

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
BURO STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21
No. W.S. 1,684

ROINN



COSANTA.

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 1,684.

Witness

James ("Spud") Murphy,
22, Pearse Park,
Dundalk,
CO. LOUTH.

Identity.

Section Leader,

Cork III. Brigade Flying Column.

Subject.

Clonakilty Company, Clonakilty Battalion,
Cork III. Brigade, I.R.A. and
Brigade Flying Column.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil.

File No S.2984.

Form B.S.M. 2

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
BURG STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21
No. W.S. 1.684

STATEMENT BY JAMES (Spud) MURPHY

22 Pearse Park, Dundalk.

(Late of Clonakilty, Co. Cork).

I was born in Clonakilty on 31st August 1897. After leaving school I went to work with the Clonakilty Bottling Co.

In 1917, I joined the Volunteers, being a member of Clonakilty Company. The strength of the company was about 40. We did the ordinary training - close order foot drill. We were trained by officers of the Clonakilty company. As 1917 progressed, companies were formed in the following areas: Clonakilty, Ring, Shannonvale, Lyre, Kilmeen, Reenascreena, Rosscarbery, Milltown and Ardfield. Towards the end of the year these were formed into the Clonakilty Battalion. The first O/C. of the battalion was Jim Walsh.

Normal training continued through 1918. At this stage, the only arms held by the company were two rifles (belonging to John "Flyer" Nyhan's father) a half dozen shotguns and a few revolvers.

The British now threatened to enforce conscription and there was a considerable increase in the membership to approximately 150. Practically every man of military age in the district joined. Several raids for arms, mainly shotguns, were carried out in the area. At this stage, we had ~~60~~³⁰ shotguns and we purchased an additional service rifle from H.Q. The raids for arms were carried out by selected members of the company. Amongst those who took part were: "Flyer" Nyhan, Stephen O'Neill, Michael Crowley and myself.

Another section of selected men were, at this period, engaged in the manufacture of home-made bombs and buckshot. The men of this section worked at John O'Keefe's of Clogheen. All members of the Volunteers were engaged in helping to organise the general public in the fight against conscription.

When the conscription stage had passed, the majority of the new recruits fell away and the strength of the company fell to about 50. In April or May, they were engaged in the collection of the anti-conscription fund.

In connection with the general election, December 1918, a section of about eight men, under the command of Sean O'Donovan, went to Waterford city to take part in protection duty. The Sinn Fein supporters in this constituency were in the minority and were being intimidated by the supporters of the Irish Parliamentary Party candidate - Major Redmond. The supporters of Redmond were main^{ly} the families of soldiers serving with the British in France or in other areas.

Cork Brigade, which consisted of about 20 battalions and embraced the whole county, was divided at this stage - early 1919 - into three brigades: Cork City and Mid- and East-Cork; North Cork (No. 2 Brigade), and West Cork (No. 3 Brigade). The other battalions in this brigade were: Bandon, Dunmanway, Skibbereen, Bantry and Castletownbere. About a year later, the Bantry Battalion was divided into two, thus making Bantry and Schull. The officers of the Cork No. 3 Brigade were: O/C. Tom Hales; V.O/C. (I cannot recollect); Adjutant, Liam Deasy; Q.M. Pat Harte.

A training camp for selected officers was held at Glandore ^{in August-1919}. I was not at this camp. Clonakilty was represented there by Sean O'Donovan, Pat Harte and Stephen O'Neill. Beyond normal training there was no further activity in the area during the remainder of 1919.

The first major activity in which members of the company took part was ^{the} ~~to~~ attack on the Timoleague R.I.C. barracks on 25th February 1920. About a dozen members of the company took part in this operation. They were divided into two sections of six each. One section entered the village and took part in the actual attack on the barracks. The attack was not a success,

due to the failure of the guncotton to explode. I was a member of the second party which was on outpost duty on the Clonakilty road, about one mile from the village. We were armed with shotguns.

At Easter 1920, the majority of the members of the company were engaged in the destruction of the evacuated R.I.C. post at Milltown and the coastguard station.

When the Local Government elections were held in June 1920, all units took an actual part in the work of the election. Several Volunteers were elected to the various Councils, all of which were now controlled by the Sinn Fein party.

About this time, it was decided to attack the coastguard station at Ring in an endeavour to obtain some arms. All coastguards were at this time armed with rifles. The attack was to be carried out by selected men from Clonakilty, Shannonvale and Ardfield companies. The men from Shannonvale and Clonakilty were there on time, but the Ardfield section, which was travelling by boat, were late. They were in the middle of Ring Bay when the attack opened.

Sean O'Donovan and Dan Harte were in charge of the attacking party. The attack opened after midnight when "Flyer" Nyhan and myself entered the station proper where we expected to get the arms and ammunition. We were, however, disappointed as we only got two service rifles and a fairly large supply of ammunition. The remainder of the rifles were kept in the private dwellings of the coastguards and, before we could make any further effort to capture them, the alarm was raised. The garrison sent up Verey lights and, as the station was within two miles of Clonakilty and no roadblocks had been set up, we decided to withdraw.

