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COSANTA.

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 1695.

Witness

Maurice Brew,
Kilmartrin,
Donoughmore,
Co. Cork.

Identity.

2nd Lieutenant, Donoughmore Company,
Donoughmore Battalion, Cork I Bde.,
I.R.A.

Subject.

Donoughmore Company, Donoughmore Battalion,
Cork I. Brigade, I.R.A. 1915-1923.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil.

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ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

BURO STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21

No. W.S. 1,695

STATEMENT BY MAURICE BREW.

Kilmartrin, Donoughmore, Co. Cork.

I was born at my present address on May 14th 1890. My parents were farmers. I was educated at Stuake National School until I reached the age of 16, when I went to work on the farm at home.

I joined Donoughmore Company of the Irish Volunteers in October, 1915, when it was organised by Paddy Looney, Meenachonee. He was assisted in the work of organisation by Pat Higgins and Liam de Róiste, both from Cork City. Other locals who were active promoters were: Jack Manning and Joe Collins. The training in the early stages was carried out under Pat Higgins on Sunday mornings after Mass at Stuake. Within a short time our own officers were able to carry on. The strength of the unit at first was about twenty, but within a few weeks it grew to about 60. The officers of the company were:

O/C - Jack Manning
1st Lt. - Joe Collins
2nd Lt. - Jerh. Scanlan.

The section commanders were: Denis Murphy, Paddy Collins, Jim Barrett, and Maurice Brew (witness).

The training carried on consisted of close and extended order drill. Weekly parades were held in the fields in the area and on Sundays we went on route marches to surrounding districts. The only arms held by the company at this time were about 15 shotguns which were the property of members or their parents, and about twenty croppy pikes which were manufactured in the forge at Stuake. There was also an old Fenian rifle which was

the property of Jim Barry, a member of the company.

The first public parade of the company outside our own area took place in November, 1915, when we went to the Manchester Martyrs' Commemoration parade in Cork City. About sixty men from the unit, under Jack Manning (O/C), took part in this parade. We were armed with the shotguns, croppy pikes and the old Fenian rifle referred to previously. We travelled by the Muskerry train to Cork, where we were met by Pat Higgins in the railway station yard and marched with him to the Volunteer Hall in Sheares St. Here we handed up our arms, for which we obtained receipts, and then moved into the city centre to get something to eat before the parade. After the parade, we returned by train to Donoughmore.

Our weekly parades now continued and on Sundays we marched to Peake, Nadd, Rylane, Aghabollogue, where we helped to interest the public in the Volunteers and where companies were formed at a later stage.

We now paid a regular weekly subscription towards a fund, from which we purchased a miniature rifle, which gave us a fresh interest as we were now able to take part in target practice on Sunday evenings. We now discovered a second old Fenian rifle, and these weapons we used for drilling.

The O/C (Jack Manning) attended a course of training for officers at the Volunteer Hall in Sheare's St., Cork, in January, 1916. The training officer was, I believe, J.J. O'Connell, Dublin. When he returned from this course, the company was organised on a proper military basis. The officers and section commanders, together with the Company Adjutant and Q/M, Wm. Kelleher and Tom Scanlon

respectively, met each week as the Company Council, and at the same time underwent a course of training on the lines of that carried on at the course in Sheares St. These training sessions and meetings were usually held at Mullane's forge, Stuake.

The first clash with the British authorities took place on March 15th 1916, when we prevented the holding of a British recruiting meeting at Stuake. The members of the neighbouring Courtbrack Company were with us in this venture. When the car in which the speakers for the meeting arrived at the meeting place, the crowd gathered round. We were now ordered to "fall in" in the vicinity and, having formed up, we were marched between the car and the audience - surrounding the car. The Courtbrack Company arrived at this stage and took up positions with us. The crowd now scattered and the speakers only audience was our combined units of Volunteers and a few members of the R.I.C. There was no prospect of getting any recruits for the British army from this gathering, so the speakers for the British drove off without attempting to address us.

I was one of a party of about sixty men from the company (Donoughmore) which attended the St. Patrick's Day parade in Cork on March 17th 1916. About forty members were armed, either with shotguns or croppy pikes.

Regular weekly parades were being held as usual and we were on parade on Friday evening, April 21st 1916, when a despatch arrived from Brigade H.Q. It was received by Jack Manning (O/C). It contained instructions for a parade on Easter Sunday. After

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training, the parade was dismissed and a Company Council meeting which was attended by Jack Manning (O/C), Joe Collins (1st Lieut.), Jerh. Scanlan (2nd Lieut.), Wm. Kelleher (Adjt.), Tom Scanlan (Q/M), and Section Commanders Denis Murphy, Jim Barrett, Pat Collins, and Maurice Brew (witness), was held. At this meeting, orders were issued for the mobilisation of the full company at Coolmona on Easter Sunday at 11 a.m. All available arms, ammunition and equipment were to be carried on this parade and each man was to carry two days' rations. All present at the Company Council were instructed to ensure that the mobilisation was as complete as possible - all men to be advised of the orders during the following day - Easter Saturday. We had no definite news that this was other than an ordinary parade, but the O/C (Jack Manning) appeared to lay more stress than usual on the necessity for strict adherence to instructions. I left the council meeting that night with a feeling that there was something extra special on foot, and on Saturday evening I notified all members of my section of the Easter Sunday parade.

