

ROINN COSANTA

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY

STATEMENT BY WITNESS

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Witness

Thomas Treacy,
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Kilkenny

Identity

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Brigade Commandant, Kilkenny, 1918 -

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Irish Volunteer Movement, Kilkenny
1916 - 1921

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STATEMENT BY MR. THOMAS TREACY,
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In August 1951 I prepared a statement for the Bureau of Military History of the history of the Irish Volunteers in Kilkenny from the time of their formation in March 1914 up to and immediately after the time of the Rising in April 1916. In this present statement I propose to give, as far as I can now recollect, the story of the Volunteer movement in Kilkenny City and County from the period following the Rising to the time of my last arrest and internment in November 1920, together with my experiences as Vice Commandant and Acting Commandant of the prisoners in Ballykinlar Internment Camp during the year 1921. As mentioned in my previous statement (1914-1916) there were approximately 120 members of the Irish Volunteers in the City and County of Kilkenny in 1916. Thirty-one of these, including myself, were arrested immediately after the Rising and interned in jails and internment camps in England. All these prisoners were released by August of 1916. I don't know the number of members of the Irish Republican Brotherhood that were in Kilkenny City and County at that time as I was not a member of that organisation, but I would say that after deducting the number of I.R.B. men who were members of the Volunteers there would not be more than forty, thus giving an aggregate strength of one hundred and sixty between Irish Volunteers and I.R.B. men. It should, therefore, be abundantly clear, without labouring the point, that it would be no easy task and would take plenty of enthusiasm, energy and work to reorganise and build up the Irish Volunteer organisation.

Here is an example of the position at the time. When after the Rising the Irish Volunteer prisoners were being removed on foot from Kilkenny Jail to the railway station under heavy military escort en route to Richmond Barracks, Dublin, there was indifference and dead silence by the populace. Only one man whom I saw at the top of John St., Kilkenny, had the courage to recognise us by waving his bowler hat in salute. He was Mr. Patrick Dunleavy of John St., a retired teacher, an aged man at the time, but a sound Irishman. The Redmondite Volunteers in Kilkenny paraded in Easter Week 1916, apparently to show their loyalty to John Redmond who was opposed to the Rising, but that was their last parade. They faded out immediately afterwards. The executions of the leaders of the Rising in 1916 had a tremendous effect in opening the eyes of the public and brought about a change of attitude in favour of the Irish Volunteers and a resurgence of nationality, to the great disgust of John Redmond's Irish Parliamentary Party who did everything in their power to stop it. The Irish Parliamentary Party had a powerful grip over along number of years in the City and County of Kilkenny, but the tide of public opinion was at this time – the latter part of 1916 - turning in favour of the men of Easter Week and the Irish Volunteers. For some years prior to my arrest and internment in 1916 I held the position of Principal Clerk in the Probate Office, Kilkenny. On my return from imprisonment in August 1916 this position was no longer available for me, so, as my wife had some experience of the drapery trade, I secured a premises in Parliament St., Kilkenny, and with her I started a drapery business there.

1917:

Early in 1917 a meeting was called in Kilkenny to consider the question of reorganising the Irish Volunteers in the City and County. The following, amongst others, attended Peter de Loughry, Parliament St., Patrick Corcoran, Patrick St., James Lalor, Walkin St., Edward Comerford, Wellington Square, Martin Kealy, Blanchfield's Park, Seán Gibbons, Clomanto, and myself. Some of the foregoing were members of the Committee which controlled the Volunteers in Kilkenny up to the time of the arrests in 1916. I have referred to this committee in my statement on the 1914-1916 period. At this meeting it was decided to reorganise the

Irish Volunteer Companies and outposts that existed at the time of the Rising. Arrangements were made accordingly; meetings of all pre 1916 units were called and officers, Section Commanders and Squad Leaders were elected. In Kilkenny City "A" Company was the only company in 1916, and all those who held rank in 1916 were re-elected to the posts which they previously held. Likewise in the rural companies and outposts, those who held rank in 1916 were in almost all cases re-elected to their previous posts.

The premises occupied by "A" Company, Kilkenny City, up to the arrests in 1916 were known as "Kyteler's Inn", being portion of the house or inn of Dame Alice Kyteler who was sought for trial for witchcraft in the 14th century but who escaped. From the time of its first occupation by the Volunteers it was generally referred to as, the Volunteer Hall. These premises were again secured and occupied. There was no difficulty about this, as the agent of the property, Mr. Patrick Lennon, Blackmill St., Kilkenny, was a supporter, and facilitated the Irish Volunteers in every way he could. At this stage it was decided to call the place "The Irish Club". This was merely a camouflage to cover up the activities of the Volunteer reorganisation etc. At about the same time as it was decided to reorganise the Volunteers in Kilkenny, G.H.Q. in Dublin initiated a reorganising drive throughout the country.

The reorganised companies in Kilkenny City and County attended regularly to their training. Good progress was made, new recruits were enrolled steadily, not in large numbers it is true, but a definite upward trend in numbers was well maintained. The facilities for training etc. were very much restricted in comparison to those which prevailed pre 1916, as the R.I.C. and British forces were far more on the alert. These restrictions and difficulties were either circumvented or surmounted. Kilkenny was fortunate at that time in having one of the local newspapers. "The Kilkenny People", edited by Mr. Edward T. Keane - full blooded in its support for Sinn Féin. It carried articles written by its editor in his own peculiar hard hitting style, interspersed with wit of a devastating quality all his own, which was a holy horror to, and the envy of, his opponents and the opponents of the movement. It would be difficult to measure the tremendous importance and value of this support to the cause in Kilkenny City and County, in adjoining counties and, in fact, the whole country, as his articles were regularly quoted by the daily and provincial press of the time. Later on this paper was suppressed on two occasions by the British, in 1917 for a period of 14 weeks and in 1919 for a period of 7 weeks. On those two occasions the British military dismantled the works and machinery. Were it not for the support of "The Kilkenny People" the work of re-organising and moulding of public opinion in favour of the cause of Irish freedom and independence would have been far more difficult. The editor of the "Kilkenny People" refused to publish British recruiting advertisements.

In June of 1917 Mr. Pat O'Brien, M.P., the Irish Parliamentary Party representative for Kilkenny City over a long number of years, died. The constituency consisted of the City of Kilkenny and extended from three to four miles out from the Borough boundary into the rural district. The number who had votes then was very much restricted towards the number who have votes now. Mr. Liam T. Cosgrave, James's St., Dublin, who was sentenced to death by the British for his part in the 1916 Rising and who was afterwards President of the Executive Council of the Irish Free State, was selected as the standard bearer for Sinn Féin in the resulting by-election. Mr. John McGuinness, Wolfe Tone St., Kilkenny, was the candidate for the Irish Parliamentary Party.

The members of the Irish Volunteers were the driving force of Sinn Féin in Kilkenny. They were in prominent positions in the Sinn Féin Cumann and organisation. During the election campaign the Volunteers from "A" Company, assisted by contingents from companies and outposts in the rural area, acted as a protecting force at public meetings and at election rooms. At the polling booths they prevented intimidation of or interference with voters. They also acted as guards over the ballot boxes and escorted them to the Courthouse and guarded them

there until the boxes were opened and the count was completed. Hurleys were carried by the Volunteers at election meetings in the early days of the campaign, but within fourteen days a British proclamation was published prohibiting the wearing of Volunteer uniform or the carrying of hurleys. Mr. Dan McCarthy, who was wounded in the Rising of 1916, was the Director of Elections for Sinn Féin.

The Sinn Féin election campaign opened with a meeting and a public reception for the candidate in the Market Place, Parliament St. Mr. Cosgrave was accompanied by Mr. Eamon de Valera, Countess Markievicz and Rev. Fr. O'Flanagan, who was a famous orator at the time. The reception and meeting was a real big rousing one and was gloriously successful from every point of view. On polling day Mr. Cosgrave was elected by a comfortable majority, to the obvious amazement and disappointment of the Irish Parliamentary Party. The political tide had turned, and never again was an Irish Parliamentary Party candidate elected in Kilkenny City or County. The winning of this election, and its consequential publicity, was a great help to recruiting for the Irish Volunteers. New companies were founded in districts where previously the Volunteer movement did not exist. Soon it became necessary to form the companies into battalions.

1918:

At first - about January of 1918 - it was decided to form three battalions, viz;

Kilkenny City and North Kilkenny Battalion: Kilkenny City and the north and north west portion of Co. Kilkenny. The following battalion officers were appointed to this battalion:

Battalion Commandant - Myself

Vice Battn. Comdt. - James Lalor, Walkin St., Kilkenny.

Battalion Adjutant - Leo Dardis, James St., Kilkenny.

Battalion Quartermaster - Edward Comerford, Wellington Square, Kilkenny.

Castlecomer Battalion: Consisted of companies and outposts in the north eastern area of the county, including the towns of Ballyragget and Castlecomer and extending to the Carlow border. The company in The Swan district of Laoighis was attached, to this battalion.

The following officers were appointed to this battalion:

Battalion Commandant - James Culleton, Clogh, Castlecomer. Co. Kilkenny

Vice Battn. Comdt. - Michael Delaney, The Swan, Laoighis.

Battalion Adjutant - Sean McEvoy, Shanganah, Conahy, Co. Kilkenny.

Battalion Quartermaster - Michael Fleming, The Swan, Laoighis.

South Kilkenny Battalion: Consisted of that portion of the county south-east, south and southward from about 3 miles out from Kilkenny City. Tinnahinch in Co. Carlow was also included in this battalion area. The following were appointed officers of this battalion:

Battalion Commandant - Martin Kealy, Blanchfield's Park.

Battalion Vice Comdt. - Simon O'Leary, Paulstown.

Battalion Adjutant - Patrick Lalor, Castlekelly.

Battalion Quartermaster John Morrissey, Goresbridge.

These three battalions were the only battalions formed in the Kilkenny area in January 1918.

About April of 1918, through the diplomacy of Peter de Loughry and Patrick Corcoran of Kilkenny, the Rev. Fr. Delahunty, John J. Dunne and Michael Shelly of Callan, and Thomas Cahill of Kilbricken, the Callan Irish National Volunteers and those of the surrounding areas who were linked up with them came over in a body and joined the Irish Volunteers. They brought with them all their equipment, which mainly consisted of 24 Service Martini-Enfield pattern rifles and a good supply of suitable ammunition. It was then decided to form a further battalion, known as the Callan Battalion, its area to extend from about 3 miles out from Kilkenny City to the Tipperary border, including a portion of Co. Tipperary in the Ninemilehouse district, Kilmanagh, and south west to Kilmoganny. It, of course, also included Callan and district.

The following officers were appointed to this battalion:

Battalion Commandant : James Rowan, Ahenure, Callan.

Battalion Vice Comdt.: John J. Dunne, Callan.

Battalion Adjutant : John Fogarty, Callan.

Battalion Quartermaster: I regret that I cannot now recall the name of the Q/M who was appointed to this battalion at this time.

In 1918 on the death of Major William Redmond, Irish Parliamentary M.P. for Waterford City, an election to fill the vacancy was held.. His son, Captain William Redmond, who was serving with the British Army, was selected as the Irish Parliamentary Party candidate and he fought the election in British khaki. Dr. Vincent White of Waterford was the standard-bearer for Sinn Féin.

Waterford was the greatest stronghold of the Irish Parliamentary Party in Ireland, so it was decided to send a contingent of Volunteers - as many as could go – to Waterford to assist Dr. White, the Sinn Féin Party candidate.

On St. Patrick's Day of this year I went to Waterford to arrange for the billeting of the Kilkenny contingent. The Volunteer Hall in Thomas St., Waterford, was put at the disposal of visiting Volunteer units for this purpose. Mr. Edward (Ted) O'Kelly, Danville, Kilkenny, afterwards Dr. O'Kelly, was O/C of all contingents of Irish Volunteers in Waterford for the election. He was wounded in the 1916 Rising but escaped capture, and was harboured by the Stallard family in their house at Danville, Kilkenny.

The Waterford election of 1918 was probably the hottest and roughest election fought in modern times, and were it not for the number of Volunteers who went there from Cork, Kilkenny and other places, Sinn Féin supporters and voters would be grossly intimidated and terrorised. On polling day I was put in charge of a party of Irish Volunteers assigned for duty at Sallypark, Waterford, where it was learned a planned attack by the Redmondite supporters was to be made. The Redmondite party's forces mobilised in large numbers in Sallypark, but realising the Irish Volunteer forces were in position and ready for them they withdrew, but caused plenty of trouble in other parts of Waterford. After the close of the poll that night a vigorous and violent attack was made by a party of the Redmondites on the Irish Volunteer Hall in Thomas St. with rifles and revolvers. They were supported by a large mob armed with all kinds of heavy sticks etc. A party of British Army forces in war kit, with fixed bayonets, held the upper end of the street, and it was only by doubling up O'Connell St. that the party that I was in charge of barely succeeded in getting in to Thomas St. before a large contingent of R.I.C. men cordoned off the entrance to the lower end of Thomas St. Things were looking critical for the hall and those inside it were being sorely pressed. Seeing the critical situation, I ordered my party to charge into the attacking Redmondites. After a vigorous and sharp encounter the Redmondites broke and the party under my command drove them into a lane slightly down on the opposite side from the Volunteer Hall in Thomas St. Captain Patrick Talbot of the Urlingford (Co. Kilkenny) Volunteer Company received a nasty head wound in the encounter but fortunately it did not prove serious. Others received slight wounds. Volunteers from the Urlingford (Co. Kilkenny) Company distinguished themselves in this charge. It was dark at the time. There was shooting from the Volunteers in the hail and also shooting into the hall by Redmondites who had occupied a house or houses on the opposite side of the street. Those in the hall mistook my party to be another Redmondite mob reinforcing the attack on the hall. I advanced under fire to make contact with the hall, with a view to straightening out matters as the situation was very serious. I dashed up to the bolted door of the hall, as I was more likely to be recognised than the others since a goodly number inside were familiar with my voice. I shouted as loudly as I could that those now outside were Irish Volunteers but the reply I got was more revolver shots fired from inside the hall. Fortunately they missed me. I persisted in my efforts to make contact and at last succeeded,

and I was able to straighten out a very mixed, awkward and ugly situation. Sinn Féin lost this election. It was, I think, the first defeat since 1916.

Before finishing with this Waterford election I would like to record the following little incident. On the morning of the polling day Peter de Loughry of Kilkenny, who was working very hard during the whole campaign, public speaking, canvassing etc. for the Sinn Féin candidate, and myself left the Volunteer Hall about 6.30 a.m. to go for a walk and to get some fresh air. We met an old gentleman, whose name I do not propose to mention but who was a staunch Redmondite and who, I was informed, held a prominent post in the Irish Parliamentary Party in Waterford at the time. The following is the gist of the conversation that took place:

Redmondite (snaking hands): "Morrah Peter. How are you at all? I'm glad to see you well".

Peter: "I am glad to see yourself well, B...n".

Redmondite (speaking with great tenderness): "Your father Peter, I knew him well. He was a good Irishman. I was often with him at a cock fight, and great cocks he had. If he were alive to-day he would be on our side".

