

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

BURO STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21

No. *W.S. 1,612*

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21

STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

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Witness

Capt. Peter McDonnell,
Newcastle,
Galway.

Identity.

O/C West Connemara Brigade,
August 1920 - Truce.

Subject.

Leenane Battn., West Connemara Brigade, I.R.A.,
& Brigade Flying Column,
1914 - Truce.

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STATEMENT BY CAPTAIN P. J. McDONNELL,
NEWCASTLE, GALWAY.

On a Sunday in the early Spring of 1914, to the best of my recollection the month was February, George Nicolls, Solicitor, of Galway, and Padraic O'Maille, Mounterowen, Maam, arrived in Leenane, Connemara, and addressed an open air meeting advocating the organisation of a Company of the Irish Volunteers. Tobias B. Joyce of Ashmount, Leenane, an uncle of Padraic O'Maille, presided at the meeting.

After the meeting about 20 or 25 young men present stepped out and gave their names as members. We then had our first lesson in drill from an ex-B.A. man whom George Nicolls had brought along from Galway. Subsequent drill instruction was given by T. Tarmey, Westport, who had been a boxing and drill instructor in the B. army. He travelled by horse and car from Westport every Sunday - a distance of 20 miles - for two months, until he was replaced by Martin McDonnell, Renvyle, who came to work at Leenane and took over the job of Instructor.

Some time in March I was elected as Company Captain. The Company then had about 40 members and some weeks later Michael Joyce was appointed as 1st Lieutenant and John Coyne as 2nd Lieutenant. British Army drill books had now been acquired, and given to the officers, who after study were able to act as instructors at the usual Sunday parades. As there were no arms in the company, we made wooden guns for the purpose of arms drill.

There had been a company of Volunteers formed in Kilmilkin, Maam, on the same date as Leenane, but it fell away again after a few weeks. This led to a split and the near break up of the Leenane Coy., as Padraic O'Maille when the Kilmilkin Coy. failed wanted to be appointed in charge of the Leenane Coy, so when I was appointed he tried to start an opposition Company, with the support of his farmer friends, who had themselves and their herdsmen and their sons enrolled and paraded every Sunday in Leenane village, after our parade was over. This carried on for some months until they found it too difficult to get even their employees to parade.

One result of this split was, that the Leenane Company was never officially affiliated at Hqrs., as they could not tell which was the proper company. An official was eventually sent from Hqrs. who instructed both parties to meet him at Letterfrack, 12 miles from Leenane. Forty men of my company marched with me to Letterfrack, but the opposition owing to the age of the majority, had to be conveyed by car. They never paraded afterwards.

About this time I received from Hqrs. a small .32 revolver and 5 rounds of ammunition for which I paid 25/-. I also sent on £5 for a rifle which I never got. Some months later I bought another .32 revolver and 200 rounds of ammunition in a hardware shop in Westport. These with a .22 rifle and 2000 rds., a D.B. shot gun with 200 cartridges I also had, and a S.B. shot gun with 100 cartridges the 1st Lieut. had, were the only arms in the company.

The company held well together carrying out their weekly drill and field exercises until the Redmond Split, when a number of them failed to turn out for drill, sometimes only about half a dozen turned out. When questioned they said they had no business drilling when the Leaders could not agree. I let them rest for a time.

During the summer of 1914, I was instrumental in having a branch of the A.O.H. Irish American Alliance started in Leenane. All the Volunteers were also members of the A.O.H. and after a months rest from parades, I got most of the old company enrolled as Hibernian Rifles, and got weekly drills going again, and made them interesting by having rifle practice every second Sunday.

Our branch of the A.O.H. was affiliated with the Mayo organisation, and we paraded with them every St. Patrick's Day in Westport. This also helped to keep the men together and interested.

On the 17th March, 1916, when the parade was being formed up at the A.O.H. Hall Westport, we were informed that a public meeting was being held by some parties on the Octagon, that all branches were to return to the Hall with their banners, and that they could then attend the meeting. However, when the parade was coming through the Octagon on their return to the Hall I saw that the man addressing the meeting was dressed in Volunteer uniform; I gave the order to my crowd to wheel in to the meeting with our banner, and it was the only banner at the meeting.

The man in uniform who addressed the meeting was The O'Rahilly. It was the first and last time I ever saw him.

In September 1915, Michael Kilroy, Newport Mayo and I attended at the Munster Volunteer Training Camp, in the Galtees.

We were in communication with Bulmer Hobson, and were arranging to go to the Connaught Camp, but as it was getting late we thought that this might not be held and decided to go to the Munster Camp. We left Newport Mayo, on a Saturday morning on bicycles, carrying our equipment, stayed the night in Limerick, and joined the Camp on Sunday at Galbally. During the week we camped at Galbally, Anglesbory, Kilfinane and Ballylanders.

We had the usual training, lectures and field exercises. We carried out a night attack against Mitchelstown, with the local company in defence.

Colonel O'Connell was in charge of the camp. Frank Fahy - the Ceann Comhairle was there also. We left the camp again on Saturday morning and cycled back to Mayo.

During Easter Week 1916 West Galway was completely cut off from the rest of the country, and no information - except rumour - could be had as to what was happening, and no instructions were received. After waiting until Friday I decided to get in touch with the Mayo Volunteers, and cycled to Newport, and found they were in the same position as myself, without news.

On Sunday morning the R.I.C. posted up notices that the Rising was over.

After the Rising all training stopped, and to all appearances the Volunteers were dead, and remained so until after the release of the prisoners from Internment.

The first intimation of a revival we had, was when Michael Staines and a friend Brennan, arrived in Leenane on a cycle tour of the West, giving us the latest news about Volunteer activity and urging us to revive the organisation again.

After some meetings and organisation work we got the Company going again and revived the weekly drills and parades.

I also got the Coy at Renvyle again organised and working. This company had originally been organised by Michael Wallace of Tullycross, Renvyle, but had been dead since the Redmond debacle. I also organised companies at Letterfrack and Maam, but these two areas did not come alive until the conscription threat.

Up to this time there was no organisation except Independent companies. Later on, I think about September 1917, a meeting of representatives of all Vol. companies in Connemara was called and held at Oughterard, and Battalion officers appointed.

I was appointed as O/C Leenane Battalion and R.H. O'Toole, Lettermore was appointed as Vice O/C.

This Battalion took in the following coy areas; Carraroe, Lettermore, Lettermullen, Baeladangan, Rosmuck, Clonbur, Cornamona, Finney, Shanafarahane, Maam, Leenane, Letterfrack and Renvyle.

John D. Bartley, Clifden, was at the same time appointed as O/C Clifden Battalion. I am not sure now whether this included Roundstone, but believe it did, for at subsequent Brigade meetings J. D. Bartley and his Adjutant Michael Ward, were the only ones from that part of Connemara who attended.

During the remainder of 1917 the area was well organised, companies being formed in Carraroe, Lettermore, Tiernea, Lettermullen, Rosmuck, Clonbur, Cornamona, Maam, Finney, Shanafarahane, Leenane, Letterfrack and Renvyle.

After the reorganisation the companies were very keen on training. For a time the greatest difficulty was to get sufficient instructors for them all. By getting B. A. drill books and giving them to the Coy Captains, along with some initial instruction they were able to manage.

It was practically impossible for me to supervise the battalion properly. I had no means of travel except cycling; the area was very scattered, and I had to give some attention to my business, which was left more or less to run itself for weeks at a time. After the first flush of reorganisation had worn off attendances at drills and parades started to fall away again.

The threat of conscription added a much needed fillip to the attendances at drills. Some companies swelled to twice their original size and drills were held at least three times weekly, after Mass on Sundays and after supper on week days.

As there were practically no arms with the exception of some shot guns and a few small and practically useless revolvers, night training with pikes was concentrated on. Close order drill was dropped, and the men were taken across country by night, and trained in scouting and moving quietly in the dark, so that when the British military were camped round the country to enforce conscription, they could be attacked at night with some hope of securing the much needed rifles and ammunition.

Instructions were issued to every company to secure all the shot guns in their areas, and to make pikes to arm those who had no guns. I personally, with the help of some of the Volunteers made 4 dozen pikeheads, and fitted them to 6ft. ash handles, in my workshop at Leenane.

At this time the County was the Brigade area. Larry Lardner, Athenry, was Brigade O/C. While he was interned in England, Seamus Murphy, Dublin, who was at the time Manager of the Galway Express, was acting O/C. This was the man with whom I was directly in touch since my appointment to the Battalion.

During the conscription menace Ede. Council meetings were held fortnightly in Galway, which entailed for me a journey of 13 miles before 8 a.m. to the train, and the same after 8.30 home.

For failure to attend the conventions or to carry out his duties as Battn. officer, R.H. O'Toole, was removed from his appointment, and a cousin of his, Jos. O'Toole, appointed as Vice O/C.

After some time this man was also removed for inattention to his duties. Colm O'Gaora was then appointed, and held this position until the reorganisation of the area in 1920.

I am sorry to have to say, that quite a number of the Volunteers emigrated at this time to America to escape conscription. No argument could change their minds, even a guarantee of immunity, if they invested a fraction of their passage money in a rifle. And God only knows, how, many of them happened to scrape the passage money together from their few poor miserable acres, or poor wages of their fathers, received from the merchants or farmers they worked for.

As it turned out they only jumped into the danger they sought to escape, for the majority of them were conscripted into the American army, when they entered the war. I have not known one of those who ran away from conscription here, to have ever returned home.

When the conscription menace was safely passed, the attendances at drill again dwindled, till only the hardy few continued to turn out. The coming of the General Election in 1918 brings them alive again, if not for drill parades, at least for hard and earnest work to get the Sinn Féin candidates returned.

The Volunteer training left us a disciplined force of young men, who when required to carry out a responsible job, were easily handled and directed, and ready to accept their orders without question. It was the Volunteer training that consolidated the Sinn Féin movement, and without it the 1918 election could not have been the success it was. Even when the votes were cast, the Volunteers never let the Ballot boxes out of their sight until they were opened and counted.

An incident which I might mention; At the time of the "German Plot" scare, I had arranged to spend the night with Padraic O'Maille, on my way to attend a Bde. conference the following day. Unfortunately somebody turned up at the workshop that evening with an urgent repair job, and it was too late when I had finished, to keep my appointment. I passed by Padraic's house next morning on my way to Galway and arrived there to find that the conference was called off because of a general police raid the previous night. I could not get in touch with any of the Bde. staff, but received a message to return home again.

When I arrived back at Maamcross station I was informed that a large party of police had called at Mounterowen to arrest Padraic, and that he, assisted by his brother Eamon had opened fire on the police and after an exchange of shots, the police retired in disorder.

I was desperately sorry to have missed this as I knew that Padraic and Eamon were armed with only .32 revolvers, and I was at this time in possession of a .45 Bulldog, which I constantly carried, and believed it would have helped considerably in hastening the departure of the police.

By the above you can see that whatever difference was between us in 1914 was completely forgotten, and the same applied to all who took part in that dispute.

I might also mention that I accompanied Michael Kilroy to Dublin in November 1917, as he expected to be able to get delivery of some rifles for the Newport Company, the cash for which had been forwarded some time previously. We availed of an excursion, run in connection with a replay of an All-Ireland football Final between Wexford and Kerry.

After the match we attended a lecture on explosives and demolitions, given in a room in Harcourt St., which I understood was Volunteer Hqrs. We were given some recipes for the manufacture of gun-cotton and other explosives. We tried our hand on the Guncotton afterwards, but it was not a success.

We got no rifles on that occasion, only 100 rounds of 7 mm. ammunition and a number of drill books.

During the period of the conscription threat, it was arranged to raid some Fishing and Shooting Lodges belonging to absentee English Industrialists who occupied them during the summer months. The results were disappointing.

One Winchester .44 repeating rifle with about 100 rds., I. .45 Bulldog revolver with 50 rds. and some shot guns and shells was the extent of the haul. There were some shot guns held by the local farmers for which it was not necessary to raid.

The result of the General Election was reflected in the Volunteers. They turned out in increasing numbers for their weekly drills, and attempts were made to collect money for the purchase of arms, but owing to the poverty of the area very little could be done.

The Volunteers in the area were practically all labourers, cottiers and tradesmen;- that is once the conscription threat was past. The merchants and well-to-do farmer class gave us a wide berth, with very few exceptions.

Republican Courts were established over the whole area, and all cases arising were brought before them, and the British Petty Sessions boycotted.

Early in 1920 owing to the growing activity of the Volunteers in other districts, all the small R.I.C. stations in Connemara were closed down, and the men drafted into the towns. The only barracks left occupied in the area, were, one in Clifden with a garrison of 18 or 20 men and a D.I., and Maam barracks about ^{eight} miles from Leenane with a Sergt. and eight men. The vacated barrack buildings were all burned down.

The barracks at Maam was a very strong building which must have been built in the Fenian times. It was completely isolated, on a raised position, completely devoid of cover. There was a steel door fitted inside the front door, and steel shutters hinged on the outside of all windows.

With the few arms we had an attack was out of the question, but it was possible to take it by a ruse. Owing to the boycott rigidly enforced against working for the R.I.C. the police had to cut and save their own turf. From a watch I had arranged to be kept on the barracks, I learned that during the turf cutting all the men with the exception of the Sergt. and B.O. and the man who was resting, left the barracks every day about 10 a.m. and proceeded to the bog about a mile distant.