The following members of the Donoughmore Company assembled at Coolmona at 11 a.m. on Easter Sunday, 1916:

Jack Manning - O/C
Maurice Brew (witness)
John O'Shea
Richard O'Leary
James Barry
Wm. Kelleher
Denis Kelleher
Paddy Collins
Joe Collins
Mick Sullivan
Pat Sullivan
Patk. Daly
Denis Daly
Edw. Daly
James Daly
Wm. Foley
Tim Dineen
Pat O'Meara

Jim Barrett
 Paddy Looney
 Michael Healy
 Tom Forde
 Charlie Hurley
 Tim Cremin
 Tom Healy
 John McSweeney
 Batt Healy
 Pat. J. Murphy
 Denis Murphy
 Tim Sexton
 Tom Downey
 Tom O'Neill
 Jack Murphy
 Jack O'Shea
 Peter Murphy
 Peter O'Callaghan.

The arms carried on this parade consisted of seventeen shotguns with about 1,500 cartridges, thirteen pikes and two small revolvers with about 40 rounds.

The company was paraded at about 11.15 a.m. and we marched to Bering, where we arrived about 12.30 p.m. Here we met men from Courtbrack, Whitechurch, Mallow, Mourneabbey, Nadd and Castletownroche Companies. We carried out some exercises on the mountain here and the parade was then dismissed to enable us to partake of some refreshments.

Later in the evening - about 4 p.m. - we were again on parade when Tomás MacCurtain (Brigade O/C) arrived by car. He was accompanied by other officers. He addressed the parade, instructing all units to return to their home districts and to remain under arms pending further orders. We now marched back to our home area. The parade was dismissed with instructions that all men were to hold themselves in readiness for mobilisation at short notice.

On Easter Monday, the officers of the company met and we went to work on the loading of the cartridges

which we had, with slugs or buckshot. Two representatives from the company, including Jerh. Scanlan (2nd Lieut.), were sent to Cork on the Wednesday of Easter Week to ascertain what was happening in Cork and to seek instructions. They returned with instructions to continue to 'stand to'.

We were still awaiting instructions when on Friday a special messenger arrived from Brigade H.Q. in Cork to make arrangements for the transfer of some arms from the city and the dumping of them in Donoughmore area. With John Scanlan, Bouracharrig, and another I was instructed to proceed to Cork with three horses and carts to collect the arms. I travelled with John Scanlan to Cork and reported to H.Q. in Sheare's St. We were then informed that an agreement had been made to hand over the arms to the Bishop of Cork. We returned to Donoughmore area without the arms.

No arms or ammunition were lost in raids or surrendered to the enemy in Donoughmore Company area at Easter, 1916. There were no arrests in the area following Easter Week.

There were no Fianna or Cumann na mBan organisations in the area prior to Easter, 1916.

After Easter Week, regular weekly meetings of the Company Council were held as usual and we discussed the position and noted the changing attitude of the general public towards the Volunteers following the execution of the leaders. There was very little we could do at the time beyond keeping the organisation together, and this we did. The people were now beginning to become more sympathetic and funds were being raised

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to help the dependants of the men who had been shot or who were in prison. We helped to organise the collection of funds for this purpose and we sent regular subscriptions from our own funds to some local girls who were teaching in England, to enable them to provide comforts for the men from Macroom area interned at Frongoch.

Following the release of the prisoners about Christmas, 1916, we again set about organising the Volunteer company in the area. When J.J. Walsh - later to become Postmaster General of Irish Free State - addressed organising meetings at Cork and Macroom, our company were present on each occasion. The organisation of the Irish Volunteers was now proceeding apace and our unit was regularly visiting neighbouring areas in order to arouse interest. Amongst the areas visited were Rylane, Peake and Nadd, where companies were established during 1917.

About this time, a collection for the Prisoners' Dependants' Fund was taken up throughout the country at the church gates. When taking up the collection at Stuake chapel gate, the local R.I.C. sergeant (Casey) attempted to remove a notice concerning the collection from the gate, but Paddy Collins and I prevented him from doing so.

During the summer of 1917, a Sinn Féin club was formed in Donoughmore. A public meeting, which was addressed by Donal Óg O'Callaghan and Liam de Róiste - both from Cork City - was held at Donoughmore Cross. The chairman of the meeting was John W. Honohan, Derry. Some members of the committee elected at the initial meeting were: - Paddy Collins, Jim Barrett, Maurice Brew - witness - Jack Manning, Jerh. Scanlan, Paddy Looney.

