

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
BURO STAIRE MILEATA 1913-21
No. W.S. 1694

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 1694.

Witness

Francis Healy,
17 Sorrento Road,
Dalkey,
Co. Dublin.

Identity.

Section Commander, D. Company, 4th Battalion,
Cork I. Brigade.

Subject.

D. Company, 4th Battalion, Cork I Brigade,
I.R.A. 1915-Truce.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil.

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BÚRO STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21

No. W.S. 11694

STATEMENT BY FRANCIS HEALY,

17, Sorrento Road, Dalkey, Dublin.

Military History of 'D' Company, 4th Battalion, 1st Cork Brigade,
Irish Republican Army, during Anglo-Irish War, 1915-1921.

A general request has been issued from the Bureau of Military History, Dublin, to all Volunteers to write an account of their activities during the fight for Irish freedom. I have decided to place on record a true account, as far as my memory serves me, of my own personal experiences during the historic period 1915-1921 which helped to bring about the re-birth of the ancient Irish nation.

Thirty-six years have now elapsed since the signing of the Truce on 11th July, 1921, being the first recognition of an Irish Volunteer Army since the Treaty of Limerick in 1691. I have vivid recollections of various happenings, and with the aid of a roughly kept diary during the period 1920-21, the dates given by me can be regarded as almost accurate.

I was born at Shanballymore, Doneraile, Co. Cork, on 27th September, 1900, and from my earliest days heard the local gossip of the famous Doneraile Conspiracy which is described in detail in a novel by Canon Sheehan, 'Glenanaar'. As a matter of interest, there is a footnote given in this book relative to the "White Boy Days", and the teacher mentioned in it was my father, the late Patrick Healy, N.T., Ballyvonare, and later at Shanballymore.

I was the youngest member of a family of thirteen and for economic reasons had to start earning my living at 16 years of age. My first employment was in a clerical

capacity in the firm of James O'Callaghan and Sons, Corn Merchants, Glanworth, Fermoy, Co. Cork. My pay was 22/6d per week, and board and lodgings took 16/6d of this amount. I later joined the services of the G.S.W. Railway, where work was harder but remuneration much better, as I received 70/- per week. I was a junior member of the station staff at Carrigtwohill and, consequently, my hours of work were from 6 a.m. to 3 p.m. daily during the year 1919-1920. Being free each evening from 3p.m. left me some spare time, which I fully devoted to Volunteer company activities, having joined in that area in 1919.

One of my earliest impressions of the Sinn Féin movement, as that was what the freedom movement was then known by, was reading a poster displayed outside Shanballymore post office which was headed: "On His Majesty's Service", dated April, 1916, and issued by British Army H.Q. Dublin: "The situation in Dublin is well in hands". This referred to the alleged suppression of the Sinn Féin Rising in Dublin in April, 1916.

From that period, local Volunteer companies' activities included pulling down and burning the British flag - the Union Jack - wherever it was displayed, provided that it could be done with safety and without exposing the Volunteers taking part to liability to arrest and future unemployment. The Union Jack was usually replaced by the tricolour. This activity was later extended to displaying the tricolour on tree tops, battlements of old castles and other prominent places. After the flag had been placed in a prominent position, the lower branches of the trees were sawn off so as to prevent British forces (army or police) from removing the flags, which often remained in position for months until faded or blown down.

On the night of the 3rd April, 1920, the I.R.A. burned down or destroyed 182 unoccupied police barracks all over Ireland so as to prevent their re-occupation by the R.I.C. who, for the time being, had been transferred to large towns for their own safety, as a number of barracks had been attacked and captured by the I.R.A. I remember climbing to the chimney top of Carrigtwohill R.I.C. barracks after it had been destroyed by fire and explosives, and placing a large tricolour flag on the top of gable and chimney.

Raids for arms, censoring of mails, etc.

From the time I took up residence in Carrigtwohill, the tempo of I.R.A. activities had stepped up very much. Shortly after I joined 'D' Company (Carrigtwohill), 4th Battalion, 1st Cork Brigade, Irish Republican Army, I was promoted to the rank of Section Leader and, as such, I took part in numerous raids, ambushes, etc. and, in addition, carried out police patrols, enforced court orders, served summonses, etc. under the District Court regulations of the first Dáil Éireann. It may not be generally understood that no members of the I.R.A. were full-time police officers in this area and the duties of army and police had to be performed by members of the company. In addition, we were collectors for the Dáil Loan. The levy for the loan was fixed according to valuation of each holding, and, in some cases, there were point blank refusals from the Ascendancy class to recognise the Dáil or any of its officials, either members of the army, police or district justices. In one case in which I participated, that of Mr. T.G. Barry of Greenville, Carrigtwohill, he persistently refused to recognise the Dáil collectors, who levied on him a subscription of £25. In order to enforce the decision, we

would not permit any ordinary farming functions re marketing of cattle, threshing of the harvest, etc., and, finally, it was decided to enforce the order by arranging a cattle drive. This threat had the desired effect and the sum was paid over very reluctantly, the identity of the collectors being disclosed to the enemy, with the usual results - raids, etc. for some wanted men.