My plan for the capture of it was; to have a party of men armed with revolvers and shot guns to hide in a small grove adjacent to the barracks overnight. After the usual party left for the bog in the morning they were to crawl as near as possible to the barracks and await for the arrival of a motor car driven by a man in military uniform. The car was to halt near the barracks and the driver approach the door with a letter in his hand; when the B.O. opened the door he would engage him in conversation and then hold him up, shouting hands up as a signal to the raiding party to rush in.

At the next Brigade council meeting in Galway I put my plan before the meeting and asked the Bde. staff to procure the uniform and that I would do the rest, but that I could do nothing without the uniform.

The A/Bde. O/C told me that before sanction would be given, that I should supply plans and sketches of the barracks, showing the window and door opes on all sides, the number of the garrison, and the number and armament of the attacking party; - To bring this to the next Bde. meeting when it would be considered and if found feasible would be sent on to G.H.Q. for sanction.

I argued that the opportunity would have then passed for bringing off a surprise raid; that at the present as there had been no disturbance in Co. Galway the police were careless, but at the first shot near at hand they would tighten up.

Needless to say I did not bring in the plans as requested but I am still convinced that an opportunity was let slip, of securing a much needed supply of arms and ammunition for our men. I could not understand why Red Tape was being used when we were supposed to be at war; or at least preparing for it.

A short time after another somewhat similar incident arose. I had a branch Coachbuilding shop started in Louisburgh, Mayo, and the two men I had sent there to carry on were two ardent Vols. They were instrumental in reorganising and training two Vol. Coys in the area.

They checked up on the local R.I.C. barracks, and after some weeks of observation, they decided that it could be captured, and reported to the Battalion O/C of the area - E. Moane, Westport. He came along to Louisburgh and after discussion with the local officers agreed to the plan.

A lock up shop that adjoined the barracks was to be entered and an entrance blown through the gable, while fire was kept on from the Courthouse across the street. As they had no explosives, they appealed to me to try and get some. As I knew they had explosives in Galway, I promised to get it and to bring along some men of my own to assist in the attack.

At the next Bde. meeting I brought the matter up, and asked for a supply of explosives. To my surprise I was refused and also told that I could not go outside my own area for any activities. As a result the proposed attack fell through.

Up to this though I knew that the police had no love for me and were as far as possible keeping me under supervision as I moved about the area, I still continued to sleep at home in my sister's. I think it was about June 1920, I had a rather bad cold and was some days in bed with it. One Sunday afternoon a cyclist arrived in a very excited condition at the house, and told me that a military officer and a party of marines had landed off a destroyer in the Bay and were coming towards the village. I got up immediately dressed, and went out the back way and up the fields just a few minutes before the officer and two marines came in the front door. The remainder of the party stayed outside with their rifles at the ready. The officer asked if that was where I lived and if I was at home. My sister replied that I lived there but was not at home then. Then he asked to see my room, looked round it and gave a rather perfunctory search. He then turned to my sister and told her to tell me to look after my own business, and not to be taking part in illegal activities. She replied that I was not doing anything except attending to my work. He then told her that as far as he was concerned personally it didn't much matter, but that there must be some reason for having sent him round from Limerick to arrest me.

Needless to say after this I did not sleep at home, thought I still carried on in the workshop any day I was at home.

In August 1920, Dick Mulcahy, Chief of Staff, recuperating from an illness and overwork came on a visit to Thomas O'Malley, Kilmilkin, - brother of Surgeon Ml. O'Malley, Galway.

On a visit to Leenane, he asked me to visit him at Kilmilkin, in order to discuss the Volunteer position. He did not wish to meet any other officers of the Battalion, as he said he was only there for a rest, was under an assumed name, and did not want his presence advertised.

After a long discussion on the organisation and strength of the Battalion, arms, communications, etc., he informed me that it had been decided at G.H.Q. that for administrative purposes the County as a Unit was too unwieldy, that communications to outlying Battalions, - like mine, through Bde. Hqrs. were held up unduly, that it was decided to divide the County into several Brigades, all to be in direct touch with G.H.Q.; that it would mean better communications between the various Units and Hqrs., that complaints would get sympathetic hearing, and that Hqrs. would be able to give the officers practical advice on their problems. He then explained that all West of Galway City and the Corrib was to be called the Connemara Brigade, and that I would be O/C of it. I declined the honour, stating that I had no special qualifications for the post, also that I had spent a couple of years trying to run a business and a rather extensive Battalion area, and that both were suffering from inattention.

I made several suggestions and recommendations to him, which he was not inclined to accept. He suggested that I take it on, and if later I met any man whom I considered better able for the position they would consider appointing him.

I first of all suggested Colm O'Gaora, who was my Vice O/C, & who had been an active Volunteer from the very first. He probably had the first Coy of Volunteers in Co. Galway, as Padraic Pearse had been coming to his district, Rosmuck, for some years to study Irish, and naturally had spread the Light there. I then recommended Mr. Thornton, N.T. Furbough, whom I had not at the time known personally, but had good accounts of him from Padraic O'Maille, who had spent some time with him in prison in England. This recommendation was not very favourably received, either, Mulcahy stating that he had no great faith in either Gaelic League organisers or National Teachers as soldiers.

As a compromise I then suggested that the area be divided in two, designated as East, and West Connemara Brigades, that I would take on West Connemara, and to appoint Thornton in charge of East Connemara. He then asked for the boundary between the areas and I said that all that area between the road running from Costello to Maam and the Corrib would be East Connemara and that all West of that, including Clonbur area to the Co. boundary would be West Connemara.

He took notes of this and said he would put it before G.H.Q. and let me know the result. He impressed on me the importance of getting the area organised immediately, and to make a drive for funds for the purchase of arms. I naturally pointed out the poverty of the area, and that so far we had been able to get very little cash on collections made, but that we would do our best. He promised that our application for arms would get very favourable consideration, as I put in a plea for some to enable us to put a Column on active service.

I immediately called a meeting of the principal officers of the Leenane, Rosmuck, Roundstone and Clifden areas to attend for a conference at Leenane. As far as I can now remember the following officers attended from their respective areas; T. O'Malley, M. Joyce, M. Conneely, J. Feehan, J. Connolly, Leenane, C. O'Gaora, G. Staunton, P. Nee, Rosmuck, J. King, J. Dundass, D. Keane, Roundstone, G. Bartley, C. Breen, M. Joyce, Clifden. I explained the position as outlined in the talk with Dick Mulcahy, that West Connemara would in all probability be sanctioned as a Brigade area; - We therefore would have to divide it up into Battalion areas, each of which would have sufficient men to form a reasonably sized Unit and still be capable of easy administration.

Taking the area and the distribution of the population into consideration, this was not an easy task, but I consider we made a reasonably good job of it. The area was then apportioned out in four Battalions, No. 1. LEENANE, T. O'Malley O/C, No. 2. ROSMUCK, Colm O'Gaora O/C, No. 3 ROUNDSTONE Jim King O/C and No. 4 CLIFDEN, Gerald Bartley O/C.

The Battn. areas were marked out on their maps, and each O/C was instructed to have his staff selected from the best men he had without upsetting the company organisation. Also, to make an all out drive for funds to procure sufficient arms to get an active Column in the field. It was necessary for us to do this, or else look forward to being picked up singly and imprisoned or shot trying to escape. Furthermore, it would help in some small measure to ease the strain on areas that had been carrying on the fight for some time and were being overrun with troops.

The following were appointed on the Bde. Staff also on that date, J. Connolly; Bde. Vice O/C, M. Conneely; Bde. Adjnt., J. Feehan; Bde. Q.M. J. Connolly was an ex- B.A. Sergt. who had been a former Volunteer and followed Redmond's advice. He was a very active Volunteer since his return. As he was employed in Leenane Hotel as motor driver and mechanic, it was deemed advisable that he should not associate himself publically with us; for owing to his position and B. army connection he was able to pick up very useful information for us.

The Battn. staffs got to work in real earnest, reorganised old companies and getting new ones into being. Raids for arms were carried out in every area, and a cash collection made. By the end of October I had received £ 120 which I considered very good.

About this time also I received communication from Hqrs. agreeing to the division of Connemara into two, and confirming my appointment as O/C West Connemara, and requesting me to report to G.H.Q., at an early date. I accordingly made immediate preparations for my journey to Dublin, confident that with £120 to hand in, that I would have a goodly supply of arms back with me. As I had only been in the city once before on the excursion in 1914, I knew nothing whatever about where to stay, whom I was to meet, or where. I contacted Padraic O'Maille, and he told me to stay at Mrs. O'Brien's, 39, Blessington St. which was a first class call house for Republicans, then to contact the hall-porter in Vaughans' Hotel, identify myself to him and mention Padraic O'Maille's name as having sent me there.

The first thing I did the morning after I arrived in the City, was to buy a map of Dublin, so that I would be able to find the appointed meeting places, without having to enquire from strangers, some of whom might well have been C.I.D. men. When I called to Vaughans' and identified myself to the porter, which by the way was not very easily accomplished, he put me in touch with Dermot O'Hegarty, who was then in the Hotel. He could not tell me just then where I would get in touch with Mulcahy, but to call again about 4 p.m. and that the porter would probably have a message for me. I called at the time stated and was told to go to a house in Upper Dornick St. at 7 p.m. After tea I studied my map, found out where the place was, and presented myself at the house on time.

When I was ushered into the room, Dick was there with two other men - Seán McMahon was one but I don't remember who the other man was. When the usual greetings were over they quickly got down to business. I had to give a full report of the organisation, staffs, strength, and the possibility of Active Service. I satisfied them on all points, but said that the speed with which we went on active service was up to them, that we could not fight without arms, and that if we had some arms we would start immediately. The Q.M.G. said that at that particular time they were very short of arms, as all they could get in were sent South immediately where the A.S.U.'s were being very hard pressed. It was to help relieve pressure in the South that they were anxious that something should be done in the West. The Q.M.G. made an appointment with me to meet him at one of the G.H.Q. dumps the following evening, and he would see what could be done.

I was to contact Jacky Dunne, who lived in a cul-de-sac off Pearse St., - then Gt. Brunswick St.;- I forget the name of the street now, but it was near the Queens' Theatre, and he would bring me to the dump. When we arrived at the dump I saw that the Q.M.G's statement was correct when he said they had very little; all I saw there were 2 Hotchkiss guns, both out of order, some mixed explosives, detonators, electrical and fuse, and mine exploders in various stages of construction. It looked blue for my supply of arms for the West!

I stayed in Dublin 3 or 4 days and during the evenings haunted the Q.M.'s department. Eventually I was told that some rifles and ammunition would be delivered at 39 Blessington St. about 7 p.m. that evening, and to wait in to take delivery of them. I waited in until 8 p.m., and when nothing had arrived I took it for granted to be another disappointment, and went out to meet a friend of mine who was working in the city. I stayed with him until I had only just time to get home before curfew.

Needless to say I was very disappointed. It was now Thursday night and at the most I could only stay another day in Dublin as I had to get back by Saturday. I could not afford to stay longer, for all my expenses came out of my own pocket. Imagine my great surprise then, when I opened the door of No. 39 to see lying under the hall table, 2 rifles without even a piece of paper wrapped round them and two parcels left beside them. I enquired how they had come there, and was told that two young fellows brought them along on a side-car a few minutes after I had gone out. And there they were left in plain view of anybody who walked in! Imagine that in Dublin in November 1920 when raids were the order of the day.

Now a problem faced me; I had got 2 rifles, but how to get them out of Dublin?. First I examined what I had received. There was one Canadian Ross Rifle with 100 rds. .303 ammunition and one Howth rifle with 10 rds., 50 rds. 7.9 m/m. , 50 rds..45. ammunition, 3 No. 10 $\frac{1}{2}$ " Ord. Maps and 96 Manuals. I have the Invoice before me as I write this, and what memories it brings back.

I got hold of Mick O'Brien who was himself a Volunteer to get a safe Taxi to take me to the Broadstone to catch the 8 o'clock train for Galway. He had just time to rush out and get back before curfew. Then I took the rifles and ammunition out the back, and hid them in thick ivy which grew over the eave of the roof. I was up long before daylight in the morning to get the stuff down out of the ivy. It was rather a precarious job, climbing up on top of a high wall you knew nothing about in the dark, getting the rifles and getting them safely down. I got them up to my room and started to camouflage them as best I could. I first wrapped my pyjamas and soiled shirts round them, then my heavy overcoat outside that- I had bought a light one useful for service - and then plenty of brown paper and twine. It finished off as a long shapeless bundle. I packed the ammunition, maps and as many of the manuals as I could, into my bag, made a parcel of the rest and hoped for the best. I swallowed a cup of tea, but could eat nothing, I was so anxious for the taxi to turn up. I waited as long as I could; at last I had to start off to walk to the station, carrying the awkward parcel containing the rifles on my shoulder, and the bag and extra parcel of books in my hand.

When we arrived at Galway, I allowed my unwelcome travelling companion to leave ahead of me. I then had a look down the platform and saw several policemen there, amongst them at least two who knew me. To get to the Connemara train I had to go down the platform, past the police and around to the other side. It would, I thought be too chancy to walk down past them carrying the suspiciously long bundle, after coming off the Dublin train. Just then a newsboy came along selling papers. I asked him if he'd carry a parcel round to the Connemara train and he with visions of a sixpenny tip agreed immediately. I gave him the parcel and let him go along before me. He landed the parcel on the train alright and got a bob which sent him off thinking he had found a soft mark.

