

W.S. 1381

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
BURO STAIRE MILEATA 1913-21
NO. W.S. 1381

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

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Witness

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 Tuam,
 Co. Galway.

Identity.

Intelligence Officer,
 Leenane Battalion, Co. Galway.

Subject.

Leenane Company Irish Volunteers,
 Co. Galway, 1917-1921.

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STATEMENT BY WILLIAM KING,

110, Parkmore Terrace, Tuam, Co. Galway.

I was born at Drummin, Westport, Co. Mayo, in the month of August, 1903. My father was Michael King and my mother's maiden name was Margaret Sammon. I had two brothers, John C. and Thomas, and one sister, Margaret Mary. My mother died when I was one day old and I was taken with my eldest brother, John C., to live with our uncle, Patrick Sammon of Cullaghbeg, Leenane, Co. Galway. My other brother, Thomas, and my sister were taken to an aunt in America. John C. and I were educated at Leenane National School, two miles distant from our uncle's house. Our teachers were Mr. Thomas Gallagher and his wife. Mr. Gallagher's father taught in that school and his son taught there when he retired.

The local post office was at Leenane Hotel and my brother and I often went to mail letters there. On our way to the post office we passed the local R.I.C. barrack. The Garda Síochána station now occupies the same site. During the 1914/1918 war there was a big display of placards outside the R.I.C. barrack. They were mostly recruiting posters with headings such as "Recruits wanted", "Your King and Country need you". As children we admired the beautiful pictures of soldiers in uniform. I remember, too, as a boy, seeing parades of Redmond's Volunteers, who were trained by Martin McDonnell. I never joined Redmond's Volunteers. I remember also seeing parades of the Irish Volunteers. They were usually held on Sundays. I remember that the training of the Irish Volunteers in the early days was done by Thomas Tarmay, an ex-British soldier and a native of Westport.

I remember that Pádraig Ó Máille of Mounterowen, Kilmilkin, Co. Galway, afterwards Deputy Ceann Comhairle of Dáil Éireann, was very actively associated with Sinn Féin, which had little interest for me as a boy except that its publications had some patriotic songs which attracted me. The local Sinn Féin club at that time (pre 1916) distributed song books containing patriotic songs in English published by Felix MacGlennon of Dublin. I remember well two other men who were also very actively associated with Pádraig Ó Máille in the Sinn Féin movement. They were Peter McDonnell of Leenane, whose father was a Fenian, and Colm Ó Gaora from Rossmuck.

One day news came of a rising in Dublin and of the gallant stand of a small band of Irishmen against the might of the British Empire. We heard that Pádraig Ó Máille and Colm Ó Gaora were arrested. News travelled slowly at that time, and, as we were later to learn, it was often coloured by British propaganda. After the rising in Dublin executions and deportations fired my blood. My uncle, who took very little interest in politics at that time, often told me and my brother that Irishmen would always be beaten because there were too many traitors in the country. He told us all about John Redmond and Home Rule.

I joined the Irish Volunteers in November, 1917, when I was a little over fourteen years and still attending school. The company was Leenane, which later became 'A' Company of the 1st Battalion, West Connemara Brigade. The Company Captain was Peter McDonnell, whom I have already mentioned as being closely connected with Pádraig Ó Máille and Colm Ó Gaora in the Sinn Féin movement. He afterwards became O/C, West Connemara Brigade, and Vice O/C, 4th

Western Division of the I.R.A. The 1st Lieutenant of the company was Jack Feehan, afterwards Brigade Q/M, West Connemara Brigade, and second in command of the West Connemara Brigade Flying Column. The 2nd Lieutenant was Patrick Kelly, who in the post-truce period was O/C Louisburgh Battalion, West Mayo Brigade, and a member of Michael Kilroy's Flying Column.

The strength of the company was from sixty-five to seventy men. Parades were held every Saturday night and sometimes on Wednesday nights as well. Some foot drill was taught but no arms drill. Route marches were made occasionally on Sundays, and on these marches some scouting lessons were given. That was the extent of training in 1917 and 1918.

