

U.S. 1451

# ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21  
BURO STAIRÉ MÍLEATA 1913-21  
No. **W.S. 1451**

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

DOCUMENT NO. **W.S.**.....1451.....

Witness

Edmund Tobin,  
Ballinalackin,  
Garryspillane,  
Kilmallock,  
Co. Limerick.

Identity.

Battalion Quartermaster.

Brigade Quartermaster.

Subject.

Activities of Galtee Battalion, Irish  
Volunteers, East Limerick Brigade, 1913-1921,  
and Brigade Flying Column, 1920-1921.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil.

File No .....S. 241.....

Form B.S.M. 2

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

BURO STAIRE MILEATA 1913-21

NO. W.S. 1,451

STATEMENT BY EDMUND TOBIN,

Ballinalackin, Carryspillane, Kilmallock,

COUNTY LIMERICK.

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I was born in Ballinalackin in the year 1894 and was educated in Glenbrohane National School. In about the year 1910 I went to learn the blacksmith trade at my uncle's place in Ballylanders.

About the year 1913 a Company of Volunteers was formed in Ballylanders. Among those who joined at the start were Tadhg Crowley and Thomas Murphy. I was also one of the first to join and the three of us became great pals. Tadhg Crowley became Captain. A short time later I was accepted into the I.R.B. local circle. Soon after the formation of the Volunteer Company a Company of the Cumann na mBan was formed in the area.

Our Company was one of several Companies in County Limerick, County Cork and County Tipperary which from their formation became known as the Galtee Regiment. As well as I can remember Liam Manahan was then the O/C. of the Regiment.

We met one night every week for drill with wooden rifles. Our Drill Instructor was a man named Davy Walsh of Mitchelstown. He was a very good training officer. The Cumann na mBan also met once a week for First Aid lessons. After a while we rented a big store from a Mr. O'Grady on the Kilfinane road. We constructed a (good) floor in the building and used it for training and the running of dances, concerts and lectures to raise funds for the Company. The Cumann na mBan always assisted at these functions. Officers from G.H.Q. including Ernest Blythe visited the hall many times before 1916 and addressed the Company. Sometime in 1914 or 1915, at a Volunteer parade in Elton, our Company won a Cup for being the best drilled Company in the Regiment. It happened that I was left hand man of the

parade and an old British ex-soldier was right hand man. Tadhg Crowley was in charge on the occasion. We were very proud marching home to Ballylanders that evening.

In the early days before 1916, our Company as well as Companies from Mitchelstown, Galbally, Dungoud, Kilfinane, Ardpatrick, Anglesboro, Cush and other places met on Sundays at some point for drill and general field exercises. One such place was Ballybrien halfway between Ballylanders and Mitchelstown. This particular Sunday was a lovely sunny day. We all met in a big field. Davy Walsh, our drill instructor, was in great form and put us through extended order drill and field exercises generally. We had a field kitchen there and had tea when our exercises were over. We had taken our food with us in haversacks of all types, shapes and sizes, some of them old British ones. My mother had made mine out of a good strong bit of material, the strap being made of the same material. It would hold enough food for any one man for a whole day.

On another Sunday also before Easter Week 1916, our Company and Galbally Company travelled to Lough Gur where we were addressed by Dr. Eoin McNeill of G.H.Q. on the aims and objects of the Volunteer Movement. The Cumann na mBan were present on the same occasion. We returned home after the address feeling that Ireland was worth fighting for. I remember Ned O'Brien of Galbally saying to me that day, "We can say we were there when it was not popular". We were certainly very few that day.

On Easter Sunday, 1916, Liam Manahan, who was a Creamery Manager in Ardpatrick, ordered all Companies in the Regiment to mobilise and proceed to Galbally. He resigned his job the same day. Our Company mobilised and marched to Galbally under Thomas Murphy who was Company Captain. Tadhg Crowley could not take part in public parades at this time due to the fact that the Post Office was situated in his father's

house in Ballylanders. To the best of my knowledge the strength of the Ballylanders Company was thirty men that day.

When we arrived in Galbally we were divided into sections and placed in different positions around the village. I was in charge of a section at an old lime kiln on the west side. Before being divided up in sections we were told that we may be fighting the enemy before the day was over. We were all armed, mostly with shot-guns, some old and some new. We loaded our shot-guns with buckshot cartridges and waited for further instructions. We had been making the buckshot ammunition at night time for several weeks prior to Easter Week. We melted the lead in the bottom of an old pot after which we poured it into moulds. Some of this ammunition was made at my forge in Ballinalackin. Late that night after standing-to all day awaiting orders from Headquarters, which never came, we were ordered back to our areas with instructions to be ready to be called out again at very short notice.

By Monday morning Liam Manahan had got Dr. McNeill's order countermanding the Rising. We could do nothing. Liam sent two men - one from Ballylanders and one from Mitchelstown Company - into Limerick City to find out the position there. In Ballylanders we were hearing all kinds of rumours to the effect that our men were out fighting in Dublin, that the Castle had been taken and that there was fierce fighting in the streets of Dublin. On Tuesday night Sean Tracey arrived from Tipperary with the news that he had received word from Pierce McCann that the Volunteers were, in fact, out fighting in Dublin. When Liam Manahan heard this he ordered all Companies in the Regiment to mobilise in their own areas and stand-to for further orders. During that night or early on Wednesday morning Liam asked me to go to Galbally and report back as soon as possible on the position there.

