

W.S. 829

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

BURO STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21

No. W.S. 829

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 829

Witness

Charles McGleenan, M.P.,  
Ballytrodden,  
Blackwatertown,  
Armagh.

Identity.

Captain Blackwatertown (Co. Armagh)  
Company I.R.A., 1920 - ;  
Vice O/C. Armagh Battalion 1921;  
O/C. Blackwatertown Battalion I.R.A., 1914-1924.

Subject.

National activities, Cos. Armagh-Monaghan,  
1914-1924.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil

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Statement by Charles McGleenan, M.P.,

Ballytrodden, Blackwatertown, Armagh.

The Irish Volunteers were organised in Blackwatertown, early in the year 1914. I became a member at the start. We did a certain amount of training from the time the Company was started up to the outbreak of the 1914-1918 war under various drill instructors and training officers. At the time the war broke out a drill instructor named Fergus McMenamy on one occasion at a parade, as a test of the intentions of some of our local Volunteer leaders, asked if there were any Volunteers prepared to join the British Army. This man was no lover of England or of the British Army - he subsequently fought in the Rising in Dublin. His intention in asking for recruits was to test the reactions of the Company's officers and men. John Redmond at this time was attempting to lead the Volunteer organisation into the British Army and McMenamy's action was to have a definite decision from the members of our Companies as to their attitude towards the war. No Volunteer at that parade had any desire to join up to fight England's war, and Redmond's declared efforts to help in the British war by getting young Irish Nationalists to enlist broke up the local Volunteer organisation.

The only military organisation existing when the Volunteer organisation for the time being broke up was the Irish Republican Brotherhood, better known as the I.R.B. The I.R.B. had been in existence locally previous to the start of the Volunteers. When the disorganisation of the Volunteers became apparent as a result of Redmond's war efforts I joined the I.R.B. John Garvey was head of the local I.R.B. centre which had about fifteen members. In the year 1916 the membership of the circle increased to twenty-four members.

Late in 1914 we reorganised the Irish Volunteers in Blackwatertown principally from men who were members of the I.R.B. and officered by them. This reorganised unit met at least once a week for military training. We had a Martini-Henry rifle, two Snyder rifles and a police carbine, a few shotguns and a few assorted makes of revolvers.

In 1916 one Company was under arms to mobilise in Coalisland. A number/went there on Easter Sunday. I did not go as I did not get to know what was definitely on that day. The men who travelled to Coalisland on Easter Sunday 1916 were John Garvey, James Daly, my brother Mick, Ned Kelly, Charles Dillon - who was Company Captain - etc. Soon after their arrival in Coalisland those men got orders to return home and to await further instructions in their home locality.

From Easter Sunday we met every evening and remained mobilised for portion of each night awaiting the orders we expected to come to us. We had all our available arms with us during those waiting periods and we continued waiting and watching until well into the week after Easter Week.

After 1916 we carried on as a Volunteer unit and later on we organised Sinn Fein Clubs in many local areas. I was particularly interested in the club in Blackwatertown which was organised in 1917 and remained active up to and after the acceptance of the Treaty in December 1921. This club's representatives attended the Sinn Fein Árd Feis which debated the Treaty and voted against its acceptance by Dail Éireann, as they stated the North was getting nothing for or by the Treaty.

In the Volunteer movement in 1917 we locally met and carried out routine military training. Those meetings were

sometimes as Volunteers and sometimes as I.R.B.. The Volunteers and the I.R.B. were in most cases the same people, but when the I.R.B. held an I.R.B. circle meeting no person outside the I.R.B. organisation was made aware of the meeting or allowed to be present at it.

The I.R.B. meetings concerned themselves with the question of raising funds, collecting and procuring arms by any and every means possible and the spread of the Volunteer organisation. All the activities proper to a military unit were considered the business of the I.R.B. Immediately after 1916 and in 1917 and 1918 the I.R.B. could be classed as the heart and the mainspring behind the Volunteer organisation and of the Sinn Fein organisation.

In or about July 1917, after the release of the sentenced leaders of 1916 rising, a Sinn Fein meeting was held at Annahone on a Sunday evening. The speakers at this meeting included Mick Collins, Paul Galligan and Seán Ó Muirthuile. I read at the time that this meeting was the first occasion at which Michael Collins addressed a public meeting. After the conclusion of this meeting the speakers travelled to Armagh and addressed another meeting there. This meeting was held in the late evening or night.

#### South Armagh Bye-Election February 1918.

In February 1918 we took an active part in the South Armagh election. I went the day of the polling with the Armagh city crowd to a play named 'Clady'. On that morning a Company of Irish Volunteers from Dublin City marched in to 'Clady'. They were lined up on the side of the road at the school where the polling was taking place. A Company of National Volunteers (Hibernian supporters) from Armagh city came marching in to 'Clady' and past where the Irish Volunteers were drawn up. The Dublin Volunteers were called

to attention as the National Volunteers past. This mark of courtesy towards the National Volunteers was replied to by them spitting at the Dublin Volunteers.

Later on that evening when the Hibernian party had drawn in all their Nationalist supporters they removed the green flags they had on their cars up to then and commenced to haul in Unionists to vote for the Hibernian candidate. I had noticed in particular a car which up to that evening had flown a green flag. Later it came to the school and a load of big fat Unionist voters who went into the school to vote. I went over to the car and made a search for the green flag which I found under the seat that one of the Unionists had been sitting on. It took it from under the seat and in front of the Nationalist Volunteers said I will see that no Unionist will set his backside on this flag again and I tore it up in front of them. None of the National Volunteers made any protest at my dealing so with the flag.

#### Raids for arms.

In October 1918 we carried out a raid for arms at Captain Proctor's place, Tullydoey. James Connolly (R.I.P.), Tom Carr, Pat Hughes, James Finn and myself took part in this raid. Tom Carr was dressed in R.I.C. uniform and Pat Hughes was dressed in soldier's uniform. These two men managed to get into the house and we followed them. We searched the place thoroughly and got a shot-gun and a revolver on the premises. This raid on Proctor's caused some friction in our Company. Charles Dillon who worked with Captain Proctor was Captain of our Company and he objected to the raid on Proctor's being carried out. He said he knew who carried out the raid and that he would inform the police. Dillon was dropped as Company Captain and I took over the Captaincy of the

Company from this time onwards. James Daly, also a member of the Company and a workman at Proctor's, wanted the raid carried out. Neither of these men lost their employment over the raid.

Pat Hughes put the revolver he had on the raid into the pocket of the military coat he had on him. When a mile from Proctor's, returning from the raid, he took the coat off and threw it over a hedge forgetting he had left the revolver in the pocket of the coat. In the middle of the night Frank Donnelly brought a dispatch to me informing me, as near as it was possible to do so in writing, where the revolver and coat were. I went before daylight and got the revolver, took it home with me and later handed it to Hughes.

#### General Election of December 1918.

In preparation for the General Election we helped at arranging meetings, putting up posters and painting slogans on the walls. We went to Blackwatertown R.I.C. barracks on a wet night and painted slogans on its walls. This night's work got me a severe dose of the flu and I was in bed on the day of the election but my vote was recorded nevertheless. The Sinn Fein candidate for mid-Armagh - my constituency - was Liam O'Brien, now a professor in Galway University. I can't now remember who his Orange opponent was.

