

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

BURO- STAIRE MILEATA 1913-21

No. W.S. 1394

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

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Witness

John Nagle,  
Garrandee,  
New Inn,  
Cashel,  
Co. Tipperary.  
Identity.

Vice-Comd't. 6th Battalion 3rd Tipperary Brigade;  
Vice O/C. No. 2 Flying Column.

Subject.

National activities, New Inn, Co. Tipperary,  
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STATEMENT BY JOHN NAGLE

Garrandee, New Inn, <sup>Bachel</sup>~~Cahir~~, Co. Tipperary.

Vice Commandant, 6th Battalion, 3rd Tipperary Brigade

Vice O/C. of No.2, 3rd Tipperary Brigade Flying Column.

I was born in August, 1897, in the farmhouse at Garrandee where I still reside. I attended the Boys' National School at New Inn until I was 14 years of age and then my school education finished, I remained at home assisting generally with the farm work and learning to become a farmer. My father, Richard Nagle, was a member of the Irish Republican Brotherhood and, in my boyhood days, there were some old rifles in the house which I often heard my father say had come from Clerkenwell in London for the I.R.B. and which he had collected when they were thrown from a train at Ballydrihid, near Cahir. I still possess a bayonet belonging to one of those rifles.

In 1914, I joined a company of Irish National Volunteers which had been formed in New Inn. The company was controlled by staunch supporters of John Redmond and the Irish Parliamentary Party. In fact, we of the rank and file knew very little, if anything, about any other party, except what we read and heard of Carson and the Ulster Volunteers. We drilled and trained with wooden rifles - mine was the stock of one of the old rifles to which I have referred and to which I had fitted a wooden barrel, and occasionally Seumas O'Neill - then a professor in nearby Rockwell College - gave us a lecture. After six or eight months with the New Inn Company, I was transferred to another company at Marshalstown.

My recollection of what took place locally at the time of the split in the Volunteer movement is rather dim. In

Marshallstown, the position was somewhat similar to that of New Inn, control of the company being in the hands of supporters of John Redmond. I do remember one night when Seumas O'Neill addressed the company. He was strongly in favour of the Irish Volunteers of Pearse and MacNeill. He was replied to by a schoolteacher named John Maher. After a fairly heated discussion, Seumas O'Neill left, and the company continued to carry on as a National Volunteer unit. I went with it to the review by John Redmond in the Phoenix Park in 1915. That was about its last appearance; it just faded away afterwards.

In 1917, a Sinn Fein Club, which I joined, was formed in New Inn. Seumas O'Neill organised the club and one of the principal men in getting it going and keeping it going was Thomas Hennessy of Knockgraffon.

It was not until about the time of the start of the conscription crisis in 1918 that an Irish Volunteer Company was formed in New Inn. Father Murphy, C.C., New Inn, was initially responsible for starting the company. Again, Seumas O'Neill was the organiser and assisting him were Christopher Tobin (now of Coolmoyle), Patrick Tobin and James Horan of Cloughleagh. The first meeting or parade was held in the farm of Rockwell College, and Christopher Tobin was elected captain. I was elected 1st Lieutenant, Philip Heffernan, 2nd Lieutenant, and Martin Gorman, Q.M. First known as the New Inn Company, it subsequently became B/Company of the 2nd (or Cashel) Battalion of the 3rd Tipperary Brigade. From a small beginning of only ten men we organised and built up the company until it had a strength of over 60 men and, during the years that followed, this company maintained a strength of approximately 65. As regards arms, we had some shotguns

which we either raided for or collected from farmers, and Chris Tobin, the company captain, had a Bull Dog revolver.

Beyond the usual drilling and training, there was no activity until May of 1920. Then, on the night of the proposed attack on Clerihan R.I.C. Barracks, our company was called out for the first time. My recollection of that night is, that if the operation was successful, the captured arms were to be taken to Hourihan's of Bawnbrack, and our duty was to keep the road from Clerihan open so as to permit the free passage of the vehicle carrying the arms. A chain of scouts was placed along the road to warn the attackers in Clerihan or, if necessary, to warn those coming with the arms of any enemy activity in our vicinity. These instructions were given to us by the late Paddy Hogan of Cashel, then commandant of the battalion. The attack on Clerihan Barracks was called off at the last minute, and our company was dismissed on receiving word to that effect, or at a pre-arranged time. I am not sure now which.

