

**ORIGINAL**

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21  
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No. W.S. 763

ROINN  COSANTA.

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 763.....

Witness

Seamus McCann,  
Ballymacool Terrace,  
Letterkenny,  
Co. Donegal.

Identity.

Member of Irish Volunteers,  
Derry City, 1918 - .

Subject.

National activities, Derry-Donegal, 1918-1921.

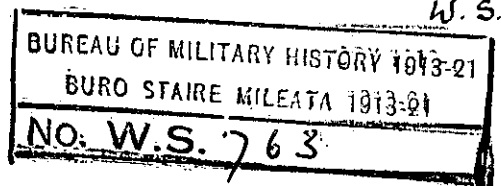
Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

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File No. ....S.1647.....

Form B.S.M. 2

ORIGINAL



STATEMENT BY SEAMUS McCANN  
Letterkenny, Co. Donegal.

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I first joined the Volunteers in Derry City in the year 1918. At the time I joined the men who were organising the Volunteers and keeping the organisation going were about seven or eight in number, on whom the young men of my years looked as "old timers". The names of these men were:- John Fox, Patrick Shiels, Seamus Kavanagh, Patrick Hegarty, Ned MacDermott, Joe Flanagan (Fianna Éireann) and Charlie Breslin.

These men had been in the Volunteers since its foundation in 1914 and had, as far as I know, all been arrested by the British and served some time in prison and internment camps after the 1916 Rising.

After I joined the Volunteers we had mobilisations after Mass each Sunday and also on a day during the week. We went outside the city and we had lessons on road-sketching and judging distances, map reading, etc. Each Volunteer was issued with a copy of 'An tOglach' with orders that when he had read it he should pass it on to others.. Our drill hall and place of meeting was the Shamrock Hall, Bogside. Our military activities in the hall included drilling, etc.

The first active operation I took part in as a Volunteer was in the year 1920. I think it was Patrick Shiels who called to me at my home and told me to report to Pat Hegarty's shop in Foyle Street at once. When I arrived at the shop I found four other Volunteers there, Alfie McCallion (Derry), Jim Walshe (Cork), Tom Sullivan (Cork),

and Bill Doheney (Tipperary). At Hegarty's we received orders to go to the Anchor Line Shipping offices and there look out for a Co. Tyrone man. This man had defied the ban on all Irishmen leaving Ireland except they had a permit from the I.R.A. We found our man in the sheds attached to the Anchor Lines offices. We held him up and took his passport from him. This operation we carried out without attracting very much attention and there was no trouble over it afterwards.

Our next operation was early in April, 1920. There was a general order from G.H.Q. to the Volunteers instructing them to destroy all evacuated police barracks and burn all income tax papers in the various Company districts all over the country. I was mobilised in connection with this order and paraded at the Shamrock Hall. Joe O'Doherty, who was Battalion O.C. at the time, arrived in the hall and he picked out a few squads of men for the different jobs. I was selected to go with Joe O'Doherty's party. Our job was to burn the Custom House. When we arrived at the Custom House we found a strong guard of R.I.C. men there, so Joe O'Doherty called off the operation and it was not carried out. On another occasion I was mobilised for the burning of R.I.C. barracks which had been vacated at a place called Carrigans, three miles from Derry City. This job was carried out by Joe Doherty and the following Volunteers took part: Hugh Morrison (killed in 1922), William Mayne, John MacShane and myself.

We arrived at the village of Carrigeen and cut the telephone wires leading from it. We then got to work on the barracks. Entering the barracks by the back door, we sprayed the stairs and the woodwork with paraffin oil and

set fire to it. When we found that the fire in the building was going well, we withdrew from the vicinity. After we had left the village, the local people turned out and succeeded after a time in putting out the fire.

The June Fighting in Derry City, 1920:

The events in Derry which have since been known as the "Derry Riots" in June, 1920, started off by the Orange mob attacking Catholics by firing on them in the streets in the Catholic quarter of the city. As far as I know, the plans for this attack by the Orangemen were well organised months before the events happened.