All these were members of the Volunteers; as a matter of fact, the majority of the members of the Sinn Féin Club were Volunteers. At the first meeting of the club,

I was appointed, with Tadhg Murphy (now Dr. Tadhg Murphy, Carrignavar), to represent the club at a meeting in Macroom which was to set up an executive for the mid-Cork area. The officers of this executive were: - Denis Lynch, Macroom - Chairman; Paud O'Donoghue, Coachford - Secretary. Meetings of this body were held fortnightly and were attended by me.

As 1917 advanced, the strength of our company (Donoughmore) was increasing. Public parades in uniform were held regularly, and amongst the places visited by our unit were Ahadillane, Kanturk, Bering, Macroom, Firmount, Cork City.

When the British threatened to enforce conscription in the spring of 1918, the activities of the company were intensified. The strength of the company doubled, reaching nearly 200. There was no change in the officers. All available men were now engaged in the making of buckshot, tin can bombs, re-loading cartridges, training the new recruits, helping to collect the anti-conscription fund and to organise the general public for the coming fight against the imposition of conscription. All guns not already held by Volunteers or members of their families, were collected. A supply of petrol was sent from Brigade H.Q. for dumping in the area. When the threat of conscription had passed, the majority of the new recruits continued to serve in the Volunteers. The strength of our company (Donoughmore) was now about 160.

About this time the district was organised on a battalion basis as there were companies in existence at Grenagh, Courtbrack, Mounne Abbey, Whitechurch, Donoughmore, Ahadillane and Rylane. These companies were now organised as Donoughmore Battalion, Cork Brigade. The first officers of this battalion were: -

O/C - Patrick P. Twomey
 Vice O/C - Thos. J. Golden
 Adjt. - Denis McCarthy
 Q/M - Jim Barrett.

Normal training continued throughout 1918 and public parades were a regular feature. The full company (Donoughmore) were engaged on protection duty in Cork City during the general election in December, 1918.

There was a change in the organisation in Cork in January, 1919. Up to this time the county was organised as one brigade with about twenty battalions. It was decided to divide the area into three brigades as follows: Cork City, mid Cork, and East Cork (No. 1 Brigade), North Cork (No. 2 Brigade), and West Cork (no. 3 Brigade). Our battalion (Donoughmore) was now attached to No. 1 Brigade, being the South Battalion in this unit. The other battalions in this brigade were: Cork City (Nos. 1 and 2), Whitechurch (No. 3), Cobh (No. 4), Ovens (No. 5), Macroom (No. 7), Ballyvourney (No. 8), and Passage West (No. 9).

Beyond training, which was now becoming more advanced, there was little activity during 1919. Selected men from each company were now being trained as scouts, signallers, engineers and despatch carriers. During the summer of this year, all Volunteers helped in the collection of the 1st Dáil Éireann Loan.

Miss Peggy Bowen-Colthurst - a sister of Lieut. Bowen-Colthurst, who shot Sheehy-Skeffington while a prisoner at Easter, 1916, resided at Dripsey Castle at this time. She established a cheese factory in the village and paid a higher price for milk than the local creamery. As a result, a number of farmers (six) who had been supplying milk to the creamery, transferred their supply to her factory. As her family had been boycotted by all those with a national outlook following the 1916 incident, the farmers, who had ceased to send their milk to the creamery, were requested to refrain from supplying the cheese factory. They refused to do so and it was decided to teach them a lesson by holding up their supplies and disposing of them. On August 15th 1919, I was detailed to take a section of six men armed with revolvers to the main Macroom-Ballincollig road and to hold up the milk suppliers on their way to the Bowen-Colthurst factory. My party was accompanied by a guide from Inniscarra Company who knew the district well. We took up a position at a disused house near Fitzgibbon's Cross about $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles from Dripsey. As each supplier came along, we held him up, led his horse and cart into the yard of the house, tied and gagged the driver, and spilled the milk. When we had dealt with the six suppliers concerned, we withdrew and left them to make their way back home, after warning them to discontinue supplying milk to Bowen Colthursts. The farmers concerned returned as suppliers to the local creamery. Amongst the men who were on this job with me were: Tom Sweeney, Michael O'Shea, "Rocky" O'Leary, "Paky" Mahoney, John Crowley, and Jerh. P. Sexton.

About this time, a number of raids for arms were carried out in the company area, and the few shotguns that were still outstanding were collected.

As far as I can recollect, Brigade H.Q. submitted to G.H.Q. about this time plans for a general attack on all R.I.C. barracks and a suggestion that all R.I.C. men captured in these attacks should be shot. This plan was not approved, and instructions were now issued from Brigade H.Q. that no action should be taken against the R.I.C. without its prior authority. A meeting of Donoughmore Company Council, at which this order from Brigade H.Q. was discussed, was held on, I think, Saturday night, September 17th, 1919. Some members of the Council suggested that, despite this order, we should arrange to disarm two R.I.C. men at Berrings when they attended Mass there next day. It was finally decided not to carry out this job.