The next attempt at an action took place shortly after the Clerihan affair. Paddy Hogan, the battalion commandant, Edmund Grogan, Bill Grogan, Tom Taylor, Dan Taylor, Bill O'Donnell and Patrick Casey, all of Cashel, together with Paddy Byrne of Knockgraffon, Chris Tobin and myself went to Rockview between Cashel and Golden to ambush a patrol of R.I.C. men. All arms were then held in Cashel by the battalion quartermaster, and we were each issued with either a shotgun, a revolver or a rifle for the proposed ambush. The ambush position was at Heaney's gate at Rockview, and while we were there a man named Healy left his own house nearby on a motor cycle. When he came along, Hogan had a chat with him for a minute or two and Healy then went towards Golden on the

motor cycle. Rightly or wrongly, it was afterwards stated that he (Healy) warned the R.I.C. in Golden of our presence in the ambush position. At any rate, no patrol passed the road that day. After handing back the arms in Cashel, I returned home for, at the time, I was not on the run.

Shortly afterwards, the arms in the battalion dump were distributed to the companies. Our company were given a few revolvers. Chris Tobin, the company captain, secured a parabellum and he then gave me his Bull Dog revolver. It was the first effective weapon I had which I might call my own. About this time, too, - i.e., the early autumn of 1920 - the blocking and trenching of roads became part of the routine activity of the company.

Again, about this same time, the Brigade H.Q. was set up near Rosegreen at a place about three miles from my home. The brigade officers often billeted in our neighbourhood. The first two of them to stay in my house were Seumas Robinson the Brigade O/C., and Ned O'Reilly, vice commandant of the 3rd Battalion. Later, Sean Treacy and Sean Hogan stayed with us. Things were so quiet at the time in our district that they generally left their arms in the kitchen when retiring for the night, and it was not considered necessary to put out scouts. I usually accompanied them when they visited company and battalion areas and, in this way, I became closely acquainted with them. Again, stores and arms coming from G.H.Q. for the Brigade H.Q. were often delivered at our house and were stored in a quarry on our farm.

In September 1920, Edmund McGrath of Cahir, commandant of the 6th Battalion, was captured at Maher's of Blackcastle where he had gone to attend a Brigade Council meeting.

Sean Hogan, who then ranked as a brigade staff officer, was staying with me at the time. He (Hogan) had left to go to the Brigade Council meeting, but, hearing shots as he approached Maher's, he returned to my house. Edmund McGrath had spent a good share of time during that year of 1920 in prison and, as a result, his battalion was not organised as well as it might be. Sean Hogan was then appointed to take charge of the 6th Battalion temporarily, and I went with him to assist in its <sup>re-</sup>organisation. For about five weeks, we spent from Monday to Friday each week on this work and returned to my home for the weekends. We also spent some time on similar work in the 7th Battalion area.

On the night before he left on his last visit to Dublin Sean Treacy visited Hogan and myself at my home. The Volunteer company was paraded for his inspection and, as usual on such occasions, he gave a lecture urging the Volunteers to push ahead with their training and activities and to become more aggressive towards the enemy. Before leaving, he appointed me as company engineer, or, in other words, I was to take charge of the arrangements for blocking and trenching the roads. That was the last time I saw him alive.

There was at that time a sergeant of the R.I.C. named Lee stationed in New Inn. He sent me word that he was anxious to see me and that he would meet me in Downey's publichouse in New Inn. I was a bit dubious about accepting the invitation as there was then either an order or an unwritten law against Volunteers fraternising with the R.I.C., so I consulted Hogan and he said: "Why not, certainly go and see him". Accompanied by a Volunteer named Tom Quirke, I went to Downey's. Sergeant Lee was there. He was more than

courteous and ordered drinks for Quirke and myself. Quirke, who knew nothing about my appointment with the sergeant, refused to take the drink and left. Lee then told me that he had orders to raid my home and to arrest me on the following Monday. He added that after my arrest he would recommend my release and he was confident that his recommendation would be acted upon, provided I gave him an assurance that there would be no I.R.A. activity in the New Inn area and that the district would be kept quiet. I then gave him some sort of a verbal assurance to that effect and parted with him. I told Hogan what Lee wanted me for and I then went on the run. As Lee told me, my home was raided and searched on the following Monday, but of course neither Hogan nor I were there at the time.