Towards the end of June 1920, the first batch of British Black and Tans (consisting of three) arrived in Clonakilty. Amongst the party was Constable Murray, who made himself unpopular

by his activities within a short time. About 25th July 1920, he fired at a number of unarmed civilians and it was decided that he should be dealt with at the first available opportunity. About 8.30 p.m. on 27th July, it was reported that he was alone on the Western Road and a party of four obtained revolvers from a dump at O'Donoghue's of McCurtain Hill. The party consisted of "Flyer" Nyhan, Stephen O'Neill, Michael Crowley and myself. We divided up into two sections. I accompanied "Flyer" to the Munster and Leinster Bank corner where we were informed that Murray had proceeded down Kent St. to Rossa St. We just caught up with him as he was entering Fitzgerald's green-grocer shop in Rossa St. We opened fire. He was shot through the head as the result of which he died at 2 a.m. on the morning of July 28th, without regaining consciousness. The other two (Ml. Crowley and Stephen O'Neill) had proceeded out the Western Road in search of Murray, but failed to find him as he had returned to town. Following this incident "Flyer" Nyhan and myself left the town for a couple of days after which we returned to work.

During the last days of August 1920, the garrison at Clonakilty R.I.C. barracks expended a considerable amount of ammunition in repelling an imaginary attack. Although nobody had fired at the barracks or attempted to attack it, the garrison continued to keep up fire for several hours.

About this time, with Jim Hurley and Mick Hayes, I lay in ambush for Inspector O'Connor of the R.I.C. on the railway line between the Convent Bridge and the R.I.C. Barracks. Owing to the sudden appearance of civilians, who were aware of our identity, we were forced to withdraw.

During August 1920, I took part in a house-to-house collection for the Arms Fund. I was accompanied on this job by Jim Hurley. Immediately on the termination of the collection, both of us went on the run. I was moving around the area for

some days and eventually moved into the Bandon Battalion area, near Kilbrittain, where a training camp had been in operation for some days prior to our arrival. This camp was in charge of Tom Barry, newly-appointed Brigade O/C. Training. I was accompanied by Stephen O'Neill. We then returned to our own area.

Some time before 21st November 1920, I got orders to report to a training camp at Clogher, north west of Dunmanway. Other representatives of the battalion who reported at the same time were: Stephen O'Neill, John "Flyer" Nyhan, Jim Sullivan, Knockawaddra, and Denis Sullivan of Cahir, Ardfield. We travelled on foot to Clogher which we reached on the evening of the 21st. Here we met about 30 others drawn from the other battalions in the brigade. We began a course of training which continued throughout the week. About 3 a.m. we moved across country towards Kilmichael which we reached about 8 a.m. This was Sunday, 28th November 1920. During a halt when the column was about three miles from its destination, it was learned that Pat Deasy - a young brother of Liam Deasy (brigade adjutant) - had followed us. Tom Barry, column O/C., ordered him to return home, but on appeal he was allowed to remain with the column. When we reached Kilmichael, the column was divided into a number of sections as follows:-

- a. No. 1 section was in the extreme eastern end of the position. This was in a laneway at the northern side of the road. There was a narrow wall of stones loosely built which jutted out to the road. From this position, the on-coming lorries could be enfiladed. This position was occupied by John "Flyer" Nyhan, Mick O'Herlihy and myself with the column O/C. and Denis O'Brien, Newcestown, and one other.
- b. Section 2 of about 10 riflemen was placed on the slope of a large rock about 10 feet high and about ten yards from the No. 1 post, and north of the road.
- c. No. 3 section of similar strength occupied high ground on the north side of the road at the western entrance to the ambush position. This was about 150 yards from No. 1 section. This section was in charge of Michael McCarthy, Vice O/C., Dunmanway battalion.

- d. Section 4 under Stephen O'Neill and consisting of six riflemen under cover of rocks about 40 yards south of the road.
- e. No. 5 section, which consisted of six riflemen, was north of the road and to the rear of the men in the main position. From their position they could cover the approach to the western end for a distance of about 200 yards.

Scouts were posted to the north of No. 3 section and also about 200 yards south of No. 1 post to advise approach of the enemy from Macroom and to prevent surprise from the Dunmanway area respectively.

All men were in position about 9 a.m. and we remained there without any evidence of enemy activity until approaching 4 p.m. In the meantime, we were supplied with tea and rations by the occupants of a neighbouring farmhouse. About 4 p.m. a sidecar arrived from Dunmanway direction with four men on it armed with rifles. Just as they arrived, the scouts to the north-west signalled the approach of the enemy convoy. The men on the sidecar were ordered to get off the road immediately and they galloped the horse up a laneway to the south. They had no sooner got off the roadway when the leading lorry drove into the position. It was allowed to approach to within about 25 yards of No. 1 position. We (the party in this position) were ordered to open fire on the driver and occupants of the front of the lorry. The lorry came to a halt within 5 yards of us and Tom Barry threw a bomb into the centre of the lorry himself. The men in No. 2 section simultaneously opened fire. By this time, the second lorry had entered the western end of the position and was attacked by the men of No. 3 section. Some of the men of the second lorry got out on the road and took up positions by the fence and started firing back on the men in No. 3 section. We were ordered out on the road - Tom Barry first - and we followed. We got down on our knees and we opened fire on the men that got out of the lorry at the other end (west) of the position. After an exchange of fire lasting

about ten minutes, they were all killed with the exception of one man who jumped into the bog and ran about 50 yards before being shot.