My first raid for arms:

Raids for arms had become a frequent form of Volunteer activity and, although fraught with danger, we usually were successful and escaped without arrest or injury under very varied circumstances. We received information that a farmer at Woodstock had shot a cat by means of a revolver shot. Four of the company were detailed to raid the house and get possession of the revolver. Looking back on this, my first raid, I feel I expended more nervous energy in the period before the raid than on any other activity that I afterwards participated in. The farmer lived about three miles from the village, and we took up positions in the breen leading to his residence at about 9 p.m. He lived alone and did not return home until about 1 a.m. We were equipped with revolvers and pocket torches, and as the farmer approached the entrance to his residence we held him up and demanded possession of his revolver. He denied having any revolver, but seeing that we were determined in our demand, he entered the house and produced from behind a dresser a seventeenth century pistol, which we took possession of and retreated, feeling disappointed at the result of our first raid for arms, after three hours vigil and six mile walk.

The undermentioned names, given according to rank, composed the active service unit of 'D' Company. They participated in nearly all the armed activities of the company.

Present address (1957)

Capt. T. Cotter	-	New York, U.S.A.
1st Lt. M. Murnane	-	Carrigtwohill, Co. Cork.
2nd Lt. Seán Deasy	-	Carrigtwohill (killed in Kilcloyne ambush)
Ex " M. Geelan	-	" (killed in motor-cycle accident).
" " M. Ryan	-	Woodstock, Carrigtwohill.
" Capt. J. Ahern	-	Barryscourt.
Sect. Ldr. M. Connell	-	Carrigtwohill.
" " F. Healy (myself)	-	17, Sorrento Rd., Dalkey, Co. Dublin.
Vol. D. Ahern	-	Barryscourt, Carrigtwohill.
" M. Finn	-	Tibbotstown, "
" J. Crowley	-	Carrigtwohill.
Trans. Dr. J. Roche	-	The Garage, Carrigtwohill.
Vol. D. Cronin	-	New York, U.S.A.
" J. Donovan (decd.)	-	Carrigtwohill.
" Teddy O'Brien "	-	"
" Wm. Fenton (decd.)	-	"
" John J. Lawton	-	"
" Paddy Perry	-	"
" G. O'Keefe	-	"
" T. Brown (decd.)	-	Tibbotstown, Carrigtwohill.
" Jim Kelleher	-	Carrigtwohill.
" W. Bransfield	-	") Taken out of bed and
" J. Ryan	-	Woodstock) shot on roadside by
" J. Ahern	-	Ballyrichard) British forces on 8th May, 1921.

The raids for arms I took part in during years 1920-21 were as follows:

J. Howard - Woodstock, Carrigtwohill.
 Smith-Barry - Lisgoold.
 B. Barry - Ballyadam.
 M. Beamish - Glanthane, Cove Junction.
 N. Nicholson - " " "
 T. Mulcahy - Barryscourt, Carrigtowhill.
 C. Butler - Ahanisk, Middleton.
 R. Heard - " "

Only vague memories now remain of the details of some of the raids and the names of the participants, etc.

I remember at Beamish's, Cove Junction, I cut the telephone wires on the pole leading to the residence. We got two automatic pistols and ammunition. Mr. Beamish received us well and offered some refreshments (wines, etc.), which we declined with thanks.

The raid on Nicholson's, Glanthane, was on a bright, moonlight night, and I distinctly recollect having to

reprimand one of my section, P. Perry, for blowing a hunting horn which he found on the hall table, as his action might result in attracting an enemy patrol that frequented the area at all hours. The family was absent at the time of the raid, about 11.30 p.m. We got a small quantity of ammunition and the raid passed off without further incident.

T. Mulcahy, a game-keeper employed by Lord Barrymore, Fota, had been presented by his employer with a valuable shotgun, which we took from the game-keeper at 3 p.m. on a Saturday afternoon.

The raid on Butler's of Ahanisk was lead by Tom O'Shea of Cove and was carried out on the orders of Battalion H.Q. The Butler family was very anti-Irish in their outlook and the owner was a retired British army colonel. When our collectors for the Dáil Loan called there the previous month, they were informed that Dáil Éireann and all its followers were members of murder gangs, and that if there were any further calls to the place, the matter would be brought to the notice of the military and police in Midleton, who would deal with the Sinn Féiners as they deserved. We arrived at the place about 9 p.m. and demanded admission, which was refused. Our party then covered the front of the house and I was selected to force an entry through the drawing-room window. There was a possibility that Colonel Butler had arms and would use them against us. I gained admission and opened the front door for our search party to enter. We locked up the occupants in a bedroom and made a thorough search of the house. We got a small supply of ammunition. We found a silken Union Jack flag, which we laid out as a table cloth and burned a hole in the centre of it to show the occupiers what protection the enemy flag was able to give them against the forces of Dáil Éireann. During the progress of the

raid we all wore masks made from black stocking material and carried pocket torches and revolvers.