#### Raid on Copes, for arms.

The raid on Copes of Drommilly was carried out in February 1919. Frank Aiken was in charge of the men taking part in the raid and I was second-in-command on that occasion. Men from Blackwatertown, Armagh and Ballymacnab Companies took part. In this raid we got a small revolver and a shotgun and nothing else. This was one operation I was never satisfied with as I felt at the time that we missed a store of arms in our hurried search of such a big house. I heard afterwards

that two cartloads of arms and ammunition were taken the day after the raid to Laughgall R.I.C. barracks.

General raid for arms, summer 1920.

I took charge of the local Volunteers in the General Raid for arms. We raided seven houses in Derryoughal district. We only got one useful shotgun, some ammunition of various kinds and a small quantity of gunpowder in all those raids. In one of the houses when we were starting to raid the house the woman of the house fainted and I immediately called off the raid.

From time to time we raided different other houses in the area but we never got very much effective arms or ammunition.

About early in 1920 we organised a Sinn Fein demonstration. The British authorities proclaimed this function but we decided to hold the demonstration and in doing so to hoodwink the local police whose duty it was to carry out the proclamation order. We decided on a site for the meeting which was a closely guarded secret from the R.I.C. In order to deceive the police we resorted to the following stratagem. I got a crowd of men together and we set off in a manner to give the impression that we were proceeding to the place of the meeting. The police followed us and we led them in the opposite direction from where the meeting was being really held. We continued as far as we considered necessary and then we retreated our steps back again to the village of Blackwatertown. We were preparing to start off again leading in another wild-goose chase when an aeroplane appeared and it dropped a message on to the large Square in front of Blackwatertown barrack. The police then got into waiting crossley motor tenders and headed straight for the place where the meeting was being held - Tullygunigan. The meeting was almost over when the police arrived. The police, on arrival, formed up and carried out a

baton charge. The Middletown flute band was present at the meeting and in the melee resulting from the baton charge the police captured some of the band instruments.

I can't now remember who the speakers at this meeting were but I am positive that Eamon Donnelly was one.

Raid on Income Tax Offices - April 1920.

On the night that the G.H.Q. orders to burn all Income Tax offices was to be carried out I was in Armagh city and I volunteered to go with the Armagh Company to help them in the work detailed for them that night. I was told that they could do their own job in Armagh and that it was enough for me to do mine which was the burning of Blackwatertown R.I.C. barrack which had been evacuated a short time previously.

The Blackwatertown barrack was a large building standing on its own grounds. When we went there we found some wheaten straw in the building which proved most useful to us. We had two gallons of petrol and two gallons of paraffin oil with us and also some hay ropes to lead from the ground floor up the stairs. We spread the wheaten straw on the floors. Any of the windows that would not open we broke them to give the fire sufficient air. After this we sprinkled petrol and paraffin on the floors. We started the fires going at the foot of the stairs. The fire started rather slow at first but when it got going it made great headway and completely gutted the building. There were only two Volunteers with me on this job.

Destruction of Charlemont Fort - July 1920.

The next local operation of importance was the blowing up and the burning of Charlemont Fort. This was a most imposing building situated on high ground in a position to guard the bridge over the Blackwater River between Tyrone and Armagh.

This building was used by the Red Coats in 1798 and up to the outbreak of the Boer War. We received information that it was to be occupied by British troops so we decided to destroy it.

The following Companies took part in the destruction of this Fort:- Blackwatertown, Allistragh and Clonmore. The men in this operation were under the orders of a Tom Teerney. I was not able to take charge in this as I had a sister very ill and she died early the next day. From information I got later from those taking part in the operation no officer could have carried out the job better. This was the only job in the area I missed.

About the end of 1920 Eamon Donnelly was on the run. Notwithstanding this fact he decided to hold a public meeting at the Shambles Corner in Armagh city. It was arranged that Father Michael O'Flanagan would attend the meeting and speak at it. The holding of a Sinn Fein meeting in Armagh city at this time had all the appearance of being a provocative matter to the police authorities and to the Unionist elements in Armagh, and it was feared that the police would attempt to arrest both Father O'Flanagan and Eamon Donnelly if the meeting was held.

On the night of the meeting the I.R.A. attended at the meeting place armed with various types of weapons including revolvers and hurley sticks. The R.I.C. were present at the meeting in force and they had also two plain-clothes detectives mixing about amongst the people at the meeting.

The meeting was conducted in an orderly manner and at its end a number of uniformed police started to close in on the platform and they appeared to be about to draw their guns.

John Allen and myself had been keeping a close eye on the police and at this stage we moved close in behind them and at the time that they drew close to the platform we moved up very close to them. The police when close to the platform noticed our nearness for the first time with the result that they halted in their advance towards the platform. The speakers left the platform in another direction and we moved in between the police and the direction the speakers had gone. This move prevented the police following the speakers who got safely away.

#### Attempted blowing up of Callan Bridge.

Callan Bridge is situated about a quarter of a mile from Armagh City on the main Armagh-Dungannon road. We used sledges and jumpers to bore holes in the bridge. The night was clear and frosty and the sounds of our boring operations could be heard all over Armagh City where there was a military barracks and two R.I.C. barracks. A squad of "B" Specials had their headquarters about 300 yards from this bridge. Notwithstanding the noise our work forced us to make and the very close proximity of the various enemy forces we were not interfered with.

There were three arches in the bridge, one partly disused. We succeeded in getting three holes bored after much delay and trouble. We placed our limited supply of explosives in the holes and fired the charges with the result of making three good sized holes which were filled by the British forces the next day. The amount of explosives we had at our disposal for this job would not have been sufficient to do one arch properly. I was in charge in this affair.

Neither police, military or B/Specials made any appearance whilst we were working at this bridge. I believe

that they feared that our activities were a ruse to draw them out into an ambush position. About the same time as this attempt we blocked the same road as there was a raid planned on Cookstown R. I.C. Barracks.

Planned attack on Middletown R.I.C. barracks.

For this operation I got orders to take up a position on the Armagh-Killylea Road. As I did not know the road well or the position I was to take up which had been selected by the Battalion staff, I was to be guided to the selected position which I later found was on high ground along sides the main road with a road leading round the position which would enable enemy forces to easily cut off our lines of retreat. I decided, knowing the dangers of the selected position, not to take the men into it. I took the men further up the road in the hope of finding a better position. We had only gone some 200 yards when we heard military lorries approaching. We managed to scramble over a gate in time and we lay down behind a hedge without any cover. The lorries proceeded past us. I had given orders to the men not to fire on them as our retreat had to be uphill without any cover whatever.

This happened about an hour before the time appointed for the attack and at the time I was to have my men in their position. There was no attack carried out on the barracks that night. I never heard any explanation why the attack was not carried out.

Lying in ambush for Black & Tans.

About this time there were about a dozen Black & Tans in Armagh. I and a number of men from Allistragh and Blackwatertown Companies lay in ambush on many occasions on the Dungannon-Armagh road. These Tans generally went out

from Armagh in the Dungannon direction in daylight but never returned that road on any of the nights we waited for them. The days were getting long at this time. Our district was half and half, protestants and catholics. In other words about 50% of the population were either in the B/Specials or sympathetic to them. For this reason we had to be back in our homes after lying in ambush before daybreak. If we were seen returning all would be up with us from this onwards.

