

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

BURÓ STAIRÉ MILÉ 1913-21

No. W.S. 762

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 762

Witness

Liam McMullen,
31 Collins Park,
Donnycarney,
Dublin.

Identity.

Captain Ballycastle Company
Irish Volunteers (Co. Antrim) 1919 - .

Subject.

National activities, Co. Antrim,
1908-1924.

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Statement by Mr. Liam McMullen,

31, Collins Park, Donnycarney, Dublin.

I am a native of Ballycastle, where I spent my youth and early manhood. About 1908 or 1910 I was working with a man called Stephen Clarke who was arrested for distributing seditious posters. He was a member of the Dungannon Club and he distributed propaganda posters on which was written "Any Irishman joining England's Army, Navy or Police Force takes his stand in the camp or garrison of the enemy and is a traitor to his country and an enemy of his people". Stephen Clarke was Manager of a Toy Factory. Himself and three others were tried for this alleged offence but the trial judge was not too severe with them and they were released.

I was in Dublin several times with Stephen Clarke who managed a Toy Factory in Ballycastle and there was a Sinn Féin Aonach held in Dublin every year around Christmas, and Clarke's factory had business connections with it. It was held in the Rotunda. The first time I was there I was with Roger Casement. During these visits to Dublin I became well acquainted with the work of the Sinn Féin organisation, and with many of the leaders including Arthur Griffith, Seán MacDiarmada and Bulmer Hobson. The latter had visited Ballycastle many times.

Casement:

One of my earliest childish recollections was seeing Roger Casement when he arrived on periodic visits to his ancestral home in Maherintemple which was

convenient to my home. It was well known locally that Roger Casement was interested in Irish politics. He was a supporter of the Liberal Party. He was an ardent Home-Ruler and was actually more than that. He was a follower of Arthur Griffith and a Separatist. He was one of the pioneers of the Gaelic League. He and a lady named Miss MacNeill were responsible for the foundation of the Gaelic League College in Cloughneely, Co. Donegal. This College is still functioning. He was a striking figure and a great walker. He always wore Donegal Homespuns and spent a great portion of his holidays in Donegal. On several visits to Dublin I was in his company.

Mrs. Riddle started a Toy Industry in Ballycastle and Mr. Stephen Clarke became manager of this industry. I served my time here and worked continuously in the factory up to the time I went 'on the run' in 1920. Roger Casement when he was at home was a constant visitor to the factory, also Francis Joseph Bigger. The place was a rallying ground for Nationalists, most of them holding extreme views on Irish politics. In this way I became very well acquainted with Roger Casement. He constituted himself a sort of teacher to me. I remember on one occasion while in Dublin he pointed out to me Nelson's Pillar. He told me the history of the monument and said as soon as the Republic was declared he would see that this monument was removed from its site.

The idea of a Republic at this time was very rare and was never mentioned, even by members of the Sinn Féin Clubs or their leaders, but Casement evidently had

the idea very well planted in his mind that the country would be freed from English rule and that the future Government of the country would be a Republic.

One of the activities in which Casement became interested was his association with Francis Joseph Bigger, in organising lectures in various centres all over County Antrim and in Belfast city. These lectures dealt with particular phases of Irish history such as the fights in '98. These lectures had, however, more than an historic motive. There was generally sedition mixed up with them. The view was always expressed at these lectures that it was possible to effect the freeing of the country of British rule by adopting similar methods to those which had been adopted in the past.

Before the outbreak of the Great War in 1914 there was very little doing in the Sinn Féin organisation in the Ballycastle area, but of course there were several individuals scattered here and there who believed in it. Griffith's paper circulated fairly well there and another paper called "The United Irishman" and one called "The Irish Peasant".

In 1912 Carson's Volunteers were formed with drums beating and banners flying. Shortly after the Nationalists followed this example and formed their organisation of the National Volunteers. The first Volunteers to be formed in and around Ballycastle was the National Volunteers who gave allegiance to the Irish Parliamentary Party. The Republicans didn't join this organisation because it was tagged on to the Parliamentary Party. The Nationalist element and the Republican element didn't

get on too well around there. At the outbreak of the war the only Volunteers in existence in Ballycastle area were the National Volunteers and Carson's Volunteers. Myself or the people associated with me would have nothing to do with either force.

After the split in the Volunteers, which took place soon after the outbreak of the 1914-1918 war, a Sinn Féin Club was started in Ballycastle. Its members consisted of young men from the locality who held very strong Republican sympathies - about twenty in all joined the Club.

During the war years activities of the club consisted of organisational work in an endeavour to strengthen it in preparation for local government elections. These elections were delayed until the war was over.

I remember during the year 1915 meeting Denis McCullough, Seán MacDiarmada, Bulmer Hobson and a brother of Denis McCullough and cycling with them to Cushendun. As far as I know the business of these men was concerned with Gaelic League work. Denis McCullough was a frequent visitor to Ballycastle and his work was, as far as I understood, in connection with the Gaelic League.

As I said there was very little done during the war years except trying to get the Sinn Féin organisation going and increasing its members. The first incident which roused the people was the Conscription Menace in the early months of 1918. We all got into line preparing for resistance to Conscription. Nationalists of all denominations and many Orangemen were united in the determination to resist the conscription of Irishmen by

the British Army. Louis J. Walshe who was then a solicitor in Ballycastle and a native of Maghera, County Derry, took a leading part in the Sinn Féin movement and in the fight against Conscription. I remember he organised an anti-Conscription meeting for Ballycastle and arranged for a large contingent of Orangemen from a place called Moyarget to take part. The Master of Moyarget Orange Lodge was Chairman of the meeting in Ballycastle. The Orange band at Moyarget travelled to the meeting by wagonette and when they came to the outskirts of Ballycastle they dismounted and with their instruments joined up with the Sinn Féin Pipe Band and both bands paraded through all the principal thoroughfares of the town before the meeting commenced.