Now I thought my troubles are over, but I thought so too soon! When I arrived at Maamcross where I expected nobody but the porter and the sympathetic Station-master, there were also a Sergt. and two constables armed with rifles. This I thought has torn it, but I was again in luck; there was a motor driver from Westport there with his car. I knew him as one of the Boys, so I went up to him and asked for a seat home. I then told him to get out the big parcel he'd find in the carriage. He did so, and I arrived safely with my first Service rifles to come to Leenane.

When the Ede. Q.M. saw what I had brought, he was naturally disappointed, as like myself, he had expected much more. He brightened up however, when I told him that another and bigger consignment would arrive shortly, and that Mr. Kelly the Station-master would notify me of their arrival.

We then went along to Gleeson's in O'Connell St. and collected two pairs of Breeches and puttees, which we had ordered the week before, and on our way back to our digs ran into a raid in Nth. Frederick St. When we were half-way through a lorry halted at the north end, and military jumped out and started holding up and searching everyone; we turned to go back but found the same thing going on at the other end of the street. There we were after being released from custody as being harmless, and now on the same day we were likely to be taken back again, with breeches and green puttees in our possession. We went into an upstairs tea-shop that was just beside us, left the parcel at the hat-rack and got a table as far away as possible from it and ordered tea. When we had finished our tea the raid was over.

After tea-time that evening we contacted Jacky Dunne, to see what had happened to the box of arms they had packed for us. If they had been sent on, it was alright, as we knew the Stationmaster at our end was alright, and would hold them for us, or contact the Vice O/C and have him take them away. We were in for a disappointment though; they had heard of our arrest at Hqrs. before the box had been despatched to the station; - So it was diverted to Tipperary and we had to go home again with promises of prompt attention.

The Q.M. had to go up to Dublin again early in January¹⁹²¹ and waited there until he had a box on the train with him. When the train arrived at Mullingar on the run to Galway, it was boarded by Auxiliaries and 'Tans, who started to pull everyone off and search them.

A big Auxiliary had hold of Jack Feehan by the shoulder taking him out to search. Wasn't Jack in a lovely pickle with a nice little automatic in his pocket, which he had secured in Dublin and fancied for himself. It was just the nice little excuse an Auxiliary wanted. Jack was almost saying an act of Contrition, and wondering would we get the 'stuff' on the train, when he heard a "Hello Jack", and looked round to see his brother, Tom, advancing with outstretched hand. - His brother was in the R.I.C. and had just lately been transferred to Mullingar. - "Do you know this guy?" asked the Auxiliary. "Certainly I do, he's a brother of mine come to visit me; I just came up to meet him". "Well, get him to hell out of here" said the Auxiliary. And Jack and Tom got out.

Tom advised Jack to stay the night in Mullingar, that it was not safe to travel that night, as the train was being held up and searched at every station. It was one time Jack was glad to have a brother in the police.

He arrived safely in Leenane with his box of hardware which he picked up at the station. To the best of my recollection it contained 1 Lee Enfield, 1 Lee Metford, 1 Mauser, 7.9. mm. 5. Martini Carbines, 2 Colt .45 Automatics, a few miscellaneous revolvers, about 500 rounds .303, 50 rds. 7.9 mm., and about a dozen rounds for each revolver.

As soon as this consignment arrived, a Brigade conference was called, which was held in Padraic O'Maille's, Mounterowen. Reports on progress and training were discussed, the movements of enemy forces through the area, the chances of ambushing patrols and the hundred and one things that are brought up and discussed at such meetings.

It was unanimously agreed by all present that a Flying Column should be formed as quickly as possible and put on

permanent active service. After a check up of the arms in our possession it was seen that the most we could hope to arm would be about twenty men and most of those would have only shotguns.

The roads in Connemara are like the country, 'bare and bleak' with no sheltering walls where shotguns would get within range of the enemy.

The O.C. Clifden, reported that a Crossley tender of R.I.C. travelled at least three days per week from Oughterard or Galway to Clifden and returned again on the same day. It was decided that immediate preparations would be made by all officers to pick their best men for our first Column; that owing to our poor supply of arms it would have to be small, and secrecy of movement until we actually had our first engagement, was therefore essential.

Somebody had knowledge of an old deserted shepherd's house in a place called Aille na Veagh, in the Twelve Bens. It was away from any house or beaten track and it was within easy reach of the road over which the police car travelled.

It was, therefore, decided that the Brigade staff would be responsible for seeing to the house and having the necessary repairs done to make it habitable, survey the road between Recess and Clifden and select the site of the ambush and to give due notice of date of assembly to the Battalion O.Cs.

The O.C., Clifden Battalion, was to arrange with a friendly merchant in Clifden to have supplies of food delivered at stated times at an agreed point for collection by us. All Battalion officers were to be responsible for seeing that their men had a supply of bandages and first aid equipment.

After this meeting the Brigade Quartermaster contacted the Captain of Letterfrack Company, Patrick Conneely, the 1st Lieutenant, Val. Conneely and the Brigade Intelligence Officer, Stevie Coyne, who also lived in Letterfrack, told them what was required and to get busy in getting the house in Aille na Veagh made water-tight. The Company Captain, who was a carpenter, was to prepare the timber for a door that would be assembled at the Camp (as we may call it) and also to get some timber up to repair the roof. He arranged a date when they would bring those items to Camp and meet some men from the Leenane Company who would be there to assist them and get the roof thatched.

On the following Sunday the Brigade Vice O/C. and I cycled to Recess and on towards Clifden and thoroughly examined the whole area for a good ambush position. In picking a position we had to take into account the armament of the Column. We had only four magazine rifles and three martini carbines with approximately fifty rounds of ammunition for each weapon. The remainder were armed with shotguns and revolvers. We had some crude home-made grenades; short lengths of iron piping, loaded with a stick of gelignite and some iron nuts with an ordinary fuse which had to be lighted before throwing.

We found no suitable place until we arrived at Derrylea lake within three miles of Clifden. Just at the end of the lake there is a sharp turn and there is a cliff to the hillside rising to a height of thirty to fifty feet over the road, with deep clefts and shelves running through the face and the lake is coming right up to the roadway on the left.

We decided that this would suit alright for it gave a chance to bring the shotguns into play, and the home made grenades could be used with effect against the lorry.

We also had one small road mine and a home-made exploder, but we had only two electric detonators - which were all we could get from G.H.Q. - so you can imagine how these two detonators were nursed. We never got a chance to use the mine and I still carried the two detonators in my vest pocket when the Truce came.

An incident occurred here, which may be worth recording, arising out of notifying potential members of the Flying Column to report for active service. I personally selected the men from Leenane - or No. 1 Battalion to be called out. Amongst those called were two officers of the Maam Company whom I doubted would be rather reluctant to go.

At this time there was a Mission being held in Leenane and Kilmilkin Churches, and during the same week there was Confirmation at the Leenane Church, administered by the late Most Reverend Dr. Gilmartin.

On the evening of the Confirmation, just after tea time, the local P.P., now Canon Cunningham, Clifden, called at my home and told me that the Archbishop wanted to see me. He did not know why. I went with him to the Parochial House and was introduced to the Archbishop. We were then left alone in the room and His Grace started off by saying that he understood that I was in charge of the I.R.A. in the area. I assented. He then said that he wished to have a serious talk with me and started off with, "You know there is a Mission Retreat being held in all the churches of the parish. The priest who is giving the retreat in Kilmilkin church called here to-day and told me he wished to consult with me on a question of conscience - which he is entitled to do so long as he does not reveal the penitent's name or anything that would lead to him. It seems that during confessions to-day two young men mentioned to him that they were ordered out to shoot policemen, and that it was against their

conscience to do so. "Now", he said, "this is a very serious thing to have happen and they should be released from their oath. You know that it is a very serious thing to go out shooting either police or military when we are not at war; that to make the taking of life morally right we should be at war." Also, that before we could morally declare war we should at least have a reasonable chance of success. That as we were, with very few men and badly armed we hadn't a chance against the armed Might of England. I replied that we were at war with England, that they had no right here and we were fighting to get them out. That the police and military of England were roaming the country to try and exterminate anyone who stood for the freedom of the country; that they pulled men out of their homes and shot them on the street, sometimes before the eyes of their families, and that any man who had a chance of fighting was a fool if he waited to be pulled out and shot without making an effort to fight back. That as regards the reasonable chance of success, when the Belgians stood up against the Might of the German Army in 1914, that she had not a reasonable hope of being able to withstand the German Army, and that I had never heard of any member of any Church saying that they were morally wrong. etc. etc.

He then told me that if I had taken any oath that I thought bound me to do these things that he would release me from it. I admitted that I had taken an oath but had no desire whatever to be released from it. A lot more followed on both sides, and in the end when saying good-bye he gave me his blessing and said he'd pray for me. Whenever he visited the parish again he always enquired for me.

On the 10th March, 1921, we mobilised at the camp at Aille na Veagh in the Twelve Bens. It was roughly about 6 miles north east of Clifden and about midway between the Clifden-Leenane road on the north and the Clifden-Recess road on the south. This site was picked for our first camp because it was within easy striking distance of Clifden and of both roads leading out of it, and as our force was small we expected to bring off an ambush on either a lorry or cycling patrol of the R.I.C. which would test out our men and bring us an addition of much needed arms.

All during the day small parties of men were arriving from all over the Brigade area, from Lettermore & Rosmuck, from Roundstone and Ballyconeely, from Clifden, Cleggan and Renvyle, from Leenane, Maam and Cornamona. The Battalion officers were there with their quotas, for the amount of arms which they knew we were limited to. But above and beyond these came others by the dozen, hoping that there would be some spare gun or rifle to give them a chance of striking a blow for freedom. Every man who came had some small contribution, a few shotgun cartridges, a few sticks of gelignite taken from some Co. Council works, a coil of fuse etc. It was hard to have to tell these men that we had nothing for them, that only a very limited number could stay on and the others would have to return home.

They all got instructions as to what they could do in their company areas to help the fight, and that they would be called on whenever we got any arms to give them.

The Camp was just a disused one-room shepherd's hut, without doors or windows, and devoid of all furniture. The door which we had got fitted up was taken down to act as a table when placed on some stones. Our

bedding was plenty of heather scattered over the floor, which we snuggled down in at night and slept as soundly as if in spring beds.

On the following morning we got the Column organised and carried out some training. We could not, however, have any rifle practice for two reasons, one that we did not want anyone to hear us who might by some means betray the fact that there were armed men in the mountains, and two, we had no ammunition to spare even a few shots per man for much needed practice. I believe that until they had their first fight, that with the exception of the Q.M. and myself, not a man of the Column had fired a shot out of a service rifle.

We had breakfast shortly after daylight each morning, then went off to the ambush position, posted our look-outs, who would warn us in time of the enemy approach, and then settle down to a day-long wait. When dusk came and no sign of any patrol we started out brek back to the camp. Though the weather was dry we more often than not arrived back with a good percentage of the men wet up to the waist. This was because there was no defined pathway and the valley was full of swampy patches, and in the dark it seemed easier to step into them than keep on dry land. There was ^{no} grumbling, however, at any of the hardships. When we got back to camp and had a few cups of hot tea, there were songs and stories till it was time to turn in.

There was a bit of a set back on the 14th. The messengers who had been despatched to pick up the supplies arranged for from Clifden returned to say there were none there. This was a serious situation as we were at least 3 miles over the mountain from the nearest house, and the people in these houses with the best intentions in the world could do very little for a crowd of hungry men as

they were poor and very seldom had any more than bare necessities for themselves. However, we sent out some scouts and they returned with some home made cakes which saved the day.

I discussed the position with my officers, and we decided that as we had been 4 days in succession in the ambush position without any result, that if it continued like this the men would get discouraged. We therefore decided that we would go into Clifden and try for a town patrol. We had no business trying a serious attack on the barracks, our armament and column were too weak.

On March 15th, Gerald Bartley - O/C. Clifden - left camp to have the town scouted and arrange a point about a mile from town for local guides to meet the Column and guide them across country to the town. He reported back that evening that all arrangements were made.

After tea that evening we started off for town, leaving the usual guard at the camp. It was quite dark before we arrived at the meeting point and had to wait some time for the arrival of the guide and scout. The scout reported that there was a patrol of eight mixed R.I.C. & Black and Tans on the town. It was pitch dark at this time and as the country was strange to us we were completely in the hands of the guide. The guide started off and we followed in two parties. The attacking party ^{were} armed only with revolvers, and the covering party with rifles and a few shotguns. After stumbling and falling about in the dark for nearly an hour, instead of being near the town we found ourselves back at the point where we met the guide. That guide had an unpleasant quarter of an hour that night. We then went down to the Clifden-Leenane road and halted a few hundred

yards short of the police barracks, which is the first dwelling on that road. We then sent the scout in again to find out where the patrol was. He returned in about twenty minutes and reported that he had done the whole town, and also contacted the other scouts who were keeping watch, and they told him the patrol had returned to barracks.

There was nothing for it but to withdraw and hope for better luck the following night. We then went to the cottage of a man named Joyce about $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles outside the town. A Volunteer's house, it was only a small cottage and the Column had it crowded to the door. We got a warm welcome and tea was supplied to the lot of us. We then lay around on the kitchen floor, on forms and chairs and rested there until about 2 a.m. We then left and crossed over the hill towards the Clifden-Recess road, and entered an empty house that stood about 100 yards from the road and about $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile from Clifden. The house was entirely empty but we lay down on the floor and slept soundly till long after daylight.