After the shooting had started I received orders to report at McGuinness's in Chamberlain Street. My house was opposite Butchers Gate and on this first night there was heavy fire coming down Butcher's Street from the Diamond. This left my house in the line of fire and when I was leaving I told my uncle to close the door after me. He did so but, in the act of doing it, got a bullet through his hand. When I arrived at McGuinness's I was told to go to Shamrock Hall. At Shamrock Hall myself and a few others were ordered to go to the Christian Brothers' Schools, and from the Schools we went to St. Columb's College. At the College Patrick Shiels told me to go with Jack Deeney to McCloskey's Garage in William Street where a car and driver was waiting. James Heron was the driver of the car. Our job was to collect arms and ammunition. When we picked up Heron and car, we went out towards the Scalp Mountain and near there we met a man with a horse and van. He had the stuff we had been sent for in the van, so we loaded up the car with two Colt machine guns and a few thousand rounds of ammunition. We returned immediately to the College and handed over the whole lot to the officer in charge there.

This stuff was some of the Redmond Volunteer equipment.

At the time we were sent out for the arms, other groups of men were sent to other places where it was known arms were available. I think it would be about Tuesday morning that all the arms available were collected and the College organised into a defensive position. Our two machine guns were brought into play on some Orangemen who had drawn a barricade across Bishop Street connecting Abercorn Road with Barrack Street. Fighting was now taking place in the Nationalist areas which in some places were occupied by detachments from the College. The house of Johnnie Fox of Patrick Street off Howard Street was occupied. Our men in the College had control of a number of streets abutting on to the College. A lot of individual sniping was taking place in any district where our men were operating.

A peculiar aspect of this fighting was the fact that for the first few days the British authorities allowed things to drift. It was only when the Volunteers had got into a position which enabled them to hit back with effect that military reinforcements were sent into Derry. The British military authorities, strange to say, didn't adopt an impartial attitude in their efforts to stop the riots. In every instance where they interfered, their attention was always directed towards the Nationalist forces. When armoured cars had arrived in Derry and when they made efforts to surround the College, we were ordered to evacuate, which we did.

The following citizens were killed in the general fighting:-

Edward Price (Diamond Hotel)  
James McVeigh (Walkers Street)

Thomas McLoughlin (Thomas Street)  
Thomas Farren (Long Tower)  
James Doherty (Tyrconnell Street)

Eleven were wounded.

After the general fighting, we next received orders to disarm the patrol of R.I.C. which operated each night in William Street area. On the first night on which we went there the patrol was off. We went there for three further nights with the same results. After those disappointments we got orders that this attack was called off. On the night immediately following the calling off, the patrol was back again on duty on the street.

Shootings in Derry, 8th November, 1920, followed by  
Reprisals:

On November 8th, 1920, we got orders to attack and disarm the R.I.C. guard which were stationed outside the Post Office and Custom House. I was mobilised for this attack with three others. We went along to the vicinity of the G.P.O. and found two R.I.C. men on guard at the outside of the G.P.O., Sergeant Wiseman and Constable Waters. We approached the policemen and ordered them to put up their hands. Sergeant Wiseman went for his revolver which was in a holster attached to his belt. Alfie McCallion went for Constable Waters' rifle. We opened fire on Sergeant Wiseman who ran away in the direction of the docks. Waters was saved from death or serious injury by a thick great-coat he was wearing as I fired at him at point-blank range. McCallion got Waters' rifle. Sergeant Wiseman escaped, wounded in the hip, and we did not get his revolver. The following took part in this operation: Alfie McCallion, Mick Sheeran, James Molloy and myself.

In addition to the aforementioned, we had a number of scouts on duty in the vicinity of the G.P.O. and only for those men's help we could never have got so close to the police and I am sure the operation might have failed otherwise. I can't now remember those scouts' names but they took as much of a risk as we did in this operation.

After this operation large forces of military and police got on to the streets in Derry. Pedestrians were held up and searched all over the place. Nothing was found on the people searched and after some time the forces withdrew to their barracks. Sometime later that night a number of R.I.C., disguised as civilians in plain clothes, appeared on the streets and started to carry out an official reprisal. Those men were armed and were disguised. Amongst the damage done by those disguised R.I.C. men were the burning of Charley Breslin's bookshop in William Street and the burning of sheds at the house of Corney Doherty, also in William Street. In this latter case the sheds were burned to a cinder and contained a number of livestock, including a horse and pigs, various vehicles, including a motor car and carts, harness, etc., hay, straw, and other farm produce. Various other houses were attacked on the same night and widespread damage done.

