

W.S. 793

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
BUREAU STAIRS MILITARY 1913-21
NO. W.S. 793

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 793

Witness

Michael O'Sullivan,
Eas Coille,
Ballyvourney,
Co. Cork.

Identity.

Despatch Rider, Kilnamartyra Company (Co. Cork)
Easter, 1916;

Battalion Engineer Officer, 8th (Ballyvourney)
Battalion, Cork Brigade.

Subject.

Military activities, West Cork,
1916-1921.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil

File No. S. 2062

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STATEMENT

BY

MICHAEL O'SULLIVAN, EAS COILLE, BALLYVOURNEY,

CO. CORK.

BATTALION ENGINEER OFFICER, 8TH (BALLYVOURNEY) BATTALION,
CORK 1 BRIGADE AND LEWIS GUNNER, BRIGADE COLUMN.

I had an uncle, Daniel Harrington, who was in Frongoch and it was he who started the Volunteers in the Ballyvourney district, immediately after the split in the Volunteer movement in the Autumn of 1914.

He was arrested on Good Friday before Easter Week. He raided the whole country around Ballyvourney for arms and picked up every shotgun that was in it. He had his home barricaded and shuttered for about two weeks before the Rising. He was an I.R.B. man, of course. He had men under arms in the house during this period, but this day he went out to go to a funeral and they caught him.

I heard he was arrested in Ballyvourney so I went to the house and removed the arms and the shuttering from the window and when they came they found nothing. One of the men in the house, John O'Riordan, was arrested at the funeral with him but the others were not touched.

On that evening then my brother Patrick hastily assembled 'A' Company to rescue the uncle from the Barracks at Macroom and while he was assembling the Company he sent word to Macroom to hold the train there. They did, but whether it was that the R.I.C. anticipated an attack on the train they went to Williams, the hotel

proprietor, for a car. He, though a Protestant and a loyalist, refused his car and they went to a Catholic hotel proprietor, Leo Murphy, and he supplied a car and driver and my uncle and O'Riordan were brought to Cork under police escort.

My uncle was released from Frongoch, one of the very last, at Christmas, 1916. It was he who started the whole thing around here. He was a link with the Fenian movement through an elder brother of his, who actually served eleven months in Limerick Gaol for illegal drilling near Bandon late in the nineteenth century. My uncle Daniel died, aged 67, in 1933, a convinced separatist to the end. I might as well add that he was active throughout the Tan war and took part in a number of engagements against the British Forces.

At Easter, 1916, I was about 14 years of age, but I paraded with the Kilnamartyra Company on Easter Sunday as a despatch rider. We proceeded to Carriganimma. There were 200 men from Cork in Macroom, the idea being to meet the consignment of arms from the 'Aud'. I remember the Cork men were armed and the Kilnamartyra men had shotguns and pikes.

At Carriganimma a motor cyclist, whom I think was Peadar O'Hourihane, told us the news of the failure of the 'Aud' to land the arms. We returned home and stood to arms for the whole of Easter Week, getting scraps of news of the Rising in Dublin. There were no further arrests. There were a good many on the run evading arrest, however. We dumped our arms for another day.

There was no further activity, apart from the usual thing - making buckshot, filling cartridges and making shotgun bayonets and grenades - for the next year or so. The 8th Battalion was, of course, functioning and had regular parades. I was Battalion Engineer Officer then but was away in Rockwell from September, 1918 to June, 1919.

On 7th July, 1918, there was an incident at the mouth of the Glen, about halfway between Ballyvourney and Ballingeary. An aeridheacht had been proclaimed which was to be held at Ballyvourney that day and its venue was moved to Coomiclurane, about seven miles away. Two R.I.C. men on a side car were on their way through the Glen and it was known they would be going back that way to their own Barracks. R.I.C. had been drawn in from a number of outlying Barracks to enforce the law, assisted by military from Macroom.

