs Ross
 Q/M - Dick Barrett.

When the Brigade Q/M (Dick Barrett) was arrested early in April, he was replaced by Tadhg O'Sullivan (Q/M Bandon Battalion). At this time the officers of the battalion (Bandon) were: -

O/C - Seán Hales
 Vice O/C - John Lordan
 Adjt. - Jim O'Mahoney
 Q/M - Tadhg O'Sullivan.

The appointment of Tadhg O'Sullivan as Brigade Q/M left a vacancy which was filled by Dan Holland, who had been O/C Supply and Transport.

At the end of March, 1921, it had been established that Fred C. Stennings, previously referred to in connection with the abortive ambush at Curranure towards the end of August, 1920, was acting as a spy. A party under the Battalion Vice O/C (John Lordan) was assembled to arrest him on the night of March 30th 1921. I was a member of this party and took up a position at the rear of the house. The front door was approached by the Battalion Vice O/C (John Lordan) and another man. They knocked and the door was partly opened by Stennings, who tried to close it again but was prevented from doing so by John Lordan. Stennings then dashed along the hallway, pursued by Lordan and his companion. As Stennings dashed away, he drew a revolver and opened fire on his pursuers, who, replying to the fire, shot him dead.

Following this incident, I joined the column in Newcestown area with the party who had taken part in the execution of Stennings. The column had just returned from the attack on Roscarbery R.I.C. barracks on 31st March, 1921.

During the first week in April, the column was divided into two sections. The men from the 5th (Bantry), 6th (Castletownbere) and 7th (Schull) Battalions returned to the western end of the brigade. The men from the 1st (Bandon), 2nd (Clonakilty), 3rd (Dunmanway) and 4th (Skibbereen) Battalions, under Seán Hales (O/C Bandon Battalion), moved south to Inchy Bridge between Timoleague and Ballinascarthy, where we took up a position on the railway embankment with the intention of ambushing a train in which a military party was expected to travel. The train was derailed but the military party

were not on it, so this section of the column now withdrew to Ballinadee. When we reached Ballinadee, I was instructed to return to Innishannon area to arrange for scouts and boats to take this column across the river (Bandon) at Shippool. Having made the necessary arrangements, I returned to the column, which I contacted at Kilmacsimon Quay before they came on to Shippool to be ferried across the river. Having crossed the river, the column billeted in Dernagasha area for a couple of days before moving on to Crosspound. While the column remained in Dernagasha, all scouting and outpost duties were performed by the men of Innishannon Company.

About this time, Lieut. Colonel Peacocke - a retired British army officer who resided at Innishannon - was suspected of passing on information to the enemy, and special instructions were issued to ensure that all his movements were reported on to our battalion intelligence officer. The O/C Innishannon Company was held responsible for seeing that reports on this man's activities were furnished regularly.

About mid April, a permanent scouting outpost was established at Dromkeen in Innishannon Company area. This post was so situated that the approach of enemy forces could be observed at a considerable distance. The scouts here, with their local knowledge, would be able to convey news of the enemy's approach to men resting in the Ballinadee or other areas in the south long before the enemy could reach them, as all roads in the district were cut and the raiding forces would have to travel on foot.

I was moving round the area in connection with my work as Battalion O/C Signals until the end of the first

week in May. I was now instructed to proceed to Dunmanway Battalion area to check up on the movements of Lieut-Colonel Peacocke - referred to previously - who was supposed to be visiting some friends of his in that area on a fishing holiday. I went to Dunmanway area, where I contacted the Battalion Adjutant (Paddy O'Brien). We investigated the movements of Lieut-Colonel Peacocke in the district, but there appeared to be nothing to indicate that he was doing other than enjoying a fishing holiday.

I was due to leave Dunmanway area on May 14th, when I learned of the proposed general shoot up of enemy forces throughout the area which was fixed for this date. I then joined the Dunmanway units in an invasion of the town, where we hoped to find a lorry load of Auxiliaries on the Square about 3 p.m. The Brigade Vice O/C (Ted O'Sullivan) was in charge of this operation. He was assisted by the O/C Dunmanway Battalion (Seán Murphy) and the Battalion Adjutant (Paddy O'Brien).

About fifty men were assembled in the vicinity of Dunmanway about 2 p.m. The majority were armed with shotguns, but I think there were fifteen or so riflemen. This party were divided into four sections. The riflemen and shotgunmen were interspersed in each section. Three sections entered the town from the north, where there were three roads to be held. The Brigade Vice O/C was in charge and was assisted by the Battalion O/C (Seán Murphy). I was with the section which entered from the south in charge of Paddy O'Brien. Each of the sections moving in from the north took along a horse and cart, loaded with bags of clay, to block the roads on which they were to take up positions at the entrance

to The Square. All sections from the north reached the entrances to The Square on time and shot their horses, and so blocked the exits from The Square on their side effectively. Paddy O'Brien's section, with which I was operating, entered The Square from the south at the same time, but the only enemy in sight were two R.I.C. men, who, immediately they saw us, dashed into a house some distance away and escaped through the back to the river bank, whence they made their way back to their H.Q. All sections remained in position for more than an hour, and as there was no appearance by any of the enemy garrison at the end of that time, we withdrew from the town. I then returned to my home area - Innishannon - in Bandon Battalion area.

While I was operating in Dunmanway area on May 14th, a party under the Battalion Adjutant (Jim O'Mahoney) attacked a patrol of R.I.C. in Innishannon. One of the patrol was killed. The I.R.A. party had no casualties. Amongst those who took part were: - Jack Corkerry, John O'Donovan, Tim McCarthy, Wm. Hogan, Richard Harris and Jack Brien. They were assisted by a member of Cumann na mBan - Miss M. Cotter - who acted as scout and intelligence officer.

