

W. S. 1,172 ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
BUREAU STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21
No. W.S. 1,172

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 1,172

Witness

James J. Riordan,
Knockavorheen,
Kiskeam,
Co. Cork.

Identity.

Second Lieutenant Kiskeam Company;
Q.M. Newmarket Battalion Cork IV. Brigade.

Subject.

National and military activities, Kiskeam,
Co. Cork, 1916-1923.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

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STATEMENT BY JAMES RIORDAN,

Knockavorheen, Kiskeam, Co. Cork.

I was born at my present address on April 4th, 1891. My parents were farmers. I was educated at Kiskeam National School until I reached the age of 15 years, when I went to work on the farm at home. In my young days I can remember my father telling stories of the "Moonlighters", with whom he was apparently associated.

There was a branch of the Gaelic League formed in Kiskeam in early 1916. There were about twenty members but by the beginning of 1917 the membership had increased to about 80. Nearly all Volunteers in the area were members of the Gaelic League. The teacher was Humphrey Lynch, who was at the time working as a farm labourer in the district. He was a native speaker. Classes were held on two nights each week and each member paid 4d per week. The teacher was paid 12/- per week in the early stages but as the membership increased his pay was increased to 15/- per week. Early in 1917 a branch of the Gaelic League was formed in Kingwilliamstown (now Ballydesmond) and Humphrey Lynch was also appointed as teacher there. When he took on the job in Kingwilliamstown he did not go back to farm work any more, becoming a regular Irish teacher in the area.

The Irish Volunteers were formed in Kiskeam in March 1917. The strength of the unit was between 20 and 30. The pioneer members were: Tim J. Cronin, Jim Cashman, Dan Flynn, Dan Guiney, Tom Collins, Jerh. Mulcahy, Jack D. Connors, Con T. Murphy, Jerry Scannell, Michael

Riordan and witness. The first officers elected by the members were (I think):

O/C - Jerry Scannell
 1st Lt. - Con T. Murphy
 2nd Lt. - Jim Riordan.

The company was a unit of 19th Battalion of Cork Brigade.

The only type of drill carried on in the early stages was ordinary foot-drill. Later we had arms drill with wooden guns. Parades were usually held in the fields in the district. The instruction was carried out by our own officers.

During 1917 all Volunteers were active in organising Sinn Féin in the area. In the early stages Sinn Féin was mainly composed of the Volunteers and the members of their families.

Beyond the usual drills and parades there was nothing out of the ordinary happening during the year 1917. However, when the British threatened to enforce conscription in the spring and summer of 1918 there was increased activity on all sides. There was a large increase in the membership of the Volunteers and nearly every man of military age in the district joined up. Practically everyone who joined at this time continued to serve to the Truce in one capacity or another. There was no change of officers at this time until the event referred to in the next paragraph.

Sometime later in the spring of 1918 the Company O/C (Jerry Scannell) led a parade of the full company towards Newmarket with the intention of attacking the R.I.C. party stationed there. The members were armed

with weapons of all sorts - shotguns, slashers, pikes, pick handles. Someone reported the approach of the parade to Seán Moylan (Battalion O/C) who was working in Newmarket, and he came to meet the parade at Coolagh Bridge about a mile from Newmarket. He ordered the parade to be dismissed and all members to return home. He held an investigation into the whole affair some days later and dismissed the O/C (Jerry Scannell). For a short time following the O/C's dismissal Con T. Murphy was in charge of the company. He was later replaced by Dan Guiney who was elected O/C. Jerry Scannell returned to the ranks and continued to serve as a Volunteer until he left the district some time later.

Four members of the Kiskeam Company left for Newmarket to take part in a general attempt throughout the battalion area to disarm R.I.C. patrols on March 18th, 1918, but the instructions were countermanded before they reached the assembly point. About this time all arms held in the area by other than members of the Volunteers were collected. In all cases the arms were surrendered voluntarily, although in one or two cases where the holders did not wish to show that they were prepared to co-operate, bogus raids were made. During the conscription period all Volunteers were very busy loading shotgun cartridges with buckshot, refilling cartridge cases and preparing weapons of all kinds.

The conscription scare had only passed when we were all busy in connection with the work of Sinn Féin as a general election was due in December 1918. However, there was no contest in our area as the Sinn

Féin candidate - Paudeen O'Keeffe - was returned unopposed.