I got an unusual fright during my search of an attic at rear of the building. I entered the room, which I thought was uninhabited, and was about to search the place when I felt the presence of another being. Some object was lying on what I took to be a quantity of rags on a broken bed frame. It gazed at me from between the rags with only one eye. I backed out of room, being afraid to turn about in case I was attacked by some ghost-like creature, and rejoined my companions. I did not tell them of the incident in case some of the senior members might say I was seeing things and would not be considered suitable to participate in future raids. Some days later, I learned from a resident in the locality that an old eccentric female employee lived in the garret portion of Ahanisk House and seldom appeared in public. This eased my mind considerably, as for days after the raid I felt that this one-eyed creature had me under observation both night and day.

Returning to police activities in connection with I.R.A. duties. We had to investigate a larceny of the parish priest's hens. After brief investigations, we found that a servant boy who was attending the parochial house for catechism lessons in preparation for his Confirmation, set a hen snare when entering for his lessons and after the P.P.'s lectures on honesty, etc. had terminated, the juvenile captured a hen on his way out and sold the bird in the village. When we brought the culprit and the P.P. face to face, the conversation between them could be easier imagined than described, but we succeeded in putting a stop to the larceny as good as any modern juvenile court.

Before departing from items of local interest, another novel incident occurs to me. During the year 1919-20 we organised and equipped a pipers band. The original portion of the band came from the equipment of the old-time fife and drum band which had come into the hands of British ex-service men who had just returned from World War 1. There was a party of about twenty ex-service men living in the village and vicinity, which left our position as an anti-British force in a very precarious condition as we believed that some of the ex-service men still continued in the pay of the British army. Early in November, 1919, some of the ex-servicemen endeavoured to revive an old fife and drum band to celebrate the first anniversary of the armistice on 11th November, 1919. The party adjourned to a "Local", and, after consuming some beer, went to get the drums etc. All that could be located was the big drum, minus drum sticks. John Foley, who was more aggressive than the others, took possession of the big drum and paraded the main street shouting for "King and Country" and played on the drum with a kitchen poker as a substitute drum stick. Some months later, we replaced the old fife and drum band with a pipers' band and purchased ten sets of kilts in Irish colours in addition to six sets of pipes. All this outfit was purchased at "Blackthorn House", Patrick St., Cork. These business premises were later destroyed by orders of the British military, as it was considered to be supporting anti-British propaganda.

Execution of spies:

During the next year or so, three ex-servicemen were detected being secret service agents against us and were executed by order of the I.R.A. The names of these men

are known in the locality, but even at this late stage it is not deemed advisable to mention them as it may possibly embarrass relatives who, in some cases, gave all the assistance in their power towards the national movements.

Burial of Pipers' Band:

As occurs in all districts, certain jealousies arose as to the propaganda value of the pipers' band. The band turned out in full strength to parades, funerals, etc., which I regret to have to state were becoming more frequent as the result of increased armed activities. Information was received that the uniforms and instruments were likely to be confiscated by the enemy. The members of the band who were not attached to the Volunteer company got nervous when this rumour extended, and they left the instruments and uniforms in the band room which was situated at Station Road. One night about March, 1920, four of the company - John Crowley, John Lawton, F. Healy (myself) and W. Fenton - procured a large trunk and dug a grave for same in the townland of Killacloyne. We then raided the band room, took possession of all the outfit and placed it in the trunk. We then shouldered the trunk, and after travelling by a circuitous route placed the property in the grave provided for the purpose, covered it over with growing grasses, bushes, etc. and went our way. The incident was known locally as the "Burial of King Cormac". The band remained in its grave until after the truce in July, 1921, when it was again restored to its former status and played many an Irish air to celebrate the coming of even a temporary peace.

Attack on R.I.C. barracks:

Orders were received from H.Q. that all battalion areas were to increase their stock of arms and ammunition from all possible available sources. In consequence of this order, the I.R.A. attacked and captured the local R.I.C. barracks at Carrigtwohill early in January, 1920. For security reasons and to avoid suspicion being aroused in the locality, the local company was not called on to participate in the attack. About 6 a.m. the following Monday, I was closely interrogated by a party of R.I.C. under the D.I. from Midleton, but when they found me at my lodgings it threw off suspicion from me and other members of 'D' Company. As far as I can recollect, the attack started about 11 p.m. and finished about 4 a.m., when Sergeant Scott and his party of R.I.C. men surrendered to the I.R.A., who captured a good supply of rifles, revolvers and ammunition. The password for the night was "Soldiers are we", and reply "Whose lives are pledged to Ireland".