It was decided to attempt to disarm the two above-mentioned and, reluctantly, at my brother's order, I handed over my revolver to Daniel McSweeney, subsequently my brother-in-law. A party, including him, James Moynihan, Gortnascarty, Neilus Reilly, Ballyvourney, Johnny Lynch of the Glen and Tadg Toomey, Ballingeary, took up position at the mouth of the Glen. They watched out and when the side car appeared they jumped from behind a rock and dragged the police off the car. There was a scuffle on the road and one of the police, who held on to his carbine, was wounded severely by a shot in the neck. He recovered eventually. However,

their carbines and ammunition, 50 rounds each, were taken and formed the nucleus of our service rifles in the Battalion.

The R.I.C. carbine was, I think, a Lee-Metford and a very handy little weapon except that while it had a magazine to hold 6 rounds .303 ammunition, it had to be loaded singly. I used one of these myself subsequently and fitted an attachment for clip loading. They were provided with bayonets too. These particular ones got that July day were secured complete with their bayonets.

In September, 1919, we were preparing to attack Ballyvourney, Ballingeary and Inchigeela R.I.C. Barracks, but these attacks were cancelled by G.H.Q.

Donnacadh McNeilus, who had been rescued from Cork Gaol in November, 1918, was brought out to our area as a hide out and I remember being one of his armed bodyguard. He was interested in the impending attacks and was in on the preparation for them and was thoroughly disgusted at their cancellation.

On 3rd January, 1920, Inchigeela Barracks was attacked. There were seven R.I.C. in it and we failed to effect an entrance through the doorway and the attack settled down to an exchange of fire. We had two rifles, one being a Howth gun which was used by Johnny Lynch of the Glen. He had only 12 rounds for it. The R.I.C. on their side threw out a lot of the egg bombs at us but they were ineffective. One of the garrison who had

been outside, a Constable Tobin, came running down the street when he heard the first shots and was fired on and severely wounded by a shotgun. He was unarmed at the time. Our attacking party withdrew after a time, having decided we wouldn't waste our small stock of ammunition.

The usual blocking and holding of roads around was carried out by about 30 men, while 20, armed with shotguns and the two rifles, attacked.

Following this abortive attack, Brigade decided to take a part, and Florrie O'Donoghue and Dominic O'Sullivan Adjutant and Quartermaster, respectively, came out to lay a charge of guncotton against the gable end of the Barracks. This attack was intended to take place on 7th March, 1920. The position was surveyed with a view to blocking the concealed loopholes in the gable and it was discovered that there was a protecting net of barbed wire out for about 12 yards from the Barrack gable. The idea was abandoned. I was one of the storming party armed with revolvers and we were standing by the gable ready for the charge to be laid and to blow a gap in the wall when the job was called off.

On the 4th of April, 1920, I took part in the demolition of the Courthouse at Ballyvourney. It was a very strong building of three storeys, with a flat roof and dungeons beneath and very strong walls. It could have been used as a strong point by enemy forces. It was very near the police barracks and we were under

fire while burning it and in the full light of flares sent up by the police. I was one of the party at the gate of the police barracks acting as holding party to keep our fire directed on the garrison while a party of us was burning the Courthouse. We hoped that the police would come out but they didn't.

When the Courthouse was drenched in petrol - 120 gallons of it - one of the demolition party brought an acetylene bicycle lamp in and a tremendous explosion took place. The intention was to throw in a lighted torch from the doorway and all the windows had been closed to give more force to the explosion.

The premature setting off of the petrol caused very severe injuries through burning and shock to five of our party, including my brother Patrick, O/C. Battalion, who was in charge. We had to rush them into the hospital in Cork and they were about two months there. The police never came out that night but kept sending up flares all night long.

The burning of the Glebe House, a big house about to be occupied by troops near Inchigeela, took place on 2nd June, 1920. There were only three of us on this.

There was a project to take Inchigeela Barracks by a ruse in the same month. The owner of a threshing set, a wild irresponsible type, had been boycotted for threshing for Bowen Colthurst and to try and have the ban removed came to us and offered to bring in a bottle

of potheen to the Barracks if we would put a drug in it. We thought it a dirty kind of trick but at length consented and a doctor friend of ours and a Volunteer put morphia in it, just enough to send the police - there were 14 of them there now - asleep and enable us to get in and capture everything when the potheen maker would emerge. We assembled about the Barracks at the time appointed and in due course he came out letting on to be drunk and when we got him away some distance, by cross-examination, he admitted there were seven police unaffected by the potheen and so we decided not to proceed with the venture, as it seemed as if their would-be betrayer might in reality be walking us into a trap. We brought him away from the scene and gave him the benefit of the doubt, partly as a nephew of his, a good young lad, was in the Battalion.