Our local headquarters, arms dump, etc.

During the spring and early summer of 1921 Allistragh Company was our local headquarters. In Allistragh Company we had a good many willing workers including John Allen, Francis Hogan, Jim Hackett, Feighan Brothers, together with a number of others. We had collected a good assortment of arms and ammunition. We made safe dumps for all the arms and war material we had and we provided dumps for the reception of any additional material we hoped to secure.

I made many journeys to Belfast and I was able to purchase some arms on each visit. The late James Finn who was wounded in the Lappenduff fight with British military forces in County Cavan in May 1921 put me in touch with a good many people who were useful in collecting arms, etc. for me. (Poor Finn was courtmartialled after his capture and was sentenced to death. The Truce in July 1921 saved his life. He was released from imprisonment in about January 1922. He joined the Civic Guards in County Kildare where he died some years ago, R.I.P.).

One one of these visits to Belfast I met James McKee of Old Lodge Road. McKee told me of a B/man who was reputed to have arms in his house and I raided the house and got the only German mauser rifle we had.

Returning home from one of these runs to Belfast I was carrying a box containing five revolvers, a quantity of ammunition and fittings for various types of guns and revolvers. Leaving Armagh, at Sky Bridge about 5 a.m., I met on the road a crossley car with Black & Tans on board. When they saw me they slowed up and stared me in the face. As there was nothing I could do about it I returned their stare. The Tans had come suddenly around a bend on the road and I was on a bicycle with the box on the handlebars and forced to hold on to it to keep it there. I could not see the remotest chance that I could get away from the Tans had I attempted to do so. I had to take the chance of brazening it out and it succeeded. Had the Tans got me that morning I would not have been a prisoner long. It was about March 1921 and things were getting hot everywhere.

#### Fight at Todd's Corner.

Plans were made by the Armagh Company to carry out a raid on B/Specials' houses at a place named Todd's Corner. I was asked to co-operate with a few others to guard a certain hill overlooking the houses at Todd's Corner.

Todd's corner was a meeting place for the B/Specials and it was a stronghold where the Specials thought they were safe from attack. The raid was timed to start at 8 a.m. I and two members of the Blackwater Company were camping out at night for safety reasons. I awoke the morning of the raid at 5 a.m. and something told me that things would go wrong. I awakened the other two men and we proceeded to our allotted position as quietly as we could. Before we got to the foot of the hill on top of which was our position we heard firing. We rushed to the top of the hill and were in a position to get a clear view. We saw what must have been the last of the Armagh Company retreating from Todd's Corner and leaving a house there in flames.

The Volunteers got no arms in this raid but they had a man - Garry Hughes - severely wounded. This man had to be carried across country on a door. He was got clear away and recovered enough to take part in the fighting in the Civil War in 1922.

#### Burning of Rich Hill Station.

The next job I was asked to do was the burning of Rich Hill Station on the Great Western Railway line. Rich Hill was a journey of ten miles across country from where I lived. Some of my men had three miles further than I to travel. We mobilised the men but did not tell them what the mobilisation was for until we had them lined up. That was a rule I made and adhered to all through the fight.

We started from our headquarters - Allistragh - about 12 o'clock midnight on the 16th March, 1921. Our march to Rich Hill led us straight across country to the Great Northern Railway line and then straight to Rich Hill. We had a porter who worked on the railway with us and he told us where a store of paraffin oil was to be found. When we arrived at the station one of our men took the signalman in his charge. Another man took charge of the stationmaster. Others were posted on roads leading to the station. The area around the station was a stronghold of B/men with a 90% membership in that force, so we had to be cautious. We got the paraffin oil with plenty to spare with the result that we were able to give all the stores, building, and the railway wagons on the sidings in the station a liberal doping. Whilst we were at this work preparing for the fire three trains approached and were signalled through on their way towards Armagh.

When we had all the preparations made I set the fires alight. I then called all my men together, numbered them to

ensure that they were all present and we marched home.

The burning of Rich Hill was a complete success notwithstanding the fact that there were about forty B/men almost beside us during all the time we were at the Station.

We got home safely and next day we saw plenty of police activity in our district. I got a despatch from the Brigade O/C. which was passed to me in the dark on our way to Rich Hill with instructions that it was to be handed to the Stationmaster. I never looked at it. I gave the despatch to the Volunteer who was in charge of the Stationmaster during the raid to be handed to him at the conclusion of the raid. This was done. It turned out that the envelope was addressed to the O/C., Allistragh, and the despatch was a note informing the Stationmaster that the raid was a reprisal for the handling of Belfast goods at Rich Hill Station. The funny thing about Allistragh was that we had called one of our Companies Allistragh although not one member of the Company lived in Allistragh which had an Orange hall and every inhabitant of the place a Unionist. Imagine the chagrin of the inhabitants when the authorities started to look for the O/C. of Allistragh Company there.

After this we had many ambushes planned and we assembled on many occasions at selected positions and waited for any Crown Forces that might turn up. We had a few rifles and a sufficiency of shotguns with cartridges loaded with large pellets or small balls, and during the few months before the Truce we lay in good ambushing positions on many nights but we always had to give up in order to be home before daylight dawned. Most of our journeys home on these occasions were through fields to avoid the watchful eyes of all B/men. To us at this time it looked as if all protestants were Intelligence agents for the British Forces.

Killylea Burnings.

In the district between Armagh and Killylea, two catholic houses were burned. In one a man named Mallon lived. At the time the Specials surrounded his house Mallon happened to be standing at the fire in his kitchen. Some of the Specials fired through the windows with the result that Mallon was wounded and fell and lay beside the fire with the thatch of the roof of the house burning all around him. Only for a neighbour breaking in his door - he had it locked to go to bed when wounded - and dragging him out of the house he would have been burned to death. Mallon recovered from his wounds.

Reprisals for Killylea Burnings.

I got orders to burn two houses in Cullentrough, Killylea, as a reprisal and the Armagh Company were ordered to burn two more houses as reprisals.

Some of my men had to go seven miles to our mobilisation place. We could not start until after dark and we had to be at our destination at 12 midnight, the time that Armagh Company were timed to start operations. Armagh men had only two or three miles to go to the houses allotted to them and as we had to travel seven miles to Armagh and then two further miles it was difficult for us to be on our job first. The result was that when we were marching along the railway line and directly opposite where the Armagh men were to operate the firing of their houses started and the shooting also. Two of the men we had with us who said they knew the district we were travelling through and were acting as our guides suddenly realised that they did not know their way and they suggested to us that we should turn back. I gave John Allen who was the Captain of Allistragh Company orders to take up the rear of our marching men and that if anyone insisted on retreating he was to be shot. At this stage I halted the men and told them that I had orders

to burn certain houses and that before we would return home that job had to be carried out. After this there was no grumbling.

I had taken the precaution on the Sunday previous to this to view the houses we had to burn and I knew that the road leading to the houses went under the railway line and that I would likely know it when we would get there. We got there all right about 1.30 a.m. and we took up positions at the front and rear of each house immediately we arrived as I had the men allotted to their different positions beforehand.