In January, 1919, Cork Brigade, which was composed of about twenty battalions, was divided into three brigades. Our area (Newmarket) became a unit of Cork 11 Brigade. There were seven battalions in this brigade - Fermoy, Castletownroche, Mallow, Charleville, Kanturk, Newmarket, Millstreet. The first officers of Cork 11 Brigade were:

O/C - Liam Lynch, Fermoy.
 Vice O/C - Dan Hegarty, Mallow
 Adj. - Tom Barry, Glanworth.
 Q/M - George Power, Fermoy.

During the summer of 1919 all Volunteers were engaged on the organisation and collection of the Dáil Éireann loan in the area. Towards the end of this year a training camp was established at Tureen, Knocknagree, at which selected men in the battalion underwent a course of training. The Training Officer was Tom Roche, who had resigned from the R.I.C. shortly before. Amongst those who attended this camp were: Dan Flynn, Jack Murphy, Dan Fitzgerald, Jim Riordan (Kiskeam), John Jones, Jerh. O'Leary (Kingwilliamstown); Tom McNamara, Wm. Barrett, Bill Moylan, Dan Vaughan, Dave McAuliffe (Newmarket); Denis Galvin (Taur). The total number in the camp was about 15. The camp lasted for about 10 days, during which time we were put through a course of training in the care and use of arms. We were also trained in semaphore and morse. There were two rifles used for instruction purposes at this camp. One had been captured from the R.I.C. at Newmarket on March 18th,

1918. The second had been provided by the Battalion O/C (Seán Moylan).

At Easter, 1920, Glashakinleen R.I.C. post (evacuated) was destroyed in accordance with General H.Q. order. With several other members of the company I took part in this operation. Two members of the party received accidental burns due to the fact that petrol had been used to help to set the building on fire. Those injured were: Con T. Murphy and Charlie Reilly.

During the summer of 1920 several raids were made on the mails in the area. A number of members of the Kiskeam Company took part in a large scale raid on the mail train at Banteer in July of this year. Several other companies in the battalion were represented in this operation, as were some units from the Kanturk Battalion. As the mails taken in this raid were those for Kerry, West Limerick and portion of North Cork, there was a large amount of work involved in removing and censoring them. A special staff selected by the Brigade O/C dealt with the work and some of the mails captured were sent to G.H.Q. by special messenger. All correspondence not sent to Dublin was returned to the Post Office authorities by posting at several Post Offices in the area. These raids on the mails had the effect of making the general public, as well as some of the Volunteers, more discreet in their talk and their writing.

Towards the end of the summer a number of Volunteers from the various companies in the battalion visited Newmarket on at least two occasions with a view to attacking a military patrol during curfew hours.

On each occasion the patrol failed to pass through the ambush position. Amongst those who took part in these attempts were: Dan Flynn, Jim Riordan (witness), Jack Murphy, and Jerh. Mulcahy of the Kiskeam Company.

On the evening of October 10th, 1920, the following members of the Kiskeam Company - Dan Guiney, Dan Flynn, Jas. Cashman, Jim Riordan - together with Tom Herlihy, Manus Moynihan, John Jones and Dan Lucey (Kingwilliamstown Company) were instructed to be at Corney Lenihan's, Drumounarrigle that night before 10 p.m. We travelled by horse and car to Drouminarrigle where we arrived about 9 p.m. We then learned that with the Brigade Column we were to take part in an attack on a British military convoy at Ballydrochane near Kanturk next day. The Brigade Column, under Liam Lynch and Ernie O'Malley, were already at Corney Lenihan's when we arrived. Our party, with some other representatives from the Newmarket Battalion, were under Seán Moylan.

Early on the morning of October 11th, 1920, the whole party moved off to the site selected for the ambush, which was on the Kanturk-Newmarket road about one mile from Kanturk. We reached our positions about 8 a.m. The Brigade Column was armed with rifles captured in the raid on Mallow military barracks, while the remainder had shotguns. One of the Hotchkiss guns captured in Mallow was also used on this job. The whole party, except those who were to block the road, took up positions behind the roadside fence on the north of the road. They were extended over a distance of about 200 yards. The party was so arranged that there

were two shotgunmen with each rifleman. I was about midway in the ambush position with another shotgunman and Paddy McCarthy of the Brigade Column, who was a rifleman. The position was on a straight stretch of road just west of a bend at the Kanturk (eastern) end of the position. At the western (Newmarket) end of the position there was a disused farmhouse south of the road. It was here from this farmyard that two carts were pushed out to block the road when the enemy party arrived in a lorry about 10 a.m. The carts were pushed out by Dan Guiney, Dan Lucey, Tom Herlihy and one or two more.