Now, as I have said, Sean Hogan and myself spent about five weeks during the months of September and October 1920 re-organising the 6th Battalion. When this work was completed the late Sean Frendergast of Tullow, Cahir, was appointed commandant of the battalion. This more or less left Hogan free, and, together with Jerry Kiely of Tipperary town, and Edmund Grogan of Cashel, Hogan and I went to Bansha where we met the brigade flying column which had been formed in October 1920, under the command of Denis Lacey, the brigade vice commandant. Next morning, with the column, we occupied an ambush position in the Glen of Aherlow to ambush a lorry of Black and Tans or Auxiliaries which was expected to come from Ballymacourty. We waited all day, but nothing happened - the expected lorry did not come. Edmund Grogan and myself returned next day to Knockgraffon.

The brigade staff were at this time contemplating the formation of a second column. It may have been Hogan's idea,

I don't know, but he had talked quite a lot about it to me. I met him again about a week after I had parted with him in the Glen of Aherlow. Meanwhile, he had received the sanction of the brigade commandant to go ahead with the organisation of the No. 2 Flying Column of which he (Hogan) was to take charge. He asked me to go with him to assist him. We went first to the 6th Battalion area where, from men on the run, we selected ten for service on the column. One of these, Mossy McGrath of Clogheen, was appointed by Hogan as adjutant of the column. My own appointment as Vice O/C. of the column may have been at that time an automatic or accepted one on account of my association with Hogan in its (the column's) organisation. Later, it was ratified by the brigade staff.

All men coming to the column for duty were armed and equipped by their own battalions, and the first mobilisation of the new column took place at Ballybacon about two weeks before Christmas of 1920. Dan Breen joined us about this time and he remained with the column for some weeks. From Ballybacon we went to a disused dwelling house in the hills near Clonmel where we were joined by nine or ten men from the 5th Battalion. Intensive training was engaged in there for a few days before we moved to another disused house near Ballypatrick where the intensive training was continued for a further week. From Ballypatrick we went to Kilsheelan where, at night time from selected positions, we attacked the R.I.C. Barracks, but not with the intention of capturing it, the idea being to bring the column as a unit into action and under fire for the first time. I would say that we continued the attack with rifle fire for about half an hour and, while little damage was done to the barracks and the garrison suffered no casualties, still we considered that it was well worth while as part of the training of the column.



It would be impossible now for me to give a day to day account of the movements of the column. As we visited the various battalion areas, it grew in strength to about 35 regular members. Some of these did not remain all the time with the column. There might perhaps be some who would have to return to their homes or to their areas for long or short periods and then rejoin the column again. We also had on the roll a reserve of approximately 38 men. ~~These~~ <sup>These</sup> men remained in their own areas, but could be called upon at any time.

For the information of the reader I would like, at this stage, to give a general outline of how the column operated. The brigade was then well organised and company intelligence officers sent daily reports to their battalion intelligence officers who, in turn, daily sent a summarised report to the brigade intelligence officer. These reports covered the movements of enemy forces in all company areas. The column, too, was in daily touch with brigade headquarters, our dispatch rider being the late Tom Looby (afterwards a Lieutenant Colonel in the army), and it was from the brigade headquarters that the column took its orders as to the areas we were to go to. For instance, if the intelligence reports showed that a lorry or lorries of enemy forces regularly passed along certain roads on given dates or that patrols of police and military were in the habit of taking the same routes at certain times, then the column was ordered by the Brigade H.Q. to go to that particular area with, of course, a view to attacking the lorries or the patrols. This arrangement had one serious drawback - a human one. For some reason or another, company intelligence officers - when there was no enemy movement in their areas - tired of furnishing 'Nil' reports and varied them by giving incorrect information.

This, in turn, often led to the column marching anything from 10 to 25 miles to an area and then being informed by the local company officer ~~convinced~~ that no enemy forces had been seen in that area for, perhaps, two months previously. Before going to a company area, the column leader advised the company O/C. in advance, and it was the duty of the company officers to arrange for billets for the column members and to arrange for scouts.

