

W.S. 1,232

**ORIGINAL**

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

BURO STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21

No. W.S. 1232

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 1,232

**Witness**

James Fraher,  
4 St. Augustine's Terrace,  
Abbeyside,  
Dungarvan,  
Co. Waterford.

**Identity.**

Captain, Dungarvan Company Irish Volunteers;  
Battalion Adjutant and later Brigade Adjutant  
Waterford Brigade.

**Subject.**

Dungarvan Irish Volunteers,  
Co. Waterford, 1914-1923.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil

File No. S.2540

Form B.S.M. 2

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STATEMENT BY JAMES FRAHER,

4 St. Augustine Terrace, Abbeyside, Dungarvan,  
Co. Waterford.

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I was born in the parish of Ballyguiry, Co. Waterford, in the year 1898. My parents were farmers, and both were native Irish speakers.

My grandfather was actively connected with the Land League and did a term of imprisonment in Waterford gaol in connection with the shooting of a land agent at Modeligo, Co. Waterford.

As a boy, I was educated at Glenbeg National School, and, at the age of twelve years, became a pupil of the Irish Christian Brothers in Dungarvan, Co. Waterford.

When I had finished my education, I went to serve my apprenticeship at Messrs. Crotty's hardware stores in Dungarvan. I was then about fifteen years of age.

In Dungarvan I joined the local branch of the Gaelic League which was run by Thomas Fahy of Abbeyside. Other prominent men in that organisation at the time were Dan Fraher, Dungarvan, Willie Meehan of Ring and Tomás de Veale of Old Parish, Dungarvan.

When the National Volunteers were started in Dungarvan in 1914, I joined up. I remember that the O/C of the Volunteers was a man named John Dwyer who was then Secretary of the Waterford County Council.

There were, I'm sure, upwards of eight hundred men in the Dungarvan Company. This included men from the neighbouring districts of Ring, Brickey, Colligan and Abbeyside. Drilling was carried out with wooden guns.

There were, to the best of my recollection, just a few rifles and maybe a revolver or two, but these were held by the ex British soldier element (of whom there were a good number) in the National Volunteers. I can remember that Pat Ryan, a publican, in Main Street, Dungarvan, was one of the Lieutenants.

When the split in the Volunteers came in 1915, I remember some speaker coming down from Dublin to address a meeting of the local Company. This man represented the Irish Volunteers who had seceded from the National (Redmond's) Volunteers. I cannot now remember this man's name, but I do remember quite well that, when he had finished his address, practically everybody left the Hall with the exception of about eight of us who remained.

This small unit of eight, or perhaps ten, men formed an Irish Volunteer company in Dungarvan. Pax Whelan was the officer in charge.

Amongst others whose names I can recall in this first Dungarvan unit were George Lennon, afterwards O/C of the West Waterford, Flying Column, Mickey Morrissey, later T.D., Bernard Dalton, - Dunne, - McCarthy, a tailor, and Tim Crowe, a railway employee.

I cannot say whether we had any guns at this time (1915). I know I certainly had not.

We met periodically at the house of John Greany in the town of Dungarvan which, for many years afterwards, was a well-known rendez-vous for all sympathisers with the Republican movement.

Prior to 1916, Padraig and Willie Pearse, as well

Square, Dungarvan, quite often, but these men did not contact our Volunteer unit prior to the 1916 Rising. As a matter of fact, the first intimation I had that a Rising had broken out in Dublin was through news bulletins posted up in the windows of Dungarvan Post Office.

During Easter Week, 1916, I have a recollection that Pax Whelan got word of a British troop train en route from Waterford to Fermoy and there was some talk of derailing this train some distance outside Dungarvan. I am hazy as to what exactly happened, but I do know that no attempt was made by us to derail the train. There was, I think, some mix-up in the time of arrival in Dungarvan of the train. The main thing is, however, that we didn't carry out the plan.

Here I would like to refer to a man by the name of P.C. O'Mahony, a Kerryman, who was then employed in Dungarvan Post Office. This man, though not openly associated with the Republican movement, was in a position to obtain information regarding movements of British troops, from telephone conversations overheard by him. This information he passed on to Pax Whelan.

No arrests of Irish Volunteers in the Dungarvan district took place following the 1916 Rising, so far as I can remember.

Early in the year 1917, I remember having a Tricolour made and fixed to a staff. Late one night I attached it to the chimney of Glenbeg National School. The following morning the flag was removed by the local R.I.C.