When the lorry rounded the bend at the eastern end and had travelled some yards into the straight stretch, the road was blocked by the two carts and fire was immediately opened on the enemy party. The driver was killed by the opening volley and the lorry collided with the obstruction and with a milk car which was just inside the ambush position at the western end when the lorry rounded the bend to the east. The members of the enemy party who were not wounded by the opening volley jumped out and took cover underneath the lorry. They replied to our fire. They were, however, forced to evacuate their position by fire from the officers (I.R.A.) in charge, who, from their position on the bend of the road, were able to enfilade the straight stretch. They were then called on to surrender, and with Paddy McCarthy and my fellow shotgunman I jumped on to the road to accept the surrender. Our appearance came as a surprise to the enemy, whose attention was directed towards the spot from which the fire which forced them to evacuate their position underneath the lorry had come. Liam

Lynch then came along and ordered the whole party to clear the lorry and collect all military stores. The lorry was burned and we captured, I think, eight rifles, a couple of revolvers together with a stock of .303 ammunition. The enemy casualties were, as far as I can remember, two killed and three wounded. We had no casualties. The whole party then withdrew to Drouminarrigle, where I was instructed to return to Kiskeam to arrange for a party of the local company of the I.R.A. to travel to Drouminarrigle that night. They were required to act as a protection for Allen's Bridge creamery which, it was expected, might be burned as a reprisal. With Dan Flynn I returned to Kiskeam and arranged for a party to travel to Drouminarrigle as instructed.

In October, 1920, a workshop and factory were established in the farmhouse of Michael O'Leary, Knocknadulane. The staff employed here were mainly engaged on the manufacture of gunpowder and the making of mines. I did not take part in the operations of this workshop but I was responsible for dumping the manufactured stuff. The mines were usually made by filling pieces of 9" drain pipe about 1½' long with scrap metal, sealing both ends with steel plates held in position by a bolt running through the centre of the pipe. The mines were usually charged with gelignite and detonated by electricity. The staff of this factory were: Con Moylan, Bill Moylan, Barney Columbia and Seán Healy. The dump in which I placed the manufactured stuff was made of concrete and lined with timber. It was built into a fence and the side which opened was beside a gap, where it was camouflaged by

suitable size stones. The dump was 2' x 2" x 6'.

When Paddy McCarthy was killed in the attack on the Tans in Millstreet on November 22nd, 1920, our company was responsible for the supply of the coffin, which was made here in Kiskeam. We then took the coffin to Ballydaly to a house close to where he was being waked,

On January 15th, 1921, while a member of the Battalion Column, I took part in an attempt at Scarteen, near Newmarket, to ambush a party of British military travelling in lorries on the Newmarket-Rockchapel road. Owing to the fact that F.R.A. hostages were being carried by the convoy we had to allow the enemy to pass through without attacking.

The Battalion Column under Seán Moylan were in ambush on the Kingwilliamstown-Castleisland road on January 27th, 1921. With a number of others I was engaged in digging a trench in the road just round a bend at the eastern end of the ambush position. It rained all day and the expected enemy party did not turn up. The column then billeted in the area that night and the members of the local companies (Kiskeam and Kingwilliamstown) were ordered to return to their own areas. They were also instructed to return early next day or to send other representatives. When I returned home I was accompanied by Denis Kiely. It was very late and we were both soaked to the skin. As it was unlikely that we would be fit to travel next day I arranged for replacements. These were: Tim J. Cronin, Owen Daly and Jack Leary. This party travelled to Tureengarriv next day and were members of the ambush party

which attacked an enemy convoy accompanying Divisional Commissioner Holmes, R.I.C.

From the end of January, 1921, to the early days of March I was moving round the area with the column but we failed to make contact with the enemy. In addition, during this period we were all engaged on the destruction of lines of communication, demolition of bridges, trenching roads and the preparation of more dumps on the lines already described.