However, two members of the Council - Dan McCarthy and Jerh. Scanlan - accompanied by two men who were 'on the run' in the district - Ben Hickey and Leo Murphy - decided on their own to carry out the job. They were accompanied by Humphrey Kelleher. This party of five proceeded next morning to Mass at Berrings. They held up the two R.I.C. men as they were coming on to the roadway outside the church. The R.I.C. men put up a fight and there was some shooting. Constable McSweeney (R.I.C.) was seriously wounded, and one of the I.R.A. party - Ben Hickey - was slightly wounded. The revolvers carried by the R.I.C. men were captured.

Our raiding party now withdrew to the home area and there was no activity until about 11 a.m. next day.

(September 19th, I think), when several tenders of military and police arrived in the district. They searched the home of Jerh. Scanlan, who had taken part in the raid, and a number of other houses. I was aware of the whereabouts of our men, who had not gone back to their homes, and immediately I became aware of the presence of the enemy raiding party, I went to warn them. Before I could withdraw from the yard of the house where the others were, I learned from a neighbour who dashed in that the place was being surrounded by the military and R.I.C. I succeeded in getting outside the enemy ring without being observed, and made my way to the home of the Company Q/M (Jim Barrett) to advise him of the position. We disposed of all arms and documents held by the Q/M, and I then returned to my home by a roundabout route. My home was raided on three occasions during the following week, and I was 'on the run' from then until the Truce on 11th July, 1921. Seven men from the area were arrested following these enemy raids, including John Scanlan, Dan Looney (2), Wm. Ahearne, Dan Moynihan, Owen McCarthy, Tim Connell. Scanlan and Moynihan were not members of the I.R.A.

Jerh. Scanlan (2nd Lieut., Donoughmore Company), who had taken part in the attack on the R.I.C. at Berrings and who had been recognised, was now 'on the run'. He was billeted outside our area near Millstreet. Permission was received from Brigade H.Q. to allow him to leave the country, and in November, 1919, I was sent to Millstreet to contact him. He agreed to travel and it was arranged that he would be collected on the following Sunday evening and taken to Walshe's, Kerry Pike, near Cork City. I travelled to Kerry Pike to arrange for his billet and then returned to collect him and take him there. He left the country, as arranged, about a month later.

Towards the end of February, 1920, the R.I.C. authorities held an inquiry into the shooting at Berrings on September 28th 1919. This inquiry was called "The Star Chamber Inquiry" and was held at the Courthouse, Coachford. A party of R.I.C. from Donoughmore attended the inquiry, which was carried on for nearly a week. They travelled on bicycles each day to and from Coachford. Their movements were checked and for three days they followed the same route on the outward and return journeys. It was decided to ambush them on the return journey on the fourth day (I think). About twenty men from the company were mobilised at Tullig on the Donoughmore-Coachford road about 4 miles from Coachford. Two were armed with rifles and the remainder with shotguns. We took up position behind the roadside fence on high ground overlooking the road on the western side about 3 p.m. We were extended over a distance of about 80 yards. The R.I.C. party usually passed through this position on the return journey about 4.30 p.m. We held up everybody who passed along the road and detained them until after 5 p.m., by which time we had received a message from one of our scouts to say that the R.I.C. party had returned to Donoughmore by another route, so we then withdrew from the position and returned to our home area. Jack Manning (O/C) and Paddy Collins were in charge of this party, which included amongst others Tom Healy, Paddy Murphy, Wm. Kelleher, Tim Sweeney, Mick O'Shea, John Regan, Dan McCarthy, and myself.

Two members of Donoughmore R.I.C. garrison were driven to Forest Point to Point Races by Michael R. Walsh - a shopkeeper in Donoughmore - on, I think, March 10th 1920. Arrangements were made to ambush this party on the return

journey. The party which had been mobilised for the job at Tullig some days before were again assembled - this time at Clonmoyle on the Donoughmore-Coachford road about $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles from Coachford. Positions were taken up behind the roadside fence about 4 p.m., but having waited about 2 hours we learned that the enemy had travelled by a different route within about $\frac{1}{2}$ mile of where we were in position. We again withdrew to our own area.

After the foregoing incident, it was decided at a Company Council meeting to boycott Michael R. Walsh, who had driven the R.I.C. to the races. I went to Macroom to arrange for the printing of the posters which it was proposed to display in the district in order to notify the public of our decision. The posters were printed by a man named Kelleher, who carried on a small printing business. They were taken from Macroom by my brother, who, at the time, was a student in Maynooth. He is now Parish Priest of Milford. The posters were posted up throughout the area and not a single individual in the district did any business with Michael R. Walsh after that. The boycott continued for about two months until Walsh came to the church gate one Sunday after Mass and apologised to the parishioners for having co-operated with the R.I.C. He promised to be a good boy in future, so the boycott was lifted. A somewhat similar boycott was applied to two farmers - Philip and Thomas Barrett - who co-operated with the enemy by manuring and tilling the garden plot at the R.I.C. barracks. The same procedure as in the case of Michael R. Walsh was followed. The workmen employed on the farm left, milk would not be accepted at the local creamery, nor would any of the farm produce be handled. The Barrett family sought a settlement through the local Catholic Curate - Fr. Smith - and the case was settled on the following terms: -

- (a) a public apology to be read by one of the family at the church gate after all Masses on a certain Sunday, and
- (b) all workmen to be paid their wages for the period they were idle due to the boycott.

