ROINN COSANTA.

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 1,731.

Witness

John C. King,
133-01 Sandford Avenue,
Flushing,
New York,
U.S.A.

Identity.

Adjutant, Leenane Batt'n., I.R.A.

Member of West Connemara Brigade,

Active Service Unit.

Subject.

Witnesses experience in the fight for

Irish Freedom with the West Connemara Bgde.,

Active Service Unit.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil.

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File No.

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Form B.S.M. 2

STATEMENT BY JOHN C. KING,

133-01 Sanford Avenue, Flushing, New York, U.S.A.

STAFF CAPTAIN JOHN C. KING'S EXPERIENCE IN THE FIGHT FOR IRISH FREEDOM WITH THE WEST CONNEMARA BRIGADE - ACTIVE SERVICE UNIT.

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I was born the 1st of October, 1900, near the town of Westport, Co. Mayo. When I was three and a half years' old, my mother died at the birth of my brother, William. There were five children; one girl and four boys. My father could not take care of the children, so they were taken over by different relatives.

I cannot remember the background of my family on either side. William, the baby, and I were taken by my uncle and his wife, named Sammon, which was my mother's name. They lived on the south side of Leenane, Co. Galway, in a village named Cullaghbeg. My uncle had some part in the Land League under Parnell and Michael Davitt. He was always a bit wary about having anything to do with matters of any national revolutionary nature, as it seems he had some experience during the Land War which left some unpleasantness in his memory. By this, he felt that people could not be trusted.

He had a small farm, and was also a road ganger for the County Council. He kept a number of stud animals, stallions, bulls and rams, as well as two

beautiful Scotch collies, male and female. Thus, my brother and I grew up with all kinds of farm animals.

We attended national school at the village of Leenane. The national school at Leenane was about a mile and a half from home, and the teachers were always of the loyalist type. Gaelic was never taught in my day. Although I speak it, I cannot read or write the language of my country!

Close to the end of my school days, the Great War started, and we were having all the propaganda at School that could be drummed into our young heads by England's system of education. Anybody who donned the uniform of England was a demi-god in the eyes of the loyalists.

Every day we were treated to the spectacle of British soldiers on route march through the country. The constant din of artillery and rifle practice - the massing of the British fleet in the Killary Bay as they hid from the attacks of the German "U" boats. To my young ears at the time, it was all the greatest of excitement coming into our dull country life.

The first feeling of awakening came to me around Easter Monday, 1916, as I was doing some marketing in a loyalist shop in Leenane. A fellow came in who was a servant of some of the English land-holders about the district, and he was very excited. He said that "Sinn Feiners" had risen in Dublin and were spreading all over the country, and that the participants would all be

shot or hanged, as they were all in the pay of the Kaiser.

I had a mile and a half to walk home and a lot of time to think of those strange men who dared to attack the great British Empire (now at war). I felt a funny feeling deep down in my stomach, and I could not stop the tears coming into my eyes. The story I told at home was not taken much notice of until the following day. News came thick and fast, and all kinds of false rumours were coming in, as censorship was clamped down.

Soon word came from the Ó Maille household, which was close by, that Pádraic Ó Maille, along with Colm O'Gaora, were arrested. I did not know Colm O'Gaora then, but the Ó Maille family were next-door neighbours, so it brought the matter into the "back yard". The Ó Maille's were all either teachers, or had something to do with the Gaelic language.

Things happened fast after this, as the threat of conscription came along, and all the youth of the country flocked into the Irish Volunteers, or endeavoured to get out of the country to America. A company was formed in Leenane by Peter J. McDonnell, John Feehan and Michael Joyce of Glanagimla. I joined at once, and became Company Lieutenant. This part of the movement was taken up with drilling and making of pikes and teaching first-aid.

After the release of the political prisoners from England, I came into contact with Colm O'Gaora and Pádraic Ó Maille, and in 1918 saw Padraic elected to Dáil Éireann. I took a very active part in this election. I remember having the 'flu (which was

raging at the time) and being confined to bed on Christmas night on that year, and on New Year's Day I got out of bed, although I was in a very weak condition, to see the result of our victory over the Irish Party member, William O'Malley. There was a terrible fall of snow at the time.

Again in 1919, those who were released had to go on the run, and Padraic Ó Maille, who was elected first Deputy Speaker of the Dáil, had to go with them. He was a very big man, weighing twenty stone, and six feet tall, so he was easy to recognise under any kind of disguise.

Knowing that I was in the Volunteers, Padraic asked me if he could get his mail under my address. So I consented and, for a long time, I received his mail in an envelope marked "catalogue". The R.I.C. were constantly searching and raiding for him, and as I was also active in the Volunteers, I had to watch that the police would not "catch on" that I was getting Padraic's mail. I had to be always on the alert, and too, my uncle was not aware that I was doing this. My actions in the Volunteers made so much nonsense to him, and brought down on my head plenty of tongue lashings on account of late hours and absence from home and work.

One night, I came home late, and it was my custom not to put on any light. The big Collie dog never barked when I came to the door, but this night he wanted to get by me, and he growled meaningly in his throat. I quieted him by patting him on the head. But I knew there was something amiss. I listened and heard a low murmur of distant supressed voices, and also saw the

gleam of a smouldering cigarette on the laneway leading to the main road from the house. I knew at once that it was a patrol of police, keeping an eye on my house to see if Padraic Ó Maille would come along. I caught the dog by the neck and gave him a shake, and said; "Go, get them!". He dashed down the lane silently, and next thing I heard was a cry of pain as his sharp teeth sank into one of the R.I.C. men's leg. After this, I did not think it safe to get any more of Padraic's mail.

About this time, the R.I.C. raided the residence of Padraic Ó Maille and there was an exchange of gunfire. Padraic and those who were with him got away, and I heard afterwards that it was Sean Ford who fired on the police. However, the raiding party did not show too much desire for combat, and took to their heels. The following day, a large cycling party of R.I.C., under a District Inspector, made another raid on the house. To what purpose, I cannot tell. (As the object of their attention was in their net the previous night, how naive did they think he would be, to await their arrival the following day!) They certainly made a big display of their stupidity, and made a formidable spectacle, armed with side arms, carbines and bayonets. It was the first raid I saw, and woke me up to the fact that things were getting hot. Later, I would learn how hot things COULD get!

The year 1919 was taken up with collecting funds. We ran concerts, sports and dances as well as door-to-door collections. I remember being sent to a fair at Maam and collecting £5, which I thought a good day's work. On another occasion, I was hard at work in the

hay-field when Padraic and Eamonn Corbert from Galway came along, and said they were going to some sports event that was being held in Kylemore. All I could do was walk along with them. (The reader must realise the effect such an act had on my uncle - on such a fine day - and what I was in for, on my return home!) I remember that we carried side arms on this occasion, as we expected the field to be raided by R.I.C. to catch Padraic.

At the time in question, the R.I.C. had evacuated all the outposts which they deemed vulnerable to attack, and the closest to Kylemore was Clifden. They held Maam barracks, which was built on a hill close to Lough Corrib and was heavily fortified with steel shutters and barbed wire. It could not be attacked from any direction, as there was no cover to get close enough to place a demolition charge. Thus, it was never attempted.