The two houses were only fifty yards apart, one on each side of the road and both facing the road. As soon as every man was in position we fired a few shots at each house and demanded the inmates to surrender. At Leeman's house a man came to the door with a shotgun which was immediately taken from him. He had his wife and father with him at the door.

The other householder, Preston, with his mother and sister were taken out. The mother and sister were terrified. We got all cattle and horses out of the outhouses at both houses and we proceeded to put paraffin and petrol into the rooms of each house. I gave orders that no person was to set the house alight; that I would do it; I went up a narrow stairs at the backdoor in Leeman's to see if I could find out what was in a large travelling box. I could only see one very small window at this place and the first thing I knew was that one of our men named McCrory had set the fire going in the kitchen. I saw that there was nothing for it but to jump down the stairs and get out on the backdoor at the foot of the stairs which I did in quick time and reached safety.

I then saw that a pony had got back into its house which was alongside of the burning dwelling-house. I went in after the pony to get it out and my flashlight was about panned out at this time. The pony was in a state of nerves. When I would go up to its head it would hop around to the other side and I would land against it. I managed to get control of it at the finish and got it out. It tried to get back in but I was able to get it as far as the road and got a gate closed against it.

By this time both houses were burning and the noise of the fires going could be compared to a fleet of lorries. The men engaged had apparently mistaken the noise for lorries and had cleared off. Two of them returned to investigate their fear that I had been trapped in a burning house and they were agreeably surprised to see me alive.

I had orders to shoot Leeman, but when I took the other man, Preston, out with me to chase the cattle away from the houses before we set them alight, Preston got into conversation with me and I told him I had orders to shoot him if he would not tell me who it was that did the other burnings and shootings. He told me that a man named McKinley of Milford was head of the B/men in his district and that it was he who called them together to do the job - Preston, himself, included. He also gave the names of a few houses that the rifles were kept in. I thought it was better to leave Leeman and Preston unharmed and to act on the information Preston had given me. This was the only order I didn't carry out during my period of active service.

I gave the information I got from Preston to my Battalion officers in the hope that they would attend to it. The houses

where the rifles were kept were in their area. They never did anything about this matter, a thing I blame them very much for since.

This job was done about the end of April 1921. We did not succeed in carrying out any other jobs until the Truce. We had it planned to ambush a patrol of Tans and Police on the streets in Armagh City which they patrolled regularly at night, walking in extended order in single file. Armagh City lay alongside of our area for operations and we considered it too much of a good thing that those playboys were having it all their own way in Armagh. The Truce, however, intervened and that settled that.

From the 1st April 1921, I was on the run and did not sleep at home. I went to Mallon's of Creighan and stayed there all night. The next morning I was seen leaving the house by a local Unionist. Mallon's was raided the next night. I was not there, however.

My home was being continually raided from April 1921 up to the Truce, 11th July, 1921. I was expecting that the British might burn our dwelling-house. I lay often during the period at night in a large orchard which surrounded my home, fully armed, to be in a position to open fire on the Special Constabulary whom I expected would attempt the burning. During all this period of long days and short nights in the early summer of 1921 I and a number of other active I.R.A. men could only exist in safety by the exercise of constant vigilance and safety precautions. We were surrounded on all sides by armed enemies who were out to get us. The fact that we had established a reputation amongst those opposed to us for toughness may have helped somewhat in our successful survival.

Truce (?) Period.

We intensified our training programme during the so-called Truce period as we understood that fighting would soon start again. We had a training camp at Tullyguinegan for all company officers. I attended it as well as the one at Killeeney for battalion officers; also one at Derrynoose.

During the Truce I made many "excursions" to Belfast to procure arms and ammunition. On one occasion when things had got hot in Belfast, I got a rifle in McErlane's publichouse, off the Falls Road, and brought it up the Falls Road after 12 midnight. The lights on the streets were out and the moon was shining brightly. I heard footsteps behind me and saw that two policemen were close on my heels. I turned into Cavendish St. and then I had the moon behind me and I saw by my shadow in the moonlight that the rifle was showing about six inches below my overcoat. There was nothing for me to do now except "hook it" as hard as I could go. I knew the district and its nearcuts well and I got safely away.

On another occasion I took a rifle up the Falls Road on a tramcar with the result that no person would sit near me; not even the conductor came to me for my fare. That was my first and last cheap ride.

On another occasion in Belfast I went past Townsend St. and there was a lot of shooting from the direction of Queen's St., which was a Unionist quarter, into a Catholic quarter. I took a chance and I got through in my way up the Falls Road with a revolver I had got. This happened in daylight.

During the Truce period the Sinn Fein Club increased its membership to 80 members. The Club was strongly influential and its members full of hope and courage for the future of the country. They were certain that something good would come out of the negotiations that were going on between our leaders and the British. To a man, they believed that the long-talked of

freedom of the country was at hand. When the signing of the Treaty in London took place and the Ard-Fheis of Sinn Fein was called to be - as far as the Party was concerned - the deciding factor on the question of the acceptance or rejection of the Treaty, Blackwatertown Sinn Fein Club held a meeting to decide on the policy to be supported by the Club's delegates at the Ard-Fheis.

In connection with the Treaty question, orders were received that the I.R.A. were not to take any part in voting on the Treaty question. Notwithstanding this order, I went to that Sinn Fein meeting as I feared that things would go wrong. At the meeting I heard all that could be said for the acceptance of the Treaty by two delegates - John Donnelly (Sailor), and Paddy Devlin (Home Ruler) were men who could talk and were well-versed in the favourite arguments for the Treaty. John Garvey was the only man to make a stand on the anti-Treaty side. His talk was slow and halting and his points of argument few and far between. His arguments were not convincing and, as a result, I had to take part in the debate. I was immediately attacked by Donnelly who said that I should not take any part in their discussion as the I.R.A. had received their orders not to participate in such discussions. I said that we had got nothing in the Treaty and that it would be time enough to vote for something when we were getting something worth while. That the Treaty as it stood would leave the northern nationalists under the sway and influence of the Orange Order, who were anxious to carry out what England dictated and that our position would be worse than ever under the Treaty.

Donnelly went for me in an aggressive manner and things got hot. Some of those present made motions as if to hold Donnelly back from attacking me. I told those to let Donnelly alone as he never fought or never would. Then things got quiet and a vote was taken on whether to support the Treaty or vote against it. The result showed that only the two men named above

voted for accepting the Treaty. Two delegates were appointed to attend the Ard Fheis and instructed to vote against the acceptance of the Treaty.

In Blackwatertown Camp was J. Garvey, who had been a member of the A.O.H. in 1913. When Garvey got linked up in the Republican and Sinn Fein organisations he attended a meeting of his local division of the Hibernians and was instrumental in putting it to a vote of the meeting whether they would transfer their allegiance as Hibernians to the A.O.H. Irish American Alliance. This motion was carried and the members of the Division joined the American Alliance and afterwards two representatives of the American Alliance came over from America and visited Blackwatertown. Those two visitors were a Rev. Father Pollard and a man named Cunningham.

As a result of this change over from the Irish version of Hibernianism to the A.O.H. American Alliance there was an important sequel. Some of the Hibernians who did not favour the change-over to the American Alliance and other former Hibernians who were not linked up when the change over took place reformed the local Blackwatertown Branch of the A.O.H. and took an action in law against John Garvey for possession of the local Hibernian Hall. This action succeeded and the American Alliance people lost the legal right to use the Hall.