In order to discourage the R.I.C. in their policy of reprisals, the I.R.A. issued orders that counter-reprisals should be carried out on the night following the above happenings. The places selected for those counter-reprisals were all the property of imperialistic Unionists.

Crocket's, Grocers, William Street was burned. I and some others got orders to burn Holmes & Mullen's (now Littlewood's) in William Street. When we were forcing the side door of one of the places in William Street, Crocket's

went up in flames only a few doors distant. We had to clear out when the police and military approached without completing our job. The following were with me: Alfie McCallion, Mick Sheeran and Charlie McGuinness.

8th November, 1920 - Newspapers (1) Reports:

"November 8th - Derry Night Of Terror -  
Shooting and Reprisals - 5 R.I.C. men  
Severely Wounded - Much Destruction  
Of Property."

"On Saturday night and early yesterday morning there were the wildest scenes of terrorism and destruction yet experienced in parts of Derry. The outbreak took place following a murderous attack on two policemen who were wounded and in the orgy of frightfulness which ensued three other policemen were wounded. The wounded policemen are Sergeant T. Wiseman, Constable George Watters, Constable Shortt, Constable Hugh Kearns, Constable James Henehan. Constable Shortt and Constable Hugh Kearns are very seriously injured and it is feared their wounds will prove fatal."

"In William Street the newsagency establishment of Mr. C.O. Breslin and the garage and stables of Mr. John Doherty at the head of the same thoroughfare were gutted. Many other premises were damaged. It is stated that all this damage was done between half-ten when curfew came into operation and midnight, during which time the noise of rifle fire in that part of the city was almost incessant. The first of the dreadful happenings of a night of bloodshed and ruin was a daring attempt to hold up and disarm two policemen on duty at the Custom House - Sergeant Wiseman and Constable Watters. About half-past eight they were



attacked by four or five armed men. This revolver firing caused great alarm and pedestrians rushed in all directions for safety. The attackers escaped carrying with them Constable Watters' rifle. Parties of constabulary and soldiers soon appeared on the scene. Sergeant Wiseman and Constable Watters were removed to the Infirmary."

"When curfew came into operation quiet had been restored but soon after there was an outburst of rifle fire which intermingled with loud explosions and cheering of those engaged in the destruction of property was heard at intervals until after midnight. Some of the inhabitants alleged that the attacks were carried out by soldiers and police but several persons interviewed on the subject were unable to say definitely. All stated, however, that uniformed men were responsible and regard the attacks as reprisals for the wounding of policemen. It is stated that uniformed incendiaries were led by a man wearing a trench coat and that occasionally a whistle was sounded."

"It was in William Street that the greatest terror was created. The occupants of Mr. Breslin's got away before it became enveloped in the flames. Residents in the locality say that the screams of the animals which perished on Mr. Doherty's premises were agonising. The door and windows of the residence of Mr. Michael O'Doherty, father of Mr. Joseph O'Doherty, M.P. for North Donegal, were smashed and the window of Mr. O'Doherty's butcher shop in Sackville Street was also smashed. While this havoc was being wrought, there were even more sensational doings in Foyle Street and Shipquay Place when it appears three policemen were found dying after midnight. Constables Shortt and Kearns were picked up in Foyle Street. Each was lying in

a pool of blood. They were removed by comrades to the Infirmary where Constable Henaghen who was found in Shipquay Place about the same time was also conveyed. The circumstances under which they received their wounds are shrouded in mystery."

"A startling story was told by members of the Fire Brigade of their encounter with armed men in Foyle Street when on the way to the outbreak of fire in William Street. Soldiers fully armed travelled on the motor engine which went by way of Foyle Street. After the fire engine passed Orchard Street a few men were observed in front running across Foyle Street. After proceeding a little further three or four other men, some of whom were masked, were seen standing on the left hand footpath. Thinking the Brigade had run into an ambush, the driver was ordered to put on top speed. Suddenly fire was opened on the brigade and the military escort from both sides of the street. The soldiers at once returned the fire and two men were seen to fall."

"It was after the fire engine passed through Foyle Street that the three constables were found wounded and one story is that they had gone there to restrain men engaged in reprisals."

