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COSANTA.

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 1643.

Witness

Seán Healy,
Station House,
Blackrock,
Dublin.

Identity.

Capt., 'A' Coy., 1st Battn., No. 1 Cork Bde.

Subject.

'A' Coy., 1st Battn., No. 1 Cork Bgde.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil.

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ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21 2703.

BURO STAIRE MILEATA 1913-21

No. W.S. 1,643

THIRD STATEMENT BY SEÁN HEALY,

Station House, Blackrock, Co. Dublin - formerly of -
3 Frankfield View, St. Lukes, Cork.

On reading over my first statement, a copy of which has been kindly supplied to me by Buro Staire Míleata, and on talking matters over with Lieut.-Colonel Seán Brennan, I have decided to supply an additional statement. Several incidents of the War of Independence, which I have not previously related, have now occurred to my memory.

The Irish Nation is most certainly indebted to the Director and Committee members of the Military History Bureau for their all-out efforts in trying to obtain and collate all data in connection with the activities of those brave men and women who played such a noble part during this very historic period: and it is only right that their names should be remembered. Lieut.-Colonel Brennan emphasised that it is only good and proper that the people of future generations should be reminded of those days of suffering and heroism and of loyalty and treachery, hence I will now continue my narrative :-

The setting up of the 'den of iniquity' in our midst, known as Empress Place, R.I.C. Police Barracks, took place in the year 1920. It followed the destruction of King Street (now McCurtain Street) R.I.C. Barracks. The demolition party entered a house next door to the building, cleared the premises of its occupants, then placed a land mine against the dividing wall. The mine was promptly exploded, and caused very severe damage to both buildings, but owing to some technical hitch the barracks was only partly destroyed but rendered unfit for further habitation, no fatal casualties having been suffered by the garrison.

After the King Street garrison took up residence in Empress Place, they were shortly afterwards augmented by a strong force of the newly formed 'Black and Tans'. If the walls of this new hell could only speak they would reveal a number of inhuman tortures, perpetrated under the fair name of 'Law and Order', against I.R.A. prisoners-of-war, who had the misfortune to fall into their blood-stained hands and, as I have already stated, I happened to be one of those unlucky victims who was detained in 'Empress Place' for a brief period.

Following the attack on King Street barracks, huge reinforcements of troops and police were rushed to the district and extensive raids were carried out all over the area. At that time I was staying in a boarding house in York Street, which was only a couple of yards from the destroyed police barracks. Mr. Denis Wallace was the proprietor. It was a large house with about twelve apartments, with a back door leading into York Lane, which lane was right at the back of the barracks.

There were about fifteen young men lodging in this house, several of whom were attached to the Volunteers. Bill Irwin, Quartermaster of 'A' Company, Dan O'Donoghue of our Signal Section, Volunteers Dunne, Lane, Mulcahy, Kelliher and a few others were staying in 'York House', which was the name of this boarding house. A quantity of arms and ammunition, belonging to the Volunteers, was usually concealed under the bedroom floors, as a security measure in the event of a raid by the police.

Consequent on the attack, 'York House' was being kept under observation by the Crown Forces. Boarders were being shadowed, when entering or leaving the house, by R.I.C. detective officers, who were obviously looking for some 'wanted' men. After observing

these happenings, I decided to change my place of residence. I then moved to another boarding house at the other end of the same street, where I stayed for a few months. A lady named Miss McSweeney was the proprietress of my new 'digs'. This lady sheltered many of our men. Seán O'Donoghue, our Battalion Commandant, stayed at this house. Volunteers Gussie Roche, Liam Dunne, also Jim Hickey, now Senator Hickey, ex-T.D. and ex-Lord Mayor of Cork, along with others.

We used to sit and talk around the fire during that black winter of 1920, chatting about our future plans etc. as we listened to the rumbling of the British Curfew lorries outside. Boisterous voices of the English soldiers could be clearly heard in the night air as they were holding up and interrogating some poor unfortunate citizen who happened to be on the street. An occasional shriek could be heard from somebody who was being beaten up by the 'Black and Tans'. The noises from the throbbing engines were frequently interspersed with shots from rifles and revolvers, fired by the soldiery. Even the public service clocks and street lamps were used as practice targets by some of the forces of 'Law and Order'.

It being unwise to stay at the same address for any length of time, I again changed my 'digs' after a few months' stay. My next transfer was to a house in Alfred Street. My new landlady was a namesake of my own - Mrs. Healy. This lady had two sons named Thomas and John, and a daughter named Rita. These two boys joined our forces when they reached the required age. The new 'digs' were very comfortable and also convenient to my office at the railway station. The fact that I had the same name as the people of the house proved very useful to me. Martial Law, which was then in operation, required that the names of all the occupants of every house should be posted on a list which was to be hung up on the

inside of the hall door. Clause 3 of the Martial Law proclamation read as follows :-

"THE OWNER LESSEE OR RESPONSIBLE OCCUPIER OF EVERY OCCUPIED BUILDING SHOULD HAVE ON THE INSIDE OF THE OUTER DOOR OF EACH INHABITED BUILDING A LIST STATING THE NAMES, SEX, AGE AND OCCUPATION OF EVERY PERSON RESIDING IN SUCH BUILDING. SUCH OWNER ETC. WILL BE HELD RESPONSIBLE FOR FIXING SUCH LIST OF THE MEMBERS OF HIS HOUSEHOLD AND THE ACCURACY OF THE LIST AND FOR MAKING ALL ALTERATIONS NECESSARY OWING TO THE DEPARTURE OR ARRIVAL OF MEMBERS OF THE HOUSEHOLD".

In short this proclamation meant the death penalty for anyone found harbouring known I.R.A. men. We had to be very guarded in our conversations at all times as we never knew when the Crown Forces would plant a spy in our midst as an ordinary lodger in a house.