At Easter, 1920, when the general order for the destruction of evacuated enemy posts was received, the Donoughmore Company - to the number of about 70 - was paraded to take part in the destruction of Rylane R.I.C. barracks. The building was destroyed by fire. With four other members of the company, including Jim Barrett and Eugene Sullivan, I took part in the demolition of Firmount Courthouse on this occasion.

A Sinn Féin meeting presided over by Terence MacSwiney was held in Cork City Hall towards the end of May, 1920. I was present at this meeting, which was called to make arrangements for the Local Government elections which were to be held in the following month. I was appointed Director of Elections for Ballincollig/Blarney area. My duties were to organise the voting strength in the area, to ensure that every possible Sinn Féin supporter voted, and to visit all polling booths on the day of the polling to ensure that everybody on the register voted. I was accompanied on my tour of the polling stations by the Labour candidate for the district - Paddy Buckley, known as Black Paddy - as it had been arranged at the meeting in the City Hall that one seat in the area would be reserved for a Labour man.

When the R.I.C. barracks at Blarney was attacked - this was a brigade job - on June 1st 1920, I was on outpost duty at Cloghroe with a motor-cyclist from one of the city battalions. Our duty was to ensure that no civilian would be allowed to proceed towards Blarney

and to direct any I.R.A. men who might arrive at our post to their positions. We were on duty about 7 p.m. and remained until 11 p.m., when all sections from Donoughmore Battalion were withdrawn. I joined up with the other men from Donoughmore Company, and on our way back to our own district we burned Donoughmore R.I.C. barracks which had been evacuated a day or so before.

The men from Macroom Battalion carried out an attack on Carrigadrohid R.I.C. barracks on June 9th 1920. They sought the co-operation of our company to hold some of the roads in our area leading to the enemy post. On this occasion, I was one of a party of about 70 from Donoughmore Battalion who held a position at Fitzgibbon's Cross on the Cork-Dripsey road. We were to intercept any military re-inforcements which might travel this road, to the relief of the Carrigadrohid garrison. With the exception of two riflemen, all the others were armed with shotguns. We took up our position about 10 p.m. and remained until daybreak, but there was no appearance by any enemy force, so we evacuated and returned to our home area. The Battalion O/C (Jackie O'Leary) was in charge.

When the Sinn Féin Courts were set up about June, 1920, I was appointed a member of Donoughmore Parish Court. Other members of this court were: Con Buckley, Jack Manning, and Paddy Collins. The Court Registrar was David Mullane. At this court we dealt with cases of title, assault, larceny, licensing prosecutions, trespass, rights of way. Punishment, which was mainly on the basis of fines, was made to fit the crime, and in every case the decision of the court was accepted by the litigants.

Towards the end of June, 1920, a patrol of 2 R.I.C. men and one soldier came into the area from Ballinacollig. They were observed going towards Donoughmore village and their movements were reported to me. I collected about a dozen men with the minimum delay and we took up a position at Crean's Cross on the Ballycunningham-Donoughmore road about 2 miles from Donoughmore Cross. All were armed with shotguns. When we had been in position for some time, we learned that the enemy party had left by another route. We then travelled across country to Matehy - about 7 miles - where we hoped to intercept them, but they had passed through our selected position when we got there.

The next operation in which I took part covered the period August 12th to 20th 1920, when about 60 men drawn from Donoughmore Company took up positions each evening in this period at Kilcullen on the Rylane-Donoughmore road. All were armed with shotguns. In this case it had been reported that a military lorry passed this road occasionally about once a week and it was proposed to attack it. We took up positions each evening about 6 p.m. and remained until 11 p.m., but the enemy did not turn up, so we went back to our home areas after spending over a week in this abortive attempt to engage the enemy.