Although the members of 'D' Company were not called out for the attack on Carrigtwohill R.I.C. barracks, they were called out to their full available strength for the attack on Cloyne R.I.C. barracks. While not actually engaged in the proximity of the barracks itself, their task was no less onerous or dangerous than the men who carried out the assault on the building. We were under Capt. T. Cotter, Lieutenants Murnane and Deasy, and N.C.Os. I remember cautioning my section that the mobilisation that night was for a serious and dangerous mission. I also remember seeing most of the members of the company attending to their religious duties in the local Roman Catholic Church about 8 p.m. that night, viz. 8th May, 1920. The meeting place was Ballyadam Bridge, and all were ordered

to bring whatever equipment was previously issued to them. We were addressed by our captain, who told us the object in view and also gave us the password for the night as "Miltown Malbay". The position we were to hold was the main road leading to Cloyne from Cork and Cobh. The position selected was halfway between Carrigtwohill and Middleton, where we felled some trees across the roadway. I was detailed to climb a telegraph pole near Ballyadam and cut all telephone communications, which I succeeded in doing after climbing a high pole three times.

We then took up an ambush position near Mile Bush, with a small party patrolling the roadway. We were to prevent any reinforcements from reaching the beleaguered party of R.I.C. About 40 members of 'D' Company were engaged on this duty, and all acquitted themselves in a worthy manner which greatly contributed to the success of the enterprise. There were no lives lost on the occasion, but one R.I.C. constable and two I.R.A. members received slight wounds.

After cutting telephone communications, I was detailed for scout duty on a pedal cycle in vicinity of the fallen tree near Ministers Hill, Mile Bush. I had cycled in the Cork direction for about a quarter of a mile from the place of ambush, when I observed in the distance a British convoy of two lorries of troops lead by an armoured car, all travelling rather slowly. I returned immediately to the place of ambush held by 'D' Company, and gave the strength of the British party that was approaching. Owing to the comparative strength and equipment of the respective parties, it was hastily decided to take cover before the convoy reached the fallen tree. The military were not experienced at the time in the Irish methods of guerilla warfare and did not search the fields at both

sides of the roadway where we lay in hiding. I was only twenty yards away when the armoured car halted, and I could hear and see the officer I/C ordering his men to procure axes and saws to cut away the tree. I had a Volunteer lying near me who, through inexperience, wanted to discharge a shot from his revolver at the British officer. I ordered him to refrain from doing so. After a short while, the tree was removed and the convoy passed on, but our activities delayed the relief sufficiently to allow the main party to complete the attack on the R.I.C. and make a successful retirement. 'D' Company mobilised again after the danger had passed, and after a roll call and word from Cloyne that all was over, we returned to our homes, etc. and proceeded on our ordinary ways of life.

Mail train Cork to Youghal raided:

In order to obtain information regarding spies, casual informers, and enemy movements, drastic action had to be taken occasionally. 'D' Company were directed to arrange for the early hold-up of the morning mail train from Cork to Youghal and censor all letters, etc. As previously stated, I was at the time an employee of the Railway Company and, as such, my opinion was sought for suggestions re the carrying out of the raid. I suggested that I would be held up at 5.25 a.m. as I entered the railway station in company with the post office official (who was not a member of the I.R.A.) who collected and checked the local mails. An ambush was also arranged in conjunction with the raid on mails, as it was assumed that a small party of R.I.C. might come to the station to investigate the raid. The full company, with all available equipment, was again called out. Detailed instructions re this raid were issued on 15th April, 1920. Mails were

raided at Carrigtwohill Station at 5.45 a.m. on 16th April, 1920, by armed and masked men, as arranged, and three horse loads of mail bags were taken to Tibbotstown for censoring. About 7 a.m. on the same date, when I was returning to my lodgings in the village for my breakfast, I discovered that a party of about 200 British soldiers had surrounded the village of Carrigtwohill, which is situated about a quarter of a mile distant from the railway station. The British were making a detailed search for I.R.A. men, arms, ammunition, etc. I knew where our party were in ambush and at once realised that the military might at any time extend their cordon. As a railway official, I was as polite as possible to the British sentry who was on duty outside the railway station, but he said he had definite orders not to allow any person into the village pending the search. I got as much information from him as possible, and while expressing my regret at not being able to obtain my breakfast in the village, I said I would obtain a meal from some friends and at once went along the old bog road and informed our ambush party of the situation.