The Leenane Company area coincided with the Leenane parish area, which extended into County Mayo as far as Erriff Bridge on the Leenane-Westport road and as far as Doolough on the Leenane-Louisburgh road. As regards numbers, roughly one half of the company were natives of County Mayo and the other half natives of County Galway. Two members of the company from County Mayo, the brothers Patrick and Peter Wallace from Letterass, Ashleagh, afterwards became members of the West Connemara Brigade Flying Column. Leenane and Finney Companies^{were} the only ones in the West Connemara Brigade which extended into County Mayo. Leenane Company had the distinction of having eleven of its members in the West Connemara Brigade Flying Column. Their names are: Captain Peter McDonnell, afterwards Brigade Commandant, West Connemara Brigade, and O/C of the column; Lt. Jack Feehan, afterwards Brigade Q/M, West Connemara Brigade, and second in command of the column; Volunteer John C. King,

afterwards Adjutant, Leenane Battalion; Volunteer Patrick Wallace, afterwards: Q/M, Leenane Battalion; Martin Conneally, afterwards: Brigade Adjutant, West Connemara Brigade; Jack Conneally, afterwards: Vice Commandant, West Connemara Brigade; Volunteer Peter Wallace, Volunteer Thomas Coyne, Volunteer Richard Joyce, Volunteer Michael Joyce, Volunteer William King (myself), afterwards: I/O, Leenane Battalion.

All these eleven members of the Leenane Company served in the West Connemara Brigade Flying Column from its formation late in 1920 to the truce of July, 1921.

I remember the general election of 1918 very well and the result - victory for the Sinn Féin candidate, the late Pádraig Ó Máille. Prior to the election there were great preparations. Election slogans were being prepared and green, white and orange badges bearing photographs of the executed and imprisoned 1916 leaders were being sold. I helped in the sale of those badges, the money going into election funds. I remember that at the time green, white and gold ties were worn by a big number of boys. As I was then a young boy I was very proud to wear my green, white and gold badge and tie. I collected the slogans and learned them off by heart. William O'Malley was then the sitting M.P. for Connemara. I think the constituency covered Galway City and all Connemara. I remember that my uncle on polling day went with his horse and side-car to bring the supporters of the Sinn Féin candidate - Pádraig Ó Máille - to the polling booth at Salruck National School. One of the slogans I now remember was:

"Two men now call you for your vote,
Two of the O'Malley clan,
As William trusts in England still,
So Pádraig is your man".

William O'Malley, the Redmondite candidate, was nick-named "Phosferine" as he had allowed his name to be used in advertising this commodity as a great nerve tonic and so another slogan:

"You sons of Connemara with votes so sharp and keen,
Who wait your chance to fire me out and live on
Phosferine."

In the year 1919 there were several raids for shotguns in the Leenane company area. About half a dozen guns were collected as a result of these raids. Later on the Dáil Éireann loan was collected by members of the company who were also members of the Sinn Féin Club. Sittings of the parish court were held in various places, including the home of the Ó Máille family at Kilmilkin. The justices of the parish court were John Coyne of Leenane, Michael Coyne of Griggins, Maam, and Thomas Ó Máille of Kilmilkin. I took very little interest in the activities of the Sinn Féin courts. I remember, however, that a man named Thomas Joyce was arrested by the Volunteers and brought to an unknown destination. Joyce was tried and a fine of eighty pounds was imposed on him. I remember that Rev. Fr. O'Grady, P.P., of Cornamona parish was a witness in the case. The fine of eighty pounds was collected by the Volunteers and paid over as damages to Joyce's sister-in-law, who was the complaining party. It was a family feud of some kind.

As far as I remember, all the Volunteers in Leenane Company acted as Republican police as the need arose. I remember a case of robbery of furniture from a cottage at Kylemore, belonging to the nuns at Kylemore Abbey. The culprits, two brothers named Bodkin, were tracked down by the Volunteers and the furniture restored to the nuns. The brothers Bodkin were punished by a fine imposed by the

parish court. This robbery was committed outside the Leenane Company area and as there were no Volunteers in Kylemore, a very backward area, the matter was dealt with by the Leenane Company.