On the night of August 31st 1920, I was one of about nine men from Donoughmore Company who mobilised at Stuaque where we billeted in a hayloft at Connell's. We moved off next morning about 4 a.m. for Inniscarra, where we made contact with representatives from other companies in the battalion (Donoughmore). We took up positions on the

Inniscarra-Dripsey road about 1 mile from Inniscarra Bridge. We were under cover of the roadside fence with the River Lee at our rear. The full party numbered about 50 men. The majority were armed with shotguns. I was armed with a Lee Enfield rifle, while the men from Courtbrack Company carried Howth rifles. We were extended over a distance of about 80 yards. We took up the position about 8 a.m. We had been in position about 2 hours when a lorry of military approached from Dripsey direction. The road was to have been blocked by a tree trunk which was balanced on one end against a high rock on the opposite side of the road and was to be pushed off from the rock so that it would fall across the road. The tree was pushed away from the rock as the lorry approached, but it failed to overbalance and fell back against the rock. A second attempt to push the tree trunk over failed before the lorry reached the point at which the road was to be blocked, but this also failed. The failure to block the road enabled the lorry to pass through our position, and being the last man on the eastern flank of our position, I opened fire on the lorry, which swerved into the fence, was righted and continued on its way until out of range. There was a general outburst of fire, which was replied to by the enemy, but the failure of the road block to operate enabled the enemy to escape. We now had to withdraw hurriedly from our position, as we were within $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles of Ballincollig Military Barracks where a large enemy force was stationed. With the other men from Donoughmore Company, I withdrew across country to our home area. The men from the other companies did likewise. Some of the men from Donoughmore Company who took part in this engagement were: Paddy Collins, Dan McCarthy, John Crowley, Tim Sweeney, "Paky"

Mahoney, Maurice Brew (witness). Jackie O'Leary (Battn. O/C) was in charge.

About forty men from the company (Donoughmore) were mobilised towards the end of October, 1920, and were on their way to Grenagh to take part in an engagement with the enemy when the operation was called off by Brigade H.Q. The Battalion O/C (Jackie O'Leary) was in charge on this occasion also.

Early in October, 1920, a prison warder named Griffin who was hostile to the I.R.A. prisoners then on hunger-strike in Cork Gaol, was captured in the city and taken to Donoughmore area, where he was imprisoned in a labourer's cottage about 2 miles from my home. I was made responsible for his safe custody. I placed two members of the company (Donoughmore) on guard over the prisoner, but within a couple of hours one of the guards reported that the prisoner had escaped. I immediately arranged with the other company officers for an immediate mobilisation of the full company and regular patrol of all roads in the area. I then proceeded to Rylane Company, where I arranged for further patrols, and went on to Inniscarra where I arranged with the Company O/C to hold all bridges crossing the River Lee. The prisoner was now confined in the area and was recaptured next evening about 4 p.m. He was held prisoner in the area for about eight weeks.

At this stage it had been decided to place columns in the field on a full-time basis, and in order to raise funds to meet the expense of equipping these columns it was decided to impose a levy on all farmers, shopkeepers and householders. The job of collecting this levy fell on the shoulders of the officers in each company

area. The levy was computed in the case of farmers on the number of stock carried on the holding, and in the case of shopkeepers and others, on the Poor Law Valuation of the premises. The work of collecting this levy occupied the attention of all the company officers and several men in the period up to Christmas, 1920.

The first Battalion Flying Column was formed in the area in January, 1921. It was assembled for training in Donoughmore Company area at Sweeney's, Monatagart. The strength of this column was about 30. It was drawn from representatives of all companies in the battalion. Training was carried out under an ex-British soldier - Denis Dwyer from Grenagh. The Battalion O/C (Jackie O'Leary) was Column O/C. The initial training continued for about a fortnight. For the final week, the column was billeted and completed its training at the labourer's cottage which had been used as a prison when Warder Griffin was detained in the area.

The column left its billet on the night of January 17th 1921 and moved off to take up a position at Dripsey. On the way I was instructed to return to Donoughmore area and to arrange for first-aid men and transport to be sent to Dripsey next morning. I was also detailed to ensure that an efficient scouting system was immediately established between my own area and Dripsey so as to ensure that the line of withdrawal from Dripsey was properly covered. I was also to arrange for guards, outposts, billets and feeding for the column on its return from the Dripsey engagement. I was told by the O/C (Jackie Leary) that, if only one man returned from the ambush, he was to report to me. I arranged for the billeting of the column at Lane's, Kilcullen House, where

a supply of food was always available. I did not hear any report from Dripsey until about 11 p.m. on January 28th, 1921 - the date of the engagement - when I heard that there had been a fight and that the column had been scattered. I later learned that the majority of the column had retreated to Rylane area.

When the Battalion Column had moved out from their billet at the "prison" to take up the position at Dripsey, the billet was occupied next day by some men from the Brigade Column, including Dan O'Donovan ("Sandow"), Dick Murphy, and Mick Bowles. Shortly after I heard the report of the happening at Dripsey, I made contact with the above named men from the Brigade Column who were travelling in a car towards Coachford. I informed them of the position and, after a lot of persuasion, convinced them that they should not proceed on their journey as the area was occupied by strong enemy forces. Had they proceeded on their way, they would undoubtedly have run into trouble.

About this period, I received instructions from the Battalion O/C (Jack O'Leary) to collect a supply of arms and ammunition from the Blarney Company for the Brigade Column. I organised a convoy of six horses and carts, and with about twenty men on scouting and guard duty we went to Blarney, where we picked up a Lewis gun, 15 or 16 rifles, and a supply of ammunition. We transported these stores safely to Crowley's, Derry, where they were cleaned before handing over to the Brigade Column.