LORD MAYORS McCURTAIN AND McSWEENEY.

Tomás McCurtain was murdered by R.I.C. thugs at his home in Blackpool, Cork, on March 20th, 1920. He received a death notice a couple of days previously. Although holding the dignified office of Lord Mayor of Cork, and the rank of a Brigadier in the Irish Republican Army, he always remained one of the plain people and was extremely popular with all the citizens and he was open to approach by the very poorest. He was an expert at gun repairs. My automatic pistol went out of order on one occasion and Tomás put it right for me in a very short time. The terrible and unforgettable tragedy of his death was a severe blow to our army, and the freedom movement generally; but this breach was soon filled by the indomitable Terence McSweeney who actually walked into the valley of death with a full knowledge of the frightful perils he would be called upon to endure, and whose reign as Lord Mayor and Brigade Commandant of Cork No 1. Brigade, was again quickly terminated by the so-called "defender of

small nations", even under more brutal circumstances. Terence McSweeney died as a prisoner in Brixton Prison, London, after being on hunger strike for seventy-three days. His remains were brought back to his native Cork for burial.

Residing in our area - Belgrave Square - Terence McSweeney took a special interest in the training and drill of the men of 'A' Company. I remember him carrying out night inspections during our Company manoeuvres, when he gave heart-to-heart talks to our men, assuring us of victory in the end. He was well known and loved by every man of the Company. His funeral took place from the City Hall to St. Finbarr's Cemetery on 31st October, 1920, where he was laid to rest beside his old friend and companion, Tomás McCurtain, just seven months after Tomás McCurtain's death. Hundreds of I.R.A. soldiers with solemn faces, tear-stained in many cases, proudly marched in that sad procession from the City Hall to the Cemetery. It was one of the biggest funerals I ever remember. The coffin was draped with the tricolour, followed by hundreds of priests and laymen. Mayors and Councillors from nearly all parts of Ireland attended. Large numbers of I.R.A. men, and the women of the Cumann na mBan, marched in military formation, with members of the general public bringing up the rear.

British forces, consisting of soldiers, police and intelligence officers, looked on in silence, but they were there for the purpose of getting information as to who was who. The funeral presented a golden opportunity to the enemy in this respect, but nothing could stop the Irish people from paying their last act of homage to the dead leader.

Thinking of the noble words of Brigadier Terence McSweeney, "It is not those who can inflict most, but those who can suffer most,

will emerge victorious in our fight for freedom", it was the sincere resolve of every man and woman at that funeral to pursue the fight to the bitter end, no matter what punishment the enemy may inflict. Ultimate victory was made certain by the brave deaths of our Lord Mayors and the other patriots who died that the Irish Nation might live.

BRITISH PASSPORTS SEIZED.

Men of military age were now joining the ranks of the Irish Volunteers in large numbers. As another weapon of attack, the British Government used extensive propaganda in addition to destroying our factories, creameries and large stores, to try and force emigration to other countries, and both the Canadian and U.S.A. Governments encouraged emigration. Every facility was afforded by the British Authorities to intending emigrants, with the result that large numbers were leaving the country every week.

In order to curb these activities, Dáil Éireann issued a decree that all Irishmen should hold an Irish passport or Travel permit. Under the existing circumstances this was a very difficult decree to enforce. Here again the Army of the people was called upon to take the necessary steps, where possible, as we had no customs officials to deal with the problem.

Cobh was the principal port of embarkation for the South of Ireland and, although the Cobh Company, under Captain Michael Burke, was a most active Company, they could not cope efficiently with these extra duties, hence outside assistance had to be provided. On one occasion I was instructed to take a party of Volunteers from "A" Company to assist with this work.

Most of the intending emigrants arrived in Cobh on the eve of their departure and stayed overnight at an hotel or boarding house.

Our duties were to inspect all papers and any person of Irish nationality going out for the first time, who did not hold a Dáil Éireann Passport, his British Passport was to be seized, thus preventing him from emigrating on the intended date.

Cobh being the British Naval headquarters, warships were always berthed there. A very large number of sailors, soldiers, marines and police, occupied this port, which made our task extremely dangerous and difficult. The assignment was one of the most precarious that I had received as thousands of enemy forces had to be reckoned with.

We travelled to Cobh on a night train from Cork and arrived about 10 p.m. Among my squad were Lieutenant D. Duggan, Section Commander W. O'Mahoney and Volunteer Val Ivers, who usually accompanied me on most of my expeditions. We were met by Captain Michael Burke, Volunteer Jerry O'Keeffe and other men from the local Company, at a pre-arranged place. Jerry, who was the local communications officer, was employed as booking clerk at Cobh station, where he did great work for the cause, particularly in regard to intelligence and despatches. (He was the local "George Osbourne", which was the covering name used to camouflage our despatches).

Under the guidance of the Cobh men, who knew all the local hotels, we commenced operations about 11 p.m. and dispersed about 12.30 a.m. after checking six hotels. First of all we placed a guard on duty at the office in order to prevent anybody from using the telephone; then other guards were posted at the street exits in order to prevent anybody from leaving the hotel while the raid was in progress. We did not visit bedrooms, but made a hasty check

on intending passengers who were found in lounges, dining-rooms and bars etc.

Quite a number of the people concerned were in possession of Dáil Éireann travel permits - official passports were difficult to obtain - and where we received an assurance that every effort was made by the intending emigrant that an application had been made to Dáil Éireann for permission to emigrate, we gave them the O.K., but where we got a hostile reception, which happened in some cases, we seized the British passports at the point of the gun. The inspections had to be carried out rapidly as time was an important factor, otherwise we would be caught in a trap if information reached the British military or police.