The threat of Conscription and the organisation got together by all sections of the people to fight it created a situation which enabled Sinn Féin to progress by leaps and bounds. We had no trouble in getting recruits after the anti-Conscription campaign. Our strength grew so great from the end of the war to the Local Government Elections in 1920 that we were able to elect a Republican candidate on the County Council for North Antrim. Louis Walshe was the candidate. This election was carried out under Proportional Representation and Mr. Walshe received more than the quota of votes and was the only candidate elected with his quota on the first count in North Antrim.

The association of the Orangemen with the anti-Conscription campaign apparently did an amount of good. These men were never very bitter in their attitude towards Republicanism afterwards. One exception to this statement is that at the local elections in Ballymoney

a band of young Orangemen attacked and beat up Louis Walshe.

During the Local Government Elections and subsequently a large number of Unionists voted Republican. The first change which occurred in this attitude of the Orangemen was in the General Election in 1918. The Sinn Féin leaders were foolish enough to be influenced by the late Cardinal Logue to enter into an agreement with the Irish Parliamentary Party, and in certain northern constituencies with a Nationalist majority there was no election held except to put up Nationalists candidates to oppose the Unionists. The impact of this arrangement on the Orangemind was to confirm them in their belief that Sinn Féin was on a par with the Old Parliamentary Party and that any measure of Home Rule for Ireland meant Rome Rule. This situation did an amount of harm and ruined all chance of a future co-operation with Sinn Féin by National minded Unionists.

In the year 1919 in north and mid-Antrim the Sinn Féin, Gaelic Athletic Association and the Gaelic League were all closely connected organisations. The members of the Sinn Féin Club were also members of the local G.A.A. and the Gaelic League. We had many discussions at this time concerning starting Companies of the Volunteers in the locality. We got no help from the outside Officers in Belfast in this organisation attempt. Other districts in the county were organised and had Companies functioning. However, some of the members of the Club got in touch with Paddy MacLogan in Belfast and invited him to come and address us.

We sent out notices to all members of the various

gaelic organisations and Sinn Féin who were young and active to turn up for the initial meeting. Paddy MacLogan arrived unofficially, as far as Belfast was concerned, to make an effort to start Volunteers in the district. He was experimenting with this idea that Volunteer Companies should be started. Twenty-five members from Ballycastle enrolled as Volunteers in the Company at the first meeting. Seeing that it was the first Company around there and was experimental, and not actually official, MacLogan arranged that we wouldn't have the usual elections of officers until later on. I was appointed Company Captain pro tem. Two others were appointed as pro tem. Section Leaders. We arranged to meet each week to practice military tactics and drill and we were able to get the use of a barn for firearms lectures. MacLogan did the lecturing. At this time MacLogan was an organiser of the Volunteers in Antrim. We had two official Companies in Glen Ravel and in Loughguile. He came to us weekly from either one or other of these. He usually came on a bicycle. We possessed very little arms in our Company. We had a number of shotguns and Frank McCarry had one very light type of Lee Enfield Rifle for which there was no ammunition.

After organising the Company in Ballycastle we moved our headquarters out of the village to a district called Carey. This move was necessary for security purposes because meetings in the village would attract too much attention to our work.

After we had devoted a certain length of time to drill and organisation we decided that it was time to get ourselves a better supply of arms and our attention

naturally was attracted towards the arms which we knew were held by the garrison in the local R.I.C. barracks in Ballycastle.

I should have mentioned that in a short time MacLogan decided that Ballycastle Company could be recognised as an official Company. He issued the Oath of Allegiance, swearing in 25 men himself and then left me a copy of the oath.

No change was made in the officers who had been provisionally selected and they were confirmed in their ranks. When we had been sworn in as Volunteers our Company was made No. 1 Company of the Battalion. I forget the number of the Battalion now. Willie J. Lynn was O/C of this Battalion. Frank McCarry was an officer. The joke about this Battalion is that at the time it was formed there was only the Ballycastle Company in the Battalion.

Capture of arms in raid on Ballycastle R.I.C. barracks:

The first venture we made on Ballycastle barracks was on a night of a day on which a regatta was held in Ballintoy, which is a little fishing village on the Antrim coast. A row started at the regatta as some of the competitors wouldn't agree with the decision of the adjudicators, and when the situation became serious and fighting resulted all the R.I.C. from the surrounding districts were called on to attend, leaving one R.I.C. man left in Ballycastle barracks behind sealed shutters. We reckoned that if we could get the policeman on duty in Ballycastle barracks to come to the door to answer a knock we would then have no difficulty in getting the guns.

Six of us set out in a two-seater car from our parade ground as soon as we heard the news that the Ballycastle police were gone to Ballintoy. We received no response to our knocking on the barrack door. We had no arms of any description so we had to go back unsuccessful.

After the failure of this attempt MacLogan decided that we would get the arms by other means and we took the precaution this time to organise a sports meeting on a very large scale outside the town of Ballycastle. It was hoped this would attract a big crowd of people and leave very few people in the town. The field where the sports was to be held was situated about $\frac{3}{4}$ mile from the R.I.C. barracks. We called in the assistance of men both from Loughguile and Glen Revel Battalions for the actual job at the barracks, as these men would be unknown to the R.I.C. in Ballycastle. The R.I.C. had also brought in some reinforcements as the party who were running the sports were looked upon as extreme in politics and dangerous. When our men arrived at the barracks in Ballycastle, Willie Lynn went over and knocked on the door, which was opened by the Barrack Orderly, and he engaged this man in conversation for about ten minutes. Then two of the Loughguile Company got out of a car which was parked nearby and held up both Lynn and the policeman. Then another car came from the opposite direction and four men got out and went into the barracks and one of them threw out all the rifles and equipment he could lay his hands on. All the stuff not taken from the barracks, such as papers, old uniforms, great coats etc., were placed in the centre of the floor and sprinkled with paraffin oil and set on fire in the hope of burning the barracks. The fire, however, did not succeed as was hoped.

Then two men armed with rifles went up the road in the direction of the Sports field and two more similarly armed went in the direction of the place we intended to dump the arms. The men who went in the direction of the Sports field held up everybody who passed along the road, and they sent a young lad up to the Sports field to tell the police that the barracks was being raided. The crowd came tearing down from the Sports field accompanied by the police and when they arrived where the two men had taken their stand with their rifles the crowd of people and the police were ordered to halt.