At this stage, the engagement was over and, on a roll call of our men, it was found that we had two fatal casualties - Mick McCarthy and Jim Sullivan - and that one of our men, Pat Deasy, was seriously wounded. All members of the enemy forces, to the number of about 18, had been killed. I was now ordered to go for a horse and cart to remove the casualties, while the other members of the ambush party collected spoils and set fire to enemy transport. The booty from the engagement consisted of 18 rifles and revolvers and a supply of several hundred rounds of ammunition.

We removed the dead and wounded to a farmhouse near Castle-town, Kinneigh, where Pat Deasy died that night. The column went on to Granure where we billeted in an unoccupied cottage for the night and remained there until dusk next evening. We then went to Kilmoylerane. During our stay in Granure, there was considerable enemy activity in the area and on one occasion the column O/C., Tom Barry, ordered us out and got us to line the fences of the acre attached to the cottage in which we were billeted. Enemy forces which were in the vicinity at the time moved off and we did not find it necessary to engage them.

The members of the column at Kilmichael were: Denis Cronin, Bantry; Mick O'Driscoll, Ballineen; Denis O'Sullivan, Ardfield; John Hegarty, Leap; Tim O'Connell, Ahakeera; Tim McCarthy, Durrus; Ned Young, Dunmanway; Dan Hourihan, Ballinacarriga; Pat Donovan, Dunmanway; John O'Sullivan, Kealkil; Mick Herlihy, Union Hall; Stephen O'Neill, Clonakilty; James Murphy (witness), Clonakilty; Paddy O'Brien, Ballineen; Jack Hennessy, Ballineen; M. Domovan, Skibbereen; "Neilus" Cotter, Dunmanway; David Crowley, Ballineen; Jack Roche, Kilbrittain; Jerome O'Hea, Barryroe; Denis O'Brien, Newcestown; Tim Crowley, Ballygurteen; Patrick O'Donovan, Inchafune; James O'Mahoney, Corran; John O'Donovan,

Dunmanway; Sonny Crowley, Dunmanway; Denis O'Neill, Baltimore; John D. O'Sullivan, Caheragh; John Falvey, Upton, Michael O'Donovan, Clogagh; Batty Coughlan, Dunmanway; Michael O'Driscoll, Bantry; Michael McCarthy, Dunmanway (killed); James O'Sullivan, Knockawadra, Clonakilty (killed); Pat Deasy, Bandon (killed); Jerh. Mahoney, Coppeen; Michael McCarthy, Schull; John Lordan, Newcestown; John "Flyer" Nyhan, Clonakilty; Jack Hourihan, Ballineen, and Tom Barry (column O/C.)

The column was moving around the area for about a week and, on 5th December 1920, were in Knockea. From here we moved into ambush position at Gaggin on the morning of December 6th. The column was now in charge of Charlie Hurley, Brigade O/C. In the position at Gaggin the column was divided into four sections which were extended over a distance of about 200 yards. Three sections were south of the road and one section - about the centre of the main position - was north of the road. The ambush was set to cope with a convoy of three lorries from Bandon to Clonakilty or vice versa. All sections were in position about 7.30 a.m. and all were armed with rifles.

About 2.30 p.m. one lorry arrived from Clonakilty. It was allowed to pass into the centre of the position. As it was coming into the centre of the ambush, a shot was accidentally discharged. The lorry accelerated and got outside the position before the attack could develop. About 400 yards on the eastern side of the position the lorry halted, the occupants dismounted and moved into the fields in an endeavour to out-flank the column. The driver of the lorry continued on to Bandon to summon reinforcements. The enemy flanking party was now engaged by the section of the column at the eastern end of the position. During the course of this exchange of fire, reinforcements arrived from Bandon. The column was now withdrawn, the section north of the road having rejoined the main body on the southern side of the road. The enemy reinforcements moved into the position

evacuated by our column. Moving in, they opened fire, and one of our men, who had been detailed to prevent the occupants of an adjoining house from leaving, was killed. He was Michael McLean. We now withdrew to Ardacrow in the Kilbrittain area. The column continued to move around the area until the approach of Christmas, when we were demobbed and arms dumped in the Clonakilty area. At Gaggin, I was in position with Charlie Hurley, "Flyer" Nyhan and Mick Herlihy immediately inside the fence at the western end of the ambush position south of the road.

The column reassembled in the Kilmeen area about mid-January 1921. The strength was about 70. All were armed with rifles. We were moving around the area for a couple of days and at the same time doing some training. The column was now divided into seven sections with about 10 in each. The section commanders were, as far as I can recollect: Denis Lordan, Pete Kearney, Mick Crowley, Jack Corkery, Tommie Kelleher, Christy O'Connell, John Lordan. I was a member of Pete Kearney's section. Other members of this sections were: Dr. Eugene Callanan ("Nudge"), Willie and Bob Hales, and Pat Donovan.

On the morning of 22nd January 1921, we moved into ambush positions at Mawbeg on the Bandon/Ballineen road. On the previous night a spy - Wm. Dwyer - had been captured. He was executed on the morning of the 22nd and his body - labelled to show that he had been executed as a spy - was left on the roadside in the vicinity of Mawbeg. It was hoped that the enemy forces in Bandon would send out a party to collect the body and this would then be ambushed.