Now we received orders to destroy all barracks and posts evacuated by the military and R.I.C. One night, we assembled to burn the police barracks at Leenane. We had a lot of oaten straw and petrol, and carried side arms. When we reached the main door, it was locked, and we decided to get a sledge hammer to batter it down. Padraic Ó Maille was along with us, and he said: "Keep back!", and charged at the door. The door frame disintegrated in a cloud of dust, and Padraic disappeared through it. I heard a dull thud and a loud grunt as Padraic hit the wall on the other side of the hallway. I remarked to P.J. McDonnell, who was standing near, that the big brute must have gone through the wall on the other side.

The year 1920 saw things getting real hot, and it was decided to sleep away from home. There were a number of men on the run in and around the mountains, and at all hours of the night and day I was taking somebody to some place to hide out. The majority of these were unknown to me, but Padraic knew them all. They generally had an alias, and I never enquired further. One of these men (I afterwards found out) was Richard Mulcahy. I was told by Padraic to keep a look-out while Mulcahy dined at Padraic's house in Mounterowen. Later, as I walked with him in the lead, while some other came in the rear, he asked me if I had any rank and I told him my rank. He said: "Do you know what makes a good I.R.A. man?" I did not make any reply as I did not know what answer to make at the time. "Well", he said, "I will tell you, and I want you to keep it always in your memory; it is this: always obey orders without question when coming from your superior officer; be punctual at all meetings. Do not ask questions. Keep your eyes and ears open, and observe everything that takes place. These are the basic qualifications for a good I.R.A. man, and see that you observe them!" I never met Mr. Mulcahy after that, although I was to hear plenty about him. I remember him as a stern man who talked little. He had a lean military-like face and did not do any idle talking. He seemed to be always in deep thought.

One night, after leaving Padraic and some others in billets for the night, I was coming along an old by-way in the upper part of my native village, when I observed an object coming along from the direction of my house. I hid until it came quite close, keeping my hand on a

.38 revolver I carried, and wondering what the apparition might be. When it came near, I saw it was a man, and then I recognised Tomas Ó Maille, a brother of Padraic, who was a professor at Galway University. He began to tell me a tale of murder and torture in Galway by the Tans and Auxiliaries. Tomás wished to stayed with Padraic for the night, so I had to retrace my way back to where Padraic slept.

I will never forget how this professor was garbed. He wore a severe black suit and overcoat, a white straw hat, a very high collar, with a narrow black tie, white spats, and he carried a cane and reader. You can imagine this outfit in the Connemara Mountains. He was the first professor I met, but I was to learn afterwards that all professors followed a pattern of eccentricity.

As the year 1920 went on, the situation grew worse, and there were a lot of men who could not remain at home, so it was decided to start a camp. The place selected was in Glanosch Valley. There, a herd's house was taken over and furnished for sleeping quarters. This valley is about seven miles long, and runs from east to west in the centre of the Joyce country. There is no road going through it, and it is surrounded by high mountains on either side. On the south side of the valley, on the Maam Turk Mountain, Eamonn Ó Maille (who was a brother of Padraic and an engineer) blasted a cave, to hide out and store arms. We decided to move all arms and ammunition to the camp, and do some training there.

The men were at this time raiding for arms and

loading shotgun cartridges, as the order was expected at any moment to form a column. I made frequent trips with food and arms to the camp in Glanlosh, and Padraic would ask me if there was any news. So I would tell him anything that came into my mind. Tomás, with the mind of a teacher, would tell Padraic not to pay much attention to the King fellow, as he was given to great exaggeration (which was quite true in this case!). Generally, Padraic told him to "shut up".

Padraic had a dog named Dingo which was of questionable ancestry and went all over with him. It gave off a very offensive odour and was infested with his share of fleas. An enmity sprang up between Tomás and the dog, due to the odour and fleas. Tomás told Padraic he should get rid of the flea-hound. Padraic's reply was to the effect that the dog was held in high esteem, and that any man who didn't care to tolerate him should clear out.

One night, we were all seated in a house after having something to eat, and the woman of the house asked Tomás what the Black and Tans and Auxiliaries were. Tomás explained thus: "The Black and Tans and Auxiliaries are the scum of the British prisons and armies, and are sent over to this country, getting seven pounds per week, to shoot down men, women and children, and destroy our homes, and get as much loot as they can possibly attend to. DO YOU KNOW ...!" (Tomás always finished his sentences in this manner.)

On Christmas night of 1920, all went home from camp, and I was about to depart too when Padraic asked whether or not anybody was going to remain with him.

Nobody answered, but all left! I decided to remain as I felt sorry for him to be alone on the Holy Night. About twelve o'clock that night, Padraic got a notion that there might be a raid on the camp and that it would be better to repair to the cave on the mountain side. Now, it was pitch black, and he took some bedding on his back, and I carried some more. He took a pail of live coals, and we started up the steep cliff. As Padraic got into the breeze higher up, the embers in the pail began to send a shower of sparks skyward, and old Dingo began to howl at the flames. I was coming in the rear and, with the sparks flying and the rocks dug up by Padraic's feet, I was running the gauntlet!

When we reached the cave, we started a fire, and soon the place was full of smoke. I told Padraic the chimney was stopped up, and went on the roof to open it with a stick. I was not long up there when I heard a great commotion in the cave. Padraic began to holla, and the dog began to snarl. I jumped down, and heard something go up the steps that led down to the cave door. As I entered, I heard Padraic cursing at Dingo to "get him", and the next moment he (Padraic) was upset on the floor, and I ducked as a grey object came at me and went through the door, with Dingo in pursuit! It was then that we found out that a badger and his mate had made a home in our dugout when they found the door open, and got smoked out!

There was an upright bed in the cave, with a spring in it, which we got into. It was not long until Padraic was snoring soundly, and Dingo busy by the fire attending to his fleas, as well as licking some scratches received from the badgers. Some time during

the night, I woke and, as the fire had died down, I felt rather cold. Padraic lay on his side, still snoring. I was surprised to find that I could sit up alongside of Padraic and no bedclothes would touch me. It was as if I was in a "pup tent" alongside him. I was glad when morning dawned.

It was reported that four R.I.C. men attended Mass at Kilmilkin Church each Sunday, but did not carry arms. We had need of bicycles for despatch work, as well as taking wanted men from place to place. So myself and an officer named Bernard Brennan (alias Jack Smith, who was on the run and staying with P.J. McDonnell at Leenane, and who belonged to a Sligo column to which he returned after this incident) went to the Church, seized the four bicycles, and made off with them. The police were scared when they found their bicycles gone, and they thought it was a ruse to shoot them on the way to the barracks. We heard afterwards that one fellow, who had been engaged in a raid on the residence of Colm O'Gaora, thought he was being singled out. He fainted before he reached the barracks, and had to be taken in on a side car.

Commandant Seán Corcoran was at my house shortly afterwards, and one of the bicycles was given to him, as the one he was using was in bad condition. The poor fellow was shot dead about three days later near his home at Claremorris. He was surprised by a patrol of police, as he cycled along the road on that same bicycle, and did not get a chance. May God rest his noble soul!