In the Spring of 1921, all available men were engaged in cutting enemy lines of communication, demolishing bridges, blocking roads, digging trenches and suchlike activities. The men engaged on these duties were always protected by armed scouts. This work went on continuously up to the Truce as the enemy were forcing civilians to re-open roads at the point of the gun.

At this time, Leemount House, Coachford, was burned in order to prevent its occupation by enemy forces. With a number of other men from the company (Donoughmore) I removed a gas engine and plant from Mrs. Lindsay's premises. This engine was to be used in a bomb factory which was to be set up in a dug-out in the area.

Instructions were now received from Battalion H.Q. to build a dug-out which would accommodate a number of men in each company area. This was strenuous work as a considerable amount of digging had to be done with the minimum number of suitable tools. A large dug-out to accommodate about thirty men was under construction in Twomey's farm at Monatagart during this period, but it had not been completed when the Truce was called.

On the night of March 31st, 1921, a party which included the Battalion O/C (Jackie O'Leary) and myself raided the Petty Session Clerk's office at Coachford to collect his books and the cash received by him for dog licences. We got the books, but we did not get the cash, despite threats to shoot the clerk. We returned to Donoughmore, where we carried out a similar raid with similar results.

We had only returned from the raids on the Petty Sessions Clerk at Donoughmore and Coachford when we learned that the area had been invaded by a force of military. This party carried out several raids but they failed to make any captures. However, next morning a complete comb-out of the district was undertaken by an enemy force estimated at 2,000. They moved across country in extended order, searching fields and fences, but beyond finding the dog licence books, which had been seized on the night of March 31st, and the gas engine which had been removed from Mrs. Lindsay's, they captured no other booty. In this round-up the enemy employed an aeroplane to search the district. Similar tactics were employed by a large enemy force a week later, with like results. On the occasion of the latter round-up I escaped with the Battalion Staff under cover of darkness to Courtbrack Company area.

Major Compton-Smith, D.S.O., Chief British Intelligence Officer for Munster - was captured at Blarney railway station by the Battalion Vice O/C (Frank Busted) and taken to Donoughmore Company area about mid April, 1921. He was held prisoner for some days while negotiations for his exchange for a number of I.R.A. prisoners under sentence of death in Cork were being carried on. The British, however, refused to exchange the prisoners, whom they duly executed. Major Compton-Smith was then executed. Before his execution he wrote three letters - one to his wife, one to his father, and one to his regiment. He handed these over to the Battalion O/C for transmission. When removed to the place of execution, he placed his cigarette case in the breast pocket of his tunic and asked that,

after his death, it should be sent to his regiment. He then lighted a cigarette and said that when he dropped the cigarette it could be taken as a signal by the execution squad to open fire.

About mid May, 1921, a strong column from the battalion (Donoughmore) was mobilised at Kilmartin. It moved off on foot for an attack on Macroom about 3 p.m. on the same day. A supply of ammunition for this column was being taken along in a motor car. The car met with an accident and I was ordered to remain behind to arrange for the removal of the car to a safe place. The column proceeded on its way to Macroom, but when it had occupied the position allocated to it by the Brigade O/C (Seán Hegarty), who was in charge of the operation, the job was called off. The column then marched back to Donoughmore area and disbanded - the members returning to their respective companies.

Towards the end of June, 1921, two strong enemy columns passed through the area on their way to Cork 11 Brigade. They returned within a couple of days and billeted in Donoughmore and Rylane for one night. The Brigade O/C (Seán Hegarty) and Brigade Q/M (Seán McSweeney) were in the district at the time. The former was escorted without delay to Grenagh, while with the Q/M and the Battalion Staff I withdrew to Ahadillane, where we remained overnight until the enemy columns had withdrawn.

My rank at the Truce was 1st Lieut., Donoughmore Company, Donoughmore Battalion, Cork 1 Brigade, I.R.A. The strength of the company was about 150.

The officers of Donoughmore Company in the period 1915-1921 were as follows: -

1915-1919.

O/C - Jack Manning
1st Lt. - Joe Collins
2nd Lt. - Jerh. Scanlan.

November, 1919.

O/C - Jack Manning (arrested Feb. 1920)
1st Lt. - Paddy Collins (I think)
2nd Lt. - Maurice Brew (witness).

February, 1920.

O/C - Paddy Collins (apptd. Bn. Q/M Feb. '21).
1st Lt. - Dan McCarthy
2nd Lt. - Maurice Brew.

February, 1921.

O/C - Jack Manning (resigned April 1st '21).
1st Lt. - Dan McCarthy
2nd Lt. - Maurice Brew.

April, 1921.

O/C - Dan McCarthy
1st Lt. - Maurice Brew
2nd Lt. - Paddy Murphy.