During this time the two cars at the barracks had been loaded up with rifles, handcuffs, revolvers and ammunition, and some police uniforms. All equipment of use to us was pitched into the cars. The cars then picked up the two men with the rifles and went off.

My position that day was on top of the mountain where the arms were to be dumped. I was to remain there until the stuff arrived. Then the men in the cars would transfer the arms etc. over to me and carry on in their cars. During the time they were unloading the rifles myself and another man took a few guns and held up the traffic on both sides of the cars. We got the rifles deposited on the side of the road. The Ballycastle Company were waiting in concealment nearby to dispose of the guns and as soon as the cars drove off they appeared on the scene and took charge of the rifles. They took them across a little hillock about 100 yards from the road when they were hidden from view. All the rifles were there handed over to me and I was responsible for them until they were properly dumped later on. At about 11 o'clock that evening we carried them

away a distance of about seven miles and dumped them in a cave on the point of Fairhead. That was the last the police ever heard of them - notwithstanding the fact that there was intense activity in searching for them.

A very funny aspect of this raid was that the police over a wide area in Co. Antrim were unable to go out of their barracks for some time, as all their equipment such as caps, uniforms and batons had been taken or burned. Some of the police before moving out to the Sports field changed from their uniforms into civilian clothes and left their uniforms in Ballycastle barracks. This was a common practice of the police at the time, to mix up in gatherings as civilians and try and find out what was going on behind the scenes. All this proved unfortunate as those who changed into civies lost their uniforms. We made a bonfire of the caps and batons and kept the handcuffs. We had got about half a dozen shotguns together with 9 rifles and 4 revolvers in the barracks. We also got several thousand rounds of .303 ammunition and quite an amount of information in police papers, which was taken with the other equipment from the barracks.

During the time I was waiting at Loughaveema for the rifles etc. to arrive, and during the time it took to unload and dump them, which was from 2 o'clock in the afternoon to 11 o'clock that evening, I got refreshments from Frank McCarry and Willie Lynn. This consisted of sweet biscuits and a half pint of Bushmills whiskey. At this time my principles were strictly teetotal, but because of the special circumstances and the exigencies of the time I took the liberty to deal with the whiskey.

This operation took place in the summer of 1920. From the start of the Volunteers, Paddy MacLogan was our guide, philisopher and friendth. He planned and took charge of the activities we carried out and he continually impressed upon us the importance of carrying out something which would have a large propaganda value and would be talked about and in which we would be able to succeed without causing casualties or bloodshed. The attack and capture of the arms in the police barracks is a typical example of how his teaching and leadership was justified. We had very little other activity at the time except the routine work of intercepting the mails and blocking roads which we did regularly.

Raids on Mails:

We raided the mails regularly in order to censor them. In preparation for those operations we provided ourselves with an official stamp on which was written "Passed by Censor I.R.A.". This stamp was used on all letters opened by us and after we had read them.

The manner in which we did this was to hold up the local postman and take his mail bag from him, take the letters away to a suitable spot where they were read and censored. The letters were then returned to the mailbag, taken to the house of some local opponent of ours and hung on the knob of his door.

Apart from the value of the information we received from those raids on mails there was also the propaganda value due to the fact that every letter in the mails on which we could lay hands was stamped with our stamp "Passed by I.R.A. Censor". This was put on all forms, cheques, money orders, postal orders and bank notes

which were being sent out by the Black and Tans - mostly Englishmen to their wives. We never took any cash or money-orders from the mails during our raiding of mails.

Another activity which was, I understand, general in the Brigade area was to raid the local post office at intervals and seize all money and postal orders and stamp them with the official date stamp of the post office. These were then sent on to Belfast to be dealt with there by the Brigade Officers.

Capture of Torr Coastguard Station:

Torr Coastguard Station was going to be closed down and its garrison disbanded. The men who were in occupation were to be sent back to England. We got news of this and were told that they were almost ready to go, having all their furniture packed and ready to move out. This information was known generally in the vicinity of the coastguard station. People got to know about it automatically as the place was small, and no secret was made of the fact that they were about to leave.

The attack was arranged for a Saturday night. A parade was held in the evening. The Ballycastle Company were all mobilised - about 25 men in all. We walked all the way from Ballycastle to Torr. The building occupied by the Coastguards consisted of five houses in terrace form. Each house was separate on the ground floor but upstairs there was a connecting door between each neighbouring house. We were able to allot five men to each house and when we arrived on the scene the men were apportioned to each house. MacLogan took charge of the men who were taking the Officer's house.

We had taken the precaution previous to reaching the building to cut all telegraph wires at several points. The tactics we employed were that each party assembled near to the house for which they had been detailed and at a given signal the knocker on each house was loudly rapped. This rousing process in the middle of the night made a great deal of noise and it appeared to us at the time to be rather dangerous as these men were armed and could have opened fire on us in our exposed position at the doors from the safety of the upper floors. As a matter of fact we were as well armed as they were on this occasion as each of us had some of the rifles or revolvers captured in Ballycastle.

However, the inhabitants of the Coastguard Station put up no resistance. On hearing the rapping there was an enquiry from the top windows as to the purpose of the knocking and they were told it was a raid for arms. The men came down and answered the door. We immediately put handcuffs on them and then proceeded to search the place. We were told where to find the guns and when the guns and equipment were taken possession of we released the men we had handcuffed and apologised nicely for the trouble and annoyance we had caused them.

Amongst the arms and equipment which we captured at Torr were seven Short Webley Revolvers, some Verey light pistols with ammunition for same. Also rocket guns and heliographs, and a large quantity of 45 revolver ammunition consisting of several thousand rounds. All the material which we captured was packed in boxes ready for transport, a fact which proved very convenient for us as we had no trouble in taking it away with us. When we collected the stuff and collected it

for transport our work for the night was only starting. We had decided before the raid to convey it to our dump at Fairhead. This meant we had to carry this amount of stuff from Torr over mountainous country which was devoid of roads of any description and it proved heavy and laborious work. None of it was ever discovered afterwards.