A patrol of R.I.C. was sniped at Innishannon Bridge on May 20th 1921 by a party consisting of Tom Kelliher, Con Begley and myself. As far as we could see, there were no enemy casualties. Next day the same party sniped a party of R.I.C. who were standing outside their barrack in the village. It was later learned that one of the R.I.C. garrison was seriously wounded. Others who acted as scouts or were otherwise engaged on these

occasions were: - Tom Kiely, Denis O'Donoghue, Jerh. Finn, Richard Harris, David Finn, Jack Brien, John Murphy, Dan Coleman, Pat Kearney, Tom Falvey and Patk. Butler.

About this time I left the area to take part in a Brigade Signalling Camp in Kealkil. The instructors at this camp, who were drawn from Cork 1 Brigade, were: - Tim Kennefick and Billy Spillane. The signalling officers from the battalions in Cork 111 Brigade who were in attendance were: - Bandon (Richard Russell, witness), Clonakilty (Joe O'Donoghue), Dunmanway (Dan Warren), Skibbereen ("Neilly" Bohane), Bantry (Patk. Connolly), Castletownbere (Denis O'Sullivan). The camp continued for a week, during which we were trained in the use of lamps, flags, etc., for morse and semaphore signalling.

On my return to Bandon area after this camp, I was mainly engaged in organising camps throughout the battalion and training signals staff until the Truce.

I think it was on June 1st 1921 that Lieut-Colonel Peacocke, a "retired" British army officer who resided at Innishannon, was shot. He had been operating in the area as an intelligence agent and had guided raiding parties of military in the area. His identity had been established some time prior to Xmas 1920, when during the course of a raid the mask which he always wore on such occasions slipped. From the date of this incident, Peacocke lived in Bandon military barracks and only visited his home in Innishannon on odd occasions. Information was received on May 31st (I think) that he had been seen at his home. Tom Kelleher and Jim Ryan - two members of the Column - were sent to Innishannon to shoot Peacocke. They were scouted by Jack Murphy, Ml. McCarthy and Tom

O'Sullivan of the local company (Innishannon). The men detailed to carry out the shooting (Tom Kelleher and Jim Ryan) hid in the laurels outside the house, and when Peacocke came to the hall door he was approached by them. He attempted to draw his gun but was shot by our men, who were fired on by Peacocke's guard of Black and Tans. Our men, including scouts, withdrew without casualties and returned to their H.Q. in Crosspound area.

A meeting of Bandon Battalion Council was called for Ballinadee on June 14th 1921. The members had assembled - Liam Deasy (Bde. O/C) and Tom Barry (Column O/C) were also present - when information regarding enemy movements in the area was received and the meeting was postponed until next day. The members of the council then moved into billets, but about midnight a special order was received by John Lordan (Vice O/C Bandon Battn.) from the Bde. O/C (Liam Deasy) to make arrangements for the burning of Lieut-Colonel Peacocke's house immediately. A party which consisted of John Lordan (i/c), Richard Hurley, Jack Ó'Callaghan, Jerh. O'Mahoney, Jack Corkerry, Denis Donoghue and myself, with Pat Butler, Paddy Dempsey and Patk. Kearney as scouts, left without delay for Peacocke's. We gained entry to the house and collected all available material which could be ignited with the minimum of difficulty into the centre of each room. We sprinkled all rooms with paraffin and then set the lot on fire. The house was completely burned out. We returned to Ballinadee, where the Battalion Council meeting which had been arranged for the previous evening was now held.

After the Battalion Council meeting, I accompanied Liam Deasy (Bde. O/C) and Denis Lordan (Col. Adjt.) across

the Bandon river at Shippool and procured a conveyance to take them to Crosspound. Amongst the men of Innishannon Company who engaged in the scouting and transport on this occasion were: - Jerh. Finn, David Buckley, M.L. Crowley and Dan Coleman. On the same occasion, Tom Barry (Col. O/C) was scouted across Innishannon Bridge and on to Kildarra by Denis O'Connell, Pat Butler, Tom Falvey and Jerry Connolly.

The next activity of note in which the members of Innishannon Company were engaged was the destruction of the houses of five British loyalists in the area as reprisals for the burning of the houses of I.R.A. men and their supporters by the British military and police. The houses selected for destruction were: - Colonel Connor's, General Godley's, General Caulfield's, Stephenson's, Corr Castle, and M. Dennehy's. This operation was carried out under the Battalion Vice O/C (John Lordan). All members of the local company were engaged either as scouts or members of the parties which destroyed the buildings. While these operations were being carried out on the night of June 23rd 1921, Innishannon Barracks (R.I.C.) was being sniped by some members of the Brigade Column in order to confine the garrison to barracks.

The final operation in the area took place on June 29th 1921, when Tom Kelleher, ~~Tom Kelleher~~, Tom Kiely, Tom Butler, David Finn, Jack Murphy, Jerh. Finn and Tim Cummins sniped a party of R.I.C. at Innishannon Barracks. I was not present on this occasion, being engaged on organising activities as Battalion O/C Signals. As far as I can recollect, there were no casualties on either side.

My rank at the Truce - Battalion Lieutenant of
Signalling, Bandon, Battalion, Cork 111 Brigade.

Strength of the battalion at the Truce - approximately
1,000 men.

Signed: Richard Russell

Date: 11th 3rd 1957.

Witness: P. L. Donnell
(Investigator).

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21 BURO STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21 No. W.S. 1,591