The main body of the column were in position north of the road behind the roadside fence. We were extended over a distance of about 250 yards. A small party were in position south of the road to deal with any enemy force which might be

forced to take cover at that side. We remained in the position until darkness set in, but there was no appearance by the enemy. The column then withdrew to billets.

As one section of the column was moving into their billets they were met by the owner, who took them to be members of the British forces. He complained of the activities of the I.R.A. in the area and he gave the names of some of the local leaders. He agreed, on request, to meet the supposed enemy officers in Bandon later in the week with more information. The officer in charge of the I.R.A. unit (Denis Jordan) now revealed his identity. The enemy agent (Bradfield) was arrested on the spot. He was tried later that night and executed.

Next morning at dawn, the column moved to Laragh, within about three miles of Bandon, where we again took up positions. The body of the spy, Bradfield, was left on the roadside in the neighbourhood in the hope that the enemy would come out to investigate. Although we remained in the position until approaching darkness, the wait was in vain and no enemy appeared. We now withdrew to nearby billets for food and, during the night, we crossed the Bandon river at Baxter's Bridge. We reached our billets in Crossmahon about 4 a.m. Later that evening, 23rd January 1921, we were informed that we were to move into Bandon to attack a curfew patrol there that night.

The column was now divided into a number of sections under (1) the Brigade O/C. Charlie Hurley; (2) The Brigade Adjutant, Liam Deasy, and (3) The O/C. Laragh Company, Frank Hurley. Each of these sections numbered about 10 men and were to act as covering parties on the enemy posts in the town to prevent any break-out by the enemy when the main body of the column attacked the patrol.

The main body of the column under Tom Barry moved into the centre of town and took up positions in doorways in Shannon St. and Castle St. A section of ten men also occupied a position

on the railway bridge which crossed Shannon St. I was one of a party in position at the Cork end of Shannon St., where we had erected a barricade with bags of flour taken from a shop nearby. All sections were in position about 11 p.m. and, although we remained until 3 a.m., the enemy patrol did not come out. A few shots were now fired at all enemy posts to which there was an immediate reply, but no member of the enemy garrisons made their appearance on the streets of the town. All sections were now ordered to withdraw. With the exception of the brigade O/Cs. - Charlie Hurley section - all units reported to the meeting place on time. Later, the missing section arrived, but one man - Dan O'Reilly, Kilbrittain Coy. - was missing. It was later ascertained that O'Reilly had been killed. The column now marched to Collier's Quay where we crossed the Bandon river and reached billets north of the river about 6.30 a.m.

We remained in billets that day and, on the following night, we moved to ^{within} ~~whin~~ a couple of miles of Innishannon to carry out an attack on the R.I.C. barracks there. The column was now divided into sections, and about 20 men under the Brigade Vice O/C. - Ted Sullivan - were sent to hold the Brinny road leading from Bandon. We then moved in close to Innishannon village where two sections of ten men each were sent (1) to hold the main Cork/Innishannon road, and (2) the main Bandon/Innishannon road. The remainder of the column moved into the village. With two or three others, I escorted four men carrying a mine to the door of the barrack. The mine was laid against the door and we withdrew to a party covering the eastern side of the building who were waiting to rush the door should a breach be made by the mine. The mine failed to explode and the garrison, having apparently heard the noise when the mine was laid against the door, threw a number of bombs through loopholes which they had made in the wall of the barrack. Fire was now opened by all

our covering sections on the building but, as there was no hope of capturing the post in the absence of a successful mine explosion, all sections - with the exception of four snipers who were to continue shooting at intervals - were ordered to withdraw.

The snipers kept the garrison under the impression that the attack was still on while the remainder of the party moved to Brinny to support the ambushing section already there in the event of reinforcements coming to the aid of the garrison at Innishannon. There was no appearance by the enemy, so the column was withdrawn to billets in the Crowhill area. We now rested through the day and moved that night to Newcestown. While here, two sections of the column - about ten men in each - went into Bandon to harass the enemy garrisons there. They fired a few shots at each post and then withdrew.

The strength of the column was now reduced to about 40. The men from the western battalions (Bantry, Castletownbere and Schull) returned to their home areas. The remainder of the column, under Tom Barry, moved into Clonakilty battalion area. We were in the Ahiohill district on the night of 31st January 1921, when the column O/C. asked Dan Corcoran and myself to accompany him to the house of Thomas Bradfield, Desertserges. We were driven there in a horse and trap by Tim Coffey, Breaghanna, Enniskeane. Tom Barry approached the house and asked the maid whether Mr. Bradfield was at home. She said that he was out in the fields. Dan Corcoran accompanied the maid to the field to call Bradfield and to inform him that the officer wanted him. We were all wearing Sam Browne belts outside our trench coats and Bradfield assumed that we were members of the British forces. When Bradfield came in he welcomed us and invited us into the sitting-room where he gave us some refreshments. He sat down and began to talk to Tom Barry about the activities of the I.R.A. in the area, giving a number of names

of prominent officers. At this stage I had taken up position at the front door and Dan Corcoran was likewise at the back door. When Bradfield had given sufficient information, Tom Barry disclosed his identity and Bradfield was certainly shocked. We immediately placed him under arrest and removed him on foot to Ahiohill area. He was tried that night and when we were moving from Ahiohill to Burgatia House on the night of 1st Feb. 1921, Bradfield was executed. His body was labelled as that of a spy and was left on the roadside.

