ORIGINAL

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 1693.

Witness

John Kenny,
106 Tyrconnell Park,
Inchicore,
Dublin.

Identity.

Quartermaster, Cyclist Company, 1st Battalion,
Dublin Brigade.

Subject.

F. Company, 1st Battalion, Dublin Brigade,

I.R.A. 1913-1921.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil.

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ORIGINAL

STATEMENT BY JOHN KENNY,

108, Tyrconnell Park, Inchicore, Dublin.

I was born in the City of Dublin on 5th March, 1897. My parents had strong national tendencies, especially my mother, who regarded the English as responsible for the fall of man. Early in 1912, my brother, Michael, and I joined the Irish National Guards, an off-shoot of Fianna Éireann with rooms then in Blackhall Place.

Among the members of the 'Guards' at one period or another who took part in the national struggle for independence were: Bob, George and Bill Oman, Tom (now a priest) and Eddie Donohoe, Joe and Mattie Gahan, Jack Bannon, Jack Murphy, Dick Gibson, John Conway, Jim and Dick Seville, Paddy Lalor, Alex. Thompson, Frank Bolster, Seán Howard (who was killed in action in 1916), Tommy Bryan (who was executed by the British with five others in Mountjoy Jail on 14th March, 1921), Hugh Early, Paddy Houlihan, afterwards Comdt. 1st Battalion, Dublin Brigade, Seán Kennedy, the two Mason brothers, Walter Williams, Ted Tuite, Seán (Gurra) Byrne, Mattie Kelly, my younger brother, Michael, and myself.

Among the girls I remember were: Alice and Katy Byrne, May and Kathleen Kelly, May Murray, May Gahan, May Crimmins, Mary and Nellie Walker, Nellie Belton, Bridie and Rita McMahon, and Eileen Dempsey.

It was from Blackhall Place that we marched to Bodenstown churchyard to honour the memory of Wolfe Tone. We marched openly through the streets of Dublin in uniform, with dummy rifles, to which were affixed French bayonets, carried at the 'slope' in true military fashion, and dragging a hand-truck behind us in which our tent and other supplies

were stored.

I remember that we met with a company of British soldiers who were marching to Dublin, and our leader, a man named Finlay, halted our march, as did also the British commander. Both men approached each other and exchanged greetings, and the British officer appeared highly interested in our exploit. We duly arrived at Sallins on time, paid our respects at the grave of Wolfe Tone and were transported back to Dublin that night. There were no incidents.

In 1913 we moved to rooms in York St., and later, at the inaugural meeting of the Irish Volunteers in the Rotunda Rooms, most of us attended and joined up. Although there were many speakers on that occasion, I can only remember Jim Larkin and Tom Kettle, which is passing strange in the light of later events.

Our rooms in York St. were often visited by The O'Rahilly, Thos. McDonagh, Seán McDermott, and Seán Milroy, who lectured to us and joined in our debates. The O'Rahilly enlisted our services to help to train 'B' Company, 3rd Battalion, for we were all well drilled in the use of firearms and side arms, while some of us were expert semaphore signallers and were familiar with the 'dumb alphabet'.

We later moved our rooms, for the last time, to North Great Georges St. Jack Bannon, Dick Gibson, John Conway, Dick Seville, Walter Williams, Mattie Kelly, my brother and I joined 'F' Company, 1st Battalion, where we made acquaintance with many afterwards noted figures, among whom were: Pierce Beasley, Dermot Hegarty, Fionán Lynch, Con Collins, Tom Byrne, the Shouldice brothers, the O'Reilly brothers (whose father was a Fenian), Johnny O'Connor,

Paddy Houlihan, and Tom Sheridan, to mention only a few.

My parents then lived at 16, Belvedere Avenue, North Circular Road, while Johnny O'Connor lived around the corner in Sherrard St., and Mattie Kelly in Rutland St. Mattie and I became close friends and visited each other's parents' houses constantly and often, so that I got to know his mother, sister and brothers, with the exception of Seán T., who was seldom there, and another older brother whom I never met. Mick Kelly and his pal Mick Flanagan, R.I.P., were older than Mattie and I, and as they also belonged to another company, we did not see much of them outside the house.