From the year 1914 and up to and including the year 1921 Sinn Fein had no worse enemies than the Blackwatertown Division of the A.O.H.

#### Shooting of John Garvey.

In March 1922, John Garvey was travelling home to Mayard accompanied by Pat McPhillips who lived in a house built on the foundations of Portmore. Portmore was a fort which the British built and occupied to protect the crossing of the River Blackwater at Blackwater village. When the two men were about 100 yards from Blackwatertown Bridge they were fired

on and John Garvey was very seriously wounded. One bullet hit Garvey in the breast above the heart and went out at his back, taking out a lump of flesh from his back as big as a small bowl. A bullet went between McPhillip's arm and his body, making a tear across his arm for about three inches. In this shooting an order calling to halt was given and immediately the rifle shots rang out. The shooting took place about midnight on a very clear moonlit night and those who fired the shots knew who they were firing at. After Garvey fell, the men who shot him came up and looked at him where he lay on the roadside in a pool of blood and said: "that he had got enough". They, presumably, thought that he had got more bullets than one judging by the number of shots they had fired. Garvey recovered from his wounds and lived for nearly 30 years afterwards.

It was wellknown by the I.R.A. who were involved in and guilty of the Garvey shooting. There were two men particularly involved and mainly responsible for this affair - one man named Milligan, and the other Joe Stenson. I, with a few others, lay in ambush to get those two men. We watched and waited for 10 nights but none of them turned up. I decided to give up waiting in that position, and the next night with half a dozen others, we made up our minds to try looking for the men we wanted at a Unionist stronghold known as Todd's Corner, and that if we didn't see the Specials we wanted or meet them on our journey, we would seek them out by raiding their houses. In this Unionist locality all the farmers or their sons were armed members of the B/Specials.

As we neared our objective we met one of the men we were looking for - Milligan - coming on a bicycle and we ordered him to halt. He took us for B/Specials and said "It's all right, Billy". We made him a prisoner and on searching him we found a loaded Webley revolver and a quantity of ammunition.

I left our prisoner in charge of three of my men with orders not to left him escape and if there was any shooting in the direction we were going they were to shoot him. I then took the remaining members of my party in the direction of Todd's Corner and close beside a B/Special's house we met the other man we were looking for, on a bicycle. We called on him to halt. He dismounted as quickly as he could and went to draw a revolver from his breast pocket. One of my men was armed with a Thompson sub-machine gun and this man and I fired simultaneously. I fired at the man's arm with which he was drawing the gun and I hit him. He dropped the gun from his hand and at the same time he fell on the road, wounded in the chest. The other man in my party who had fired was behind me when he used his gun and his fire was nearer hitting me than the B/man. The man whom I wounded here was named Joe Stenson who had sent B/Special Milligan out to call in the B/Specials for the shooting of Garvey.

I turned after Stenson dropped on the road to remonstrate with my comrade for his wild shooting and, whilst doing so, Stenson got up and ran away down the road. I started after him, firing at him with my revolver. I fired four shots all hits and he went down after the fourth shot. As he appeared to be dead I returned to where I had left my other men when I started running and shooting. I took them back to where Stenson had fallen to discover that he had disappeared. My men were about 100 yards from where he had fallen and were standing close to a B/man's house which was an extremely dangerous position for them. The wounded man made his way to a local Unionist house. From there he was brought to a hospital and when the doctors examined him they said he must have been stronger than a horse to have survived his wounds. This man fully recovered and is still alive. The scare he got at his shooting finished his connection with the B/Special organisation.

When the other members of my party heard the shooting of Stenson they carried out their orders by shooting Milligan. At the funeral of Milligan a few days after his shooting, the minister officiating at his funeral asked the people attending the funeral to go home, be at peace and have no reprisals, as reprisals would only bring more trouble on their heads. They took his advice.

After those happenings, raiding started in a more serious way. Sometimes our house was raided twice in one day or the one night. My father, who was in hospital at this time, when he saw the reports in the papers of the raids at our place, came home. I had only two sisters at home at this time and my father was worried over what they might be subjected to.

I had to go on the run, but I slept not more than 200 yards from our house so that I could keep a watch and if anything happened to the house or any of its inmates, my intentions were to pay back in treble measure, in quick time. In those raids by a mixed party of B/Specials and Black and Tans in charge of a Captain Judge of the Specials, and a Captain Doran of the Tans, they never did more than toss things about and take a few things away with them. Those raids happened about the end of March 1922. Early in April 1922, the captain of Blackwatertown Company of the I.R.A., J. Finn, who lived at Charlemont, was returning home with a companion, D. Hegarty, when they were held up on Charlemont St. and abused. They went to their homes and procured two rifles, and a brother of Finn went with them armed with a home made bomb. The three boys noticed the approach of a B/Special patrol and J. Finn and Hegarty opened fire with the rifles on the patrol from behind a wall. Ned Finn threw the bomb but failed to pull the pin; this mistake rendered the bomb ineffective. One of the Specials fell wounded and the others ran away, but returned some hours later with a strong force of police and Specials and raided the neighbourhood.

In the middle of this activity Hegarty and Finn landed at my house and, as it was Sunday morning when they arrived, I gave them orders to keep within doors as the church people would be going to church and would see them. Both men disobeyed this order and they were seen, with the result that a large force of police arrived in the vicinity of our house and, only <sup>that</sup> one of my sisters saw them dismounting from their tenders and ran to warn us, I and the other two would likely have been caught in the house as we were inside when we got the alarm.

Dan Conroy, a member of Allistragh Company, who was working with me at this time, was along with Finn and Hegarty cleaning guns. Conroy, when the alarm was given, ran out and left behind him 30 rounds of .303 ammunition which the raiders got.

A few evenings before this Sunday morning raid on our house, I was going to a brigade meeting. I instructed Conroy when leaving to lift a box which I had in a dump which I considered too near the house and to put it in a field at the top of a hill nearby. Instead of doing what he was told, he put it in a barn about 100 yards from our house in a heap of loose corn. The raiders got this box and I did not know of it until Conroy told me later. I had a couple of addresses of Belfast men in the box and their places were raided on that Sunday night also. The results of this raid provided the Northern Authorities with material for various charges which they could prove against me. From that time onwards, I knew that it would be better for me to keep out of their way. We had a battalion meeting arranged for that Sunday evening which we had to abandon owing to the whole countryside being packed with armed police.

Around this time we were using the A.O.H. Hall in Blackwatertown for the holding of battalion meetings and running Ceillis for the arms fund. On one occasion the A.O.H. expressed

dissatisfaction at our use of their Hall and they invited us to send representatives to a meeting of their Branch. Ned Finn and I went as a result of this invitation to the meeting, which was in progress when we arrived. One man proposed that we get the use of this Hall every alternate week. With that, Pat Hughes, then Co. Secretary of the Hibernians, said that there was an Orange Hall in the district. I replied that there was and that if we wanted their Hall we would take it, and we then walked out. Jack Nugent, who was at this Hibernian meeting from Armagh City, was one of the first Sinn Feiners in Armagh. He followed us out and begged us to go back but I told him that I considered the insult we had received at the meeting was too great to permit us to return; so we left without any agreement being reached. We, however, took the Hall on any occasion on which we required it.