The capture of the Verey light pistols didn't appear at the time to be of very much value to us but later we had considerable amusement on a few occasions as they enabled us to cause the British Authorities considerable annoyance. On a few occasions we went into an uninhabited and backward area at night and put up Verey lights. When the police authorities saw these they would come out in the direction to investigate. We had the roads blocked and this could cause great delay to the R.I.C. party and also entailed hard work for them in the clearing of the blockade. We also got a couple of telescopes with powerful magnification.

Burning of Torr Coastguard Station:

Sometime after the capture of this material we got information that the buildings at Torr were going to be occupied by Auxiliaries. As a result of this it was arranged that we would burn the building to prevent this happening. The tactics we employed in this instance were to arrange a dance in the Parochial Hall in Carry and we gave this dance plenty of publicity. Early in the day of the night of the dance we sent up six two-gallon tins of paraffin oil to a place on the mountain near Torr where it was to be concealed. There were only a few houses around on the way from Ballycastle to Torr so it was easy enough to conceal the oil. We had a supply

of skeleton keys made beforehand. When the time came to start operations we carried the paraffin oil the rest of the way and, using our skeleton keys, we got in through one door and went right through the station. We also had a lot of candles and the arrangements were that the candles would be placed in piles of paper soaked in paraffin oil. The woodwork all around was also soaked in paraffin oil. When the coastguards were leaving they left piles of newspapers all around in the buildings which we made good use of. In each house there was a recess for coal and into these we put candles and paper soaked in the paraffin oil. We made sure the shutters were all closely fastened and we stuffed the keyholes of all doors. Then we lit the candles, locked up and left the place.

When we had all this done we went back to the dance. We had only arrived at the dance when a few policemen arrived there also, whose duty it was to keep their eyes on everybody there and detect any suspicious movements. We made sure that we kept well under their eyes.

The candles didn't burn down to the paraffin and inflammable paper until about six o'clock the next morning and it was about 10 o'clock the next day when the roof collapsed. The general conclusion reached was that somebody had come in from another district and done the job. The police went around and took statements but we had a very good alibi because we made sure we were seen at the dance on that night. The only clue which was found was a burned petrol tin. The whole thing was given up as just another mystery.

About Christmas 1920, four of us were notified to go to Belfast to assist in the destruction of the Waterworks.

To prevent suspicion we decided to travel in small numbers. Two of the men who had relatives living in Belfast went before the rest. These men were arrested on their arrival in Belfast. The others waited until after Xmas. We didn't go to bed at all waiting for the despatch to come warning us when we were to start, but when we did get the message it was to tell us that the operation was cancelled because the authorities had found out all about the project.

From this onwards we did ordinary routine work such as cutting telephone wires etc. and devising schemes for handling the mails. When we cut the telephone wires we would remove about a quarter of a mile of the line altogether and throw it in a river or some place like that. The police would patrol the roads and look for the men who did it. We stuck up bags of hay on the poles to represent the figures of men, which the police fired on, and we also used the Verey pistols with great effect in giving the police alarms and getting them out at night.

Raids on Poteen makers:

Then we did a bit of the "Still" hunting. One night we got information that a still was working in the neighbourhood and three of us set out for the place. I was armed with a long Webley which we had got in the police barracks. Willie Lynn and Frank McCarry had masks which they used for all raids. The place was securely bolted but wee patches of light could be seen from the doors. We rattled and shook the door and shouted to them to open up but there was no response and finally I fired the gun in the air and the place was opened up immediately. We found three men inside and the whole apparatus working beautifully. Because I was not

wearing a mask the three men recognised me and next day my place was raided by police looking for me. I had a very lucky escape that morning.

Tom Glennon who was O/C at this time of the area, informed me that I was to take part in the burning of all the railway stations in the vicinity. I went to consult Tom on a few details of the job. I started off early in the morning and spent the day looking for him. I was coming home in the evening when I met a girl who was a member of the Cumann na mBan and she stopped the car and told me that the police had been in my house and had taken away stacks of literature. She had a bicycle and she gave it to me and she got into the car and I cycled back to Ballyleg. That night about midnight I set out for Knocklayd mountain. James McCarry brought me over the mountain to the Armoy district. I stayed in the house of the Devlins for a couple of days and then went from there to Benvan. I made this my headquarters for a long time. I moved around from one house to another and attended parades etc. One morning I got a notification from Belfast that I was to travel to Loughguille and join Tom Glennon and a few others who were "on the run" and form a Flying Column. I was to equip myself from the Ballycastle Arms Dump. On the afternoon of the same day I got a despatch to say that the rest of the Flying Column had been arrested and I was the only one left. I remained 'on the run' on my own until Felix McCorley arrived.

From about February 1921 onwards we had orders from Belfast headquarters that we weren't to carry out any big ambushes or operations. The idea behind all this was that it wasn't considered advisable for us to cause any large concentration of police in the area

which would upset the good relationship which existed between the people generally and the Volunteers.

Tom Fitzpatrick was appointed O/C of Antrim Brigade after Glennon's arrest. He came along and stayed in Benvan. The headquarters of the Antrim Brigade was in Glenravel. Nothing much was done except the usual routine work for a few months up to the Truce in July 1921.

Truce period:

On the second day of the Truce a policeman in Ballycastle by the name of Gailbraith shot one of the McCarry's through the barrack window as he was walking past in the street. Gailbraith was the subject of an official inquiry and he put forward a case for himself that he believed that McCarry was attempting to capture the barrack.

On the night of McCarry's wake I got a message to start for Belfast and report at Little May Street on a certain date. I had to equip myself for the journey. Glennon was coming along with me. We had a meeting of the Company and Fitzpatrick was there and he informed us that we were now No. 2 Brigade and that I was appointed to the Brigade as Engineer Officer and this was the reason I had to go to Belfast in order to get in touch with the Divisional Engineer - Johnnie McArdle. We also had to see the Belfast Engineer Officer - Joe Cullen and the County Down man who was called John Flanagan. We were then to travel to Dublin, and get instruction from Rory O'Connor. All the other officers of the Brigade had been appointed that night.