On Easter Sunday morning, 1916, I called for Mattie on the way to join the parade at Parnell Square. He asked me to wait as there was an important meeting in the house and there might be some despatches to be delivered. When we left the house later, Mattie was bearing despatches which he handed to the officer in command of the parade at Parnell Square. I think the officer was Comdt. Eamon de Valera. Shortly afterwards the parade was dismissed and many thousands of armed Volunteers were dispersed.

Mattie and I wended our way towards our association rooms in North Great Georges St., where we were joined by other disappointed chaps. We planned an outing for the next day and duly gathered together, girls and boys, early the following morning, Easter Monday, 1916. When we were about to set off, we were served with mobilisation orders by Paddy Byrne of Richmond St., but we decided to ignore the order and carry out our plans, for we were still sore about the fiasco of the previous day. When we reached Harcourt St. railway station, it was in the control of a

detachment of the Citizen Army, I think it was, so we pushed on towards Portobello, intending to board a tram-car for Rathfarnham. However, when we saw a company of British soldiers coming towards us at the 'double' and firing shots as they came, we knew that the Day had dawned, so we hurriedly conferred together and decided to get the girls safely home and make for home ourselves to get our guns, for most of us had German Mauser rifles since 1914. The Howth gun, as it was better known - on account of the fact that it was at Howth in 1914 that the guns were landed - was a very accurate and deadly weapon. Although it was very heavy, it had a kick like a mule and only fired one bullet before having to be reloaded.

It was late when my brother and I succeeded in reaching home, and we slept at home that night. Early the next morning, we set out, having said good-bye to the rest of the family. My father showed emotion, but my mother was calm and controlled. She gave us her blessing, told us to fight well, and added: "Remember that your deaths are ordained by God and not by the English". We met Jim Seville or Dick Gibson, I forget which, and my brother went off with him, while I called for Mattie Kelly as we had arranged the previous night. When I reached Kelly's house, Mattie was waiting for me. We were immediately joined by Seán T., who was taking a tricolour flag to the G.P.O., so I went with them and witnessed Seán T. Ó Ceallaigh handing in the flag through the window of the G.P.O. We were not admitted, and as Mattie went off with his brother I made my way to an outpost I had heard of at Annesley Bridge, Fairview.

There I was welcomed by Vincent Poole, who was in command, and there I met my brother, Jim Seville, Dick Gibson, and one or two others I knew. Later that evening,

we were ordered to evacuate that post and fall back to the G.P.O., where we were expected and duly admitted. There I met my old chief, The O'Rahilly, who greeted me and instructed me to stay convenient to his call. On Wednesday morning, he detailed me to go out and contact all adjacent posts, with orders for their commanders to fall back to the G.P.O. John Conway asked and was given permission to accompany me.

The first outpost we contacted was the Henry St. Warehouse, now Roches Stores, and we turned into Little Denmark St. where the side entrance was situated. We found the doors heavily barricaded on the inside, and while we were making ineffective attempts to force them open, we received welcome and unexpected aid from a stout, elderly man who emerged from a house opposite and crossed over the road to us. He added his not inconsiderable weight to ours and between us we finally succeeded in breaking through. Just as the doors gave way, our friend was shot dead. I don't know his name, although he was a familiar figure in the city at the head of either St. James's or the National Foresters' Brass and Reed Band, but his name should be enrolled on the roll of honour of his country. We stepped gingerly over his dead body and entered the Warehouse, to be greeted by the sight of a fully uniformed figure of a Volunteer with the markings of a Section Leader, lying in an apparently dazed state just inside the doors. I left John Conway to look after him and made my way upstairs to the roof, where I contacted the remainder of the 'garrison' in the person of a young fellow about 16 years old who was calmly surveying his surroundings, a rifle trailing in his right hand. We went down, collected our Section Leader and made our way to the next outpost, which was only across the street in Liffey St.