I remained around my home neighbourhood for some time after the events I have just described. On that Sunday night of the raids for Finn and Hegarty, Finn, Hegarty and myself made our way to James McCusker's of the grange and we got a few hours sleep next day. Hegarty proved somewhat an embarrassment as he could not sleep himself and he prevented me sleeping much as he was continually waking me up every few minutes with the information that he could hear the police coming. I got him and Finn away from the neighbourhood to a camp across the border. I hung around the vicinity of my home for more than a month as a protection for my home. There was not any activity with the police other than their raiding.

Around this time we received a large quantity of arms, ammunition, explosives etc. from across the Six County frontiers in preparation for a renewal of military operations on a <sup>large</sup> scale against the Northern Government forces. The headquarters of Allistragh Company was used as a clearing depot

to receive incoming consignments and sent it out to the various localities. Mick Feighan, who drove a laundry van, brought in many a load and some of the stuff went from us as far as Belfast and other places. None of those munitions were lost in any way and was always safely conveyed to its destination. This was a remarkable achievement considering the intense activities of all the different military and police bodies who were arrayed against us.

After this the companies in the battalion area were in a fair position as regards arms and ammunition, to put up a fight. We had a reserve dump of munitions in a safe place to fall back on for replenishments in preparation for our military offensive against the northern forces. We saw a good number of land mines were laid on some of the roads. We had a reserve of unlaidd land mines and a quantity of explosives also available in the area.

During this time we were under orders to keep quiet in order that all the military stores available for use in the north could be quietly got in for the big plans ahead of us. This was one order that, ordinarily, we would not like to obey.

It was during this time when working at dumps that I had a very near call as it was the closest I ever was to being shot dead. A lad with a dispatch for me came from Armagh. He found me in a room working at packing detonators. I was close to a wall with my back to him. There was a double-barreled shotgun that one of the men who had been guarding the place during the previous night had used. I had my back towards the boy and I did not see that he had the gun pointed towards me. He pulled the trigger and off the shot went. I had my head about three inches from the wall and the charge passed in this space. What really saved me from some of the charge was the short distance the boy was from me - four feet.

As things were in a fairly quiet state, I decided to leave the area for a short time. I travelled across the border in Mick Feighan's laundry van with Feighan as driver. On our journey we had to pass by the headquarters of B. Specials at Harris's Plantation. They were housed about 200 yards off the main road. A large party of Specials were on the side of the main road and when we arrived they proceeded to search the van. Mick Feighan rose to the occasion and said he was going to the house then used as their headquarters to take up a parcel of laundry. This statement produced the required result, and the Specials allowed us to pass unhindered. We had to call at the Specials' Headquarters, but we got no laundry.

After crossing the border I first went to a camp occupied by Keady Company of the I.R.A. in Co. Monaghan, a few miles from Castleblayney, and I spent a few days there. I then proceeded to Dundalk where Frank Aiken, our Divisional O/C., had taken over the Dundalk military barracks from the British army. From Dundalk I went to a camp near the Armagh, Six County, border in Co. Louth, at a place named Dungooley. This camp contained over 100 men mostly from Mullaghbawn Coy. area and was under the control of John Grant, O/C. Mullaghbawn Company, I.R.A. Whilst at this camp I crossed into the Six County area on several occasions with Johnny Grant and his Mullaghbawn men. On all those occasions we were looking for British forces in order to attack them. In some way we were unlucky and failed to make contact with either police or military forces. Our entry into the Six Counties area was made in the Forkhill direction. There never was a shot fired any time I was across, as we never got close enough to them.

From Dungooley Camp I went to a camp at Castleshane, in Co. Monaghan. This camp was situated in Dan Hogan's Divisional area - 5th Northern Division and was manned by

men from 3rd Brigade, 4th Northern Division - mostly from Armagh, Blackwatertown and Lurgan areas. Those men were forced to leave their home areas by the pressure of the continuous raiding activities carried out by the Six County police and military forces. Castleshane was a convenient locality for those men to set up an armed camp as it was within easy distance from their home areas.

The officers and men of the 5th Northern Division looked on those Six County I.R.A. men with suspicion and their presence in Castleshane with resentment.

The camp in Castleshane was situated in the ancestral home of the Lucas family - a family of local landlords. During the Tan war in the south of Ireland one of this family, a General Lucas, Scodamore, was serving in the British army when he was captured by the I.R.A. from whom he subsequently escaped.

The Castle where the camp was situated was burned some time previously, but the ample and comfortable accommodation afforded by the farmyard, houses, lofts and riding school, and the grounds surrounding the buildings provided all the comforts and the facilities for training necessary in the soldiering life.

On a few occasions an armed party from this camp went to the Co. Armagh border to have a shot, if possible, at an armed party of Specials. On one occasion I took 30 men armed with rifles and a Thompson machine gun to ambush a party of Specials who were in the habit of guarding the road a short distance across the border in Co. Armagh. Our intention was to attack them when they were changing guard at a three road end. We took up position near the roads. I divided my small force into a main body over which I took charge and two small parties on each side of the main body to prevent any enemy outflanking movements. The small flanking parties were told not to fire

except the Specials attempted to attack us on our flanks, and no firing was to take place until I gave the firing order. A man named Skelton, who had come to Castleshane from Dungannon area, was with us on this operation. I found out later that this man was an unreliable type. When he saw the first of the approaching Specials moving into view at a considerable distance he opened fire. His action spoiled the whole operation.

#### Civil War.

About mid-July Dan Hogan, O/C. 5th Northern Division, and a large body of Free State troops marched into Dundalk and captured the town of Dundalk including the military barracks which was Divisional H.Q., and the two police barracks then being used by the 1st Brigade, 4th Northern Division. Frank Aiken as Divisional O/C. was in charge of Dundalk Military Barracks at this time. Neither he nor his men offered any resistance to the Free State forces who captured the military barracks. There was slight resistance offered at Anne St. Barracks.

A short time before the capture of Dundalk by Dan Hogan I sent some of my men into the military barracks to do guard duty there. Those men could be trusted at a time when men were changing their opinions and allegiance daily. When Dundalk was captured those men of mine got the option of joining the Free State army (pro-Treaty forces) or clearing out. Clear out they did and started to march the 25 or 26 miles to their camp at Castleshane. On their journey to Castleshane we happened to meet them with a ton motor truck and we gave them a welcome lift for the remainder of their journey.

A week or so later Frank Hannaway, O/C. 3rd Brigade, said to me: "Are you coming to Dundalk?" I said: "I have no business there". Hannaway went to Dundalk. I did not know until later that Hannaway's visit to Dundalk was to take part

in the recapture of the barracks and the town. The town was recaptured and all the military garrisons made prisoners.

On the next day after the capture of Dundalk a consignment of sixty rifles and a large quantity of ammunition arrived in Castleshane. This consignment was a small portion of the military equipment captured in Dundalk. At the time we received those stores we got orders from the Divisional O/C. to dump the arms and at the same time to keep quiet and to take no part in the fighting, as the Divisional O/C. was doing his best to avoid a clash with the men on the pro-Treaty side who should be our comrades. After we got those rifles, two men left the camp with rifles on their way to Dublin to join the anti-Treaty forces. We followed those men and brought them back to the camp. Later those two men went to Dublin with the intention of joining the Free State army and when they found they could not get a commission in the army they returned north again.