During the Truce we had a Camp which was attended by the Battalion Officers at Ballyucan near

Ballycastle. The Antrim Brigade attended during the first period and everything went off very smoothly. The Belfast Brigade attended for the next period. On the day the Camp was to break up we got instructions from Belfast that two or three lorry loads of Specials were setting out from Belfast to attack the Camp. They had been trying to obtain permission from Lieut-Colonel Wickam, Divisional Police Commissioner, to attack it, but he wouldn't give them permission officially as the Truce was still on. However, they were coming anyhow even without permission. We had arranged a system of signals - beacons on the hilltops of Devis and Slemish. The information regarding the proposed attack by Specials on the Camp came direct from the Divisional Headquarters in Belfast to Ballymena by 'phone. This information was relayed to the Volunteers by fires being lighted at Slemish, then at Knocklede and Trostan, and then each mountain peak along the line would follow suit. The Companies from all around were ordered to be at the Camp for the defence of the place. However, the Specials didn't come. We heard afterwards they lost their way.

I had turned up at the station and had just bought my ticket for Belfast when Willie Lynn came and told me he was driving to Belfast and I went up to his house and waited until he was ready and then he drove to Belfast with myself and Frank McCarry. They took me to Little May Street, to Joe McPeake's house. Joe brought me to St. Mary's Hall and I saw Joe McKelvey, Divisional O/C, and it was arranged that I should see McArdle on the Monday following. I stayed in McCorley's that night. Roger and Mrs. McCorley lived in Mountcollier Street.

When we got our instructions from McArdle the four of us set out for Dublin. The four were: - Joe Cullen, John Flanagan, myself and McArdle. When we arrived there we stayed in Moran's Hotel. We attended lectures on road-blocking, railway-cutting and the use of explosives for demolition purposes etc. over a period of a week. Rory O'Connor and one of the Plunketts gave the lectures. At these lectures we met Engineer Officers from all over the country. We then returned to headquarters in Belfast and from there we were sent out on our rounds. My job was to travel round every Company area in Antrim and give lectures and report at the end of the month to St. Mary's Hall. This appears to be a colossal task to be carried out within the time specified but I was able to do it and give a series of lectures in each Company area. Except for long journeys when I travelled by train I did the whole itinerary on foot as it was the most convenient and least objectionable way of travelling.

Another thing we did at this time was to provide material for the manufacture of explosives. The Company Engineers were entrusted with this job. We had a chemist in the Brigade called Karl Kerr from Glenravel but he wasn't free to travel around. All he could do was to give instructions to the Headquarters Staff and I transmitted them to the rest of the Company. My headquarters in Glenravel was in an outhouse of buildings attached to a big estate. I had the drums etc. for the manufacture of the landmines here. We made the landmines from re-inforced concrete in drums and filled them with explosives and fitted them with detonators and sealed the mine ready for use when necessary. During part of the time no one was in charge of this factory and as a safety

measure I saw that the latch of the door was attached to a switch which would explode the mines. This ensured that any person attempting to raid our factory would disappear in a hurry.

Another job which I had during my frequent visits to Belfast was to purchase equipment for an ammunition factory which was being set up in Belfast. The reason I was selected for this job was that I had a knowledge of what was required and I was unknown in the city. I bought crucibles for melting metal for the manufacture of bomb cases and a lathe for the finishing of the smaller parts of the bombs such as the necks and striking pins and also for the repair and making of the small parts of rifles and automatics etc.

Johnnie McArdle invented the percussion bomb which was constructed in such a manner that as soon as it struck anything it went off. This bomb had no timed fuse. On the bomb being thrown and hitting the ground or any other object, the firing equipment would junction and hit and explode a Morris tube cartridge and cause an instantaneous explosion of the bomb. He made drawings of the striking pin and the various parts attached thereto. He handed these drawings to me and I took them along to an Engineering Works in Ballymacarret area where I had a number of the parts turned out for me. When I arrived at the works and produced my drawings I informed the mechanics dealing with the matter that they were parts of the reverse gear for a motor boat. The drawings were arranged in such a way as to give no indication of what the real purpose would be. The goods were paid for and delivered in the ordinary course of work.

My work from the late winter of 1921 and up to about March 1922 was occupied principally with my divisional work as Brigade Engineer. I was travelling round the various Companies and making an occasional visit to Belfast to report on the progress of engineering in the Brigade area.

All during the winter of 1921 a state of warfare existed between the Nationalists and Unionists Sections of the Belfast population. On the Nationalist side the activities were purely of a defensive nature. The I.R.A. came into this affair as a protective body to look after and defend the areas which were populated by Nationalists.

Shortly after the Treaty we were addressed at a Divisional Council by Richard Mulcahy. He made it clear to us that we would still have to keep on fighting and told us we would be armed and equipped from Dublin.

Another Divisional Council was addressed by Eoin O'Duffy. His address was on the same lines as that of Richard Mulcahy. O'Duffy had been Liaison Officer for Ulster with his headquarters in St. Mary's Hall, Belfast, which was also the headquarters of the 3rd Northern Division.

At this particular period E. O'Duffy was Director of Organisation for Ulster and that as such he could speak to us authoritatively as Executive Officer of the I.R.A. Headquarters in Dublin.

About March 1922 a split occurred in the I.R.A. on the question of the acceptance or otherwise of the Treaty. The anti-Treaty element in the I.R.A. formed

a separate headquarters in the Four Courts in Dublin. Joe McKelvey, our Divisional O/C, took the anti-Treaty side and left Belfast and went on to Dublin where he became Chief of Staff for the new anti-Treaty headquarters. This departure of McKelvey didn't have the effect which strangers to the North would imagine. The acceptance or rejection of the Treaty by the people of the South had very little effect on our position within the Six Counties. We had our problem to deal with in the North and the attitude of the people in the South to the Treaty had very little effect on our position. We had to defend ourselves in the North no matter whether the Treaty was accepted or rejected. We felt, however, that the rejection of the Treaty might provide us with better opportunities for fighting.

