

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

BURO STAIRE MILEATA 1913-21

No. W.S. 878

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21

STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 878

Witness

Dr. Patrick O'Sullivan,
Farsid Villa,
Rostellan,
Co. Cork.

Identity.

O/C. Kilnamartyra Company (Co. Cork)
Irish Volunteers, 1914 - ;

O/C. 8th Batt'n. Cork 1 Brigade, 1919 - .

Subject.

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STATEMENT

BY

DR. PATRICK O'SULLIVAN.

FARSID VILLA, ROSTELLAN, COUNTY CORK.

OFFICER COMMANDING, 8TH BATTALION, CORK I BRIGADE.

AND MEMBER OF BRIGADE A.S.U.

I joined the Volunteers in July, 1914, after coming home from Blackrock College. They were known as the Irish National Volunteers then. I was seventeen years of age at the time. The local Company then was the Kilnamartyra Company and our Training Officer was a man named John Brown. He was a Reservist belonging to the Irish Guards. He was training us until the day of mobilisation at the beginning of the European War. He was mobilised by wire and had to clear off.

The Sunday after the outbreak of war, there was to be a projected parade of the Volunteers of Cork City and County before Capt. Talbot-Crosbie, a former British Officer and one of the heads of the Irish National Volunteers in Cork. At our Company parade in Kilnamartyra the night before, my uncle - Daniel Harrington - asked what might the Volunteers be committed to by going to the big parade in Cork. He said that if, as he suspected, it was going to be a medium for recruiting for the British Army, he for one wouldn't parade and there and then he stepped out of the ranks. Others followed suit and eventually only twelve of the Kilnamartyra Company went to Cork.

After that the Volunteers lapsed in the district and

in September of 1914 I went back to Blackrock - to the Castle this time as I was intending to be a Civil Servant. I did the necessary examinations (for an appointment as Surveyor of Taxes, if I remember rightly) and in due course, having qualified, I received a Government form to fill up. The final question on it was what regiment did I intend to join. I consulted with a companion who had qualified in the same examination and who likewise had received a similar form. He said to put in some obscure regiment or some Territorial Unit and they might forget all about us. I refused to put in any regiment and so was never called to the appointment.

Back in Kilnamartyra the Company had been reorganised as a Unit of the Irish Volunteers. It was now 1915. Harry Brown was O/C., my uncle was 1st Lieutenant and I was 2nd Lieutenant. The usual Volunteer training of the time was carried out throughout 1915, and then, early in 1916, we sensed something was afoot and we set about collecting all the arms we could, by force when necessary, and on Easter Sunday we paraded, approximately 25 strong. I was now 1st Lieut., my uncle being the oldest of the Company, having been appointed to what we regarded as being the most responsible job, that of Company Q.M., He was in charge of all our store of ammunition. This wasn't much and neither was our armament. We had one .22 rifle, which wasn't too good, about a dozen shotguns and the remainder of our weapons were pikes.

We marched to Carriganimma on the road to Millstreet as we expected that there we were to collect the arms from Casement's ship, the 'Aud'. Nothing happened and after nightfall a motor cyclist (he may have been Peadar O'Hourihane

or perhaps it was Michael Lynch of Tracton, a half-brother of Diarmuid) arrived with orders for us to go home. The Macroom Company was there under the command of Dan Corkery; the Carriganimma Company was there under Paud O'Donoghue and the Clondrohid Company under Jim Murphy. We marched home again and 'stood to' all Easter Week.

We now knew of the Rising being on in Dublin and soon enough the arrests started. My uncle was taken coming home from a funeral and eventually found himself in Wakefield Gaol and then in Frongoch. My house was raided but I had gone on the run and I stayed away from home until after all the Frongoch prisoners had been released.

My uncle had been a long time in the National Movement and was a member of the I.R.B., and was determined to do something for his country. If he didn't get the chance at Easter Week, 1916, he made up for it in later years. However, he had his house shuttered and barred prior to Easter and was, with a number of friends, going to hold out there should it be attacked, just as the Kents did subsequently near Fermoy. As it happened he was away at a funeral one day and was picked up by the R.I.C. at Ballyvourney, along with one of the men of his garrison. Before the police could get to the house, my young brother, Mick, had gone there and removed the barricades and the arms, too, and nothing was got.