When our job was completed we returned to Cork on an empty train which left Cobh about 1 a.m. With the knowledge of the railway Inspector, who was on duty at Cork station and who facilitated us in every possible way, we remained in a railway carriage in the carriage shed where we enjoyed a well earned sleep for a few hours until Curfew was lifted. We duly passed on the captured passports to our Brigade Headquarters.

The seizure of British passports by the I.R.A. was undoubtedly a very serious blow to British prestige and an all-out effort was made by the British forces to try and capture the men who took part in this daring raid. When information of the raid reached the ears of the police their combined forces combed the town searching for the men who took part in it, but not a single one of our men was captured. The publicity given to this raid had the desired effect on all persons who intended emigrating and the necessity of obtaining Dáil Éireann travel permits was quickly realised.

SHOOT THEM DOWN.

The "SHOOT THEM DOWN" orders and the "MURDER GANG LISTS" which were now the order of the day created new difficulties for us. The following is an extract from a speech made by the Divisional Commissioner of Police - Colonel Smyth, to the R.I.C. at Listowel, County Kerry, in June, 1920 :-

"IF PERSONS APPROACHING CARRY THEIR HANDS IN THEIR POCKETS, OR ARE SUSPICIOUS LOOKING, SHOOT THEM DOWN. NO POLICEMAN WILL EVER GET INTO TROUBLE FOR SHOOTING ANY MAN." He also stated that he was directly responsible to the Prime Minister of England, Mr. David Lloyd George, for his actions. This brute got paid in his own coin, in the County Club, ~~Cork~~ Cork, about a month later. Six I.R.A. officers took part in this worthy action, two of the men being from "A" Company. Retribution was fully dispensed to this monster who was shot dead before he had time to carry out his murderous intentions; but several cold-blooded murders were carried out by his men about this time. Canon Magner of Dunmanway was shot dead by one of his policemen on 15th December, 1920.

The climax was reached when the Mayor of Limerick, George Clancy, and the ex-Mayor, Michael O'Callaghan, were murdered at their homes in the presence of their wives in March, 1921. Dr. Vincent White, Mayor of Waterford, and several others received "death" notices, warning them to prepare for a similar fate. "Black Lists" were prepared by the police, which contained the names of prominent I.R.A. officers. The intention was to secretly murder these men in their beds at every available opportunity, particularly under cover of darkness. The British authorities were very much afraid of American public opinion and world-wide reactions generally, and did not wish to be officially associated with these gangster methods. In most cases they tried to cover up these atrocious murders by saying that the

victims were done to death by orders of the I.R.A. Supreme Council, for cowardice or some other framed up excuse.

RAILWAY MEN MURDERED.

Mostly all railway workers, both men and women, were now regarded by the Crown Forces as dangerous enemies, and special attention was being directed towards their extermination. Large numbers had lost their employment, due to the part they played in the fight. A special relief fund had been opened to relieve the distress in their homes. Over £100,000 was subscribed to help them, by the Irish people, and large amounts of money were provided by the Trade Unions.

When a member of the Crown Forces was shot at Mallow, the Black and Tans invaded the station one night during Curfew hours, killed three railwaymen and wounded several others and then partially wrecked the station. Attacks against the men took place at nearly every railway station in the country. Men were murdered in their beds, at their work; they were arrested wholesale. In several cases they were lined up and searched, then they were told to run and while in the act of running the Crown Forces fired at them with rifles to satisfy their fiendish forms of pleasure, wounding many of them.

One of the worst outrages took place at Bruff, County Limerick. On St. Stephen's night, 1920, Auxiliaries surrounded a dance hall, so that nobody could escape. They were looking for some wanted men, whom they expected to find enjoying themselves during the Holy Season. A number of the party entered the hall, searched everybody present, wrecked the hall and took their departure, after leaving twenty-two men and boys either dead or wounded in the dance hall. But those crimes were paid back in the double in most cases.

The I.R.A. was not to be cowed by these cowardly actions. The men fought on and the railway men never once bowed to the tyrants. Two months later Sean Moylan's Column, in North Cork, attacked the enemy at Clonbannin, killed a Brigadier-General and some other officers; and Tom Barry's Column, in West Cork, ambushed a train of nine lorries on 19th March, 1921, where thirty-five men were killed before the British surrendered. Six lorries escaped, but three of them came under fire and heavy fighting took place. A Volunteer piper named Florrie Begley played martial airs at Crossbarry while the fighting was taking place.

MURDER LISTS.

During the early weeks of the spring of 1921, Lieutenant Eamon O'Mahoney, who was then employed as a railway clerk in the Goods Depôt at the station and who acted as a liaison officer during the Truce, informed me that my name, along with his own and the names of other members of the Railway Company's staff, were included in one of these "Murder" lists. The name of Tom Crofts headed the list, he being one of the most prominent members of the I.R.A. and one of the most wanted men. Commandant Tom Crofts, who was also a railway clerk, was now on full ^{TIME} active ~~time~~ service and figured in some of the most daring exploits of the War. He was one of the men who made a successful escape from Spike Island prison camp.

The information was conveyed to Eamon O'Mahoney by a Mr. James Breen, who was Chief Clerk in the Goods Depôt at that time, and he had received it from a friendly R.I.C. officer who wanted to save the lives of brother Irishmen. Quite a number of the old R.I.C. men, who depended on the service for their existence and who had a long service in the Force, tried to carry on by "marking time" until they reached the pension age. They hated and detested the

Black and Tan methods of trying to restore 'law and order'. Several of them actually resigned from the Police Force, losing their positions and pension rights, as they felt that they could no longer carry on England's dirty work.