When we awoke we were all hungry but had little means of satisfying it. As far as I remember there were 19 of us in the house and we had 2 small loaves and 4 tins of bully beef, nothing to drink except cold water. We waited there all day until it got dark and then moved in to the edge of the town. We contacted the scouts there and learned there was a patrol of 2 R.I.C. and 2 Black and Tans on the town and that they were then standing in the Main Street at E.J. King's corner, less than 200 yards from the barracks.

It was decided that a party of 6 men armed with revolvers and automatics would form the attacking party, and the remainder under the O/C Roundstone Battalion would cover the barracks and prevent any reinforcements coming

out when the firing started. They were not to open fire on the barracks until the attack on the patrol opened.

The method of attack was 3 men walk abreast up the footpath, and the other 3 men ten yards in the rear with their weapons grasped in their hand coat pockets. When the leading 3 men passed out by the patrol they would wheel and open fire, getting them between the two parties.

Everything turned out as arranged, except when we got to the patrol we found only 2 R.I.C. men and no Black and Tans. The two men were killed and a Lee Enfield and 2 Webley revolvers captured.

The covering party opened fire on the barracks and they replied with everything they had, rifles, machine guns and grenades, but nothing went anywhere near our men.

When we returned to join the rest of the Column we found we were minus one of the attacking party.

Four of us - G. Bartley, J. Feehan, R. Joyce and I went back into the town again and searched right up to the barracks fearing he might have been wounded and crawled off in the wrong direction.

Though we looked everywhere we failed to find a trace of him or of the two Tans missing from the patrol. All this time there was continuous firing from the barracks, though our men, owing to the scarcity of ammunition, had fired only a few rounds at it when they heard us firing on the street. The missing man turned up at Camp the following day and shamefacedly admitted he had lost his head.

As arranged, some of our men had collected our supply of bread, butter etc. so when we joined the rest of the Column, each man was given half a loaf and a junk of butter and we sat down and satisfied our hunger for the first time that day. We stayed around for a time to see if anything would happen, but eventually had to leave in order to reach the environment of the Camp before daylight.

When we were far on in the mountains we saw the lights of a train passing on to Clifden, and shortly after we heard the sound of gunfire and saw the sky redden with the blaze of burning houses. There were thirteen houses burned in Clifden on that night, and one man was shot through the mouth by the Auxiliaries who made up the reinforcements. There was a force of Auxiliaries then stationed in Clifden to reinforce the existing garrison. It was from Marconi Wireless Station that the call for reinforcements was sent to Galway. All wires connecting the town with the outside world had been cut.

As we knew our usefulness in this part of the area was done with for some time, it was decided to move the Column to the Maam Valley and see what could be done towards attacking the Maam police barracks or getting a patrol on the roads. We, therefore, left the Camp on the evening of March 17th, crossed the Twelve Bens and arrived that night at Glencraff, a valley about four miles west of Leenane where two families of the O'Neill's lived. We billeted there for the night and had the comfort of sleeping in a bed for the first time since we started out on Active Service. We rested there until the following evening and then set out for Mounterowen and the residence of Pádraic Ó Máille.

This is just half way between Leenane and Maam, which left us four miles from Maam Barracks. We naturally discussed our chances of attacking this post, and eventually had to admit to ourselves that owing to the position and strength of the post and our own lack of arms and equipment, no useful purpose could be served by wasting any of our small supply of ammunition against its walls.

The Barracks was built when times were apparently not peaceful, and its site was carefully selected on top of an eminence without any cover in the proximity of the building. There were steel shutters hung on the outside walls and these were closed across the windows, and a half inch steel door hung inside the front door. There were barbed wire entanglements all round the building and trip alarm wires on all approaches. Our few rifles and shot guns would not make much of an impression on it, so we decided our only hope was on the open road.

Accompanied by G. Bartley, I decided to visit Rosmuck Battalion area and contact the O/C, who at the time was suffering from facial paralysis, and find out if there were any patrols visiting his area. We learnt from him that a patrol of from five to ten police visited the area occasionally; sometimes by truck and sometimes cycling. We contacted the local Company Captain and got all particulars from him, made arrangements for billeting and food supply - as the district is very poor - and arranged to come back in a few days time with the men.

As the patrol's movements were uncertain we could make no definite plans except to get our own men to the area and await developments.

We accordingly returned to Mounterowen the following day and arranged to move the Column to the Rosmuck area. The men were told to have each at least one pair of extra socks, as all the travel was over mountain and bogland.

On the 4th April, 1921, the Column moved out from Mounterowen, and crossing the Maamturk and Oórid mountains arrived at Gortmore in the Rosmuck area about dusk. As far as I remember we did not delay on the way except to sit and eat some slices of bread and butter, each man carried his supply with him.

We were met at Gortmore by the local Coy Capt. P. Geoghegan, P. O'Nee Battn. Q.M., G. Staunton Battn. Vice O/C and a number of the local Volunteers. We tried to procure some bread from the local Co-op. store to send with the men to the billets, but the store was locked and the storeman missing. I enquired from the Q.M. what sort of a man was the storeman, by which I meant 'was he a supporter of ours?', and I was told - "He is a most courageous man". We had many a joke about this afterwards.

The local men collected some home-made cakes from the Gortmore residents for us, and I remember we got a big home-made cake from the local school teacher which was quite hot after being just taken out of the oven. His house was burned the next night.

The local men then guided us to our billets which were situated on either side of the Maamcross-Screebe road, about a mile north of Screebe Lodge. The locals did guard for us during the night.

J. Feehan, G. Bartley and I were billeted with P. Geoghegan to the west of the road, and were just finishing breakfast next day when a messenger arrived to inform us that a patrol of five R.I.C. men had come from Maamcross direction. We immediately sent the messenger to collect the major portion of the Column which was billeted in the village of Glantrasna.

We proceeded to the road to try and find an ambush position. This was almost impossible as the place was all flat bog, with an occasional mound here and there. About a quarter of a mile north of the road junction at Screebe there was a small galvanised structure standing in a plot of shrubbery, which had been erected to act as a Church for the Protestant visitors who frequented Screebe Lodge in the summer months. As the shrubbery offered at least cover from view, and there were a few scattered rocks and mounds in the neighbourhood, we decided to make the best of it. There was a much better position about three quarters of a mile on towards Maamcross, but we would not have time to get there.

While we waited at Screebe Church for the Column to mobilise, I, who carried the only binoculars in the party, descried the police party about a mile away, across country, on their return journey from Lettermore village, where, I understand they went to visit an R.I.C. pensioner. They still had two miles of road to travel to reach us, but we had no time for picking good positions and had to make the best of what we had to hand.

The formation of the patrol on their return was, one man in the lead, an interval of 200 yards, then another man, and about 200 yards behind this man, the remaining three men together.

The men were placed in positions in such a manner that we could allow the patrol to be completely within the lines and every man of them to be within range of some members of the ambush party.

Four men with shot guns were placed in the little grove round the church. G. Bartley and I with two shotgun men were behind a rock directly across the road and right on the edge of it. J. Feehan with a rifleman and two shotgun men were posted about 400 yards away towards Maamcross in a cluster of rocks. They were to deal with the leading and possibly second policeman, and also to hold up any traffic coming from Maamcross from entering the lines until after the ambush was over. Pádraic ÓMáille and Dick Joyce were posted behind a mound about 100 yards north of the church and about 80 yards west of the road. Jim King and a shotgun man were posted about 60 yards to the left and rear of my position. The remainder of the men were posted behind various mounds and rocks on either side of the road.

We did not expect much of a fight and expected it to be over in a few minutes. The position held by G. Bartley and me was the entrance to the ambush, and the instructions clearly issued were that no shot was to be fired until Gerald and I opened the "Ball", and that we would not fire until the last three men were under our guns. We would not see the police until they appeared round a turn of the road about 100 yards on our left. Also the position of our cover in relation to the road was such that only one standing person would have cover from view of the police coming round that turn.

Gerald and the two shotgun men had to lie down in a depression behind the rock while I kept watch. From where I was standing I could see the whole position and

touch Gerald with my foot as the signal for him to get into position.

At last the first policeman comes on the scene, and passed me out so close I could almost touch him with the rifle. He had gone about a hundred yards past me and the second man appeared round the corner when suddenly I heard a shot on my right, in about ten seconds a second shot and then a third and fourth. You might imagine what I was then thinking. The second policeman halted just opposite my position and dropped in a crouch against the sod ditch on the shade of the grove. I had my pistol drawn to fire on him when I saw that his first action was to loose the buckle of his belt and let belt and revolver drop on the ground and his rifle ammunition followed it.

The three men forming the rearguard were not within our lines, and we behind the rock had no protection from them. It was not particularly of them I was thinking, but of the man, whoever he was, who had gone against all instructions and spoiled our first ambush. I'm afraid I paid no heed to the police for a time but was looking to see if I saw the head of the man who had done this. Luckily for him he kept well in cover.

After the firing started, the leading policeman - whom I had recognised in passing as Sergt. Fleming from Maam Barracks - jumped off the bicycle and rolled into the roadside trench. Gerald and the two men with him had by this been standing up and when Sergt. Fleming got settled into the trench we were the only party in sight and he started firing at us. Luckily for us he had only a revolver, and even at the distance of 100 yards his bullets were coming uncomfortably close.

Suddenly the remaining three police appeared round the corner with their rifles held at the ready in their hands. I shouted to Gerald to drop flat and open rapid fire on them. I personally fired three rounds at them and they retreated round the turn again out of our sight.

As they had bicycles and we were on foot we did not see that any useful purpose would be served by trying to follow them up. Afterwards we learned that one of the policemen had got two bullets through one of his lungs, and that the three of them took cover in Screebe Lodge.

The young policeman who had dropped his arms on the road took a sudden dive into the shrubbery and headed off across the bogs. The Sergt. lay doggo in the trench at the side of the road and when J. Feehan came along to collect his gun and ammunition, pretended to be wounded and started crying for mercy, saying he was not prepared to die. Apparently, he expected that we would do the same things as themselves if the positions were reversed.

We collected only two Webley revolvers and one Lee Enfield for all our trouble. We destroyed the two bicycles and took also the two haversacks which the policemen had and which contained seven bottles of poteen. Of these I destroyed 4 bottles, divided one amongst the members of the Column who felt like having a drink, and had the other two kept for medicinal purposes. (An attempt has been made since to publish that the members of the Column all got drunk on the poteen captured from the police. This, however, is entirely wrong. I never at any time saw one member of the Column under the influence of drink).

The local curate came along when he heard the firing, and put in an appearance when it was over in order to

attend to anyone who required his services. I'm afraid he had a rather poor opinion of us when we couldn't present him with at least a few wounded policemen.

When some of the men who had gone off scouting around to see if they could find the other three policemen came back, we formed up and started on our return journey over the mountains for Mounterowen.

It was dark when we arrived at Mr. P. Ó Máille's house at Oorid. He lived there alone with his two sons, John about 15 and Pádraic about 14. The housekeeper was away when we arrived and there was not enough bread baked to go round, so young Pádraic buckled to and started baking cakes, and a very good job he made of them.

We had a good feed and then felt like a sleep, so we were given all the beds in the house and a good hayloft for the remainder. We had a good sleep and stayed there all the following day, and at dusk started off again. We crossed the Maamturk mountains that night and arrived at J.B. Walsh's house - Maamgowna - before daylight in the morning. Mrs. Walsh and the daughter got out of bed and made tea for us and then we went to the hayloft and had a good sleep. Although we were within two miles of Maam police barracks it didn't worry us.

When I awoke in the morning I heard the Quartermaster checking the amount of ammunition wasted at Screebe. He asked each man: "How many rounds did you fire?" and I listened lazily to the replies, two rounds, none, two rounds, one round, none, then 18 rounds. That suddenly wakened me up and I remember swearing and asking, "what in the name of did you fire them at?". "To polish off that Sergt", and the Sergt. hadn't got a scratch.

I then told him he was very lucky that his head didn't appear my side of the cover or we'd probably be reporting him "killed in action". Like many serious incidents it was a matter for many joking remarks afterwards.

We slept and lazed that day and gave our rifles an extra cleaning, and were called to an excellent dinner in the afternoon, to which we did full justice. We returned to Mounterowen that night.

When we came back from Screehe we got information from a reliable source that a large party of military and police were in the near future to raid Maam valley from Cornamona to Leenane to capture or wipe us out. We did not lose any sleep over the rumour only set about making preparations to give them as warm a reception as we could.

Mounterowen House, which we had made our Headquarters, was situated on the side of the hill about 250 yards from the main Maam Leenane road facing north. The Maam river flowed along parallel to and about fifty yards from the road. At this point it was about 20 yards across, and the crossing was made on stepping stones and a shallow ford for horse drawn vehicles.

The land to either side of the house was formed into fields with sod and stone fences. To the rear the hill rose steeply for about 300 feet when the wide Leigh valley spread out before you and the Rionne Mt. rose to your right about 1,400 feet.

We had positions formed and camouflaged over the face of the hill for every rifleman we had, and each man knew the position he was to occupy when the raid started. We counted on the raid being made in daylight, at least

by the time they reached us after starting in Cornamona. We kept a regular watch on the Maam valley, and no body of men or vehicles could come along the road without being spotted three miles away.