I got the Company together when I heard of my uncle's arrest with a view to rescuing him from the police barracks at Macroom and I sent word to there to hold the train and so

délay escort and prisoners. The train was held up alright, but whether the R.I.C. got wind of it or not, they secured a motor car in the town and my uncle was got away by this means to Cork. He wasn't released until Christmas, 1916. He was fifty years of age at the time.

In October of that year I started doing medicine in University College, Cork. I joined the Volunteers at the old hall in Sheares' Street. We got regular instruction there on some nights, three or four other nights in the week we were out parading in the country and also every Sunday.

Early in 1917 Tomás MacCurtain, O/C. Cork Brigade, asked me to form a College Company in U.C.C. This I did and got it up to a strength of about 100. Some of the members of this Company did great work in the years that followed. I particularly remember those who were doing medicine with me - Peadar Kearney of Dunmanway and his brother Joe, Eugene ('Nudge') Callanan of Bandon and Jack Breen of Lombardstown.

Breen, now in the Army Medical Corps, and myself noticed among trophies of arms (all antiquated weapons) hanging on the walls in U.C.C. that there was quite a serviceable-looking rifle. I succeeded in getting it down and secreting it under a Raglan coat I was wearing I carried it off to Ambrose's, a pub much frequented by medical students. Jack Breen got it there and much to my disgust kept it for himself. However, it was a French rifle and ammunition for it was very hard to get.

Though I organised the College Company I couldn't be

O/C. and I was already O/C. Kilnamartyra Company. On my visits home I supervised training and parades, which were being carried on all the time. Also I participated in raids for arms on private houses and managed to secure, among other weapons, a British service rifle. A Volunteer got for me in the Middleton area hundreds of empty shot-gun cartridge cases and these I filled with slugs and powder.

In 1917 a big meeting of Volunteer Officers was held in Cork, it may have been in the 'Grianán', which was the Gaelic League Headquarters. There was much adverse criticism of the leaders for not bringing out the Volunteers in Easter Week, 1916. Chief among the critics were the Hales brothers from Knocknacurra in the Bandon area. They themselves had marched to Macroom at that eventful time but like ourselves had returned home disappointed. Eventually, the meeting re-elected Tomás MacCurtain, Brigade O.C. for Cork. There was only the one Brigade then in City and County. After his re-election, Seán Hales, who had been most violent in his criticism, stood up and swore to be loyal to the Brigadier.

During the remainder of 1917 we in Kilnamartyra were trying to perfect our organisation and to recruit more into the ranks. We also kept on trying to collect more arms. It was surprising the number of people in the 'Big Houses' who had revolvers. They had plenty of shotguns and ammunition too. I think we got mostly everything in the way of firearms in the possession of these people, the 'gentry', as they were called.

In order to make bullets we used raid the Big Houses, too,

for the valuable supply of lead they mostly had on the roofs. We got a considerable amount from this source. One night we took about 4 cwt. of lead off the roof of an alleged haunted house that was on the road to Macroom. The ghost was one Bob Warren who had drunk himself out of fortune and life, but who, according to local gossip, still remained, in spirit, anyway, at his former residence. Not deterred by the prospect of meeting his apparition, several of us, including my doughty uncle, made our way to the house and got up on the roof, where we removed the lead flashings from the valleys. With a load of lead strapped to our shoulders with ropes we set off down the avenue. Suddenly one of the members of the party halted, solemnly took off his cap and said 'Goodnight, Bob'.

I must somewhat regretfully state that in our ardent search for lead, we even contemplated robbing a grave. It was reputed that Captain Leader, a member of an old Catholic aristocratic family, had been buried in a lead coffin in the family vault in Kilnamartyra graveyard. The tomb was below ground and a flight of steps was supposed to lead down to a doorway within which our proposed prize was, it seemed, resting on a shelf. The trouble was that there was a big stone slab or tombstone covering the flight of steps and this tombstone in its turn was completely covered with earth and nettles. In fact, we didn't know where to start looking for it.