Another change of "diggs" was now imperative as I felt that Alfred Street was too exposed and too easily kept under observation by the Crown Agents. This house could be watched from the Soldiers' Home, which was situated on the opposite side of the street. This house was originally opened as a place the British military forces could spend their hours of leisure, but it was now a rendezvous for all Crown agents. Spies and Informers frequented the place at all time of the day and night. The front entrance was on the Lower Road and it had a rear entrance from Summerhill. An attack with bombs was made against it by the men of "A" Company a few months later, a couple of soldiers being seriously wounded and the premises badly damaged.

I now moved from Mrs. Healy's house to an address on the Lower Road at the other end of the railway station. A Miss O'Farrell was my new landlady, to whom I have already alluded. I was able to gain access to the railway station by passing through the Loco. Yard and thereby avoid walking on the public road where there was always a danger of being assassinated by the Murder Gang, but the constant danger of discovery forced me to make other and safer arrangements. With the knowledge that the British Intelligence Officers were now aware that I was a prominent I.R.A. officer, I had to take every precaution to see that I was not shadowed when going to or coming from work at the station, or when carrying out my duties as a fighting man.

I held a meeting of my Company officers when we decided to build a dug-out. The building of such a place is a very simple matter if funds are available to purchase the necessary materials and equipment and if times were normal; but the carrying out of such a project in the midst of thousands of armed forces presented a very difficult problem. It had to be carried out under the teeth of the enemy. Very great risks had to be taken, but, like most of our other war efforts, the job was carried through successfully, and our dug-out was never discovered, although every effort was made to try and locate such places. Intelligence officers on horseback accompanied by police dogs scoured the area on several occasions. It was situated in "A" Company area and over three miles from the British Army headquarters. Glanmire village was about a mile away.

THE DUG-OUT.

First of all we had to select a suitable site. After examining various places we decided on a location situated in Knocknahorgan. We then approached the owner of the land whom we knew to be a staunch supporter of our movement, when he willingly gave us permission to use his place and promised us all the necessary assistance that he could provide in the nature of tools and digging equipment. The selected spot was about 300 yards from the public road: it was heavily wooded. The selected site was overgrown with briars and furze bushes, and there was a running stream of fresh water close by.

After careful consideration we decided to commandeer some railway sleepers and wagon covers from the Kilbarry Railway Yard which was about two miles' distant, as we had no money to purchase these requirements. The Volunteers employed on this project,

being mostly railway employees, were naturally a bit reluctant to interfere with their employer's property; but War is War and Self preservation is the first law of nature, therefore, all scruples had to be thrown aside. The war effort had to go on and its successful prosecution had to get priority over everything else. If any of us were caught in the act of seizing the Railway Company's property and the matter reported to the Company we would lose our employment and the Railway Company would, no doubt, have reported the "pilferage" to the British Military authorities when we would suffer Courtmartial at the hands of these people with a probable sentence of a long number of years of imprisonment. Therefore, we had to be very cautious in carrying out the work.

On a certain night we proceeded to Kilbarry, after making arrangements with Mr. Duggan of Dublin Pike, (Dan Duggan's father) to have a horse and cart in waiting near the railway yard. We commandeered about two dozen sleepers and three wagon covers without incident and then transported the material to Knocknahorgan.

It was not our intention to use this dug-out as a permanent hide-out. It was to be used only for emergency purposes, on such occasions as when it would not be safe to sleep in the City, or when a big round-up was taking place. It was also to be used as an auxiliary arms dump. We already had an arms dump at The Fisheries on the Lower Road. The keeping of all our "eggs" in one basket was unsafe. Thorough searches of whole districts of the City were now taking place. Thousands of British troops took part in these searches for arms ; some areas were actually 'fine-combed'. The answer to our problem was a country dug-out.

As quite a number of our men had now been deprived of their employment, there was no shortage of manual labour. Six men took part in the operation and the work had to be speedily carried out, as the men had to reach their homes each night before the dreaded Curfew hour approached. The work of excavation was most strenuous as we had to delve into the ground to a depth of about eight feet. When finished, the dugout was about eight feet deep by ten feet wide and ten feet in length. We used the railway sleepers as side walls, placed one wagon sheet on top and another underneath, a third was used to lap over the mouth. To enter and leave, it was only necessary to raise the overlapping wagon cover which was supported by a frame on the inside. The mouth was well camouflaged with overhanging branches. It took about a week to complete the job and, when it was finished, it was reasonably comfortable and dry and able to accommodate about six men. Candles were used for the lighting.

We often passed some pleasant hours in this abode where we censored captured British Mails at our leisure, cleaned and oiled our guns, played cards etc. It proved a haven of rest on nights when we had to sleep there. The ventilation was good as we were fortunate in securing some broken drain pipes as ventilators. No noises from the Curfew lorries disturbed our slumbers; no tramp, tramp, of heavy boots of the marching hordes, and no list of names of the occupants, hung on the door by a landlord for the benefit of His Majesty's occupying army. It was a complete change to sleeping in a city house which had to conform to martial law regulations; but, of course, we always slept with one eye open, so to speak, with loaded guns within reach, and ready for use in the event of a surprise raid. Taking all circumstances into consideration, the spirit of our men was wonderful. Men who had to travel miles on foot or on bicycle in order to to

carry out their ordinary occupation, in spite of curfew and all the other dangers which existed, never grumbled or complained. During the day he was earning his living, working as a clerk, a mechanic, or labourer, and when working he was living under an hourly threat of a visit from the Black and Tans. He got no pay for the "overtime" he devoted to the cause of Ireland and, as far as promotion was concerned in the job, he was actually 'black listed' by his employers in most cases. The employees who remained 'sitting on the fence' and carried stories to the employers regarding the activities of the National Cause workers, no matter how inefficient in carrying out their ordinary duties, were the men who were promoted to higher positions, when vacancies arose. When an I.R.A. man was caught, he was not treated as a prisoner-of-war, but as an ordinary criminal, as happened in several cases. No pension was paid to his dependents and, in many instances, even his wife and children were arrested, tortured, and his home burnt to the ground as a reprisal.