We travelled by horse and trap to Cahermore Cross and then walked the remainder of the journey - about one mile - to Burgatia House. This house was occupied by a loyalist family named Kingston. It was about one mile from the R.I.C. barracks at Rosscarbery which we were to attack the following night. We arrived at Burgatia about 3 a.m. and placed the members of the household under arrest. Sentries were now posted, a meal was prepared and, having eaten, we settled down to rest for the remainder of the night.

On the following morning, the owner of the house - Kingston was tried on the charge of carrying messages to the enemy. He admitted doing so, but pleaded that it was because he wished to save the lives of the soldiers and to avoid ambushes. He was found guilty, but was not sentenced to death. He was ordered, instead, to leave the country and his property was confiscated.

The trial of Kingston had only been completed when Jack Corkery reported the approach of the postman who had been held up by the sentries. He was then brought into the house and questioned. He was an ex-British soldier. He said he was not opposed to the I.R.A. and he promised that, if released, he would not tell anyone that we were occupying Burgatia House. He swore an oath on the Bible that he would not disclose our presence to anyone for at least 24 hours. On giving this undertaking he was released and allowed to proceed on his rounds. It was now about 12.30 p.m.

There was nothing strange until about 4 p.m. when the sentries reported that Black and Tans carrying rifles were moving around in front of the house and that lorries of military were in the district. We were all instructed to take up defence positions inside the house and in the yard surrounding it. With the majority of the column, I was in position behind the wall of the yard. We remained there for some time and the encircling enemy forces opened fire on the house. We did not reply to this fire.

At this stage, I was instructed by the column O/C. (Tom Barry) to take a section of eight men and to push east to the Ownahincha Road and to cross the main Clonakilty/Rosscarbery road where I was to occupy a position north of this road and attack the enemy force from the rear. Another section was ordered to hold the Ownahincha road and provide an escape route to the east. These two sections were unable to move to take up their new positions until we had allowed the advancing enemy forces to approach quite close to our position in the yard at Burgatia House, when a sudden burst of fire from our riflemen sent the enemy rushing away for cover. They had been taken completely by surprise by our fire. While they were dashing for cover I moved with my section to the Ownahincha road. Before we reached the road we came under fire from an enemy party on the main road to the north and one of my men - Brennan - was wounded in the leg. As we were only a short distance from the main body, we sent the wounded man back to the base at Burgatia House and continued on our way to carry out our assignment. We crossed the Ownahincha Road and, turning north, succeeded in crossing the main Clonakilty-Rosscarbery road and getting to the rear of the enemy position. We now opened fire on the enemy from a new position and they replied.

The enemy were now confused by the new turn of events and, while they were engaged by my section, the main body of the

column in Burgatia House succeeded in crossing the Ownahincha Road and withdrawing to the east. They took the wounded member of my section - Brennan - with them. I continued to engage the enemy for about half an hour and I then withdrew with my men into Reenascreena area. Amongst the men who were in my section on this occasion were: Tom McCarthy, Schull; Dan Nugent, Clonakilty; Dan Sullivan, Ardfield, and, I think, Eugene and Dan Sweeney. At this stage the column had withdrawn to Kilbree and we rejoined it there next night.

On the morning of 4th February 1921, I was sent, in company with Jim Hurley, O/C. Clonakilty Battalion, to intercept the postman who had called to Burgatia House on the 2nd and to execute him for having given information to the enemy. We had learned that he had called to the R.I.C. barracks and informed the garrison that the column were in Burgatia House. We proceeded to Kilruavane Bridge where we waited for our man, but he did not turn up. He had been taken in by the British and transferred to England. We reported back to the column which was now in Reenascreena.

We were moving around the area for a couple of days as large enemy forces were very active in the district. On the evening of 9th February we were in the vicinity of Skibbereen, when we were informed that it was proposed to invade the town that night. The main body of the column - to the number of about 40 - took up ambush position about a half mile outside the town on the Drimoleague road. The remainder of the column - about a dozen - under the column O/C. (Tom Barry) moved into town to try to engage an enemy patrol. I was a member of this party. We moved into Skibbereen to within 100 yards of the enemy barracks about 9 p.m., but failed to make contact with any enemy patrol. We remained in the town for about two hours and fired a few shots at the enemy post but, as no enemy forces put in an appearance, we withdrew.

During our visit, we rounded up several civilians including members of Skibbereen Urban Council and some soldiers. One of the members of the Council who had been rounded up was ordered to get up on a porter barrel and sing "The Soldier's Song". He was known to be in sympathy with the garrison following in Skibbereen and it was thought that this was a very fitting penalty to impose in his case. When we left the town to rejoin the ambush party on the Drimoleague road, we took three enemy soldiers with us. They were taken to Caheragh where they were detained until next day. They were well-treated by our forces and, having had a good few drinks, they returned to Skibbereen next day in "singing" form.

The column now moved to billets and, within a day or two, were in the neighbourhood of Drimoleague where arrangements had been made to attack the R.I.C. post there. The position was surveyed by the column O/C. (Tom Barry) and, about midnight on 12th February 1921, we marched into Drimoleague and took up positions at the front and rear of the barracks. A large mine was taken into the village by a party of six men and was laid on the barbed wire entanglements surrounding the barrack. When the mine was exploded it did some damage to a wall and door of the building, but did not break the wall. In the absence of a successful explosion there was no possibility of taking the building and, after a few rounds had been fired, the covering parties in the front and rear were ordered to withdraw. We now moved to Castledonovan area where we billeted that night.