Bob Langford, a Brigade Staff Officer, happened to come into the area and we put up our proposal for the desecration

of the tomb and coffin of Captain Leader. As, of course, we had the best of intentions, Langford sanctioned this unholy proposition. Maybe he was only trying us out, to see how far we would go with the project. We organised a party equipped with picks and shovels and got a very old man living in the village to come along to the graveyard about 10 o'clock one dark night to point out the entrance to the tomb. His memory went back far enough for this and he indicated what may have been the right spot, but when we went to start about unearthing the stone that covered the steps, the job appeared so formidable that we estimated it would have taken us all night and on until daylight. Anyway, Bob Langford called it off. Possibly we could not have carried out our excavations for that whole period without being ultimately discovered, but Bob Langford who had pressed us to go ahead with the job possibly thinking we would draw back at the last moment, decided we were going too far, when he saw we really meant business.

I was still doing medicine in U.C.C. but around the Conscription period in April, 1918, my 'digs' in Cork were raided for me by police but I escaped. After that my medical studies went by the board and I came home and devoted myself full time to the organisation of the area. Open parading had commenced in the Winter of 1917-1918 and continued until the conscription crisis. The same as elsewhere the ranks of the Kilnamartyra Company were swollen with new recruits. Very few of these, nevertheless, disappeared from the Volunteers when the threat of Conscription was removed.

From this time on I was with the Company and there was intense activity by the Volunteers in the area. We boycotted the R.I.C. publicly and privately, hindered them in their police duties as much as possible and, in fact, commenced making unarmed attacks on police patrols. So much of a nuisance and a menace did the Volunteers become that the area was proclaimed and made a Martial Law Area, and this was as early as 1918.

During the General Election towards the end of the year, the Volunteers organised and ran the whole electoral organisation.

Though not now at U.C.C. I used go in to Cork about the organisation of the area. Brigade Headquarters wanted it well organised on account of the geographical nature of the area, the few roads, the deep glens, the wooded foothills and the mountains backing them, admirable terrain for the conduct of guerilla warfare and for the secure hiding away of men upon their keeping.

I was in touch a lot with Florrie O'Donoghue, the Brigade Adjutant and also Brigade Intelligence Officer. He had a proposition to make. This must have been sometime fairly early in 1919. Anyway it was before the Military Courts were functioning and certain men from the Bandon area had been arrested and charged with making seditious speeches, unlawful assembly or some such excuses as were used at the time by the British authorities for keeping the Irish in their places. These Bandon men used be brought from Cork Gaol where they were

lodged to Bandon town to be dealt with according to law, by a party of R.I.C. in a military lorry. The police used travel up from Bandon each Wednesday morning, convey the prisoners from the city and back again during the course of the day and then finally return to their barracks in Bandon in the evening. Florrie O'Donoghue proposed that the lorry be ambushed on its evening journey back to Bandon and when no prisoners but only police would be in it. As well as stopping the lorry and inflicting casualties possibly, we were out to secure the R.I.C. arms and ammunition.

The Liberty Hill about six miles out from Cork on the main Cork-Bandon road was selected and with Florrie I surveyed the position. The ambush was fully organised. I had done an amount of game shooting around my native place, so I was to be armed with a shotgun to pick off the driver of the lorry and thus bring it to a halt. The others were to have revolvers. However, it was not to be. The prisoners were apparently dealt with, and so the travelling stopped before the ambush could take place. It was a pity because with all his organising ability and flair for detail, Florrie O'Donoghue had even arranged for a car to be provided, with Jim Gray as driver, to bring back the captured arms to Cork City. Florrie had it worked out to a nicety how long the car would take to get from the vicinity of the ambush position to its destination in Cork. Anyway, if the job didn't come off, it was good training for all that did happen afterwards.