Immediately following the Truce on 11th July, 1921, there was a general relaxation of the tension of the previous months. However, within a matter of days the I.R.A. were hard at work preparing for the day when the negotiations with the British might break down and it would be necessary to resume the fight. Training camps were established in each battalion area which were attended by the officers of the companies in the battalion. Each of these camps was carried on for about a fortnight, during which the men in attendance were trained in every aspect of military affairs. When the Battalion Camps had terminated, the company officers returned to their own areas to put the men in the local units through a course of training on the

lines of that at the Battalion Camps. I spent the whole of the month of August, 1921, either at the Battalion Camp or supervising the training of the companies, while during September I was more or less similarly engaged.

Some time later, a few tons of explosives, including "War Flour" and "Irish Cheddar", arrived in the area and was handed over to me for storing and safe custody. These materials were later used in the manufacture of land mines and suchlike.

Battalion H.Q. was now established at Curragh House and the normal work of administering and training the battalion was carried on from there. As the H.Q. was in my company area (Donoughmore), I was responsible for the provision of guards and a maintenance party.

Beyond these activities and normal training, there was nothing exceptional until March, 1922, when a large portion of the cargo of the "Upnor" - a British military transport ship conveying arms from Cobh (then Queenstown) on the British evacuation - was taken into the area to be dumped. The stores taken into the area on this occasion included: - 300 Lee Enfield rifles, 14 Ross Canadian rifles, 12 Lewis guns, 6 Maxim guns, 1 Vickers gun, 48 Webley revolvers, 80,000 rounds of .303 ammunition, 6,000 rounds of .45, 48 boxes of high explosives, including gelignite, cheddar and shell caps. The arrival of these stores in the area necessitated the provision of additional guards all round the clock while they were held in the district until sometime in July, 1922, when they were removed by the Brigade Q/M.

As the question of the acceptance of the Treaty was now under consideration by the I.R.A. - it had been accepted by the Dáil on a vote of 64 to 57 - a convention of delegates from all units in Cork 1 Brigade was held in Cork on St. Patrick's Day, 1922. I attended this convention as a representative from Donoughmore. I also attended a parade in Cork with the Battalion (Donoughmore) A.S.U. on Easter Sunday of that year.

Early in April, three British officers visited Macroom and were detained there by the I.R.A. Next day a strong British force entered Macroom to search for the missing men. As it was feared that the British might attack our forces in Macroom, a strong column from our battalion was mobilised and took up ambush positions in the vicinity of Coachford, where we remained for two days until the British withdrew from the area.

When news of the attack on the Republican H.Q. in the Four Courts on June 28th 1922 was received, the Battalion Column was immediately mobilised and ordered to 'stand to'. Next day, I moved into Ballincollig Military Barracks in charge of a party of twenty men from Donoughmore Company.

I moved to Limerick City with a composite Cork Column on July 12th and took part in a few engagements with Free State troops there until the city was evacuated by our forces on July 21st, when, after some days in the Limerick area, I was sent with a column from our battalion (Donoughmore) to Waterford City. After the evacuation of Waterford, I was

engaged with our column in Dungaryan, Tramore and Carrick-on-Suir areas until we were ordered to return to Cork when the Free State forces landed at Passage West about August 10th 1922.

I now took part in engagements with the Free State forces at Douglas and Rochestown, and after the evacuation of Cork City I withdrew with our column to Ballincollig and the home area. During the period to the end of October, 1922, I took part in several engagements and engaged in the blocking of roads and demolition of bridges throughout the battalion (Donoughmore) area. On one of these occasions I engaged two lorries of Free State troops single handed until the column got into position, and so saved four men who were engaged further along the road blowing up a bridge at Glen Caun.

I was arrested on October 30th 1922, at which time I had a dump on my land which contained ten land mines, twelve rifles, 5 large boxes of grenades, and about 8,000 rounds of .303 ammunition. The Free State force which took me prisoner had apparently some news of this dump and searched everywhere for it, but failed to discover it. Lieut. Leonard, who was in charge, suggested that, if I revealed the whereabouts of the dump, I would be released immediately, and furthermore, if I cared to join the Free State Army I would get my rank. I reported this matter to the O/C Prisoners in Macroom (Peter Honchion), who ordered me to give parole if I got a chance, and to see to the safety of the dump.

Some days later I was visited by Fr. Brew, C.C., Macroom. He told me that he had arranged with Comdt. Lynch, who was a parishioner of his, for my release on parole. On the instructions of my O/C (Peter Henchion), I gave parole and was released. On my release I reported for duty to my Battalion O/C (Frank Busted). I carried out all duties allocated to me as O/C Donoughmore Company up to the cease fire order. I posted scouts and acted as guide for members of G.H.Q. staff and Divisional Officers who were passing through the area to various meetings during the early part of 1923. After the cease fire I was engaged in the collection and dumping of arms for some months. I returned to my home in November, 1923, but, despite the termination of hostilities, my home was raided frequently up to the year 1929.

Signed: Maurice Brew.

Date: 14th November 1954

Witness:

P. L. Donnell

(Investigator).