The split in the I.R.A. and the setting up of anti-Treaty headquarters had a peculiar effect on the officers and also on the rank and file of the 3rd Northern Division. A large number of our Division and Brigade Officers had been influenced to adopt a pro-Treaty viewpoint on the understanding that they would be supplied by General Headquarters with ammunitions and war material and would be helped to carry on the fight within the Divisional area. This attitude of some of our officers caused discussions and differences of opinion amongst vast numbers of other officers and men.

My personal opinion about the position in which we found ourselves in the North was that, because our numbers were so small, whether we agreed or disagreed with the Treaty we should continue taking orders from the Division as a split in our forces would be lamentable.

We junior officers had very little contact with Dublin, in fact we had no contact with Dublin, and we were expecting help from the pro-Treaty party which didn't later materialise.

From the time of the split we had been organising, arming and training for to take the initiative in a fight against the British Government forces as they were attempting to set up a Government in the North. Our plans were to hamper the British Government forces both military and civil, as much as possible, in their efforts to carry on.

Round about St. Patrick's Day 1922 we were mobilised for a stand-to. This mobilisation was carried out all over the Divisional area and officers and men were standing at their various posts for the order to start operations. We were standing to all during the night and in the morning we found that the terms of a Craig-Collins pact were published in the daily press. Simultaneously with our reading the papers we got despatches which were sent to the various Companies telling us the operations were off. We then dispersed.

Nothing of importance occurred until about the 18th May, 1922, when a mobilisation was ordered all over Co. Antrim for the purpose of receiving arms which were being despatched from Dublin via Dundalk for use by us in Co. Antrim and the 3rd Northern Division generally. The arms didn't turn up that night. The lorry broke down on the journey between Belfast and Glengariffe.

When the lorry, which was an oil tanker, filled to capacity with all the various ammunitions of warfare, came as far as Carrickfergus the engine bearings ran out, and the lorry became immobilised. The driver of the lorry who had previously served with the British Army in France got the idea of going to the British authorities for a permit to have the lorry removed back to Belfast. The police whom he first approached refused the permit. He then suddenly thought of approaching the military. He went to Carrickfergus Castle which was then occupied by the military. He produced his discharge papers and made a serious complaint against the Belfast police authorities for holding him up and interfering with his prospects of making a living, and he protested that a man who fought for his king and country should not be treated in this manner by any police officer who had remained safely at home during the war. The Military Governor was very sympathetic and gave him a military permit which would carry him any place over the area irrespective of any action the police would be inclined to take. He got his lorry back to Belfast, got the damage to the engine repaired and started again for Glenariffe and came through via Ballymena. The supply of arms and ammunition which arrived on this lorry was sadly inadequate.

There was a complete mobilisation of all the Companies in the Brigade at Glenariffe to meet the arrival of the arms lorry. The procedure adopted was simply to hand out the arms to the waiting men. Every Quartermaster was handed his allotment. He divided the allotment amongst his men and as soon as

they were equipped they marched off with their arms and material. The distribution of the stuff worked most satisfactorily.

In places like Ballymena where the Town Councils operated it was impossible to adopt the procedure adopted in country districts. The roads between Glenariffe and Ballymena were patrolled by enemy forces, 'B' Specials etc. Under these circumstances the arms had to be taken into that Company area by carts and other conveyances and were concealed under farm produce. All the arms were distributed without a hitch.

Shortly after this importation of arms orders were given for a big stand-to which was really to be the start of the fight all over the Six Counties in the form of a general uprising of all I.R.A. forces. For this mobilisation plans had been laid and discussed for probably more than a week previous, and every unit all over the place knew exactly what they were supposed to do in the general plan. All the units were mobilised at particular points near where the scene of their operation was to be. Every officer in charge of the various local operations had to send in a detailed plan and report to the Division about what the operation was and how he proposed to carry it out and the number of men expected to be used in it. Also all arrangements for a line of retreat etc.

My operation was the destruction of a railway bridge across the road on the Northern Counties line between Ballymena and Dunloy. This bridge was on the main line between Derry and Belfast and was an important bridge. I went one night and measured the girders of the bridge and estimated the quantities of explosives

required and the number of charges of explosives which would be required to demolish it and sent my report to Brigade headquarters. I was told to instruct the Battalion Engineer to have the preparations made in advance for the blowing up of the bridge. I sent him two cwt. of war flour and a supply of electric detonators, cables and batteries. It was decided that there should be a combined attack on Musgrave Street Police Barracks, the Belfast headquarters of the armed section of the Special Constabulary, previous to the general uprising in the Six Counties. The object of this was to secure all the armoured cars belonging to the R.U.C. I was in charge of Antrim Brigade headquarters that day. Brian McGuckian was with me and we believed there was not the slightest possibility of failure of this operation as it seemed to be so well planned. If the operation was a success the drivers were to bring the armoured cars to Glenravel and drivers from the Brigade area had come in and were awaiting to take charge of them. Unfortunately the operation was not a success. The story of this can best be told by Roger McCorley and Seán MacDevitt. After the failure of Musgrave Street we got orders to carry out our general attack. We had been previously informed that the borders were to be attacked by several thousand men from the South to support our operation. Brian McGuckian and myself didn't feel very happy about setting out on the expedition because we knew all the police would be on the alert on account of the incident in Musgrave Street. I proceeded to Dunloy but I had to make a call at Corkey. When I got there I found that the Battalion Engineer hadn't done anything about the operation and he had refused to

take part in it at the last moment. I then went on alone to Dunloy. I got to Hugh MacCamphill and Barney Cuning. We made wooden boxes for the explosives which were to be used on the railway bridge. I think Hugh was then Battalion O/C and when the Engineer didn't turn up he came along to do the job himself. The fitting up of the equipment to successfully carry out this job was a fairly heavy undertaking. MacCamphill provided six men from the local Company to help us in our preparation, such as filling the sandbags for tamping the explosives, erecting platforms to enable work being done on the under structure of the bridge. We had to swing platforms, which were wooden planking, close enough to the ironwork of the bridge and below the girders and on to these platforms. The explosives were placed in close contact with the girders which formed the ironwork of the bridge and all around the explosives had to be tamped with sandbags.