Peter (Speaking indignantly and pointing to a large Union Jack flag which hung from a top window in a nearby house):

"Indeed he would not. What are your party standing for only Britain and the Union Jack? That's what you stand for".

Redmondite (looking at the flag referred to): "That's not the Union Jack. That is the Stars and Stripes".

Peter (to me): "Ah! Come on Tom. There is no coping with such ignorance. He does not even know the flag he's supporting and they hanging in hundreds all over Waterford. God help us".

We parted. On looking back I saw our Redmondite acquaintance keenly studying the Union Jack flag. It was apparent that he was not familiar with the British emblem and must have thought that his party were flying the United States emblem, which was then, and is now, highly respected in Waterford.

13.

Conscription Act:

The British Conscription Act for Ireland was passed about the middle of April 1918. From the time that it became clear that the British did really mean to pass this Act, I am satisfied that its effect to unite the people of Ireland was tremendous. There was more real serious thinking done at that time by the whole mass of the Irish people of all shades of opinion than was ever done before. Never in my time was there such unity in the country. On looking round, most of the men of military age under the Act quickly came to the conclusion that the Irish Volunteer organisation in the country was the best organisation to resist conscription. So they joined up in what I might call flocks. Most of those who joined up at that time were previously either hostile, critical or indifferent to the Irish Volunteers. Numbers quadrupled in that period. Only for the previous training and discipline of the Irish Volunteers it would have been very difficult to cope with such a sudden influx of raw material into the ranks. The greatest need of the organisation at that time was the need for arms. The total amount of arms held then by my battalion was about 12 Lee Enfield rifles, about 30 shotguns and about a dozen small arms, together with small quantities of ammunition, gelignite, detonators and fuses, in the rural companies there were some shotguns available, as members of the Volunteers who were farmers or farmers' sons had shotguns and small quantities of ammunition for the destruction of pest on their lands. This amount of arms would not go far in arming such numbers.

The lack of sufficient arms was a permanent headache at all times and especially now with such numbers in the movement. For months before the passing of the Conscription Act

persons who were friendly to the movement and who held permits to purchase shotgun ammunition, were exhorted to purchase as much ammunition as possible and to keep it for the use of the Irish Volunteers. Moulds for the making of buckshot were prepared and as much buckshot ammunition as possible was made. Volunteers who had no weapons were encouraged to have pikes made. A quantity of pikes for my battalion were made by Michael Murphy, blacksmith, Kilderry. Members were exhorted to obtain and collect explosives, detonators etc., no matter how small the quantities, when and wherever possible. Castlecomer Battalion (afterwards No. 3 Battalion) was by far the most fruitful battalion in this regard.

This was an extra busy period for officers and men of all ranks, as it was expected that the Conscription Act would be put in force at short notice and that the British would concentrate its first and main effort to smash up the Irish Volunteers. Instructions were issued for guerilla tactics to be put into operation immediately the British started to conscript in any area. The area attacked was to be supported by all adjoining and surrounding units. It was thought that the British might create an artificial food scarcity in cities and large towns to bring the people to their knees, by the simple expedient of purchasing grain and other staple foods and exporting them or holding them from the populace. A Scheme for the purchase of oats (for oatmeal) was launched by the anti-conscription forces in Kilkenny, and large quantities were purchased and stored in and near Kilkenny City. The principal store was situated in the lane leading from Patrick St. to Rose Hill, between the Kells and Callan roads. Professor John Keenan, St. Kieran's College, was the Hon. Secretary of the committee dealing with this.

A monster anti-conscription meeting was held on The Parade, Kilkenny, a short time before the Conscription Act was passed, and this meeting was used as a cover to hold a meeting of battalion officers of all the four battalions in the City and County, at which all aspects of the situation were considered and discussed. The action to be taken if and when the British attempted to enforce the Conscription Act in any area was decided on, and instructions were issued accordingly. This meeting was held in Stallard's garden, Asylum Lane, Kilkenny. On Friday the 18th May, 1918, about 8 p.m. while shaving in my home (then 15, Dean St., Kilkenny) before going down to the Volunteer Hall (previously referred to as the Irish Club) I noticed a Sergeant Baragry of the R.I.C. leisurely moving up and down by my house. R.I.C. men passing up and down the street was a usual thing, but when he went up and down by the house about three times I became suspicious that there was something unusual on. In his walk up and down he travelled about 30 yards each way beyond my door. This looks like a raid or the preliminary to an arrest, I thought, and the matter to be decided quickly was whether I would cut out the back way by scaling difficult walls, or when he passed down 20 yards or so from my door I would slip out the front door arid tip toe across the street to the junction going down to Friar's Bridge. I decided on the latter and got across the Street without his seeing me. I was fortunate in taking this course for I afterwards heard that R.I.C. men were stationed in the gardens at the back. There was plenty of light at the time, it was not even dusk. I proceeded to the Volunteer Hall by going through New Building Lane, thus bypassing the R.I.C. barracks in Parliament St. When passing across Parliament St. I noticed an unusually large number of R.I.C. men in groups of threes and fours, all carrying revolvers. I noticed other groups of R.I.C. men in High St. When I arrived at the Volunteer Hall I found that the members already there had not noticed anything unusual. I related what I had seen, and mentioned that I believed there was some big move on by the British. I sent scouts out to observe and report on the movement of the R.I.C. in the town and to watch the R.I.C. barracks and the military barracks.

Reports came in quickly that there was an unusually large number of R.I.C. men armed with revolvers moving around the town, and contingents of R.I.C. men from outlying stations were seen moving into John St. R.I.C. barracks. Almost simultaneously with these reports came a further report that Peter de Loughry, whom I have previously referred to and who was one of

our representatives to G.H.Q., was arrested. The big round-up of leaders all over the country was under way, under the British latest invention and fake excuse - "The German Plot".

I was now satisfied from what I had observed earlier in the night that the British intended to arrest me, and as it was felt that something in the nature of a crisis was on it was decided that Patrick Corcoran Cone of our representatives to G.H.Q.), James Lalor, Vice Battalion O/C, Edward Comerford, Battalion Q/M, and myself, all carrying small arms, should go "on the run" and so be available should the crisis develop. Capt. Thomas Nolan, Outrath Company, was with us. We left the Volunteer Hall and proceeded to Capt. Nolan's house at Joinersfolly, Outrath, about 2 miles from Kilkenny City. Here we had a meal, after which Capt. Nolan brought us to a vacant house on an outfarm of Mr. Joseph Rice, who was then a Lieutenant in the Outrath Company. This house was situated on the Waterford road about two miles from Kilkenny City, and could be approached from the Ballinalina, the Waterford and the Kells roads. The grey dawn was beginning to break as we approached the house and I noticed a profusion of beautiful white daisies in the fields. It was the middle of May.

The next day, Saturday, Leo Dardis, the Battalion Adjutant, arrived with news that a large number of leaders of the Irish Volunteers and Sinn Féin all over the country had been arrested. My house in Dean St. was raided by R.I.C. during the night and a most exhaustive search made for me. They searched every conceivable place in the house and outoffices. They tried in the chimneys and under beds. They rummaged through everything as they were convinced I was there, because Sergeant Baragry of the R.I.C., who failed to see me slipping out, assured them that I was in the house or on the premises. The large raiding party remained for over two hours in the house, searching everywhere and everything in the place.

Leo Dardis, the Battalion Adjutant, Capt. Nolan, Outrath Company, and Seán Cullen, New St., kept in constant touch with us while we were at Joe Rice's place. Mr. Michael Staines and Mr. George Plunkett from G.H.Q. visited us there and discussed the position of things here and generally, and the necessity for forming the Kilkenny Brigade. While 'on the run' we were all the time in touch with our battalion and also with the officers of the other battalions in the county at the time. As the traffic to and from us at that period was very heavy, it was thought advisable to move elsewhere for a time, so we proceeded to a large unoccupied house called Cullen's at Danesfort, Co. Kilkenny. This house was the property of Mr. John Pembroke of High St., Kilkenny. We remained here for about a fortnight, when we returned again to Joe Rice's place at Outrath. Joe Rice and the Rice family of Outrath made everything very comfortable for us and looked after and provided for all our wants in a magnificent manner, which was greatly appreciated by all four of us and for which we were deeply grateful. The same remarks apply to Mr. John Pembroke for the period we were in his place at Danesfort. Timothy Hennessy of Ennisnag (afterwards Commandant of the 1st Battalion) kept in constant contact with us while we were in Mr. Pembroke's place.

Early in July 1918 Denis Byrne, Michael Cotton, Patrick Phelan, Michael Butler and Richard Curran, all from Graiguenamanagh district, were arrested by R.I.C. and charged with illegal drilling. They were brought to the Courthouse, Kilkenny, for trial. When being removed after their trial and sentences they were loudly cheered by a large crowd who had assembled outside the Courthouse. The officer in charge of the R.I.C. ordered a baton charge and the R.I.C. charged the unarmed crowd and batoned them indiscriminately. About the same time there was another baton charge in Thomastown where some other political prisoners were being tried. In this baton charge Commandant James Rowan of the Callan Battalion was severely batoned by the R.I.C.

Formation of Brigade:

A meeting of the officers of the four battalions in the county was convened for the purpose of forming a Kilkenny Brigade and the election of Brigade officers. Arrangements were made to

hold this meeting at the residence of Mr. Thomas Cahill, Kilbricken, about one mile from Callan. It was held on Sunday, August 25th, 1918. Those 'on the run', viz. Pat Corcoran, Jim Lalor, Ned Comerford and myself, cycled from Joe Rice's place on that morning, starting about 5 a.m. and arriving at Tom Cahill's about 6 a.m. The reason for travelling so early is obvious, as we did not want to be seen leaving Joe Rice's place or arriving at Tom Cahill's. After knocking for some time at Tom Cahill's door it was opened by his maid servant. Now it happened that Mr. Cahill had a garden party arranged for that day and a dance was being held in his house that night. His maid was, of course, entirely unaware of the Volunteer meeting. She took us to be arriving for the dance that night, so she went straight and called her master and complained bitterly that "four men had already come for the dance that night, before people were up; a nice how-do-you do, and some of them are ould lads at that".

Tom Cahill, who was a member of the Callan Battalion and who was doing intelligence work, had a lovely balancing act to perform that day, and he proved himself to be the real man for this very delicate job. He had on the one hand our meeting, at which the battalion officers from the four battalions were present and the Volunteers who were acting as scouts etc. to protect the meeting, On the other hand he had his garden party, tennis etc., attended by the grandees from around Callan (mostly British minded). which included the District Inspector of the R.I.C. in Callan and some guests from Kilkenny. The Volunteer meeting was held in his big haybarn in the haggard or yard at the rear of his premises. The garden party was held at the front of the house, and he succeeded in carrying the whole thing through without those at the front of the house having the foggiest idea of what was going on at the back.

At that meeting it was decided to form the Kilkenny Brigade. I was elected Brigade Commandant, and the following other brigade officers were elected:

Brigade Vice Comdt. - James Lalor, Walkin St., Kilkenny.

Brigade Adjutant - Leo Dardis, James's St., Kilkenny.

Brigade Quartermaster - Edward Comerford, Wellington Square, Kilkenny.

"An tÓglach", the official publication of the Irish Volunteers, was published about this time. It was banned by the British. It had to be printed and distributed secretly. Copies for the Kilkenny Brigade area were conveyed from Kingsbridge railway station, Dublin, by Thomas Maher, railway guard, of William's Lane, Kilkenny, and brought by him or Canice O'Reilly of Thomas St., Kilkenny, who was a railway goods' carter, to my place of business in Parliament St., Kilkenny. Leo Dardis, the Brigade Adjutant, had the copies distributed to the battalions through the Volunteer communication channels operating throughout the brigade. Each company paid for the number of copies supplied to them. The official paper was a great help to the organisation. It acted as a tonic to the members. Anyone on whom a copy was found by the British received anything from 6 months to 2 years' imprisonment. Some Kilkenny Volunteers served jail sentences as a result of being arrested with a copy in their possession.

In September 1918, still 'on the run', I went to reside in the house of my mother-in-law, Mrs. Anne O'Regan, 30, Dean St., Kilkenny, where I was very well looked after. During this period I attended all brigade staff and brigade general meetings, which as a rule were held either at Joe Rice's place in Outrath, Joseph Sweeney's house at Troyswood, or the Sinn Féin Hall in Kilkenny. The only disguise I used during my time 'on the run' was to wear a moustache.

In October 1918 I was instructed by G.H.Q. to attend a meeting in Dublin. I was still 'on the run' at the time. I cycled from Joe Rice's place at Outrath to Gowran railway station for the early morning train. I arrived at that station and had my bicycle loaded, and I got into the train before the R.I.C. man on station duty arrived. The train was actually moving out before he arrived so he did not see me at all. My instructions were to call at Mr. Peadar Clancy's

shop in Talbot St., Dublin, at a stated time that night, when I would get instructions as to where the meeting was being held. I duly called to Mr. Clancy's shop at the time specified. There I met George Plunkett, whom I had met a couple of months before, and he told me to go to Fleming's Hotel (Seán O'Mahony's place) in Gardiner's Place. He told me he had a very important message to be delivered to Michael Collins (then Adjutant General of the Volunteers) there, and he directed me to get there as quickly as possible with it. I proceeded right away to Fleming's Hotel and there I succeeded in getting the message, through Mr. Harry Boland whom I met in the hotel, to Michael Collins who was engaged upstairs. About five minutes after Collins had got the despatch Mr. Michael Staines, whom I had met a short time previously in Kilkenny and who was in the same hut with me in Frongoch in 1916, came down the stairs and said that the venue for the meeting had now to be changed to Blackhall Place. Piloted by him a number of Irish Volunteer representatives from the country, including myself, got out by the back entrance, some others left by the front, and then splitting up into ones and twos we proceeded to the meeting hall in Blackhall Place. All the G.H.Q. staff were at this meeting, which was attended by a large number of representatives of brigades in the country. It was expected that the British would start to enforce conscription on the 1st November, 1918. The tactics to be adopted by us were to be guerilla tactics. Resistance was to be by the use of any and every means at our disposal. It was visualised that the usual and easy channels of communication would be frequently dislocated, but it was emphasised that lines of communication in brigade areas and with adjoining areas and with G.H.Q. must be maintained, and be restored if broken or alternative lines provided. Adjoining areas should go to the relief of any areas pressed, whether inside the brigade area or adjoining brigade areas. The general condition of the organisation and a large number of problems were discussed. It was about 3 a.m. when the meeting was over, and where I had arranged to stay there would be no chance of getting in at that hour, so I went to the Clarence Hotel on the Quays. I was told by the night porter there that the Royal Exchange Hotel in Parliament St. was the only place where I would have a chance of getting in at that hour. So I went to the Royal Exchange Hotel, and after ringing and rapping for some time the night porter opened the door and I went in. I asked him if he had a room or a bed vacant, and after thinking for some time he said: "I have, but what is your name and address? Did you ever stay here before?". I told him I did. (This was a fact as I had stayed in that hotel on one occasion previously). I said my name was Thomas Doyle, Newbridge, and added "I don't want to be called early, eleven o'clock will do. I will be obliged if you can arrange that". I gave him a tip at this point and said that if he had a single room vacant I would prefer it. The tip had its effect. "I have" he said, "and I'll put you into the best one in the place where there will be no noise, Mr. Doyle. I didn't know you when you came in as I was drowsy, but sure now I remember you well, Mr. Doyle".