In Ballingearry the police were in the habit of coming out and sunning themselves on the wall before the Barracks and we thought it a feasible thing to take the post and all in it if we could rush and capture a number of them outside. There were 14 there, R.I.C. and Tans mixed. We selected Whit Sunday for the job, really a bad day as there was a big crowd of people passing through the village on the way to Ballyvourney, it being a Saint's day. We would have to go in the opposite direction to them and could easily attract attention.

However, 12 of us went there on bicycles, armed with revolvers, and took up a position in a public house across the road from the Barracks, by the way, as if we

were on holiday and spending the time there drinking. Not one of the garrison was outside and when after some time two did come out they carried their revolvers and that suggested they were suspicious.

One of our party left the pub and let on to be drunk and I had to go after him, by the way, as if trying to get him to go home on his bicycle. He acted the part so well that he fell over the machine and barked his shin. Even this did not bring out any more of the police to see the fun, which was what we were hoping for. But one of the two outside, a Tan, started laughing and the 'drunken' man suddenly got annoyed and made a dive for his gun inside his coat and shouted at the Tan to get inside or he would do for him. I threw my arms around him to cover his real impetuosity and keep up the pretence of his being a drunken braggart. The two police, anyway, darted into the barracks and soon we saw every loophole in the steel shutters with a rifle protruding.

Our game was up and in due course we cleared away - except for a few of us who went and leant on the parapet of the bridge looking down on the back of the barracks. When the Sergeant (who, incidentally, a few years earlier was the one who arrested Claude Chevasse for speaking Irish to him) appeared out the back door my brother threatened him with a revolver and ordered him in. He dived for the safety of the barracks and none of his garrison came out that day. Certainly, they were not looking for fight.

We planned an ambush at Coolavokig at Gatabawn which we carried out on 15th July, 1920. Our armament consisted of one rifle, about fifteen shotguns and three revolvers. I had one of these. We took up position close to the road and had two men ready to drop a cart down about 9 feet from the bank in front of any enemy vehicle which would come, on getting the sign. We had two signallers to warn us of their approach. It was about one o'clock in the day when we got the sign that two cars were coming. They came slowly up the hill in low gear and we saw that they were loaded with petrol and with a very small escort. My brother Patrick was in charge of the operation and decided to let them pass as it was arms we were after and we wanted to hit up a large party.

About 3 o'clock our signallers notified us that one car was coming and soon a large Crossley tender came very fast. Actually it had 17 on it belonging to the Manchester Regiment. They were packed tight standing up and there were three in front. We had an old Munster Fusilier with us and he had our one rifle ready to pick off the driver. He was a crack shot and had been all through the war. Just at the critical moment when the cart was to be dropped down on to the road an unforeseen thing in those days of few cars happened. A touring car came along from the opposite direction and passed the military tender just opposite where the cart was poised on the high bank. It was let go, but too late on account of the touring car. We opened fire and

every soldier was hit. The driver was shot through the neck and arm and the tender crashed into the bank on one side, rebounding and hitting the opposite bank and shedding a large double-tyred spare wheel. It turned right around and, still under fire, was got under control by the wounded driver who, undoubtedly, was a good plucky man, and it raced away towards Ballyvourney. We saw no more of the touring car which was driven by a man with a woman beside him. It went on towards Macroom.

We followed up the British tender but it got to the outskirts of Ballyvourney where it ran out of petrol through the tank having been shot through. It was surrounded by a strong patrol from the village and they took up positions in a wide circle to protect it.

The Officer in the tender, Captain Airey, was killed outright and all the others wounded. The tender was pushed down the hill into the village covered by the patrol and we retired. Had we all had rifles, our fire might have been more effective and we might have secured all the arms.