Before dismissing the column to go to billets, the column leader indicated the place and time for assembly on the following day and the place for assembly should there be an alarm during the night. Two officers from G.H.Q. - George Plunkett and Dan Ryan - spent a week with the column on one occasion, but we had no engagement with enemy forces during their visit.

Now we come to the activities of the column. During the early months of 1921, we spent a good deal of time around the foothills of the Galtee Mountains and, while there, the garrison of R.I.C. and Black and Tans in Ballyporeen were our principal objective. To my knowledge, on at least four occasions we sniped the barracks there. The police showed no tendency to come out of town or to send patrols out into the countryside, so we decided to go into the town and attack a patrol of six R.I.C. men and Black and Tans who patrolled the streets each night. This patrol moved in twos, about twenty yards apart. On the night of 12th March 1921, we occupied positions in laneways and in doorways along the route the patrol was expected to come. Our men had definite instructions that no shot was to be fired until all six members of the patrol were well into the ambush position. One man, however, lost his head and fired a shot at the first

two members of the patrol that came along. Firing then became general, in which one Black and Tan was killed. The remaining members of the patrol fled back to the barracks and we withdrew to Ballylooby. There was considerable firing from the barracks, even long after we had withdrawn and, on the following day, British forces burned two houses in the town as a reprisal.

Then in April 1921, we received orders from the Brigade H.Q. to go to Garrymore Cross on the Cahir-Clogheen road and to link up with Dinny Lacey's column there. The purpose of bringing the two columns together was to attack a convoy of British troops which passed regularly between Cahir and Clogheen. On the morning of our arrival at Garrymore, Dan Breen, Sean Hogan, Dinny Lacey, some officers from Lacey's column and myself inspected the proposed ambush position. On account of the proximity of Hyland's house to Garrymore Cross, the position was considered unsuitable and it was decided to call off the attack for the time being. It was also decided that our column would withdraw towards Burncourt and Lacey's column towards Ballyboy in the Ballybacon direction.

Before the rearguard of Lacey's column left the Cahir-Clogheen road, a party of seven or eight British soldiers in a wagon drawn by two horses arrived on the scene coming from the Cahir direction. They were engaged by the rearguard. The horses were shot dead and the soldiers dismounted from the wagon and started to run back towards Cahir. Our column had already moved off towards Burncourt and I should say that we were about 300 yards from the Cahir-Clogheen road when we heard the firing. Not then knowing what exactly had happened, we hurriedly took up the best positions we could and, seeing the soldiers running back along the road, we opened fire on

them. This fire of ours held the soldiers on the road and, after a very short time, they surrendered to Lacey's men who searched them and then let them go. It was on that day that District Inspector Potter of the R.I.C. was captured. While the captured booty was being examined, he came along the road in a motor car. He was alone and in civilian clothes, but he was recognised by Sean Downey, a member of Lacey's column. Our column had nothing further to do with him after his capture. It was Lacey's column who held him prisoner and who eventually carried out his execution, after the British authorities had refused an offer by the staff of the 3rd Tipperary Brigade to release Potter in return for the reprieve of Thomas Traynor, a Dublin Volunteer who was then under sentence of death in Mountjoy Prison.

Later on in the day of this incident at Garrymoe Cross scouts reported that a large force of British troops were engaged in a big round-up in that area. Lacey's column did have a scrap that day with a party of British soldiers who probably were part of the forces engaged in the round-up. Our column took up a position in a wood and remained there until after nightfall, when we withdrew back to the Galtees.

During that Springtime and early summer of 1921 we occupied numerous positions and often waited from dawn to dark in various places to ambush enemy forces. It was a case that either our intelligence was poor and the information we were getting was not correct, or else the British forces were having the uncanny luck of never sending out patrols at the times when we had reason to expect them and were ready for them. Then again we would sometimes hear that a patrol of lorries of troops passed positions that had been evacuated by the column perhaps a day or even only a few hours before.