The next day, Sunday, I travelled home by rail as far as Maryborough (now Portlaoighise), where I alighted and proceeded to cycle back to Kilkenny. I was trailed by an R.I.C. man from Maryborough. I did not notice him until I was about half a mile outside Maryborough. I increased my speed but he still kept me in view. It was not until I had covered about six miles and nearing Abbeyleix after a hard gruelling pace on a wet heavy road that the pace began to tell on him. I got out of his sight and as I came into

Abbeyleix a G.A.A. match was just finished. The crowd was leaving the field so I mingled with them. There were half a dozen R.I.C. men in a bunch on the street as I passed.

On arrival back at Joe Rice's place at Outrath I reported all the proceedings, instructions etc. to the other members of the brigade staff. A meeting of the brigade council was called and was held on the following Sunday in an unoccupied house on the farm of Mr. Joseph Sweeney at Troyswood, Kilkenny. At this meeting all the instructions and directions given at

the G.H.Q. meeting were issued to and explained to the battalion officers of all battalions in the brigade area.

During the six months May to October 1918 the conscription threat and the plans to resist it dominated all other issues. On the 11th November, 1918, the armistice in the 1st World War was signed, and this finished the Conscription Act as far as Ireland was concerned. The number of Volunteers in Co. Kilkenny at the beginning of 1918 would not, in my opinion, exceed 700. During the conscription scare it grew to between three and four thousand. As the danger of conscription faded out the members who were concerned only about conscription as it affected themselves, faded out also. But that does not mean that all who joined during that period left. As a matter of fact roughly a quarter continued in the ranks and proved themselves to be very good members. Even those who left at that time had greatly benefited by the training, discipline and education in national ideals and patriotism which they received in the movement and from their comrades. Most of those who frowned on the Irish Volunteers before the conscription menace were friendly now, and this was a great advance and made things easier in the tough period which lay ahead.

I had still to remain 'on the run' as I was informed by G.H.Q. that the British were still after all those who had escaped their net at the time of the faked "German Plot" arrests earlier in the year. In October and November 1918 what was known as the Big Flu was raging in the country. Many died. The daily funerals of young and old were numerous. There was practically no Volunteer work done while the epidemic lasted. Some members of the Irish Volunteers died with it. Many who got it were strong enough to survive.

In the general election held in December 1918 the Sinn Féin candidates for Kilkenny City and County were returned unopposed.

1919:

In all the battalions in the brigade area training (indoor and outdoor), recruiting and organising went on as usual after the dark clouds of conscription and the big flu had passed by. Peter de Loughry of Parliament St., Kilkenny, (one of our representatives to G.H.Q.) who was arrested in the round-up at the time of the fake "German Plot" in May 1918 was imprisoned in Lincoln Jail in England. He it was who made the famous key which enabled Eamon de Valera, Sean McGarry and Seán Milroy to make their sensational escape from that prison. Mr. E.T. Keane, Editor of the "Kilkenny People", humorously described them at the time as being the first three in the Lincoln Handicap of that year. All the prisoners arrested under the fake "German Plot" were released about the middle of March 1919, so I was able to come off 'the run' and move around freely.

From the time the First Dáil functioned in 1919 the name of the organisation was changed from the Irish Volunteers to the Irish Republican Army, which title continued from that on. Particulars of numbers of R.I.C. and equipment in each R.I.C. barracks in each battalion area were collected by the battalion staffs and transmitted to Brigade H.Q. The reports containing these particulars were considered and, if necessary, discussed at the brigade meetings. Statistics of British Army strength in the brigade area were compiled and were constantly kept under review. The brigade meetings at this time were held in Kilkenny City, it being the central position in the county. These meetings were as a rule held in the Sinn Féin Hall, Parliament St., which was the property of and was situated next door to the shop and dwelling house of Peter de Loughry, whom I have already frequently referred to. The Sinn Féin Hall could be approached either from Parliament St. (which was the official entrance) or from New Building Lane where there was a side entrance.

Occasionally brigade meetings were held in the Town Hall. Brigade meetings were held monthly and special meetings whenever required. Brigade officers were conveniently situated for interview with battalion or company officers on any matter that might crop up between the meetings.

Communications:

Despatches were sent to G.H.Q. by

(a) road communications routed from company to company, thus from Kilkenny to the Blanchfield's Park Company, on to the Paulstown Company, then on to the Bagenalstown Company, from where the Carlow Brigade carried them on, and

(b) per rail by brigade representatives or by special courier.

From G.H.Q. despatches were received

(a) by rail, per railway guard Thomas, Maher, Williams Lane, Kilkenny, or

(b) under cover to local covering addresses. The following addresses were used for this purpose at different times: Mr. Daniel O'Connell, publican, High St., Kilkenny, Mr. Thomas Butler, merchant, Parliament St., Kilkenny, and Mr. Michael Dalton, barber, Watergate, Kilkenny.

During this year - 1919 - eight or nine rifles were procured for the brigade. They were purchased one at a time over a protracted period from a soldier in the military barracks who was contacted by a barber named Brennan. The following took part in securing these rifles: James Lalor, Brigade Vice O/C, Leo Dardis, Brigade Adjutant, Edward Comerford, Brigade Quartermaster, and Volunteer Michael Phelan. The British military eventually found out about it, and those referred to narrowly escaped being captured when they attended in the early hours of a morning near the wall of the military barracks to take delivery of more rifles.

1920:

Early in January 1920 I was called to G.H.Q. in Dublin. I met, by appointment, the Chief of Staff, Dick Mulcahy, in "St. Enda's", Rathfarnham, and received instructions from him that an R.I.C. barracks was to be taken either by strategy or attack. I met Mr. Eoin O'Duffy (afterwards General O'Duffy) with the Chief of Staff on that occasion.

When I returned from Dublin I had a special meeting of the Brigade Council called, at which I reported what took place at G.H.Q. and the order given by the Chief of Staff, It was decided to select Tullaroan R.I.C. barracks for attack. The date and time were fixed. The question of the materials and armaments available for the carrying out of the attack was considered.

With the gelignite and detonators, mainly obtained from the Castlecomer Battalion (afterwards No. 3 Battalion), it was arranged that bombs be made.

Mr. Joseph McMahan (better known as Joe McMahan) from Kilmaley, Co. Clare, was in Kilkenny 'on the run'. He had obtained employment at his trade in the coach building works of Mr. Edward Furness, Patrick St., Kilkenny, and he was attached to one of the city companies. Joe had a design and formula for the making of a particular type of bomb, so arrangements were made for the making of bombs to this particular design in the engineering works of Peter de Loughry. The bombs were made after the normal working hours, and the following were engaged in the making of them:

Joe McMahan (just referred, to)

James Lalor (Brigade Vice O/C)

Thomas Murphy (brother-in-law of Peter de Loughry)

Martin Cassidy (O/C A Company)

Michael Oakes, Waterbarrack

Michael Phelan, Bishop's Hill.

When the arrangements for the attack on Tullaroan R.I.C. barracks were complete and when positions and tasks had been allotted to the various units taking part, the operation had to be called off at short notice. This was due to the fact that James Lalor, the Brigade Vice O/C, received an anonymous letter which stated that the British military authorities had knowledge of it. This proved to be entirely untrue because there were no activities whatever by the British military or the R.I.C. on the night the attack was due to come off.

A special meeting of the Brigade Council was summoned, at which it was at first decided to select Cuffesgrange R.I.C. barracks (about three miles from Kilkenny City) for attack. On further consideration, however, it was decided not to proceed with the attack on Cuffesgrange barracks but to attack Hugginstown R.I.C barracks instead. I then arranged for the following officers to meet me at the house of James Rowan, Ahenure, Callan, on the following Sunday to consider and decide on plans for the capture of the barracks:

James Lalor, Vice Brigade O/C

James Rowan, Comdt. Callan (afterwards 7th) Bn.

William Farrell, Capt. Hugginstown Company

Patrick Walsh, Capt. Dunnamaggin Company.

After examining all reports and all available information it was considered that the most feasible method of attack, and the one most likely to succeed, was for (a) a small party of bombers to attack the roof of the barracks from the adjoining lean-to shed in the yard of Cleary's licensed premises, with the object of blowing a hole or holes in the roof; (b) the bombers to be supported by firing parties armed with shotguns and situated front and rear of the barracks to keep the R.I.C. engaged and occupied while the bombers were operating to breach the roof and (c) when the roof would be sufficiently broken to pour Paraffin oil, petrol, and inflammable material in through the holes, set it afire to burn the building and thus force the garrison to surrender. This plan was agreed to, and Monday night, 8th March, 1920, at 11.30 p.m. was the date and time fixed for the attack.

All the other supporting arrangements to enable this plan to be carried out were considered, and instructions were given as to the need for dead secrecy in all things relating to the operation. Particulars as to when and where telegraph and telephone lines were to be cut, so as to completely isolate the village on the night of the attack, were arranged. Routes thence, places for the various units taking party to mobilise and tasks to be performed were decided on. The local Hugginstown and Dunnamaggin Companies were given a lot of scout, patrol and guide work to do.

I was in charge of the operation and was assisted by James Lalor, Brigade Vice O/C, as 2nd in command and by Leo Dardis, the Brigade Adjutant. The party of bombers was selected from those who worked at the making of the bombs and who, consequently were used to and familiar with the handling of these missiles. The officers of the other units taking part were instructed to select the men from their units whom they considered most suitable to carry out the tasks allocated to them.

As heretofore mentioned, the bombs were made in the engineering works of Peter de Loughry, and Thomas Nolan, Captain of the Outrath Company, conveyed them, packed in a large box, in his pony and trap to his own premises in Joinersfolly. About the middle of the week preceding the attack he conveyed them - again using his pony and trap - to, I believe, the house of a relative of his near Hugginstown, from where they were collected by members of the Hugginstown Company. The number of bombs was approximately 36, or 40 at the outside.

During the week preceding the attack I had visits from and consultations with officers whose units were concerned in the operation regarding details of and the progress being made with the arrangements. At one of these interviews with William Farrell, Captain of the Hugginstown Company, I asked him if he had sufficiently impressed on his men the vital necessity for dead secrecy both before and after the attack, and his reply was: "I told them that if they uttered one word about it either before or after the attack it would mean instant death for anyone who talked about it". It would be difficult to improve upon that warning.

On the night of the attack I, by arrangement, met Leo Dardis, the Brigade Adjutant, at Clonmorán Cross, Kilkenny, at 7.50 p.m. and we both cycled by Ballinalina to the Waterford road and then on to the junction of the road at the end of Langrishe's demense wall at

Knocktopher. The field adjoining the road at this point was the assembly point for the units coming from Kilkenny and from Captain T. Nolan's company in Outrath. When all who were to assemble at this point had arrived we moved off to the general mobilisation point near Hugginstown. It was then about 9.30 p.m.

We were preceded by a guide from the Hugginstown Company on this part of the journey. We went by the road to the Carrickshock Memorial Monument. The night was very dark at this time, so much so that it was with difficulty some of the men kept in touch with their connecting files. We mostly walked this road, which was very rough as steam-rolling had only then been introduced in a few places in this county. The general mobilisation point was on the Carrickshock road, approximately 250 yards from the back of Hugginstown R.I.C. barracks. We arrived at this point about 10.30 p.m., and there I checked up with the officers on all details. There I was informed for the first time that one of the R.I.C. in the barracks, Constable Dockery was retiring on pension, that this was his last night in the R.I.C. and that there might be a farewell party in the barracks for him. (Note: - It was generally thought and said afterwards that it was in consequence of this that it was decided to attack the barracks on this particular night. That is not correct as I had not heard a word about it until I arrived at the mobilisation point.

All surrounding telegraph and telephone wires to and from the area were, according to plan, cut by 10.30 p.m. so that the British forces could not get word and rush out reinforcements from Kilkenny or Waterford. The wires were cut at Lavistown, about 2 miles from Kilkenny City, at Ballyhale railway station, at Mallardstown, at Coolagh (near Callan) and at Kilmoganny. The whole circuit of communications to and from the area were thus completely severed. All roads leading to the village were patrolled by our armed scouts to a distance of about half a mile from the village.

When those who were notified to mobilise at the general mobilisation point were assembled, final instructions were issued and all moved off as silently as possible to their allotted positions. The time now was in or about 11.30 p.m. One party of about 12 Volunteers, mainly from the Outrath Company, armed with shotguns and buckshot ammunition, under the command of Capt. Thomas Nolan, moved off first as they had to cross the far end of the village from the barracks and move up by the back of the houses on the opposite side of the street to take up their position in front of the barracks on the Booleyglass road. The Brigade Vice Commandant and myself went with this party. A second party of about 12, mainly from the Callan Battalion (afterwards 7th Battalion), armed with shotguns and buckshot ammunition, under the command of Comdt. James Rowan and assisted by guides from the Hugginstown Company, took up a position at the back of the barracks. The bombing section, under the command of Joe McMahon, assisted by guides and helpers from the Hugginstown and Dunnamaggin Companies (including Capt. Pat Walsh who was later killed in action at Tubrid), took up their position in the yard of Clery's public house adjoining the R.I.C. barracks. A ladder capable of reaching the main roof and a lower projecting roof of the barracks had been placed in this yard earlier in the evening by members of the Hugginstown Company for the use of the bombing section. The strength of the bombing section was 5 men, viz. Joe McMahon (already referred to), Thomas Murphy, Parliament St., Kilkenny, Martin Cassidy, Upper Patrick St., Kilkenny, Michael Oakes, Waterbarrack, Kilkenny, and Michael Phelan, Bishopshill, Kilkenny.

Officers who were not armed with shotguns carried automatics or revolvers. My command post was with the party in front of the barracks on the Booleyglass road. James Lalor, the Brigade Vice Commandant, 2nd in Command of the operation, was in charge of all units at the front of the barracks and Leo Dardis, the Brigade Adjutant, was in charge of those at the back. The strength of the R.I.C. garrison in the barracks was 6, viz. Sergeant Nealon, Constables Ryan, Dockery, Tighe, Conroy and O'Donoghue.

As previously stated, the night was very dark when we were travelling up the Carrickshock road, but by the time the units were in position there was intermittent bright moonlight which lit up the village and surroundings.

