

ROINN COSANTA

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY

STATEMENT BY WITNESS

DOCUMENT NO. W.S S. 1642

Witness

Edward Halley,
Ballywater,
Callan,
Co. Kilkenny

Identity

Vice Comdt., 7th Battn., Kilkenny Bde.

Subject

Ballycloven Coy., 7th Battn., Kilkenny Bde.,
I.R.A. 1914 - 21

File No. S 2964

STATEMENT BY Mr. EDWARD HALLEY, Ballywater, Callan, Co. Kilkenny, formerly Vice—Commandant. 7th Battalion. Kilkenny Brigade.

I was born on 12th July, 1887, at Ballywater, Callan, where I now reside. My father was a farmer and I, having completed my education at Ballyline National School, worked with him on the farm which I subsequently inherited and which I now own.

For some years prior to the outbreak of the 1914-1918 Great War the political position in rural Ireland, as I saw it, was one of solid support for the Irish Parliamentary Party and its policy of Home Rule for Ireland. When, therefore, the Irish National Volunteer movement was launched in November, 1913, with the support and blessing of that Party and of its leader John E. Redmond, it spread rapidly and most able-bodied men in the towns and countryside were enrolled as members.

I became a member in May, 1914, when a Company of this new movement - the Irish National Volunteers - was formed in the nearby village of Ballyline about three miles from Callan. Amongst those who were responsible for organizing the Company were the late Father Delahunty, C.C., Callan and the late Mr. John J. Dunne, Callan, both of whom I am glad to say, played a prominent part during later years in the struggle for independence and to whom I will refer again in the course of this statement.

The formation of the Ballyline Company aroused a great deal of local interest and, as far as I can recollect, we had something like 200 members. Under the direction of an ex-British Army Sergeant named McMahan, good progress was made in drilling and training. Parades were held on three nights of the week and on Sundays Mass Parades and marches were carried out. An election of Company officers was held. My first rank was that of a section commander.

Later I was elected one of the Company's Lieutenants, Mr. Matthew J Keating, M.P. for South County Kilkenny, presented a rifle for which a shooting competition was held and presented the rifle to the winner.

On Easter Sunday of 1915 we travelled to Dublin and took part in the review of National Volunteers in the Phoenix Park. The split in the Volunteer movement had then taken place and, as we marched along the South Quays, we saw Irish Volunteers marching on the opposite side. It was probably for most of us our first time to see an Irish Volunteer contingent and we wondered which side had taken the proper course.

On a Sunday, about two months later, a parade of National Volunteer Companies which we attended was held in a field at Ballybur near Cuffesgrange. The parade was addressed by Father Delahunty and the late Peter Deloughry of Kilkenny. Father Delahunty was still at that stage a supporter of the Redmondite policy, whilst Deloughry, who was an I.R.B. man, espoused the Sinn Féin and Irish Volunteer cause. Needless to remark they expressed conflicting views but the general assembly of Volunteers were not asked to take any decision.

That parade at Ballybur was the beginning of the end of the National Volunteers in this area. Father Delahunty's ardour for the movement cooled off, the parades ceased to be

held and the organisation was kept alive in a half-hearted way until 1916 by occasional meetings of the officers.

During Easter Week of 1916, when the news of the Insurrection in Dublin had trickled through, Father Delahunty called a meeting which was held in the Concert Hall in Callan. He said that his only regret was that he was not with the Volunteers who were fighting in Dublin, and I may say that he was expressing the views of all of us who were listening to him.

When the Irish Volunteers were reorganised in 1917, I joined and was elected, 1st Lieutenant of a Company which was formed in Ballycloven. Thomas Gleeson, the Company Captain, left this district soon afterwards and I then became O/C of the Company with Patrick Cody and Edmond Byrne as the other Company officers. There was little activity at that time with the exception of organisation work and secret parades for drill and training.

During the Conscription crisis period in 1918, the parades and training were carried out openly and our small supply of arms was augmented by shot guns for which we raided hostile houses.