I mention this incident because it was subsequently

reported in the daily papers that this was the first occasion on which the Tricolour was flown from a National School building in Ireland. Glenbeg National School was the one in which I was educated as a boy and is situated in my native parish of Ballyguiry, Co. Waterford.

Late in the year 1916 the reorganisation of the Irish Volunteers began in Dungarvan. I cannot remember the names of our first officers except that Pax Whelan was the "Number one man". We had about fifteen or twenty men in the Company.

Drilling was carried out at night, about twice a week, in a sunken roadway near the Gaelic field, better known then as Dan Fraher's field. We had some practice with a .22 rifle, but it was not until about six months afterwards that we secured our first Lee-Enfield rifle.

It so happened that a local man, named Brown, who was in the British army, came home on furlough from the Great War bringing a rifle with his kit. We raided his house one night when he was there and took his rifle and belt of ammunition. The gun was then taken for safety out to Colligan, about three miles north-west of Dungarvan.

About the same period - mid-1917 - I organised a Volunteer Company in the Brickey district, two miles west of Dungarvan. There was a membership of twenty or so in this Company which had a pretty good supply of shotguns, principally for the reason that the members were nearly all sons of farmers. I was appointed Captain of the Brickey Company on its formation.

In January, 1918, I happened to be cycling towards Dungarvan from Brickey when I met what turned out to be

road. They were young lads, and I had a chat with them when they told me they were deserters, and an idea came to me that perhaps I could make some use of these fellows. Their names, I well remember, were Conroy and O'Brien. I made a suggestion to them that I should supply them with civilian clothes and some money and that they should then go to Clonmel and rejoin a British regiment there. They were later to try and get hold of any arms and ammunition in the barracks and bring them out to me at a pre-arranged time and place. They agreed to do as I suggested, so, that night I returned to my home in Ballyguiry where I secured clothes for the two soldiers who, I should have said, were wearing British army uniforms when I first met them.

The two men duly reported to Clonmel barracks and joined up. A short time later, they were identified as deserters by the British army authorities and placed under arrest. Unfortunately, my name and address were found on them, and very soon afterwards I was taken into custody by R.I.C. at my place of business - Crotty's - in Dungarven.

I was taken to Dungarvan police barracks where I was charged with aiding and abetting deserters from His Majesty's army. (I still have a copy of the charge.) The two soldiers were taken along to an identification parade in the barracks but, to their credit, they refused to identify me. They were returned to Cork barracks in custody and I was released on bail. I should here state that at this time - January 1918 - no instructions had been issued to Volunteers in this area to refuse to recognise the British Courts or to accept release on bail.

A week later, the two soldiers were again brought

back again to Dungarvan when the charge against me came up for hearing. On this occasion, both Conroy and O'Brien refused to be sworn, with the result that the charge against me was withdrawn and I was released from custody.

On the conclusion of my case, the two soldiers were cheered by spectators in the courthouse, and the R.I.C. present, on the orders of the magistrate, ordered the court to be cleared. Many fights broke out as the R.I.C. carried out the order.

That same night - 20th January, 1918 - as Conroy and O'Brien were being brought to Dungarvan railway station under escort, fighting again broke out between a crowd of sympathisers and the escort. I cannot now recollect what was the ultimate fate of the two soldiers.

Early in the year 1918, a Sinn Féin Club was started in Dungarvan. In common with the other Volunteers, I helped in the general activities of the Cumann.

In connection with the famous bye-election of March, 1918, in Waterford city between Doctor Vincent White, representing Sinn Féin, and Captain William Redmond, representing the Irish Parliamentary Party (whose leader was John Redmond), I was detailed, with about a dozen others of the Dungarvan Company to proceed to Waterford to help in stewarding on behalf of Doctor White. I was unarmed, but carried a stick as a weapon of defence.

We were billeted, with hundreds of Volunteers from other Counties, in the Volunteer Hall at Thomas Street,

Waterford, where we were attacked with stones and bottles by the mobs from the Ballybricken district of Waterford, strong supporters of Redmond. It took repeated charges by us to clear the streets of these hooligans.

The presence of the Volunteers from outside areas was, in my opinion, absolutely necessary for the proper conduct of the Sinn Féin election programme, as the savage behaviour of the Redmondite supporters would certainly have succeeded in intimidating those sympathetic to the Sinn Féin cause, if allowed to go on unchecked. The comparatively small number of Irish Volunteers belonging to the Waterford city companies could not, in my view, have coped with the situation unaided.