Amongst my duties as Vice O/C. of the column was that of selecting ambush positions and preparing plans for the ambushes. One day when the column was in billets at Skeheenarinka, accompanied by a member of the column named Tom O'Gorman, I went to select an ambush position on the Clogheen-Ballybacon road for a cycle patrol of British troops which, we were informed, passed that road fairly frequently. O'Gorman was a local man and he was acting as my guide. We arranged with his brother to pick us up with a pony and trap later on <sup>in</sup> the evening at Bellew Cross and to bring us back to Fitzgerald's of Skeheenarinka. On our way we called to the house of people named English where we delayed for some time as Mrs. English insisted on making tea for us. When saying goodbye to Mrs. English outside her home, we saw a party of twelve Lancers on horseback passing along the road and we stood inside the door again for a few minutes to permit them to pass. Later, when we were on the road, we saw O'Gorman's brother driving furiously towards us in the pony and trap. He was waving a rug towards the ditch, so, taking the hint, we crossed the wall at the side of the road and took cover. We then saw the Lancers pass back again and this time, to our surprise, they had three prisoners with them. The prisoners were Mr. and Mrs. Fitzgerald, to whose house we had decided to return, and FrankFyne, a member of the column. The Lancers had made a sudden swoop on Fitzgerald's house and had captured two members of the column there, but one of them - Chris Conway - had succeeded in making his escape. Gorman's brother picked us up with the pony and trap and brought us back to Skeheenarinka, but when we got there we found that the column had left and the local Volunteers had no idea as to where it was gone. We (Gorman and I) collected some shotguns and stuff which the column had left behind and,

as I considered that the column would most likely have gone in the Cahir direction, I decided that we would go on to the house of people named Lonergan on the Cahir side of the Galtee Mountains. Two Volunteers then arrived from the Glen of Aherlow with word for us that the column had gone to the Glen of Aherlow. This was another bit of good luck for Gorman and myself for, subsequently, I learned that Lonergan's house was raided that night by troops and R.I.C. men.

On our way to the Glen of Aherlow, we witnessed from a height, British troops firing at what looked like mines set in the surface of a road. A local Volunteer officer, when trenching the road, had conceived the bright idea of collecting old round-bottomed boiling pots and setting them with the bottoms and legs or prongs just showing above the level of the road. They certainly looked like the real thing, and when they were discovered by the British troops, they (the troops) were naturally very nervous of interfering with them.

Towards the end of April or early in May, 1921, the column had a miraculous escape when only good luck and the loyalty of the local people prevented its capture or destruction. On a Sunday afternoon we left the Galtees and went to Ballygiblin. There on the Sunday night we attended a dance at the house of a Mrs. O'Brien. About 8 p.m. on the Sunday night, s\_couts reported that they had heard lorries on the Clogheen road, about half a mile away, but no notice was taken of the report and, after dancing away for a further few hours, we went to our billets. With three or four other members of the column, I slept that night in the house of people named Williams.

As was my habit at the time, I arose early next morning,

washed and donned my full equipment before having breakfast. About 8 or 8.30 a.m., while I was having breakfast, a scout arrived and reported that large forces of military were massing in Ballyporeen, about  $2\frac{1}{2}$  miles away. I questioned him and took his name for, at the time, it was not an unusual thing to receive a false alarm from people who did not like or wish to have the column in their vicinity. I aroused those who were with me in Williams's and we went to the assembly point which had been decided upon the night before. The assembly point was at a farmhouse named O'Gorman's. We had only left Williams's house when military arrived to search it and I understand this also happened at several other houses - the column men were just left when the military arrived. There were 23 men with the column at that time and all reported to the assembly point. Now, strange to relate, had we remained there we would have been O.K. and would not have had any trouble at all, for O'Gorman's house was about the only place within a radius of miles which was missed by the military in their search during the day. It is, however, easy to be wise after the event.

When we assembled, Sean Hogan and I were of the opinion that the only military out that morning were those behind us and we considered that our best plan was to try and reach either the Cahir-Mitchelstown road or the Ballybacon-Mitchelstown road, cross the road and then get back cross-country behind the military. One member of the column, Dave Moher, was a local man, and we appointed him to act as guide. After a warning was issued by the column leader about the care of arms, lest an accidental shot should give our position away, we moved off through a breen away from O'Gorman's house. We had not gone far when we were halted by the sight of military in extended formation and in depth, line behind line of them,

in fields in front of us. I would say that at that time we were as near as 300 yards to some of them, but we had good cover in the boreen. Some local people came to us there and told us that the military were here, there and everywhere. We asked those people to go away and try and find out if there was a break in the enemy lines anywhere, but we saw no more of them, for they were taken prisoner by the military and held for the day.