I was very satisfied that I was not allowed pass the cordon, as in that case I would have little opportunity of turning about on the roadway and going in a different direction from the village. For some reason not known to me, the post office official was temporarily detained by the sentry. After about a five minutes' journey, I contacted the ambush party and, after a brief conference, it was deemed advisable to abandon the place immediately, dump all arms and equipment and retreat towards Knockraha.

The enemy continued their search up to about 9 a.m., after combing the village for men and material but failing

to get any of the objects or men so eagerly sought for. When the officer i/c of the enemy heard of the raid about 9 a.m., he at once rushed to the railway station and, at the point of his revolver, closely interrogated me re the raid, etc. When I finished work at 3 p.m., I went at once to Tibbotstown where the mails were stored for censoring, and assisted in the censorship until nightfall. The mails were returned next morning (minus some incriminating documents, R.I.C. correspondence, etc.) and were forwarded to their destinations only one day late.

The incidents of the morning raid, with over 200 of the enemy, in full war kit, only a couple of hundred yards away from where the I.R.A. were carrying out a successful raid, enraged the military authorities, and from that date onwards raids and arrests were carried out frequently by the enemy. Their searches for I.R.A. equipment during the whole period in the parish proved futile.

Pedal cycles prohibited in East Cork:

On 22nd April, 1921, the use of pedal cycles was prohibited in East Cork. As the railway station was the centre for extensive distribution of despatches and copies of An tÓglach (official organ of the Irish Volunteers), I often had to travel long journeys on foot so that these documents reached the required destinations.

Raids on churches by enemy forces on Sundays and Church Holidays:

The next move of the enemy was to search church congregations as parishioners were leaving on Sundays after attending Mass. Congregations were held up by armed soldiers, some in covered lorries with some spy watching out through a hole in the canvas, and when a wanted man

was observed, the enemy would get a signal from the lorry and thereby capture any I.R.A. man who might chance to be attending Mass on the date in question.

It was decided to make a determined effort to counteract this new move. A party from 'D' Company, consisting of about ten men whose names are as follows: - T. Cotter, S. Deasy, M. Murnane, W. Fenton, M. O'Connell, F. Healy (myself) and others whose names I do not recollect, took up positions in the vicinity of Glounthane, Killacloyne, and other places. The dates and places are as follows:

Sunday, 10.4.'21 - on Main Road from Cork to Cobh,
near Glounthane.

" 17.4.'21 - Near Cobh Junction.

" 24.4.'21 - Near Little Island.

" 31.4.'21 - Near Home Rule Bar.

" 7.5.'21 - Near Cobh Junction railway station.

" 14.5.'21 - Near Glounthane Church.

The enemy did not pass through our ambushade. Years later, I often thought that our chances of success were poor when taking into consideration that our average equipment consisted of two rifles, eight shotguns, five revolvers, and a limited supply of ammunition (some being refills of used cartridges), and the strength of the enemy could be up to any number and he was well equipped with modern firearms, including hand grenades and machine-guns.

I.R.A. police work:

In addition to military activities, I often had to carry out police duties such as enforcing orders of Sinn Féin Courts, as District Courts were then called. I spent a good portion of my spare time organising police duties. I served one of the first summonses in East Cork in connection with District Court proceedings. It arose in connection with a milk prices dispute between two farmers,

one from Glounthane, the other from Little Island.

The court was held in Barrymore Castle, a historic building south of the village of Carrigtwohill.

The District Justices were B. Cotter, T. Kelleher, Barrymore,

Mulcahy, Ballintubber, The court officials included F. Healy, W. Fenton, M. Geelan, T. Cotter, and other members of 'D' Company whose names I cannot recollect. As far as I can recollect, the dispute was amicably settled. I attended to several other police matters on orders of the company and battalion officers.

Guest of His Majesty in Cork Military Jail:

I was arrested at Carrigtwohill railway station on 6th October, 1920. The charges were that I was a member of an illegal organisation and partook in enforcing orders of an illegal authority, viz. Dáil Éireann.

I was subsequently tried by courtmartial at Cork Military Barracks (Victoria - now Collins). On orders from my company officer, I refused to recognise the court and the case was adjourned to a later date. After about one month in jail, I was released and told by the British officer i/c, Sergeant Major Bailey, that if I was again found associating with any enemies of the empire, I would be re-arrested and sent to an internment camp.

Recollections of Cork Military Jail:

The following Sunday, I paraded as Section Commander of 'D' Company, 4th Battalion, 1st Cork Brigade, at the funeral of Terence MacSwiney (Brigade Officer), whose death, after 74 days' hunger-strike, at Brixton Prison, London, drew world-wide sympathy to the relatives of deceased and the Irish Ireland movement. I knew the late Lord Mayor of Cork for some years, and his determination under

adverse circumstances was always an example to me in my varied experiences both in and out of political movements. One quotation from him has stood out in my mind through life, viz. "It is not those who can inflict most; but those who can endure most, win in the end".