While we were hammering on the door, a party of Volunteers under the command of Tom Byrne and Seán Milroy appeared, coming from the direction of Capel St., thus saving me the trouble of contacting them later. We were all admitted to the publichouse which contained the outpost, and found the commander, apparently a Northerner, busily engaged frying sausages. I gave him The O'Rahilly's orders, which he acknowledged without relinquishing the frying-pan, which he canted in the air to turn the sausages. He asked us to relieve his men while they ate and, although we were hungry ourselves, we agreed to do so.

Tom Byrne's party had taken two British soldiers as prisoners, who professed, as Irishmen, to be too patriotic to bear arms against us. Both wore the insignia of riflemen and said they had had a couple of years active service in France, but when we gave them their rifles and posted them at the exposed windows, we quickly got their measure and promptly relieved them.

Later, we all gathered in an adjacent dairy yard and Tom Byrne proposed to take the party back to the G.P.O. while I remained behind for about ten minutes to keep an eye on their retreat. The plan was to go direct, over and through walls and houses, but before they went Tom Byrne took a few men and searched the outhouses, etc. of the dairy yard to ensure that the place was empty. They finally left and I walked up and down, keeping my eyes on the gate. After a while, I became conscious of the presence of watchers, and looking upwards I saw two women standing at the top of the ladder leading to a loft or barn. One was large and stout, the other, standing behind and bearing a large crucifix aloft in her hands, was young and slender. I called to them twice in what I thought was a reassuring voice, but received

no answer except that they both turned and disappeared into the loft. Many months later, I met Tom Byrne and told him of my experience, but he told me that I must have been dreaming. I don't think so, but no matter.

To resume my narrative, when I got back to the G.P.O. I reported to The O'Rahilly, who ordered me to get some sleep, which I badly needed. When I awoke, the G.P.O. was in flames and everything was being prepared for the evacuation. Our small forces were duly marshalled and lined up around the corner in Mary St. There was a certain amount of milling and fidgeting until the calm voice of Joseph Mary Plunkett recalled us to ourselves and we grinned shamefacedly at each other and calmed down. Our leaders were great men. They calmed and steadied us, they encouraged us and laughed with us, so that our nerves were soothed and our hearts inflamed with determination not to show the white feather. After a short consultation between our leaders, The O'Rahilly shook hands with them all and moved to the front of our lines. He asked for twenty volunteers to lead the attack. Everyone surged towards him. He smiled and ordered the first twenty, of which I happened to be one, to step forward. Also in that party were Joe Gahan, Albert Dias, John Conway, Dick Gibson, Jim Seville, Jack Bannon. (I'm not quite sure about Jack Bannon). All, except Albert Dias, had been members of the Irish National Guards. My brother went with a party under the command of Seán MacEntee and took another route. The O'Rahilly drew his heavy automatic pistol, and, pointing towards Moore Street, gave the order to "charge, for the glory of God and the honour of Ireland". We were met by a heavy barrage of rifle and machine-gun bullets, and I only got about 30 yards when I was hit and I fell. I got up, but was again knocked down, and this time John Conway and Albert Dias dragged me along until we reached a lane out of the line of fire.

We were joined by more of our chaps and we slept the night in a store of some short, while I moaned and drank gallons of fruit juice to allay my thirst. The moaning seemed to relieve my feelings and I rather enjoyed it.