In the month of May, 1918, J.J. Madden, a school teacher in Lismore Christian Brothers', together with Pax Whelan, O/C of the West Waterford Brigade, were arrested and charged with the offence of wearing a Volunteer uniform in public.

During the hearing of the evidence before William Orr, the Resident Magistrate, somebody in the court cheered whereupon Orr ordered the police to clear the court. Immediately, pandemonium broke loose and fighting commenced between the R.I.C. and men in the courthouse, of whom I was one.

At the time, a man happened to be passing outside the Courthouse with a cartload of stones. The stones were thrown by the incensed crowd through the courthouse windows, some landing on the magistrate's bench. The R.I.C. charged with batons and were met with volleys of stones.



Fighting continued in the streets of Dungarvan long after the prisoners were removed in custody. A special detachment of police was rushed from Waterford city that night to deal with the disturbances.

I make special mention of this affair because it marked the first real sign of what might be termed national resurgence in Dungarvan, a town which, up to that time, had been noted for its apathy in regard to things national.

From the period May to December, 1918, my activities were mainly concerned with the organising of Volunteer Companies in Colligan and Dungarvan. A fair number of recruits were enrolled and, in December, 1918, I would estimate the strength at approximately thirty men in each Company.

Arms were very scarce then. There were a few revolvers about, a .22 rifle or two, and perhaps a dozen or so shotguns. Generally speaking, however, the arms position could be described as being very poor.

In December, 1918, at the general election which resulted in an overwhelming majority for the Sinn Féin candidates, I was actively engaged with others of my comrades in the Volunteers on election duty on behalf of Cathal Brugha who was the Sinn Féin candidate for West Waterford. He was returned T.D. for the constituency by a large majority over his Redmondite Party opponent.

Early in the year, 1919, I transferred from the Brickey Company and was elected Captain of the Dungarvan Company. I worked in close co-operation with Pax Whelan, the Brigade O/C, who lived in Dungarvan.

With the view to getting things moving, I organised a daylight raid on the Dungarvan Post Office, in the hopes of obtaining some information from police and military correspondence which might prove useful to us.

In this raid I was accompanied by three other Volunteers. All of us were armed with revolvers. We remained in a garage near the Post Office from 4 a.m. until 8.30 a.m., at which time we knew that the mails would be sorted. At 8.30 a.m., or thereabouts, each morning a few R.I.C. men used call for their mail. At about 8.25 a.m. Pakeen Whelan (not Pax), Sonny Cullinane, another man whose name I have forgotten and I (all wearing masks) entered the Post Office, held up the staff and took the R.I.C. mail. Later that night, these letters were examined by us. What we usually got in these raids, which became quite frequent later on, was the reply from Dublin Castle to the local District Inspector's report on Volunteer and Sinn Féin activities in the Dungarvan district.

As well as raiding Dungarvan Post Office, I also carried out raids on the mails being conveyed from the railway station to the Post Office. Nipper McCarthy of Dungarvan provided the car and drove us out the country where the mails were examined and re-posted, bearing a stamp, "censored by I.R.A."

In one of these raids, we discovered from an R.I.C. report the names of men from the district (not I.R.A. men) who were carrying out raids on the farms of people who were alleged to have grabbed the land in years gone by. These raiders used beat up the farm holders, with a view to terrorising the latter into leaving their

holdings, which would then be taken over by a member of the raiding party.

Having ascertained that an armed man from the local I.R.A. Company was implicated in this, his house was visited by a few of us one night and his revolver taken from him. He was subsequently dismissed from the Company. On learning what we had done, the raiding ceased and we had no further trouble of that kind again.

While I was employed at Crotty's, hardware merchants, Dungarvan, this firm was the sole suppliers of gelignite, fuses, and detonators to the local County Council who required the stuff for blasting in quarries. There was a special magazine in the premises for storing these items. When I handed out supplies to County Council gangers, I always held over an amount for use by us which the County Council people never missed. I passed on any such stuff to the Quartermaster. These materials were, later on in the fight, used in the making of bombs, land-mines and suchlike.

I omitted to refer, earlier, to the ambush of British troops in Fermoy by a party of I.R.A. men under Liam Lynch, which occurred in September, 1919.

It was arranged by Pax Whelan, Brigade O/C, that either I or Mick Mansfield of Old Parish, Dungarvan, should be one of the party from Dungarvan to go to Fermoy to help in the attack. When it transpired that Mick Mansfield was available to travel, I was asked to stand down in his favour and make arrangements locally for the dumping of any arms which might be captured from the British at Fermoy. As a matter of fact, none of the rifles captured by our lads at Fermoy came over to our

district following the successful ambush.