Appendix 6

National Archives Act, 1986, Regulations, 1988

ABSTRACTION OF PART(S) PURSUANT TO REGULATION 8

Form to be completed and inserted in the original record in place of each part abstracted

(i) Reference number of the separate cover under which the abstracted part has been filed: WS 1731/A

(ii) How many documents have been abstracted: 1 p

(iii) The date of each such document: 31/1/58

(iv) The description of each document:

WS 1731 Witness Statement Jane C. King p12

Details of a personal nature

(Where appropriate, a composite description may be entered in respect of two or more related documents).

(v) Reason(s) why the part has been abstracted for retention:

(c) Would or might cause distress or danger to living persons on the ground that they contain information about individuals, or would or might be likely to lead to an action for damages for defamation.

(These will be the reasons given on the certificate under Section 8(4).)

J Moloney

Name: (J. Moloney.)

Grade: Col.

Department/Office/Court:

Date: 7 March 2003.

The New Year of 1921 was filled with hasty preparations, as we were aware that the time was at hand when we would get the order to take the field. We began to get all our equipment together at an arranged dump. My brother, Willie, and I were taking some rifles and other stuff along an old pathway (which was a short-cut from the main road) to our house. It was very dark, and there was a house near the entrance of this byway in which lived a family named Barrett, whose daughter was married to an R.I.C. man named Callanan from Clonakilty in Co. Cork.

Barrett had a dog called Kruger, named so after a Boer General. This dog was black and white, and you could never get past the house without his giving the alarm by barking.

My brother could hit anything with a stone, cast underhand from the hip. So I climbed into the field before I reached the house, carrying the rifles on my back in a sling. Willie continued along the path. As he got near the gate, he saw the dog framed there, so he quickly picked up a stone and cast it underhand with great force. But, instead of a howl from the dog, I heard a loud scream as if someone had been suddenly hurt. My brother came running back to tell me that he mistook Jim Barrett in the gateway for the dog, as he wore a white coat which his son, who was a shop assistant in Dublin, had brought home when leaving. All I could do was lie down on the ground and try to smother loud laughter.

A mission was being held in the Leenane Church, conducted by two priests, Fathers Tracey and Cotter, of the Redemptorist Order. They were very sympathetic to the cause. Uc of the column were told to go to Confession to them, and tell them that we expected to start fighting in the near future. They gave us their blessing, and were indeed fine priests.

Not long after this, we ran into the same two priests, but not in the confessional. We went to Cornamona to destroy a bridge, and they were conducting a mission there. The Pastor, Father John O'Grady, was from Louisburgh, Co. Mayo. The charge was laid in the bridge by Eamonn Ó Maille (the engineer), and an electric cable led to a battery, some distance away. Some of the men stood guard while others went to houses close by, to warn the occupants to evacuate until after the detonation. It was a heavy charge of dynamite, as the bridge was very strongly constructed of granite arch. P.J. McDonnell, who was O.C., told the men to stand-to until all the people got over the bridge who were at the mission. When all had passed, Father O'Grady and the two missioners came along, and Father O'Grady asked what was amiss. The O.C. told him that now we were at war with the British, and that we had to destroy bridges which afforded the enemy a circular route, and explained that it was essential to military strategy to do so. Father O'Grady would not listen, but began a long tirade about a lot of foolishness as well as the hardship entailed by his parishoners. Father Cotter, who had flaming red hair, said, "Boys, don't argue with him! Do your work, but please let us get a distance down the road before you blow the bridge!" They started off

at a run, but Father O'Grady said he would stand on the bridge and let it be blown up under his feet. To this, Father Tracey said: "Good-bye, John! See you in Heaven ... maybe!" With that, the C.O. gave the order to clear the bridge and take cover. Father O'Grady was not too far away when the explosion shook the countryside and split the bridge in two.

There was an old man named Lowery who would not get out of his house, as he was suffering from severe rheumatism. He was lifted from his bed by the concussion, and when he got to his feet, his old bones had become limber as a child's. I heard that he became an ardent Republican.

A few days after this, P.J. McDonnell, John Feehan, Gerald Bartley and Tommy Madden came to my house, and they told me to come along, that we were going into action and would not remain home any more. I went into the stable and got my rifle which I had hidden for some time, as I was expecting to be called at any moment. I will never forget the look my uncle gave me as I came out of the stable with the rifle, which he never knew was there. No doubt that when he saw this, he was sure we meant business, even though he may have thought us a lot of young fools. I was the only one who carried a rifle; all the rest carried side arms. I thought myself a formidable trooper, with my .38 calibre revolver and .303 Martini Carbine - but I was to learn a different lesson later, as to the effectiveness of armament!

I had never met Tommy Madden previously to this, and as I looked him over, he appeared to me at the time to be one of the strangest men I ever saw. He looked much older than he was. He had crossed eyes, and did not seem to have very good eyesight. His eyebrows were bushy and covered his eyes, and were set in a lowering expression. He walked in a stooped manner and, at each step, lifted his feet after the manner of an ostrich. But he was not wanting in courage. I will deal with him some more later on in this story.

Gerald Bartley I had heard about, but it was our first meeting. He was one of the finest looking I.R.A. officers I ever saw. Tall and well-built, with a pale, lean face, dark hair and square shoulders. I liked him at once, and we became the closest of friends and remained so until I left for America.

I must add at this time that our battalion had been formed into a brigade, which was the West Connemara Brigade, with Peter J. McDonnell, O.C. I became Adjutant of the Leenane Battalion. However, as I was joining the Active Service Unit, I did not act much in this capacity until after the Truce.

(A further word about myself: I was no brave, fearless hero! Far from it! I was just an ordinary soldier doing what I was told, and at that time looked much younger than twenty years which was my age when I went on active service. All throughout my career as a soldier, I just did as I was told, and carried out any orders that were issued to me by commanding officers. They can testify that I did not complain at any time under any circumstances, and if God had ordained that

it should be my lot to make the extreme sacrifice, I would have done so. That is not to say that I was not afraid. Every man in his sane mind is afraid, and without fear there could be no bravery. (Fear is a natural protector given by God to mankind.)

Our first task was to procure a sort of a camp or meeting place, and to have some shelter. Padraic Ó Maille and I were directed to get an old house at the back of the Twelve Pins into a living condition. The location of this house was midway between Kylemore and Clifden - as the object of the attack was in this area.

Padraic and I cut mountain sedge and sods, and covered the roof. A few Volunteers from the village of Letterfrack came with some rope, to secure the thatch. They also brought some food, consisting of bread, butter, cheese and stout. The Volunteers left for home shortly before Padraic and I had completed the task of roping down the thatch, and when we started to get something to eat, we found that the gallant Volunteers had drunk all the stout and eaten all the cheese, only leaving the bread and butter. When Padraic saw this, he let out a roar like a wounded rhinoceros, and charged out the door! He began to bellow at the Volunteers, who were about a mile over the moor, on their way to Letterfrack. They paid no attention to him, but continued on their way. It was a good thing that they were not near, as Padraic would have shot them. That night, I went to a house near Creggs, and Padraic went to Joyce's residence at Ungey, near Letterfrack.