Using every inch of cover and crawling slowly along under Dave Moher's guidance, we reached - about midday - a narrow by<sup>E</sup>road which runs from Kilbenny to Ballygiblin. Here a Miss O'Hanrahan, a schoolteacher in, I think, Kilbenny, met us. She told us that we were completely surrounded and that as far as she could see there were no breaks in the lines of the military and, certainly there was no hope of getting across any of the main roads. Hogan then suggested that the column break up into small parties of twos and threes in the hope that some might get away and live to tell the tale. I did not like this idea. I thought we should stick together and the men of the column shared my view. Miss O'Hanrahan then said that she would go to Kilbenny in an effort to find some further information about the possibility of a break in the military lines, and that when halted, she would plead the excuse that she was going to the Post Office to send a telegram. When she got to the Post Office she found that it was occupied by British officers who had taken it over for a temporary H.Q.

We crossed the by<sup>E</sup>road and as we did we could see British soldiers guarding horses and carts which were held up at a Creamery about 100 yards away. At ~~that~~<sup>that</sup> time British army planes flew overhead at a low altitude and it was evident



that they were taking part in the search. Under cover of a ditch and shrubbery we waded in single file through a stream which, in places, was at least 12 inches deep, and this brought us to some small fields where the cover was good. Next, we entered a field of about an acre in extent and, on the south side of this field, we took cover in a dyke, on one side of which was the bank or boundary wall of the field, and on the other side was a light screen of bushes. This dyke was about 30 yards long and it would have been anything from about three to four feet wide, i.e., from the bank or ditch to the screen of bushes. We knew we could go no further without running into the British forces who were then closing in from all sides. We put two men under cover at the west side of the field facing the Galtee Mountains, and three men under cover at the east side of the field. It was then, I would say about 1.30 p.m., and we were only about  $1\frac{1}{2}$  miles from where we had started that morning.

There was a rick of hay about 20 or 30 feet away from where our two men were posted on the west side of the field. It was just over the ditch in the next field. The tension in the dyke can well be imagined when, through the screen of bushes, we saw two British officers mount the hay rick and scan the countryside with field glasses, or later when a party of cavalry approached the east side of the field and tried to jump their horses over the ditch. The horses refused the jump and our three men lying flat under cover on that side of the field could hear the soldiers say: "There are no damn Shinners in there". In the dyke our nerves were on edge. Some of the men tried to relieve the tension by whispering a joke, and others to murmur a prayer. We seem to have been convinced that our presence in the dyke

had been discovered and, while awaiting the British troops to close in, we buried any documents we had in holes in the ditch and covered them up. We had also decided that when the British would close in, we would man the ditch and sell our lives as dearly as possible.

About 3 p.m. we saw and heard Verey lights which were fired quite near us. We assumed that this was the end and that the Verey lights were the signal to close in on us. Instead, however, it was the signal for the troops to withdraw and soon the silence was broken by the noise of the cavalry and of lorries and armoured cars starting up and moving off. I understand that the British forces had also brought along field guns that day.

It was not long before some of the local people, who had been detained while the round-up was in progress, discovered our whereabouts and came along with buckets of tea and food. It was hard to understand, even amongst ourselves, how we had escaped from that round-up, but credit must be given to the then Parish Priest of Ballybacon who, although opposed to us politically, when told of our danger, went to the Church and prayed there all day for the safety of the column.

Some weeks later, on, I believe, orders from the brigade H.Q., the column moved from the Galtees right across South County Tipperary and into the Kilkenny Brigade area. On the first day of our journey we reached Ballygurteen and stayed there for the night. We reached Garrandee ~~and~~ on the second day and for the first time in six months, I spent some time at home. Then on, via Ballyfolow and Ballingarry and, on a Saturday night, we billeted in Oldtown, Co. Kilkenny. There we met Eamon Aylward, Paddy Ryan and William Maher, all of the Kilkenny Brigade, and discussed with them plans for the

ambushing of two or three lorries of military which were expected to pass through the village of Kilmanagh on the Monday. At that time, Sean Hogan and I generally travelled together in an 'Overland' motor car which had been commandeered some time previously. Sean Morrissey, a member of the column, was our driver. Hogan, Aylward, Maher, Ryan and myself, with Morrissey driving, went to Teehan's of Shipton House on the Sunday evening. Later that night, Morrissey and I left Teehan's in the car, as it had been arranged that I should take the column cross country from Oldtown to Kilmanagh. It was a dark night, well past midnight, and, not knowing the roads, we easily went astray. We knocked up two houses to inquire the way, but we only succeeded in frightening the inhabitants. Come to think of it, anyone knocked up around 1.30 a.m. and seeing two strange men with parabellum revolvers strapped from their shoulders, would easily be frightened. Later, we inquired from a man we saw leaving a house. He, too, was going to Oldtown and he stood on the running board of the car and directed us. On the way he told us that his name was Tom Hogan, that he was from Golden and that he was staying with friends in Oldtown.