I remember being sadly disappointed when we raided Major Poe's residence at Harleypark. We expected to get quite a haul of arms there but found only a clip of rifle ammunition, a few shotgun cartridges and a cartridge filler. He had handed over his arms for safe keeping to the British Military in Clonmel a few days previously.

About September of 1918, the 7th Battalion, Kilkenny Brigade, was formed. It at first embraced nine Companies - those of Coolagh, Dunamaggin, Hugginstown, Ahenure, Kilmanagh, Ballymack, Callan, Mullinahone (Co. Tipperary) and our Company at Ballycloven. James Roughan of Ahenure was elected Battalion Commandant and John J. Dunne was elected Vice-Commandant. At a subsequent reorganisation the Dunamaggin and Hugginstown Companies were transferred to the 8th Battalion. Whilst he held no official rank, Father Delahunty might also be described as a Battalion Officer. Up to the time of his arrest at the end of 1920 he was familiar with and was consulted about Volunteer activities. He attended Battalion Council meetings, was a well known speaker on Sinn Féin Platforms and was in the confidence of Sinn Féin and Volunteer leaders.

I should have mentioned that in 1915 about twenty-five Martini rifles had been received in Callan for the use of the National Volunteers. During the intervening years they were held in Callan by perhaps either Father Delahunty or John J. Dunne. Subsequent to the formation of the Battalion they were distributed amongst the Companies and my Company in Ballycloven received either eight or nine of them.

It is difficult now, after such a lapse of time, to recall all the incidents of that period. Beyond the usual work of Volunteer Companies of the time I cannot recall any incident worth recording with which I was associated during the year of 1919.

When the General Order was received for the destruction on Easter Saturday night of 1920 of all evacuated R.I.C. barracks, I was allotted the task of destroying Kilmanagh

barracks. I went there with four Volunteers, forced an entrance into the barracks, sprinkled the stairs and woodwork with paraffin oil and set it on fire. The fire, however, burned itself out after we had left without doing much damage to the barracks. I discussed the matter with Jim Roughan, John J. Dunne and Father Delahunty and got some gelignite from them. Two weeks later I mobilised twenty men for the Job. We broke in the roof, heaped up the furniture and set it on fire and blew out the walls with **charges** of gelignite.

The next incident was in connection with the attack on Drangan R.I.C. barracks which took place on 4th June, 1920. On that day I received a dispatch to report with another officer at Cahill's of Cappahenry at 9 p.m. that night. There was a good number of Volunteers assembled at Cahill's when I got there. Jim Roughan, the Battalion Commandant, announced that the South Tipperary Brigade were to attack Drangan barracks that night. He, himself, and six riflemen from the Ahenure Company were going to Drangan to assist in the attack. The trouble then was that we all wanted to go to Drangan. He detailed me to take charge of a party of men to block the Jamestown-Mullinahone road and to continue blocking the road until daybreak. Other parties with similar instructions were detailed to block other roads. By the time we had commandeered cross-cut saws and hatchets, and felled trees at various points on the road it was well after daylight and we returned home. During the night we heard the explosions in Drangan and saw the Verey lights which the police were sending up, but it was not until noon on the following day that I got the news of the success of the attack. From then until the Truce in July 1921, road blocking and road trenching was a continuous feature of our activities.

In October 1920, with a party of about 25 or 30 selected men drawn from the Ahenure, Mullinahone, Callan and Ballycloven Companies, I occupied an ambush position on the Lismolin-Mullinahone road about 14 miles from Mullinahone. This was to be a joint operation and was planned in co-operation with Denis Sadlier, Vice-Commandant of the 7th Battalion, 3rd Tipperary Brigade.

The idea was that Sadlier was to arrange for the burning of hay on a farm then occupied by a man named Boyle. Boyle was what we called an "emergency" man. He occupied a holding from which the former owners were evicted and he was receiving police protection. It was expected that, following the burning of the hay, British military from either Mullinahone or Killenaule would go out to Boyle's place to investigate. If they went from Mullinahone we were to attack them and if they went from Killenaule, Sadlier, with men from his Battalion, would ambush them at Horan's Cross on the Prospect road.