#### Flying Column in Donegal:

I attended a meeting of the I.R.A. in the Shamrock Hall, Derry, in December, 1920. It was at this meeting that I first met Peadar O'Donnell. His intention at this meeting was to make arrangements for to take a Flying Column into Co. Donegal, if sufficient Volunteers were available in Derry to man a Column. A number of men volunteered for this Column. This is a list of the names of those who

volunteered for service in the Column:-

Column O.C. - Peadar O'Donnell	-	Dungloe, Co. Donegal.
Alfie McCallion	-	Derry City.
William Cullen	-	Derry City
James Tyler	-	Derry City
Seamus McCann	-	Derry City
James McKee	-	Co. Armagh.
Con Connally	-	Co. Monaghan
William Doheny	-	Co. Tipperary
Jim Walsh	-	Co. Cork.
Tom Sullivan	-	Co. Cork.

The following joined the Column when we arrived in West Donegal:-

Frank O'Donnell	-	Dungloe
Con Boyle	-	Dungloe
Joe O'Donnell	-	Dungloe.

Arrangements were made at this meeting for the members of the Column to leave Derry City the following Saturday night. Alfie McCallion and a few Volunteers conveyed the rifles and ammunition for the Column to the top of Bligh's Lane on Saturday night. All roads leading from the city were held by British military (the Dorsets); so we did not attempt to leave that night. On Saturday night we got going. Between Derry and Newtowncunningham McKee, Sullivan and myself lost our way. J. Deviney of Newtown was the Column guide. We tramped the main road until we came to near Letterkenny. It was now beginning to get clear in the morning so we went into an old coal shed near the Post Bridge and left our rifles down and rested on some straw for a short while. We discussed our situation and it was decided that I should go into Letterkenny and get in touch with some of our friends there. I went into

Letterkenny and got in touch with John Curran, a Volunteer, who had been out with a party looking for us during most of the previous night. Curran arranged for Dr. McGinley to pick us up later with his car. I then returned to the shed where my comrades were, and Dr. McGinley later arrived with his car, drove us to Duddy's of Foxhall where the rest of the Column were waiting for us. The Duddy family did everything that was possible for us. The next night Dr. McGinley and Willie McKay, Churchill, came to Duddy's with their two motor cars and took us to the bridge at the top of Glendowan where we made a halt. At this time many bridges on main roads were blown up by the I.R.A. and trenches were also cut in the main roads to obstruct motor traffic by crown forces.

From the broken bridge at Glendowan we tramped in a downpour of rain to the top of Glendowan where we made a halt. The rifles we carried were old and required cleaning, so we loaded up and fired a volley into the mountains to clean the bores of the rifles. We resumed our march then until we came to the village of Doochary and from there on to Derryhenney where we spent the night. We arrived the next night (1st January, 1921) in West Donegal. At this stage, some of the Column were getting it hard to keep going with blisters on their feet, but we soon got used to even that. Frank O'Donnell came to meet us at Derryhenney. He had Paddy Bonner with him. Paddy drove us in his car to Dungloe.

At Dungloe we billeted in an old house in the Fair Hill, and whilst in this house we received information that a strange man had come off a train and was staying in Sweeney's Hotel. Three members of the Column then proceeded to Sweeney's Hotel and brought this man to where

we were billeted. The stranger turned out to be a British military officer. He was carrying a gun which we took from him.

Column Headquarters were established in the townland of Crovegghy, which is four miles from Dungloe. Crovegghy was one of the best spots I ever stayed in. The people of the neighbourhood kept an open house for all men on the run. Amongst the people from Crovegghy who befriended us were James Doran, Jack Boyle, James Durrin, Anthony Gallagher, B. Doran, Peggy Gallagher, etc.

On our arrival in Crovegghy James Doran came out to welcome us, saying, "Whilst there is a cow in Crovegghy, you will not want!" Meanwhile Anthony Gallagher and Jack Boyle were getting an old thatched house ready for us. We spent the first night billeted at the houses of Doran's, Durnin's, Gallagher's and Boyle's. We moved into a shack prepared for us the next night where a good turf fire was burning on the hearth. Ginger McKee went down to Peggy Gallagher's to make the tea whilst we sat around cleaning our rifles. The tea over, two men were posted outside on guard. We then spread out some straw on the floor and with blankets over the straw we settled down to sleep for the night.