Up to the end of 1918, the Macroom Battalion had a 'sub-battalion', which duly became the 8th Battalion, Macroom being

already the 7th. The area embraced by our newly constituted Battalion included the Companies 'A' (Kilnamartyra), 'B' (Ballyvourney), 'C' (Coolea), 'D' (Ballingeary) and 'E' (Inchigeela). Battalion Headquarters was at Renanirree in the parish of Kilnamartyra, about $3\frac{1}{2}$ miles from that village, and was located in Jack Sheehan's house. Jack's son, Cornelius, was Battalion Adjutant. I was appointed O/C. Battalion, Paddy O'Sullivan became V/O.C. and Dan Harrington was Q.M. Dan's brother, John, was Battalion Engineer with my brother, Mick, as Co-Engineer Officer. By the time the Truce came the Battalion strength was approximately 650. In 1919 we were the 8th Battalion of Cork I Brigade, the one existing Brigade covering all County Cork having been divided into three.

The previous year an armed attack on two R.I.C. men by five Volunteers had secured their two carbines, 100 rounds of ammunition and the two bayonets. This was on 7th July and was one of the causes for imposing Martial Law on the area.

There were plans and preparations in 1919 for attacking Ballyvourney, Ballingeary and Inchigeela R.I.C. Barracks but G.H.Q. cancelled these.

Then on 3rd January, 1920, we attacked Inchigeela Barracks. There were seven R.I.C. here though one of them, Tobin, happened to be out in the village. When he heard the firing he ran down towards the barracks and got wounded by one of our men with a shotgun, who did not know he was unarmed. Both garrison and attackers kept up an exchange of fire,

though we only had two rifles, one being an old Howth rifle. The R.I.C. lobbed out egg bombs at us but they weren't very effective. Our ammunition was so scanty that we eventually had to withdraw seeing that a continuation of the attack would serve no useful purpose.

We planned another attempt on the same barracks for 7th March and this time Florrie O'Donoghue, Brigade Adjutant, and Dominic O'Sullivan, Brigade Q.M. came out to us with some guncotton and we prepared a charge to be laid against the gable wall of the building. Then on surveying it we saw a whole apron of barbed wire stretching out for about 12 yards from the gable end and the idea was dropped.

I was in charge of the demolition of the Courthouse at Ballyvourney on 4th April. This was a three-storied building, very strong, with dungeons beneath and a flat roof and immensely thick walls. We did not intend that the Crown forces would occupy it as a blockhouse in the middle of our Battalion area, so we set fire to it. Actually, we were under fire ourselves from the R.I.C. Barracks close at hand, though I had detailed a covering party to keep the police from sallying out and spoiling the job. They didn't venture to do this, but some of us were very nearly hoisted by our own petard, for when we had soaked the inside of the Courthouse with 120 gallons of petrol, a Volunteer carried in a lighted acetylene lamp off a bicycle and there was a terrific explosion. Five of us, including myself, suffered a lot from burns and shock and we were about two months in a Cork hospital recovering.

I was out and well again in time to take part in the

burning on 2nd June of a big house called Glebe House near Inchigeela and which was going to be occupied by British troops.

On Whit Sunday we thought to take the R.I.C. Barracks at Ballingearry by surprise by rushing a number of the garrison who used come out and sit on the low wall in front if it was a fine day. There was a total of 14 in all, both regular R.I.C. and Black and Tans, in this barracks. There were 12 of us for this job all armed with revolvers and we rode to Ballingearry on bicycles and went into a public-house opposite the barracks. This appeared to be an innocent procedure enough, on account of the day. Only two police came out and they had their revolvers with them and were very diverted by one of our lads who left the pub and let on to be drunk. My brother, Mick, followed him out and tried to persuade him to go home on his bicycle. We hoped this playacting might bring more of the enemy garrison out to see a bit of fun. But there was nothing doing and when the fellow acting the drunk hurt himself on his bicycle he got really annoyed at one of the two police, a Tan actually, laughing at him and tried to get his gun out. My brother had an awful job quietening him, and the police scenting something retired into the Barracks and shut the door. They must have given a genuine alarm for in no time there were rifles sticking out of the loopoled shutters.