We were in position from about 8 a.m. until 1 or 2 p.m. when one of Denis Sadlier's brothers arrived with the news that a cycle party of about fourteen British soldiers had left Killenaule but, unexpectedly, had taken the Milford road. He asked us to go to Milford, which was about three miles away, in the hope that we would be in time to ambush the military there.

On reaching Milford we were informed that the military had passed about fifteen minutes before. This was clearly evident for the tracks of their bicycles were still fresh on the road. There was then nothing further that we could do only to disperse and get back to our homes.

In December, 1920, following the arrest of Ernie O'Malley near Inistiogue, there was widespread activity and raids by the British forces. In this area it led to the capture, amongst others, of Jim Roughan (the battalion Commandant), John J. Dunne (Battalion Vice- Commandant), Michael Shelly of Callan (Sinn Féin T.D.) for South Kilkenny, and, I think it was at that time too, that Father Delahunty was arrested.

On the following fair day in Callan, which was the second Wednesday in December, 1920, I met some of the officers of the other Companies. We had a preliminary talk about carrying out an ambush and arranged to meet again that night at Paddy Ryan's house at Kyleadora, commonly known as Ryans of the Wood. Four Companies were represented at the meeting in Ryan's, those present being Eamon Aylward and Paddy Ryan of the Ahenure Company, Pat Egan, James Raleigh and Ned Cuddihy of the Mullinahone Company, Jimmy Leahy of the Coolagh Company and Patrick Coady and myself from the Ballycloven company. Lorries of British troops or police then frequently passed along the main Clonmel -Kilkenny road and we decided to mobilise the Companies under arms for the morning of Monday 20th December, 1920, at a point about 300 yards from the village of Nine Mile House. There was an excellent ambush position there where the road from Kilkenny to Clonmel turns sharply to the right and then, about 40 or 50 yards further on, turns sharply to the left before entering the village of Nine Mile House, The road from Mullinahone to Nine Mile House joins the main road at the latter sharp bend. There was ample cover along the steep slopes on the left-hand side of the road and a perfect view of the countryside.

Armed with a miscellaneous collection of weapons, shot guns, rifles and revolvers, over eighty men assembled at the ambush position about 7 a.m. on the morning of the 20th. I had a Service rifle which Father Delahunty had brought from Dublin and given to me sometime before his arrest. Ammunition was our biggest worry, as a check-up revealed that there was scarcely ten rounds per man. Pat Egan, Captain of the Mullinahone Company, was selected to take charge. He was assisted by Eamon Aylward and Jimmy Leahy,

By 8 a.m. final Instructions had been issued and all men had taken up their positions. I was placed in charge of a party of fourteen or fifteen men from the Kilmanagh and Ballycloven Companies on the left flank of the position. As a precaution to prevent Information reaching the military in Callan, road blocks were not erected.

The day wore on with no sign of any lorries of British forces, but about 2 p.m. we saw a cycle patrol of fourteen British troops and two R.I.C. men coming along the Mullinahone road. They dismounted from their bicycles and slowly pushed them up the steep incline towards the main road. It looked as if they were going to be sitting ducks when they entered the ambush position.

Unfortunately, at that stage, one of our men fired an accidental shot. The two R.I.C. men who were at the rear of the patrol turned and cycled back towards Mullinahone. The soldiers discarded their bicycles and ran back down the road. We opened rifle fire on them at 300 yards range but without effect. The soldiers left the road, got cover in a bog and from there had an exchange of fire with us at a range which I gave as 1,000 yards. One soldier was wounded in the latter exchange. The engagement was broken off almost immediately afterwards, our only booty being the soldiers bicycles.