Looking back on this operation it seemed reckless to attempt it with the small number of men which we had available for it. Just four or five men on the top of a parapet of a railway bridge with tethers and ropes, acquired locally from a contractor, attempting to raise these heavy wooden platforms into position underneath the bridge. Whilst the platforms were being erected another section of men were filling sandbags in a local ballast pit and carrying them to the scene of the operation. As far as I can remember from the time we started we were able to carry out the work and complete the job in about 30 minutes in all. This coincided with the 11 p.m. zero hour fixed for all military operations throughout the six northern counties.

That night, and for a week previously, a platoon of Specials were detailed to guard this bridge and prevent any interference with it. These men were playing cards in a house nearby all during the time we were making our preparations. They were absolutely unconscious that anything was going on outside. When we had the explosives properly fixed in position with electric detonators attached to the explosives and about 880 yards of electric cable which we had laid on from the explosives to the battery, we retreated to the end of the cable and set off the mine. We then went up to the bridge and examined it for the purpose of making a report to the Brigade Headquarters. We found the job was completely successful. Not only the bridge but the surrounding masonry was destroyed. The railway line was cut and the road completely blocked with the debris. The only part of our equipment which we were unable to salvage was a portion of the electric cable which had disappeared in the explosion. All the other commandeered equipment had disappeared in the explosion.

On hearing the explosion the B Specials came out and fired a few shots in the direction of the bridge from a distance but didn't go near it. We remained locally awaiting further developments. The arrangements were that I was to go back to Brigade Headquarters and make a report when the demolition was carried out. I had to wait until the following night, however, as I had to walk about twenty miles to reach headquarters.

On the night we blew up the bridge, Bob MacDonald, Brigade O/C, and a party of men under his command attacked Martinstown R.I.C. barracks. Another party of Volunteers made an unsuccessful attack on Ballycastle R.I.C. barracks. A few of the attackers at Ballycastle were

wounded and some others arrested during the course of this operation. Felix McCorley and a party attacked Glenarm barracks unsuccessfully.

In connection with this general attack which we carried out in Antrim it should be stated that the police and British Forces had anticipated something like it and had been preparing for some such an incident for some time before. Consequently they had been strengthening their defences in every way with men and weapons so that to capture a barracks at this time was a very difficult matter.

The I.R.A. party coming from Martinstown attack were ambushed by a party of Specials. The Specials apparently lay behind some hedges and attacked the I.R.A. party when they came into the ambush position.

On the morning following these events in County Antrim we were disappointed and surprised to discover that we in Co. Antrim were the only Units which carried out the general agreed plan to have a simultaneous rising all over the Six North Eastern County area. We also understood that there was to be a move made by Southern Forces into the Six County area and this invasion did not materialise. We understood that units of the Provisional Government's forces would cross into Northern Ireland and attack the British forces in the North. On the understanding that the general plan would operate we had prepared to carry out extensive operations throughout the area continuously from this onwards.

On the night after the demolition of the railway bridge we marched to the rendezvous of the Battalion at Corkey. There we found all the active men of the

Battalion 'standing to' under arms waiting for an attack. In the close vicinity there was a concentration of British armoured cars and forces of military and Specials. This concentration of British forces was around Corkey barracks, a large private house which had been commandeered earlier by B/Specials. Sir Dawson Bates appeared in the area on that day and inspected all the British forces at Corkey barracks. By the evening of that day the British forces had moved off without carrying out any raids. I had to proceed then to Brigade headquarters at Glenravel to report on the operation. As far as I can remember of the mobilisation of I.R.A. men at Corkey, they dispersed after the British forces left the area and when this happened Hugh McCamphill and Cuning and myself slept in a hayshed and the next morning I left for Glenravel to make my report to Brigade headquarters.

When I got to Brigade headquarters the O/C sent me away immediately to examine the road bridge in Glenravel for demolition, and when I returned I found the headquarters Company which was a separate Unit, all equipped and ready to set out. News had come from Glenariffe that a party of the Volunteers had been attacked by a large force of Specials and they had sent a message for help to every I.R.A. Company near the place. The Company was divided into two sections, and all the Brigade Officers except myself went to Glenariffe with one half of the Company. I was left at headquarters to take charge of the residue of Headquarters Company. A large amount of stores etc. was left in my charge which would have to be protected. The half of the Headquarters Company which marched to the relief of the men attacked

at Glenariffe were only a part of various forces that had moved from different areas in response to the call for help. The Headquarters Company got to their destination first and a fight ensued. The only casualties amongst the Volunteers were three men from Glenariffe Company who had been attacked. A lot of the other parties of Volunteers from the other areas arrived late. The three Volunteers were shot in an attempt to gain the heights after they were surprised by a party of Specials. These men in their efforts to gain the heights mistook a band of Specials for I.R.A. men and walked into a trap. I heard that the Specials suffered considerable casualties but we had no means of knowing what losses they sustained.

During this period I had to remain at the Brigade Headquarters with the half of the Company which was there. The Brigade Headquarters Company at this time was located slightly off the main Ballymena-Glenariffe Road, and during the time we waited there we saw large forces of Specials and military moving in the direction of the scene of the fighting. A number of the lorries stopped at a village near us and the men dismounted from their lorries, and then the problem was whether we would defend our positions or retreat. We posted our men at strategic points and sent out scouts. However, the Specials didn't come near our location at all but they assembled all the civilians who were available in the village, made them line up in military formation and gave them all kinds of commands in order to discover if they could pick out the Volunteers. This was done several times throughout the afternoon and everytime they did it we had to turn out and man our posts. The party which had gone to the aid of the Glenariffe

Volunteers returned and the O/C gave instructions that instead of defending our positions we were to retreat back into the mountains if we were attacked.

About this time Felix McCorley left headquarters to look for arms. The O/C Tom Fitzpatrick was taken away to hospital for treatment for an injury to his leg. Denis O'Neill was Vice-Commandant and Brian McGuckian was Quartermaster and I was Lieutenant. After the O/C left for hospital and McCorley went on his search for arms the position of the remaining Officers of the Brigade was critical. The enemy was completely in charge all over the area. They had large forces at their disposal. They were holding up and searching people on all roads. Curfew was imposed and all the inhabitants of the area had to be within their houses at a specified time.