I had to send all our party off. Only a few of us went round and hung over the bridge which overlooked the rere of the police barracks. Then the Sergeant appeared at the back door and I produced my gun and told him to get inside. He did and

neither he nor any of his men appeared out afterwards. They must have wanted a quiet life.

On the 15th July, 1920, we carried out an ambush at Gatabawn on the Macroom-Ballyvourney road. We had only one rifle carried by an old Munster Fusilier who was a dead shot, about fifteen shotguns and three revolvers. We had a cart ready to let go down a steep bank, about 9 feet high, on to the road so as to block any enemy lorry. There were two signallers to notify us of the coming of the enemy. About one o'clock in the day two lorries did come - they were loaded with petrol and had only a small escort, so as it was arms we wanted, I decided to let these pass.

About 3 o'clock we were signalled that one car was on its way. It was a large Crossley tender and had seventeen soldiers on it belonging to the Manchester Regiment, as we discovered subsequently. It was going fast but unfortunately just as it was into the position and the cart was about to be let go, a private touring car going in the opposite direction, that is, towards Macroom, passed it right at the critical moment. The Volunteers with the cart held it back for a few seconds to let the private car get by, but those seconds counted. Our rifleman had been detailed to pick off the driver and he fired but he had been waiting for the cart to drop and the military tender had cleared the cart. Still the old soldier wounded the driver, while our entire party with their shotguns and few revolvers hit every one of the troops. The wounded driver was wonderful. His tender bounced and rebounded off opposite

sides of the road, even losing the spare wheel with the shock, but he kept control and drove on towards Ballyvourney. We followed but outside Ballyvourney the tender which had run out of petrol from a shot in the tank was surrounded by military from the village and they were in too strong numbers for us to attack them. They pushed the tender on into Ballyvourney and so we didn't get the arms we were after. We had wounded every soldier in the tender, though, and the Officer, Captain Airey, had been killed.

Another Officer in charge of an enemy party, a Lieutenant, was killed in the ambush at the Slippery Rock and a number of soldiers wounded. This was on 17th August, 1920. I was not in this operation as I was attending a Brigade meeting near Blarney that day, having been summoned there by Seán O'Hegarty, the Brigadier. My brother, Mick, took part in this with my V/O.C. Patrick O'Sullivan in charge. A great haul was made here: the Officer's revolver, ten rifles and bayonets, all the ammunition, steel helmets and equipment being taken, and the bicycles as well - it was a cycle patrol of the Manchester Regiment.

1921 came and the Brigade Column was formed. Out of a number of Volunteers sent from Cork City we only retained about six. This was after a Training Camp was established. Seán O'Hegarty was there and made sure we were kept busy for the whole period of the Camp. Seán Murray was the Brigade Training Officer and was in charge. He had been in the Irish Guards in the 1914-1918 War. We had P.T., drill, tactics, range practices and bayonet fighting. We, of course, couldn't afford to use much ammunition on our musketry practice. We

had two Lewis guns also, got out of Ballinacollig Barracks.

Our Camp was up in the hills about a mile East of Ballyvourney and we occupied a large empty house. There were 40 of us altogether, all from my own Battalion, except the six from Cork, Seán O'Hegarty, Seán Murray, Jim Gray, 'Sandow' Donovan, Seán Culhane and Corney Sullivan. From the house mentioned we moved on to another empty one at Renaniree, and this was a good base from which to descend upon the Macroom-Ballyvourney road and which is portion of the main road from Cork to Killarney extensively used by enemy convoys.

Our biggest operation took place on this road at a place called Coolavokig on the morning of 25th February. The Column had been lying in wait for a number of days, retiring after nightfall to the base at Renaniree. We had hardly settled into our allotted positions this particular morning when at 8 o'clock along came about eight tender loads of Auxiliaries. They had hostages with them too.

Unfortunately they spotted one of our men moving to his position and they scented danger. A couple of them sent up into the rocky hillside to act as scouts were shot dead and immediately the fight was on. All the Auxiliaries dismounted from their tenders as fire was opened on the leading one from one of our Lewis guns. For some reason the other gun wasn't brought into action at all.