Things in Castleshane were getting bad for us; we had no money and our food supplies were cut off. We found ourselves in a more or less hopeless position as our orders to observe a policy of neutrality prevented us doing something to replenish our food supplies. Wild talk and rumours of all kinds were going around. One morning we awoke to find our billets surrounded by Free State troops under Brigadier McGee and Commandant Donnelly equipped by turretted armoured cars and machine guns. As we were not under arms it was a simple matter to make us prisoners.

Frank Hannaway and I were taken in custody to the Court-house in Monaghan and the remainder of the men in the camp were taken to Ballybay. Hannaway and I were treated as officers of the I.R.A. by our former comrades. We were taken, after a few days, to Dundalk jail and after a week there we were conveyed by train with many others to Newbridge Internment Camp.

From Newbridge Internment Camp Frank Hannaway, Eugene and Laughran and I escaped through a tunnel/made our "get away" through a hail of bullets. We first made our way to Naas and there the next night I got two loaves of bread, a pound of butter and a pound of sugar and we had a welcome feed after a 24 hours' fast. We made our way towards Dublin. At Celbridge station a signalman asked us: "Who goes there?" I answered: "Me". He then said: "Where are you going?" I said: "Home". He then said: "You have a long way to go". We arrived in Dublin next day about 11 a.m. There we made our way to a house in the north side of the city belonging to a Co. Antrim man named Fisher. We were put up for the night, and the next day Frank Hannaway said we would go into Dublin and take a train for the north. I did not like the idea as it was dangerous. Hannaway would not think of starting out to walk or adopt any other means of reaching the north except by train. I had to give in to his way as he was my superior officer. We started for Amiens St. Station and we separated as we considered it safer that way.

I walked in on the platform and I saw a bunch of C.I.D. there. One of them immediately recognised me and he requested me to accompany him to the guardroom where their officer, Capt. McGarry was. They immediately went out and picked up Hannaway and Laughran and brought them in. After questioning in the guardroom we were brought to Wellington Barracks where I was brought into, what I knew afterwards, was the "knocking shop" - a place where third degree methods were used on prisoners to extract information from them. I was questioned "up, down and across" I gave my name (assumed) James McKeown. Then a big bully got up and ordered me to take off my coat, which I did. He then said: "Roll up your sleeves". When this was done he asked if I would fight him. I said that if I was hit I would. There was a crowd of Free State soldiers looking into the room at us through a window. They shouted "Give it to him". The result of

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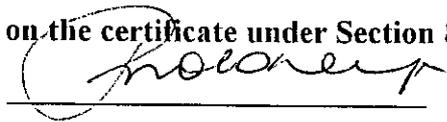
**ABSTRACTION OF PART(S) PURSUANT TO REGULATION 8**

**Form to be completed and inserted in the original record  
in place of each part abstracted**

- (i) Reference number of the separate cover under which the abstracted part has been filed: WS 829/A.
- (ii) How many documents have been abstracted: 2pp
- (iii) The date of each such document: 13 April 1953
- (iv) The description of each document:  
WS 829 Witness Statement Charles Mc Cleenan M.P. p 33 + 34  
name of individual

(Where appropriate, a composite description may be entered in respect of two or more related documents).

- (v) Reason(s) why the part has been abstracted for retention:  
(c) **Would or might cause distress or danger to living persons on the ground that they contain information about individuals, or would or might be likely to lead to an action for damages for defamation.**  
( These will be the reasons given on the certificate under Section 8(4).)



Name: (J. Moloney.)

Grade: Col.

Department/Office/Court:

Date: 7 March 2003.

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all this was that after looking at me for a minute the bully went to a chair and sat down. One of the men in the room asked me if I was a republican. I said; "I am; are you not republicans?" One looked at the other with the result that I was sent out. Hannaway and Laughran were then taken in for their turn next. It was only when I was brought to the guardroom afterwards that I got to know the reputation of the place where I had been questioned. I was told that some of the prisoners in Wellington had their heads nearly kicked off them in the "Knocking Shop", especially one fellow named Coyle from Derry City.

We were next brought to the gymnasium where there were about 250 prisoners. We were warned soon after our arrival in the gym. by the prisoners O/C. of a spy in the camp whom I knew afterwards to be a man named \_\_\_\_\_ who in the Tan war wanted to join the R.I.C. and the local I.R.A., when they heard of his intentions, warned him that if he attempted to join the R.I.C. he would be shot. That night he ran away and joined the Black and Tans and was later wounded in Belfast. He got five bullet wounds and three or four of his comrades were killed. In a conversation I had with this man he told me he was at the corner of the street on the night M. Garvey was shot. I heard afterwards that he was from the same locality as a man who was on the run and staying in the same lodgings as M. Garvey, so I put two and two together.

Afterwards, when detailed to do fatigue duty, he refused. It was a wee Dublin tailor who was in charge of him then. When he refused to fall in for duty I said to the tailor: "If he refuses to fall in the second time, say to him: "You are not in Belfast now shooting Garvey". The result of the tailor following my suggestion - \_\_\_\_\_ marched up and down for a time, then stood in a corner heedless of all that was going on around him. After standing stiff for about half an hour he came over to me and said: "Did you say anything to any of those boys about me shooting Garvey?" I said: "I would not talk to any of them on

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any account as they are a bad lot". He then said: "For God's sake, say nothing to them for they would shoot me". He had a bad time whilst there as all the boots belonging to the prisoners were around him in the morning. One particular prisoner flung all the other prisoners' boots at him as long as there was a boot to be got.

It was out of this barrack that four boys, all from Dublin, were taken out one night and, on going out, they shook hands with their comrades, saying that they would hardly meet again for two or three years, as each of them was caught with arms. Little those boys knew that their comrades had seen the last of them in this world for they were being taken out to go straight to their courtmartial, tried by former comrades and, before dawn was fully clear the next morning, they faced a firing party composed of former pals who sent them to eternity because they were loyal to the Republic that others had let down. Those boys were executed to pave the way for the execution of Erskine Childers which was carried out a few days afterwards. Those executions of boyish youth and a mature and worldly-wise man made a blended sacrifice that Ireland should live as a free nation.

From the time I joined the Volunteers first, those executions were the hardest blow of all, as it showed the reality of the split in the I.R.A. in all its grimness. That men who were fast comrades a few months previously and were prepared to die fighting side by side were now enemies and engaged in shooting and destroying each other.

After being in Wellington Barracks a prisoner for about seven weeks, we were taken out and brought by train to Harepark Camp on the Curragh, Co. Kildare. , who had been taken out from us for about an hour every other day during my stay in Wellington Barracks, was also brought out and taken to another part of the barracks and none of us ever saw him again.

In Harepark, the first person I saw whom I had known

formerly was the Free State camp adjutant, an army officer named McAllister, who had been adjutant in Newbridge whilst I was a prisoner there. He had tried to be friendly with me in Newbridge and offered to bring me in anything I required. He sometimes did bring in rashers and other foodstuffs without asking him to do so. When I was passing into Harepark Camp McAllister took my name and other particulars. He was sitting at a table. He did not look up at me and apparently did not recognise my voice when I gave him the assumed name - James McKeown.