The area of attack was the road leading to

Clifden, in or around Kylemore Castle, where there was very good cover and a dense forest. But the enemy did not appear in this locality, so it was decided to enter the town of Clifden and make contact with him. We hid out in an old house on the east side of the town, near the village of Coulaun. It was reported that a party of from four to six Black and Tans and R.I.C. (walking in the centre of the street, paired off in extended order) went out on patrol in the town each night. But we could not get exact information as to the number of the enemy on patrol.

It was dangerous to remain close to the town too long, so, on the night of March 16th, six men entered the town with side arms. The remainder covered the barracks, to prevent the enemy getting to the assistance of the patrol when attacked. Only two Tans came on patrol that night, and the party shot them down, securing their arms and ammunition.

We then withdrew to our old house at the Twelve Pins. As we climbed the mountain at the back of Clifden, it was a terrible sight (and my first baptism of fire) to see the mad demons giving the town to flames. In the night, we came to the old house where we had some bread and tea. We put down a roaring fire, and gathered a lot of mountain heather to spread on the floor; ate our bread and tea, and tried to get some sleep.

Tommy Maddon was over against the wall, and I thought he was asleep, or else looking at the fire. I got a clod of turf and tossed it at him; it hit him on the head, so he said: "King, by God, you think I'm

not looking at you, and I'm looking at you between the bloody eyes!" After that, I never doubted Madden's ability to see well, even though he was not looking in my direction.

Soon after this, we moved into a village at the back of Kylemore and had some rest. As it was decided to attack a patrol of police and Tans who went from Maam to Rosmuck on certain occasions, we crossed the mountains, in the direction of Rosmuck. One morning around the first of April, I was on watch in a little wood on the side of the road at Screebe Lodge. I saw a patrol of police passing in the direction of Rosmuck. When they went by, I reported to the O.C. what I had seen.

Men were placed in positions along the road, and preparations were made to attack them upon their return. Orders were given not to fire until all the police were within the ambush. Everything was going as directed when a rifle was fired prematurely. This gave the alarm to three of the patrol who were cycling in extended order, and they ran into Screebe Lodge. The three that entered the ambush were soon dealt with, and we got two Webley revolvers and one Lee Enfield rifle. The O.C. ordered the men to withdraw, as it would be foolish to attack the lodge where the other three had entered. Anyway, they had probably used the 'phone to summon reinforcements.

We took two young fellows from the houses in Screebe with us, as we knew that, as soon as reinforcements came, they would burn the houses we were staying in, and perhaps shoot the boys.

We crossed again to Mounterowen, to the residence of Padraic Ó Maille, on the way, stopping at Walsh's house in Maam Cowna for some rest. Most of the men were in a bad state of exhaustion from hunger and fatigue. One of the Walsh girls had a little summer house that she slept in, as she was not in good health. I heard some loud snoring coming from the little house, and there was Padraic stretched out on the clean bed, fast asleep, with all his clothes, including his shoes and overcoat, on. When we had some rest, I went to Leenane to get some cigarettes and tobacco at Mrs. Cuffe's.

The column now set up headquarters at Padraic's house at Mounterowen, as there was information to the effect that a raid was expected on the house, and it was decided to attack the enemy when he came. The Column set about preparing positions of defence. The Ó Maille residence is set on the side of a hill, facing north, about three hundred yards from the Maam-Leenane road, close to which flows a swift-running stream that empties into the Maam river. A little roadway ran down from the house to the stream over which stepping-stones, as a means of crossing by foot, were placed. This part of the stream was shallow and could be forded by horse-drawn vehicles. The Leagh valley stretches back to the Maamturk mountains, and, to the west, the Roighha mountains. Preparations were made, and each man knew his position, so all we had to do was sit back and wait the coming of the enemy.

During the time of waiting, one of the boys, named Gaughan, whom we had taken with us from Screebe,

went off his head when he heard that his house had been burned down as a reprisal for the attack on the police there. We had to get him tied to a bed until we could get a doctor. In tying him to the bed, he got hold of W. Connolly's hair and pulled out a handful from the roots. We were in a dilemma, as we were expecting the attack on the house at any moment, and a demented man would be something to contend with. The O.C., P.J. McDonnell, sent me to Leenane to get Dr. O'Brien, who resided at McKeown's Hotel, to attend to the demented man. Dr. O'Brien came after dark, and gave the man an injection of morphine which sent him into a deep coma. The following day, he was sent back to his native village, in the care of his brother and another Volunteer. Dr. O'Brien, who came from the Aran islands, was always ready to help us when required.

During the preparations around the P. Ó Maille residence for the attack (which took place in about two weeks), there were many amusing incidents. Tomás was anxious to fire a shot from one of the rifles. One day, he said so to John Dundass, from Roundstone, and Christy Breen, who came from Dublin. They took Tomás to the back of the house, where they procured an old flint lock rifle which was found in some raid for arms. They set Tomás behind a rock, placed the old flint lock in his hands. Breen got a stick of dynamite in the breech. Tomás was about to fire when the O.C. came along, and stopped the comedy. He asked Tomás did he know what was about to take place, and Tomás replied that he was anxious to fire off one of those pieces. "Do you know", the O.C. said, "Tomás, that would be the first and last piece you would fire if I had not come

along?" "Oh!", said Tomás, "I believe those fellows are murderers, 'do you know!'"

In a look-out post at the back of the house, there was a powerful telescope which was kept focussed on the Maam barracks which was about five miles away, as well as the Maam cross road. There was a sentry on watch at all times. One day, it was Tomás' time to go on watch. He was not long away when he came back, holding his two hands in front of him. He came up to the O.C., crying, "Look! Look! Disgusting! Disgusting!" It seems that the fellow who preceded him on watch had placed some odorous offal under the seat of the telescope, and tilted it upside down. (He knew Tomás would follow.) Tomás went to re-set the seat, resulting in the condition of the professor's hands.

On the morning of April 22nd, Mick Conroy of Roundstone was on watch at about 3 a.m. It was still dark. He reported that there were black cattle coming along the Maam-Leenane road from the direction of Kilmilkin. The O.C. ordered the column to be alerted. Not long after this, rifle fire started, first from the road, and answering volleys from around the house as the column manned their positions. The first thing I saw as I rushed out was the police ducking for cover, leaving their bicycles on the roadway. The range was two hundred yards, and we set our sights accordingly, as we had tested this range in advance.

By this time, firing had become general from each direction. The O.C. was by the entry gate, and one of the R.I.C. made a dash for the little pathway leading to the river. The O.C.'s rifle spoke, and the R.I.C. man

pitched forward, behind an old log which had been cast up by the river. The O.C. was a dead shot, and when he got an object in the sights of his rifle, he rarely, if ever, missed. Now all the police and Tans had got under cover along the north side of the road, with the exception of the man who lay dead or wounded near the log. None of his comrades came to his assistance. The O.C. got among the men, and ordered those in charge of sections to reserve their fire and wait for targets to appear. After that, the column only fired at something that looked like a policeman or Tan. But the raiding party kept up a measured fire, all directed at the house, and I think the raiders numbered about twenty-five men, all told. At this point, Eamonn Ó Enille had taken up a position on the east side of the house, behind an old stone wall, and he was firing at the enemy along the road with a Howth rifle. This rifle was a single shot, of German make, and had a large bore. The bullet was lead, fitted into a large case, and had a large amount of some kind of black powder (which was not cordite), and, at each shot, a large spurt of smoke would come from his rifle. At the same time, he would let out a yell at the English B----------s to stand up and fight. It was not long until some marksmen on the enemy side found the range of Eamonn's position, and soon his sport got too hot as bullets began to chip the wall in front of him. He was the only I.R.A. man I ever heard holloa at the enemy, as each man fought with grim silence. It was the enemy who was known to holloa and swear!