When those at the back of the barracks were in their position, Joe McMahon appeared on the ladder and gave me the pre-arranged signal that he was ready to start. I then blew a whistle and McMahon dropped two bombs, one on to the road in front of the barracks and the other into the back yard of the barracks. Both bombs exploded with loud explosions. I again blew a blast on the whistle and announced in a very loud voice to the R.I.C.: "The Irish Republican Army is attacking your barracks. I call on you to surrender. If there are any women or children inside they will now be allowed out and given safe conduct. Ten minutes will be allowed for this". Then after a pause I was in the act of repeating this announcement to emphasise the time left to comply, but the reply I got was a volley of rifle fire in my direction from the barracks. I then gave the order to Joe McMahon for the bombing section to carry on. Immediately a bomb, followed by more bombs, was slung on to the main roof of the barracks and on to the projecting roof of the barrack kitchen. The shotgun units both back and front of the barracks were also brought into action, and from time to time volleys of buckshot were fired at the windows of the barracks. These were vigorously replied to by the R.I.C. with bombs and rifle fire. The moon now shone brightly and lit up the whole village while the attack was on. While this was an advantage in some ways, it had disadvantages in so far as it made it easy for the R.I.C. to locate objects and movements outside. The night was cool but fine. The air was still. The bursting and explosion of the bombs appeared very loud, and coupled with this was the sharp crackle of rifles, the whizzing of bullets through the air, the volleys and flashes from the shotguns, the buckshot from which shattered the windows and slowed down the rifle fire and bombing from the barracks, the smashing and tinkling of glass as it crashed with flying slates and pieces of masonry, all combined in creating a tremendous volume of sound which was heard for miles around.

This continued for about 45 minutes, at the end of which time the firing of bombs and rifle fire by the R.I.C. died down and voices from inside the barracks called out "We surrender". I ordered my men to hold their fire, and shouted to those inside the barracks to open the door and ordered that one of the R.I.C. men should bring out the arms. After a short time the door was opened and an R.I.C. man, Constable Tighe, in his shirt appeared with some rifles. Accompanied by James Lalor I approached him and told him where to put them down on the road. I then sent him back for the remainder, which he brought out and put with the others.

In all he brought out six rifles and two revolvers.

Some of our men carried out the ammunition, which consisted of three boxes of .303 rifle cartridges. Just before the R.I.C. surrendered, our bombing section had succeeded in blowing a hole in the roof of the kitchen of the barracks. The time for using the petrol, paraffin etc. (which was already at hand) had now arrived, but the surrender coming almost simultaneously left no necessity for this.

Constable Tighe now informed me that one of their men, Constable Ryan, was very badly wounded and that the R.I.C. men inside were doing what they could to save his life. He mentioned that they had no medical supplies for such an emergency. He was then handed a first-aid outfit containing bandages etc. by, as far as I can now recollect, Captain Thomas Nolan. Constable Ryan got the priest and doctor before he died about six o'clock in the morning. He had been very badly wounded in the arm.

A motor car which was commandeered and brought by Commandant Tim Hennessy, Ennisnag (now Danesfort), was held in readiness a short distance from the village to be used in the event of any I.R.A. man or men being wounded. Fortunately we had no casualties. A resident of the village was now rapped up and asked for the loan of his pony and cart. He immediately agreed, so the pony, a white one, was tackled to the cart, the captured arms and

ammunition, together with our unused bombs, were loaded up, and the cart driven off by a party of our men to a temporary dump in a disused building known as "Pilsworths Factory" at Ennisnag on the banks of the King's River near Stoneyford. When finished with the pony and cart the pony was turned towards his home in Hugginstown and he and the cart arrived safely home without either a driver or a mishap.

Immediately after the pony and cart had left Hugginstown with the captured arms etc., all units were dismissed and they moved off to their several destinations. It was about one o'clock a.m. at the time. I cycled back with the Kilkenny City and Outrath units. We came by Knocktopher, turning left after we passed that village, on through Kells, and by The Seven Houses, near which we met some of our advanced scouts from a Kilkenny City Company who had news that there was no sign of any activity by the British military garrison or by the R.I.C. in Kilkenny City. When we arrived at Bamford Cross, Captain Tom Nolan and those members of his unit who lived in the Outrath area wheeled on by Ballinalina, and those from Kilkenny City who lived in Patrick St. district went home by the Kells Road.

Others crossed over to Tinnypark Cross and went in by the Callan Road. Michael Phelan of Bishop's Hill and myself came down by Shellumsrath, Poulgour and St. Canice's Well.

It was about 3 a.m. when we reached home, and notwithstanding that the R.I.C. usually had strong regular night patrols on duty in the city at this period we were all very fortunate in not running into any of them on the way back.

The following is a copy of the report which appeared in the issue of the "Kilkenny People" of the 13th March, 1920, of the attack on Hugginstown R.I.C. barracks and of the inquest on Constable Ryan.

Co. Kilkenny Sensation
Hugginstown Barracks Attacked
Police Constable Mortally Wounded
Garrison Surrenders and Delivers up Arms
Full Details of Battle

On Monday night between 11.30 and 11.45 the police barrack at Hugginstown, Co. Kilkenny, was attacked by a party of armed men, numbering 150 to 200, and after a fierce fight lasting about 50 or 60 minutes, the garrison - one sergeant and five constables - surrendered and delivered up their arms to the raiders.

Constable Thomas Ryan, one of the defenders, was seriously wounded during the fight - his right arm being practically blown away - and he died shortly after 6 o'clock on Tuesday morning, after receiving the last Sacraments from Rev. Fr. Hoyne, C.C., Hugginstown.

Sergeant Nealon also received a slight wound under the left eye, caused by a splinter from a bomb or a piece of flying glass. When the arms - six rifles and two revolvers - were delivered up to them, the raiders departed, leaving a quantity of unexploded bombs, a box of cartridges and four bottles of petrol behind. It is thought that two of the raiders were wounded.

Hugginstown, the scene of the attack, is a small village of about 18 or 20 houses, situated in the centre of a lonely bleak stretch of country about 15 miles from Waterford and the same distance from Kilkenny. It is about 2 1/2 miles from Ballyhale railway station and is only a quarter of a mile distant from the scene of the Battle of Carrickshock which took place on December 14, 1831, in the closing stages of the fight against the tithe laws. On that occasion, a large escort of Police protecting the tithe collectors, were attacked by men armed with scythes and pitch-forks, and 11 were killed and 17 wounded.

Monday night's battle suddenly began some time between 11.30 and 11.45 o'clock, with a loud explosion and a volley of shots. There was then a short pause of one or two minutes when firing opened again, to which the police in the barracks replied with rifle and revolver fire and hand grenades. Then followed a series of deafening explosions from the bombs and

hand-grenades thrown by the raiders. These mostly came from the back and sides of the barrack and the loud reports continued incessantly for about three quarters of an hour, when Constable Ryan, who had been upstairs throwing hand grenades through the window and a hole in the gable-end, tottered down the stairs into the day-room with his right arm almost blown away. He collapsed on the floor with the cry "they got me through the window".

He lay bleeding and moaning on the floor and after a few minutes he called for a priest and doctor. Constable Dockery, another of the defenders, laid his rifle aside and tried to stem the flow of blood with a sheet, but failed. The wounded constable again called for a priest and the sergeant, desirous of granting the dying man's request, ordered his men to cease fire and he shouted to the raiders that they would surrender.

When the police had handed over their rifles and revolvers to the raiders, one of the constables went for Rev. Fr. Ryan, C.C., who lives only about 100 yards away from the barrack, and another, donning a civilian coat and cap, cycled to Rogerstown, Kilmoganny, for Dr. J.P. Marnell, who arrived at the barracks about 3 o'clock. Fr. Hoyne administered the Last Sacraments to the dying man and Dr. Marnell used every means in his power to prolong life but failed, and Constable Ryan died on a stretcher on the floor of the day-room of the barrack shortly after 6 o'clock.

Sergeant Nealon stated they would not have surrendered only that Constable Ryan was wounded and dying. Constable Dockery was spending his last night in the barrack as he was being pensioned off next morning. He had the unique experience of fighting for his life during his last hour as a policeman, as, strictly speaking, he retires from the force at midnight on Monday.

Situation of barracks:

The police barrack is a well-built square block of a building, situated at the corner of a lane leading to the scene of the Carrickshock battle. It is adjoined on the right, looking out, by a public house owned by Mrs. Cleary. There is a porch with a window over the front door and there are four large windows in the front of the building. Entering the building, the day-room is on the left and overhead is the constables' dormitory. On the right is the Sergeant's kitchen and living-room, and over that are his sleeping quarters and that of his family.

There is no window at the gable-end, and at the back there is one small window looking out from the back kitchen about three feet from the ground. The ground floor windows were protected by steel shields and sand-bags, but there was no protection for the upper windows.

Seen on Wednesday, the barrack showed signs of a violent attack. Almost all the glass in the windows were broken, while the walls were dotted over with marks of bullets and splinters. The zinc gate leading from the lane into the yard was riddled with holes, mostly in the lower part, evidently caused by splinters from bombs. The back wall of the building and the high wall surrounding a small yard were dotted with bullet marks. The top portion of the back door leading into the yard was completely smashed as if by a heavy hammer or crow-bar. There was a hole in the roof of the back kitchen which juts out from the main building, caused by a bomb which came through and exploded and blew some of the rafters through the ceiling. Considering the amount of explosives used, the barracks was not badly damaged. Some houses opposite the barracks were also marked with bullet holes and the door of the post office, about 20 yards down from the barrack on the same side, was damaged as if by badly aimed grenades and some bullets.

When the attack began Constable Ryan was sleeping on a couch in the day-room and Constables Dockery, Tighe, Conroy and O'Donoghue were in bed in the dormitory overhead. Sergeant Nealon was sitting by the bed of his wife, who was ill and under the doctor's care for a week before that, and he was reading a newspaper when the first shot was fired.

His five children were asleep at the time and, rousing them up, he brought the whole family down to the kitchen. Mrs. Nealon and the children were terror-stricken by the firing and

explosions, and she and two of her youngest children fainted. When she revived and gained sufficient strength she recited the prayers for the dying over Constable Ryan before Fr. Hoyne arrived.

Inhabitants' Experiences:

Most of the inhabitants of the village had retired to rest when the firing began and some of them at first thought that the police were only practising bomb throwing. But when they realised the real nature of the attack they became thoroughly frightened. Some of the more adventurous spirits, however, ventured to look out at the operations, one man stated to our representative that there was a continuous flashing from rifles on both sides for over half an hour. He also stated that he counted about 50 loud explosions. The raiders, he said, swarmed all over the place. They crouched behind the low stone wall opposite the barrack. They entered the back premises of Mrs. Cleary's public-house and Holland's next door to that. They also took up positions behind the houses opposite and some of them occupied posts on the roofs of the houses. In fact, they took possession of the village.

Sentries on roads:

All roads and lanes leading to the village were guarded by armed sentries for about 1/2 mile outside, and several people were held up on their way home and ordered back whence they came at the pistol point. One man who had been out looking after some sheep and cattle came along swinging a lamp in his hand and ran into a group of about a dozen of the raiders.

He was escorted to the village and ordered to enter his house. He was just inside when the volley rang out "and I knew what was then up" he said. One young girl was very disappointed because her mother would not let her out to see the fireworks. The leaders of the raiders could be distinctly heard giving orders and it is said that they used some kind of megaphone for this purpose. They also used whistles for signalling to each other.

Arms handed over:

When the police ceased firing and intimated their intention of surrendering, one of the leaders ordered that one man bring out all the rifles and revolvers and leave them on the middle of the road. Constable Tighe appeared with six rifles and one revolver and did as ordered. He was about to retire when the spokesman sharply called out that there was one revolver missing and told the Constable to be quick about bringing it out. The Constable then entered the barracks and brought out the second revolver. There was no ammunition or hand grenades demanded and the raiders departed with the surrendered arms.

Motors used by raiders:

It is stated that three or four motor cars were used by the raiders but that they were brought only within a mile or so of the village.

The first intimation of the attack reached Kilkenny about 8 o'clock on Tuesday morning, and it was then discovered that all telegraph and telephone wires to Waterford and the South had been cut at Lavistown, about two miles from the city. Considerable police activity was noticeable about 9 o'clock. The business premises of the Mayor were visited and motor cars he keeps for hire examined. The private house of Mr. T. Treacy, T.C., was also visited, while the assistants in many business houses were looked up and questioned as to their movements on the previous night. Telegraph wires were also cut at Ballyhale station, Mallardstown near Callan, Coolaghmore (also near Callan) and Kilmoganny, within 200 yards of the police barrack. The Post Office have lodged claims for compensation in respect of the damage done to the telegraphic connections.

Deceased Man's Family:

The deceased constable, a native of Limerick, was 38 years of age and had about 17 years' service in the R.I.C. He was married and leaves a widow and three children. His wife, who was formerly a Miss Byrne of Leighlinbridge, Co. Carlow, is postmistress in the Barrack St. Post Office, Waterford, where Constable Ryan was well known. After the incident on

Wednesday the remains of the deceased were removed to Ballybricken Church, Waterford, where they remained until Thursday morning. Office and High Mass were celebrated for the repose of his soul and he was buried in Ballybricken cemetery. The chief mourners were: Mrs. Ryan and her children; Mrs. O'Farrell, Dublin, sister of Mrs. Ryan; and Rev. Fr. Byrne and Mr. P. Byrne, Leighlinbridge, brothers of Mrs. Ryan, and some friends of the deceased.

Lord French's Sympathy:

Mrs. Ryan has received the following message from the Private Secretary to the Lord Lieutenant: "I am commanded by His Excellency, the Lord Lieutenant, to convey to you his sincere sympathy in the loss of your husband, who was killed in the gallant discharge of his duties".

Mr. Tyacke, Assistant Inspector-General R.I.C., visited the scene of the conflict and sympathised personally with the wife and relatives of the dead constable.

The Inquest

Constable's vivid story of the fight.

On Wednesday at 12.30 o'clock Dr. Denis Walshe, J.P., Graiguenamanagh, Coroner for South Kilkenny, conducted an inquest into the circumstances surrounding Constable Ryan's death. Owing to the limited accommodation at the police barrack the inquest was held in Mrs. Cleary's public-house. County Inspector E.C. Power and District Inspectors White, Thomastown, and R.R. Spears, Callan, were present.

The inquest was to have begun at 12 o'clock, but owing to the difficulty in securing a sufficient number of jurymen it was after one o'clock before the proceedings commenced.

The following were sworn on the jury: Messrs. Edward Tennyson, Booleyglass (foreman), Matthew Keeffe, Denis Phelan, Richard Cuddihy, Thomas Daniell, Edward Millea, Thomas Donovan, D.C., William Loughlin, John Millea, Pat Power, John Aylward and Thomas Calthorpe.

Constable O'Donoghue's narrative:

The jury having viewed the body of the deceased in the police barrack, Constable Charles O'Donoghue was sworn and deposed:

"I knew the deceased, Constable Thomas Ryan. He was about 38 years of age and was married".

Mr. White, O.I.: "Do you remember the night of the 8th instant?"

"Yes sir".

"At what time did-you go to bed?"

"About 10.30. The Sergeant was in his own quarters. Constable Ryan and Constable Tighe were in the day-room, and Constables Dockery, Conway and myself were in the dormitory. Sometime about 11.50 I heard a volley of rifle fire - an explosion".

"Come on, boys"

"Did you hear more than one?"