We moved around the area for several days at this stage and, on the evening of 23rd February, we were in the Bandon area. The strength of the column was about 40. It was divided into three sections - two of seven each and the main body. The two small sections were to enter the town from the Dunmanway road about 8.30 p.m. The main body was to enter

from the Cork Road. The duty of the latter section was to attack the expected enemy curfew-patrol at the junction of North Main St. and Bandon Bridge. I was a member of this party. The O/C. (Tom Barry) left us on Cork Road about 8.30 p.m. and moved into the North Main St. to ascertain the whereabouts of the enemy patrol. He was accompanied by Mick Crowley. When they had been gone for a short time, I moved to the junction of North Main St. and Watergate St., close to the Allen Institute with about ten others. As we reached the junction we saw four or five Black and Tans standing at the corner of North Main St. They looked in our direction and, as we were dressed in trench-coats with bandoliers on the outside, they evidently took us to be members of their own forces. Suddenly, there was a burst of revolver fire and the enemy party attempted to withdraw up North Main St. towards their barracks. Tom Barry, who had engaged in the shooting match, pursued the retreating figures. We were unaware that Tom Barry had gone up North Main St. and our party opened fire on the retreating enemy. At this stage two of the enemy had been killed or wounded. We were still shooting up the North Main St. when there was a shout from Tom Barry. We then realised that he was in our line of fire and we stopped shooting. Tom Barry now made his appearance from North Main St. and joined us in the vicinity of the Allen Institute. We then learned that there were only five "Tans" involved and that Tom Barry had chased one of them into the home of one of our intelligence agents where he had shot the "Tan".

We now withdrew to the top of Cork Road and waited for about $1\frac{1}{2}$ hours in the hope that the enemy would follow us, but they did not appear. When we reached billets in Tinkers Cross area we made contact with the two small sections which had engaged the garrisons of the enemy posts while our engagement was taking place in North Main St. They informed us that they

had shot two dead and wounded two others. They had also taken two naval officers of the Bandon garrison as prisoners. These men were later released and conveyed a message to the O/C. of the British troops in Bandon informing him that reprisals would be taken for any outrages committed by his troops. After the release of the naval men the column retired to billets in the Newcestown area.

The column was now disbanded for a short time and the members moved into their home battalion areas. On March 1st, 1921, accompanied by Jim Hurley, Battalion O/C., and Tim Donoghue, Vice O/C., I went into Rosscarbery to attack a patrol of R.I.C. We were standing at the junction of Tan Yard Lane and the Square in Rosscarbery about 9 p.m. when we saw about four Tans in uniform. We opened fire on the party and killed one - Constable Brock. Suddenly, shooting broke out behind us and we found that we were under fire from two Tans who had passed just as we took up our positions and whom we thought were civilians. I was wounded in the right hand in the crossfire. We replied to the fire of our ambushers and then withdrew. We returned to Cahermore Cross and then on to Bealad where we billeted for the night.

The column reassembled about the middle of March and on the 16th (evening) was in the vicinity of Shippool. The strength of the column was now about 100 and it was divided into seven sections with 14 men in each. The section commanders were: Sean Hales, John Lordan, Denis Lordan, Mick Crowley, Tom Kelleher, Pete Kearney and Christie O'Connell. The following brigade officers were also present: Liam Deasy, adjutant; Tadhg Sullivan, Q.M.; Dr. Connie Lucey, M.O.; Dr. Eugene (Nudge) Callanan, Asst. M.O.; and the O/C., Tom Barry, who was brigade training officer.

On the morning of 17th March, about 6.30 a.m., we moved into position at Shippool on the Innishannon/Kinsale road.

It was expected that a large enemy convoy would pass through the position from Kinsale. During the course of the day the column was under cover of the roadside wall and were extended over about 300 yards. I was a member of Pete Kearney's section and we were north of the road about the centre of the position. Although we remained in position all day, the expected enemy convoy did not arrive and we withdrew to billets near Innishannon at dusk.

We remained in this area next day and that night we crossed the two Cork/Bandon roads to Ballyhandle, where we arrived about 1 p.m. We were now billeted in a number of houses in the area. My section, of which Sean Hales was in charge, was billeted in Harrold's farmhouse, and the neighbouring house of Beasley's was occupied by Christie O'Connell's section. All was quiet until about 2.30 a.m. when instructions were received that all sections should report to column headquarters which was in O'Leary's. The column assembled in O'Leary's about 3 a.m. and were addressed by the column O/C. who told us that large enemy forces were operating in the area and he outlined a plan of attack. The column moved up to Crossbarry about 3.30 a.m. and positions were occupied along the old Bandon Road west of Crossbarry village. About 4.30 a.m. four sections were extended behind the roadside fence and Harrold's and Beasley's farmyards for a distance of about 300 yards. Denis Jordan's section held the position on the eastern flank. Christie O'Connell's was in a similar position on the western flank, while Tom Kelleher's section was at the rear of the main position.