The order to surrender came from our leaders the following morning, and our party marched out bearing their wounded, mise amháin. I was taken away on a stretcher by St. John's Ambulance men. We had to go through the ranks of the British at the top of Moore St. and I was foolish enough to ask a soldier for a drink. He raised his rifle with its fixed bayonet in a threatening manner above the stretcher on which I was lying, but another soldier angrily intervened between us and threatened his comrade in turn, telling him he ought to be ashamed of himself. The ambulance men hurried me away at the order of an officer, and I was taken to Jervis St. Hospital, where I was left in the basement with many other casualties. The place was like a charnel-house, but one Volunteer in uniform was trying to prop himself up on his arm and sing "God Save Ireland" when a rush of blood from his mouth ended the song and, falling back, he feebly waved to me and expired. My next recollection was of lying in a nice clean bed, with a crucifix in my hands and the voice of Rev. Father Flanagan, Administrator of the Pro Cathedral, intoning the prayers for the dying. Well, or otherwise, I did not die, but I spent about eight weeks in hospital. The ward was raided every other day by the British and I was rushed into hiding until they had gone. The doctor in charge was Dr. Louis Byrne, then Coroner of Dublin. The Rev. Sister's name, I think, was Josephine, and I forget the names of my devoted nurses but if ever I forget their extreme kindness to me, may I never be forgiven my sins. I cannot speak too highly of the medical and nursing staffs of Jervis St. Hospital

at that period. They were utterly unselfish, devoted and patriotic. When I mention the fact that my own day nurse was affianced to a young British army officer, it may convey some idea of the sort of people in whose care I was. My beautiful uniform had entirely disappeared and I never got a button of it, but I had a whole skin so I did not worry.

When at last I left the hospital, I went home to Belvedere Avenue and was welcomed by my own people and a party of Castle detectives, who were waiting for me in our best room. It seemed that letters to my mother, from some of my comrades who had been captured, were intercepted and disclosed the existence of a son, John, of whom they had heard nothing from my people. My imprisoned comrades were not to blame, for they thought that I was dead. I was taken before Lord Powerscourt in Dublin Castle and from there to Ship St. military prison, where I spent the night in company with drunken soldiers, sailors, and street women. The following day I was escorted on foot to Kilmainham Jail, and my escort of British military were compelled to surround me at James's St. in order to protect me from assault at the hands of the 'ring women' whose sense of patriotism was doubtless outraged at the sight of a rebel.

I was welcomed to the jail by the chief warder, an English Sergeant Major, who proved to be a very pleasant fellow and told me that I was the only rebel in the prison and that I was being assigned a very roomy cell which was once occupied by some famous Irishmen, including Charles Stewart Parnell. The Sergeant Major later took me on a personally conducted tour of the whole prison, showing to me the scaffold where some prisoners were hanged, and the glassed-in portion of the prison with the little cells in which those condemned to 'solitary' were confined.

I was to spend a little time in one of them myself, for I soon staged a hunger-strike in order to get better food. There I was visited by two young British officers; one of them was a doctor, and the Sergeant Major told me that the other was a Lieut. Grogan. They were very amiable and, having agreed to see that my prison conditions were improved, they proceeded to reason with me, pointing out the advantages of life in the British army for a spirited chap like myself, and hinting that an officer's commission was not out of the question. We parted without rancour, and certainly they kept their promise about my general prison conditions for I was given the best of well-cooked food and had a military prisoner to clean out my cell daily.

An amusing incident happened shortly afterwards about which I heard much later. A Colour-Sergeant attached to the prison called to my parents' house and indicated that he was in a position to have my prison conditions ameliorated (for a consideration). Fortunately, Mattie Kelly, who told me afterwards about it, happened to be in the house and sent him away without thanks. I was about two weeks alone in Kilmainham when the last batch of our chaps arrived from Dublin Castle Hospital, and I met them next morning and we exchanged news. I told them about my improved conditions and advised them to demand the same, so when, on the following morning, the aroma of my well-cooked breakfast assailed their nostrils as my 'servant' passed their cells on his way to mine, the boys commenced to howl like wolves and Austin Stack, R.I.P., demanded to see the doctor, who again agreed to have their conditions improved, and so they were, except that they had to keep their own cells clean.