Hair -breadth Escapes:

From my earliest days, I invariably kept a diary in which I recorded what I considered important in the affairs of each day. Under date given as 8th May, 1921, I made the following entry: - "Spent a fearful night". The circumstances leading to this terse entry are as follows, and are still vividly impressed on my memory after a lapse of 35 years.

On 1st May, 1921, a local spy named Michael O'Keefe was executed, and the party carrying out the sentence had called to my place of residence about 20 minutes prior to carrying out of the death sentence. Needless to remark, there was intense police and military activities as a result of the shooting, but no evidence was forthcoming to establish the identity of the parties responsible, so the enemy went on the policy of an eye for an eye, etc.

The following Saturday night, 8th May, 1921, I retired to bed at my address, c/o Mrs. McCarthy, Main St., Carrigtwohill, about 11 p.m. At 1 a.m., 9th May, 1921, I was awakened by the sound of revolver shots being discharged in the vicinity. A short while after, I heard loud knocking on the front door and then the door was forced open. I could hear men speaking in pronounced Scotch accents in the living-room underneath my bedroom. As luck would have it, the house where I resided was old-fashioned and the stairs was concealed in a kind of a

wardrobe partition. The enemy forces were slow in studying the lay-out of the house, although I was in bed only a few feet over their heads. I felt that my end was near and was wondering if I should risk endeavouring to make my escape from the building, but I assumed that the place was surrounded in addition to the party who had entered the house. I was only in suspense for a few seconds when I heard the strangers again leaving the house. I was fully satisfied by this time that the party were members of the murder gang drawn from the Cameron Regiment stationed at Cobh, Co. Cork, who were known to be frequently engaged on night raids and shootings in East Cork. During this time, two members of the local Volunteer company, who were performing an armed patrol in anticipation of raids by the murder gang, arrived in the vicinity and called on the strangers (who were in plain clothes) to halt. The strangers, who numbered about six, opened fire on the I.R.A. patrol, who returned the fire and the strangers immediately made off.

During the incidents stated, I jumped out of bed, dressed hurriedly and rushed down stairs to find that the paraffin oil lamp which had been lighting on the kitchen wall, had been taken down and placed on the kitchen table and the tablecloth had just taken fire. I immediately extinguished the flames and rushed out of the house and ran for shelter in Barrymore Wood adjoining the village. I was sheltering in the wood for about fifteen minutes when I met Richard Hayes, who had a similar escape to mine about 12.45 a.m. We both came to the conclusion that the Camerons had raided some house at the Middleton end of the village. We stole back cautiously and saw the body of a man lying on the street who had been shot through the head. This man was William Bransfield, an active

member of the local company. The sight of the mother leaning over the dead body of her only son, left a lasting impression on me. Fr. Tuohy, C.C., arrived shortly afterwards and administered the Last Rites.

We returned to the Main Street to find that the Camerons had also set fire to the residence of the local blacksmith (J. Keegan) and turned Miss Keegan out of the house in her night attire. We got the fire under control after a short while and arranged for Miss Terry O'Grady to give shelter to Miss Keegan until daylight. By this time, the party of the Cameron Regiment had retreated to Cobh and some local I.R.A. came on the scene and helped the distracted villagers. As I knew that secret service agents had kept the enemy well informed re movements of the I.R.A., I did not reside at my Main St. address at night time after this escape, but took the standard precaution of residing at a different address each night.

The local I.R.A. officers came to the conclusion that Saturday night was the most likely night for the Camerons to again visit the village, and a full company ambush was arranged to take place between 11 p.m. on 14th May, 1921, and 5 a.m. on 15th May, 1921. The enemy did not arrive up to 5 a.m., so the ambush party was dismissed as previously arranged. We then went to dump our arms at the various places of safety which we had away from the village. My dump was in a field situated between the railway station and the bog road. Myself and Volunteer John J. Lawton proceeded to the place, and after depositing our arms we returned to the village about 6 a.m., not realising that a patrol of about 20 of the enemy were raiding a farmer's house (Ryan's of Woodstock) about 400 yards away from our dump.