"Just one. At the same time Constable Ryan ran upstairs and said: "Come on, boys, we are attacked"

Then there was like another explosion in the front window. I jumped out of bed and was putting on my pants when splinters came through the front window. I rushed downstairs with my carbine. Constable Tighe and Conroy were firing out through the window of the day-room in front, and I went firing through the back door of the day-room.

"Where was the rest of the party at this time?"

"Constable Ryan had a box of bombs, going upstairs with them".

"Did the explosion you speak of continue?"

"Yes, they took place principally in the back yard".

Bomb through roof:

"Did any of these missiles come into the barracks? One came through the roof into the barracks?"

"Yes, one came through the roof of the kitchen, a hand-made bomb or grenade. It came through the slates and then through the ceiling."

Constable Ryan Wounded:

"What happened after this firing had gone on for some time"?

"I heard Constable Ryan moaning and saying that he was dying, and I went into the day-room. it should be near one o'clock. Constable Ryan was lying in the day-room and was asking the Sergeant to get him medical assistance and a priest. There was blood flowing all over the day-room on all sides and out through the door. Constable Ryan's arm was completely shattered and Constable Dockery was twisting a sheet around it".

"Did you see anything happen to Constable Ryan or do you know what part of the barrack he was in?"

"He was up in the sergeant's bedroom; it was up there he took the bombs. I did not see him come downstairs; he had come down to the day-room before I came in".

"I am done":

Coroner - "Did he make any statement?"

"No, but when coming down the stairs he called the sergeant and said "I am done, sergeant; they got me through the window". He was In a semi-conscious state at the time".

Mr. White - "Did you notice the windows of the room in which Constable Ryan was?".

"Yes, I saw them after returning from Thomastown on Tuesday. One pane of glass was blown out; the other panes were intact".

"Did you see any bombs about"?

"Yes, they were scattered all over".

"Were any of them on the roof of the barrack?".

"Not in front,, but they were in the back".

Bombs, petrol and cartridges:

Coroner- "Were these different from the tombs used by the police?"

"Yes"

"You could identify them as different?"

"Yes".

Mr. Whyte - "How many bombs did you see?"

"Between 50 and 100; some of them were dead and some were alive. Some of them were on the roof of the back kitchen and others were scattered about the yard and about the door of the back kitchen, and also about the road in front of the barracks."

"Besides these bombs was there anything else found outside the barracks."?

"Yes, four bottles of petrol and a box of shotgun cartridges".

"Did you see how these were filled"?

"They were filled with slugs".

"Did you see a ladder anywhere?"

"There was a ladder against the wall at the back. It reached to the roof of the back kitchen".

Mr. Whyte - "I should like to mention the difficulty I am in: this constable was in a room by himself at the time the injury to his arm occurred. He came downstairs without assistance and lay down on the kitchen floor. His arm was shattered, but no one was up in the room with him at the time it occurred".

Deceased an expert bomber:

Coroner- "Who was told off to use the bombs at the barracks?"

Witness- "Constable Ryan".

Foreman- "Was he using these upstairs at the time?"

"Yes".

Foreman- "You did not hear him say anything only that they got him"?

"No, but he was muttering the whole time".

Foreman- "He did not mean that the bombs he was using got him or anything like that?"

"No".

Mr. Whyte - "Was this constable a skilled bomber?"

Witness- "Yes, he went to the school of instruction in Waterford and had a certificate in bombing".

Right arm shattered:

Dr. P.J. Marnell, F.R.C.S., Kilmoganny, was the next witness. He deposed: "On Tuesday morning at 3 a.m. I was called to see the deceased, Constable Thomas Ryan, at Hugginstown. I found him in a state of collapse and on examination I found his right arm shattered. He was still bleeding but there was a temporary bandage on his arm. The bones of the arm and forearm were shattered. I ligatured the brachial artery and stopped the bleeding. I remained with him until he died at 6 a.m. I made a post mortem examination to-day assisted by Dr. Murphy, and I am of opinion that the cause of death was shock and haemorrhage. The wound was such as might be caused by a powerful explosive. It is not at all likely to be self-inflicted. There were no other marks of violence on the body."

Dr. P.J. Murphy, Thomastown, corroborated Dr. Marnell's post mortem examination in every particular.

The Coroner asked the jury if they would like to see the bombs that were used.

Foreman - "I don't know anything about them".

D.I. Whyte said the only remark the deceased made was something about being "done for" and that "they got me through the window". The doctors' evidence was that this wound, in their opinion, was self-inflicted, and they submitted that if when throwing out a bomb it prematurely exploded it would have blown his hand away. There was no one in the room with him; if there were anyone he would produce that person. The deceased came downstairs without assistance and he simply bled to death.

Dr. Marnell - "His hand was quite intact".

D.I. Whyte - "He met his death in carrying out his duty in defending his barracks and carrying on his occupation

Coroner's address to jury:

The Coroner, in addressing the jury, said he had no desire in the world to dictate the wording of their verdict, but he thought it was necessary to tell them how to draft it. They would have no difficulty in concluding that this man died from shock and haemorrhage caused by a high explosive. The next thing was that he died by violence and it would be necessary for them to state whether it was accidental, suicidal or homicidal.

As regards the accidental theory, he thought they might put it out of their heads. In considering these things he would ask them to forget that this man was a policeman.

"Just consider him (continued the Coroner) as an ordinary neighbour and put yourself in his place and make the case your own. At 11.50 o'clock on Monday night he was in his house, giving provocation to nobody. You have ample proof that his house was attacked by men armed with deadly weapons, and like every other man he had a right to defend his house. In this case it was more than right - it was a duty. In the course of that defence he evidently received this injury, which proved fatal. Unfortunately there is no direct evidence that the shell that caused the injury came through the window, but you have his statement when dying to that effect - that "they got me through the window". The only question is the question of homicide. The fact that the barrack was attacked and that he received this injury during the attack, leaves no doubt as to how he received it. It would be your duty, of course, if the evidence warranted it, to mention the names of the persons who inflicted the injury, but you

have no evidence before you. With these facts before you we will now leave you to consider your verdict.

The verdict:

After an absence of 15 minutes the jury returned with the following verdict: "That Thomas Ryan died from shock and haemorrhage caused by a high explosive, and there is no evidence to show where the explosive came from. We offer our sincere sympathy to his wife and family". "

It would tire the reader if I were to deal with all the inaccuracies and exaggerations contained in the foregoing report, presumably supplied by the R.I.C., and also in the sworn evidence given by the R.I.C. at the inquest, which it is obvious was given with a deliberate propaganda flavour in favour of the British and R.I.C., so I will only deal with the following points:

(1) The report states that 150 to 200 armed men (other papers at the time stated that there were 200 to 300) were engaged. The approximate number engaged, including scouts, patrols and those engaged in cutting communications, was 80, and of those only approximately 35 were engaged in the actual attack itself.

(2) It is stated in the report that there was no ammunition or hand grenades demanded. The truth is that 11 hand grenades were inadvertently overlooked, but as regards the ammunition, 3 of the usual large sized boxes of rifle ammunition - all that was in the barracks - were handed over and taken away in the pony and cart.

(3) In the "Kilkenny People" report it is stated that 3 or 4 motor cars were used by the raiders, in actual fact there was only one, viz, the one held in readiness in the event of any casualties amongst our forces.

(4) In his evidence at the inquest Constable O'Donoghue in reply to District Inspector White stated that after the attack the bombs, which he identified as different from those used by the R.I.C., were scattered all over the place. There were, he swore, between 50 and 100 of them, some dead and some alive. Again the "Kilkenny People" of 12th June, 1920, reporting a court case in which Constable Thomas Ryan's widow claimed £8,000 compensation for the loss of her husband, states "Constable James Conroy swore that there was a tremendous attack on the barracks from all sides, There was considerable rifle firing and bomb throwing from the outside - hand grenades being used. A stiff fight went on for two hours. One hundred and seventeen bombs were found outside the barracks after the attack. These were bomb cases belonging to the attackers". In the same case Mr. J. Sealy, K.C., on behalf of Mrs. Ryan said "Apparently 150 or 170 bombs were fired by the attacking party". My comment is, as heretofore stated the number of bombs made for the attack was 36 or at the very outside 40. (I checked this up with the survivors of those who were actually engaged in the making of them). The number of those used in the attack was anything between 15 and 20. A few of these, perhaps 4 or 5, for some reason or another failed to explode. The remainder of the unused bombs were brought away in the pony and cart. Further comment would be superfluous.

The R.I.C. in Kilkenny did not hear of the attack at Hugginstown until about 8 a.m. on the morning of Tuesday the 9th March, 1920, which goes to prove that the cutting off of the communications was very effectively done. I was told at the time that it was only when a British Imperialist from the Hugginstown district came in to Kilkenny at about 8 a.m. with the news to them that they first heard it. They immediately got busy.

Two of them called to my residence (then 15 Dean St.) at about 9 a.m. on that morning, stating that they wanted full particulars of my movements during the previous night.

These particulars I refused to give them, so they departed as wise as they had come. The R.I.C. also called that morning at Mr. Peter de Loughry's place in Parliament St. He was then Mayor of the City and at the time he had motor cars for hire. The R.I.C. examined his motor

cars and took impressions of the tyres. They also visited and questioned a number of our men in Kilkenny City, but made no arrests on that day.

The files of the "Kilkenny People" record the following as having been arrested in March 1920 by British military and R.I.C., presumably on suspicion of having been connected with the attack at Hugginstown.

Capt. Wm. Farrell, Hugginstown

James Walsh, Kilkeasy, Hugginstown.

Edward O'Halloran, Hugginstown.

John Gorman, Ballyhale.

Patrick O'Keeffe, Parliament St., Kilkenny.

Sean Byrne, Rose Inn St., Kilkenny.

Edward O'Gorman, Woollengrange.

Thomas Barron, Sheepstown.

William Lynch, Coolgove.

John McGrath, Thomastown.

Edward Raftis, Knocktopher.

None of the arrested men was charged with that incident, so the British authorities must have had no evidence to connect any of them with it. The demoralising effect on the R.I.C. of the capture of Hugginstown barracks was plainly visible in the weeks that followed, as a number of R.I.C. barracks all over the county were hurriedly evacuated. For days and days lorries could be seen bringing their belongings to barracks in the larger centres. This hurried evacuation of rural R.I.C. barracks then became general throughout the country. On the other hand, the success of the attack coming as it did after several failures elsewhere, had a heartening and stimulating effect on our organisation throughout the country, and the same plan of attack was used with good results in some of the subsequent attacks on R.I.C. barracks in neighbouring counties.

About the middle of March 1920 I was called by G.H.Q. to a meeting in Dublin. There were brigade officers from other areas, present at this meeting. We were given orders to have the vacated R.I.C. barracks and Income Tax books and documents in our areas destroyed by burning. The instructions were that these operations were to be carried out on Easter Saturday night of 1920. On arrival back in Kilkenny I called a Brigade Council meeting and issued the orders to the Battalion Commandants to have these instructions implemented.

The following is a list of evacuated R.I.C. barracks burned in my brigade area on Easter Saturday night 1920, together with particulars of the amount of compensation claimed by their owners from the Kilkenny County Council:

Name of barracks Amount of compensation claimed

Corbettstown £2,000

Kilmanagh £31,200

Railyard £2,600

Hugginstown £2,000

Loughbrack £2,000

Killamery £1,800

Rosbercon £1,500

Slieverue £4,500

Bennettsbridge £3,070

Clomanto £200

Inistiogue £2,500

Johnstown £3100

Coolcullen £1,750

The Rower £800

Tullaroan £175

Slatequarries £2,000

Paulstown £600

The Income Tax offices of Mr. Patrick Lynch, Castlecomer Road, Kilkenny, and of Mr. Louis Finnegan, Patrick St., Kilkenny, were also raided on that Easter Saturday night and all books and documents were destroyed. The Income Tax office of Mr. Thomas Murphy in Castlecomer was raided at a later date, when the books and documents there were destroyed. Some more R.I.C. barracks were subsequently, after evacuation by the B.I.C., destroyed that year, but I regret I have not particulars of them.

On the 10th April, 1920, at about 3 o'clock in the morning my house at 15, Dean St. was raided by British military and R.I.C. and I was arrested and taken to the Kilkenny military barracks. James Lalor (Brigade Vice Commandant), Thomas Nolan, Outrath, and Michael Loughman, New St., were arrested about the same time that morning and were also brought to the Kilkenny military barracks. We were all put into the one cell. Some days afterwards we were brought by rail under heavy military escort to Cork Gaol. There we met about 20 other prisoners from County Kilkenny who had been arrested during the end of March and early in April 1920. They were mostly from the Hugginstown district.

After about a week or ten days in Cork Gaol we were taken very early one morning with about 100 other political prisoners in British military lorries to Cobh. Here we were put on board a British naval vessel bound for Belfast. We were being taken to Belfast Prison. The boat trip to Belfast was a pleasant break from prison routine. The day was fine, a calm sea, and the sun shining at its best. The captain of the vessel allowed the prisoners to use a portion of the upper deck, and from there we viewed the very varied and beautiful scenery all along the coast from Cobh, around by Waterford and Wexford, and up the full length of the east coast of Ireland to Belfast.

At the disembarking stage in Belfast we received a very hostile reception from members of the civilian population. There were a number of I.R.A. prisoners in Belfast prison when we arrived there. Eoin O'Duffy (afterwards General O'Duffy) was the prisoners' commandant. I was already acquainted with him as we had met earlier in the year at "St. Enda's" in Dublin.

There was at that time a large number of I.R.A. prisoners in various prisons in Ireland and in England. Reports came in to Belfast prison that the prisoners had gone on hunger-strike in other prisons for release, and it was unanimously decided by the prisoners in Belfast prison to do likewise. This was towards the end of April or early in May 1920.

The hunger-strike in Belfast prison started on a Monday evening. After a couple of days on hunger-strike about 100 prisoners - including myself, Michael Loughman and about 20 others from Co. Kilkenny - were marched, handcuffed in pairs, under a strong British military escort to Belfast docks to board a British naval sloop en route for Wormwood Scrubbs prison in London. On our march to board the sloop we passed by a big ship which was under repair in the docks. The workers on the deck (which was about 50 feet high) of this ship rushed to the deck rails and hurled down on us anything that came to their hands. Nuts, bolts, bits of iron and lumps of coal were showered down at us. We had no protection other than our overcoats to ward off the missiles. The British military escort were wearing their war equipment, steel helmets etc. Most of the missiles appeared to drop heavily on the British soldiers' steel helmets. They (the missiles) were, of course, aimed for the prisoners, but as luck would have it the military escort got the most of them. This went on for a couple of minutes until one British soldier close to me got a whale of a whack on the shoulder from a big lump of coal. That apparently was the last straw for him. He jumped out from the ranks, bolted a round of ammunition into his rifle and turned it on the crowd of workers on the ship who were throwing down the missiles. He shouted to them in unprintable language to get back or he would blow their particular kind of heads off. Other soldiers near him made a hasty move to

do the same as they also had got it stiff, but the British officer in charge then, and only then intervened and ordered those firing the missiles to get back, and the soldier who had turned his rifle on them first then shouted "andnear time".