I took the column from Oldtown to Teehan's of Shipton House and then to Kilmanagh where we arrived about 6 o'clock on the Monday morning. Eamon Aylward with his column and some Kilkenny Volunteers were also there. The final plans for the ambush were then made. No one was allowed to leave the village and anyone coming in, such as farmers arriving with milk for the Creamery, were detained as prisoners. My position was at the lower end of the village where the Creamery is situated. Here we occupied houses and some other vantage points. Hogan and Aylward took charge of parties at

the upper end of the village and the lorries were expected to enter the village at a crossroads about halfway between both positions. The plan was simple. If the lorries turned towards the upper part of the village they would be attacked by Hogan's and Aylward's parties, and my party would be in a position to deal with them from the rear. The position would, of course, be reversed if they turned towards the lower end of the village; then I would initiate the attack and Hogan and Aylward's men would attack from the rear.

I have said that in planning the ambush, arrangements were made not to allow anyone to leave the village. I believe that someone did get out and that the military were warned of the position in Kilmanagh when they were yet a few miles from the village. In this connection, it is significant that two local men, both, I think, ex-British soldiers, were executed a few days later for spying. As we were left the area at the time of their execution, I cannot give any details of this happening, but I will refer again to one of the two men.

We remained all day in our positions in Kilmanagh and late in the evening we withdrew in two separate parties to a farmhouse about half a mile from the village. Here we had tea and, while we were there, a farmhand came into the yard with a pair of horses as if returning from work in the fields. We took no notice of him beyond the fact that I noticed that he left the horses standing in the yard and disappeared. Later, I learned that this man's name was Darmody and that he was one of the two men who were executed a few days later for spying. Before we left the house, a big convoy of military from, I understand, Clonmel, arrived in Kilmanagh.

With the assistance of local guides I took the column to

the house of Sim Walton at Raimeen, Tullaroan, about  $4\frac{1}{2}$  or 5 miles from Kilmanagh. We were all tired men and I was exhausted, for I had not had any rest for at least 36 hours. Our instructions were to await orders. About midnight, two scouts arrived to take the column to billets and, with an order for me to report to Hogan and Aylward at a house in Tubrid where they had set up a H.Q. One of the scouts came with me and we arrived there about 1.30 a.m. As I was so tired, Hogan told me I could stay there and I went to bed at once without taking any supper. About 4 a.m. an alarm was given and all in the house went out and stood-to. The column was then being roused in their scattered billets. As I was still deadbeat, Hogan and Aylward said they would remain behind and bring along the column. With some others I went to another house - Ryan's of Tubrid - and here I again went to bed and slept soundly until midday when I arose, washed and had a meal. There were then 15 men in the house, six of whom were our column men and nine were Aylward's men, and they included Sean Hogan, Aylward, Mossy McGrath (column adjutant), Sean Hayes (later T.D.), Sean Morrissey, Paddy Ryan, Sean Quinn and Pat Walsh. Some were still in bed, some were shaving and some were having a meal. The latter two, Sean Quinn and Pat Walsh, were killed during the course of that day.