The O.C. got back into the lines, and said that he feared that the enemy might be also coming through

Leagh valley at the rear. He asked John Dundas from Roundstone, who was one of the most daring and fearless soldiers in the unit as well as having the agility of a greyhound, to ascertain if it was so. The O.C. instructed him to wait until the police had fired a volley, and then to make a dash up the bare face of the hill, with his gun and equipment. This he did, and as all enemy fire was directed at him, we held our breath as the bullets spattered around him, until he got over the crest of the hill and signalled that there was no enemy in that direction.

Around noon, the weather, which was very cold, gave way to showers, and visibility became very poor. The O.C. told the men to avail themselves of this condition and withdraw to the shoulder of the hill where they could have better means of movement, should reinforcements arrive. To do this, we would have to work our way along a fence to the east of our present positions. At this point, there was an exposed patch which was open to enemy fire. Fire was kept up as each man dashed along the exposed patch and gained cover in a contour, about fifty yards away. All the men got safely through in this manner, and we could look over the enemy position in comparative safety.

Still, it was not possible to get any firing power to close with the enemy. So Gerald Bartley, Richard Joyce, Jack Feehan and Jim King went to the right and the left of the enemy (and after a long detour), got behind and over their positions. But, although the range was short, they could not get effective fire to bear on their positions. They fired a few shots at the R.I.C. man at the log, but found he

was already dead.

A party was sent in the direction of Leenane, about a mile away, to cut the road. As this party was securing some tools in nearby houses, T.F. Joyce got by in a Ford with some workmen, on his way to a farm at Kilmilkin. Apparently, there was no firing at this time. As the Joyce's car got into the middle of the ambush, an R.I.C. man leaped on the running board, and ordered him to speed on, at revolver point. Bartley and Joyce fired on the policeman, and saw him reel as a bullet smashed his arm. But he managed to hold on until the car reached Maam, where he got a message through for reinforcements.

(Later, we learned that it was this message for reinforcements that prevented the enemy from surrendering during the attack on Mounterowen.)

Not long after this, a beggar man went by on his way to Leenane, and it seems the police gave him some kind of message. About a few hours later, a car arrived from Leenane direction, and a tall man in black got out, and as the remainder of the column were spread out along the slope of the mountains, one of the boys sent a few shots in his direction, and he dashed for cover. The man thought he was an R.I.C. man. (Visibility was poor, due to showers of hail.) That night, we learned that the man in the car was Rev. Father Cunningham, who had come up from Leenane, on getting the message from the tramp to attend to the wounded R.I.C. men. Christy Breen, who was a dead shot, fired about four shots at a black rug on the side of the car, as he thought he had located an R.I.C. man, and when the object did not seem

to move, Christy cursed his American made Springfield rifle as useless. But the following day, he heard that all his bullets went into the rug, in one square foot. Remarkable marksmanship at seven hundred yards range, with poor visibility!

From our positions on the side of the mountain, we could not locate any movement by the police, as they were packed tightly together at the end of a culvert in an old sandpit on the other side of the road and stream. At this time, Eamonn Ó Maille, the engineer, began to tell the O.C. about trying high angle fire. I am sure the engineer was thinking in terms of artillery or mortar fire, and it was left to the professor and engineer to figure it out. Alas, we did not have any such weapons of war!

The O.C. said that he would try to get some men along the Leigh stream, to get close to the enemy, with side arms, and try to drive him from cover. So he selected Thomas Coyne to go with him, while Patrick Wallace and I came a distance behind. We had not gone very far along this stream when we were spotted by an R.I.C. man who had gone farther up the hill, on the other side of the road, over the enemy position, and soon he found our range as his bullets sang into the ground around us like angry bees. After crawling a long time, keeping in the shelter of the stream, we reached a little mound-like hill, but could not get any closer than one hundred yards of the enemy position, and beyond this mound there was not a spot of cover.

Some hours had elapsed since the R.I.C. man got away on the car, and reinforcements might arrive at

any moment. And, if we were caught in this open ground, we would not have a chance. So the O.C. told us to withdraw to our former positions. The marksman did his best to pick us off, as we ducked from cover to cover, but, thank God, he did not hit any of us.

Not long after our return, some of the officers who had binoculars and the man who had the large telescope, reported that a long line of lorries was coming down the road from Maam Cross in our direction. The column moved into a pocket of the mountains, out of view of the enemy coming along the road. We were fighting at least thirteen hours at this time. The engagement started at 3 a.m., and it was now 4.30 p.m.

From our positions on the mountain, we watched the reinforcements (fourteen lorry loads in all). A turreted armoured car was in the lead. Some of the lorries halted about a mile away from the ambush position, and the officers began to deploy their men over the open ground, in extended order, firing rifles and machine guns as they came across the stream. The armoured car got into the police position in front of the house, and started to fire two machine guns. You could see dust and slates, as well as glass flying, as the gunners raked the house and outer buildings.

Imagine, if each I.R.A. marksman had about one hundred rounds of rifle ammunition, what casualties we could have inflicted on the might of England, advancing, in what seemed to be a foolish formation. But, alas, each of us was reduced to a few rounds! These we had to save for emergency. It was amusing to see the different antics of the enemy as they advanced towards

the house,in spread formation, in short dashes, and, even then, it took them about two hours to get close enough to bomb it. And it was done under heavy machine gun fire. All this was for nothing, as the house was empty. The outhouse in the back contained Mrs. Eamonn Ó Maille, her two small children and Miss Jane Ó Maille, as well as two girls who helped to cook for the column while there.

They fired and looted the house, and even killed the horse and some cows. They killed the pig, and carried the carcass along with them. The four women were set free, and Mrs. Eamonn Ó Maille and Jane got shelter in the home of M.B. King at Leenane.

It was then dark. I went ahead to my own house which was not far away, and told my uncle's wife to get some hot tea ready, as the column was coming down from the mountain at the back. Soon they all arrived, and after getting what they could to eat, some went to rest, as guards were spread out. Most of the men were in a bad way, as they had very little to eat since the previous day, and lying on the mountain in the wet and hail all day caused some to suffer from colds and sore throats. However, the O.C., Jack Feehan, and a few more went down to Leenane to get some food and refreshments, as well as cigarettes.

While at my house in Cullaghbeg, we heard that the police had only one man killed and two wounded, but most of them had to be carried to the lorries as they were unable to walk. It was then that we learned that they were on the point of surrender, were it not for the wounded policeman who reached Maam in the Joyce car and sent word for reinforcements!

They did not expect such resistance from the men in the house, and believed that there were only a few there who would, after the police fired some shots, run out and be shot down! But their expectations were turned to sorrow for those who thought so. They learned to respect our ability as soldiers after this encounter.