On being dismissed the men separated to go to their own areas. With about thirty men I retreated cross-country to (Garryricken and Trenchmore and afterwards crossed the Kilkenny-Clonmel road at a point about two miles from Callan. There was no sign of British forces on the road when I reconnoitered it but they arrived on cycles from Callan within minutes of our crossing. We had not gone more than 200 yards from the road when two of our men, Paddy Ryan and a chap named Maher, who was cycling from Nine Mile House on two of the captured bicycles, came into conflict with the military. Shots were exchanged in which Ryan shot one of the soldiers, a Private Squib, through the head. Leaving their bicycles on the roadside, Ryan and Maher crossed the fence and, under fire from the military, made good their escape. It was dark at that time and we, assuming that the fire was directed at us, took cover for some time. It was only later that we got the details. British forces were by that time concentrating into the area and firing was going on all over the countryside. It was particularly heavy in the Mullinahone direction but that, as I again learned later, was due to indiscriminate firing by British troops who had run amok.

Another party of British forces arrived from the Callan direction and, mistaking the troops who had pursued Ryan and Maher for I.R.A. men, opened fire on them. The mistake was mutual and the fire was returned with the result that a Constable Walsh of the R.I.C. was shot dead. As I have said, it was dark when all this was going on and we had no idea at the time of what exactly was happening but I would say that the confusion amongst the British forces was a big factor in enabling us to reach our homes safely. That night and on the following day Auxiliaries, Black and Tans, and troops concentrated into the area around Nine Mile House.

There were widespread raids and searches. They terrorised the inhabitants of the village, burned stacks of hay at farmhouses and wrecked O'Sullivan's licensed premises. On 23rd December, the day of Constable Walsh's funeral, the British Authorities ordered all houses in Callan to close. One woman, a Mrs. Ryan, in whose licensed premises the police were in the habit of drinking, opened her hall door to look at the funeral as it passed. She was immediately fired upon by either the troops or the Black and Tans, and died within a few minutes from her wounds.

As I have said the Battalion Officers were arrested in December, 1920. About the first week in January, 1921, a dispatch was received by Patrick Torpey in Callan requesting the attendance of two representatives from the 7th Battalion at a Brigade Council meeting in Kilkenny that night. Torpey and I went. The meeting was held in

Tom Butler's house in Parliament Street, and George O'Dwyer, then newly appointed Brigade O/C., presided. Also present was an organiser from G.H.Q. named Patrick Medlar. The representatives of each Battalion gave a verbal report to the organiser of the position in their areas. I was questioned about the Nine Mile House Incident and asked to know who authorised it.

I explained the position, that, after the arrest of Roughan and the others, we had no Battalion Staff and that the Company Officers took the responsibility on themselves to carry it out. The organiser then asked Torpey and myself to arrange a meeting of the Company Officers for the following night and that he would attend it.

Due to the fact that Torpey and I had to remain overnight in Kilkenny and that some of the Company Officers were 'on the run', it was impossible, in the short time at our disposal, to arrange a full meeting. Those whom we did contact met the organiser at Cahill's of Cappahenry. Medlar could not wait until a more representative meeting was held. He said he was going back to Dublin and insisted that before he left that night we would have to elect a Commandant and Vice-Commandant. Jimmy Leahy of the Coolagh Company (now of Poulanaapple) was then elected Commandant and I was elected Vice-Commandant. He left it to us to appoint two suitable men as Adjutant and Quartermaster. I am a bit doubtful

about who was appointed Battalion Adjutant. It may have been Dick Pollard of Callan who held the post for a brief period and was succeeded, also for a brief period, by Joseph Walsh of Mullinahone. Thomas Meagher of Callan was definitely appointed Adjutant when he returned from serving a prison sentence about March of 1921 and he held that rank up to and after the Truce.

We had no hesitation in appointing Eamon Aylward as Battalion Quartermaster. He was one of those men whom we had been unable to contact in time for the meeting at Cahill's of Cappahenry and, had he been present, I imagine he would have been a unanimous choice for Battalion Commandant,

About that time too - January, 1921 - the Battalion Active Service Unit came into being. It was organised from men 'on the run' and its earliest members included Jimmy Leahy, Eamon Aylward, Paddy Ryan, Paddy Lutteral, James McKenna and Seán Quinn.