As day after day went by and nothing happened we began to lose faith in the information, and believe it was a rumour started to frighten us out of the district. There was very little fear of that happening, for every man of the Column was anxious to have a really good fight and justify our existence as a fighting Unit.

During this time we carried on training and rifle practice. In one of the raids for arms carried out in the area we had secured a very good repeating .22 rifle, and as I had several thousand rounds of ammunition to suit it we made full use of our waiting time. During this time also, and owing to our proximity to the Maam barracks, a regular Guard was mounted every night, with an officer in charge who changed the sentries every two hours. This had to be done to prevent surprise in the night. There was no fear of a surprise in the daylight.

One instruction given repeatedly at this time was :
"In the event of an attack by daylight the men were to get into their positions and no shot was to be fired until the police or military had left the road and congregated on the river bank at the stepping stones, and then for every man with a rifle to fire as fast and accurately as he could." The range was 200 yards.

I should have pointed out earlier that when we arrived in the Rosmuck area on the night of the 4th April we found the Battalion O/C very ill, suffering from facial paralysis. We decided that it was safer to get him out of the area before any ambush if possible, as if he was

captured afterwards he would be shot out of hand. We got the loan of a bicycle and sent one of our least known men to Leenane that night to contact J. Connolly at Leenane Hotel and get him to come to Rosmuck and collect the sick man. He contacted him alright, but, unfortunately Mr. McKeown, the Hotel proprietor, required the car the following day but he would collect him later.

Also when leaving the scene of the ambush I insisted on P. Geoghegan, the Local Company Captain who took part in the ambush, and his brother Thomas, accompanying us, for the same reason that when a raiding party came they would be shot if found at home.

Several lorry loads of Tans and Auxiliaries turned up that night and burned out several houses, among them being Geoghegan's, their uncle's built alongside, the Co-op. Store, the Teacher's, the Curate's and Pearse's Cottage.

On the day after we arrived back at Mounterowen, 'The Independent' arrived at the house with big splash headlines describing the ambush and giving particulars of all the houses destroyed as reprisals. Thomas Geoghegan got hold of the paper in the sittingroom and read the account with interest until he read out the list of houses burned. When he saw that his father's and uncle's houses were amongst those destroyed he went completely out of his mind. It took about four men to control him and get him upstairs, put him lying on a bed and tie him down to it. We sent a messenger to Leenane to get the Doctor, Seamus O'Brien, to come over. He came along and gave him an injection of morphia which quieted him down. He visited him every day for a week

till he was well again. We advised his brother to take him home and sent another man with them for safety.

During this time we got a message from the late Tommy O'Malley, Kilmilkin, to call to his place for a parcel which arrived for us. We sent two men that night and when it arrived and was opened we found to our delight that it contained about half a dozen revolvers of various types with some ammunition for them, a few hundred rounds of .303 amm., fifty rounds of 7.9 Mauser amm. which I was delighted to get as I personally carried the Mauser rifle in preference to the Lee Enfield. The revolvers and .303 amm. were a very welcome addition.

Mr. O'Malley's was one of the accommodation addresses which we had left at G.H.Q. for the purpose of forwarding material. Mr. Kelly, the Stationmaster at Maamcross, took care of any stuff that came along.

Each address was used only once, and this was lucky, for some 'kind friend' got to know about the parcel that came to T. O'Malley and apparently reported it to the police, for shortly after this Maamcross station was raided and every consignment of goods found in the store with an O'Malley name on them was burst open, but nothing was found.

One of the new revolvers, a Bulldog .45, was issued out to Willie Coneely, a member of the Column. He was very proud of it and kept it shining, made a big lanyard for it and carried it in his breast pocket.

One night, being a member of the Guard he was sent to the kitchen to get turf for the fire, and when stopping down to pick the turf from the floor the revolver dropped out of his pocket and fell on the hammer. This fired

off the cartridge under the hammer and the bullet entered his leg just beside the shin bone and came out through the calf at the back. Luckily it missed the bone. This was another patient for the Doctor.

We made a wire cage to keep the bedclothes off the leg. He was able to hop around before a week, and a good job too.

On the night of the 22nd April it was my turn to come on as Officer of the Guard. The Guard was assembled and the sentries posted with the usual caution that if anything suspicious occurred that the Officer of the Guard would be notified immediately. About 12.30 I got a severe pain in the stomach, and the usual remedies of hot milk etc. failed to remove it. Mick Conroy, Q.M. Roundstone Battalion, advised me to go to bed and he would take over the Guard in my stead.

As I could not take much interest in anything while I had this pain, I consented, and surprisingly enough went to sleep soon after. I thought I was only a few minutes asleep when I felt someone shaking my shoulder. I opened an eye and saw Mick Conroy, the Officer of the Guard, beside the bed. I asked if anything was wrong, and he replied that there was a crowd of dark objects coming along the road from Maam and he didn't know whether they were cattle or policemen. As Mick had a bit of a stammer it took him a time to get his message across, but when I heard it I wasn't long in becoming wide awake.

I jumped out immediately and told him to call the others and get them down as quickly as possible, that I was going down to have a look. I just pulled on my breeches and jacket and boots, unlaced, shoved my puttees

in the haversack hanging on the head of the bed, grabbed my rifle and rushed down stairs.

I went outside the front door and had a look over the road. It was at this time around 3 o'clock a.m. and starting to get bright. I saw a group on the road halted about 100 yards from where the path turned off the road to the river and stepping stones. I had no difficulty in identifying the group as police. They were gathered in a close group as if getting last minute instructions for the raid. The men were all ready and I gave them instructions to man the fences running out from each side of the house, and for no shot to be fired until they were in a cluster on the bank at the end of the stepping stones and then to fire as fast as they could before they broke for cover.

The men quickly spread out to their places, and at the same time the group on the road broke up and started mounting their bicycles to get down to the stepping stones. Three of them had already turned down the pathway to the river, when, suddenly, a revolver shot rang out from where the remains of the group stood. The echoes had hardly died away when an answering rifle shot came from my own men on the right. Again the element of surprise was destroyed despite all instructions. No man owned up to having accidentally or deliberately discharged his rifle, but the man who spoiled the Screebe affair was in position on the right.

I was at this time behind the pillar of a wicket gate to the left front of the house, and I saw a policeman standing at the stepping stones trying to make up his mind whether he'd cross or not. I threw up my rifle and covered him dead centre, pulled the trigger and was

answered by a faint click. The cartridge had misfired. I reloaded immediately, but found that I could not push the bolt all the way home. Apparently the bullet of the faulty cartridge remained in the breach. There was nothing for it but drastic action. I took a stone off the top of the fence and hammered the bolt home. All this time I kept my eye on the policeman I was going to shoot, but before I had finished the reloading he had made up his mind that it was safer stay his own side of the river, and by the time I was ready to attend to him he had taken cover behind a big black-oak block which had been washed up on the bank by a flood. I fired my double bullet shot and got a most frightful kick, and all I did was lift a sod just in front of the block.

The group of police left on the road rushed for cover at the sound of the first shot from our side, as they knew then they were not going to surprise us in bed. After some scattered firing they settled down to volley firing, and for a time directed most of their fire at the house where they expected us to be. Some of our men in the early excitement wasted some ammunition, but were brought under control and spaced their shots just to keep the enemy engaged. Though we were at the most about 250 yards apart, it was impossible to see a target to fire at, except a policeman who made a dart to return to his comrades from the riverbank and was wounded through the hip and crawled to the shelter of a bank. He later collected another bullet in the same leg.

After shots had been exchanged for some time, I got the idea into my head that this force of police - whom I estimated to be no more than twenty-five - would hardly try to capture us on their own, and were only holding us there while another force was crossing the mountain and coming

through Lee valley at our back. I therefore decided to send a man up to the shoulder of the hill where he could have a view of the valley.

I therefore called John Dundass, Adj. Roundstone Battalion - whom I knew to be fearless and told him what I suspected and what I wanted him to do. It was a dangerous mission, for any man trying it had to run up the bare face of the hill while 20 or 25 police were firing at him from 250 yards range. He was carrying a shotgun and haversack. I got him to wait until the police fired one of their volleys, and then to bolt for it. He was on his toes behind the fence and as soon as the volley rang out he was away up the hill. The police fire lifted immediately as they tried to get him going up the hill, and I held my breath as I saw sods being lifted at his heels and all round him. He, however, arrived safely at the crest, and then, instead of diving over into safety, he deliberately turns around and thumbs his nose at the police and shouted the traditional phrase, which was, however, drowned in rifle fire.

Around noon the weather changed and it started making some heavy showers, so I decided it was safer for us to withdraw under cover of the showers. We could get along towards the right under cover of the fence and connect with a sheep path going into the valley. There was a length of this path of about 30 yards without any cover and in plain view of the police, and this is where the showers helped us to withdraw in safety.

During all this time, Miss Jane Ó Máille and Mrs. Eamon Ó Máille and her two young children were in the house. Some time after the fight started they moved to an outhouse at the back, as many of the police bullets

were piercing the interior partitions of the house and made the kitchen and back rooms untenable for them. They managed, however, to get a fire going and get the kettle boiled and had tea and bread and butter sent out to all the men within reach.

When we got behind the shoulder of the hill we could discuss the situation. There was no cover whatever between the house and the river which would permit us to close up on the police. I then decided to send two men to the right and two to the left and try and encircle the enemy position. Gerald Bartley and Dick Joyce were picked to go to the right, and Jack Feehan and Jim King to the left. As I knew this ground intimately I pointed out their routes, but it meant that each party should make a very wide detour in order to avoid observation.

I then detailed three men who were armed with only shotguns to go toward Leenane and break down or barricade the bridge which was about half a mile away on the Leenane side. This was done so as to delay any reinforcements that might come along from Clifden. While they were procuring tools in a neighbouring house a Ford motor passed from Leenane towards Maam before they had time to stop it. In the car were Frank Joyce of Leenane and a labourer, with a load of wire and stakes to repair the fences on some grazing land of his at Kilmilkin. Apparently there was a lull in the firing at the time, and he suspected nothing until he was right in the middle of the fight and a policeman jumped on to the running board, threatened him with his revolver and ordered him to drive on while he held on to the windscreen with his left hand. Bartley and Joyce had crossed the road at this time and were advancing high towards the police position when they saw this incident. They immediately opened fire

on the car but failed to stop it as it was travelling all out. One bullet pierced the policeman's wrist and went through the windscreen. This man was then able to get to the Maam P.O. and 'phone Galway for help.

Bartley and Joyce arrived over the enemy position, but owing to the formation of the ground could not see any of the enemy except one policeman who was lying behind the road fence in a small sandpit. They fired several shots at him and wondered why he did not stir, and then decided he was already dead. This proved to be correct, as we learned afterwards that he was shot through the neck and killed and had received other bullets in the back after he was dead.

The raiding party had come in two trucks to within a mile of Mounterowen, left the lorries in charge of the drivers and finished the journey on bicycles carried in the lorries. Sometime about midday the drivers apparently got curious as to how the day was going for their friends and came along to see for themselves. They were allowed to come along well within range and then pinned down so that they could not get away and bring help.

About this time too a 'Knight of the road', in other words a beggerman, sauntered along bound for Leenane, and apparently the police shouted a message to him, for about an hour and a half afterwards a Ford car arrived from Leenane and a tall man dressed in black got out.

At this time we were spread along the shoulder of the hill, roughly about 700 yards from the police position, and through the showery haze he looked very like a policeman so some of the boys loosed off a few shots in his direction. Some of them must have gone close enough to

be uncomfortable as he was seen to make a dive for cover. We learned that night that instead of being a policeman it was our respected P.P. who had been told by the beggerman to go there to attend some wounded police. He was naturally a bit annoyed about it at the time as he thought we should have recognised him and held our fire while he was attending the wounded. Another incident about his coming on the scene. When getting out of the car, which was an open tourer, he had thrown a rug off his knees in such a way that it hung over the side of the car at the rear door. To one of the boys - Christie Breen - this at the distance and rather bad visibility looked like one of the enemy taking it easy, so he tried his markmanship as up to this he had fired only a few shots. After firing four shots at his target it was still there, so he decided he was either a bad shot or mistaken in his surmise. We learned the following day that three of the shots made a 4 inch group through the rug and the panel of the car.

From our elevated position I had a good view through the glass of the enemy position. I could pick out two men in the little sand quarry mentioned previously, one lying in the watertable near some bicycles at the upper side of the road, and four or five moving about under cover of the bank on our side of the river. They had apparently dashed there in the first flurry for cover and were not finding it very comfortable. There was only one possible place where the remainder of them could be, and that was in a little hollow on the far side of the road where a small stream came down from the mountain and passed through a culvert under the road. Their rifles could be seen pointing over the top but at such an angle that the heads must have been well below ground

level. I conceived the idea then that with the help of the four men already sent round it might be possible to rush them and get their surrender. With this end in view I decided to take one man with me carrying only side arms, as owing to the nature of the ground rifles would be a hindrance, and I had great faith in my own Parabellum Pistol. I picked Tommie Coyne (butcher) to go with me, as I had plenty of confidence in his pluck and courage - he had been in my Company from the start of the Volunteers - and we started on our trek. At times crawling on our stomachs and at times rushing, we passed from cover to cover down the slope, but we did not get along unobserved. Some lone rifleman seemed to have spotted us and was trying out his markmanship. Sometimes there was a smack on a stone and the sound of a hornet whistling by, but we kept on.