The Slippery Rock at Knockanure was the scene of our next operations on 17th August, 1920. Here we ambushed a party of military on bicycles, killing the Officer in charge, Lieut. Sharman, and wounding most of the soldiers. We secured a revolver and ten rifles, all the bicycles, all the ammunition, bayonets, entrenching tools and steel helmets. Our ex-Munster Fusilier felt himself entitled to take the dead Officer's wristlet watch.

Patrick O'Sullivan, V/O.C. Battalion, stood on top of the rock and called on the party to surrender. The Officer in charge looked up, looked round at his troops and pressed down hard on his pedals. His men did the same in an endeavour to ride hard past us. We opened fire and the Officer fell dead, the wounded and slightly wounded dropped on the road just where they were and commenced firing on us. When there were only about three of them keeping up the fire we jumped down on the road and over-ran them and then they surrendered. They belonged to the Manchester Regiment also. After the fight they asked us for cigarettes. We were sorry we hadn't one among us, no more than they had, and we felt bound to apologise for not being able to oblige them.

The Brigade Column was formed in January, 1921. Fifteen came out from Cork originally and eventually we kept six of them. Seán Hegarty came out too from the Column with Seán Murray, Brigade Training Officer. He was an ex-Irish Guardsman and he put us through it, starting off our training programme at 5 o'clock in the morning. Physical drill was the first item on those frosty mornings and Seán Hegarty took his place with the youngest of us, that was myself. Breakfast followed, then parade drill, field drill, musketry and bayonet fighting. We used as much ammunition as we could afford to try and perfect our shooting. We had two Lewis Guns which had been got out over the wall of Ballincollig Barracks. Our training camp was approximately one mile east of Ballyvourney village in the hills and we occupied

an empty two-storied house. There were 40 men in the Column and they were all belonging to the 8th Battalion, except Seán Hegarty, the Brigadier; Jim Gray, Seán Culhane, Sandow Donovan, Seán Murray and Corney Sullivan.

We moved to Renanirree to another unoccupied house and from there we used come to occupy positions on the main Cork-Killarney road.

On 25th February, 1921, we were in position at 7.45 in the morning at Coolnacahera and the British came along at 8 o'clock. It seems they may have been aware of us having been there as we had hardly settled into position when they arrived. They saw one of the Cork city men who showed himself. The enemy advanced very cautiously and we saw that they were Auxiliaries. They had one touring car in front and seven tenders. There were four hostages in front, walking on the road.

I was No. 2 on the large Lewis gun, with Eugene O'Sullivan, an ex-Munster Fusilier, as No. 1. He was an expert gunner. Connors, a city man, had the smaller gun, the type used in planes. As it transpired, he abandoned his gun and cleared off and it would have been lost had not a young lad named Dick Kingston picked it up and brought it to my brother.

The Auxiliary tenders came on at a snail's pace and would have come right into the ambush position had they not seen a man, as already mentioned. They stopped dead and two jumped from the car and ran up the rocks to investigate. They were immediately shot dead by

two men with shot guns who were stationed near Connor's Lewis gun position. We got in a burst immediately on the touring car and the first two tenders. The car was ditched and the survivors jumped out. All the others got out of their tenders and the fight became general.

The probable strength of the Auxiliaries was about 90 and we had about 40, though we had only 15 at this particular point to engage them. Dan Corkery's men from the 7th Battalion were on the other side of the road where they were very useful in keeping them confined to the road.

The fighting continued until 12 o'clock in the day when the Auxiliaries had been forced into two cottages and the half acre around them. They were in a bad way. We moved in nearer to them again and, to make more firing room for themselves, they commenced breaking holes in the walls with bayonets. Every hole that appeared was covered immediately and brought under our fire, which was very effective. The Auxiliaries in the open space around the cottages were under fire from the Macroom men and had to dash from cover to cover. None of them succeeded in getting into the cottages. All fell before they could reach the doorsteps. We moved across the road and got ready with grenades when suddenly Seán Hegarty saw 48 lorries packed with troops coming along the road. Seán lifted his Peter the Painter and fired in their direction and then ordered us to retire.