Only for that soldier some of the prisoners might have been killed. As it was a number of them were wounded, and it must be remembered that we were all on hunger-strike for some days at the time.

The sea voyage on hunger-strike was a big ordeal. We were handcuffed in pairs and nearly all, including myself, got seasick. The empty retching under these circumstances was much more racking than ordinary seasickness.

We were landed at Pembroke in Wales, and from there we were brought by rail to London and thence to Wormwood Scrubbs prison. When we arrived at that prison we found that the Irish prisoners already there were also on hunger-strike. After 11 Days' hunger-strike (including the period on hunger-strike in Belfast prison) I was unconditionally released. James Leddin of Limerick and Michael Loughman of Kilkenny were released at the same time on the same day. We were sent to St. Mary's Hospital, Highgate Hill, London, where a number of other hunger-strikers were on release sent to recover.

While in St. Mary's Hospital Mr. James Delaney, Green St., Kilkenny, came to see me, and when I was convalescent I arranged with him to have a look around London. He was working in London at that time. He had joined the British Army during one of the Redmondite British recruiting drives early in the 1914-1918 Great War. He served in that army during that war, but when he came back his ideas had changed and he became a solid supporter and soldier of the Irish Republic. On one of our rambles around London we (James Delaney and myself) were attracted by a beautiful display of guns, rifles, revolvers etc. in a large gunsmith's shop, and my mind went wondering as to the possibility of some way of smuggling small arms across to Ireland. Our conversation then began to run along these lines. I inquired from him as to the possibility of purchasing serviceable revolvers, automatics, ammunition etc., as I thought there should be a lot of these still around London after the Great War. He believed it was possible to secure them by purchase in certain places, and he was game to take on the job if a way to get them to Ireland could be arranged. I gave this aspect of the problem serious consideration in the days that followed, and when he called again I explained my conclusions to him, which were that when I got home I would fix up a covering address to which I believed the revolvers etc. could be safely smuggled through the post, and that in consultation with the Brigade Staff I would arrange some way to have the money provided to purchase them. A code was arranged between us to be used when writing to each other about them.

I returned home from London near the end of May 1920 and acquainted the Brigade Staff about the matter. It was decided to approve of the proposal. A covering address was arranged. It was a variation of the Title, "Town Clerk, City Hall, Kilkenny," but designed so as not to incriminate him personally

Leo Dardis, the Brigade Adjutant, worked in the Town Hall at that time, and he took delivery of the post each day. As each parcel containing arms etc. arrived he, of course, took possession of it. The Town Clerk himself, for his own safety and peace of mind, was not informed of the matter.

This scheme was put into operation almost immediately after I came home, and after some deliveries had arrived safely James Delaney wrote to me from London and told me that he would require some help, as to secure the stuff he had to frequent very dangerous places patronised by a rough element of society. He suggested and recommended as his helper a man named Patrick Delaney from 14, Dean St., Kilkenny, who was then living in London and who had served in the British Navy during the 1914-1918 Great War. He (Patrick Delaney) was a boxer who had gone far in his weight in the British Navy Championships, and he would be a most reliable and useful man to partner him on the job. I knew this Patrick

Delaney from his childhood as he was reared next door to me, so I immediately agreed to the proposal.

This postal smuggling scheme worked according to plan and the parcels came from time to time and were secured by the Brigade Adjutant. On one occasion James Delaney travelled from London to Kilkenny and brought, concealed on his person, four revolvers, having carried them right through from London. I can vouch for this because I collected them from him at his father's house in Green St. on the day he arrived. Later on in 1920 Leo Dardis was arrested and an alternative covering address had to be arranged. Up to the time of my arrest in November 1920 approximately twenty revolvers of various patterns were secured for the brigade in this way.

James Delaney returned to Kilkenny from London early in 1921 and joined the Flying Column. While serving with the column he was known as "Matty" Delaney. During the Truce period in 1921 he was Brigade Liaison Officer in Kilkenny. At present he holds the rank of Colonel in the Irish Army. During the period I was under arrest, in the months of April and May 1920, Peter de Loughry acted as Brigade Commandant, as James Lalor, the Brigade Vice Commandant, was also under arrest during this same period.

On the 3rd June, 1920, Drangan R.I.C. barracks in Co. Tipperary (not far from the Kilkenny border) was successfully attacked. Commandant James Rowan, with a party from the Callan Battalion (afterwards 7th Battalion), assisted the South Tipperary Brigade in that attack.

About the middle of 1920 Republican Justices were appointed and Republican Courts commenced to function in all areas in Kilkenny City and County. Civil and criminal cases were dealt with by these courts. Arbitration was encouraged in all cases which lent themselves to this course. The Republican Courts were more concerned with dispensing justice than with dispensing law. In Kilkenny City Mr. Peter. de Loughry - then Mayor of the City - usually presided at the Republican Court, and other Republican Justices who sat with him were: Mr. Patrick Corcoran, Patrick St., and Mr. Laurence Walsh, Baun, Dunmore.

To enable these courts to function, to enforce the courts' decrees, and to maintain Republican law and order generally, a Republican Police Force was formed in all the battalion areas. Nicholas O'Keeffe, High St., Kilkenny, was appointed Chief of the Republican Police in the Kilkenny City Battalion area. All members of the Republican Police Force were I.R.A. men specially selected for the work.

The first sitting of a Republican Court in Kilkenny was held in the City Hall at about 8 p.m. one evening in or about the month of June 1920. I acted as Clerk to the Court. Some of the first cases to be dealt with related to the larceny of jewellery, plate and other valuables from the residences of Major Humphrey, Talbotsinch., and Major Joyce of Sion House, Kilkenny, both ex British Army Officers.

Another early case related to the stealing of cattle from the lands of Sir Wheeler Cuffe, Leyrath. These people had reported their losses to the R.I.C. at the time of the occurrences but without result. They then reported them to someone whom they knew to be connected with Sinn Féin or the I.R.A. The Republican Police quickly discovered the culprits, and traced and restored the missing property and cattle to the rightful owners without undue delay.

The owners expressed their grateful thanks to the Republican Police and their appreciation of the magnificent police and detective work well done. All these people were Unionists, and I just mention these few cases as a sample of how justice and fair play was administered under the Republic regardless of political or religious affiliations.

One of the ex British Majors referred to in the preceding paragraph, on the day following that on which his property was restored to him called to the R.I.C. barracks and created a scene. He cursed and thundered at the R.I.C., shouting that they were not worth a curse as police to protect or recover people's property, that he had recovered his property in a twinkling, no

thanks to them, and that it was a blessing that there was someone in the country to protect him and people like him from thieves who were prowling around and whom they (the R.I.C.) made no attempt to bring to justice.

Two of a gang of burglars operating around Kilkenny City and outskirts and who were concerned in some of the robberies already referred to, were arrested by the Republican Police and imprisoned in an unoccupied dwelling house on an outfarm the property of Capt. Thomas Hennessy (afterwards killed in action in Friary St., Kilkenny) of the Threecastles Company. After a couple of days' imprisonment one of these prisoners spilled the beans on his comrades. His prisoner pal in the next room overheard him giving details which implicated him with the robberies and the disposal of the stolen goods. He was furious and became very sullen and morose for three or four days. Then all of a sudden he made a dash to escape, knocked down and overpowered his guard and tore madly through the fields, pursued by some of his guards, who fired revolver shots at him, but without effect.

One of the guards then cycled to Kilkenny and reported the matter, stating that the prisoner headed towards the River Nore. All available members of the City Company were immediately mobilised to prevent him entering the City and to re-arrest him. Some members of the company were sent to the district on the east side of the River Nore and others were sent to the district on the west bank of the river. Those on the west side of the river contacted him near Talbotsinch, but when he observed them he rushed to the river, jumped in fully clothed and swam to the east side. When he got out on the east side he was observed by the party patrolling that side of the river. He again jumped into the river and swam back to the Talbotsinch or west side, where he was recaptured.

At the point where this incident took place the River Nore is approximately 40 yards wide.

There was a sequel to the arrest of these two prisoners. Michael Loughman of New St. was arrested by the British military and tried for assaulting one of the prisoners and for detaining him for eight days against his (the prisoner's) will. Mr. Loughman was acquitted.

Later on in 1921 Augustine Delaney of Irishtown, Harry Bateman of St. Kieran St. and Patrick Loughlin, also of Kilkenny, were arrested by British military and charged with acting as a police picquet of the Irish Republic on or about the 16th July, 1920. They were tried by courtmartial and all three received prison sentences. This charge related to the prisoner who escaped and was recaptured.

About this time (middle of 1920) the local authorities in Kilkenny City and County refused to recognise the British Local Government Board and recognised instead the Department of Local Government set up by Dáil Éireann.

About this time (July 1920) a number of R.I.C. men resigned from that force. Amongst those who resigned were the constables natives of County Kilkenny, viz. Constable Edward Loughlin of Castlewarren who had eleven years service, Constable T. Brennan of Clogh who had eight years' service, and Constable W. Lanigan, Kilkenny, who had thirteen years' service.

At this time, with a view to better organisation, it was considered necessary by the Brigade Council to subdivide some of the battalion areas and to form new battalions. On a Sunday early in July 1920, accompanied by Martin Kealy I attended and presided at a meeting of officers of the South Kilkenny Battalion. This meeting, which was held in an unoccupied but partly furnished house known as Butler's Cottage near Tinnahinch, Graiguenamanagh, was held for the purpose of forming what was afterwards known as the 5th Battalion. The area allotted to this new battalion, and which was formerly part of Commandant Martin Kealy's South Kilkenny Battalion, took in the companies and units in Graiguenamanagh, The Rower, Raheendonore, Inistiogue and Thomastown. As far as I can now recollect, the battalion officers elected at this meeting were:

Battalion Comdt. - James O'Hanrahan, Cappagh, Inistiogue

Vice Batt. Comdt. - Martin Bridgett, Baheendonore.

Battalion Adj. - Michael Carroll, Graiguenamanagh (now of Thomastown)

Battalion Q/M - John Cottrell, Graiguenamanagh (now of Inistiogue).

On a Sunday early in August 1920 I attended a meeting held in Urlingford for the purpose of forming what was afterwards known as the 2nd Battalion, Kilkenny Brigade. This new battalion was formed of the companies and units in Tullaroan, Graine, Clomanto, Urlingford, Crosspatrick, Galmoy, Balleen, Johnstown and Freshford.

Formerly these units were part of Kilkenny City and North Kilkenny Battalion, which at this time was under the command of Commandant Timothy Hennessy. At this meeting the following were elected as officers of the newly formed battalion:

Commandant - Simon Walton (Little Sim), Raimeen, Tullaroan.

Vice Comdt. - Patrick Talbot, Urlingford.

Adjutant - Patrick Loughlin, Urlingford.

Quartermaster - James Holohan, Tincashell.

On my way to Urlingford that morning I cycled through Freshford where a sports meeting was being held that day. On my way back about 4 o'clock in the afternoon there were four or five lorry loads of British military accompanied by R.I.C. scattered at various points in Freshford, but I got through without being held up or questioned. It was thought at the time that the British by some means or another got wind of the meeting and thought that it was being held in Freshford under cover of the sports meeting which I have already mentioned as being held there that day.

The following is a copy of a circular which I issued on 2nd August, 1920, regarding the boycott of the R.I.C. It was circulated throughout the brigade area.

"Óglaigh na hÉireann

Cill Chainnigh.

Owing to the tactics employed by the R.I.C. on our fellow countrymen it is hereby ordered that they be rigidly boycotted forthwith. No person shall associate with any member of this infamous force. No trader shall supply them with goods of any description. No car owners or others shall have any business transactions with them. This boycott of the R.I.C. must be rigidly carried out, and if any person disobeys same it will be considered a grievous offence and will be dealt with accordingly.

Commandant

2nd August, 1920".

About the end of July or early August of 1920 a number of what was afterwards known as the Black and Tans arrived from England and were put into the then occupied R.I.C. barracks as reinforcements for the R.I.C. About the 15th August, 1920, a party of what was known as the Auxiliary Division of the R.I.C. went into occupation of Woodstock House, Inistiogue, Co. Kilkenny. This force was composed mainly of ex-British Army officers, most of whom had seen service in the 1914-1918 Great War.

The infamous deeds of these forces (Black and Tans and Auxiliaries) for the short period they were in this country were hardly ever excelled elsewhere in any country, and details of their brutal and dirty deeds can be found in most of the books and histories relating to that period of Irish history.

About the middle of August 1920 in compliance with an order from G.H.Q. a general raid was carried out simultaneously in all the battalion areas for arms and ammunition held by private persons under permit from the British authorities. A good number of arms, mainly shotguns and shotgun ammunition, were secured by each battalion in the brigade area as a result of this general raid.

About the end of August 1920 a spy named Kenny was arrested by members of the 5th Battalion (Graiguenamanagh area). He was tried, sentenced to death and executed by

drowning. Kenny had been assisting the British military in the Graiguenamanagh area and was responsible for a number of arrests of I.R.A. men. He was an ex-British soldier, and at the time of his capture he was actually on his way out of the country. When arrested by members of the 5th Battalion at Thomastown Railway Station he had amongst his possessions a large sum of money and a voucher entitling him to travel to Canada at the expense of the British government.

On a Sunday early in September 1920, accompanied by Commandant Martin Kealy I attended a meeting held in the house of Mr. Martin McGrath at Tullogher, Co. Kilkenny.

Kealy and I cycled to this meeting and on our way passed quite close to Woodstock House and Demesne where the Auxiliaries had their headquarters. The road hereabouts was in very bad condition, so we dismounted from our bicycles, walked slowly along and took the opportunity to survey as far as possible the house itself and its surroundings.

At this meeting in McGrath's house a further battalion, afterwards known as the 6th Battalion, was formed. This new battalion was comprised of the following companies or units, viz. Tullogher, Listerlin, Glenmore, Mullinavat, Slieverue, Knockmoylan, Kilmacow, Mooncoin and Milepost. The area of this battalion was up to then part of Commandant Martin Kealy's, South Kilkenny Battalion.

The following battalion officers were elected for the new battalion at this meeting:

Battalion Commandant - Martin McGrath, Tullogher

Vice Commandant - John Hogan, Grange.

Battalion Adjutant - Denis McDonald, Tullogher.

Battalion Quartermaster - Richard Kennedy, Ballynooney.

Denis McDonald, the Battalion Adjutant, was at this time and for some years subsequently an Irish champion weight thrower. He afterwards emigrated to Canada where, I believe, he still resides.

When this reorganisation was completed the remainder of Commandant Martin Kealy's South Kilkenny Battalion was from then onwards known as the 4th Battalion, and Commandant James Rowan's Callan Battalion became the 7th Battalion.

About the middle of September 1920 Mr. Peter de Loughry, whom I have previously mentioned on a number of occasions in this statement, was requested by G.H.Q. to make grenade or small bomb cases in his foundry for G.H.Q.