Communications had completely broken down with our Divisional Headquarters. We got no instructions as to what we should do and we realised that we were on our own as no other area in the Six Counties carried out military operations according to the plans which were drafted for the general operation. We held a Brigade Council meeting to discuss what our future action should be and we decided that anyone who could openly live at home should go home and the others who were being looked for should go into hiding and remain amongst friendly people in the locality.

I went back to Ballycastle area with Willie J. Lynn who had been at the Brigade Council meeting. I found almost the whole of the original Company was at a place called Murloch. After a day or so there we got a despatch from Belfast telling us to meet and board a vessel in Murloch Bay. We were to board her in order

to unload arms from her. We had a system of signals arranged. We waited for this boat for about a week and nothing happened. Then we received a further dispatch to say that the boat wasn't coming.

From the time the Brigade Headquarters broke up we were living on our friends amongst the country people - we didn't like this idea of having the country people supporting us and we moved around as much as possible in order to spread the burden of our support amongst as many people as possible. Sometimes we would travel as much as twenty miles to get food and a bed. This travelling also enabled us to get information. During this time we were endeavouring to get our organisation built up again by fixing up and renewing our lines of communication etc. About the end of June Felix McCorley returned to the area and brought instructions that all the Volunteers were to go to Dublin to be trained in arms. All the men who were on the run and many others moved mostly in the direction of Larne along the coast road either by cycle or motorcar or any other means of conveyance on the first stage of their journey to Dublin through Belfast. Myself and a few of the Brigade Officers remained a short time after the main body of the men had left for Dublin. As far as I remember Willie Lynn and I were together and we went to Cushendun on a Saturday afternoon and stayed that night with people named Scally. I was on the road with Harry Scally the next evening and we heard the roar of a lorry or a car coming along. He jumped on the ditch and told me a Ford car was coming up, but just as he said that a Crossley came round the bend in front of the Ford car. Before the Crossley stopped they all hopped off and pointed their guns at us and shouted "Hands up". I had a Colt

revolver with me and I managed to drop it. I had eight rounds of ammunition in my pocket which I could not get rid of. I was arrested and taken towards Ballycastle Workhouse where the Specials were quartered. On the journey my hands were handcuffed behind my back and periodically they would threaten to throw me out and shoot me; they were all drunk. They brought me into the Workhouse with my hands still handcuffed behind my back. They got into communication with R.U.C. and then stripped and searched me. Then they put me under a military guard with the handcuffs off and told me to say any prayers I had to say because a firing party was preparing to shoot me. I believe they had actually selected the firing party, but about that time a Sergeant Henderson of the R.U.C. arrived on the scene. When Henderson discovered the position he knew that if they carried out their intentions of shooting me there would be a lot of explaining to be done and repercussions arising from it. He issued orders forbidding the shooting. A number of people in the village had recognised me being taken into the Workhouse and some of them had come to find out if they could get in touch with me.

One incident in connection with my capture is worth recording. On our way in the lorry from Cushendun we met a car on the road which the Specials held up. One of the Specials asked me if I knew who the people in this car were. I said I did. He asked me then what their names were and I told him Casement. He then wanted to know if they were related to Roger Casement, and I said they were cousins. (It happened that one of those Casements was Deputy Lieutenant for the County and an Officer of the British Army). When I told the Special the names of the occupants of the car he gave

Casements" car a desperate overhauling. This meeting with and the searching of the Casements" car on the road had also annoyed Sergeant Henderson as it would cause him a lot of trouble explaining it away.

I was taken to Ballymoney first and was taken before a Resident Magistrate there and remanded for trial. On my journey to Ballymoney I had a powerful escort, a Crossley car with fifteen Specials in it. I was in a Ford car with a Special on each side of me and another fellow in front with a gun. Then I was sent to Derry Jail with the same escort. Every time we came to a cross-roads the Specials sent the Crossley on in front on the pretence they expected a rescue. If there was any normal excuse for claiming that an attempted rescue took place I expect they would have shot me on the spot.

When we reached Derry Jail the warder at the gate refused to accept me while I was wearing handcuffs. The handcuffs had to be removed before I was admitted. There were a few officers of the Third Northern Division already in Derry prison when I arrived. There were some men also in Derry who had been arrested before the Truce in 1921 and had been sentenced for attempted jail-break. Some of the boys who had been picked up in Ballycastle on the night of the 'stand to' were also there.

I was then taken to Belfast for trial the second week of January at the Ulster Assizes. All the time awaiting trial in Derry we expected that things would be arranged and that we would be claimed as members of the Army of the I.R.A., but nothing like this happened. I didn't recognise the Court. This procedure was according to official instructions.

After I had again been transferred from Derry to Belfast and was awaiting trial there, Willie Lynn called to see me. He had been with the boys in the Curragh, Co. Kildare, and he told me they had all got fed up and those who had not sentences of penal servitude recorded against them in Northern Ireland, or against whom serious charge might be brought if they were apprehended and arrested in Northern Ireland, had decided to leave. They were all coming home, Lynn told me, as headquarters in Dublin refused to take any responsibility for our actions in Northern Ireland. In other words, we were being left to our fate. He told me that he had arranged for a Defence Counsel for me for the Assizes, and that the Solicitor and Counsel would call in and see me and that that was the best he could do. He also told me he was going to give himself up and serve his sentence of six months recorded against him. He did this.

I was defended by Counsel but the trial was a foregone conclusion. I was sentenced to three years, which I served. The first six months I served in Belfast and I was then transferred with a bunch of thirty others to Maidstone, all of us handcuffed in pairs from the time we left Belfast prison until we arrived in Maidstone. After serving my sentence I was released on the 25th April, 1925.

Conditions in Maidstone prison during my time there were pretty good; much superior to those existing in Belfast or Derry. My time there was spent in the Printers Shop. I met at least one famous character there - Horatio Bottomley. He also worked in the prison as Bookbinder.

Signed: Liam McMullen
(Liam McMullen)
Date: 11-12-52
11.12.52

Witness: John McCoy
" 11/12/52
(John McCoy)