We received word at Column Headquarters that Black and Tans were on their way from Glenties, so we left our billets for the Parochial Hall in Dungloe. This was the 4th January, 1921, and was a fair day in Dungloe. Whilst in the hall, I met Anthony McGinley, P. Breslin, Joe Sweeney and some other local I can't now remember. We left the Parochial Hall and went out into the fair and got the people to go off the streets. We made final preparations to meet the Tans by joining up with some of the local I.R.A. and

taking up attacking positions around the town. During that night Cissy Doherty and Mary McBride came around to all the posts with hot tea. Doherty's kept an open house for all men on the run. We remained all that night around Dungloe town awaiting the arrival of the Tans but they did not turn up.

We received a report of Tans coming from Dunfanaghy. The Column decided to attack and we took up positions on the road that leads from Dungloe to Crolly's Bridge before daybreak. We remained in those positions for a whole day in pouring rain but the Tans did not come our way.

At dark we evacuated our positions and Peadar took us to his home in Munmore. Peadar's mother gave us a good warm meal and dried our clothes at a good turf fire. Mrs. O'Donnell had three sons in the Flying Column. Their home was raided many times by British military and the Black and Tans. After remaining for the night at Munmore, we returned to Croveghy.

Meenbanad Train Ambush, January, 1921:

In the other attempted operations where we lay in ambush, we had taken considerable pains in planning the layout of the scene of the operation but, in the case of the train ambush at Meenbanad, we had no time to prepare plans. We were settling down in our billets for the night when Peadar O'Donnell came in and said, "Boys, put on your boots. A troop train is on the way towards Burtonport!" We all got ready for the road and were taken by P. Bonner's car to the town of Dungloe where we met Joe Sweeney and Anthony McGinley. Those officers had the local I.R.A. ready waiting for us. We all started in the direction of Meenbanad Railway Station at the double. We moved to a cutting about 150 yards from the station and, as we had not

time to lift the rails in order to stop the train, we used large boulders to block the railway line and we then lined ourselves on each side of the cutting. In this operation the Derry Flying Column were armed with rifles and hand grenades and the Dungloe men were armed with shotguns.

We had not long to wait until the train arrived. As soon as it came to our position, all our men armed with bombs used them endeavouring to put them into the carriages. Then fire was opened with rifles and shotguns. The exchange of fire lasted for some time, the military replying to our fire from the engine tender of the train. This fire forced our men to withdraw and the train succeeded in passing through the cutting. After this operation we fell back to the townland of Shiskinarone. From there we travelled to Croveghy Column Headquarters.

One of our Column men, Willie Cullen, of Derry City lost his way after this fight and got separated from the Column. He was armed with his rifle. He ran into a party of British military, was able to hide his rifle, and was captured unarmed. We recovered the rifle later.

The officers in charge of this operation were Peadar O'Donnell, in charge of the Column, and Joe Sweeney, in charge of the local I.R.A.

Crolley Troop Train Ambush, January, 1921:

The Column together with some local I.R.A. men left Croveghy and moved across the mountains to Loughkeel. The McGee's place at Loughkeel where we halted was a noted resting place for men on the run. The McGee's were very kind people who did everything possible at all times for men on the run. Whilst resting there, we received information that a British troop train was on its journey

to West Donegal. We immediately left McGee's for Crolly railway station. The main body of the Column took up positions on the hills overlooking the station. Peadar O'Donnell, who was in charge of this operation, sent a scout to the station with orders to find out if there were civilians on the train and to send an agreed signal to inform us if there were civilians on the train.

The train arrived at the station and Peadar received the signal, "No civilians", and we got ready to attack. As soon as the train arrived within effective distance for rifle fire from our positions, we opened a rapid fire on the train. This fire was maintained until the train had passed through the hill from which our men were firing.

After the Crolly train ambush, the column evacuated Croveghy to a place in the heart of the mountains, named Brockagh. In Brockagh we were billeted at the house of James McKelvey in a large barn. This family always kept an open door for men on the run. During our stay in McKelvey's we spent many nights on the various local roads awaiting a chance to ambush passing British forces. We did not get any chance to attack during our period there.