We got away and about 2 o'clock in the day we were in contact with the military at a place called Coomraclohy, about $3\frac{1}{2}$ miles away. This developed into a running fight, with little results. We were fortunate, as there was another force above us on the Killarney road who, despite the firing, didn't move. The result of the day's fighting was 14 Auxiliaries killed and 26 wounded and 3 soldiers wounded. We had no casualties.

The Brigade Column was at Coomiclurane early in March, 1921. Seán O'Hegarty was with the Column and he must have got some word from Florrie O'Donoghue, the Brigade Adjutant, that Major General Strickland, G.O.C. Southern Command, would be going down the river from Cork, presumably for some inspection duty at Cobh.

One evening Sandow Donovan came to me and he called me and Eugene O'Sullivan, No. 1 on our Lewis gun, Corney O'Sullivan, our Brigade Engineer, Seán Murray, Brigade Training Officer, and Jim Gray, our driver. He took us into Toomey's house, our Headquarters, where we met Seán O'Hegarty, our Brigadier. Seán spoke to all of us and he said 'I've had word from Florrie that Strickland is to go down the river on the day after to-morrow and we propose to sink him somewhere about the Marina. You will go to-night with the Buick by our old route to Donoughmore (about 12 miles West of Cork city). In the morning when the curfew patrols are withdrawn you will get to the other side of the river in the city and go to Ballygarvan on the road to Kinsale. You will stay in Ballygarvan and the following morning you will meet

Mick Murphy at Kaper Daly's pub at Farmer's Cross. He will take you to the Marina with the gun'.

Before tea we did some alterations to the Buick. We strapped down the hood and cut a rectangular piece of glass out of the lower half of the windscreen on the side remote from the driver. This provided a rest for the Lewis gun.

After tea and when night had fallen we armed ourselves with rifles and revolvers and took some grenades. Jim Gray was driving. Seán Murray sat next to him with Eugene on the outside of him with the Lewis gun. I sat directly behind Eugene in the back seat, Sandow next to me in the middle behind Seán Murray and Corney behind Jim Gray.

We started off with full lights until we came to the village of Coolea. Here we dimmed our lights and travelled that way through Ballyvourney and for a short distance along the road to Macroom. Then we turned North East towards Carriganimma and we crossed the main Macroom-Millstreet road; from Carriganimma we went to Ballinagree and from that through Rylane to Donoughmore. Here we were entertained by the 6th Battalion and rested until after dawn.

We left Donoughmore after dawn and travelled on the main road through Blarney to Cork. We hoped we wouldn't run into a strong raiding party of seven or eight lorries out on an early morning raid from the city. We didn't, however, and we changed our direction at St. Anne's near Blarney and turned South to the Kerry Pike. Here Seán Murray stopped to see his mother and we judged our time

would be right so we dropped down from the Kerry Pike on to the Asylum Road on the Northern bank of the Lee. We passed over the Asylum Road and crossed Wellington Bridge over the Northern branch of the Lee.

After a run of 200 yards we were on the Western Road and in the city. Our guns were exposed and while we appeared as non-committal as possible we were quite ready for any interference. We met no enemy agent at all and we got safely to the end of Washington Street. We turned to the right into the Grand Parade where we narrowly watched Tuckey Street corner, for down here was a garrison of Black and Tans and R.I.C.

Turning left at the end of the Parade we were on the South Mall. We travelled along the Mall and then turned to the right and over Parliament Bridge; we turned to the right again along Sullivan's Quay and turned left up Barrack Street. We had now to pass the gate of Catfort Barracks where Black and Tans were stationed. The Black and Tan sentry at the gate saluted us smartly and we returned the salute.

Not long after we apparently over-ran the turn on to the Kinsale road for we were now astray. We thought the next cross to the left would put us in the right direction, still we thought it better to enquire. We wanted to ask somebody passing along, but everybody approaching us, the minute they saw us, they disappeared through the most convenient way of escape. Obviously as a carload of Auxiliaries we were not popular as no

Cork man wanted to meet us. At last we grabbed a young man going in the same direction as us as he turned in a gateway. He would not answer any questions; then Corney spoke 'Would you not like to do something for Ireland?' We were amused at his confusion, but our smiles apparently reassured him and he answered boldly, 'I would', and stepping on the running board he piloted us around a few corners and we were soon on the road to Ballygarvan.