Early in January, 1920, I learned that a consignment of shotgun ammunition was coming to Dungarvan. An employee of the Great Southern and Western railway, who was an I.R.A. man, advised me of the time of arrival of the ammunition at Dungarvan railway station.

About four of us visited the station at the appointed time and took away a box containing about two thousand rounds of shotgun ammunition. This welcome addition to our meagre stocks was distributed amongst the Dungarvan, Abbeyside, Brickey and Colligan Companies.

Attack on Ardmore R.I.C. Barracks:

About the middle of January, 1920, a party of about ten men from my own (Dungarvan) Company, together with a similar number from the Colligan Company, left Dungarvan late one night on bicycles to take part in an attack on the R.I.C. barracks at Ardmore which is on the sea coast and about fourteen miles west of Dungarvan. I had a service rifle. The remainder of my Company men had shotguns. The attacking force, numbering about forty men, was under the command of Jim Mansfield of Old Parish who was Commandant of the Third Battalion, in which area Ardmore was situated.

The police barracks in Ardmore was in the village street. It was a stoutly constructed stone building, two-storied, and the windows were reinforced with steel shutters with loop-holes to enable the garrison to fire.

At this time, there were, to the best of my recollection, fifteen police in Ardmore. This was an unusually large number but was accounted for by the fact

that some of the outlying barracks had been vacated some time previously and their garrisons moved into Ardmore barracks which the British, apparently, considered easier to defend if attacked. In addition, a party of British marines had taken over the coastguard station at Ardmore. This station was on very high ground overlooking the village and would be a vantage point for a counter attack by the Marines if the police in the barracks were engaged by I.R.A.

We approached Ardmore from the Curragh side, i.e., the east side of the village, and were allotted positions in houses immediately opposite the R.I.C. barracks. The time would be about midnight.

Whilst some of our lads were preparing positions for the attack, one of them (not in my party) accidentally discharged his rifle. This had the effect of putting the police garrison on the alert.

Immediately the shot rang out, heavy rifle fire was opened by the police, and bombs were thrown by them through the loop-holes windows of the barracks on to the street. Verrey lights were sent up to summon assistance. The Marines in the coastguard station then opened fire and they too commenced sending up Verrey lights.

We replied to the fire as best we could, with what effect I cannot say. After about half-an-hour of this, we were ordered by George Lennon, Brigade Vice O/C, to break off the action and get away. It was obvious, now that the element of surprise had gone, that it was useless to continue the engagement, more especially as our supply of ammunition was very limited that night.

In the early summer of 1920, as a result of information passed to a local I.R.A. man by Constable Bolger of the Dungarvan R.I.C. who said that Mickey Morrissey (afterwards a T.D.) and myself were to be arrested, I decided to leave my job in Crotty's, Dungarvan, and go on the run.

I went in to Waterford city where I found temporary employment, but I wasn't long there until the police came enquiring for me at my place of business, so I moved on to Maryborough to a relative of mine.

After a short while there, I decided to make for Thurles, Co. Tipperary, where I secured employment in the hardware business of a man named Fitzpatrick, one of whose employees, I later learned, was Quartermaster of the Mid-Tipperary Brigade, I.R.A. Shortly afterwards, I left to go to a job in Leahy's of Thurles. The vacancy arose when an assistant in Leahy's shop, by the name of Feehan, a man much wanted by the police for his I.R.A. activities, had to go on the run.

I wasn't very long in Leahy's when the house was raided one night by masked Black and Tans who said they were looking for Feehan. I escaped out a back window and lay low until the raiders had left.

Following this raid, I made up my mind that the best thing to do was to leave my job and contact the Mid-Tipperary Flying Column under Jimmy Leahy and Jerry Ryan. That same day, I contacted the Column about four miles outside Thurles and was supplied with a police carbine and ammunition.

Ambush at Ballyboy, Co. Tipperary:

at a place called Ballyboy, about six miles from Thurles.

A military convoy numbering, as far as I can remember, six lorries of troops, was passing through hilly country and we lay in wait behind hedges to hit them up. Jimmy Leahy was in charge.