To the best of my recollection, the men who built the dug-out were as follows :- Lieutenants Duggan and O'Brien, Volunteers Val Ivers, J. Teegan and V. O'Leary. Spasmodic attacks were carried out on the enemy. Volunteer Joe Foley was in charge of a party who attacked the house of an Intelligence Officer who lived at Ashburton. An inspection of our dug-out was carried out by a Battalion Officer when it was completed and he complimented us on the thoroughness of our work, but I did not enjoy life as a caveman for very long. I was arrested at my work, details of which I have already narrated.

GENERAL OPERATIONS.

Sniping, decoy tactics, tapping telephone wires and subversive activities generally, were regular features of "A" Company's war efforts. We frequently received orders from our headquarters to

carry out decoy operations such as the interruptions of communications and blocking of roads at places outside the city. These were usually night operations which meant that we could not return to the city. We would billet on some friendly household when convenient and when there was any serious danger of getting our friends into trouble we took shelter in outhouses or hay barns. There was a large house in Sarsfieldcourt where we put up a few times. This house was vacant for a long time and was in a bad state of repair. A part of the upstairs floor collapsed one night, when I got a bad fall. I suffered injury to one knee which put me out of action for about a week.

We billeted on a loyalist house near Riverstown one night. It was nearing midnight when we knocked at the door. An upstairs window was opened when a man put out his head and asked, "Who is there?" I replied, "Soldiers of the Irish Republican Army", and demanded admission. After using threats to force an entry the door was opened. We enquired as to how many people were in the house, and after getting the information we rounded up the occupants which consisted of six people and ordered them all into one room which we then locked up. I placed a guard on outside duty and arranged for a two hour relief. Breakfast was ordered for our party which consisted of about ten men, at 6 a.m., at which hour the prisoners were liberated and kept under observation, while the breakfast was being prepared. After partaking of a very hearty breakfast we took our departure about 7 a.m. The owner of the house was then in a very different frame of mind to that of the previous night as he was very much afraid that we had called for a different purpose. About this time several loyalist houses had been burned to the ground by our forces as official I.R.A. reprisals. Before leaving we warned the occupants that no account of our visit

should be conveyed to the Crown Forces.

GUN-RUNNING.

The Friends of Irish Freedom in the U.S.A. rendered substantial help in money, arms and ammunition to help our war effort. Gun-running at all times, even on a small scale, is a hazardous business and, in addition to daring and bravery, it requires a vast amount of careful planning. Careful plans had to be made in this case at both sides of the Atlantic Ocean where English Agents were extremely busy keeping a special look out for such activities.

Thanks to the energy and ingenuity of our Headquarters staff, a highly organised service of gun-running was initiated between New York and Cork, and the men of "A" Company played no small part in its successful operation. I cannot give any details of the arrangements that were made in the U.S.A. nor of those made with the sailors. They were top-level jobs. My duties as a Company Captain were simply to contact certain sailors, on a certain night, after a ship arrived in Cork, take over the "goods" and subsequently hand them to a Battalion officer. I cannot even say the exact type of "goods" that were received. Guns and ammunition were sent across camouflaged as motor car parts, hardware etc.

During the war years, cargo ships of the Moore and McCormack Line plied between the U.S.A. and Ireland, calling at Cork and usually berthing at a wharf adjacent to Cork Glanmire railway station. These ships arrived at frequent intervals. Prior arrangements were made for a certain sailor to notify our Headquarters staff when a ship with "goods" on board arrived at Cork.

I vividly remember one particular incident. It was during the winter of 1920/1921. Battalion Officer Sean O'Donoghue called on me

and asked me to mobilise six men from my Company to deal with a consignment which had just arrived. I clearly remember meeting two sailors at Scanlon's Public House, "The Oriental Bar", on the Lower Glanmire Road. To the best of my recollection, I was accompanied by Dan Duggan, Bill O'Mahoney, Jack Teegan, T. Burns and Jim Cantwell. Sean O'Donoghue introduced me to the sailors. I now forget their names. Both of them had an ordinary portmanteau, ostensibly containing personal effects. We met in the 'snug' when there was nobody else present. The sailors opened their portmanteaus and took a wooden case from each one, informing us that the contents consisted of revolvers, pistols, ammunition and some important documents. After putting out three scouts to keep a look-out, we conveyed the boxes to Mr. Cantwell's house in the Fisheries and deposited them in our arms dump at the back of his house. They were collected by Battalion messengers next day.

Great credit is due to the sailors for the clever and cool way they hoodwinked the Crown Forces. They played the biggest part in the schemes; but "A" Company men must also be credited with playing a brave part in these gun-running expeditions.

INTELLIGENCE WORK.

"A" Company Intelligence services were about the most efficient in the Brigade area, all operations being carried out in the Headquarters District of British Southern Command. They were brought to a very fine state of perfection. We had contacts in their Military Police, and Naval, Headquarters.

Joe Browne, who was employed as a Naval Writer in the British Admiral's Office at Cobh, supplied very valuable information regarding Naval movements. He obtained information about the sinking of the German Arms Ship, "AUD", which was sunk at Easter, 1916, by the British Forces, and when it was subsequently salvaged he managed to

secure one of the rifles which were aboard. This rifle subsequently reached our Brigade Headquarters. British Admiralty wireless messages and codes quickly reached the ears of our Intelligence Service through Joe Browne. He usually transmitted the information through one of our Company Volunteers, in the person of Dan Holohan, who was employed as a clerk at Cork railway station, who in turn handed them to me for despatch to our Brigade Headquarters or dealt with them direct.