We had only 40 men, though Dan Corkery, O/C. 7th Battalion, had a party on the opposite side of the road to us to keep the enemy pinned to the road and away from the high

ground on his (Corkery's) side. The Auxiliaries had approximately 90, yet so effective was our fire that they retreated into two old cottages alongside the road. At least some of them did and the hostages along with them. To their credit it must be stated that they did not harm the hostages, who came out unscathed from the fight. Dan Corkery's men had the Auxiliaries left in the open under fire while on our side we kept up a fusillade on the windows and doors of the cottages.

Large reinforcements of military from different points came to the rescue and at 12 noon, after four hours' continuous firing, we had to break off the engagement and retire. We had no casualties but the killed among the Auxiliaries had been estimated as up to 14, with about 25 wounded. Three soldiers among the reinforcements arriving were wounded.

Some of the reinforcements were engaged in a running fight with us later in the day, about 2 p.m., at Coomraclohy, over three miles from Coolavokig. No harm came to the Column from this encounter.

In March the Column was near Gougane Barra, at a place called Lackabawn, and here we were surrounded by strong enemy forces, but got away up the steep hillside. Enemy transport was delayed in the Pass of Keimaneigh as we had blocked the road with a steamroller, which had one of its wheels blown off by us. This held up military from Bantry trying to outflank us. We hid our two cars near this place and when danger had passed got them away safely across the border into County

Kerry, and proceeded on to Kilgarvan, between Loo Bridge and Kenmare. We meant to attack the police barracks there but the garrison evacuated it that day and moved into Kenmare.

The Column returned to Macroom and prepared to attack the strong Auxiliary garrison there if we could lure them out of the Castle, but we retired from there without effecting our object. Then we took up positions at Carrigaphooka, a few miles West of Macroom and waited for a week for the Auxiliaries but they didn't appear.

A huge concentration of troops numbering 10,000 was massed in the Ballyvourney area to carry out a round up. They were all under canvas and no one could but be aware of their intentions and their every move. It was decided to demobilise the Column until the round up was finished as it would have been the essence of foolishness to pit our 40 men against the massed enemy formations. Their lay-out was so vast that we could not even have had a nuisance value against any wing or outpost of the concentration.

From 6th June Columns were moving out, spreading to all points. It was said that they expected to encounter an I.R.A. force of 10,000 ! Actually they brought in a couple of dozen prisoners who were mostly all released in due course. Major Percival and his mobile column from the Essex Regiment participated in the round up and they distinguished themselves in their usual fashion by shooting a couple of harmless men, when moving back from Ballyvourney through Toames and on South to their barracks at Bandon.

The round up was over before the middle of June and Corpus Christi found a small party of our Column waiting along the Macroom-Renaniree road to attack seven lorries of Auxiliaries whom we were informed had gone to Renaniree. They came and we opened fire on them from positions about 30 yards up off the road, my brother, Mick, getting in some bursts on them with the Lewis gun. All the tenders had armoured sides and we didn't do much execution, having to retire eventually under a rain of rifle grenades and to prevent ourselves being encircled by the Auxiliaries numerically much superior to us. They had stopped the tenders further along the road after we succeeded in disabling one and bringing it to a halt and they climbed to the higher ground above us and thus forced us out of our position. We retired without losses, however.

I will revert here back to the Summer of 1920 to recount how I was detailed to take part in the attempt to capture Major-General Strickland, the British Divisional Commander in Cork. The idea was to take him and hold him as a hostage against Terence McSwiney, then on hunger-strike. Whether the British Government would have released McSwiney on demand as against the safety of one of their numerous Major-Generals is an interesting subject for discussion, but the fact is the situation never reached that point.