When the convoy came in sight, we opened fire with rifles at a few hundred yards range. The soldiers left the lorries and replied to our fire from the roadside with machine guns and rifles. As we were no more than twenty strong, with a small supply of ammunition per man, the action was broken off by our O/C, Leahy, when we were in great danger of being encircled, due to the vastly superior number of enemy troops. The order to retreat was given and we made our way safely from what looked like developing into a very dangerous situation for us.

In the Column, the general procedure was: on entering a particular district, the Column Commander contacted the O/C of the local Company who arranged billets for us and provided outposts and scouts, so that we would not be surprised by the enemy. Each day the Column moved on to a different district, usually about ten miles away, depending on information regarding enemy troop movements and on weather conditions.

Attack on British troops at Hollyford(?):

The next engagement I can remember took place at Hollyford. I am not at all certain of the name, but it was a district named something like "Hollyford".

The attack was on a par with the Ballyboy ambush to which I have already referred. In the case of Hollyford, I can remember that the engagement lasted much

longer and that we had to withdraw for the same reason, viz., lack of sufficient ammunition to keep up the fight and much superior enemy forces.

I should have mentioned that we suffered no casualties in either of these two engagements, and I cannot say what casualties (if any) we inflicted on the British.

Attack on Littleton R.I.C. Barracks, Co. Tipperary:

On the morning of October 31st, 1920, it was planned to attack and capture Littleton R.I.C. Barracks.

This barracks was a two-storied stone and slated building. The windows were fitted with steel shutters for defence. It was situated half-way up the village street. Littleton is about four miles from Thurles.

The night before the proposed attack, it was arranged that the barracks should be captured by surprise. So, very early on the morning of October 31st, the Column entered the village and took up positions in two houses directly opposite the barracks, without arousing the suspicions of the garrison.

At about 10.30 a.m. Jerry Ryan, Vice O/C of the Column, said to me that, as I was not known in the village, I was to go to the local post office and dismantle the telephone exchange there. I went to the post office, cut the wires as instructed, and told the postmistress to remain indoors for an hour or so. She seemed to suspect the object of my visit, but agreed to do as I asked. I was armed with a revolver at the time.

I left the post office and was returning to my



of our own men approaching the barrack gate where a Black and Tan stood. As our man reached the gate, he suddenly lashed out at the Tan with the butt of a revolver and laid him stretched on the ground.

As this happened, the Column men rushed across the road with guns at the ready. I had reached the barrack gate at this time and was one of the first in through the door of the barracks which, luckily for us, had been left open by the Black and Tans who had been knocked out.

Some of our lads dashed into the dayroom of the barracks and some dashed upstairs. I was one of those who went upstairs and into a room where we found three Black and Tans in bed. One of them went for his gun, but didn't get a chance to fire as we had him covered and quickly disarmed.

We ordered the Tans to get up and hand over their guns and ammunition. We also allowed them to pack some of their belongings and get out of the building.

We collected a quantity of rifles and revolvers which were in the upstairs rooms and came down with our prisoners, lining them up on the roadway outside the barracks. Boxes of ammunition, rifles and grenades were also taken out from the ground floor rooms of the building.

So far as I can remember, we captured about fifteen rifles, ten revolvers, a large quantity of .303 and some revolver ammunition. A quantity of Mills bombs and Verey lights were also taken. As the captured stuff was taken on to the roadway, it was removed by members of the local I.R.A. to a place of safety.

Buckets of paraffin oil were then poured on the

building and it was set alight. The prisoners, numbering about fifteen, were then taken to an outhouse on Jerry Ryan's farm, some distance outside Littleton, and locked up.

After the Littleton attack, the Column retired northwards into Thurles which we entered in one's and two's later that same day.

British troops were seen to be leaving Thurles in large numbers, going in the direction of Littleton, and Leahy, the Column O/C, anticipating the the British, on returning from Littleton, would probably start reprisals in the town of Thurles, decided that the Column should remain in Thurles and attack the British, should they start reprisals.

Late that night, or very early in the morning of the following day, we lay in ambush in the vicinity of the bridge near the Cathedral, Thurles. We heard a bomb explosion, and Leahy send one of our men, who knew the town well, to go and find out what was happening and whether the British were moving in our direction. We waited quite a while for this man, who was armed with a revolver, but he failed to report back.

It would be somewhere about 2 a.m. when we heard footsteps approaching our position on the bridge, and discovered a party of Black and Tans advancing on foot towards us. Our O/C gave whispered orders to hold fire until the Tans were closer. Fire was then opened by us whereupon the Tans ran back in a panic. One of them (as we thought) stood still and shouted to us not to fire. It was then discovered, to our great surprise, that this man was, in fact, the scout we had sent out an

hour or so previously. He had been captured by the Tans and was a prisoner of theirs.