The tapping of telephone lines was another method we employed of seeking enemy information. Post Office Linesman Tom Walsh rendered wonderful services in this respect. He ran a wire from a telegraph pole which linked up the lines leading into the Black and Tan Headquarters Barracks at Empress Place. This pole was only a short distance from the barracks. It was adjacent to the Metropole Laundry, and close to the stables of John Wallis & Sons, in Railway Street, Cork. The staff employed by Messrs. Wallis & Sons, also the Caretaker in the Laundry, were all very friendly and helped us to a great extent. In order to avoid the vigilance of the enemy forces we could only operate after business hours or during week-ends. The British Authorities were well aware that the I.R.A. had some staunch workers in the ranks of the Post Office staff, therefore they were very cautious about sending important messages over the public telephone.

Very few of our men knew of the operation of this listening-in-post, and we worked at it in pairs, always armed and ready to fight if we were trapped, as there was no back-door for escape. Tom Walsh was a master-hand at his work. He provided us with head phones, connected and disconnected the apparatus as favourable opportunities arose, and he listened-in himself at every available opportunity. He obtained valuable information regarding British troop movements on a couple of occasions.

I spent many an anxious as well as interesting hour listening-in to the messages passing over the lines. The Service messages sent and received

were usually of a routine nature. Calls for re-inforcements to be sent to different police stations passed fairly frequently. Loyalists and others used the 'phone for the purpose of reporting "suspicious" movements of what appeared to be I.R.A. men. An interjection such as "Be careful some of these . . . Sinn Feiners maybe listening in", was frequently overheard. One message I overheard was from a Hotel proprietor, reporting that men in civilian clothes, who said they were "Sinn Feiners" had seized a quantity of goods, including liquor and cigarettes, at the point of the gun. On subsequent inquiries at the hotel, I learned that the robbery was actually carried out by members of the Auxiliary Police. The tapping of telephone wires greatly helped in terminating the activities of informers.

I must mention that the telephone tapping idea of ours accidentally originated in the Parcels Office at Cork railway station where I was employed, and where frequent contacts were made with our friend the P.O. Linesman, Tom Walsh. D. J. Kelly, who was also a railway clerk, and to whom I have previously referred (now retired stationmaster) carried out an experiment by placing a six inch nail across the terminals of the office telephone switchboard and this experiment gave such satisfactory results we were able to listen-in to messages passing to and from the British Military Post at the Station. A leakage of information was subsequently reported when a Post Office Engineer was sent to make a special check on all lines and he quickly discovered our device, then commenced enquiring as to who interfered with the telephone, with a threat of calling in the British Police to investigate the matter. He severely questioned Mr. D.J. Kelly, who was the clerk in charge of the office at the time and who refused to answer any questions. Holding the rank of Captain of "A" Company, it was then my duty to deal with this Post Office Engineer. After disclosing my identity, I informed him that if he took any further action, beyond removing the nail, that he would be dealt with as an "informer" by the I.R.A. This warning had the desired effect, but further interference with the office telephone was made impossible as a special watch was kept on it from that day forward.

HUMAN BLOODHOUNDS.

Human bloodhounds, male and female, generally known as spies and informers, smashed the rebellions of 1798 and 1867. Noble Irishmen and women were tortured and hanged on the evidence of such vampires. The rebel leaders at those times were too lenient with spies and informers, which brought about their defeat. History was not going to be allowed to repeat itself again in this respect. Sean O'Hegarty, our Brigade O/C. took no chances. If there was a doubt in his mind about such people, he gave his men the benefit of that doubt. No spies or informers were executed without the sanction and specific orders of our Brigade staff, and it was not necessary to obtain confirmation from our Headquarters in Dublin.

Peremptory orders were usually issued to the Captain of the local Company, in which the person resided, to arrange to have "so-and-so" shot as he or she had been convicted as a spy or informer. We never questioned the decisions, but as good soldiers carried out the orders. No information was given or asked as to why? A number of these vampires resided close to the Victoria Barracks and the execution of a few had a deterrent effect on most of the others.

I have already referred to a traitorous Irishman who was executed at Knockraha. He died with "God save England" on his lips, may God forgive him. Another such individual came under notice and we got orders to deal with him summarily. As he was walking along the Lower Road, he was fired upon and wounded by two men from "A" Company, but he managed to reach the protection of the police, who had him conveyed to the County Hospital. When this information reached the Brigade Staff, immediate orders were issued that the full penalty must be paid forthwith, hence two men were sent to the hospital where they shot him to his death. This action proved to the others that spying activities were highly dangerous.

In another instance we received orders to deal with a woman informer. This fiend resided on the Old Youghal Road and her actions as an informer were well known to most of the people who lived in her vicinity. She hated the army of the people, and openly boasted that she would get all the I.R.A. men whom she knew, hanged or shot by her English masters.

This being a more delicate problem and the shooting of women being abhorrent to soldiers generally, we decided to take her a prisoner in the first instance. Her movements were being well watched. It was noted that it was her custom to attend a house of worship on Sundays at a certain hour. We got a bottle of chloroform from the caretaker of a Medical Dispensary at Mahoney's Avenue, and had a horse drawn covered car in readiness, on a certain Sunday morning.

We waited for over an hour in the vicinity of the church, but the woman never came along. Some strange coincidence saved her and she was not seen in the district for a long time afterwards. We never got any clue as to where she disappeared to at that particular time, and her threats never materialised. She had been previously warned that the I.R.A. intended to take drastic action against her and it would appear as if she heeded that warning in time.

It was drastic action of that nature that won the war for the I.R.A. and compelled the British to come to terms.