About 1.30 p.m. I had a stroll out around the house; everything appeared to be nice and peaceful, and our car, the 'Overland' was in the yard. Then I saw three lorries of Auxiliaries pass along the road about 300 yards from the house. I gave the alarm and all 15 of us took to the fields at the back of the house. After we had passed through two fields and a grove of trees, Hogan, Tom Nagle (no relation, but a member of our column) and myself crossed a ditch and we could

see the three lorries of Auxiliaries drive back slowly along the road by which they had come. We took what cover we could and saw the Auxiliaries stop. They would then have been about 300 or 400 yards away from us. Three or four of them dismounted from the lorries, got into a field and went towards an old outhouse on our right. The next thing that attracted my attention was the sound of sheep bleating and the commotion of animals being disturbed in a field to our rear. I was endeavouring to find out what was wrong there when I heard Sean Morrissey say "tin hats, tin hats". He and the other eleven men had not then crossed the ditch to the side where Hogan, Tom Nagle and myself were. We then saw that military in extended formation were crossing the fields to our rear and, apparently, were intent on surprising and capturing us or else I imagine they would have opened fire on us. When I first saw the military, some of them were as near as twelve yards to us. Hogan, Tom Nagle and myself opened fire on the military while our twelve men crossed the ditch to our side. The military lay down in the field and, while I cannot say what casualties they suffered, I am certain that an officer was either killed or wounded, for I saw him fall after he had stood up and signal his men on by waving his hand.

Now, as we faced the military who were nearest to us, the position was, or should have been, that the three lorries of auxiliaries were at our rear on the road, and the small party of Auxiliaries whom we had seen going towards the outhouse should have been on our left flank, but whether they had moved away again before the firing started or not, the strange thing was that we did not see any more of them that day. Keeping the military pinned down by rifle fire, we moved along by the ditch for a distance of about 200 yards. Here, the

engagement was broken off and Hogan, who had consulted his map, told us to turn right and go towards the road, his idea

being to get across the road and outside the British lines. We were perhaps fortunate to hit a point where there were no military on the road, but as we crossed it we could see the military lorries parked less than 100 yards away. It must have been when we turned right from the ditch that Pat Walsh and Sean Quinn parted from us. They had been with us up to that point, but they were missing when we got across the road. Sometime subsequently, I heard that they encountered the Auxiliaries and that it was by the Auxiliaries they were killed.

After crossing the road we got cover for a short time in a ravine, and then we pushed on over a low hill towards Ballingarry which we reached that night. It was there I think we parted with the Kilkenny men. By easy stages we reached Newcastle near Clonmel a few days later. There, two days after our arrival, we were rejoined by the remainder of the column. This portion of our column was billeted outside the area of the round-up, and it took no part in the fight at Tubrid.

Our visit to the Kilkenny Brigade area, which I have just described, took place about the middle of May 1921. After our return to Newcastle, the column resumed its normal routine for about three weeks. As far as I can now recall, our activities during that period were mainly the destruction of road bridges in which we were assisted by local Volunteers. Then, about three weeks before the Truce, the columns were disbanded by order of the Brigade Staff, and the members were sent to their own battalion areas to form active service units. This decision to disband the columns was taken because they were too small and too ill-equipped, particularly as regards

supplies of ammunition, to attack the huge convoys in which the enemy were then moving, and it would not have been feasible to muster a column of sufficient strength to deal with those convoys.

It was when the column was disbanded that I was appointed Vice-Commandant of the 6th Battalion, 3rd Tipperary Brigade, a post which I held until 22nd April 1922, when I resigned from the I.R.A. and returned to my farm at Garrandee.

In conclusion, I attach herewith a list of the personnel of the regular members of the Flying Column. See Appendix 'A'.

Signed: John Nagle

Date: 28<sup>th</sup> March 1956

(John Nagle)

28th March 1956.

Witness: J. Grace

(J. Grace)

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APPENDIX 'A'

Names of the regular members of No. 2 Flying Column  
3rd Tipperary Brigade.

Sean Hogan, Column O/C.	Edward Mulcahy
John Nagle, Column V.O/C.	Denis (Sniper) Lonergan
Mossy McGrath, Column Adjt.	William Cleary
Thomas Nagle	James Butler
Thomas Taylor	Denis McAuliffe
Edwd.(Bubbles) Dalton	Gabriel McGrath
Richard Dalton	Jack Butler
John (Buddy) Donoghue	Chris Conway
Thomas Kirwan	Thomas Ryan
Edward Dwyer	Frank Pyne
Matt McKenna	William O'Brien
Tom Looby	Thomas Mullany
Sean Morrissey	William Keating
Michael Patterson	Thomas Gorman
Patrick Hackett	Michael Fogarty
John Hayes	Gus Doherty
William Moloughney	John Power
David Moher	James Regan
Martin Lyons	Michael Regan
William Mulcahy	Tim Mulcahy

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