One day we were all paraded in the prison yard and our sentences read out by an officer we had not seen

before that. Austin Stack was sentenced to life imprisonment, Con Collins to 15 years, and the rest of us to be deported and interned at somebody's pleasure. Stack showed no emotion, while Collins lightly remarked that he would have plenty of time to study a Gaelic prayerbook which he always carried on his person. After another few weeks, we were all gathered together, with the exception of Stack and Collins who had been taken away earlier, and marched under heavy escort out of the prison to Kingsbridge railway station. There we entrained and duly arrived at the North Wall, where a ship was waiting to take us abroad. We were handed over to a company of Sherwood Foresters (of all people), and we took care to apply gently a little salt to their recent wounds and rub it in. They showed us no special marks of affection but bundled us down among the cattle. On the way to England we reached a stage of the crossing where all the ships' lights were put out and we were warned to be quiet, so we promptly commenced to sing what is now the National Anthem, and if there were any Germans in the vicinity they must have wondered what was going on. When we arrived at Holyhead, we were met by a company of Welsh Bantam Battalion, and although I am a small man myself, I literally towered over them. A brother of Vincent Poole, a big, burly man in jack boots, very kindly assisted some of the Bantam soldiers over the heavy chains on the quayside, by lifting them bodily, rifle, bayonet and all, and depositing them safely on the other side. The Whelshmen took it all in good part, but the people who were lined along the route shrank away as we strode on our way, more like conquerors than prisoners.

We were taken to Knutsford Prison to join some more of our comrades, and there I made the acquaintance of a huge Corkonian - "Tom Walsh of Ireland". He never gave any more information about himself to the authorities in whose custody he was. He defined freedom as "eight feet square of undisputed earth". He attached himself to me from the beginning of our acquaintanceship and we became inseparable. We must have been an amusing sight, for he stood about six feet, four inches, and was broad in proportion, while I stood about five feet, four inches and was by no means burly. One day I was called out to the prison yard, where I was greeted by several young women and who supplied me with food, sweets, tobacco and matches. They were Irish girls living in England and had banded themselves together to help us. They got hold of a name and asked for that prisoner, who in turn supplied them with other names. At first they were only interested in wounded men, and Tom Walsh used lurid language when we told him. However, myself and Dick Gibson appeased him somewhat by sharing all our food with him since we had more than enough for ourselves, so that between passing our prison rations to him and giving him our other surplus food, as well as supplying him with tobacco, he was rendered happy enough, although he would say wistfully, "I'd like to have a scratch so that I could get out to see all the lovely girls, and they, I suppose, cooing over ye little varmints like blessed babies".

One day at dinner hour, Tom, who was in the next cell to mine, came into my cell to collect my rations, (cells were left open during meal times), when the head warder, another Sergeant Major but this one a big Scotsman, nearly as big as Tom, appeared in my doorway. He ordered Tom back to his own

cell and Tom politely said that he was going. Again the Sergeant Major roared at Tom to clear out, and again Tom answered that he was going. Since the door was blocked by the Scotsman's bulk, Tom could not leave my cell without pushing him aside, but he did not explain. Then the Sergeant Major called Tom by a filthy name, and he was picked up in Tom's arms as though he had been an infant.
Our cells were at the very top of a series of balconies, and only for my intercession the Scotsman would have been hurled over the railings, to be dashed to certain death on the flags below. Tom was arrested but he asked to see the doctor, so the next day he was arraigned before the Adjutant and the prison doctor. I was brought along as a witness at Tom's request, and on my evidence he was acquitted, but Tom was not finished, for, turning to the doctor, he asked to be excused the chore of daily washing out his own cell, and holding out his hands, which were like shovels and all marked and calloused as a result of his trade (he was a stone-mason), he enquired if he were afflicted with the pox or itch. Of course, there was nothing the matter with his hands, but the doctor examined them and pretended to think otherwise, for Tom was excused cell washing and never did it again. The Sergeant Major was greatly annoyed.