About half a dozen of us were ten days on the watch, with revolvers in our pockets, posted at various corners in Cork City - Coburg Street, Patrick's Hill, Bridge Street, King Street (now MacCurtain Street). Information was that

Strickland was sailing for England some evening leaving Cork Quays in the 6 o'clock boat. His journey to the boat would be by car and probably he would only be accompanied by one Staff Officer as well as the driver. His route was to be from Sydney House (otherwise known as Government House) down on to Wellington Road, to the right along Wellington Road, then to the left down Patrick's Hill, down Bridge Street and then along the quays to the ship. The information included the time he was due to come from Government House, i.e. 5.45 p.m. to get him to the boat, five to ten minutes drive away before she would sail at 6 p.m.

On Strickland's approach we were to hold up his car, get him into a waiting car in Coburg Street and get him alive to a house in the Coolea district in our battalion area, which house was specially prepared for him. The one particular evening he did come, after ten days of watching for him, we were unprepared for him. The scheduled time for his departure from Government House had passed and even the scheduled time for the boat to leave had passed and we relaxed, some of us buying the 'Evening Echo' to read the latest news. It was now about a quarter past six and suddenly we got a frantic signal from our deputed watcher on Patrick's Hill that Strickland was coming. But it was too late. His car was practically past us and we were caught all unprepared. We couldn't hold up the car then, but we opened fire on it in the hope of crashing it. I tried for the driver but I missed, either that or he had a protective screen which deflected my bullets. He made a marvellous swerve at speed into King Street and away out of our reach. We never had the chance again.

An amusing incident happened one evening while we were on the watch for Strickland. A Volunteer who knew me came along and recognised me where I loitered at the corner of Bridge Street. He was aware I wasn't in U.C.C. then and could only come to one conclusion - that there was a job on hands and that I was to be on it. He cross-examined me on the point, obviously anxious to take part in whatever was afoot. He could get no information out of me and neither could I get rid of him. Making all due allowance for his sincerity and his desire to do something in the cause, I could only regard him just then as a nuisance.

Quite suddenly I was approached by a well dressed, elderly man, whom I can best describe as an old 'toff'. He indicated his car, a smart open sports model, some distance away, and a foolishly drunken man hanging over it. He told me he was being pestered by the drunk who was insisting on getting into the car beside him and had already done some slight damage to it. He asked me were there any Volunteers around who could come to his assistance. This in itself is an interesting sidelight on the new attitude that was developing then, even in 1920, towards the Volunteers, that one of the 'gentry', obviously, should be seeking their help rather than looking for the R.I.C. It showed that in the enforced absence of those representatives of the law from their former police duties, the Sinn Féin Courts and the Republican Police must have made an impression on my old 'toff' as well as other members of the community.

To return to the issue. I had an inspiration. I said:

"Yes, of course, here is the very man", and told him that my persistent questioner was a Volunteer and that he would take control of the situation. I urged my acquaintance to do his duty and reluctantly enough he went off with the old 'toff', who thanked me profusely on departing. I sighed with relief as I saw the sports car moving off with its owner at the wheel and the Volunteer installed with a strong arm locked round the neck of the drunk, who was held rigid and helpless.


I was not left long alone to watch for Major-General Strickland. The Volunteer was back in ten minutes as eager as ever to discover my motive in hanging around there so far from my native heath and eager, too, to join forces with me in whatever was due to come off.

I questioned him in turn. How was he back so soon, what did he do with the drunk and so on. He told me he got the old 'toff' to drive to the Thomas Ashe Hall in Shandon Street, that he got the drunk in there in double quick time and that he had lashed him down to a bench in the hall. I complimented him on the efficient way in which he had acted and on the good impression he must have made on the old 'toff' and at the same time I thought to myself, how anxious this Volunteer was to stand by in case I, too, was going to have trouble on my hands.


I will conclude by stating that like my uncle before me I was a member of the I.R.B., I, however, was only in that organisation when it had become something of an open secret. As the ordinary member of a Circle, I did not know what were

the inner workings of the Brotherhood. My uncle was in it when it formed the link between the ill-starred Fenian movement and the foundation of the Irish Volunteers, the Army which carried the aims of the I.R.B. to fruition and in which, through the inspiration and example of that uncle, I was destined to serve.

Signed:


(P. O'Suilleabhain)

Witnessed:


(C. Saurin)

LT.-COLONEL.

Date: 13th July 1953

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
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