We left the bog field about 6.15 a.m. and returned to the village. I remarked to J. Lawton: "I will chance a few hours sleep until Mass time at my lodgings at Mrs. McCarthy's" as I had had very little sleep during the previous week. He pointed out to me the possibility of a daylight raid, and suggested that it would be wiser to spend another morning at his residence, as I had already slept there during the previous two nights. Feeling utterly exhausted, I agreed, and got to bed about 6.30 a.m. At 7 a.m. I was awakened by Mrs. Lawton shouting to me "Run, Frank, the Camerons have surrounded Mrs. McCarthy's house". This house was situated about 100 yards away from where I then was. I dressed immediately and ran for shelter to the local churchyard, where I sheltered between some graves while deciding on what was the next best move. Then, using the shelter of walls, fences, etc., made my way to Fitzgerald's farmhouse at Woodstock, where I was refreshed with a much-needed breakfast by Gertie Fitzgerald. Seven years later I paid a visit to the Little Sisters Convent in Rome (I was visiting Rome with the Garda Siochána Pilgrimage in September, 1928) and there I met again Miss Fitzgerald, she then being Sister, whom I had not met since that memorable morning. We had a long talk on the people from the parish of Carrigtwohill, and discussed in detail the part taken by the parishioners in the fight for Irish freedom. Returning to that tragic morning of May, 1921, I returned to the village in an endeavour to attend Mass, to discover that during the previous three hours the enemy had captured and executed on the roadside the following members of the local Volunteers: John Ryan, Woodstock, Ahern, Ballyrichard, McNamara of Whitegate, and an elderly resident named Richard Hayes of Carrigtwohill.

All these men were shot dead by British forces on Sunday, 15th May, 1921, under similar circumstances, viz. taken from their beds and shot on the adjoining roadway. A total of five Irishmen shot dead by British forces during a period of eight days!

On Monday, 16th May, 1921, I was approached by the local curate, Fr. Tuohy, C.C., late P.P. of Conna, Fermoy, who had attended Castlelyons School near Fermoy at the same time as my mother was a school girl there, and he asked me to take a priest's advice, and for my mother's sake, to leave the parish at once. I promised to comply with the priest's request and keep away from the vicinity of the village for the time being. He said I had two miraculous escapes and might not be lucky the third time. Up to February, 1921, there were always vacancies in the Brigade Flying Column for members 'on the run', but owing to the tragedy of Clonmult where East Cork lost 22 of their best fighting men, there was no active service unit available that had vacancies for further members. As this way out was closed to me, I had to make alternate arrangements for myself with regard to being 'on the run'.

Visits to Dublin and London:

I knew at this time that my brother, Seán Healy, who was Captain of 'A' Company, 1st Battalion, 1st Cork Brigade, was living under similar circumstances, viz. a wanted I.R.A. man having no fixed address. I got into communication with him and we arranged to meet at McCurtain St., Cork, at 3 p.m. the same day and to arrange our affairs on a day to day basis. We met as arranged, and while standing at McCurtain St. discussing what was safest and best to do, we observed that a party of British

military had just surrounded the house that he had left about one hour previously. We proceeded at once towards Patrick Street, as it was generally believed that a crowded street was the safest place for an I.R.A. man 'on the run'. In passing, I may also mention that at this time householders were compelled under military law to have the names of all residents listed on a sheet of paper on the inside of the main door of their residences so that at any hour, day or night, the military and Black and Tans could check the actual occupants against the list, and if there was any discrepancy the head of the household was liable to immediate arrest. This system made it extremely difficult for I.R.A. men 'on the run' to obtain food and rest in martial law areas, which at this time extended over most of the Munster counties.

After some discussions re financial affairs, etc., we decided that if Cork City was now subject to frequent raids, especially at night, that Dublin or London would be the best places for a few days break from the dangers to which we were liable at all times. Consequently, we decided to travel to London via Dublin, and have a slight relaxation as far as our personal financial situations would permit. We left for London via the evening train, and combined rest with I.R.A. business. During our stay in London, we met some of the London branch of the Cumann na mBan, amongst whom were Misses May and Agnes Griffin, Miss Maura Manning, Miss Mai Healy, and Mrs. Eady (née Connolly), from whom we procured four revolvers, which were a welcome acquisition for I.R.A. purposes.

After a few days, we returned to Dublin to find ourselves again in the martial law area. On the day we

arrived, the enemy were in a state of panic, as about 1 p.m. on 25th May, 1921, the Dublin Brigade had attacked and set fire to the Dublin Custom House, which was in a mass of flames shortly after 1 p.m. We watched the conflagration with intense satisfaction from the vantage point of the top of Nelson's Pillar. The same evening, we visited a licensed premises at Dolphin's Barn, Dublin, and had another narrow escape. The British military raided and searched all the customers in the public bar but did not visit the lounge bar where we were seated, enjoying some refreshments in company with some members of the Dublin Brigade who had left the city centre on that date for safety reasons.

We left Dublin for Cork the following day, and, when approaching Mallow, the ticket checker on the train (Capt. Tom Quigley) informed us that there had been several raids made at our likely addresses in Cork City and Carrigtwohill during the period we were absent. He also advised us not to proceed to East Cork on that date as the O/C of 1st Cork Brigade had completed arrangements for the burning of some loyalists' houses, including Dobin-O'Gilvey's, as a reprisal for some Irish homes that had been burned down on military orders the previous week.