After what seemed an age we reached the shelter of a good mound where we could sit up and stretch ourselves. When we got our breath back we had a look to size up the position, and it was not hopeful. We found we were within about 150 yards from the river, but not a scrap of cover between us and it, so I decided it would be foolhardy for us to try further. We could possibly make a detour towards Maam and cross the river but we would be too far away from our objective, which was the group at the culvert.

Then if we delayed too long reinforcements might come on us where we hadn't a chance of saving ourselves, and I decided to get back. Getting back was a reversal of our forward journey; rush and crawl, crawl and rush, but eventually we arrived at our old position.

As it was now some hours since that policeman got away on Joyce's car, it behoved us to be on the look out

for enemy reinforcements. I therefore kept the Maam road almost continuously under observation. There was one stretch, from Maam Barracks to Maam bridge, which was clearly in my view and over which the lorries must pass.

I concentrated on this stretch, and some time after 3 p.m. I saw a line of lorries passing on towards Maam bridge, which meant they were coming towards us. I counted eleven vehicles passing and immediately decided to move further up the mountain side where, in the event of being followed by the new forces, we would have a better chance of putting up a running fight, for at this time our ammunition was very nearly non-existent. I personally had seven rounds for my Mauser, and without any check I could take it for granted that the remainder of the riflemen were in the same position. No matter how carefully it is handled, when you start with much less than 100 rounds per man, over twelve hours exchanging shots in an engagement will eventually find bottom. While the enemy lorries were still a mile away we moved up in single file in the shelter of a mearing fence which ran up the shoulder of the mountain. We here contacted our two sick men whom we had despatched before the fight started with two men to support each of the invalids. The whole six were quite annoyed to have been sent away from the fight, but they could have done no good and would only cause embarrassment in a hurried retreat.

There were ten lorries and an armoured car in the lead. The armoured car and some of the lorries came right up to the police position. Some halted about three furlongs away. From these latter army men descended, crossed the river and deployed across the flat, and advanced towards the house in extended formation. In the

meantime the armour car had started an intensive machine-gun fire on the house, supported by the rifles of the police and military who had descended from the lorries and taken what cover was available. After fifteen or twenty minutes of this a force of police was sent forward against the house from the front supported by rifle and machine gun fire. This was done in rushes until they got close to the house, and then they started lobbing grenades in the windows. When they considered that resistance was sufficiently subdued, with a final rush they captured the stronghold, but to their grief there were no dead 'Shinners' there. All they captured were the women and children mentioned above. They placed those under arrest and had them removed to one of the lorries without giving them a chance of taking even a change of clothes with them.

By this time three more lorries of armed men arrived from the Leenane direction. The force from Galway, at Maamcross detached two lorries to proceed to Clifden and escort the Clifden men there. Since the attack on the patrol in Clifden this was the usual procedure. If the Clifden men were required, two lorries of men from Galway had to go to Clifden to escort them out and leave them home again.

It was our grief that we had no ammunition when the reinforcements first arrived, as there was a chance of inflicting casualties when they first descended from the lorries and were gathered in groups on the road. As I stated already, I had only 7 rounds left when we broke off but still I decided to have at least two shots at the biggest bunch. I found again that one of them went through a policeman's cap as he got off the lorry.

After the capture of the house, we watched the police carrying out bundles of clothing and blankets, fishing rods etc. and every movable article of value and bring them down to the lorries. They then set fire to the house and outoffices and then returned to their bases.

When the Clifden contingent and their escorts arrived at Leenane on their return from the fight, they halted and went into the two public houses, one of which belonged to my sister - Mrs. D. Cuffe. After a few drinks they apparently got their courage back and decided to burn my house and workshops in the village, also Mrs. Cuffe's house as she was my sister. They actually had the tins of petrol out of the lorries, but after a great deal of persuasion were prevented by their officer District Inspector Golden who had previously been stationed in the district as a Sergt. and was friendly.

After seeing the departure of the lorries we continued across the mountain westwards and came down to the village of Cuillaghmore to have something to eat, for we were practically fasting since the previous night. Jack Feehan, with two men, had gone on ahead of us to my sister's in Leenane and got a supply of bread, butter, tea and sugar to make a meal for us. They had the news back of the proposed burning.

When the original police party were relieved, they were so cramped up that they were unable to leave their positions and were lifted bodily into the lorries and sent back to Maam barracks while the final attack was going on to capture the house.

It is an item of interest that Chief Commissioner

Cruise came personally to conduct the relief of his men and the capture of the house.

It may be wondered how we received information so quickly as to the actions of the police and their reinforcements at the fight, but you may remember I stated earlier that I would not agree to the Bde. Vice O/C coming on Active Service as he was motor driver at the Hotel and could pick up first hand information for us. When the call went to Leenane for a priest to attend at Mounterowen, J. Connolly was driver of the car and he was in or near the police position for several hours. He was there when the reinforcements arrived and was able to supply information of any movements which we had missed.

Before I leave the Mounterowen district, I may say that during our time there we thought of every means of getting G.H.Q. to send us some more arms, as it was absolutely useless for us to hope to engage any size of a patrol that would venture out after our first activity. They never came in less than two lorries, well separated, more often four; and seven miscellaneous rifles with inadequate ammunition and a supply of shotguns would make little impression on them. Especially if you can visualise the Connemara roads - as bleak as her mountains with no cover where such guns could be brought into play. The only spot of cover where such weapons could be brought to bear, Kylemore Pass, was avoided like the plague by the R.I.C., and even with three lorries, travelling from Clifden to Leenane, or vice versa, they travelled via Recess in order to avoid coming through the wood.

We believed they would not send us anything worth while unless we could send on some more money. So we formed the Column into collectors and apportioned an area

to each set of four collectors. I'm sorry to say, though, that we were not very successful and did not collect very much.

During this period J. Feehan, Peter Wallace, Dick Joyce and I went to the Clonbur-Cornamona district. We were met by the local Coy officers, who had billets prepared for us and guards to watch for us while in the district. They also acted as guides for us to the various houses where we were to collect, and gave us an indication as to how much we should expect or demand. I'm afraid demand is the word, for though all seemed to be most sincere in wishing us well the sincerity except in very few cases seemed to fade away when some help more substantial than mere wishes was mentioned.

We had been nearly a week in the area, when one morning we were awakened early and told there was a lot of noise of lorries round the area. We got out and up the side of the hill to have a look, and discovered that we were in danger of being caught in a round up. There was a section of men with a Lewis gun guarding a road junction about 400 yards from our billet. We dodged around keeping an eye open that we would not get caught inside the round up. Mount Gable mountain, just across from us, was surrounded with troops and searches being carried out in all houses along their route. In mid-afternoon, when we were thinking of making ourselves scarce we saw a motor cyclist D.R. coming to the Post near us and speaking to the man in charge. Immediately whistles were blown and the men within call brought in, the lorry loaded up and off in the direction of Ballinrobe. Within fifteen minutes there wasn't a sign of military around. Some time afterwards we learned that the Carr~~ick~~ Kennedy ambush had come off and they were calling in

reinforcements. We came through Glantrague and over the mountains to Mounterowen. Not long after we had our own fight at Mounterowen.

When we had finished our tea and rested a few hours, got all the news locally, we moved off to get out of the area and rest up in some safe place until such time as we could get in touch with G.H.Q. and secure at least a supply of ammunition. We therefore made arrangements for J. Connolly to get Mr. McKeown to give us a big oblong tent which he had, and to be ready to take it across the Killary in a boat to us when we'd send him word.

We then retraced our steps towards Mounterowen and crossed the mountain to the north of the Leenane Maam road and arrived in the village of Townaleen near Lough na Fooley.

This place is off the beaten track and not likely to be raided except on definite information. It was late in the night when we arrived in the village, but we were welcomed, fed and bedded. We slept late the following day, and were not long out of bed when one of the local young men ran in to say there were some lorries coming towards the village from Ballinrobe direction. Needless to say we were not at all pleased with the news. Had we anything to fight with we would have welcomed them. As it was we did the best we could. We got every man not armed with a rifle ~~and~~ started up the hill where they had a chance of cover and safety in the ravines. Those of us who had rifles counted and shared round the ammunition and started up the side of the hill where we could get some sniping positions and a chance to see what was coming. When we got sufficient elevation we could see down to the school on the road about a mile away and we

saw the tail end of a lorry going away from us. We heaved a sigh of relief and thanked Heaven.

It seems three lorries full of Auxiliaries came along and halted at the school, on a routine patrol or, perhaps, on the look out for us, and making a circuit from Ballinrobe, Clonbur, Finney, Lough na Fooley, Maam and back to Ballinrobe. But when they arrived at Shanafarahane school and saw the steep bleak road zig-zag up the mountain that they should travel to reach Maam, they probably decided to go back the way they came.

We rested another day here and sent word of our intended movements, and for J. Connolly to have the tent delivered to Wallace's and to make arrangements with them to be prepared to ferry us across the channel the following night. The channel meant was the narrow neck of the Killary just north east of Leenane village. We arrived there alright, crossed the channel, had a feed in Wallace's and then across the shoulder of the hill into a little valley nestling at the back of Bengorm. We collected the tent canvass and took it with us, but could not erect it that night because we had no poles for it. It seems that as the tent hadn't been used for some years before we asked for it, nobody knew where the poles were. We were, however, accustomed to sleeping out in the open so this did not worry us so long as the weather was dry. Mrs. Cuffe had sent a plentiful supply of provisions so we were alright in that line, as we knew she would not fail to keep us supplied as long as we remained there.

On the following night, Patrick Wallace and I crossed the channel again and came into Leenane and got some spars of timber from my workshop suitable for tent poles and pegs. We visited a while at Cuffe's, where

there was, of course, a great welcome for us. We had tea and exchanged news and yarns for an hour or so. We left there and got back about one o'clock, and slept that night at a little dugout on the hillside over Wallace's house. We were up again at daylight, and when we looked over towards Leenane we saw a great cloud of smoke over the village. We thought at first that the whole village had been burned out, but when it cleared daylight and I could use the glasses I found that my own house and workshops were all they had done.

I thanked God that the whole place was not burned. As my places were empty there was nobody homeless, and a house was no good to me just then.

We stayed about a fortnight in the valley, but our quarters were very cramped. The tent was only about 12' x 8", and there were at least eighteen men sleeping there every night, which was a bit cramped to say the least of it, as we all slept in our clothes and had our equipment also inside with us.

While there the men expressed a wish to get confession, so once again P. Wallace and I went to the road and had an interview with Fr. Cunningham. He arranged to meet us at Wallace's the following night, at around midnight, we to arrange that the men would be fasting so that they could receive Holy Communion. We collected an extra bag of provisions to leave with Mrs. Wallace for the following night.

Fr. Cunningham turned up as arranged and every man of the Column had confession and Holy Communion. Afterwards P. Wallace and another of the men ferried the priest across the channel and escorted him to the village.

Meanwhile the men were having their tea in relays and going up the hill to the Camp. All the men had finished their tea and gone with the exception of G. Bartley, J. Feehan, the two men who had been escorting the priest home, and myself. We were just half way through our tea when one of the men who had left re-entered the house in great excitement and shouted that there was a long string of lights on the road below Aasleagh. We left the tea there and hurried out and up the hill to get a view of the lights, and what we saw there definitely surprised us. There was a line of lights stretching from Aasleagh wood back along the road to Westport for at least a mile. While we were watching the lights all went out, and immediately after we heard the hum of many engines as the line of stationery lorries resumed their journey and started like a huge reptile coiling its way along the road towards Leenane.

We realised immediately that this was a 'round up', and I gave instructions that all the men get back to Camp immediately and take down the tent and cover it in the heather, together with all camp equipment. G. Bartley was to see these instructions carried out and that all the men kept under cover, while J. Feehan and I waited on the slope of the hill to see what happened and be in a position to decide what moves were necessary to keep outside the 'round up' if it looked like coming our way.

Half-way up the mountain side towards the Camp, a big sod fence thickly covered with whin bushes ran along the side of the mountain, and here we took up position to watch the movements of the enemy. There was a small 'dug-out' constructed in the shelter of the fence, and in this were Colm O'Gaora and Jim King who were both

sick. They were left here with one of the Wallace brothers in attendance so that they could have better attention than they would be likely to get in the camp.

From the position we took up we had a clear view of the road to where it emerged from the trees at Aasleagh right along to Leenane village, and about two miles along the south shore of the Killary towards Clifden and for about one mile along the Maam road on the other side of the village. Just at the head of the Killary Bay, at Aasleagh wood, there is a road junction for the road to Louisburgh which runs along the north shore of the Bay right past where we were posted on the hillside. The road from Aasleagh to Leenane runs along the south shore about 400 yards airline from our position.

As the light got clearer we saw the line of lorries, which seemed endless, coming out of the trees and heading towards Leenane. We waited anxiously to see whether any of them would branch off on the Louisburgh road which would bring them directly towards us, but apparently so far everything was alright.

There was a big armoured car leading, and just when it got opposite our position it halted and the lorries were strung out behind covering all the road in our view. As all the men had not got over the shoulder of the hill to the camp before daylight, we jumped to the conclusion that they had been spotted and that the armoured car halted there to pin the men with machine-gun fire while some lorry loads of men were sent round the Bay to effect their capture. As some minutes passed and no enemy transport appeared on our side of the Bay, we paid more attention to the activity around the armoured car and

then we discovered that it was apparently sunk in the road, and the crowd of men on the road instead of getting into position for a fight were trying to assist the armoured car to get out of the soft spot in the road. The roadway was so narrow at this point that no vehicle could pass either way, hence the hold up of the whole line. They were held up there for nearly an hour and were lying within easy range across the Bay. But, it would be sheer suicide for us with our half dozen bullets per man to fire a shot at them.