I remember one evening in the harvest of 1919 when my brother, John C., asked me to go with him to Leenane parish church. We were met there by a big number of men and the oath of allegiance was administered to us by Captain Peter McDonnell. He addressed us and told us that we were then soldiers of the Irish Republican Army. The occasion was a special parade of the company. Drilling and route marches were continued for some time after that. I was very young at the time and the officers of the company told me to take things easy. I remember that about this time my brother was away from home whole nights and I wondered where he was and what he was doing. I soon learned that he was actively engaged in I.R.A. work.

One night in the spring of 1920 I attended a meeting of the company at which we were told that Leenane R.I.C. barrack, which had been evacuated a few weeks previously, was to be destroyed. The garrison had consisted of a sergeant and four constables. On the night that the barrack was burned we heard that the R.I.C. had fixed hand grenades in the walls before they left and that these would explode if the door was forced open. I was handed my first revolver, a .38, and told to do guard at Leenane Hotel. In spite of the rumour about the hand grenades, the door of the barrack was forced open and petrol sprinkled inside the building. Captain Peter McDonnell climbed up to a window and applied a lighted match. The resultant explosion scorched his face and hands and the marks were noticeable for many days after.

About this time, or maybe a little before, Pádraig Ó Máille and his brother Eamon were sleeping at their own house at Mounterowen near Cullaghbeg when the house was surrounded by R.I.C. from Leenane, Maam, Oughterard and Clifden R.I.C. barracks. The Ó Máilles opened fire on the R.I.C. and escaped to remain 'on the run' until the truce of July, 1921. Eamon was until recently an engineer in the Housing Branch of the Local Government Department in Dublin. The Ó Máille brothers took the risk of sleeping in their own home on a few occasions after the raid for them by the R.I.C. There were several raids on the Ó Máille home by R.I.C. and British military up to the truce.

Some time in 1920 the I.R.A. built a dug-out in the Glenglosh Valley to store arms. Later on it was slept in occasionally by men 'on the run'. It could contain twelve at a time. It was in a very safe place as it could be reached only by daylight and then anybody trying to reach it had to be as sure-footed as a mountain goat to scale the face of the rock leading to it. Later on dug-outs were built at Mountowen, Cullaghbeg, Currarevagh and Finney, while a bell-tent was put up near Wallaces of Ashleagh. I was 'on the run' at this time and I remember that on the day of my Confirmation by His Grace, the Most Reverend Doctor Gilmartin, watch was kept for me by two Volunteers of the Leenane Company.

About this time I remember that a man named Kenny from Claremorris, who had deserted from the British Army was 'on the run' in the Leenane area. I was very keen to learn arms drill and Kenny taught me everything he knew. I practised it very hard and got very good at it. Later on when the Brigade Flying Column was formed I became drill

instructor to it. I put them through arms drill regularly, including the fixing and unfixing of bayonets.

Some time late in 1920 Richard Mulcahy of G.H.Q., Dublin, came to Connemara, and with his assistance and advice the West Connemara Brigade was organised. Captain Peter McDonnell of Leenane Company was appointed Brigade Commandant, Lieutenant Jack Feehan of the same company was appointed Brigade Q/M, Martin Conneally Brigade Adjutant, and Jack Conneally Brigade Vice Commandant. There were four battalions in the brigade and the four Battalion Commandants appointed were:

- No. 1 (Leenane) Battalion - Thomas Ó Máille
- No. 2 (Rosmuck) Battalion - Colm Ó Gaora
- No. 3 (Roundstone) Battalion - James King
- No. 4 (Clifden) Battalion - Gerald Bartly, afterwards
member of Dáil Éireann.

The meeting at which these officers were appointed was held in the home of Thomas Ó Máille, Kilmilkin. Another brother of Thomas is Surgeon Michael Ó Máille of Galway.

The No. 1 (Leenane) Battalion was comprised of six companies. The names of the companies and company captains are as follows:

- A (Leenane) Company - John Coyne
- B (Cornamona) " - Michael Walsh
- C (Cloughbrack) " - Martin Walsh
- D (Finney) " - Michael Joyce, Kilbride
- E (Lettergesh) " - - Kerrigan. I am not sure
christian name; it would be
John or Peter.
- F (Kilmilkin & Maam) Company - John Halloran.