At a later period we were all taken to Wandsworth Prison in London and there interviewed by a panel of immaculately dressed gentlemen. We were brought before them separately, so that I can only give my own experience. They were very urbane and suave, smiling and affable, and insisted that I be seated. They pointed out the heinousness of my crime against established order, etc., etc., but they agreed among themselves that I was young and had been badly misled by the leaders of the revolt, etc., etc. Finally, they handed me a printed form which they advised me

to sign, telling me that if I did so, I might expect to be released very shortly and that my crime would be fully pardoned. I politely declined to put my signature to any written document whatever, and after a little more talk on their side, they abruptly dismissed me and I was taken away.

I forget if we were taken back to Knutsford or sent direct from Wandsworth to Frongoch in Wales, but I do remember our arrival at the railway station on our way to the internment camps. Again we were met by a detachment of the Sherwood Foresters and our meeting was as cordial as ever. They took exception to our nonchalant pose, and Tom Walsh had to give one soldier a push, which nearly sent him under the train, in order to protect me from assault. There were no more incidents and we duly arrived at Frongoch, and there we were interned. Dick Mulcahy was in charge of our camp and we soon settled down in our new quarters. Life there was rather boring, but not so restricted, and there was more space than the prison yards we had grown accustomed to using for exercise. Besides that, the Sergeant Major there, a Welshman, was kindly and tolerant and seemed to have taken a liking to our chaps. This cramped our style a bit, but it did make things more pleasant and friendly. A football match was arranged to be played between 'the wounded men' and 'another side'. I was picked for the 'wounded men' because there were no others. As I gazed at the two sides drawn up, it seemed to me that our side looked very puny and the other side very burly, and I thought this passing strange since the bigger men should have presented better targets for bullets. The match started and was in progress for about ten minutes when I 'went up' for the ball, at least that was my intention only that Seán O'Donovan, an All-Ireland player and a very big man, had the same idea at the same time.

The result was that I was rendered hors de combat and carried off the field. I dimly wondered if there was any connection between that incident and the fact that the big men had escaped the bullets.

The first thing every morning, we were all paraded under our own Commander, Dick Mulcahy, for inspection by the British Camp Commander, whom we saluted and bade "good morning". A character named ffrench-Mullen invariably caused us some amusement by appearing at the last moment, panting, breathless, and clothed in pyjamas. He was always full of apologies to the British Commander, who at first used to be furious and later became more resigned, even waxed a bit sarcastic if, by any chance, ffrench-Mullen was on time for inspection. When at last the day came for our departure for home, we were all issued with a new suit - known among us as the 'Martin Henry' for our clothes had been more or less destroyed by the process known as fumigation. Each suit was manufactured of the same shoddy material, was the same colour, and, as far as could be judged, all were the same size - small - so that some of our chaps looked ludicrous, especially those who had allowed their beards to grow. However, we were going home, so the big fellows only grinned when we chaffed them. We were escorted to Holyhead by an English company of soldiers, whose captain bought us all tea and buns before we went on board the ship. We gave him a cheer as we sailed for Ireland.

When we reached the North Wall, a small crowd was there to welcome us home. We broke up into small groups and wended our different ways homewards. My direction took me through the centre of the City, and as I gazed on the black hulks which had once been such beautiful buildings

and thought of the time I had watched them burning, my mind filled with mingled feelings, sorrow, anger, triumph, contested for supremacy in my breast, but a quiet pride banished them all and I felt happier, for what, I argued to myself, were the ugly black bulks but the scarred and crumbling milestones on the way to freedom. The old body that was Ireland, ugly and overlaid with dirt collected through the long years of serfdom, was dead, and the unconquered soul had emerged white, shining and unafraid after its new baptism of blood. Tom Walsh, who was still with me, seemed to divine my thoughts, for he put his arm around my shoulders and said, prophetically, "This is not the end, son". The sky seemed to darken, and a cold shiver ran down my spine.