Seán Moylan was at my home on the night of March 2nd 1921. We both left some time after midnight for Knocknagree, where we contacted the Newmarket Battalion Column in billets. Early next morning we all moved into the Kerry area, where we made contact with the Kerry 1 Brigade Column at the Bower on the Killarney-Mallow road. The joint columns took up positions here about 8 a.m. and were later joined by the Charleville Column under Paddy O'Brien. We all remained in position throughout the day (March 3rd) but the enemy did not arrive. About 5 p.m. I was approached by Seán Moylan, who informed me that we (Moylan and I) were to return to Kiskeam to get some mines which were in the dump near the factory. We obtained transport and were driven back to Kiskeam, where we collected five mines together with the necessary batteries, wire and exploders. We rested at my home for an hour or two and then set off on the return journey to the Bower, which we reached next day (March 4th) about 8 a.m.

The combined columns (which had billeted in the area during the night) then took up the positions

which they had occupied on the previous day. The mines were laid in the road, and although we waited until about 5 p.m. there was no sign of the enemy. At this stage word was received that the enemy were aware of our position, but there was also news that some staff officers from British H.Q. at Cork were inspecting posts in Kerry. The officers in charge of our party then decided to move back in^{to} North Cork.

The Newmarket and Charleville Columns moved to Knocknagree area and billeted in Umeraboy, while the Kerry columns moved to the Cullen area and billeted in Ballydaly. In the meantime the officers of the columns (Seán Moylan, Paddy O'Brien, "Free" Murphy, Con O'Leary and Tom McEllistrim) moved off to select a fresh ambush position. Early on the morning of March 5th, 1921, word was received to assemble at Clonbanin on the Killarney-Mallow road.

The Kerry Brigade and Millstreet Battalion Columns took up positions about $\frac{1}{2}$ mile west of Clonbanin Cross on the southern side of the road, while Newmarket and Charleville Columns were in position on the opposite side. The parties on either side were extended over a distance of approximately 600 yards on rising ground and were under suitable cover at distances varying from 50 to 100 yards from the road. These positions were taken up about 10 a.m. or shortly before. While positions were being taken up, scouts signalled the approach of three lorries from the east, but the enemy party we were expecting was to come from the west. The three lorries from the east were allowed to pass through the position. I was in position behind a stone-faced fence about 50

from the road about the centre of the ambush site. I was accompanied by Mick Regan (Charleville Column). We were both armed with rifles. On the left of our position were Dan Vaughan and Jack Duane. Both were also armed with rifles. They were about 20 yards from our position. Two mines were laid in the road - one at each end of the position.

Sometime about 3 p.m. scouts reported the approach of an enemy convoy from the west. It consisted of three lorries, a touring car and an armoured car. They travelled in the following order: two lorries, touring car, armoured car and third lorry. It had been arranged that the signal to open fire would be the explosion of the mine at the eastern end of the position. When the leading lorry reached this mine there was no explosion. As a matter of fact, both mines failed to explode - I do not know why. Suddenly there was an outburst of firing and all sections of the I.R.A. party were in action. The enemy replied vigorously and the machine-gun in the armoured car swept the area in its vicinity. The position in which I was with Mick Regan came under heavy fire from the armoured car, and we were so situated that we could not return this fire. We were, however, in a position to cover a large stretch of road which the military, who left their lorries, had to travel in order to reach the cover of a cottage, and we availed of this to the full. Obviously the crew of the armoured car were aware of the position from which this fire was coming, so they made a special effort to keep us under cover. The fighting continued for about 2 hours and eventually the signal to withdraw was given by Paddy O'Brien. In our position we (Mick

Regan and I) did not hear the signal. In any event, we could not move from our position while the fire from the armoured car continued to be concentrated on us. Dan Vaughan and Jack Duane - on our left - were in a similar position. We were not aware of the withdrawal until a scout - Mattie Murphy - crept up to us and told us that the others had withdrawn to a position some short distance to our rear. The firing had at this stage ceased except for an occasional burst. All the enemy appeared to be under cover as far as we could see from our position.