That night, the column went north-west, over the mountain. Passing west of the village of Touwarleen and north of the village of Glanagimla, we climbed a mountain which had a high cone-like summit. We lay low the following day on the rocky slope of this mountain, and it was bitterly cold. (Tomás Ó Maille wore a black loose overcoat, over which he wrapped a tartan car rug, held at the throat by a large horse blanket pin.) We were cold and hungry, and there was frost on the ground. Through glasses, we could see the enemy lorries on the prowl, along the road to Fenney.

When we left the scene of the ambush, we feigned a retreat in a southerly direction, veering north after dark. I don't know how much such movement confounded the enemy, but the following morning saw him moving in our direction. We were all sitting around the mountain, waiting for darkness, to move along.

Tomás extracted a little volume from his pocket which looked very much like a prayer-book, and, at first, we thought he was going to start to pray. But, instead, he began to read in an unknown tongue. He then started to tell us that he was reading German poetry, and began to translate his reading, which was about grape picking in a vineyard on the Rhine. What some of the boys

said was not in praise of his poetry, but that he should be tossed into the Rhine before he had a chance to come into their company. Tomás had studied in the leading universities of Germany and England prior to teaching at Galway University.

The column then, under cover of darkness, crossed the Killary Bay at Literass, between the village of Leenane and Ashleigh, to the house of Patrick and Peter Wallace (who were members of the column). After getting some much needed refreshment, we moved over the Ben Gorm mountain into a deep cup-like valley, with a little pond-like lake on its floor, named Lugga Corry. Previously, the Intelligence Officer, John Connolly, had procured a canvas tent at McKeown's Hotel at Leenane. This was set up on the side of the little lake. The valley was secure on all sides, as a series of steep cliffs were all around it.

We remained for some days until we got the extra ammunition and rifles which John Connolly brought along from Mr. Kelly, the station-master at Maam Cross. Mr. Kelly was doing everything he could to help the fighting men. The arms were in a crate, marked "China", and addressed to Mr. Keown at the Leenane Hotel. It contained four Lee Enfield rifles, two .45 calibre revolvers, about 100 rounds of .303 ammunition, the same amount for the revolvers, as well as ten hand grenades. (It was indeed a godsend at this time.)

John Connolly told us that, when he was at the Maam Cross station collecting his crate, he was approached by an R.I.C. sergeant and two constables who wanted a lift to Maam barracks. He said, "Two of you

will have to sit on top of this crate of china in the back of the car". So the two constables sat on top of the crate. The sergeant talked all the way down to Maam about the battle at Moutorowen, while Connolly could not keep from laughing at the two fellows in the back, sitting on some of the stuff that would later be in the hands of men who would be using it against them.

After the Mounterowen battle, the enemy, along with burning down the residence of the Ó Maille family, also burned all the property of P.J. McDonnell, comprising of residence, shop and garage.

The Black and Tans and Auxiliaries went through all the country, in a round-up that followed, and they found my brother, Willie, home and brought him to Maam barracks. Willie had been active with the column, but he was not feeling too well. As he was very young, being little over sixteen years old, it was thought best that he should remain at home. When they brought him to the barracks, he was at once identified by one of the constables as my brother. They could tell him that I had visited my home the previous day, and also told him the time I left, the garb I wore and the arms I carried! They gave him a terrible beating, and injured his leg permanently. He was lying unconscious in the barracks when a friendly R.I.C. man asked Thomas O'Malley of Kilmilkin (whose Ford was commandeered in the round-up and was being returned), to help him get my brother into the back of the car, and cover him with a rug. Since the police had given O'Malley permission to take the car away, they did not search it on the way out.

The R.I.C. man told my uncle afterwards that the Tans meant to finish off my brother on the way to Galway.

Some of these R.I.C. men were giving information to our I.O., and without their assistance we could not have evaded capture.

A week later, they came to the house again. This time, the Auxiliaries had bloodhounds. They were informed that my brother, who was limping about on his injured leg, was staying close to the house. They got all the clothes they could find, and tossed them to the dogs, who took off with their noses to the ground, baying as they went. My brother had left the house in the morning after he had some breakfast, and, aided by a cane, he crossed a shallow stream before he climbed north on the Reigh mountain. From a hiding place, he watched in terror as the dogs came in his direction. When they came to the stream, they became confused, and started along the bank until they lost the scent and did not continue beyond this point.

All this time, the rest of the raiding party were terrorizing my uncle and his wife. One had entered the stable where my uncle kept a big stallion named Lough Ennel, which had been purchased from the Department of Agriculture for stud purposes. The horse was loose in the stall, and had been frightened by the firing of shots and all the commotion. So he started to kick and tried to trample the Tan. Some of the officers told him to shoot the horse, but the same friendly R.I.C. man told the officer that, if the horse were shot, the Government would deal severely in the matter, because the horse was Government property.

They withdrew, after doing considerable damage and knocking my uncle around, injuring his ribs. I am sure they would have burned down the house, were it not for the friendly R.I.C. man who bluffed them about the Government stallion. The stallion did not belong to the Government, as we had purchased him long before this. But it was the only way the friendly R.I.C. man saw of preventing the house from being destroyed by fire. He had heard the raiding party say it was on their list for destruction!

Now, at this point, I wish to say a word about spies and informers, as well as the friendly men in the R.I.C. and military who were giving us all the information and help they could. Those latter deserve the eternal gratitude of the I.R.A. because they risked their lives each time they gave information to aid us. But the spies and touts who gave information to the enemy should have been erased from existence. I am aware that it would be indeed hard to get any man or group of men to act as a firing squad if some of those miserable creatures, who called themselves Irishmen and Irishwomen, were sentenced to be dealt with as they deserved. But I am sure that, if the fight had continued much longer, we would have had to deal with them in such a manner. If the G.H.Q. Staff Officer, Ernie O'Malley, had come into our area to inspect and direct operations as he did in the south, he would have taken such action, and some of those miserable creatures' carcasses would be found along the roadside.

Along about this period in the fighting, a member of the column dropped his revolver on a concrete floor; the hammer hit the ground, discharging a .45 bullet through the soft flesh of the calf of his leg, and causing a nasty wound. As there was danger of a big round-up, it was not considered safe to keep him in the area. The O.C. told me to take him into the valley of Glanhowhan which is at the back of the Iniagh mountains, near the Ballinahinch-Clifden road. The man was at a house in Ashmount, near Leenane, so I had to give my rifle to a member of the column, and, carrying side arms and some extra bandages and dressings, we started on the long trek.

This is a difficult journey for one sound of limb, but, for a man suffering from a wound, it was much worse. However, we got there after eighteen hours travelling. As we came close to the house to which I was taking the injured man, we had to cross a steep, fast-rushing stream on the side of the mountain. At this stage of the journey, my companion was in a terrible state of exhaustion, and the wound was getting very red and painful. I was going to set him down on the side of the mountain, and go down into the village, which was about a mile away, to get help, but he said he would continue as best he could.

In aiding him across the stream, I slid down a rock into a deep pool, causing all my clothes to get soaked through, as well as my revolver and ammunition. I climbed out, and succeeded in getting the man down to the house. After we arrived, the woman of the house told me to take off my wet clothes and get them dry, and she would give me something to wear. I

unloaded my .45 Webley revolver, and put it at the side of the fire, on the hob, along with the ammunition, to dry. When I returned to the room, I picked up the revolver, to clean and oil it. I pulled the trigger, and there was a deafening explosion; and a bullet ripped through the frame of the door, and whistled by the head of the lady of the house, as she entered. I looked at the revolver, and found five more rounds in the cylinder. It seems that a local Volunteer, who wished to be smart, had reloaded the revolver while I was out of the room.