All was quiet until about 8 a.m. when the leading ^{lorry} party of a large enemy convoy drove into the western end of the ambush position. The lorry halted as it entered the position. The occupants jumped out and dashed east ~~of~~ the road towards the centre of the ambush position. Fire was opened by the sections on the road front and a number of this party were killed.

The remainder jumped over the fences on the southern side of the road and went off across the country.

At this stage the men of the third section at the western end of the ambush position were ordered to the roadway and fired some rounds at the retreating enemy forces. While these men were on the road, firing broke out on the eastern flank where the position was held by Denis Lordan's section. This section was now reinforced by a number of men from Pete Kearney's section and, after a short interchange of fire, the enemy withdrew.

The next phase occurred when firing broke out to the rear of the main position and I was ordered by the brigade adjutant (Liam Deasy) to take a number of men to support Tom Kelleher's section in this area. I moved off with about 10 men and joined Kelleher in the Castle Field where, after an engagement lasting about 10 minutes, the enemy withdrew. We remained in this position until all the other sections had withdrawn in a north-westerly direction, when we joined the main body at Crosspound. We now learned that three of our men - Peter Monahan, Jerry O'Leary and Con Daly - had been killed and that Dan Corcoran and Jim Crowley had been seriously wounded. These were our only casualties, but the enemy must have suffered heavily.

The column now left Crosspound and marched across country towards Rearour and on to Gurraneigh, which was reached just before dark. This was a distance of about 20 miles. During the journey to Gurraneigh, small enemy parties were observed in the distance on a couple of occasions and were fired on by our flankers. No effort was, however, made by them to close with the column.

We were now in Gurraneigh and it was here we learned that Charlie Hurley, Brigade O/C., had been killed in an attempt to fight his way out of his billet at Forde's of Ballymurphy when it was surrounded by a strong enemy raiding party, about

6 a.m. on the morning of 19th March. We also learned that his body had been obtained from the British military in Bandon by some members of the Cumann na mBan from Kilbrittain and that it had been taken to the church at Clogagh. It was decided to give the brigade O/C. a military funeral, and the column was paraded at dusk on the evening of 20th March and we set off for Clogagh. We marched through the night to Clogagh which we reached about 2 a.m. on 21st March. Sentries were posted, the priest was called and we went into the church to say a prayer for our dead comrade. After a few minutes we again formed up outside the church and the coffin containing the body of our O/C. was removed and laid in the grave. Three volleys were fired over the grave and a tribute paid by the column O/C. to our dead comrade. At 3.30 we marched away to Ahiohill where we billeted.

On the morning of 23rd March, we took up positions on the railway line, six miles from Clonakilty, to attack a train on which enemy troops were expected to travel from Clonakilty to Skibbereen. The troops did not travel and no action took place. We billeted that night in Kilmeen company area.

About this time, John Lordan and myself were detached from the column and were instructed to proceed to Innishannon to shoot two enemy agents who resided in the area. These agents were Frederick C. Stenning and Lt.-Col. Peacock. We proceeded to Newcestown and on to Coolmoreen, where we stayed on the night of 29th March. On the following night, accompanied by Jeremiah Desmond of Newcestown, we proceeded to Stenning's house which was situated on the street in Innishannon village. Desmond was sent to the back of the house to prevent our man from escaping while the two of us - John Lordan and myself - went to the front door and remained there for some time in order to give Desmond a chance of getting in at the back. While we were there, Stenning opened the front door and came out. When he saw us

he moved back and tried to close the door, but we did not allow him to do so, by placing a foot inside the door. Next thing he opened fire on us and then ran into the hallway where we shot him. We then left and went to Peacock's, which was west of the village and on high ground overlooking the Bandon river. Here, we learned that Peacock was not at home. We then went back to Newcestown where we remained that night and rejoined the column next night.

About the first week in May, Tom Lane, Jim Lane and myself came into Clonakilty to search for any Tans that might be moving around the town. We searched a number of publichouses and got some scouts to search others. We were eventually informed that there were three Tans in Kingston's publichouse in McCurtain Hill, and two in a publichouse next door. Tom Lane was left to cover the publichouse next door while Jim and I moved to Kingston's where I threw a bomb into the shop. The bomb blew out all the glass in the front of the shop, killed one of the Tans and seriously wounded another. I was struck in the buttock by a splinter of the bomb and seriously wounded. We then retreated via Astna St. and Clarke St. up the old Hospital Hill to Pat White's of Clogheen where we had my wound temporarily attended to. We drove in a horse and trap supplied by Mr. White to Coughlan's of Ardfield and, without resting, we carried on to Sullivan's of Knockawaddra. Next day, we attended a Battalion Council meeting at Sam's Cross and it was there decided to put me up in John Daly's at the top of Froe, where I was attended by Dr. Walsh of Rosscarbery. I was laid up until early in June.

When I was again fit to travel, I proceeded to Whelton's of Dunowen where I met Jim Lane. We came back to Peter Donovan's of Tulligee on a Saturday night early in June. On Sunday morning, we went on to Sam's Cross where we procured a horse which was intended for the column commander, Tom Barry. We proceeded to Appleby's of Carrigroe where we procured a second

horse and we both rode into Rosscarbery that evening. We stabled our horses at Dinny Donovan's and went into Mrs. Regan's publichouse. We soon learned from the young lady of the house that the town was occupied by Auxiliaries. We unsuccessfully endeavoured to get out at the back of the publichouse as all the roads were held by the enemy. We went back into the publichouse yard and over the wall into the next one where we climbed a ladder which was situated in an obscure corner of the yard and into a loft. We stayed there until daybreak and, in the meantime, the Auxiliaries made two raids on the house. This loft had no connection with any house and could only be reached by the ladder. After the two raids, things seemed to calm down.