Before Tom Walsh finally left Dublin for Cork, we met for the last time and strolled in St. Stephen's Green together. We came across a tall, foxy looking gentleman who hailed us and stopped to talk. He congratulated us upon our safe return and enquired about our health, asked us to have a drink and, altogether, he was as sincerely affable as a politician on the eve of a general election. As neither Tom nor myself used intoxicants, we declined his invitation, but I was rather intrigued by the fact that he seemed to know us, for I recognised him as Johnny Barton, a well-known City detective who was at that period supposed to keep strictly away from any activities of a political nature. He was afterwards shot as a dangerous enemy of the Republic. My time was now fully occupied in seeking employment and helping to reorganise the 'Irish National Guards'. I had been elected chairman, and Alex. Thompson had been elected secretary of our old association. Tommy Bryan, who was later executed by the British, was also a member. Many new members had been enrolled, among them

Paddy Houlihan who became Comdt. of the 1st Battalion. Seán Howard, an old member, had been killed in action in Easter Week, but most of our crowd had survived.

I also rejoined 'F' Company, 1st Battalion, but, together with Jack Bannon, I was seconded to a new cyclist company under the command of Jerry Golden and his Lieutenant, Brendan Barry. I acted as Quartermaster, while Jack was Armourer. I had also to undergo an intensive course in morse signalling until I qualified in all the branches, including elementary cyphers, and I still retain the buzzer I then used but I have forgotten all that I learned so painstakingly. At that time, I was living next door to the Connollys in Gloucester St., now Seán McDermott St., and I slept all through the night that Peadar Clancy and Dick McKee were taken by the Tans and brought to Dublin Castle to be tortured first and then assassinated. The following night, Connolly's house was raided and the Tans were agreeably surprised to see a large picture of their King hanging on the wall. I was amused when Eddie Connolly told me about it the next day, but there were no more raids for a good while. Seán Connolly, the eldest son, was killed in action in 1916, and his brother, Joe, who afterwards became Chief of the Dublin Fire Brigade, was later interned.

Jerry Golden and Brendan Barry were captured early on, and Jimmy Freeney took over the command of our company. I had purchased another gun from a British soldier whom I made contact with in the 'Republican Bar', a sort of restaurant which was run by a chap named Carroll who was married to Mary Gahan, a sister of Joe and Mattie Gahan. The place was a rendezvous for Republicans, not to mention the gun smugglers. The place was afterwards razed to the

ground by the Black and Tans. The Carrolls, who barricaded the place and fought back, were wounded, but escaped and later emigrated to one of the British colonies.

Whenever operations were carried out around Bolton St. area, Paddy Houlihan, who was usually in charge, and I used to use my sister's shop in 127, Upper Dorset St. to sally from and retreat to, at the end of the engagement. When operating around the Earl St. area, Kit O'Malley was usually in charge.

On the morning of Bloody Sunday, I attended a Quartermasters' meeting in Parnell Square, and Jack Bannon accompanied me. The Battalion Q/M was a small, sturdy man with dark, curling hair, a cast in one of his eyes, and a decided limp. He appeared a jolly, innocent sort of fellow, but he knew his business and was a born salesman: he would sell Nelson's Pillar if somebody bid for it. His business was to sell guns and ammunition to the Company Quartermasters, and he only did a cash transaction. Perhaps a Company Q/M wanted, say, a .45 gun with some ammunition to match. He asks the Battalion Q/M if he has such an article to sell; the Battalion Q/M answers by asking if the Company Q/M has the cash. Yes, he has the cash. The Battalion Q/M stretches out his hand for it, and if the Company Q/M is inexperienced he gives it to him. He may then receive in return an obsolete gun and an assortment of bullets which might, or might not, fit some known make of gun. If the Company Q/M protested, he was advised to consult his Armourer, who would "lick them into shape in no time at all, with the file". The Battalion Q/M never refunded money.