As soon as the armoured car was freed, the line poured on and into the village of Leenane. It was then about 5 o'clock in the morning, and very soon we saw police and troops knocking at every door in the village, some lorries going along the Clifden road, stopping at every house and picking up the male members of the families and taking them towards Leenane, and more lorries going along towards Maam and doing likewise. While the round up of all the local male inhabitants was going on, parties of military stretched along the fields in extended formation and started through the fields towards the mountains in the rear to comb them thoroughly and meet up with another line of military deployed along the Maamcross-Recess road who were combing the mountains northwards to meet them.

As the operations spread, J. Feehan and I moved ever higher on our mountain to keep in touch with their movements. There was a continuous movement of lorries to and fro between Leenane and Maam, apparently bringing their captures to be identified by the police in Maam barracks and taking the rejects back home. As it turned out, they had to return every man they captured during the day. While they undoubtedly took many members of the

local Companies into custody that day, they captured none that the police could say were active members of the Volunteers. For the previous twelve months the police did little of the usual patrol work, and that in the immediate vicinity of their post - which was Maam - and were therefore out of touch with the movements of the young men.

One active member of our Unit, William King, had been sent home for a time to assist his aged uncle on the land. He was picked up and brought along to Maam. He was recognised by some of the police there, but though they considered that he was too young to be personally active, they thought he might have some information to give. They proceeded to question him, and getting nowhere introduced third degree methods, butts of rifles and kicks where they hurt most, dumping in vats of water, etc., but they got no information. He was eventually let go with a rather badly damaged ankle.

While the lorries carried on their shuttle service an aeroplane appeared on the scene, circling the areas being searched and dropping messages at Maam barracks. At one time it was headed towards the mountain top on which Feehan and I were on the lookout, and as it was rather bare we made a rush for cover towards a bank. Jack was wearing a new hat he got from Leenane the previous night, and in the rush the breeze took possession of the hat and it rolled over the brow of the mountain out of sight. He wanted to make a dart after it but I promptly shouted him down, and he spent the day lamenting the new hat, which he was often chaffed about later on.

On this 'round up' there were no houses north of the

Maam-Leenane-Letterfrack road interfered with. The village of Glanagimla, which is just a mile north of Leenane on the Westport road, containing 25 houses was not interfered with, nor were two houses a few hundred yards from the village of Leenane.

On the night before the 'round up' I had sent in to my sister, Mrs. Cuffe, a full written report of the Mounterowen fight to be posted to G.H.Q. through an accommodating address. She had stuck the letter between some jugs on the kitchen dresser, to be stamped and posted the following day. After the police had burst in on her in the morning and were searching all over the house, she suddenly thought of my communication. She was carrying her baby girl, about eighteen months old, in her arms, so she went to the kitchen, took the envelope and stuck it inside the child's pyjamas without saying anything. The little girl looked up at her and said, "Now the dirty soldiers won't get it". It just goes to show how opposition to the police and military was engrained in even the youngest as well as the oldest of our people during those years.

Just about this time we received another consignment of 'stuff' from G.H.Q. It was packed in a box resembling a whiskey case and sent to Maamcross Station. J. Connolly was after driving some visitors from the Hotel to the station, and the stationmaster told him he had a package for him. They stripped the label off it and put it into the back of the car. He had only gone about half a mile from the station when he was held up by the Sergeant and two constables from Maam Barracks. The Sergeant asked him if he could give them a seat to Maam. He said 'of course' he could, but that whoever sat in the

back would be rather uncomfortable as he had a box of china in it for the hotel. The sergeant said that would be all right, he'd sit in front and the two men behind.

When they started off again the sergeant started to question Jack about 'these bloody I.R.A.' and wondering where or how they got the rifles. Jack replied that he did not know, and, anyhow, he didn't think they could have any rifles except a few old ones. "By God, they have" replied the sergeant, "didn't you see how they had us pinned to the ground at Mounterowen. I wonder", he said, "if they could get them in by boat. Did you ever see any strange boat coming into the Killary?" Jack said he did not, that the only boat he heard of was in there about eight months ago, but he was told it was a load of furniture that was on it (which, of course, was true). "That's the blooming way they got them, shipped over the country as furniture and then divided out amongst the blooming B-----s". He told Jack to be sure and let him know of any other boat coming in, and of course Jack promised he would. When they arrived at Maam, they thanked Jack for the lift, and he proceeded on his way smiling. We had a good laugh when he delivered the box to us the following night and told us the yarn about the sergeant wanting to find out how the arms got to us, and he and two constables unconsciously escorting a consignment to us.

We unpacked it and found that it contained the following:-
4 Lee-Enfield rifles; two .45 revolvers; 10 hand grenades (Dublin-made of the Mills type); 105 rounds .303 ammunition; some electric detonators and about 200 empty shotgun cartridge cases. We were naturally delighted to get this, but wished we could have got it earlier. The spirits of the whole column were raised when they saw that G.H.Q. was not forgetting us,

and we hoped to justify their confidence in us before we were finished.

We had now six magazine rifles and six single-shot Martini rifles, .303 bore; but, even with this new supply, we had less than 200 rounds of ammunition to serve out between them; not much to start a new offensive on, but could perhaps put up a good defensive fight if attacked, or do some useful sniping if the enemy gave the chance by visiting the area. Another appeal was sent off to G.H.Q. for some more .303 rifle ammunition. We had more than sufficient revolver ammunition, for, after the first attack on the patrol in Clifden town, there was no other chance given for us to get to close quarters with a patrol we could handle with side arms.

It was, therefore, decided to send the men from the 3rd and 4th Battalions to cover the Clifden-Galway road with Gerald Bartley, O/C. 4th Battalion in command, to try and contact and attack any local patrols from Clifden. They were given the best pick of the rifles and most of the available ammunition. Five men of the 1st Battalion were to stay in the Leenane-Maam valley area with the O/C. 1st Battalion in control to snipe or harass the enemy using the roads there.

There was another reason beyond the shortage of ammunition for the splitting up of the A.S.U. at this particular time. Early in 1920 it had been arranged that my marriage to Miss Matilda Kilroy - sister to Michael Kilroy - would take place in the first week of May 1921. As matters turned out, it could not conveniently take place just then, but I was determined that it would take place as near as possible to the date fixed, and after this first round-up seemed to be a good time to take a week off to get it done as, after the failure of the enemy with his huge forces to capture any I.R.A. man in the process

would probably leave a quiet time in the area for a while.

I started off on the night of 11th May from the Killary mountains, accompanied by Jack Feehan, brigade Q.M., who was my best man. We could use no transport and had to travel at night. We arrived in Moran's of Murvey, near Aughagower, in the early hours of the 12th, after having travelled close on 25 miles over mountain paths. We slept most of the day and, that evening, started off making a detour of Westport and arriving at Carnaclay where we were told that Michael Kilroy and some of his men were in the area. We contacted him and, naturally, he was surprised to see us so far from our base, but he was more surprised and laughed heartily when told why we were there. He had, of course, known of the intended wedding, but did not know when it was to take place.

He was arranging for patrols of his unit to go into Westport and Castlebar and shoot up any enemy patrols met with. We continued on, crossing the Westport-Castlebar road and on to the village of Cuilmore. When we arrived there we found the people very fearful and excited. Apparently about two hours before our arrival there was a police raid carried out by District Inspector Fudge and a number of his Terror Gang. We met a man named McGoff who had one side of his head and moustache shaved off without lather. A cow was then brought into the house and he put up on her with nothing on but his shirt, and, while they whipped the cow, making her run and jump around the kitchen, they threatened to shoot him if he fell or came off. Luckily for McGoff, the door was opened by one of the men outside and the cow charged for the opening with McGoff still aboard. He stuck on till he got around the house out of sight and hid in the cabbage garden till they cleared off.

They also beat up two other men in the village. They beat

up Thomas Lyons with rifle butts while he lay in bed, and then brought his horse into the bedroom and, beating it with the rifles, they tried to get it into the bed on top of its master. Owney Keane, who opened the door to the raiders, was beaten up in the kitchen and told to sing God save the King. They broke all the delph on the dresser and decorated the walls with fresh eggs that were in a basket ready for the market.

After hearing all the news about the police raids on the villages of Cuilmore and Carrakineady, we continued on and arrived at Jack Feehan's house in Rossow, between Newport and Westport and about two miles from Newport, in the early hours of the 14th. We were very tired and, after having some tea and fresh eggs, we went to bed and slept most of the day.

The next two days were taken up in making arrangements for the marriage. We expected to be married in the Newport Church, but the P.P. there would not agree as it was within a stone's throw of the police barracks, so he arranged with the P.P., Kilmeena, to perform the ceremony in Kilmeena Church and we were married there with Nuptial Mass at 6 a.m. on 17th May 1921. The bridegroom and best man were adorned with two .45's. and a grenade. The wedding breakfast was partaken of in Feehan's, and afterwards Mrs. McDonnell and friends returned to Derrylahan where Jack Feehan and I were to join them that night. When it got sufficiently dark for us to move, Jack and I started out from Rossow across the fields to cross the Newport-Westport road about half a mile from Newport, intending to pass through the town along the railway line as being the least likely way to meet up with an enemy patrol. We were just about to get down on the road and on to the line on the other side when we heard the slow steady march of men coming towards us from Newport. The field we were in was five feet above the

road level and rising sharply behind us with no cover and, to make everything just nice, the cloud that was obscuring the moon moved on to give us plenty of light. We could do nothing but throw ourselves flat in a slight depression a few feet from the edge and wait for the patrol to pass and, if not too strong, to have a crack with them.

The police were marching in pairs, each pair being about ten paces from the following, and they marched slowly and sedately until four pairs had passed the point where we lay and halted and there ^{were} three other pairs of police still to our left, so you may imagine we felt anything but comfortable lying there on the bare ground with a nice May moon shining down on us and fourteen police halted on the road just under our noses. We waited patiently for them to resume their march, and how the seconds stretched out - as long as minutes - and the next thing that happened was an order, and they scrambled across the stone wall on the other side on to the railway line and lay along the wall, apparently in ambush for an expected raid by the I.R.A. As soon as each man got settled in his place, we heard the rattle of bolts as they shoved a ground up the spout in readiness for anyone who came along.

All this time we lay on the bank hardly daring to breathe, like two flies on a window pane, we had only just to move and we'd be spotted. Since we dropped down we each had a revolver in one hand and a grenade in the other, but to throw the grenade meant at least swinging up an arm, and if it didn't explode it was too bad for us, as we were exposed on the bank. Our hesitation in throwing them was due to the fact that they were the Dublin-made type and not guaranteed to go off every time, as we had found out previously. We just lay quietly listening to the movements of the police less than ten yards away a cross

the road and hoping for another cloud to dim the light of the moon. This eventually happened and we chanced crawling quietly away on our stomachs for about 30 yards until we reached a low hedge which gave us cover to get up on our feet. We crossed the road and the railway about 100 yards further on and went across country to the Castlebar-Newport road which we crossed within a few hundred yards of the barracks and arrived at the rendezvous hours late, when everyone there had given up hopes of us.

The following day, 18th May, a small number of the West Mayo A.S.U. were scouting around Newport and were on the hill over Medlicott St. and across the river from the police barracks when they spotted a policeman leaving the barracks and walking the street. Captain Jim Moran, who was in charge, said: "It would be a nice shot to get that man"; someone of the patrol said it was too far, but Jim decided to try. He did so and got the man with the first shot. He was Sergeant Butler, R.I.C. The wires immediately became busy and it was not long until extra police and military were pouring into Newport from Westport and Castlebar. They lined up along the wall on the Castlebar road and poured a devastating fire into Michael Kilroy's house, and, after a time, plucked up courage to cross over ~~a~~ storm the house and, of course, found only Mrs. Nan Kilroy and a servant girl with a few young children and turned them out without giving them a chance properly to clothe themselves; they then set fire to the house and workshops.

Jack Feehan and I, who were a short mile from the town, and in a strange area without being properly in touch with the A.S.U., decided it was time to get back to our own area, so we said goodbye to our friends and to my wife and started off across country, again headed for West Connemara and wondering if anything had happened there in our absence.

We started off from Derrylahan that night about 11 p.m. and had to halt before crossing the Newport-Castlebar road to let a few lorries of police and military pass on their way to Castlebar on their return from Newport. We eventually arrived at Andy Kirby's house at Carnaclay, near Westport, at about 4 a.m. After getting some tea we went to bed and slept until nearly noon. When we were having breakfast, Andy Kirby, the man of the house, came in from the field and said there was some firing to the north. We went outside and heard it fairly plainly, at times in bursts, and times intermittent. It seemed to be somewhere between us and Newport and we realised that some of the West Mayo Unit were engaged with the enemy. We could not tell how far away they were, but from the sound of the firing, we judged it to be between three and four miles away. We decided to head towards it across country and had gone about two miles when we met two I.R.A. men coming towards us whom we knew to be members of the Mayo unit. They told us there was an ambush at Kilmeena and that they were there; that they were ordered to retreat and get away back. They had no real information for us but that one lorry had got past the position and that the I.R.A. had got the worst of it; that there were some of the men wounded. We then headed back towards Kirby's and met up with Joe Ring and some other members of the unit who had been operating in the Westport area the previous night. They had also been heading for the firing, but had no information except what the first two men had told us.