Falcarragh Barrack Attack; March, 1921;

After our ineffective wait at Brockagh, we left there and proceeded to Loughkeel with P. McBride as our guide as far as Casherlinger where we spent the night at Kennedy's shooting lodge. Mrs. Rodgers and a Miss Duggan were there and had a good warm meal ready for us when we arrived. Leaving Kennedy's early the next morning, we went to Duggan's of Gortahork where we spent the day upstairs. By night we moved to Hugh Duffy's and, whilst we were



here, McCallion and Dohenny (Tip) prepared a gun-cotton charge of explosives for use on Falcarragh Barracks. The gun-cotton was attached to a wooden frame and everything was made ready for the application of the charge to the barracks gable.

After dark the Column moved into the vicinity of the Barracks and took up positions around the barrack walls. Dohenny (Tip) and Frank O'Donnell took off their boots and went into the barrack yard. Hay, straw, petrol and oil were then passed over the yard wall. The gun-cotton charge was placed against the barrack gable. The fire was then lit and all the men on that side of the barracks withdrew to a safe position for the explosion. The explosion took place but it did not blow in the barrack gable.

After the explosion fire was opened on the barrack building from all sides. The R.I.C. and Black and Tan defenders replied to our fire and also sent up Verey lights. The exchange of fire lasted for about 30 minutes and then we withdrew from the attack, as rifle fire was an ineffective means of forcing the surrender of the barrack garrison.

After this attack we were picked up by McFadden's motor car and taken to Dunlewey. Leaving Dunlewey, the Column marched via Loughkeel to McKelvey's of Brockagh and back to our old Column Headquarters. Peadar O'Donnell was in charge of this operation.

Extract from the files of the 'Derry Journal':

"March 23, 1921.

Policeman Shot Dead In Falcarragh."

"News reached Derry on Monday that a policeman had been shot dead at the door of the barracks at Falcarragh.

It appears that Constable James McKenna was walking up and down outside the barracks before retiring for the night, when a shot was fired from the direction of a disused house nearby. The bullet struck the Constable in the chin. His comrades rushed out and saw a number of civilians running away. They were fired at, but the result is not known. The Constable died twenty minutes later. Aged about 26, he was a native of Co. Longford."

General Attack on British Forces in Derry City  
1st April, 1921:

About the end of March, 1921, Peadar O'Donnell and I left the Dungloe area and started for Derry City on foot. In West Donegal at this time all the bridges were down and the roads trenched. We arrived at Mullen's of Glendowan and on the next day Dr. McGinley called for us with his car and took us to William Holmes of Drumoghill. We spent the night there and on the next morning we were supplied with push-bikes and we bicycled into Derry City.

On the next night, April 1st, we had arranged a meeting of the I.R.A. for the Shamrock Hall, Bogside. When Peadar and I arrived in the hall, we found most of them mobilised there. James Keenan, Quartermaster, Derry City Battalion, arrived in the hall with a supply of guns and bombs which were handed out to the different parties detailed to take part in the attacks. The attacks were all to take place simultaneously at 8 p.m. Men were sent out in pairs with orders to shoot all R.I.C. found on the streets. A party was detailed to attack Lackey Road R.I.C. Barracks. Another party was detailed to bomb a military post on the Strand Road. I was one of the first party sent out, with orders to shoot R.I.C. men on the streets. I picked up an I.R.A. man on my way from the hall and took him with me.

We had walked up to the top of Great James Street when I noticed the R.I.C. man for whom I was looking coming walking meeting me, along with a civilian. I waited for him at Creggan Street where I shot him with my .45 revolver. He was Sergeant Higgins. The men who were on Strand Road and Lackey Street can tell their own stories.

The British casualties in these affairs were:-  
Sergeant Higgins, R.I.C., killed; Constable McLoughlin, grenade wounds on forehead; Private Albert Todd, British military, wounded; Private Cecil Cairns, British military, wounded; Private - Gordon, British military, wounded.

It was arranged that I should meet Peadar O'Donnell, after my part in the operation had finished, at the Christian Brothers' Schools where he was staying. Next day Owen McCormick called to see me with Jim Walsh and he asked me to tell Peadar that the military and the R.I.C. were looking for us. I then called at the Christian Brothers' Schools, saw Peadar and gave him McCormick's message.