He was also asked to use his influence with other foundry owners in this and other counties with whom he was acquainted with the object of inducing them to make these cases also.

He subsequently told me that he approached all those he knew and tried his very best, but his efforts were fruitless as those whom he approached were afraid to engage in this dangerous work. De Loughry got moulds made and proceeded with the work of casting the grenade cases in his own foundry and engineering works at Newbuilding Lane, Kilkenny. According as supplies of the cases were made they were packed and sent to Dublin to addresses arranged by G.H.Q. On one occasion while the grenade cases were being made British military, R.I.C. and Black and Tans raided the Sinn Fein Club which was next door to de Loughry's house and works, but found nothing of any importance.

The grenade cases referred to in the preceding paragraph were not the same type as the grenades or bombs which had been made in the same works for the attack on Hugginstown Barracks, but were of a type and pattern close to that of the Mills hand grenade, better known by the title "Mills bomb".

Occasionally from time to time raids were made on the mails in the hope that communications which would be of value to the brigade might be intercepted in transit.

These raids yielded little of any importance. On one occasion an R.I.C. report giving the estimated strength of the armaments held by the I.R.A. in the Kilkenny area was found. The report was fantastic in its exaggeration.

On the night of 17th September, 1920, my home at 15, Dean St. was raided by Auxiliaries, who made a long and diligent search but found nothing. I was not there at the time as it was not my practice then to sleep at home. I generally paid a short visit to my own house late each night and would subsequently slip across to my mother-in-law's house, 30, Dean St., and sleep there.

From the time In August that the British force of Auxiliaries occupied Woodstock House, Inistogue, as their headquarters, members of the 5th Battalion, in whose area it was situated, had been directed to keep them (the Auxiliaries) under constant observation and to report to the brigade headquarters particulars of their numbers, movements, armaments, defences, routine etc. From the information received under these headings it was clear that strong fortress-like defences had been installed which would be capable of resisting any assault made upon them with the armaments at our disposal. It was considered by the brigade staff that the only way it might be captured was by strategy, provided a suitable strategic line to work on could be devised or arranged. Particulars of enemy strength, armaments, routine movements etc. in all battalion areas were collected, as the brigade staff had under consideration the question of selecting for attack suitable enemy patrols in each battalion area with a view to drawing the Auxiliaries out from Woodstock and then to concentrate the main attacks on the Auxiliaries. It will, no doubt, be appreciated by the reader that every detail in the planning of such operations had to be carefully considered and discussed, as it would be disastrous for us if our first engagements with the Auxiliaries were not successful. It had also been decided by the brigade staff to organise Flying Columns and to bring them into operation at the time these operations started.

About the second week in November 1920 I was called to G.H.Q. in Dublin for consultations. There in the Banba Hall, Parnell Square, I met the Chief of Staff, Richard Mulcahy, and Ernie O'Malley. The questions of attacking the Auxiliaries headquarters at Woodstock House and of general operations in the brigade area were discussed. I gave the Chief of Staff and O'Malley all the information I had, together with particulars of our proposals as outlined in the preceding paragraph.

In the course of this interview the Chief of Staff told me that he knew the exact number of Auxiliaries in Woodstock and that he had particulars of their names and home addresses. At this interview O'Malley only very rarely uttered a word. Before the conclusion of the interview the Chief of Staff informed me that he would send Ernie O'Malley from G.H.Q. to Kilkenny to help the Kilkenny Brigade.

If the reader desires to find out how and in what way O'Malley helped the Kilkenny Brigade, I would recommend him to read O'Malley's book "On another man's wound" which was published in 1936, and the reply of the Kilkenny Brigade officers which appeared in serial form in the "Irish Press" and "Kilkenny People" in December 1936.

At about 11 a.m. on the morning of 23rd November, 1920, I was taken by surprise by a party of British military at my place of business in Parliament St., Kilkenny. I was placed under arrest and brought under military escort to Kilkenny military barracks. James Lalor, the Brigade Vice Commandant, Captain Thomas Nolan, Outrath, and Michael Loughman of New St. were also arrested during the night of November 23rd or early morning of November 24th and were brought to Kilkenny military barracks. There were about fourteen other political prisoners in the barracks at the time.

After about a week in Kilkenny military barracks, James Lalor, Thomas Nolan, Michael Loughman and myself were taken by lorry to Clonmel military barracks, and after a day there we were brought, again by lorry, to Kilworth Camp, Co. Cork, where we were kept until December 8th, 1920, on which date, with a number of other political prisoners from the South, we were brought to the Military Detention Prison in Cork. On all of these journeys we were accompanied by a large war-equipped military escort with armoured cars etc. We were

treated as hostages on the journeys, as we were formally informed by the British military officer in charge on each journey that if we tried to escape or if any attempt was made to rescue us we would be shot immediately. During the few days we were held as prisoners in Kilworth Camp. I was on one occasion brought for questioning by British officers. The first question I was asked was to state the rank which I held in the Irish Republican Army. I made it quite clear to them that I had no intention of answering any questions. After a short time one of the officers remarked: "So you don't propose to answer questions". I replied as emphatic as possible:

"No". To my relief I was sent back to my hut without more ado. About three o'clock on the bitter cold morning of 9th December, 1920, we were removed with about 250 prisoners from Cork Military Detention Prison to the docks in Cork. There we were put on board a ship and I found myself again bound for Belfast, where again we were to receive a very hostile reception from the civilian population.

From Belfast we were brought by train to a place called Ballykinlar Halt, from where, handcuffed in pairs, we were marched to No. 1 Prisoners' Camp, Ballykinlar, in the Co. Down.

Ballykinlar Prisoners' Camp was situated about two miles from the village of Dundrum, Co. Down. From the camp we could catch glimpses of the sea in Dundrum Bay. There was also a beautiful view of the Slieve Donard mountain and of the famed Mountains of Mourne. No. 1 Camp where we were interned consisted of 4 lines of huts, 10 huts to each line, completely surrounded by a barbed fence approximately 10 feet high and 10 feet wide. The barbed wire was so arranged in criss cross and woven patterns that a wren would prefer to fly over it than try to hop through it. There was also a chapel, a cook house, a dining hall, and storage buildings in the centre of the compound. The camp was usually referred to as "The Cage".

All the huts and buildings were made of zinc sheeting on the outside and wood on the inside. Each hut was made to accommodate 25 men. The area under "Cage" No. 1 was about 10 statute acres. There was a road running along inside this "Cage" on two sides. Our beds consisted of two wooden trestles about 8 inches high (often these trestles let me down), with 3 single bed boards laid on top of the trestles. The mattress was not even a very distant relation of an "Odearest", and as "it is what's inside that counts", it was filled with coarse and sometimes damp straw. For covering we had four brown army blankets each. The other articles in each hut were a long table, three or four forms, a heating stove, some buckets, a couple of which were kept constantly filled with sand for fire fighting purposes. There was no loam soil on the ground as the camp was built on sea sand.

Our party of about 250 prisoners from Cork Detention Prison arrived at Ballykinlar on 11th December, 1920, and we were put into "C" line in the "Cage". James Lalor, Tom Nolan, Mick Loughman and myself, with a number of other prisoners from Cork, Tipperary and Kildare, were put into Hut No. 19. With our arrival, there were approximately 600 prisoners from all parts of Ireland now in the camp. The weather was bitterly cold and conditions in the camp were at this time very bad.

The food was poor and of the coarsest kind. The prisoners' Commandant (Patrick Colgan) and the prisoners' camp council were constantly agitating and pressing the British military authorities in charge of the camp for improved food and better conditions for the prisoners.

After some time better food and better conditions were obtained piecemeal as a result of this constant agitation. To illustrate how bad the conditions were I will just mention that shortly after I arrived in the camp I saw ice on a cup of water beside a patient's bed in the prisoners' hospital.

Soon the number of prisoners in our "Cage" reached the 1,000 mark, it was then full and the British prepared another camp (called Camp or "Cage No. 2). to accommodate a further 1,000 prisoners. Within a few months this camp was also filled with prisoners. Amongst those

interned in it were James Rowan of Ahenure, Callan, who had been savagely ill-treated by Auxiliaries in Dublin Castle, Joe Rice, Outrath, and Ned Comerford of Kilkenny, all three of whom I have frequently referred to in the course of this statement. The prisoners in our Camp or "Cage" were organised on military lines and a Commandant, Vice Commandant, and a Camp Council of about 10 members were elected by the prisoners. Military training and courses were held as far as possible, and I might say that the camp became a training ground for the I.R.A. Good educational work was also carried out. Classes in Irish, accountancy, shorthand, economics, music etc. were organised, the teachers being procured from amongst those prisoners who were competent to teach the various subjects.

There were members of every trade and profession amongst the prisoners, and brains were pooled by the prisoners for the prisoners. Mr. Walton, proprietor of the musical stores in North Frederick St., Dublin, who was then a prisoner in our "Cage", composed a very fine march which was called "The Ballykinlar March". Dramatic classes were also organised, and a comedy, "The Pope in Killybuck" by Louis J. Walsh, and a play, "The Four Provinces", were played in excellent manner. Camp concerts, which were held from time to time, were really good. For a real good description of this No. 1 Camp or "Cage" I would refer the reader to Louis J. Walsh's book "On my keeping and in Theirs" which gives a full description of the camp while he was a prisoner in it from January 1921 to May 1921. I had the privilege and pleasure of knowing Louis Walsh very well as he happened to be incarcerated in the same hut as myself during the period he was in Ballykinlar Camp.

In the early days of the camp the British adopted aggressive and terrorist tactics, with the object of overawing and subduing the prisoners. There were five raised sentry boxes which overlooked the camp, i.e. one at each of the four corners and one additional one at the point where "Cage" No. 1 joined "Cage" No. 2. An armed sentry occupied each of these sentry boxes day and night. A guard hut was situated in a convenient position for the guard to turn out anytime during the day or night. Prisoners were liable to be shot if they went within three feet of the barbed wire fence.

One morning Jim Lalor and myself came out from the prisoners' chapel after Mass and walked down the road inside the "Cage" and near the prisoners' hospital. There was no one on the road at the time but the two of us. Without any warning whatever the sentry in the sentry box at the corner of No. 2 "Cage" fired at us. The bullet whizzed past very close to us. The sentry then, and only then, shouted "Get away from the wires". We were on the middle of the road at the time and not within six or seven yards of the wire fence. A protest was made by our commandant, P. Colgan, to the British commandant, but within a few days other prisoners were fired at and were lucky to escape with their lives.

About midday on Monday the 17th January, 1921, a shot from one of the British sentries rang out from a sentry box and two of the prisoners, viz. Patrick Sloan and Joseph Tormey, fell dead. I saw their bodies in a pool of their own blood where they fell. They were not within 15 yards of the nearest part of the wire fence. The two prisoners were killed with the one shot. The bullet hit Tormey on the right side of the head, passed through and hit Sloan in the neck. These two young men in the prime of life, unarmed and defenceless prisoners, were brutally murdered in the most cowardly manner on a cold wet January day by the British. Patrick Sloan was but one week married at the time of his arrest. Our Commandant, Patrick Colgan, promptly demanded an inquest, but the British hushed up the matter in their masterly subtle and sidetracking manner. Sir Hamar Greenwood in the British House of Commons, in reply to a parliamentary question by Mr. McVeagh, said: "A military court of inquiry held in lieu of an inquest found that no blame attached to the soldier, who fired in the execution of his duty. No action of a disciplinary character is, therefore, called for, and none has been taken". This incident and some other issues led to a "strike" by the prisoners. The strike took the form of non co-operation with the British in the running of the camp and refusal to answer names.

All locks on the hut doors were wrenched off by the prisoners. The British countered by withdrawing all concessions, i.e. letters and parcels in to the camp and the weekly letters out were stopped. The canteen was closed and large parties of British military in war kit were put into the "Cage" at night.

Paddy Colgan, the prisoners' Commandant, was transferred at this time to "Cage" No. 2, and Mr. Joseph McGrath (now Managing Director of Irish Hospitals' Sweepstakes) who was then a prisoner in "Cage" No. 1 was elected by the prisoners as their Commandant.

Mossy Donegan of Cork (he went by the name of Fitzpatrick in the camp) was Vice Commandant. There were strikes of a similar nature from time to time. In fact, it was a continual tug-of-war on various issues between the British on one hand and our Commandant, Vice Commandant and Camp Council on the other hand. During one of these strikes all the barbed wire on the hut windows were at a given signal wrenched off simultaneously by the prisoners. The camp was lit by electricity and there were about 40 electric lamps around it. These were smashed simultaneously while another strike was on.

There were no visitors allowed to the prisoners within the camp, and consequently it was found impossible for some time to establish a line of communication out of the camp to I.R.A. G.H.Q. in Dublin. Through the acquaintanceship of Mr. Patrick Bartley, a prisoner from Meath, (afterwards County Manager of Laoighis) with a friendly Irishman who was a British soldier attached to the camp, a very satisfactory line of communication to and from G.H.Q. was established. This man (Sergeant Farrell) did the job splendidly under great difficulties and great personal risk. An alternative line was established some months later lest any mishap should occur, but the alternative line was seldom used. We had communications with "Cage" No. 2 by means of despatches tied around stones and flung by a prisoner with a good long accurate throw from behind the hut nearest to "Cage" No. 2. Communications from "Cage" 2 came to our "Gage" in a similar manner. I was a member of the Camp Council and one of my jobs was the safe keeping of all communications from G.H.Q. and copies of communications thereto, together with other Camp Council documents. All the communications from G.H.Q. were in Michael Collins's (afterwards General Michael Collins) own handwriting. He was then Director of Intelligence of the Irish Republican Army.

The meetings of the Camp Council were usually held in what was known as the Commandant's hut. It had been put at his disposal by the British as an office. It was also known amongst the prisoners as the "Black Hut" on account of it being black while all the other huts and camp buildings were maroon in colour. For some time it was noticed that some of the things which the Camp Council proposed to do to thwart the British were apparently discovered and circumvented or frustrated by the British authorities in the camp. This was a source of great worry to each member of the Camp Council. A general check-up of the camp was made to try and find any possible leakage of information to the British, but without result. When the matter was under discussion at one of our council meetings I pointed out that I had some time previously read an article about an electrical invention called a dictaphone which could take in and carry the human voice in the same manner as a telephone. I had not seen one of these things, neither had any of the other members of the council. I stressed the point that the British would avail of every method old or new to get information, and that it was possible that they were now getting their information by the use of dictaphones hidden in the camp. I strongly advocated that the prisoners who were carpenters by trade (there were about 20 carpenters amongst the prisoners) should be organised under Mr. Tom Hickey (a prisoner from Carrick-on-Suir who was chief of the prisoners' camp police) for the purpose of searching the huts and buildings for dictaphones. My suggestion was considered a bit far-fetched but was agreed to. The search was carried out but without result.