The names of the Battalion Staff officers of the No. 1 (Leenane) Battalion are as follows:

Vice Commandant - none appointed before July, 1921.
 Adjutant - John C. King.
 Q/M - Patrick Wallace
 I/O - William King (myself)
 M/O - Dr. Seamus O'Brien.

Michael Joyce, Glanagimla, Leenane, replaced Thomas Ó Máille as Battalion Commandant in January, 1921.

Shortly after this a meeting was held in Brigadier Peter McDonnell's workshop at Leenane. There was a big assembly of officers and Volunteers and we were told that a Flying Column was about to be formed. All those assembled were anxious to join the active service unit, but many of those present had to be told that they could not be accepted owing to shortage of arms and ammunition. There were only about eleven or twelve rifles available at the time. They were of mixed patterns and included Lee Enfield, Winchester, Springfield, Martini single shot and Howth. There were about twelve revolvers and the same number of shotguns. About this time, too, a sum of about two hundred pounds was collected in the brigade area for the purchase of arms.

The names of the officers and men of the newly formed Flying Column, as far as I can remember them, are:

Peter McDonnell, Brigade Commandant and Column Comd.
 Jack Feehan, Brigade Q/M and Column Vice Comdt.
 Martin Conneally, Brigade Adjutant.
 Colm Ó Gaora, Comdt. No. 2 (Rosmuck) Battn.
 James King, Comdt. No. 3 (Roundstone) Battn.
 Volunteer Thomas Coyne, Glengimla, Leenane.
 John C. King, Adjutant Leenane Battn.
 William King, I/O Leenane Battn. (myself).
 Volunteer Richard Joyce, Ashmount, Leenane.
 Volunteer Michael Joyce, Leenane.
 Volunteer Patrick Wallace, Letterash, Leenane.
 Volunteer Patrick Ó Máille, Mounterowen, Leenane.
 Volunteer Peter Wallace, Letterash, Leenane.
 Volunteer Eamon Ó Máille, Mounterowen, Leenane.
 Volunteer John Dundass, Roundstone.
 Volunteer Michael Conroy, Calla, Roundstone.
 Volunteer John King, Roundstone,
 Volunteer John Conneally, Roundstone.

Volunteer Denis Keane, Roundstone.
 Volunteer Stephen Mannion, Roundstone.
 Volunteer Thomas Madden, Ballinaboy, Clifden.
 Volunteer Paul Bartley, Clifden, brother of Comdt. G.
 Bartly.
 Volunteer Christopher Breen, Clifden.
 Volunteer William Conneally, Clifden.
 Volunteer Laurence O'Toole, Tullycross, Renvyle, Clifden.
 Comdt. Gerald Bartly, O/C Clifden Battn. (now member
 of Dáil Éireann)

The Flying Column provided itself with blankets and bedding by commandeering them from Imperialist families, including that of Lord Sligo at Ashleagh. They went to Glanagimla for about a week's training, which included scouting, judging distance, aiming, rifle drill and all aspects of cover from view and fire. There was no target practice as ammunition was too precious.

The first attempt made by the Flying Column to contact the enemy was on the main Galway/Clifden road between Glendalough and Ballinahinch. We had learned that a lorry of R.I.C. passed that way almost every day. An odd time there were two lorries. We took up positions four days in succession but the enemy did not turn up and we left the district. We usually were all put up in the same village and we kept on the move from village to village. We got our information mainly from the local officers.

The column arrived in Clifden area on the 16th March, 1921, with the intention of contacting an R.I.C. patrol in the town of Clifden. About eight or ten of the column under the command of the Column Commandant - Peter McDonnell - entered the town. The remainder of the column guarded the approaches to the town and kept the R.I.C. barrack covered to keep the garrison indoors, after the patrol had gone out. The strength of the garrison in Clifden R.I.C. barrack was at the time about thirty-five to forty men. They were a

mixed lot of regular R.I.C. and Tans. The patrol numbered four when leaving the barrack, but two went into a publichouse and only the other two came into the ambush position. These two were killed. The I.R.A. party that entered the town to contact the patrol did not enter any house in the town. They took up positions in doorways and at street corners. A Lee Enfield rifle and a Webley revolver were taken. The party in the town withdrew safely and joined the main body outside. All the column then withdrew from Clifden through the Twelve Pins to Lotty in the heart of the Twelve Pins overlooking Lake Inagh. We put up in a disused house at Lotty.