We reached Ballygarvan without incident and stayed at a little house owned by a Miss Walsh who hospitably entertained us. We had something to eat there and soon after we left for Kaper Daly's. We were to be there at 2 o'clock and met Mick Murphy there. He was accompanied by Tadhg O'Sullivan. Mick introduced him to us as the 'Republican Jewman', because of his pronounced Semitic appearance. Mick had bad news for us. Strickland was to attend on the following day at the funeral of General Cummins who had been killed at Clonbannin a few days previously, that is on the 5th of March.

Mick and Tadhg returned to the city. While we were to meet Mick again, we learned with regret that Tadhg was shot dead that very evening by Crown forces in the city.

We returned to Ballygarvan and stayed at Miss Walsh's for the night.

We wanted tyres for the Buick and Jim and I decided to go in to Cork on the following day. We made arrangements with a milkman to take us in on the following

morning. We left in the morning seated amongst the churns. We wore our trench coats and gaiters which, though they suited the milkcart, were not quite the wear for city shopping. We carried revolvers concealed on our persons.

We came into Cork by the Douglas road and left the milk car near the old City Hall. On the way in I remonstrated with Jim about his unshaven countenance, for he had three or four days' growth of beard. 'No', said Jim, 'I'll pass as a benevolent old toff. It's you they'll be after, a clean shaven youth'.

We crossed Parnell Bridge and came along the Mall towards the Parade. As we passed the turn up to Parliament Bridge, I was thinking of the morning before and our progress up that way, and how, though we were so well armed, we felt small and weak in the midst of the enemy, as it were.

We turned out of the Mall into the Grand Parade making sure to keep on the Eastern side, that is remote from Tuckey Street corner, where in the daytime there was generally a bunch of Tans congregated. We had hardly reached the pavement when we saw a whippet Rolls-Royce armoured car bearing down on us. Jim spoke out of the corner of his mouth, 'Good God, Mick', he said, 'Monkey Mac' the spotter is in that car and he knows me as well as a bad ha'penny. We'll cross'.

We meant to cross halfway over the Parade until the car went by and return again to the side we were on.

We did this, leaving the pavement along with a number of people who were crossing also. Unfortunately, as they got about to the middle of the Parade, they suddenly took some notion and turned back towards the side they had left just as the whippet came along. We were left completely isolated in the middle of the Parade and in the full view of the Tans at the corner of Tuckey Street.

These fellows had nothing in the wide world to do except watch out for suspicious looking people like us. We felt it better to keep on the way we were going and we crossed the Parade in a slant towards them.

There were twenty of them there and twenty pairs of eyes watched us, taking in every detail of us from head to toe as we approached them. We passed within ten yards of them and we had gone ten yards past them before they made up their minds. Then we heard 'Halt !'

We gave no sign that we had heard but kept on our way. It was again repeated and we gained some further ground. Then we heard another angry 'Halt' and footsteps running behind us. We looked around in feigned surprise. A Black and Tan was running towards us. Jim was the nearer to him while I lagged further behind. He came rushing up to Jim, his arms outstretched as if preparing to feel him for arms. Then he spoke sharply. 'What is your name ?'

'My name is Gray', Jim replied.

'Gray ? From where ?' he asked.

'From Cork Barracks', Jim replied.

Just as he raised his hands slightly, there was a sudden diversion. A sudden gust of wind blew off his peaked cap and it came rolling along the ground towards me. I promptly picked it up and, walking towards him, handed it to him with a smile.

'Thank you very much indeed', he said, smiling also. It wasn't often at that time that a Black and Tan received such courtesy. He now turned his attention towards me. Again raising his hands he said, 'I suppose you have not a gun on you'. 'Not at all', I replied.

He brought down his upraised hands with a sweeping movement as if searching me for a concealed weapon but his hands never touched my body. The movement of the hands was apparently propaganda for his comrades at the corner.