THE UNION JACK HAULED DOWN.

Although the Bureau of Military History is only concerned with the activities of the Irish Volunteers, from their formation in 1913 to the signing of the Truce in 1921, I feel that it is not out of place to make a short reference to the handing over of the British Bastiles to the Irish Republican Army, after England was forced to come to terms.

The Victoria Military Barracks where thousands of British soldiers and a Company of Auxiliary Police were housed, and Empress Police Place/Barracks, both situated in "A" Company area, were evacuated by the British forces after the cessation of hostilities and handed

over to the soldiers of the Irish Republican Army. The Union Jack was hauled down and the Irish Tricolour hoisted, to float proudly over the Rebel City. The army of the Irish people was victorious. It was the first time in seven hundred years that the Flag of Ireland was officially recognised by the King of England and the British Government.

Great celebrations were held in the city to mark the departure of the army of the Invader. Curfew was lifted, all fighting ceased, shootings, burnings, raids and arrests were terminated; the boys of the flying column came back from the hills and mountains and were again re-united with their friends and families after long months of fighting and blood-shed.

On being released from the custody of His Britannic Majesty's gaolers in Cork Military Barracks, I was naturally a bit weak and run-down in health. After reporting my release to Brigade Headquarters I paid a short visit to my old home in Shanballymore to see my parents and the other members of my family. Having learned that several houses had been burned to the ground since the time of my previous visit it was with a feeling of nervous apprehension that I approached the village but I was indeed pleased to see the old house standing and to find that everything was as well as could be expected taking all circumstances into consideration. Five houses had been destroyed as "official reprisals" in the village and its vicinity.

With plenty of fresh air, good food, and the congenial atmosphere which then prevailed my health was quickly restored to its former strength. I then made application to my former employers, the G. S. & W. Railway Company for re-employment and was re-instated in my former position as booking clerk at Cork, Glanmire Road Station, without delay.

The British Military were withdrawn a few months later and the R.I.C. and Black and Tans were disbanded. When it came to my turn to issue single tickets to the members of those forces, it was with a feeling of pride and joy that I did so, as I felt that I did my part in helping to rid our country of this invading army, and most railwaymen took the greatest of pleasure in speeding up their departure. Before concluding I must mention one particular incident which I feel is worth recording.

A sergeant of the Hampshire Regiment named Sergeant Grant, who was one of my gaolers when I was a prisoner in "The Cage", was indeed rather kind to me when I was being released.

EMENIES MAKE FRIENDS.

When I was taken prisoner my worldly wealth consisted of £3. and some odd shillings. This was taken from me by Captain Dove, the Intelligence Officer who effected my arrest, and duly handed over to the Finance Officer. On being informed of my release, I asked for a return of this money when I was told that certain formalities should be complied with before it could be handed over to me and this red-tape business may take some time.

Being absolutely penniless, I acquainted Sergeant Grant of my plight, when he very kindly put his hand in his pocket and gave me a personal loan of ten shillings without any formalities. I called at the Victoria Barracks a few days later when I received my money from the Finance Officer, who treated me in a very different manner to that which obtained a few months previously. I then asked to see Sergeant Grant and was taken to the Refreshment Room, where he was at the time. I returned the cash lent with interest at the Bar, to the accompaniment of ~~drinking~~ each other's health. I consider

this kind gesture of a former enemy is worth recording. In the course of my duties as booking clerk at the station I was handed a railway warrant by Sergeant Grant a few months later, covering a journey for himself and a party of men from Cork to Southampton, to whom I issued the railway ticket. We parted with a hearty shake hands and I remarked to one of my fellow booking clerks, "There are some decent men in the British Army".

VOLUNTEERS, 1916.

In support of my statement regarding the loyalist opposition that had to be contended with in Cork, in addition to the armed forces of the Crown, I quote the following particulars that I have extracted from Guy's Almanac and Directory, published in Cork City. This was in the year 1916, which can be regarded as the turning point in Irish History :-

1. PLEDGED TO FIGHT FOR IRISH FREEDOM - Cork City Corps,
Irish Volunteers.

Headquarters, Sheares' Street, Captain, J.P. Lane; President, J. Jennings; Tres. L. de Roiste; Hon. Sec. T. MacCurtain; Asst. Sec. P. Ahern.

Na Fianna Eireann-National Boy Scouts.

Pres. J. Healy; Vice-Pres, Sean O'Heirgearta and P. Herlihy, Hon. Treasurers, W. D. Hennessy, and W. O'Callaghan; Hon. Sec. Seamus Courtney, Commandant, J. Healy; Scoutmaster, C. Monahan. Headquarters, Sheares' Street, Cork.

11. PLEDGED TO UPHOLD THE BRITISH CROWN - Irish National Volunteers

J. E. Redmond, M.P. President, Cork City Corps. Chairman - Thomas Byrne; Hon. Treas. J.J. Horgan, Solicitor; Joseph Murphy, T.C. J.J. McEnery; Hon. Secs - Jerh. O'Mullane; Eugene Gayer, T.C. Lieutenant-Colonel H.P.F. Donegan. Adjutant - Capt. W. T. Daunt.

A. Coy - Capt. Geo. Hutchinson; Lieuts. Geo. Devlin and Geo. Murphy; B. Coy - Capt. J.J. Horgan, Solicitor, Lieutenants T. McGrath and J. O'Connell. C. Coy - Capt. M. Bulmer; Lieutenants F. J. O'Riordan and C.P. Murphy. D. Coy - Capt. T. Byrne; Lieuts. M. Hill and F. Cotter. Motor and Signalling Corps Lieut. P.A. Egan. Quartermaster - Lieut. Jerh. Buordan. Instructor - Sergt.-Major J.F. Long. Quartermaster Sergeant - J. Haynes.
Headquarters - Cornmarket Street.