Several attempts were made about that period to ambush a patrol of R.I.C. which, as a rule, patrolled the town of Callan from the barracks to the Convent wall every night. The most suitable position to attack them was from the Convent grounds and on at least four nights with five or six men from the Company, I occupied the position there the patrol always turned back from Bridge Street. On another night when I went to the same position I found the A.S.U. there awaiting the same patrol. Seán Hayes, from the 3rd Tipperary Brigade, was with the A.S.U. that night. After a while a scout came along with the news that the patrol had left the barracks. Again they only came as far as the bridge.

One member of the patrol, a Sergeant Casey, came on to the bridge for a few minutes and had a look round. We could easily have shot him but refrained from doing so as we

were hoping that the full patrol would cross the bridge and advance into the ambush position. It was evident that the police were being tipped off whenever we occupied the position, but the source of their information remained a mystery.

On Saturday morning, 12th February, 1921, I received a despatch from Jimmy Leahy (Battalion Commandant), instructing me to block the roads on the following night as he intended to carry out an attack on the barracks in Callan. That Saturday afternoon I had a visit from the Parish Priest. "What's this", he said, "I hear yourself and Leahy intend to do tomorrow night". Needless to remark, I gave him no information, and he went on to give me a lot of advice, saying things were bad enough without making them worse, that the military and police would wreck the town if anything happened and so on. How that good man got his information I do not know but it was another instance of the difficulty of keeping our intentions secret.

On Sunday morning I met Leahy and told him of the Parish Priest's visit. He confirmed that he would go ahead with the attack which, by the way, was only to be a heavy sniping attack from four or five different points. The strength of the garrison (both military and police) and the fortified state of the barracks ruled out anything in the nature of a serious effort to capture it. After blocking the roads, as requested by Leahy, I learned that two lorries of British Forces had passed through Ballyline going towards Tullaroan. I assumed they would return later by the same route and, instead of taking the men into Callan to assist Leahy, I occupied an ambush position at Tingarden. We were sadly disappointed for the lorries returned to Ballykeefe. From our position we could hear the firing going on in Callan and could see the Verey lights sent up by the garrison.

On the 12th March, 1921, the A.S.U. had a successful encounter with military and police at Garryricken House, and on 13th April, 1921, carried out a successful ambush of two lorries of military at Kilbride. As I was not present at either of these engagements I am unable to give any first-hand information about them. On a Sunday night about one week after the Kilbride ambush I reported for duty with the A.S.U. which I met at 'Ryan's of the Wood'.

Eamon Aylward was then in charge as Jimmy Leahy was ill. Aylward was also acting in charge of the Battalion and had set up a Battalion Headquarters at Martin's of Ballylarkin.

The strength of the A.S.U. when I joined it was twelve men. We were joined some days later by two more men from the Coolagh Company and then moved off to Kilmoganny. At Springfield on the Kilmoganny-Piltown road we lay in ambush for a police patrol which was expected to come out from Piltown but, without result, as the patrol did not come. We then went on to Clogga, Mooncoin and Kilmacow, with the intention of attacking the R.I.C. barracks in the latter place. This intention had to be abandoned for, to our surprise, the local Companies were not prepared to co-operate. Later it transpired that there was a reason for this. They were then planning and preparing for an attack on an R.I.C. patrol - a job which they subsequently successfully carried out - and which they were jealous to do themselves and they feared that any prior

(A.S.U.) activity in the area would spoil their plans. The Column then returned to Kilbricken.

On the Invitation of a Company Officer, Buddy Walsh, the Column next moved to the Fiddown district with the intention of ambushing a patrol of eight or nine R.I.C. men who were regularly 'seen on the Fiddown-Piltown road. We were joined by about twenty men from the local, 6th Battalion, and at about 6 a.m. on a Saturday morning we occupied, a farmhouse - Cooley's of Beech Farm. This house was situated on the roadside about 250 yards from the Barracks in Fiddown from where the patrol was expected to come.