When Jack and I resumed our journey towards Connemara that evening, Joe Ring and some of the lads accompanied us for a time to show us the best place to cross the Castlebar-Westport road and to see us safely across. As we were about to cross the road at Sheeaun Hill, we heard the unmistakeable sound of Crossleys coming from the Castlebar direction and we

dropped behind a fence to let them pass. They were reinforcements concentrating on the Kilmeena area. After they had passed, we got across and, at dusk, arrived at Moran's of Corveigh, a few miles south of Aughagower. We were told there that there were some casualties at the Kilmeena fight and some wounded men captured, but they had no particulars. We stayed there for the night and intended starting early the following morning on the last stage of our journey, but had to stay under cover most of the day due to enemy activity. There were lorries moving about the roads and we got out on the side of the hill to watch and see where they were heading, but had to dive back under a bank and take cover from a plane that came along and scouted close down around the mountain. It stayed in our vicinity for about half an hour and then veered off north towards Westport and Castlebar.

We started off that evening and arrived in the Leenane area on the morning of 21st May. We slept a good part of that day to make up for the previous week. After a few days' rest we collected the A.S.U. men we had left in the area when we started for Mayo. They reported that there had not been the sight of a policeman or soldier in the area since we left, that they had almost forgotten they were on active service. They had covered the Maam Valley road several times but saw no activity on it.

As we had only 2 magazine and 3 single shot rifles with about 20 rounds each, and one Mauser with 7 rounds, there was not much that we could do except sniping patrols who never turned up to be sniped, I decided to summon the battalion officers to a meeting and decide what we could do to better the conditions. In the meantime, I sent another appeal to G.H.Q. to try and get some ammunition, for as we were, even if

the opportunity arose to attack a lorry or two, we would be unable to do so with only a few rounds of ammunition. To the best of my recollection, we had our meeting in Delphi Lodge, Dundorrageha, on 25th or 26th June, and there was nothing we could decide on in the absence of the means - ammunition - of carrying it out. If we could procure a reasonable supply we would consider an attack on the Clifden garrison; otherwise all we could do was to expend ^{the} a few rounds we had by sniping them at night; it would make them more nervous than they were. We waited with what patience we could for a reply from Dublin, but none came.

On the evening of 29th June, five or six of us walked from the Lodge with some friends who were visiting us, to see them on their way home. After we parted from them, as it was a lovely evening, we decided to have a swim in the Killary which, at this point, was only about 50 yards from the road. We stripped off and dived in and enjoyed it very much. While in the water we noticed a large motor boat, which we knew belonged to the Leenane Hotel, coming towards us with what we took for a load of tourists on board. Just less than half a mile away the engine conked out and there they floated on the calm sea. While dressing, we could hear the talk and efforts made to get the engine going and laughed as we joked about them being late for dinner. We finished dressing and rambled up the field to the road with our rifles hung on our shoulders; took a last look at them and headed back for our billet, Imagine our consternation and our chagrin when we learned later that night that our boatload of tourists was in reality a boatload of Auxiliaries, and they lying there helpless less than 800 yards away. We never could get such a chance of making good use of our 20 rounds per man. We got the information later that night when my sister Margaret and Jack Connolly,

the Vice O/C., came to warn us of a round-up that was to start the following morning. They told us of the boatload of Auxies who took the motor boat for a joyride and got stuck in the Bay. That nine lorry loads had come to Leenane that day and stayed at the hotel. Accompanying the Auxies was an R.I.C. man named Greene, who had been stationed in a protection hut in Bundorragha some years previously, and who was friendly. He came from the hotel to the village and visited my sisters' publichouse for a drink. In the course of conversation he informed her that he and another constable, who was also stationed in Bundorragha, were brought to Limerick; that he (Greene) was posted with the Auxies to act as a guide for them, and that his comrade was sent on board a destroyer; that a round-up on a very large scale was starting in the morning from the north shore of the Killary to Westport; that two destroyers were to be employed to land troops from the Killary to Old Head at Louisburgh; that the party he was with were to spread along the Westport road through the Erriff Valley and comb the mountains towards the sea until they made contact with those landed from the ships. Other groups were starting from Westport towards Louisburgh and Leenane, so that an intensive sweep was to be made over the mountains enclosed by the Leenane-Westport-Louisburgh roads and the sea.

We were billeted in Dhulough and Glenummera Valley and were all in bed when our couriers arrived. Needless to say, there was some excitement getting all the boys alerted, as the houses were scattered over a four mile area. Some of the local boys helped in getting them out. We then had a four mile walk to Bundorragha Pier where, luckily, we were able to secure two rowboats and crossed to the south shore of the Killary and landed between Derrynasliggan and the mouth of the Bay, where there was a family named Coyne living who, after their fright

of hearing a crowd of men around the house whom they thought were police, gave us a Cead Mile Failte and soon had the kettle going. We had just time to have tea and have the men over the brow of the hill by daylight. Just at full daylight, two destroyers arrived outside the entrance to the Bay. One landed some men at the foot of Mweelrea at the mouth of the Bay and then proceeded up the Bay and collected all the currachs and rowboats from the shores and took them in tow, in order, apparently, to prevent any I.R.A. men using them to escape from the round-up. Well, they were just too late to prevent us from using them, thanks to the friendly policeman who gave the precise information of the area to be covered, and the two who walked 12 miles to get it to us in time. The second destroyer went northwards towards Old Head, landing men at intervals along the coast.

After sending the remainder of the men to safe cover across the brow of the hill, Jack Feehan and I returned to the north slope of the hill overlooking the Bay and ensconced ourselves in a little cluster of rocks where we were hidden from view, but had a very good view of the operations, and we were very happy watching the sailors securing strings of boats and currachs and trailing them behind the destroyer and we on the safe side of the Bay. There were about eight crews of fishermen hauling for salmon on the north shore of the Bay, but the Navy commandeered all their boats and left them idle for the day.

At about 6.30 an aeroplane appeared and circled each individual island and rock outside the Killary, and spent long enough at each one just skimming/it ^{above} to ensure that there were no men on them. It then flew along the foot of the mountains on each side searching for signs of men. When it was passing our position, Jack Feehan and I had the rare experience of looking

into the cockpit of the plane and seeing both the pilot and observer. After about three quarters of an hour it left the Bay and turned north through Doolough Pass and over the Mayo Mountains. After a few hours we lost all sight of the men operating on Mweelrea as they moved north. Due to the bridge on the Doolough road having been blown up by us early on, the enemy were unable to use any mechanical transport on that road from our end. So, their Auxiliaries had to proceed first to Westport and then on to Louisburgh.

In the afternoon, we moved away from the immediate area. Gerald Bartley, Jim King and the men with them, also Colm O'Gaora proceeded to the Recess area again, on the Galway-Clifden road. Jack Feehan and I with the local men moved to Glencraff to the south of the Leenane-Clifden road.

After dusk that night, J. Feehan and I came along to J. Connolly's to see if he had any further information for us. His house was just over the Bay about a mile from the village, and there was the destroyer anchored just off the shore. You could almost toss an apple from the doorstep to the deck. The only information of any importance he had was that some of the Auxies told him that they would be about a week on this round-up, that they were giving the area a thorough clean-up. Well, as it turned out, they didn't capture a single I.R.A. man either in Galway or Mayo on that run. They also remarked that they would probably be back in Leenane on their return.

The Vice Commandant had a six-pound salmon with him when he arrived home that night and, needless to say, the two men from the mountain did their share in demolishing it and thoroughly enjoyed it, at the same time hearing the chatter on the ship outside.

They very nearly had an important capture at Glenummera near Doolough. Michael Kilroy, O/C. West Mayo and three of his officers were there on their way to get in touch with us, but we knew nothing about it. They were evading a round-up that started at Ballina and ^{was} were moving south to meet up with the one starting at the Killary. They thought they were outside the area of the round-up when they arrived there. As it was, apparently they got the shortest possible notice and, being in a strange district, they had nowhere to go except to the mountain and were lucky enough to find what they considered a good place under the side of a big rock in a cluster. They could hear the men talking as they approached their position and they actually walked around at least two sides of the rock they were under.

They were billeted less than a mile from us the previous night, but we did not know there was anybody but ourselves in the area. They stayed on there after the military had moved on and got in touch with me a day or so later. We had at this time moved to Glanagimla, a village about a mile from Leenane. We had come there as a result of hearing that the Auxies were likely to return by Leenane. The road rises steeply for about three quarters of a mile above Leenane on the Galway road, with the mountain over, and we had a notion that we might make good use of the few rounds of ammunition in our possession. We got Michael and his friends to join us in Glanagimla and while there we actually saw the lorries of Auxies returning from Mayo and going on into Leenane. About an hour afterwards, the Vice Commandant arrived at our billets accompanied by a stranger whom he introduced to me. I have forgotten his name. The stranger informed me that he was a courier from G.H.Q. and showed his credentials. He then gave me a communication informing me that a Truce was being declared

as from 12 o'clock noon, July 11th.

I cannot say that we went wild at the news. To say we were stunned would be nearer the mark, until it began to sink in that the British had been forced by men just like us fighting all over the country to agree to a Truce. After the display of force we had seen just a short week before, it was hard to realise.

I sent a messenger immediately for Michael Kilroy, gave him the news and introduced him to the courier, who told him there was also a man sent to Mayo. Michael and his officers made preparations to start off immediately and Jack Feehan accompanied them to a friend about three miles on towards Westport, who would provide a pony and trap to take them on towards their destination. We walked along the road feeling quite safe after seeing the nine lorries of the enemy passing into Leenane. We were beginning to realise our good fortune to be alive to see this day and were in very good humour, and were within about 200 yards of our destination when we heard the whine of a Crossley coming after us. It was not yet in sight, being hidden by a turn, and we looked round to see what we could do. There were six of us armed only with revolvers and automatics against a lorry load of Auxies. There was a small roofless ruin with the front wall about six feet high, adjacent to the road, and a sod ditch about three feet high running along the road. We had just taken up the best positions we could when the lorry came in sight about 600 yards away. We offered up a prayer and said "Here's for it" Then, wonder of wonders! the lorry stopped at a house about 100 yards away, reversed into the street and turned off for Leenane again. Our feelings can better be imagined than described.

We learned afterwards from J. Connolly that an Auxie officer had missed a silk scarf when he arrived at the hotel and had sent the lorry back again to see if they could find it. And, as luck would have it, they stopped 100 yards from our very poor position, as the driver apparently could not see any other place in sight where he could turn the lorry with ease.

The Mayo men got safely away home and we returned to our village to get messages sent to all the battalion areas notifying them of the good news. We didn't get a chance of using our last rounds as we expected. The Auxies stayed that night in Leenane Hotel and did not start on their return to Galway until well after the Truce hour. They were in good humour and had celebrated in the wine of the country before starting off and shouted and cheered when passing the village.

The bunch of us who were in Glanagimla marched in a body to Leenane and got a great welcome from all our friends. And so ended another stage of the Fight for Freedom.

Members of W/Connemara Bde. Active Service Unit, 1921.

P. J. McDonnell, (myself), Newcastle, Galway, O/C Bde. and A.S.U.

Gerald Bartley, Salthill, Galway, O/C No. 4 Btn. and Vice O/C A.S.U.

John Feehan, Leenane, Co. Galway, Q.M. Bde. and A.S.U.

Martin Connolly, Knocknacarra, Salthill, Galway, Adj. Bde., and A.S.U.

Michael Joyce, O/C 1st. Btn. Leenane. (Deceased)

Colm O'Gaora, O/C 2nd Btn. Rosmuck. (Deceased)

James King, O/C 3rd Btn. Donadea, Co. Kildare.

George Staunton, Vice O/C 2nd Btn. Galway.

Paul Bartley, Clifden Co. Galway.

Christy Breen, Dublin.

John C. King, Flushing, New York.

William King, 10 Parkmore Tce., Tuam, Co. Galway.

Patrick Wallace, Leenane, Co. Galway.

Peter Wallace, Leenane, Co. Galway.

Richard Joyce, Main St., Clifden.

Thomas Coyne, Leenane, Co. Galway. (Deceased)

Denis Keane, Roundstone, Co. Galway.

John S. Conneely, England.

John King, Roundstone, Co. Galway.

John Dundass, Chicago. (Deceased)

Stephen Mannion, Roundstone, Co. Galway.

Laurance O'Toole, Tullycross, Renvyle, Connemara.

Thomas Madden, Clifden, Co. Galway.

William Conneely, Cork.

Padraic O'Nee, Gortmore, Rosmuck. (Deceased)

Padraic Geoghegan, Screebe, Maamcross, Co. Galway.

Martin Joyce, Clifden, Co. Galway.

Charles O'Malley, Kilmilkin, Maam, Co. Galway. (Deceased)

Patrick Keane, Gurteen, Renvyle, Co. Galway. (Deceased)

Padraic O'Maille, Dublin. (Deceased)

Eamon O'Maille, Sandymount Ave., Dublin. (Deceased)

Signed
J. J. O'Malley. Bde Ofc

Date: 4th May 1957

Witness: Deán Brennan Liut. Col.

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
BURO STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21
No. W.S. 1612