I heard shortly afterwards that immediately after the attack on the patrol in Clifden messages were flashed by the R.I.C. from the Marconi station at Ballinaboy to London. They were relayed from there to Galway. Big reinforcements of R.I.C. and British forces came by rail and road from Galway to Clifden. Houses were burned and looted in Clifden. The house of Gerald Bartly, now member of Dáil Éireann, was looted and burned. As far as I know, thirteen other houses were burned. Many of the inhabitants of the town took refuge in the workhouse. Mr. J.J. McDonnell, shopkeeper, was shot dead. Mr. Peter Clancy was so severely wounded that he died. Mr. John M. Lydon died shortly after as a result of a beating.

The column had information that a party of R.I.C. left Maam barrack once a month to pay pensions to ex-members of that force who lived in the neighbourhood of Rosmuck. We had learned that a cycle patrol of six men usually did this work. It was decided to attack them near Screeb Cross. On the 5th April, 1921, the column took up positions at about

10 a.m., two hundred yards from Screeb Cross on the Maam side. Positions were taken up on both sides of the road, the main body remaining on the western side as there was little cover on the other side. The R.I.C. patrol approached the ambush position in the afternoon, cycling in single file ten to fifteen yards apart. In the short engagement, lasting about fifteen minutes, one of the R.I.C. was wounded. The wounded man and two other members of the patrol were forced to surrender and were disarmed. One rifle and two revolvers were taken from them. The fourth member of the patrol was outside the ambush position when the I.R.A. opened fire and he escaped with his arms. The full Flying Column was engaged in this attack, with Brigade Commandant Peter McDonnell in charge.

The column suffered no casualty at Screeb. The three R.I.C. were released and the column marched to Mounterowen House, the home of Pádraig Ó Máille, afterwards Deputy Ceann Comhairle, Dáil Éireann. We put up there and about a fortnight after our arrival we got word that it was known to the enemy that we were at Mounterowen. Our officers on receipt of this information decided to stay at Mounterowen and await the enemy attack. We spent a few days preparing defensive positions along a fence to the rear of the Ó Máille house. The fence was about twenty yards to the rear of the house. Each man was allotted his own position to meet the attack. Rifles, shotguns and revolvers were cleaned with great care and sentries were doubled at night.

On the night of the 22nd/23rd April, 1921, just as day was breaking one of the sentries noticed what he took to be cattle on the Maam/Leenane road about six hundred yards from

our positions. It was soon apparent that they were R.I.C. and Black and Tans. The column was ordered to stand to in the prepared positions and not to open fire until a definite order was given to do so. To get to Mounterowen House the R.I.C. would have to cross the Maam river which is about fifty yards from the Maam/Leenane road. At that time there was no bridge across the river but there were stepping stones where the bridge now stands. The place is about eight hundred yards or so from Kilmilkin which is marked on most maps. The range from some of our prepared positions to the stepping stones would be two hundred yards and from others three hundred. As the R.I.C. were approaching the stepping stones a shot was accidentally discharged by one of the I.R.A.

The R.I.C. dived immediately for cover and opened fire on the house from deep drains and other concealed positions. They had scattered so quickly when the shot was discharged accidentally that we were unable to get them in any concentration. The nature of the ground helped them. They had got into good cover and it was almost impossible to locate them. There were thirty R.I.C. in the party. The morning and the day wore on with very little change in the position. Several attempts were made to get to close quarters with the R.I.C. but they were unsuccessful owing to the nature of the ground.

The day was very cold with heavy showers of rain and sleet, but Mrs. Eamon Ó Máille, who was in the house with her two children and her sister-in-law, sent us out plenty of bread and butter and tea. I remember at one time during the fight that Commandant Peter McDonnell sent a scout up the mountain, where he was exposed to the R.I.C. fire, to ensure that the enemy were not coming at us from the rear.