Jimmy Leahy was then back with the Column and himself and Aylward were In charge. Scouts and outposts were put out and we made loop-holes in the walls and laurel hedges from behind which we proposed to launch the attack.

About 9 or 9.30 a.m. we saw an Auxiliary R.I.C. man pass in company with a girl. He returned alone shortly afterwards on his way back to the barracks and we took him prisoner and interrogated him. He seemed a decent type of man and his story was an interesting one. He said his name was Caragan and that his wife and two children were living in England. He himself was an Englishman. He showed us his medals and said he had served for ten years, including the war years, in the British Army. On his discharge he was awarded a pension of twelve shilling per week. He had applied regularly in England for employment, but each time was told at the Labour Exchange to go and join the Irish police where he would be paid £1. per day for his services. This he eventually did and was posted to Woodstock, Inistiogue. He told us that he grew to detest life with the Auxiliaries in Woodstock and had tendered his resignation which was not accepted, but instead he was transferred to Fiddown. He guessed that we were waiting for the patrol and he asked us to give the police an opportunity to surrender, which he was sure they would do. We placed him under guard in the haybarn. He was unarmed when we captured him.

As there was no sign of the patrol coming we evacuated Dooley's about 3 or 4 p.m. and moved off towards Mullinbeg bringing the Auxiliary with us. When passing through Bessborough demesne, what at first looked to us to be sheep turned out to be British soldiers. They were lying down in extended formation on a height and when we saw them, they were about 200 or 300 yards away. The Auxiliary saw them about the same time and stood out on the path saying, "They won't fire when they see my uniform. Then came a volley from Lewis machine guns followed by rifle grenades and the last we saw of the Auxiliary was when he threw himself into cover. Fortunately for us, the military firing from a height had not got the correct range, and their fire clipped twigs and leaves from the trees over our heads. We had been taken by surprise but got reasonably good cover along the banks of a stream from where we replied with rifle fire to the fire from the military. Using the banks of the stream for cover, we moved away in groups of twos and threes, reached and crossed the demesne wall and, crossing the road, got up into the hills near Templeorum.

From there we could see military lorries and armoured cars patrolling the roads and the demesne itself was swarming with soldiers. It was evident that they thought we were still within its confines. It was evident too that they had got information about our presence at Dooley's farmhouse. They had come out from three points, from Carrick-on-Suir, from Clonmel and from Waterford.

From Templeorum we moved off to Mullinbeg and Kilmoganny where we spent that night and then returned to the Callan area.

On, I think, the following Sunday night the Column moved off by Poulnacapple, and Nine Mile House towards Grangemockler. At Cahill's of Templemichael we learnt that Seán Hogan's Column of the 3rd Tipperary Brigade had sniped Glenbower barracks that evening and had then moved into County Kilkenny going towards Kilmoganny. We went on to Danganmore near Dunamaggin where we met Hogan and his Column. Pat Walsh of Dunamaggin, who was just home from serving a prison sentence, joined our Column there.

Eamon Aylward was then in charge of our Column and himself and Hogan agreed to join forces for the time being. The Joint Columns moved off next day and billeted that night at Newtown near Kells.

On the following morning we inspected an ambush position on the Kells-Callan road. Aylward and I were keen to occupy the position but Hogan would not approve. He wanted to go to Kilmanagh and he also proposed attacking the military and police barracks in Urlingford on his way back to County Tipperary. We agreed to continue on with him. The irony of this incident was that a single lorry of police and military, who were out serving summons, passed by the proposed ambush site during the day.

We marched to Kilmanagh that night and occupied the village at 6 a.m. next morning. We occupied every house in the village and no one was permitted to leave. Anyone who entered during the day, such as farmers coming with milk, to the creamery, were made prisoners. Hogan's column occupied the creamery and the lower end of the village whilst our column occupied the upper portion.

My position was with six riflemen in a corner house covering the approach of the Callan Road. The Post Office was occupied by Tom Looby and another member of Hogan's column. The local Company had been mobilised and supported both columns.