Two days after I arrived in Harepark Camp I was speaking to Mick O'Hanlon at a hut used as a post office when McAllister came around a corner and, seeing us, he apparently recognised both of us. Mick O'Hanlon was also under an assumed name in Harepark having been transferred to Harepark from Mountjoy, He was awaiting courtmartial in Mountjoy, having been caught with arms which carried, at that time, as a penalty, the death sentence. He was able to get transferred to Harepark in another prisoner's name. This trick of assuming another prisoner's name when a man was liable for courtmartial or execution was often brought off and, when successful, the confusion caused to the Free State authorities during this critical time often saved a man's life.

The morning after McAllister saw Mick O'Hanlon and me near the Post Office, Mick was removed from Harepark, taken back to Dublin, tried by courtmartial and sentenced to 15 years' penal servitude which luckily he had not to serve.

At times in Harepark letters and parcels for the prisoners would be stopped as a punishment during "dust-ups" with the military authorities. On those occasions McAllister would get in touch with me and give me the news. Once he told me of a column being caught in Tipperary and that the fighting would soon be over. I then asked him if he had ever read Irish history, for if he did and extracted the real meaning of it he would find

that the fighting would never be over in Ireland until all the country was free. He did not like those ideas. On another occasion he told me about the Customs huts being erected along the Six County border. I said that erecting those huts was recognising the border as it was then. He said that the Boundary Commission would soon sit and define the border. I said that when they erected Customs huts they were recognising the border as it then was - that would be as far as it would ever go. He, however, maintained that when the Boundary Commission sits we will get in the counties of Tyrone, Fermanagh, South Armagh and South Down. I then said: "Will you resign from the army if South Down doesn't get in seeing that you are a 'South Down man'?" His reply was that he would not have that to do and after some further discussion in which he got a bit heated, he walked away and left me, and afterwards he never bothered about me again.

One night in Harepark a young lad named Murphy was taken from the camp. He was in Harepark under an assumed name and was only known by one Free State army officer named McKinley who was acting in the camp as a lines officer. This officer belonged to the same Dublin Company as Murphy served with pre-Truce. The night that Murphy was taken out he was tried by courtmartial and was executed at 7 a.m. next morning. Again, what price old comradeship?

When we arrived in Harepark Camp, a few of the boys took a look around their surroundings and a tunnel was commenced early the next day. Whilst I never gave a hand at the digging of the tunnel, I carried many a pocketful of soil and tramped it down on many evenings in various quiet parts of the camp compound. The tunnel was completed all but the making of the exit hole when it was discovered.

I was released in May 1924 and was escorted a short distance from the camp by a Captain Hughes, who was reared near where we had our camp at Castleshane, Co. Monaghan.

Captain Hughes gave me wise advice not to go home as I would be arrested if I did so. I made my way back to Co. Monaghan where I had made friends and I was welcomed in more houses than one. I, however, made my way home and spent a few days "on the quiet" there..

After a short time in Co. Monaghan G.H.Q. got in touch with me and appointed me in charge of the Monaghan Brigade, I.R.A. I started to reorganise the I.R.A. and on one occasion I went into Co. Fermanagh. I was arrested by Northern police there and taken to Roslea Barracks which then accommodated fifty-nine Special Constables.

On my arrest I gave the name Pat McCabe of the Mall Road, Monaghan. The Intelligence Officer in Roslea Barracks had a look at me and stated that he could verify that I was Pat McCabe. This man happened to be an Intelligence Officer for the County of Monaghan in the Tan War. When he recognised me as McCabe he charged me with being at the burning of Roslea Barracks in 1920. After some argument on this point I partly gave in to have taken some part in burning Roslea Barracks as I knew that I would be released if they didn't find out who I really was. The officer in charge of the barracks, named McMurrin, was a prisoner in Dundalk military barracks the time that Frank Aiken was in charge there. This officer saw to it that I was treated as a prisoner should be treated. Every day he would come into my room and inquire did any person say anything wrong to me and to find out did I require anything. He brought me the newspapers each day I was there. One day he took me out for a walk and told me about being a prisoner in Dundalk and that he seen his guards giving him their last cigarette and that he knew that they had no money to purchase any more cigarettes. At this stage he looked at me and I thought that he recognised me. I had often seen him in Dundalk whilst he was a prisoner there and I am sure he must have often seen me.

On the Sunday following my arrest I was served with an order to cross the border into the twenty six counties and not to return to Northern Ireland, except I agreed to live at the usual prescribed area in Co. Antrim.

I spent from May 1924 to January 1926 in and around Co. Monaghan. I then decided to go to my home and face the Northern Government Authorities with my determination to live in Northern Ireland defying any ban issued by them to the contrary.

I was arrested at my home about a week after I arrived there by a friendly R.I.C. sergeant - Sergeant Irwin - who got a first-class certificate of merit for doing so. The day of my arrest I was brought before a Resident Magistrate and remanded by him to Belfast (Crumlin Road Jail). At the end of the remand period I was brought to a Courthouse and was about to be remanded for another week when orders came through to have me brought to Armagh. There I was released and re-arrested and brought back to Crumlin Road Jail.

A police sergeant who was in charge of my escort to the prison sent the other policeman on a message to get some fruit, but really in order to get talking to me for a minute. He showed me a bundle of papers he had with him which he said were all complaints levied against me by neighbours of mine who did not want me back near them.

I was kept some time in Crumlin Road and then, one day, I was brought before the Governor who asked me to name two men who would be prepared to go bail for me. I told him that I required no bail and therefore would not trouble any person about the matter, he advised me to think the matter over again and if I changed my mind to let him know and that he would contact the people I selected as bailsmen. I said he would not be troubled in connection with any bailsmen for me.

About two weeks after this I was asked to pack up my belongings and I was taken to see the Governor again. Beside him was a man from the Home Office who had in his possession the usual order for me to clear out of the Six Counties except I was prepared to live in a prescribed place in Co. Antrim. I told them if I was released I would go home. He said I would get six months in jail for disobeying the order. I said that if I went home what then? He said the six months would be doubled. I said then that it would be far better for them to keep me as I was as otherwise it would be a lot of trouble taking me back as I would be in and out for the remainder of my life. He again assured me of their intention to keep doubling up my sentences if I persevered in my intention to live at home. I said again "I am going home and I think you had better keep me and save the trouble of bringing me back". He then asked me where he would make out my railway voucher for. I said Armagh. He said: "I can't do that". "Well then", I said, "make it out for Monaghan and I will leave the train at Armagh". The Governor made out the voucher for Monaghan. I got out at Richill, which is six miles from Armagh, and from Richill I walked home.

I then attended to my work on the farm at home. The farm was badly neglected and needed some person to look after it. The following July the sergeant who arrested me came to me with a notification that I was free to live at home.

I must say that my Unionist neighbours, to all outward appearances, were very nice to me and, in fact, some of them came to help me at threshings and such work without being asked to do so by me. I settled down to my work as a farmer, but never forgetting that I was a soldier of the Irish Republic.

Signed:

*Charles McGleenan*

Date:

*13th April 1953*

Witness:

*John Mc Coy*  
(John McCoy)  
*13/4/53*

(Charles McGleenan)

13th April 1953.