We started in pursuit of the enemy and ran them into a narrow lane which turned out to be a cul-de-sac, and we thought we had ~~by~~ them properly caught. We found, however, that they had escaped over gates and walls out of our view. We did capture about four revolvers, some ammunition and a grenade which the Tans had discarded in their hurried flight to escape.

After this, we lay low for a day or two in Thurles and then re-formed and made for the open country again.

In December, 1920, I went down to Cork to see my brother, Lawrence, who was a prisoner in Cork gaol where he was undergoing a sentence of ten years penal servitude for being caught with a revolver in his possession in Dungarvan, Co. Waterford.

On my way out of the gaol, I walked right into an R.I.C. man, named Harcourt, who had been an R.I.C. man in Dungarvan and who knew me well from the time of my previous arrest in that town. Luckily for me, Harcourt failed to recognise me - probably due to the fact that I had grown a moustache by way of a disguise.

I went from Cork to Cappoquin and then on to my home at Ballyguiry, Co. Waterford, where I remained for a night or two only, as word reached me that the Tans were looking for me in Cappoquin. I then went by rail to Thurles where I made contact again with the Column.

I had no sooner got back to Thurles again when I was stopped and questioned by a Black and Tan patrol who,

of gun cartridge makers. I was being brought to the barracks when I chanced to remark that there was some money in the pocket of the diary and I hoped it wouldn't be lost. The Black and Tan, who held the diary, threw it at me and told me, in strong language, to clear off. I need scarcely say I did so, with astonishment at my good fortune.

It would be in or about the month of February, 1920, when a few of us from the Column happened to be in a public house in Thurles. A Black and Tan came in, alone, for a drink and, in the course of conversation with us, asked if any of us was interested in buying guns or ammunition. I said, "Yes". He then made an appointment to meet us in the same public house a few days afterwards.

Ambush at Rusheen, Co. Tipperary:

The morning following the incident I have mentioned, a Crossley tender containing Black and Tans left Thurles in the direction of Rusheen. About ten of us were hurriedly mobilised, and a position to ambush the Tans on their return to Thurles was picked at a place named Rusheen, about three miles north of Thurles. So far as I can remember, all of us were armed with rifles. Two of our lads had Mills bombs.

A donkey cart was placed across the road as a barricade. Due to the hurried nature of the arrangements for the ambush, it was not possible to prepare a more effective barricade, as the Tans were expected along any moment. The instructions issued by Jerry Ryan (who was in charge) were that nobody was to open fire until the Mills bombs were thrown.

We had hardly taken up our allotted positions along the inside of the hedges when the Crossley tender with the Tans came in sight. It was proceeding at a very fast pace. As the tender approached the barricade, it accelerated speed; at the same time, our bombers went into action, but the grenades appeared to fall short of the target as the tender dashed through the barricade, taking part of the donkey cart with it. It was possible for us to get in only a few shots at the fleeting target, with what effect I cannot now remember. We did, however, identify one of the Tans as the man who had offered to sell us guns the previous night in Thurles.

Later that evening, this same Black and Tan visited the public house where he had met us and swore vengeance on us for attempting to kill him. Needless to remark, we did not keep the appointment we had previously made with this man, as we were sent a warning, by the barman in the public house, of the consequences if we put in an appearance.

In or about the same period - February, 1921 - six of us from the Column were in the back room of a public house in Thurles when the Tans came, banging at the front door to gain admittance. The time was about 11 p.m. We all slipped quietly out the back way. As we were getting away, Jimmy Leahy, our O/C, spotted a Tan climbing in over the back gate. He took a shot at the Tan as the latter reached the top of the gate, and the Tan dropped off the gate back into the laneway.

By this time, the man of the house, named Hickey, had admitted the raiders who searched the place and, of course, found nothing. They then left the premises.

They returned again after midnight, wearing masks, broke in the back entrance to the public house and pulled Hickey, the proprietor, out of bed. They threw him down the stairs and shot him dead in the kitchen.

At the subsequent inquest, the jury returned a verdict of shooting by persons unknown.

Sometime in late February, 1921, the bodies of four Black and Tans, who had been killed in an engagement with our lads in North Tipperary, arrived in Thurles in Crossley tenders. The Tans paraded the coffins around the Square in Thurles and compelled everybody to close the doors of their houses. Those people in the streets were compelled, at the point of the revolver, to kneel on the sidewalks as the cortege passed. I myself was on the street at the time and had to kneel with others.