We now withdrew with the scout in the direction of the remainder of the columns on the north side of the road. During our withdrawal we crossed into a large field, to find that a small party of the enemy were also in the same field and moving towards where the members of the other columns were. Our party (Dan Vaughan, Mick Regan, Jack Duane and witness) immediately opened fire and the enemy withdrew in haste. We were about to attempt to pursue them when Paddy O'Brien came on the scene and instructed us to join the remainder of the column. The I.R.A. suffered no casualties but the enemy losses were, in my opinion, severe.

The Newmarket and Charleville Columns now withdrew to Kiskeam area, where they billeted in the Ruhill and Knockavorheen areas. The Millstreet and Kerry Columns returned to their own districts.

In April, 1921, some members of the Newmarket Battalion Column moved into West Limerick area on the invitation of the local Column O/C, with a view to attacking an R.I.C. patrol which moved out from

Abbeyfeale each day. This party was accompanied by some members of the Charleville Column and the combined unit was in charge of Paddy O'Brien. The members of the Newmarket Column who travelled were: Mick D. Sullivan, Dan Browne, Tim Coughlan, Jack Guiney, Dave Curtin and Tim Galvin. This trip was abortive as the enemy patrol was not active while the column was in the area.

Sometime about this period I was appointed Q/M Newmarket Battalion on the arrest of Willie Dwyer who had been in the position since the death of Paddy McCarthy in Millstreet engagement on November 22nd, 1920.

About this time deserters from the enemy forces were moving through the country. Some were possibly genuine deserters, while others were sent out as spies. Two deserters were arrested in Knocknagree area towards the end of April, 1921. With Seán Moylan I visited Knocknagree to interrogate the prisoners. They were questioned and cross-examined individually. Both protested that they were simply deserters and only anxious to get out of the country. They were questioned closely as to the sources from which the enemy obtained their information. They were unable to furnish very much information on this matter, but they did state that the British H.Q. in Tralee was visited each week by a "travelling man" who usually spent a lot of time in the office there. Each gave a description of the individual concerned and both appeared to tally. The locals then compared notes and eventually decided that the man concerned was a man named Tom Sullivan. He usually travelled round the district collecting and singing songs. Having arrived at this decision,

enquiries were set on foot to discover Sullivan's whereabouts and he was traced to Farrankeal, near Knocknagree, where he was arrested. He was taken before Seán Moylan, the officers of Knocknagree Company and myself. He was closely questioned but did not give any information. When the deserters were taken in to see him individually, each of them identified him as the man who had been visiting British H.Q. in Tralee. At this stage Seán Moylan decided that, as the man's activities were mainly confined to Kerry Brigade area, he would hand him over to the Kerrymen for trial. This was done and the deserters were similarly handed over, although we felt that they were only deserters. It was now near the end of April, 1921.

On May 1st or 2nd a dispatch arrived for the Brigade O/C (Seán Moylan) from Killarney Battalion H.Q. As the O/C was away in Limerick I had instructions to open any correspondence. The dispatch from Killarney requested the co-operation of Newmarket Battalion Column for an ambush on the Bog Road near Rathmore. As the majority of the column were in Abbeyfeale, I informed the Kerry unit accordingly, but I had a further request by return asking to have the column sent in by the night of May 3rd if at all possible. At this stage only three members (Dan Vaughan, Dave McAuliffe and Con Morley) of the Newmarket Column were in the district. They had only two rifles. I decided to send these three to Rathmore, giving my own rifle to complete the arming, and to await the return of the other members of the column from Abbeyfeale myself. I should have said that I had sent word to the Column O/C (Mick D. Sullivan) to return from Abbeyfeale.

The three members of the column, who were available, moved to the Rathmore area on the night of May 3rd, and when the remainder of the column returned from Abbeyfeale early on the morning of May 4th we followed on to Rathmore. We took up positions behind some turf banks on the eastern side of the Bog Road. There were twelve members of the column as well as some members of the Rathmore Company in my section. Two members of the Newmarket Column (Denis Galvin and Con Morley) were with the Kerry section on the western side of the road. They were behind a stonefaced fence. It was now about 6 a.m.