At 10 a.m. Tom Looby phoned from the Post Office to the military in Callan telling them that the Post Office in Kilmanagh had been raided by armed men. It was hoped by this ruse to bring one or two lorries of military and police out to investigate.

The ruse failed and about 5 or 6 p.m. it was decided to evacuate the village. The local Company were dismissed and the two Columns moved off to Oldtown. Hogan, Aylward, and Paddy Ryan drove in a car to the village of Tullaroan which I believe they had to leave immediately, for enemy forces were assembling and lorries of troops had passed through the village. The orders were for both Columns to go to Sim Walton's place at Raimeen and, as the Tipperary men were strangers to the area, we acted as their guides. When about one mile from Raimeen the Tipperary men halted at a group of

farmhouses where they decided to remain. It will be appreciated that by this time we were all pretty well exhausted for we had no rest for the previous 36 hours.

With thirteen members of our own Column I continued on to Raimeen where we were met by one of Sean Hayes' brothers who was a teacher in Tullaroan. It was then about 9 p.m. Hayes told us that the military and police were assembling in great force. This was not exactly news to us because for some time we had been listening to the hum of lorries on the roads and we had seen soldiers, apparently scouts, on the hills. Hayes was critical of the way things were being handled and particularly so of Hogan for driving around the roads in a car. On his advice we took cover in a grove at the back of Walton's place until darkness set in and then we moved off to a place called Goldenfield. This was almost retracing our tracks but keeping east of Kilmanagh. It was, however, good tactics for it was clear that the enemy forces were encircling the area into which the Columns had retreated.

We reached Goldenfield without incident and got billets there. During the night I discussed the position with an experienced soldier and member of the column named Kelly. We concluded that after a brief rest we would be able to get the Column safely back via Desert, to the Callan area. During the early hours of the morning a scout arrived with a despatch telling me to bring the Column to Houlihan's of Gaulstown at 4 a.m. This instruction amazed me and left me in a quandary. To go to Gaulstown meant going back into the area which the British forces had, or were surrounding, which I personally considered would be sheer madness and Kelly, whom I consulted, agreed with me. On the other hand, perhaps the despatch was written before Hogan and Aylward were aware of the seriousness of the position, I assembled the Column and explained the position to them, telling them that they were free to act as they themselves decided, but that I did not intend to obey the order. Some of them decided to go to Gaulstown and left with the scout who had brought the despatch. Kelly and I returned to the Callan area via Desert as we had planned. I cannot, therefore, give an eye-witness account of the fight at Tubrid where parties of both Columns were surrounded by the British forces and in which Seán Quinn and Pat Walsh (who I mentioned as having joined the Column at Danganmore a few days previously) were killed. Kilmanagh was occupied on 13th May, 1921 and the fight at Tubrid took place next day, 14th May, 1921.

Kelly and I rejoined Aylward and the remainder of the Column a few days later at Ballylarkin. The officers of the Kilmanagh Company produced sworn evidence that a British ex-soldier named Michael Keefe had guided the British forces during the round-up following the occupation of Kilmanagh. Keefe's friend, another ex-soldier named Martin Darmody, was also involved. I had experience of Darmody during the day we were in Kilmanagh. He was very troublesome, threatening our men what he would not have done to them, and we had to lock him up in a pig-house. Aylward was definitely satisfied with the evidence and it was decided to execute both men. Two members of the Column were detailed for the task and, accompanied by two members of the Kilmanagh

Company, they took Keefe and Darmody prisoners and brought them to a sandpit at Barrack where the executions were carried out.

Shortly afterwards we had a visit from Ernie O'Malley who was then O/C. of the 2nd Southern Division. He was accompanied by Con Moloney of Tipperary. Aylward and I represented the Battalion at a Brigade Council meeting which was held at Teehan's of Shipton and at which O'Malley presided. He heard reports from all the Battalions and appeared to be more concerned about organisation than about activities. He was critical of Battalion officers who moved away from their areas with Columns, saying that at least two battalion officers should always be present at the Battalion Headquarters so as to ensure prompt attention to correspondence and despatches. He harped on the necessity for regular and frequent Battalion Council meetings. He criticised our Intelligence service. We should, he said, have up-to-date and genuine information. It was not easy to see how the latter could be got in our area, for we had no contacts within the enemy ranks.