Shortly afterwards it was decided by the Camp Council to burn the camp at Easter 1921, but on the evening prior to the day fixed for the burning a large force of British military took up positions inside the "Cage". It was obvious they knew something of what was to come off. The council's project was forestalled and could not be carried out. A meeting of the Camp Council was held but no line on how the information leaked out could be found. I harped back to my previous argument that it must be dictaphones. This was discounted by the fact that my earlier proposal for a search was agreed to and carried out without any result, and I was flatly told that I seemed to have dictaphones on the brain. I argued that I was not satisfied with the previous search as it was more a general than a particular one. I was asked what I wanted and I replied that if the Camp Council agreed I would have the carpenters again organised under Mr. Tom Hickey and that I would have each board of sheeting in each hut and building lifted off and replaced. This was looked upon as an awful detailed job, but in deference to my wishes it was agreed to. Asked where, in such a number of buildings, I proposed to start, I replied that we would start here in the Commandant's hut where the meetings are usually held.

I got in touch with Tom Hickey and the carpenters and they started on the job in the Commandant's hut within half an hour. Of course, the job had to be done unknown to the British, with the very minimum of noise and with improvised tools. After a number of boards had been removed we found a dictaphone situated about three feet from the ground and about two feet from the heating stove. It was the first one that I or any of those searching for them ever saw. I immediately sent for our Commandant (Joe McGrath), our Vice Commandant (Mossy Donegan) and the other members of the Camp Council. To describe the discovery as a sensation is to put it mildly. I will never forget the look of consternation on the faces of Joe McGrath, Mossy Donegan, Dr. Thomas F. O'Higgins, Barney O'Driscoll and the other members of the Camp Council. They were speechless for some time as they recalled to mind all the things they had talked about and discussed around the stove in this same hut. It was now as clear as daylight how the British officers in charge of the camp were getting their information. The search of the camp proceeded good and strong and within a few days some more dictaphones were found. In all I should say that we discovered about half a dozen.

The wires for these dictaphones were brought underground from the British military quarters outside the "Cage" into the buildings inside the "Cage" in which the dictaphone were located. We cut the wires, the British replaced them; we cut them again and so on.

Joe McGrath gave me the job of watching out for the repair or the replacement of the 'wires. So every morning the first thing I did was to walk around the whole "Cage" to see if at any point a replacement or a new wire was put in during the night. As mentioned before, the ground in the camp was sea sand and it was easy to detect any marks of digging or disturbing of the sand during the night as the fresh sand showed a different colour to the sand around it. Thus the British information line in the camp was smashed and kept that way. The prisoners in "Cage" No. 1 succeeded in getting in a typewriter and a Rotary Duplicator. Soon a well written bright and breezy camp paper entitled "Na Bac leis" was published inside the "Cage". This was a fine achievement under such difficult circumstances. As far as I can now recall, the circulation of the paper was one copy to each hut.

There were some prisoners in the "Cage" who were very much "wanted men" by the British, and the British kept up a never-ending search for them. These "wanted men" succeeded in hiding their identity by taking and answering to the name of another prisoner, in other words an exchange of names. A prisoner named Slowey was paraded for identification several times, and on one occasion he was taken from the camp to Mountjoy Prison in Dublin where it was discovered that he was not the man intended. One day all the prisoners in the "Cage" were paraded by the British and marched in single file through a long line of soldiers to a point near the Quartermaster's stores. Here we were halted, and then in batches of eight taken

to a position facing one of the windows of the stores. The glass in the window had been muffed except for two clear slits through which a person or persons inside could see. When paraded in the batches of eight, each prisoner was asked if he had an internment order. This was only a blind to enable two women "spotters" who were inside the window to see if they could identify any of the wanted men. All the wanted men escaped being identified.

Several attempts at escape were tried. A short time after we arrived in the camp the ground was tested and it was found that there was water within two feet of the surface, so the chance of tunnelling was out of the question until fine weather arrived in the spring.

From then on work went full tilt ahead at making a tunnel by cutting a space in a hut floor under some of the beds and working downwards and outwards towards the road outside the "Cage". The work was difficult and tedious. Scouts had to be constantly on the watch for British military moving in and around the "Cage". Boarding for supports or props for the tunnel had to be pinched from the dining hall or any place it could be got. The sand from the tunnel had to be distributed under huts to avoid a heap accumulating which would arouse the suspicion of the British. The tunnel was almost complete when the British dug a trench or dyke down to where they met water right around the camp, and after all the toil and sweat and work that attempt at escape had to be abandoned.

Another tunnel was started almost immediately and work proceeded on it for some months. It was almost completed when a heavily laden military lorry crashed through the surface of the road under which the tunnel was running and sank itself down into the tunnel. Fortunately none of the prisoners were working in the tunnel at the time or they would have been buried alive. This ended the second and last attempt at tunnelling our way out.

One night two prisoners succeeded in cutting their way through the wire fence, but a sentry noticed them and raised the alarm. Search lights were flashed all round the camp and the British military turned out en masse. The two prisoners were discovered about 100 yards from the fence and were taken back into the camp.

Joe McGrath, who was then a member of Dáil Éireann, was released about the time of the signing of the Truce in July 1921. Mossy Donegan succeeded him as prisoners' Commandant, and I was appointed Vice Commandant. Later on in 1921 Mossy Donegan and Paddy Colgan succeeded in escaping from the camp. They escaped dressed in two British uniforms which had been smuggled in to them. From then until the time of our release I acted as the prisoners Commandant.

The next instance of note which occurred was a "strike" in "Cage" No. 2, brought about by the refusal of the prisoners to obey an order of the British military to remove their (the prisoners') beds from the huts. The move was obviously to inspect the hut floors for tunnels, and when the prisoners refused to carry out that order the British military moved into "Cage" No. 2 and flung the beds and everything else in the huts out on to the compound. The prisoners refused to bring them back or handle them. We in our "Cage" joined the strike in sympathy with our comrades in "Cage" No. 2 and ceased co-operating with the British in the running of the camp. On the first day of this strike the prisoner - a Mr. Cush - whose job was to collect the post for "Cage" No. 1 from the British military called in the ordinary way for the letters and parcels for the prisoners. He was informed by the British that he would be given all the mail except a parcel addressed to "Treacy". Before he went for the mail Mr. Cush was instructed that he was to get all, and if not he was to take none, so he refused to take any. All letters and parcels were then held up by the British until the strike was over. I wondered why the British showed their petty spite towards me and I came to the conclusion that it was due to my contribution towards the discovery and destruction of their dictaphone system. The cream of the joke appeared when the "strike" was over and the letters and parcels came in. It was then found that the parcel in question was not for your humble servant but for another prisoner named Treacy who was in the camp.

In the autumn of 1921 when the negotiations for an Anglo-Irish Treaty were taking place in London, a joint Irish-English commission was set up to investigate complaints of maltreatment of Irish political prisoners in jails and internment camps. While the members of that commission were actually sitting in the British Commandant's office in Ballykinlar, a prisoner named Tadhg Barry from Cork was shot dead in "Cage" No. 2 by one of the sentries. The spot where he was shot was approximately 40 yards from the office in which the commission was sitting, and it must be remembered that the Truce was on at the time.

Some very sad things occurred in the camp. Some prisoners died, some were shot and some others lost their reason and became mentally afflicted. One fine young I.R.A. man became insane and tried to run up the barbed wire fence near a sentry box in broad daylight. He would have been shot only Barney O'Driscoll roared at the sentry that the man was mad. He was brought by the military to Dundrum Asylum. Considering all the times the prisoners were fired on it was a miracle that there were not more fatal casualties.

When on the 8th December, 1921, word was received in the camp that, as a result of the signing of the Articles of Agreement in London we were to be released next day, there was that feeling of joy and anticipation which the young experience when in school or college the Master announces the Christmas holidays with an extra week thrown in. For the first time the prisoners in "Cages" Nos 1 and 2 were allowed to mix, and warm and sincere were the greetings of old comrades when they met again on that day. The camp was humming with excitement and hustle that evening getting ready for the going home on the morrow. This joyful excitement and anticipation was as deeply and as keenly felt by Declan Horton, prisoner No. 792, as by any other prisoner in the camp. He was a splendid type of fellow, physically and every other way, full of life and energy. After being released he was on his way home by train; his relatives and friends were waiting to greet him, but as his train passed under a bridge before entering a station a party of Black and Tans dropped a bomb from the parapet of the bridge. It struck the carriage in which he was travelling and killed Declan Horton.

Special trains were arranged to carry the prisoners from Ballykinlar to Dublin. As I was acting as Commandant of "Cage" No. 1 I remained until the last to see all the prisoners out of the camp. It was, therefore, on the last train with the last batch of about 300 prisoners that I travelled. There was a rumour afloat in the camp before we left that one of the earlier trains had been fired at by Ulsterites. Our train travelled along for some time and all was quiet. I was thinking of many things and had forgotten about the rumour, when between Ballyward and Katesbridge I heard what for the moment I took to be bottles smashing on the railway line. Then suddenly I realised it was rifle fire whizzing over and through the train. I shouted to the nearby carriages to stuff whatever parcels and belongings they had up to the windows on the ambush side of the train and to pass this word on to the other carriages.

The train was travelling at a very fast pace at this time and things looked good enough, but on a little further firing, strong at points and light at others, came from another party of ambushers and continued for about a mile. After one particular strong burst of firing the train for no apparent reason slowed down to a very slow pace and seemed to be stopping. The rifle fire continued and word passed down the train that one ex-prisoner was badly wounded. The train continued to move slowly along at about eight miles an hour and the released prisoners got the impression that the driver and fireman were in league with the ambushers.

These series of ambushes occurred over the major portion of the line between Ballydaw and Katesbridge and the train was in slow motion for about half the distance between these two stations. Eventually it crawled slowly into the station at Katesbridge. The released prisoners, under the impression that the driver and fireman were in league with the ambushers, rushed wildly on to the platform. They were very aggressive and uttered dire threats towards both men. They (the released prisoners) were in such a frenzy anything might have happened. I

was out quick on to the platform and got between them and the engine. I told the released prisoners to stand back and said that I would deal with the matter. The driver and fireman were frightened, and no wonder. I asked the driver and fireman, in the hearing of the released prisoners, why 'the train slowed down while the ambush was on.

The explanation was simple. It transpired that when the ex-prisoner already referred to was wounded, one of his comrades in the carriage pulled the communication cord and this, I was informed, automatically clamped on the brakes. Against all regulations, and with the brakes on, the driver and fireman had heroically kept the train going and succeeded in pulling it out of the firing line. Both men told me that they had at times to lie down flat on the footplate to avoid the bullets that were whizzing around them. I thanked them for the good work they had done and congratulated them on their presence of mind in a crisis. I then inquired from them if it was likely that the train would run into any more ambushes. They informed me that on the way up they had heard a rumour that the biggest ambush was being prepared at Banbridge.

I inquired if the train was 'scheduled to stop at Banbridge Station. The driver said "Yes". I inquired for how long, and he said "for ten or fifteen minutes. All on the train would, of course, be a standing pot shot during that space of time for the ambushers if the ambush materialised, so I put it very forcibly to the driver to phone to Banbridge to get a straight run through the station there. He phoned and after considerable difficulty succeeded in having the period of the stop at Banbridge reduced from ten or fifteen minutes to two or three minutes. This short stop was unavoidable. A straight run through was not possible. I suggested to the driver to put on speed to Banbridge. He did. The train arrived at Banbridge some minutes sooner than was expected by the ambushers. They were banging around but were not properly in position, but as the train steamed in I saw some of them make a rush. I noticed one in particular, who, with a rifle in his hand, raced for and mounted the ladder of the signal box, apparently with the intention of preventing the train passing the points into the station, but it passed them before he was halfway up the ladder.

As the train stopped I saw a number of the ambushers armed with rifles scattered here and there along the platform. At that same moment a mob of anything up to two thousand strong stormed and swarmed on to the platform, upsetting the plans of the riflemen or at least so it appeared to me. I shouted to the men in the nearby carriages to pass the word along the train not to, in any circumstances, permit the mob to break into the carriages. The mob in a mad frenzy rushed across the platform and attacked the train with everything they had, stones, bricks, sticks etc. The glass in the carriage windows on the platform side of the train was in smithereens in a twinkling. Then a hand to hand fight developed at each carriage door, with the mob fighting madly to pull open the doors and force their way in, and those inside holding the doors for bare life and punching any members of the mob that they could get their fists to. The wild eagerness and fanaticism of the mob was, strange to say, a tremendous help to us, because those at the rear of the platform crushed, pushed and pasted those at the front to the side of the train, with the result that this portion of the mob became ineffective. They could scarcely move hand or foot, and they received a hell of a hammering from the released prisoners in the carriages. Again, this fanatical action of the mob swept the armed party out of contact with one another and carried them here and there in the middle of the crowd. Shots went off but there was not an earthly chance of them hitting the train owing to the wall of human flesh of their (the ambushers') supporters which was crushed against the carriages. I expect the pushing, shoving and swirling of the mob was the cause of the shots that went off. Rifle barrels could be seen tossing here and there in the air in the midst of the crowd. This battle for the doors continued until the train started. Just before it did start a portion of the mob made a sortie around to that side of the train away from the platform. Here only a couple could at a time approach the carriage doors, as the climb up from the permanent way was

high, so they were easily punched or pushed away. They retaliated with stones or any other missiles which came to their hands.

After a few minutes the engine whistled, started, pulled the train out of the battle line and brought us without further incident to dear old Dublin. A number of the released prisoners were injured in these attacks but the injuries were mostly of a minor nature. Ambulances were waiting at Amiens St. Station, Dublin, when the train got in, but those who required hospital treatment were not numerous. Those whose injuries could be treated at home preferred to go home at once, particularly as it was so long since they had been home before. The most seriously wounded, but, thank God, not fatally, was the young man who was wounded by the rifle bullet in the ambush between Ballyward and Katesbridge. His name was Treacy and he was from Dublin. Were it not for (a) the engine driver and fireman keeping the train moving under great difficulty, (b) the shortening of the time of the train stop at Banbridge, (c) the arrival of the train in Banbridge station before the ambushers were in position, and (d) the unpredictable action of the mob at Banbridge Station, I shudder to think what the casualties would be. I fear it would have been a massacre, It was a great miracle indeed that it turned out as it did, and there were many miracles in those days.

I remained overnight in Dublin, and on the following night I arrived at that place on earth with which none else can compare - home sweet home. It was sweet to be home again and to be free once more.

On the 7th February, 1922, I was one of those present at the military barracks, Kilkenny, when it was vacated by the British Army and handed over to a party of I.R.A. men under Brigade Commandant George O'Dwyer on behalf of our government. I had the extreme pleasure on that day of seeing instead of England's flag, the Union Jack - which represented over seven hundred years of bondage, blood and tears for the Irish nation - our own beloved Irish Republican flag hoist on the same flagpole and float and dance with triumphant delight in its native breeze, displaying its beautiful colours of green, white and orange. There were many miracles in those times, but to my mind the greatest and most important of them was the withdrawal of the British troops, Auxiliaries and Black and Tans from Ireland and the disbandment of the R.I.C. For that and all the other miracles of the time I humbly thanked Almighty God, the Blessed Virgin Mary, the angels and saints, and I now most humbly do so again.

Signed: Thomas Treacy

11th Feb. 1956