My home was raided on the night of the shooting. Military and R.I.C. were patrolling on the streets in the vicinity of where we were staying.

That night we - Peadar, Jim Walsh and myself - left Derry accompanied by Mary McCormack and Nellie Sweeney, two Cumann na mBan girls. They took us to a place, named Killea, about four miles from the city and returned from there. We continued on our way until we reached Manorcunningham where we called at Curran's house where we rested and had tea. Then we went towards Leck and then on to Quigley's of Newmills, three miles from Letterkenny. We got a meal in Quigley's, and Harry Quigley got three bicycles for us and we cycled from Quigley's to McKay's of

Churchill. McKay's house was the link between the 1st and 2nd Brigades. We continued from McKay's to Glendowan.

I am appending a press report of the events in Derry on the 4th April, 1921:

Extract from the Files of the 'Derry Journal':

"April 4, 1921 - Derry Experiences Night Of Terror:  
Police Sergeant Fatally Shot, Soldier Accidentally:  
Sensational Events In City."

"Derry on Friday experienced a night of bloodshed and terror, when outbursts of bombing and shooting took place in various parts of the city. The known casualties are - Killed: Sergeant John Higgins, R.I.C., gunshot wound in the head; Private J. Wright, 2nd K.O.Y.L.I. (accidentally), gunshot wound in the back. Wounded: Pte. Albert Todd, Pte. Cecil Cairns, Pte. Gordon (accidentally), Constable Michael Kenny (condition critical), Constable McLaughlin, grenade wound on forehead, and two civilians."

"About 8.30 on Friday, Sergeant Higgins with a friend was returning home from Victoria Barracks, when near the corner of Windsor Terrace and Creggan Street a young man who came up behind him fired at him, and the sergeant fell to the ground. After spiritual attention by Rev. J.L. McGettigan, C.C., the Sergeant was carried by four young men to the Infirmary, where he expired in about three hours. Aged 48, he was a native of Ballinrobe."

"Practically simultaneously with this shooting, two loud explosions resounded through the city, followed by sounds of gun fire. It seems that bombs were thrown at the military post at the City Electrical station from the

direction of the Asylum wall opposite the post. The soldiers took cover in the armoured hut, and prepared to meet any continuance of the attack, which however was not persisted in except for the discharge of a few shots. Three soldiers were wounded in the attack, two being removed to the Infirmary. A shipyard worker who was passing the foot of Asylum Road was wounded in the knee and was also taken to the Infirmary."

Extract from the Files of the 'Derry Journal':

"March 21, 1921 - Another Derry Outburst -  
Street fighting and Revolver firing."

"There was renewed disturbance in Derry on Saturday night. There were not any serious consequences, due in a large measure to the prompt manner in which precautions were taken to confine the outburst of street rowdyism. It appears that it originated in an encounter between rival civilians in Carlisle Road shortly after half-past nine. The scene of operations was changed to the foot of Fountain Street, and during the disturbance a rush was made into Brigade Street. When the military interfered, the contending crowds were separated and dispersed. It is stated that the crowds afterwards reassembled, and the military to restore order fired a volley in the air. In response to an urgent summons, all the available police at Victoria Barracks turned out and took up positions at Ferryquay Gate and along Carlisle Road. An armoured car patrolled the streets for some time and shortly before ten o'clock peace had been restored."

Attack on Glenties R.I.C. Barracks, May, 1921:

The attack on Glenties R.I.C. Barracks was planned and carried out by General Joseph Sweerney, O.C., 1st Northern Division. Immediately before this attack Peadar O'Donnell

left Donegal for Dublin.

The men who carried out this attack comprised local I.R.A. supplemented by members of our Column. On the night before the attack the Column moved to an old house near Glenties where we billeted and remained under cover until the following night. Amongst the armament we carried was one of the Colt Machine Guns used by the I.R.A. during the Derry Riots in June, 1920. Dr. McGinley and myself brought those guns from the premises of William Holmes, Drumoghill.

We took up positions at the Workhouse wall in direct line with the Barrack. The Colt machine gun was mounted on a tripod. Our party included Joe Sweeney, Frank O'Donnell, A. McCallion, Tim Sullivan, Paddy Brennan and James McShee. Another party under James McCole were at the back of the barracks. When all men were ready and in their places, Joe Sweeney gave the order to open fire. When this order was given, the machine gun failed to work. Rifle fire was opened on the barracks from all sides. This fire lasted for about 30 minutes and was vigorously replied to by the garrison of the barracks.