Every phase of Irish history is interwoven with romance, and our part in it was no exception. Shortly after the fight in Mounterowen, the Commanding Officer, P.J. McDonnell, was married to Miss Tillie Kilroy at Newport. She was a sister of Michael Kilroy, the gallant leader of the West Mayo Column. McDonnell and Jack Feehan had to cross country all the way to Newport for the ceremony, and barely missed running into a patrol of R.I.C. and Tans who were on a raid. Afterwards, we celebrated the wedding in Thomas Kane's in Burowen where we spread our sentries around the area.

The following day, some of us were having some sleep in Culfin, near Renyle, when Volunteers reported a raid in nearby Tullycross. We had to cross the Killary Bay in a currach to the White Strand of Thilbaun where we were given a fine meal of bread, tea and salmon from fishermen there.

The "love bug" took a belated nip at our big

friend, Padraic Ó Maille, also at that time. One day, he asked me to accompany him on a rendezvous with the object of his affection, a Miss Acton of Claddaghduff. The meeting place was on the Clifden side of Letterfrack, in the house of a Mr. McLoughlin. Miss Acton was accompanied by a Miss Joyce from Ungey. When we arrived, there was a sumptuous repast set before us. All was gay, and Padraic did justice to the board, as he had a great appetite. It seems the food and also the stimulant which was served caused Padraic's stomach to collect gas. He made a rush for the door, and failed to locate the bolt. The gas escaped as Padraic exclaimed in a loud voice, "Excuse me, Miss Acton! Excuse me, Miss Joyce!", to the discomfiture of the company, as he rushed out. Some time later, I was relating the story to some of the column while we were having a meal at Michael O'Neill's house in Glenaroff. Padraic tried to hit me, and cried, "Shut up, you pup!", but I ducked under the table as his ham-like fist descended on its top, splintering some of Mrs. O'Neill's willow china and spilling food on the laps of some of the boys. After that, the catch-word was, "Oh, excuse me, Miss Acton!"

When I returned to the column, they were billeted along the Glanamura valley, and headquarters was in the house of Michael Burke. A valley ran back from the house to the Maolrea mountain, and we were under orders to retreat through this valley, in extended order, should the alarm be given. There was an old man in this house, and he led the Rosary each night, in Gaelic, with Tomás helping out. He had some condition of the throat which caused him to recite the prayers in a

halting voice. I cannot explain the manner more than to say that at times it was like a sheep coughing, and he would get a spasm of this, and most of the fellows were in stitches laughing, instead of following him and Tomás in the Rosary.

One night, the alarm was sounded, and we started along the valley on an old sheep track, in single file. Tomás was walking along, with the tartan rug over his loose coat. The day before, Mrs. E. Ó Caille and Jane had sent a dozen eggs for Tomás' use, and he put them into a large handkerchief, and knotted the four ends. Thus he went along, and as each member of the unit went by him on the narrow path, he gave a well-directed kick at the eggs (which soon reduced them to a slimy mass, spewing out on the rug and dripping off the tassels as he toddled along). The O.C. was bringing up the rear, and when he got to Tomás, he asked him what was the purpose of the slimy mess, and told him to get rid of it. Tomás replied that he would not, but would bring the eggs to Mrs. Burke as she could make a very good cake for them, "do you know!"

Not long after this, the Ó Caille brothers set up a shelter at Kane's in Leigh, near the old house which was now in ruins. One day, I was sitting with Padraic on the side of the hill. The weather was clear and warm. It seems Tomás liked to swim in a large pool close to the main Leenane-Galway road. The military had become very active in the area at this time, and had concentrated most of their forces in the west. So we had to break up into small groups, and weave in and out of the enemy's encircling movement. Tomás had

finished his swim and was drying himself in the hot sun when I heard a rifle shot in the direction of Leenane. Along the road, about a mile distant, was approaching a large convoy of military lorries and armoured cars, on their way to Galway. When Padraic saw Tomás sitting in the nude on the bank of the river, he began to bellow at the top of his voice, "Lie down, you hound! Lie down!" There was a waterfall close by, and Tomás did not hear Padraic. I put my finger to my mouth and let out a sharp whistle, and Tomás looked in my direction and I gave him a signal. He made a dive into the river, sending a geyser of water skyward. The convoy passed along the road, and did not notice anything. So afterwards, Tomás got up to where we were sitting, and remarked that, if those ruffians had caught up to him, they would have brought him in the nude to Galway City and paraded him in that manner around Galway University, "do you know!"

Tomás had a special brand of cigarettes, named Turko-Irish, which he had made for his own use, and he kept them in this shelter. When he smoked a cigarette, he would take only a few puffs when the whole cigarette would be a soggy mess, as he drooled saliva all over it. I made perpetual forays on those cigarettes (he got them in cartons of one hundred), and carried them back to the column where they were enjoyed by the boys. One day, Tomás said he would like to lay hands upon the peasantry around who were constantly wagging their tongues and toothless jaws, as well as stealing his cigarettes. "I would apply my hobnailed boot to their rear, do you know!"

Around the early part of June, I received instructions to go to the home of the two Wallace boys at Litterass, on the Ashleigh-Louisburg road, and keep a look-out for explosives which were to come to our cover address at the McKeown's Hotel. Thomas Coyne, Patrick Wallace and I built a dug-out on the slope of the hill, in some furze which grew all over that part of the mountainside. We had a large telescope set up there, and could get a perfect view of the roads in the direction of Westport, for about ten miles, as well as the Galway-Leenane and Clifden road, from our elevated position. It was our custom to come down to the Wallace residence each day, to get some food. The bridge at Dephi, on the Louisburg road, had been destroyed, and we could not be very easily surprised from that direction.

One night, I had a dream as the three of us slept in the dug-out. I thought I was being pursued by the Tans, and I had fallen down, and that they were about to fire at me. I jumped up, and hit my head against the low sheet-iron roof of the dug-out. I crawled out, and pulled on my boots, as we slept fully clothed, just removing our coats and boots. The night was clear and bright. I could neither see nor hear a sound in any direction. Only the dull drone of the Ashleigh waterfall in the distance. Now, the view from this position surpasses anything in the world for beauty as the Eriff wooded valley stretches in the distance, with the Ashleigh woods and waterfall at the head of Killary Bay, dividing Mayo and Galway, running from east to west. When I could not hear or see any movement, I went back to the dug-out, as it was not yet daylight. Try as I would, I could not get back to sleep again.

About 9 a.m., Wallace and Coyne awoke and dressed, and started to go down in the direction of the house, to get some breakfast. I said that I did not think that we should go to the house to-day, as I had a feeling, due to a dream I had during the night, that something would happen. The two fellows looked at each other, shook their heads, thinking that I was cracking up. So I told them to go ahead, and that I would keep a look-out, and asked them to bring some food back to me. After some dallying, they too got cold feet. So, about noon, we were starving.