The plan proposed was to plant the body of the spy (Tom Sullivan), who was to be executed, on the Bog Road and to await the arrival of the British party, who would surely come out to examine the position when they received information that his body was on the road. The spy was executed by the Kerry contingent and his body was placed on the roadside. The first traffic to appear on the road consisted of some parties going to the bog to cut turf. Some of those who came along passed by, while others turned back. Then the people taking milk to the creamery in Rathmore began to come along. An odd passerby stopped and then continued on his or her way. Eventually information apparently reached the enemy and about 10 a.m. a party of eight Black and Tans was seen to approach along the Bog Road in extended order. Seven members of the party came to where the body was and gathered round, but the eighth man remained some distance away. Fire was opened on the enemy from both sides of the road. All those surrounding the body of Tom Sullivan were killed. The odd man who remained

at a distance dashed off when the firing started. He made good his escape but dropped his rifle. Eight rifles and a supply of ammunition were captured. The I.R.A. suffered no casualties.

While withdrawing after this engagement enemy planes forced our party to take cover on a number of occasions. The members of the Newmarket Battalion Column eventually reached their home area during the night. The members of the column who took part in this operation were: Denis Galvin, Con Morley, Dan Vaughan, Dave McAuliffe, Dan Browne, Mick D. Sullivan, Tim Coughlan, Jack Guiney, Dave Curtin, Tim Galvin, Jim Riordan, Jack Murphy, John Jones and Terh. O'Leary.

On the morning of May 16th, 1921, there was a general round-up in the Kiskeam area by the British forces. Large parties of military scoured the country as far as Boherbuoy on the evening of May 15th. They moved on foot across the country during the night and before dawn on May 16th, 1921, were closing in on the Kiskeam area. They rounded up a large number of local Volunteers and a member of the column (Dan Flynn) as well as the Brigade O/C (Seán Moylan).

During the period to June 15th, 1921, I was engaged in visiting the various companies in the battalion and checking up on dumps. In addition, I assisted and advised in each area on the destruction of lines of communication and the trenching of roads. I was also in close touch with the column taking part in a number of attempts to contact the enemy.

On the evening of June 15th, 1921, the Newmarket

Battalion Column was mobilised and we moved to Rathcoole Wood in the Millstreet area. During the night of June 15th the columns from Mallow, Charleville, Kanturk and Millstreet also assembled at this point. The wood is situated on high ground about 2½ miles to the east of Millstreet. Early in the morning of June 16th six mines were laid in the road between Rathcoole and Drishanebeg. They were spaced, over a stretch of about 1,200 yards, at a distance from each other which was estimated to be the distance between lorries travelling in convoy on this road.

The combined columns numbered about 120. About 80 were armed with rifles. The remainder were armed with shotguns. There was also a machine-gun. The combined columns were divided into eight sections - one to cover each mine and one for protection on each flank. One section was placed on the western flank on the north side of the road. The remaining sections were all south of the road. All sections south of the road were to withdraw to the south, while the section to the north were to retreat towards Kiskeam. All preparations were completed by about 7 a.m. and the whole party withdrew into the centre of Rathcoole Wood, where we remained under cover until the O/C (Paddy O'Brien) decided that it was time for us to move into our prearranged positions. During this period scouts were posted on all sides and about 10 a.m. the approach of four lorries was reported from Millstreet end. This party was allowed to pass through the position as it was known that they would, if following the usual routine, return later to Millstreet and do a repeat

journey in the afternoon. They returned as usual and about 3 p.m. they again passed through the ambush position, travelling east towards Banteer. When they had passed on this occasion all sections were instructed to take up their positions. I was with the section covering the second mine from Millstreet end of the position (west). There were three riflemen in this position (witness and two members of Charleville Column). Dan Vaughan was in charge of exploding the mine.

Shortly before 4 p.m. our scouts signalled the approach of the enemy lorries. It was planned that all lorries would be allowed into the position and that until the last lorry had reached the mine at the eastern end, no action would take place. As this lorry reached the selected spot the mine was exploded and fire was opened by the members of the covering party. Nearly all the enemy on this lorry were knocked out at the first attempt. The other lorries were not over the mines so the mines could not be exploded to any effect. Fire was, however, opened by all covering sections. The other lorries stopped between the mines and the occupants replied to our fire, dismounting from their lorries. The leading lorry, which was between the last two mines to the west, reversed back until it covered the mine which we were covering and the mine was exploded, bringing the lorry to a halt. I think that most of the occupants of this lorry must have been put out of action by our fire and the explosion. When the fight had gone on for about an hour the signal to withdraw was given and we retired to the cover of the wood at our rear. We then withdrew to our home area. There were no casualties amongst the I.R.A.

party but the enemy must have suffered severely. Had the two lorries (2nd and 3rd) made contact with the mines we would probably have succeeded in capturing the convoy, but the fire from the machine-guns in the two lorries left us no option but to withdraw.