The man selected for this job was Volunteer John Dundass, who had to run up the mountainside and, although heavy fire was brought to bear on him, he got safely through.

I remember also that a small party of the column armed with shotguns were sent to demolish Mounterowen Bridge on the Leenane side of our positions to delay or prevent reinforcements attacking our flank. They failed to demolish the bridge for lack of suitable implements. They could only get a crowbar and pick-axe from a house near the bridge.

Things were looking good from our point of view as we thought that sooner or later the R.I.C. would have to surrender. One of them had been killed very early in the fight and we thought that the cold and hunger would make them give in. Their luck was in, however, for a man named Francis Joyce of Leenane came from that direction in a Ford motor car with two workmen. They had poles and wire in the car and were going to fence land at Raglia, Kilmilkin. They were in the ambush position before they realised it. We tried by firing in front of the car to warn Joyce away but he must have got panickly and drove on into the ambush.

One of the R.I.C. jumped on the running board of the car, threatening Joyce with a revolver to keep going as fast as he could. This R.I.C. man was wounded while on the running board but he succeeded in getting to Maam R.I.C. barrack and to Maam Cross post office, from where he telephoned to Galway for reinforcements. The telephone in Maam barrack was out of order. This R.I.C. man's name was Rutledge. We were very unlucky that Joyce came with his car at the particular time. Had he been a little later the party sent to demolish the bridge would have turned him back

or held him prisoner. In any case, they would have prevented him from driving on and his car would have been out of reach of the R.I.C. There were thirty R.I.C. held down and we heard afterwards that they were on the point of surrendering. Had not Joyce come along I think we would have their thirty rifles and revolvers.

A beggarman came along on foot soon after from the opposite - Maam - direction. The R.I.C. ordered him to send out a priest and doctor from Leenane as soon as he arrived there. Some time later a tall man dressed in black arrived. He was taken to be an R.I.C. man and fired on. We later learned that he was Rev. Fr. Cunningham of Leenane, who had come out as a result of the beggarman's message. He was very annoyed that we fired on him, but we could not have identified him on account of the distance. Very soon after our scouts signalled the approach of reinforcements and we withdrew up the mountainside, from where we watched the reinforcements approach Mounterowen House and the positions vacated by us. They approached in short rushes covered by machine-gun fire. They were in extended formation. They bombed the house when they got within bomb-throwing distance, but by that time Mrs. Ó Máille and the children and her sister-in-law had taken refuge in an outhouse. Mrs. Ó Máille was made prisoner by the R.I.C. The reinforcements comprised an armoured car and thirteen lorry loads of R.I.C. and British military.

When the reinforcements arrived the original R.I.C. party were not able to walk by themselves owing to their cramped position and the cold. They had to be helped to the lorries by the reinforcements. The man who drove Fr. Cunningham to the scene of the ambush was Jack Conneally,

Vice Commandant of the brigade. He was then employed at Leenane Hotel as driver-mechanic. He was most anxious to be on active service with the Flying Column but the Brigade Commandant would not permit it. Vice Brigadier Conneally was an ex-British soldier and he was not suspected of having any connection with the I.R.A. He obtained valuable information from the R.I.C. and British military.

The column, which had no casualty in the fight, withdrew to Cullaghbeg, where we had tea and a two hour's rest. From there we marched across the mountain to Shanafaraghan, Finney, inside the County Mayo border but still in the West Connemara Brigade area. We were in Finney Company area which, as I have already explained, extended into County Mayo. We then went on to Wallace's of Ashleagh. Two of the Wallace boys were in the Flying Column. From Ashleagh we went on to Ben Gorm where a tent was provided for us by the Brigade Vice Commandant. I think he brought it from the Leenane Hotel.

Shortly after the Mounterowen ambush we got four Lee Enfield rifles from G.H.Q., Dublin, two revolvers and a good supply of ammunition. We were very short of ammunition after the Mounterowen fight, which had lasted from daybreak to late in the evening.