As rifle fire made little impression on the barrack or on its defenders, Joe Sweeney gave an order calling off the attack. The Column then marched back to Dungloe.

British Round-Up in May, 1921:

Some short time after the attack on Glenties R.I.C. Barracks, Peadar O'Donnell returned home from Dublin. Peadar and a local I.R.A. man, named Con O'Boyle, were surprised by British soldiers at Mullin's of Glendowan. Peadar and Con O'Boyle were in the act of leaving Mullin's when the military arrived on the scene. Both ran around to the back of the house and the military started in hot

pursuit. The military extended their firing as they ran. Con O'Boyle fell with a bullet in his leg. Mrs. O'Reilly who was nearby heard the firing and saw O'Boyle fall, raced to him, knelt down beside him and was able to get from him despatches he was carrying before the military got to where O'Boyle was lying. The military made a prisoner of O'Boyle and took him away with them. Peadar O'Donnell got a bullet through his shoulder but was able to keep running and got away. Immediately after this incident, a big round-up was carried out by British forces over a wide area in West Donegal.

About this time I left Dungloe in P. Bonner's car and went to meet Roisín O'Doherty, who was bringing a nurse with her to dress Peadar O'Donnell's wound. This nurse was a native of Derry City and was a sister-in-law to Roisín. I met the two girls at the top of Glendowan and they were accompanied by John Mullan. Peadar was removed from Meenmore to Brockagh. We had at this time blown up all road bridges and trenched all roads. We removed Peadar to McKelvey's of Brockagh and we went to stay at O'Donnell's of Meenmore.

Next morning we received an urgent message to get out of bed as British military forces were seen approaching the place from the direction of Burtonport. There were two people living in the locality who were hostile to the I.R.A. - James F. O'Donnell and Mrs. Dr. Smith. We got out of bed, McCallion, Joe O'Donnell, Con Connolly and myself. We cut out by the back door of O'Donnell's house in our bare feet as the military were coming up to the front of the house. We kept going across Tully Mountain until we arrived at Crovegghy. I left the rest of the boys at Crovegghy and crossed over the mountain to Brockagh, where I met Peadar

and Charley McGuinness and some other Derry men. Charley McGuinness and his party were returning to Derry until the round-up in Donegal was over. This round-up was very well organised by the British who came into West Donegal by road and sea. Two British destroyers arrived off Burtonport with a party of military on board who landed at Burtonport in small boats. Another party arrived by train and convoys of military left Letterkenny, Ballybofey and Glenties in motor tenders for Dungloe. This composite force, comprising British military, R.I.C. and Black and Tans, arrived in the area and were assisted by two aeroplanes which continued to fly over the areas being rounded up. House to house raids and arrests were on continually for six days along the whole coastal area of West Donegal and the adjacent islands.

At the start of the round-up, we got Peadar out of bed and we left for Loughbarrow. Con McMonicle was our guide. We kept on the go all the time until the round-up was over. A party of British military captured Frank Carney and his Divisional Staff at Sweeney's Hotel, Dungloe, when they landed from small boats.

After this round-up, Peadar O'Donnell started to reorganise the 2nd Brigade, 1st Northern Division. This Brigade ran from Glendowan to Malin Head. I was sent by Peadar to Drumkeen to give the local men some training. Patrick Harkin and James Brown were in charge of this Company. Whilst here I was staying in McKelvey's of Stroangibba.

I left Drumkeen for Drumoghill where I met William Holmes. Holmes was Battalion O.C. I gave a course of training in this Battalion. Whilst here I stopped with Gallagher's of Ardagh.



I came back to McKay's of Churchill and spent a few days there. A. McCallion was in McKay's when I arrived. We left Churchill for home and arrived in Derry on the 11th July, 1921.

SIGNED: Seamus McCann  
(Seamus McCann)

DATE: 12 - 12 52  
12.12.52

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21 BURO STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21
No. W.S. 763

WITNESS: Maeve MacCann  
(Maeve MacCann)

12/ 12/ 52

NO. 84.5
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