We alighted from the train at Mallow, which is about 20 miles on the Dublin side of Cork City, and checked up our joint financial resources, which did not amount to £2. We decided that we would have a comfortable night's rest, etc. in the best hotel in Mallow, and booked in to the Royal Hotel just outside the railway station. We got to the hotel at 9 p.m., and left the following morning at 8 a.m. after a good breakfast. We were scarcely left the place when it was searched in detail by members of the Black and Tans, but the birds had flown. We did not know (or,

possibly, did not care at that age) where we would rest the next night, as each night could possibly be our last.

After leaving the Royal Hotel, we procured bicycles and decided to visit the old home at Shanballymore, about ten miles outside Mallow. The Shanballymore Company of I.R.A. had recently been very active and, as a result, the enemy had destroyed two houses in the village as "official reprisals" for local ambushes, and some of the local company were 'on the run':

During the few days we remained at the old home, a large scale raid was carried out by military from Fermoy, Mallow, Kilworth, Buttevant and Ballinvonare Camp. Four lorries of troops arrived in the village, but before the soldiers had time to dismount we rushed out of the house and scaled a few walls and hid in a recess at rear of Roman Catholic Church. My parents and a sister who was a member of the local Cumann na mBan, were closely interrogated re movements of Sinn Féiners, but, needless to remark, all pleaded ignorance, and this raid, like many others, was abortive as far as we were concerned.

As military raids were on the increase in the Shanballymore area, we decided on again returning to Cork City. (We seemed to be getting climatized to living an existence as hunted men, and the tension appeared to ease a little when we got reconciled to the idea of selling our lives at the highest figure if suddenly we were taken unawares. We did not belong to the period when millions of the Irish race died of hunger while there was an unlimited supply of food on the farmers and plenty fish in the rivers and seas of the country. Our generation consisted of persons who would not die of exposure or want

while food and shelter could be obtained from the enemies of Irish freedom at the point of the gun. We lived on a day to day basis, which years after gave us a philosophic outlook on life and its daily uncertainties.

After a few days in Cork City, I contacted a few sympathetic friends (M. Burke and D. Sheehan) in District Superintendent's office, G.S. Railway, Cork City, and explained to them the circumstance under which I had to leave my employment as a railway official at Carrigtwohill. They gave my case a sympathetic hearing and after a few days offered me temporary employment in the railway goods' store at Bruree, Co. Limerick. I accepted the employment offered and duly arrived at Bruree, Co. Limerick, on 30th May, 1921. I adopted the christian name of Fred instead of Frank (which is my correct name) as a slight precaution in regard to my identity being established by chance through some British spies, who at this time increased their activities in all directions.

After a few days in Co. Limerick, I found that Bruree (boyhood place of Eamon de Valera, T.D.) had also gone through its purgatory like Carrigtwohill, Templemore, Balbriggan and other places, and families there also had recent experiences of raids, arrests, burnings, shootings, etc.

I joined the local Volunteer company after the O/C, John Morrissey, and Brigadier Donnchadha O'Hannigan had checked up on my credentials. I attended weekly drill parades and instruction classes and paid my weekly subscription of about 1/-. The drill parades were usually held at places along the banks of the River Maigue,

Knocksound, (Fairy Hill), or at Horogan's farm.

I was not called on to take part in any armed activities, and after a few weeks in the Golden Vale area I found my health had recuperated from the exciting and dangerous times experienced in the adjoining county, Cork, but the future was still very uncertain for the Irish people and, particularly, for the I.R.A. This uncertainty was confirmed when news came through that several more thousands of British troops were to be sent to Ireland. A troop ship arrived at Cobh, Co. Cork, and I witnessed three special trains of British troops, with full war equipment, passing through Bruree railway station, consisting of about 2,000 additional troops on their way to East Limerick and North Kerry to augment the forces already in the south of Ireland.

During the month of June, 1921, news was seeping through that negotiations were in progress between the I.R.A. H.Q. and the enemy with proposals for a truce, but the landing of additional troops seemed to belie these hopes. The end came almost dramatically when on Saturday, 9th July, 1921, it was officially announced that a truce had been signed between the Irish and the British armies at British General Headquarters, Parkgate St., Dublin. It was the end of the Anglo-Irish war, being the first formal recognition by the British of the Irish forces as belligerents since the Siege of Limerick in 1691. The Truce came into operation at 12 noon on Monday, 11th July, 1921, and with it Irish hearts gave sighs of relief to feel that at last there was a silver lining to the dark clouds that had overshadowed many an Irish home since the eventful days of Easter, 1916.

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
BURO STAIRE MILITIA 1913-21
NO. W.S. 1,694

Signed: *Francis Deady*Date: 11/11/57Witness: *John Brennan**Lieut. Col.*
(Investigator)