Sarah Wallace went into the field. She was a sister of the two Wallace brothers, and belonged to the Cumann na mBan. We called to her to bring us some breakfast. After some time, she came up the mountain, with some tea in a can and bread and butter. She gave us a good tongue lashing, telling us we were lazy loafers who would not come to get our own food. When she left, I began to think that, if those two told the O.C. that I was acting on dreams, I might be dismissed from the active service unit; so I did not feel too happy about the matter.

It was not long, however, until we heard shots in the direction of Eriff Woods and, through the telescope, saw dust rising off the road. Soon, out of the woods came an armoured cage, a Crossley tender and touring car, at high speed. We got under cover, as we thought they would pass on to Leenane. They entered the Ashleigh Wood, and we saw the Crossley tender come along the Leenane road, through the village of Clanagimia. It stopped across the bay on the road. The men got out,

and set up a machine gun on the sod fence covering the Wallace house. The remainder spread out along the fence, with their rifles covering the house. Then the armoured car sped along the Louisburg road, right up to the door of the house. The crew jumped off, and surrounded it. In the Ashleigh Wood, they left the touring car, with some more riflemen who could fire on the side of the hill if anybody tried to run in that direction. While this was going on, we lay close to the ground at the dug-out in the furze, and dared not move.

After some time, they all left and went back to Westport at a high speed. We were about to come down to the house when we heard gunfire and bombs exploding, as well as machine gun fire. We forgot all about the house, and got up higher on the mountain, and listened to what seemed a battle going on. This continued for some hours, and as darkness set in, we could see dense clouds of smoke rising from the direction of the Griff valley.

Early the next morning, we were informed that the West Mayo Column, under the command of Michael Kilroy, had attacked and destroyed the whole raiding party, getting all their arms and burning their lorries.

The column was in billets along the Glanamura valley when information was received that a huge round-up was to be carried out all along the west coast of Mayo and that troops were to be landed in Killary Bay for a drive inland from that direction. As our billets were on the Mayo side and the Intelligence Officer told us

that the round-up would take place the following day, the O.C. got all his men together and told them to proceed in extended formation along the road to Bundorragh, where we would try to effect a crossing by boat.

Now the enemy was getting close and endeavouring to encircle us in a pincer movement. As each man hugged the side of the road with the O.C. in advance, we were a grim silent body, and rifles were at half-cock, with fingers on triggers. We got to the crossing point and set off in the boats, but some distance from shore, some of the boats began to leak, due to being in the hot sun (the weather was very warm and dry at the time). We reached Galway shore as dawn broke - near Bunowen and west of Derryinnsligan Lodge. We had barely reached the shore and pulled the boats to the beach, when two enemy 'planes (scouting 'planes) came into view, circling the shores of the Bay.

Around the entry of the Bay steamed two destroyers. They cast anchor not far from our cover to which we were driven by the scouting 'planes. One destroyer lowered a launch, manned by a crew, which came in our direction. The O.C. gave the order to be ready to fire if they should land. Each man released the safety catch on his weapon, and waited. The men in the launch threw a line on each boat, and started back to the destroyer. In all our close brushes with the "Grim Reaper", he surely breathed down our backs at that moment, and a cold chill passed along my spine at this closeness of death.

We were pinned to the ground in our positions all day, as we watched the enemy send hundreds of men to the

Mayo shore. They started to repair the Delphi bridge which had been blown up, as well as set fire to the heather on the mountain side. We were very hungry, and succeeded in getting a man to Thomas Kane's in Bonowen to get some tea. Mrs. Kane was one of the most courageous women I ever met, and had done everything she could for the men who were fighting. She sent a boy with hot tea, bread and butter, and she wrapped a burlap sack around the bright tin milk-can, to prevent the enemy, who had a look-out man in the crows nest on the destroyer, from spotting the can as it was carried to us. It was indeed a blessing to our parched palates as well as to our tense nerves.

We lay close to the ground all day, and as darkness set in, got orders to get over the hill at the back. We had just started to move off, availing ourselves of what cover we could find, when the destroyers started to play search-lights on the bay and mountains, and the night became as day. The O.C. at this point was amongst us, and told us to move only when the lights were swept away from our positions. After what seemed an eternity, we were finally over the tip of the mountain.

In the village of Lugnaaugh, we obtained refreshments. Then the O.C. said we would have to get across to Leenane-Clifden road before daylight, as military might start to move in that direction, if they had not done so already. We came close to the road and took cover, as each man crawled over at intervals. Once over, we entered the village of Glencorbert where we went to sleep without any rocking, as we had all a close call!

On July 10th, I was in the village of Ballinafar, near Ballinahinch Castle, with three members of the column, when a despatch came, telling us that the Truce would be in effect the following day at noon. We were to proceed at once to the village of Glanagimla, near Leenane, on the Westport road, and have all arms dumped at that hour.

It was a message of joy to us, and we set out on the long journey, coming through Recess and skirting the mountains along an old horse track that led through the mountains on the Leenane road, near McKeown's Hotel. It was about ten o'clock when we got in sight of Killary Bay overlooking the road, and we were about to get on the road and continue to Leenane, with the intention of getting some refreshments at Mrs. Cuffe's in Leenane. My attention was attracted to a series of flashes as if coming from a signal lamp on the Leenane-Westport road. I told my companions to remain on the road, and I went back to the home of the Brigade Adjutant which was close by. His mother answered the door, and when she saw me, she became quite alarmed. I asked her if she was glad the fighting was coming to an end the following day. She said, "I am, but, for God's sake, don't start anything tonight!" I asked her what she meant, and she told me that Leenane was full of military, Auxiliaries and Black and Tans, and that they had outposts set up who were signalling to each other while the main body occupied houses in the village and the officers stayed at the Leenane Hotel.

This meant that we had to get across the Killary Bay and detour along the Westport-Louisburg road into the village of Glanagimla. We arrived there close to

daylight, after an extra five miles added to our journey. We could not find any empty beds, as all the column had taken over, as well as Michael Kilroy and three of his officers who were also there, after evading a round-up of close to a thousand troops who were combing the Mayo mountains. So we lay down in a haystack until morning.

We dumped all our arms and entered the village of Leenane to do a bit of celebrating. Thus ended the West Connemara Column's part in the fight for freedom!

In conclusion, may I say that thirty-six years have elapsed since the end of this part of the fight for me, and thirty-one of them have been spent in exile. All the foregoing experiences are recorded from memory, as I don't have much data at my disposal to aid me in recording events connected with the fight. However, I understand that P.J. McDonnell, John Feehan and Gerald Bartley, T.D., who were my senior officers, have stated their part in the fight, so any dates of events which may be in dispute can be verified by consulting their story, as I am sure they have correct data to guide them.

And a word to the historian:

It was an honour and privilege to be numbered among such gallant, loyal and devoted comrades. Modern military strategists may dispute the metho[illegible] of combat used by the I.R.A., but I do[illegible] if history will duplicate

such a Herculean task performed by any army, with such armament, under such conditions and against such great odds. We are all scattered now, and some are called to their eternal reward, and, before another decade will have elapsed, there will be very few of our number left. May we all meet in Paradise!

SIGNED:_____

DATE: _____

WITNESS_____