Early in March, 1921, it was arranged that the men of the North Tipperary Column, under their O/C (named, I think, Stapleton), should come in to Thurles on a certain night with the object of carrying out a combined attack with us on the Black and Tan patrols.

The North Tipperary men succeeded in entering the town unnoticed by the enemy. (We were already there.) Positions for attack were taken up at various points in the town but, up to a late hour, no patrols appeared on the streets.

It became evident that our presence had, in some way, become known to the British, so it was decided to divide our forces. One party was detailed to keep a special watch on the Black and Tan barracks. The remainder of us approached the military barracks, which

is on the outskirts of the town, and opened rifle fire. The military replied vigorously with rifles and machine guns. They also exploded land mines outside the barbed wire defences of the barracks.

As this was merely a diversionary attack on our part to entice the Tans out of their barracks, we withdrew after about half-an-hour.

Our lads, watching the Black and Tan barracks in the hope that the garrison might come out on hearing the shooting in the vicinity of the military barracks, saw two civilians hurriedly leave the barracks. These men were taken prisoner and brought to our group. When questioned, the civilians admitted having given information to the Tans of our presence in the town that night. They were then taken a short distance outside Thurles and shot. I cannot now recall the names of these two men.

Although the combined Columns remained in Thurles until an early hour in the morning, the British showed no indication of coming out of their barracks, so we retreated northwards when daylight came. Our forces that night in Thurles numbered about sixty men.

Approaching the end of March, 1921, the Mid-Tipperary Column dispersed for a short period owing to very heavy enemy pressure in the Thurles district. I, together with two other Column men named Quinlan and McLoughlin, were proceeding across country towards Thurles when we ran into a patrol of Black and Tans. We were armed with revolvers. The date, I well remember, was March 30th, 1921.

The Tans ordered us to halt, at the same time

opening fire. We replied with revolver shots and scattered to escape. Quinlan was wounded in the leg, but managed somehow to get away. McLoughlin and myself made off in different directions, and we too escaped, at least, for the time being.

I was making my way alone across country in the direction of Thurles when I heard shooting not very far away. I took cover and, when the noise of the firing had ceased, made cautiously for a cottage, with the idea of having a brief rest and getting some food.

As I approached, the woman of the house saw me from the door and began waving her apron, indicating that I should take cover. As I did so, a patrol of Black and Tans passed by the cottage. When they passed on, the woman warned me that the Tans were all around the vicinity, so I decided to push on.

I had gone on a few miles, all the time keeping to the fields, when I saw a man some distance away on the road, driving a horse and cart. I recognised this man, whose name was Doyle, and decided I would get out on the road and enquire from him if he had met up with any of the enemy.

When I got on to the road, I found to my surprise and dismay that four Tans were walking a short distance behind Doyle's cart, from the back of which the legs of a man were hanging.

The Tans ordered me to halt, but I plunged through the hedge and ran through the adjoining field. In the field was a man ploughing. He saw what was happening. I hurriedly passed him my revolver and told him to hide



it. I then dashed away by the hedge.

I hadn't got much further from the road when I was surrounded by the Tans and taken prisoner. They marched me back to the cart and, on looking into it, I discovered that the man, whose legs I had seen a short time before, was none other than my comrade, McLoughlin who had been shot dead by the Tan party an hour or so previously.

I was asked if I knew McLoughlin but denied any knowledge of him. After further questioning and some knocking about at the hands of my captors, I was marched into Thurles where I was taken to the Black and Tan barracks.

I was again assaulted during interrogation in the barracks but denied having any connection with the I.R.A. Unfortunately, a policeman named Ryan was there, who was one of the garrison in Littleton R.I.C. barracks captured by us, and Ryan was one of the men whom I personally held up that morning in Littleton. He immediately recognised me and proceeded to beat me with the butt of his revolver. Others of the former Littleton garrison also joined in the beating, and I was then thrown, more dead than alive, into a cell.

After some hours, I was taken out of the cell and up to the office of the District Inspector of police. This man questioned me about my part in the Littleton barrack attack. I did not deny being there. There was no point in my denying it at this stage, as at least five R.I.C. men had identified me.