On Monday, about 1 p.m., the owner of the loft approached us and invited us into her home to sleep for a few hours while things were quiet. When we entered the room where we were to sleep we could see the Auxiliaries on the street outside and on the hills surrounding the town. We were in bed about two hours when the owner informed us that the Auxiliaries had once again visited the house and that they must have had some suspicion that we were there. She suggested that it would be better for us to leave. The owner guided us out. We then crossed the road and entered, through a door, a potato garden at the opposite side. The stalks were high and we lay down between the ridges. At one stage an Auxiliary opened the door of the garden, plucked a flower by the wall and went back out again. While the Auxiliary was in the garden I had him covered in case he spotted us, in which event I would have had no option but to shoot him. We remained lying between the ridges all night on Monday night. On Tuesday before dawn, when we no longer heard the challenge of sentries, we decided to endeavour to escape from the town. We got out over the wall from the garden and crossed two fields down to the Clonakilty/Skibbereen road. We examined our position from behind a bush and we crossed into

a small bit of slobland. We then made our way south towards Mill Cove. Day was then breaking and we saw light in a small cottage. We knocked at the door and the occupant opened immediately and offered us refreshments. He procured a boat for us and rowed it to a little known cove on the shore. We were guided there by Jim Hayes and Pat Hayes. We entered the boat and they both rowed us across to Ballycuain just inside the Galley Head. We said goodbye to our helpers and proceeded to Whelton's of Dunowen.

That night, an order came to proceed to Kilmoylerane as the column was again being mobilised.. An ambush was to take place on the train travelling from Clonakilty to Clonakilty Junction. It was expected that a large party of R.I.C. and Black and Tans would be travelling to the Quarter Sessions Court at Skibbereen. The R.I.C., however, travelled by lorry rather than by train and the ambush did not take place.

Late in June 1921, Jim Hurley (Battalion O/C.), Tim Donoghue, (Vice O/C) and I went to Rosscarbery to execute a spy named Frank O'Donoghue. This man had previously been working for Miss Whitley whose house had been burned after the attack on Burgatia House because of the part played by her in conveying information to the enemy regarding our occupation of Burgatia.

The battalion staff had obtained definite information that this man had informed the Auxiliaries of the whereabouts of Jim Lane and myself on the occasion when we had to spend a day and a night in the potato garden. We had met him on that occasion in Regan's publichouse and, when he left, it appears that he told the enemy of our presence in Rosscarbery. When we called to his house we were informed that he was in bed. We asked to see him in connection with the Rosscarbery Band and he came down to us. After a severe cross-examination, he admitted that he had informed the enemy of the whereabouts of Jim Lane and myself on the night mentioned above.

We procured a priest to hear his confession and then executed him.

The column was now split into two sections. One section was detailed to burn the workhouse at Bandon, and the other to burn the workhouse in Skibbereen. I was with the party detailed to go to Skibbereen. We carried out this operation which was not of much interest and returned to Kilmeen where we met the section returning from Bandon.

On 28th June, the column was billeted between Tullig and Rosscarbery when scouts informed us that Rosscarbery had been reoccupied by 150 Auxiliaries. The column at this stage numbered 33, and it was decided to attack the Auxiliaries by dividing the column into three sections of eleven each. One section was to approach from the west, while the other two were to come down Caim Hill and enter the Square in Rosscarbery from the east. I was a member of one of the latter sections. The western section was engaged by an enemy patrol on the western side of the town. This engagement gave warning to the remaining Auxiliaries occupying the town who immediately took cover and, while we continued to fire on them for about twenty minutes - they having occupied the houses - there was no possibility of capturing all the positions, and it was decided to withdraw. The enemy also withdrew from the town after this attack.

About a week prior to the Truce, Major Percival initiated a pincers movement, making a half-circle from Ring, Bandon, Newcestown, Ballineen, Reenascreena and Rosscarbery. He moved his line of troops to the sea, and a few of us were driven before this body down to the cliffs at Dunnycove in the Ardfield district. We had also the use of a destroyer with searchlights to be used as spotters from the sea. After one night in the cliffs, Jim Lane, Tom Lane and I decided to endeavour to break through. We left the cave about 9 p.m. and, after travelling

three or four fields, we saw a large party of military in the next field to us. We changed our route and went eastwards towards Dunnycove coastguard station, and then travelled west, crossed up through the townland of Ballyva on to Greenfield, up through Camus to Carrigroe, down to Lisavaird and on to Sam's Cross. Part of Percival's column was still operating in this area. We moved to Bealad where, on the following morning, we commandeered a horse and trap and proceeded to White's of Carrhuvouler, which was battalion headquarters.

There was no further action up to the Truce.

My rank at the Truce was: Section Commander, Flying Column, Cork III Brigade.

The strength of the section varied from 10 to 30 men as occasion demanded.

I had also been O/C. Clonakilty Company, Clonakilty Battalion, Cork III Brigade.

Signed: James Murphy

Date: 4/10/54

Witness: P. L. Donnell