Following Rathcoole the column broke up into a number of small units operating in conjunction with the members of the companies in the areas in which they happened to be billeted. They moved round in this way endeavouring to make contact with the enemy until the week prior to the Truce, when the members of the Newmarket and Millstreet Battalion Columns reassembled and moved in West Limerick area. There were also representatives from the Charleville Column amongst the party, which was again in charge of Paddy O'Brien.

On the night of July 7th the combined columns, to the number of about 80 men, proceeded by Rockchapel to Tournafulla, where we met the West Limerick Column. There were about 50 men in the latter party. On the morning of July 8th eight mines were placed in the road between Ardagh and Templeglantine. They were spread over a distance of nearly a mile. As in the case of Rathcoole, the combined columns were divided into sections to cover each mine with, of course, flanking parties. It had been decided that, should the convoy travel, it would be attacked on the return journey from Abbeyfeale. I should have mentioned that the lorries were expected to travel from Newcastlewest to Abbeyfeale. About 2 p.m. four lorries passed through the ambush position towards Abbeyfeale, but they

returned to Newcastlewest by another route. We waited in our positions until about 5 p.m. and withdrew to Tournafulla area where we billeted. The mines were allowed to remain in the road as it was expected that the convoy was due to pass through the position again on the following Monday, July 11th, 1921.

News of the forthcoming Truce was conveyed to us on Sunday night (July 10th) by Paddy O'Brien, and it was decided to take up the same positions as had been evacuated on the 8th and to remain in them until 12 noon on the 11th. At the latter hour we left our positions and set about taking up the mines. While doing so about 12.15 p.m. the enemy convoy for which we had been waiting came along. They were at first hostile, but when the conditions of the Truce were drawn to their attention some of them exchanged souvenirs with some of the I.R.A.

My rank at the Truce - Q/M Newmarket Battalion, Cork IV Brigade. The strength of the battalion was about 850.

During the summer of 1921 I attended a training camp in Knocknagree area, at which all aspects of military engineering as well as the care and use of arms was covered. The camp was in charge of Paddy Murphy and the Training Officer was Tom Roche. The course at this camp lasted about two weeks. Following this course I spent the remainder of 1921 visiting and training the companies in the battalion. When Newmarket R.I.C. post was taken over in January, 1922, I was in charge of the maintenance party there until the outbreak of the Civil War. I then took part in the "Line"

fighting at Kilmallock and took part in a number of engagements until captured by Free State forces at Taur on 16th November, 1922. I was confined in Limerick Gaol until February, 1923, when I was removed to Tintown 11 Internment Camp. I was released on December 19th, 1923.

Before concluding this account of my activities in the period 1916-1923 I would like to pay tribute to the plain people of the area who supported and encouraged our efforts at all times. Their homes were always open to us and night or day we were always sure of a welcome. As well as feeding, and very often clothing, the members of the columns, the people of the area were at all times prepared to put their hands in their pockets and hand out the cash to buy cigarettes and other necessities. While there was hardly a house in the area where the I.R.A. were not welcome, I feel that special mention should be made of the following who were regularly called upon to cater for the material wants of the men "on the hills": -

Con T. Murphy, Kiskeam	Nls. Fitzgerald, Meens
Patrick Neylon, "	Tim Moynihan, "
Thomas Hurley, Knockanagh	John O'Connor, "
Tim D. Murphy, "	Patk. Fitzgerald, "
Jerh. Mulcahy, "	Richard Dennehy, "
Tim C. Murphy, "	Maurice Murphy, Glash
Dan O'Leary, "	Tom Collins, Tureendav
Dan Galvin, N.T., "	John Sullivan, Meentaflugh
	Tom Herlihy, "

The members of these households welcomed and encouraged the army at all times, and there is no doubt that this encouragement and support tended in no small measure to help the army to achieve success against terrible odds.

Witness:

P. O'Donnell
(Investigator).

Signed:

Date:

James J. O'Riordan
26th May 1955

(James J. O'Riordan)

26th May 1955.