The attitude of the District Inspector was what I might describe as "quite nice" and I wondered what his

idea was. I soon found out, when he produced a cheque and offered to fill it in for £15,000 if I would give him information as to where the arms captured at Littleton had been taken and any details of the personnel of the Column and its whereabouts. Needless to say, I refused point-blank to give him any such information in spite of much cajoling on his part, so I was again returned to the cell.

That same night, a military escort came for me and took me over to the military barracks. Here I was brought into a room before an officer who questioned me about my I.R.A. activities. I refused to reply. He then ordered me to strip to the waist and, placing a revolver to my chest, again asked me what I knew about the I.R.A. Again I refused to answer. This officer then beat me up and, eventually, I was thrown into a cell in the barracks.

I was held in Thurles barracks for a few days and then brought by lorry to Templemore. From Templemore I was taken with two others to Nenagh and thence to Limerick gaol. We had a rather imposing escort of three lorries (laden with military) and an armoured car.

On the 11th April, 1921, I was charged before a field-general court martial, together with two men, named Leamy (afterwards an officer in the Free State Army) and McGrath, with the offences of having carried firearms and with arson on October 31st, 1920, at Littleton. I was sentenced to five years penal servitude on each charge.

In Limerick gaol we were issued with convict prison clothes which we refused to wear. As a result

we spent a week, naked, in our cells. However, following a general refusal by all the prisoners to wear prison garb, the authorities agreed to allow us to wear our own clothes.

I was detained in Limerick gaol until May 1st, 1921, when I was transferred to Cork gaol where I was kept for ten days, during which I got no food whatsoever.

From Cork I was transferred to Spike Island where I was placed in an underground cell with other prisoners.

The living conditions in Spike were very primitive. The food was poor but, after some time, we were permitted to cook it ourselves. We were fourteen to a cell, and one man was deputed to cook for each cell. We were allowed to leave the cells daily for a few hours' exercise and were locked up finally each evening at six o'clock. During the night an officer, with a guard, visited each cell and checked the number of prisoners.

Amongst the many prisoners in Spike Island at the time were Seán Moylan, T.D., and Seán Hayes, T.D. These two men were released in August, 1921.

On November 16th, 1921, eighty-five of us were taken from Spike by destroyer and brought to Waterford whence we were taken, handcuffed, in pairs, by train to Kilkenny gaol.

On November 22nd, 1921, forty-four prisoners escaped by tunnelling under the gaol. One of the escapees was my brother, Larry. Those of us who remained were badly beaten up by the military on the day following the escape.

On December 1st, 1921, we were handcuffed in pairs and put into military lorries bound for Ballybricken gaol, Waterford, where I was held until my release on 12th January, 1922.

On being released, I returned to Dungarvan, Co. Waterford, and rejoined my old Company.

After the taking over<sup>from</sup> the British of Cappoquin barracks, I was appointed Battalion Adjutant there and, a little later, Brigade Adjutant to the Waterford Brigade under Pax Whelan, the Brigade O/C.

About May, 1922, I was in charge of Dungarvan barracks and, when the Civil War broke out in June of that year, I fought on the anti-treaty side.

I joined up with the Waterford Column and took part in the defence of Waterford city. Following the capture of the city by Free State troops, we retired westwards and linked up with the 7th Battalion, Waterford, in the Nire Valley (Ballymacarberry) district, the O/C of which was Jack O'Meara.

I took part in engagements against Free State troops at Mulnachurca, Ballinamult, Woodhouse, Modeligo and Killongford, Co. Waterford.

In the course of sniping Free State soldiers in Dungarvan, I got hit by a bullet in the jaw but was put right by Doctor White of Cappoquin.

Following this, I was engaged at our Brigade Headquarters (as Adjutant) at Coum, Araglin, Co. Cork, and remember attending meetings of the Brigade Staff held at Knockboy, Ballinamult, at which Frank Aiken, Liam Lynch,

Liam Deasy, Austin Stack and Eamonn de Valera were amongst those present. The general military position was discussed at this and other such meetings.

I remained with the Column until the Cease Fire order of April, 1923, when we dumped our arms.

In company with other men of the Waterford Brigade, I left the country for England and thence to Canada where I remained for about six months. A few of us, who kept together, then entered the U.S.A. (illegally across the Canadian border) where I worked for eleven years or so, finally returning to Dungarvan, Co. Waterford, in December, 1935.

SIGNED:

James Fraher  
(James Fraher)

DATE:

26 August 1955

26 August 1955.

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21  
BURO STAIRE MILETA 1913-21  
NO. W.S. 1237

WITNESS

T. O'Gorman  
(T. O'Gorman)