III. CITY OF CORK VOLUNTEER TRAINING CORPS.

Executive Committee - A. W. Stanford, M.D. Chairman; R. F. Starkie, R.M. Vice-Chairman; Professor C. W. L. Alexander, S. B. Budd, A. F. Sharman-Crawford, J.P.; Henry Cronin, Sir Stanley Harrington, J.P.; Thomas Jennings, J.P. Michael J. Mahoney, Jas. Murphy, W.P. Musgrave and V. J. Murray. Hon Treas. H. A. Pelly, Hibernian Bank. Hon. Secs, D. T. Barry, M.D. and S. Seymour.

IV. BOY SCOUTS.

Commissioner for Munster, the Earl of Bandon, K.P.; District Commissioner, A. Sandford, M.D. Scoutmaster, P.N. Gordon; Hon. Sec. J. C. McNamara, Staff Scoutmaster, F. J. Johnson; Asst. Scoutmaster, H. Buchanan. Scoutmasters, Cork Troops. V. D. O'Flynn; H. Pike; B. McNally; A.J. McCluskey; S. M. Faris; A. J. Darragh; G. A. Newenham; E. Holman; R. F. Russell; R.H.V. Brougham; G.P. Atkins; W. Morris; W. Jagoe; E. Sikes; W. G. Biggs; F. Walker, M.D. M. Oliver; W.A.E. Foley and J. Murphy.

V. CORK BRIGADE BATTALION.
(COMPRISING CHURCH LADS AND BOYS' BRIGADE).

Pres. A.O. Grey; Vice-Pres. J. Berkley; H. Partridge; J. Pickering; E. K. Kearney; M.L. White; G. W. Blackham;

Coy. Officers :- Rev. Canon G. W. Healy; Rev. W. T. H. Pearson; A.J. Darragh; Rev. J.H. Murphy; S.M. Faris; G. Bird; Capt. S.G.C. Cummin; Rev. Canon Nicholson; Rev. J.J. Macmanaway; Captain W.F. Dundas; Lieut. T. Daly.

VI. CORK HIBERNIAN BOYS' BRIGADE.

Pres. J. A. Bradley; Chaplain, Rev. J.A. Russell; C.C. Committee V.J. Ahern; T. Byrne, R.H. Geary, J. Hoare, D. Lehane; M. Lynch; Capt. T. J. O'Sullivan; Lieuts W. J. Hickey; J. Mahon, C. Byrne, Hon. Sec. M. Buckley.

The loyalists were mostly professional and big business men with considerable influence in the city, whereas our officers were mostly drawn from the working classes. We were outnumbered by about fifty to one. Looking back after a lapse of forty years it now seems incredible to realise that we were able to survive and bring victory to our forces. But I must add that following England's Conscription Act in 1918, John Redmond's party solidly resisted it, when large numbers of The Irish National Volunteers left that organisation and joined the ranks of The Irish Volunteers, now known as the "Sinn Féin" Volunteers, when they served their own country instead of fighting for England. In fact several ex-British soldiers joined our ranks and distinguished themselves in the fight for Irish freedom.

RETROSPECT.

I still have in my possession a group photograph of the men of "A" Company, 1st Battalion, Cork No. 1 Brigade, I.R.A. This picture was taken at the Victoria Military Barracks, Cork, after they were handed over by the British Forces. It portrays Lieutenant Charlie O'Brien, Quartermaster, Liam Irwin, our Section Commanders, and sixty other ranks. I look back on this group with mixed feelings;

feelings of gladness at the wonderful victory that we achieved over the forces of the British Empire, and feelings of sadness for the men who have since been called to their Eternal reward. One man was killed in action during the Civil War (Jerry Hourigan of the Mayfield Section), some died as the results of the hardships and sufferings which they endured in our fight, others died of natural causes. They laid down their lives for the Irish Republic. May God rest their noble souls! And may their memories live forever!

In conclusion, I would like to place on record the words of a ballad entitled "The First Cork Brigade", which was defiantly sung by every man of the Company on many an occasion. It was sung in gaols and prison camps, on parades and at social functions. It is a parody on that American song, "Glory, Glory, Allelulia!", and sung to the same air. I cannot now remember the name of the composer but, as it relates to several incidents of the war, it is worth placing on record.

THE BOYS OF THE FIRST CORK BRIGADE.

1.

When Lloyd George's hired gun-men, came and shot McCurtain down,
The British thought "Sinn Fein" was dead, in Cork's own Rebel
Town,

But they got a rude awakening, when that debt was partly paid,
In Lisburn and the Lower Road, by the First Cork Brigade.

Chorus.

Glory, glory to old Ireland,
Glory, glory, to our sireland,
Glory, glory, to the men who fought and fell,
For we are the boys of the First Cork Brigade.

11.

We bombed them at the Courthouse, we bombed them at Parnell Bridge
We bombed them up at Dillon's Cross, and from Coolavokig ridge,
We bombed them in O'Connell Street, the Abbey and Parade,
For we are the boys of the First Cork Brigade.

(Chorus).

III.

We blew them out of King Street, and set many more ablaze,
Till the Bobbies got the wind up, and they sighed for better days.
We kept the ball a'rolling, by many a brilliant raid,
For we are the boys of the First Cork Brigade.

(Chorus).

IV.

Then the Black and Tans and Auxies came and burnt down our town,
They pillaged and they looted, and they shot our women down,
They murdered and they plundered, 'till they thought we were afraid
But we gave them "who began it" in the First Cork Brigade.

(Chorus).

SIGNED: Sean Healy

Date: 25th June, 1957

WITNESS: Sean Brennan Lieut.-Col.