I was made prisoner by British military in a round-up which took place very shortly after the ambush at Mounterowen. I had come home for one night and was captured at home. I was taken to Maam R.I.C. barrack, where I was badly beaten. Shots were fired over my head, pins were driven into my skin and all sorts of threats used by the R.I.C. to make me tell the whereabouts of my brother, John C. Towards evening, after a day of torture, one of

the R.I.C. named Mallane came to me in my cell and said that later on when all the other R.I.C. and Tans would get drunk he would help me to escape through the back gate. This Constable Mallane had at one time been friendly with my uncle. He was as good as his word and in spite of all the beatings and torture I got away from the place very quickly and swore that I would never be caught again. I think they would have shot me only that I looked so young at the time. I remember one Black and Tan saying that I should be in the cradle.

I went back immediately to the Flying Column but there was no further contact with the enemy. About the middle of May the Flying Column broke up and the members went to their respective areas. From then to the truce I stayed in a dug-out near Mounterowen with Pádraig Ó Máille, then T.D. and afterwards Deputy Ceann Comhairle, Dáil Éireann. His brothers Eamon and Thomas were also with us. Thomas was a Professor at University College, Galway, but had to go "on the run" from the city.

Pádraig Ó Máille had a dog named Dingo that followed him everywhere he went. Dingo was regarded as a great nuisance by everybody except Pádraig himself. One night shortly before the truce we were sleeping in the dug-out as usual. It was eight feet long by eight feet wide by four feet high. The night was very wet and Dingo came running into the dug-out, shook himself near Thomas, who got the full force of the shower. A couple of rifles and shotguns were resting against the side of the dug-out. Thomas grasped one of the rifles and made a blow at Dingo. The roof was so low that it upset his aim and the blow fell on Pádraig. Pádraig jumped up and in doing so hit his head against the

roof. He chased Thomas through the opening and followed him for a long way. When Pádraig's temper cooled the two of them returned in their bare feet and night attire soaked to the skin. Both Pádraig and Thomas are now gone to their reward. May they rest in peace. Dingo then commenced to kill sheep. Pádraig and I took him to the river, put a stone round his neck and threw him in. The stone became loose and ^{he} returned to the bank, where two shots from a revolver ended his career.

Another humorous incident comes to my mind. One night shortly after the Dingo incident Eamon Ó Máille and I were crossing a wall near Cullaghbeg. Eamon handed me his rifle - a Lee Enfield with a cut-out. My finger caught in the trigger and a shot was discharged, creating an awful noise in the still night. "Blast you", said Eamon, "the country will know we are here now".

The following day the three Ó Máille brothers and I were basking in the sun, having left our rifles in the dug-out about three hundred yards away. Two lorries of British military and a touring car came into view from the Leenane direction. The touring car got a breakdown and the two men in it got out on the road while British military investigated the cause of the trouble. Eamon turned his field glasses on them. After a few seconds he said to me, "Tis General Cruise get me my rifle". I had to crawl through the grass to the dug-out and crawl back again with the rifle. I had almost reached Eamon and the others when Cruise and the other man got into the car, which moved off. I think that Divisional Commissioner Cruise of the R.I.C. was lucky that we had left our rifles in the dug-out. The range was about 400 yards and Eamon was a crack shot. The withdrawal route was good.

A few days before the truce Pádraig Ó Máille received a summons to Dublin for a meeting of Dáil Éireann. "Remember, Bill", he said, "if ever anything comes of this truce with England, I'll see that all my comrades will be looked after". But that's as far as promises went. Some of my old comrades of the I.R.A. are now gone to their reward. Some are in exile and scattered to the four winds of the world. They were fine boys and loyal comrades but the cause for which they fought is still there with the fight unfinished. I pray God to have mercy on my dead comrades and I pray that Ireland will yet have her freedom as Pearse wanted it - "not merely free but Gaelic as well, not Gaelic merely, but free as well".

This is the story of my part in Ireland's fight for freedom.

I forgot to mention that the R.I.C. casualties in the Monisterowen fight were one killed and three wounded.
W.K.

Signed: William King
 (William King)
 Date: March 28th 1956

March 28th 1956

Witness: C. Moynihan (C. Moynihan)
 (Investigator)