We parted good friends and Jim and I went on to Brunswick Street to call to Wallace's, then a depot for messages for the Brigade. Scarcely had we leaned on Wallace's counter when Nora and Sheila ran in with the news that the block was surrounded. We looked out and both ends of the narrow street were blocked by military. We slipped across the street unnoticed into St. Augustine's Church. We crossed through the church to the Washington Street door. That street was also cordoned at each end. We returned to the church and knelt down and prayed for a while until the raid was over. Then we returned to Wallace's.

Here I insisted on Jim going to a barber's shop at the corner to get shaved. Then we started for Johnson & Perrott's garage to get the tyres for the Buick.

Jim went in front, I following twenty yards behind. We had hardly started when I noticed a tout falling in behind Jim. Keeping ten yards behind Jim he turned every intricate corner and byway until we got to Johnson & Perrott's garage in Emmett Place.

There was an open space in front of the garage and I crossed to the far side to watch the tout's movements. He followed Jim to the door of the garage and watched him until he disappeared in through the door of the office. Satisfied that he had Jim located in the office he turned to go. I had slipped across unknown to him and I caught him by the back of the neck and I ran him into a corner inside the door. Here, despite his protests, I kept him until Jim returned.

When Jim came along he didn't see the lad at all. 'We'll go, Mick', he said. Then he caught sight of my prisoner and he asked who was he. I told him the story.

'I suppose, my poor man', said Jim, gently, 'that you were going to Union Quay.' He put his hand on his shoulder. 'You may go there now', he said, 'but you'll never reach there'.

The tout now admitted that I had told the story correctly but that he had followed Jim through idle curiosity.

We let him go and reported the matter to Florrie O'Donoghue who had him picked up very quickly. He was tried and acquitted, his plea of idle curiosity being accepted. None of his people were found to be hostile to the movement.

We went back to where we had arranged to meet the milkcar and from there to the place where Johnson & Perrott had sent the tyres to be picked up by us, near the City Hall.

Stowing away the tyres under the churns we started back for Ballygarvan. We had not gone far from the City Hall when we ran into a holdup by R.I.C. They had the street threequarters barricaded, allowing only a passage for cars, which we could see them searching.

Driving up to the barricade we were immediately motioned through. I got the idea that a lot of this busy holding up and so forth by the old R.I.C. was just for show and that they were tired of their job and wanted no trouble.

We reached Ballygarvan without further incident and were glad to see our comrades, our car and our guns all intact.

That night we left Ballygarvan and came back a different route. We first passed by Ballinhassig Barracks, the garrison of which heard us climbing the hill at the back of the barracks and sent out a wireless message that we had passed. Next we passed very close to the Military Barracks of Ballincollig on the Southern side of the Lee. Eventually we found ourselves, after crossing Roove's Bridge over the Lee, at Coachford Village as day was breaking. We had been a good part of the night bypassing trenched roads.

From Coachford Village we went North East to Peake, then North West to Ballinagree. Here we heard that the Auxiliaries from Macroom were out across our road home at Carriganimma so we waited until nightfall.

We returned by the old route through Carriganimma, Ballyvourney and Coolea. A mile away from our Camp at Coomiclurane a car was suddenly run across the narrow road and we could see the muzzles of rifles and shotguns peeping at us from behind cover. It was the guard for the night. Jim Gray remarked, 'We are as safe, lads, as if we were in God's pocket'.

In March, 1921, the Column found itself surrounded at Lackabawn, to the East of Gougane Barra. We got up in the hills by a very steep place. We were under fire but didn't think it worth while to reply. Actually, Seán Hegarty had blocked the Pass of Keimanagh by means of a steamroller, having blown one of the wheels off it.

This held up a large force coming after us from the Bantry direction. We drove our two cars, the Buick and a Hupmobile, into a cul-de-sac. While we were going up the hill, two girls in the place we had stayed in covered up the cars with piles of furze and though the British came to the house that day and saw the rough heaps of furze in the yard they never discovered the cars underneath. We came down the hill early in the evening and took away the cars across the border into Kerry. We went round the road with the cars and the Lewis guns on board while the Column went up over the hill.