We were all warned to stay away from Croke Park that day, Bloody Sunday, but, just the same, Jack Bannon went there,

and so did I. We witnessed the attempted massacre of thousands of innocent people by the Black and Tans, who invaded the park, firing indiscriminately as they came. I escaped by scaling a wall and dropping on the other side into a party of Tans who had surrounded the park. I stayed, groaning, where I had fallen, and pretended I had been thrown over the wall. This so amused them that they allowed me to go. I forget how Jack Bannon escaped, although I'm sure that he told me about it later. Some time after that, we ambushed a party of Tans in Talbot St. and promptly retreated to the Oxford Billiards Saloon in O'Connell St., another rendezvous of ours which was known to be safe. A table known as No. 1 was always engaged for us, so that we only had to park our guns, if any, grab a billiards cue and join in the game. This time the Tans entered shortly after us and went through the usual business of questioning and searching, but nothing was found on us. Not so a young stranger at the other end of the saloon, who was brought down towards us between a party of Tans. He was carrying a revealing letter from his girl friend in the country, from where he was 'on the run', and the letter had fallen into the hands of his enemies. The District Inspector spoke to one of his men, who hurried out of the saloon, and then the prisoner was pushed in front and impelled out into the street. We heard two shots and were told later that the poor fellow had been assassinated by a drunken or doped Tan who was waiting outside. During all this time, another party were enjoying themselves in the shop proper, some of them behind the counter, serving out tobacco, cigarettes, matches, cigars, etc. to their comrades, and accepting in payment cash stolen out of the till. The proprietor, a Mr. Payne, a stout Orangeman, protested his loyalty in vain.

One Saturday afternoon, Jack Bannon was working in the battalion armoury in Parnell Square and I was sitting watching him repairing guns. The armoury was a small strong-room with an iron door, but whoever designed it did not provide any way of retreat from it, and when we heard the caretaker tap urgently on the door, warning us that the Tans were raiding in the vicinity, we prepared to clear out but then heard the tramping of feet and stayed where we were. We laid out all the workable guns and ammunition and said our prayers. The footsteps came right up to the door and we heard voices in argument. We held our breaths and our guns tightly, but after a while we heard the retreating footsteps and soon the caretaker returned to give us the all clear.

We hurried out and up to the caretaker's rooms at the top of the house, intending to pose as his sons if the Tans came back. We stood watching them from the window. I glanced at Jack and he looked like a terrier straining at the leash beholding rats walking outside around their cage. His eyes were shining eagerly; his face slightly suffused with blood, as he leaned forward, staring at the departing enemy. There they went, looking like the swashbuckling desperadoes that they were, guns slung low on each hip, casting furtive eyes up at the houses and chattering like magpies. Jack heaved a gusty sigh of regret, while I sighed with relief. I often envied the hot courage of my comrade, for though I, too, was a dedicated Volunteer, I usually had to screw up my courage in order to fulfil my allotted task with some appearance of equanimity.

I greatly fear that I am not a brave man. In 1921 I ran across an old 1916 man named Walter Williams, who had been abroad. He asked me to enlist him and I introduced him to Jimmy Freeney, our O/C. As Jack Bannon was also acquainted with Williams, there was no trouble in having

him accepted. Williams was keen for action, but things were rather quiet about that time because we were short of guns and ammunition, and the only opportunity he got, I think, was the Friday before the Truce of 11th July, 1921, and that operation did not materialise. On that evening, Jim Freeney, Jack Bannon, another, Walter Williams and myself met the Comdt., Paddy Houlihan, who gave us our instructions and a very meagre supply of ammunition. Our orders were to enter the La Scala Theatre, now the Capitol Theatre, at 8 p.m., which the Black and Tans patronised, and to eliminate as many as surprise would allow, collect their guns and try to escape with them. If one of our chaps came along on a bicycle with a white handkerchief in his hand, we were to call the whole thing off. At about five minutes to eight, Seamus Kavanagh appeared on a bike and he displayed a white handkerchief in his hand. It was fortunate for all concerned, and I heaved a sigh of profound relief for the operation had promised to have been a sticky one.

So came the Truce and, later, the Treaty.

Signed: John Williams

Date: 6 - XI - 57

Witness: Seán Brennan Lieut-Col.