There were two or three further attempts to lure the police and military in Callan into ambush positions but without success. Road trenching was carried out within earshot of the barracks but that too failed to draw them out. Seeing that they would not come out, James Kelly, Patrick Downey and I went into the town on the evening of 3rd June, 1921, with the intention of firing on any policemen we might find out of barracks. As we went up Bridge Street I noticed two Constables named Butler and Cooke coming along some distance behind us. We turned around the corner of West Street and waited for them. The policemen made an effort to draw their revolvers as they passed the junction of both streets and at the same moment we opened fire on them. Cooke fell seriously wounded but Butler ran and got safely back to the barracks. Later we learned that two R.I.C. men were paying attentions to two maids in a house at Desart and went there frequently to visit them. We watched the house for four or five nights but the R.I.C. men failed to show up. We concluded that they had been tipped off to keep away from the house as, at that time, there were people who, while having no sympathy with the enemy forces, were in daily dread of the reprisals which would follow the shooting of an R.I.C. man or two.

Shortly before the Truce a mysterious body of armed men in civilian clothes billeted for a few days at Mountgale. We assumed, and I believe rightly so, that they were enemy forces from Kilkenny posing as on T.R.A. Column. We arrested and interrogated a man named O'Meara who had been seen with them. O'Meara was unable to give us much information.

He told us that they gave him drink and cigarettes but, as far as we could ascertain from him, they had not questioned him in any way. He warned O'Meara to keep away from them but the warning was scarcely necessary for the men disappeared as mysteriously as they arrived.

On the evening of 9th July, 1921, there was a brief exchange of shots with two lorries of military at Friars Quarry on the Callan-Kilkenny road. The mail car had been

held up earlier In the day and the mails taken. With five members of the Column and five or six members of the Callan Company I waited for some time in the position at Friars Quarry in the hope that a police patrol would come out to investigate. The two lorries of military came along and the Callan men opened fire on them. There were no casualties on either side and, as far as I am aware, these were the last shots exchanged with enemy forces in the Battalion area prior to the Truce which took place two days later.

The first Commandant of the 7th Battalion was James Roughan of Ahenure who held that rank until his arrest in December 1920. He was succeeded by James Leahy of Coolagh (now of Poulanacapple) who fell seriously ill In April 1921, and Patrick Egan of Mullinahone acted as Battalion O/C. for a brief period prior to his arrest and internment In June 1921. The late John J. Dunne of Callan was the Battalion Vice-Commandant from its formation until his arrest In December 1920 when I was elected to succeed him.

The Battalion staff on 11th July, 1921 were:-

Battalion Commandant	Eamon Aylward
Battalion Vice-Commandant	(self) Edward Halley
Battalion Adjutant	Thomas Meagher
Battalion Quartermaster	Patrick J. Downey

The seven companies which comprised the Battalion and the Company O/Cs were:

Company	Area	Company O/C
“A” Company	Coolagh	James Cody
“B” Company	Mullinahone	Patrick Egan Later James O’Brien
“C” Company	Ahenure	Michael Doolan
“D” Company	Ballycloven	(1 st) Thomas Gleeson (2 nd) Edward Halley (self) Then Patrick Cody
“E” Company	Kilmanagh	Patrick Duggan
“F” Company	Ballymack	James Ring

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

(iii) The date of each such document: 24/6/57

"G" Company	Callan	(iv) The description of each document:	
		<u>WS 1642 Witness Statement Edward Halley</u>	<u>(1st) Patrick Funchion</u> <u>detail of a personnel matter</u> Later John P. Downey

(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.

(iv) The description of each document:

WS 1642 Witness Statement Edward Halley p20.
detail of a personnel matter

(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.