After this we went on to Kilgarvan on the road to Kenmare to attack the Barracks there. Whether they knew we were coming or not, they evacuated the place that very day and when we arrived the Barracks was bare. The garrison of police and Tans had gone to Kenmare.

We returned to Macroom and went into the town on Whit Saturday night and we took up positions quietly around the Castle. The burning of a house, we thought, would bring out some of the Auxiliaries but there was nothing doing. All preparations were made for burning a house which was a haunt of theirs but for some obscure reason it didn't come off and we retired from the town.

We waited at Carrigaphooka for another week in the hope that the Auxiliaries would venture along that road but without success.

About 10,000 troops were concentrated in Ballyvourney for a big round up. The valley was white with bell tents. I was close to the road watching them coming in massed formation. It was considered advisable to disband the Column until this was over.

It was on a Sunday evening, the 5th June, 1921, the troops came to Ballyvourney. As well as the army in the valley in bell tents, they took over farmhouses three miles outside the village.

Before dawn on Monday morning they were moving. They spread out fanwise to the West and North, encircling Glenflesk and the Clydagh valley - at the foot of the Paps Mountain. Here they felt sure of meeting an I.R.A. Column. They expected to be opposed by 10,000 men, who they said were there waiting to fight them. On Monday evening they brought in a couple of dozen prisoners and lodged them in the National School at Ballyvourney. There were a few Volunteers among them. They were directed by a group of Officers to sleep on the floor. One Volunteer from Tureen, over the Kerry border, started moving about feeling the floor with his hands. One of the Officers said, "What are you doing, Paddy?" "I am looking for a soft board to lie on, sir", he answered. "There you are now", said another Officer to his fellows, "I told you we had rounded up all the imbeciles of the country!" They were all released in the morning.

Myself and a few others were waiting on Corpus Christi having got the news that seven lorries of Auxiliaries had gone to Renanirree, perhaps because they had got news of a Sinn Féin Court sitting there. We hoped to intercept them on the return journey. They came along and we took up a position about 30 yards from the road and opened fire on them. They were travelling at speed and I enfiladed them with the Lewis gun as they passed. They were armoured lorries and all got through except one which was ditched. It was so close to us that we couldn't fire into it and the occupants fired rifle grenades at our position. The lorries which had passed on stopped further up the road and the Auxiliaries took to the higher ground on either side of us, forcing us out of the pocket we were in and we were forced to leave. This occurred at Knocksaharing on the Macroom-Renanirree road.

This was the last engagement I was in prior to the Truce, which came about a couple of weeks after. We saw no more Auxiliaries travelling the roads. The policy was rather for large bodies of troops to sweep across country and pick up every man they could find. Sometimes they picked up members of the Column but didn't connect them with the offenders.

Percival's Column from Bandon took part in the big round up and once I thought I had the opportunity of doing great destruction to his crowd as they went up a steep road opposite to where I was ensconced with the Lewis gun and 10 pans of ammunition. I only abandoned

the idea when I saw that amongst them were prisoners and I realised that I would only be doing them harm.

Percival's Column was made up of Infantry with horse transport for equipment and baggage. Himself rode a horse. A few of his Officers also had horses. He had hardly 300 men. An advance party went ahead of the main body by half a mile. This advance party rounded up everyone they saw or fired at everyone who did not immediately halt. They made a beeline back to Bandon from Ballyvourney using all the by-roads. At the village of Kilnamartyra the advance party rounded up a dozen old men and some nondescript younger men. These they lined up along a wall near the pub. Presently Percival came along with the main body. He was seated on a horse and directed one of his Sergeants to inspect the prisoners. The Sergeant walked slowly along the line, then walking back to Percival said, "There's not a Shinner amongst them, sir".

Passing through Toames (South of the Lee) that evening they fired on young Buckley who was bringing water from the well to his mother. They killed him. That date was, I think, the 9th June, 1921.

SIGNED: Michael O'Sullivan
(Michael O'Sullivan)

WITNESSED: C. Saurin LT.-COLONEL.
(C. Saurin)

DATE: 3rd February 1953

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