In Galbally I met Ned O'Brien, a member of the I.R.B. and talked with him on the position there. I returned to Liam and told him of the position in Galbally. He then sent me to Kilfinane for a report on the situation there. He told me as I left that I would find Jack McCarthy and his men in a wood situated about two miles from the town. When I arrived at the wood I found that they had left only a short time before. I then went to Jack's house in Kilfinane town. To reach the house I had to pass the R.I.C. barracks: as I did so one of the R.I.C. men saw me. I had forgotten that I was wearing a Volunteer pants and puttees. I was not long in Jack's house when a Head Constable and Sergeant of the R.I.C. arrived. I left the house by the back immediately and got out of town.

When I got back to our Headquarters in Ballylanders I heard nothing new except the rumours which still persisted, some of them casting doubt on the news we had already heard. Sean Tracey had left. Thomas Murphy, our Company Captain, told me that Tracey before he left asked for three or four Volunteers to accompany him to blow up a main line railway in the neighbourhood, but nobody would leave without orders from their own officers. When the week drew to a close the news of the surrender in Dublin reached us. We all felt that we had let the boys in Dublin down and thought we would never get a chance to wipe out this stain.

After the surrender Liam Manahan went to Ardpark where he was arrested. Mike Callaghan of Tipperary went on the run. A short while after two R.I.C. men approached him in the Glen of Aherlow to effect his arrest. As they did so he shot both of them dead. After this Mike stayed for some time in our Parish of Glenbrohane in the house of Mike Manahan - a fine quiet place near the hill.

About this time, on my recommendation, four new members were accepted into the local I.R.B. circle. They were David Tobin,

Tom Howard (R.I.P.), James Fogarty and his brother John Fogarty. Their duty at the time consisted of keeping a watch on the R.I.C. and reporting their movements. From then to the end of 1916, we met almost every evening in my forge. We discussed the arrests and executions from day to day and kept in touch with the local members of the I.R.B. at all times. A short time after the surrender photos of the executed leaders were on sale in some of the shops in Ballylanders village. One Sunday morning we purchased some of the larger photos and hung them up on walls and hoardings around the village. People returning from Mass that day stood in groups examining the photos. Later that day the local Sergeant of the R.I.C. called on me and asked me to take them down. I told him that I was very proud of them. After a pause he replied, "I suppose we all are, but they may be only torn down by the children". After this reply I thought the poor man might be as good an Irishman as any of us.

Early in 1917 the reorganisation of each Company in the Regiment was carried out. I am not clear as to the exact dates of events during this year. One incident, however, which took place this year was a hurling match in Thurles between Clare and Limerick. Most of the Ballylanders Volunteers travelled by train to Thurles that day. Tom Murphy, Tadg Crowley, John Joe Crawford and myself were together on the train. The two teams travelled on the same train.

When we arrived at Thurles station, Tom Murphy suggested lining up the two teams with their hurleys 'at the slope', to march to the field. We all agreed, the teams included. With the assistance of Crowley, Crawford and myself, Murphy lined up the two teams after which they marched to the field followed by an admiring crowd of Volunteers and civilians. While this was taking place a Detective Officer of the R.I.C. named Barrett was on the platform and heard and observed everything that was taking place. We knew then that we would be hearing from him again. It was grand to see the two teams marching through the town that day to the field. I think it was on that same evening that we first met Liam Manahan after his release from jail. He brought us to Hayes' hotel to meet Joe McDonagh who was a brother of the executed leader. Joe McDonagh told us that Cathal Brugha had nearly recovered from his wounds. After a long discussion on the future and reorganisation of the Volunteers we came home full of hope for the success of our cause.

Some days later I had a visit from the Ballylanders R.I.C. Barrett the Detective was with them. They questioned me about a strange lot of tinkers which were supposed to have been in the neighbourhood recently. I told them that some of the regular visitors to the area had been around recently and that they looked a harmless lot. They left me under the impression that they thought I was harmless too, for they returned to Ballylanders village and arrested Tadhg Crowley, Tom Murphy, John Joe Crawford and Tommy Walsh and had them conveyed to Limerick jail. Some days later they were taken back to Galbally for trial by the Resident Magistrate for the area. The day of the trial was a great day there. Nearly every man from Ballylanders and Galbally parishes, including the Volunteers who came in twos and threes and mixed with the crowd, were in town for the occasion. We had just previously started to reorganise and had some very active men in the various Companies.

Before the trial started a large force of R.I.C. under a County Inspector, were lined up outside the Courthouse, while the crowd with the Volunteers among them were immediately opposite. Donnchadh Hannigan asked Ned O'Brien and myself to keep a passage between the R.I.C. and the crowd. This we did with good effect, until the prisoners were being removed to the barracks, when the crowd began to cheer them and in turn jeer the police. The Inspector ordered a baton charge. The police set upon the crowd and appeared to have gone savage. It was terrible to see old men with blood streaming down their faces, but the police got as much as they gave and eventually had to retreat taking some of their wounded with them. As the Ballylanders R.I.C. were returning to their barracks that evening a similar battle took place.

In his private business at the time Donnchadh Hannigan had to visit the various towns and villages in the Galtee area, so in this way he kept in touch with the officers of each Company and kept them

in touch with one another. Each Company met weekly for drill and rifle practice with miniature rifles. County Cork was being reorganised at this time with the result that Mitchelstown area became incorporated into a North Cork Battalion. I think that it was around this time that our area ceased to be called the Galtee Regiment and became known as the Galtee Battalion.

Soon after Liam Tobin of Dublin, who had a short time earlier been released from prison, visited the area. Donnchadh Hannigan brought him to Ballylanders where one day he addressed a meeting of the Volunteers and local people. That night Liam stayed at my house. During his stay we discussed Volunteer matters, particularly the small amount of guns available in our area. Jokingly Liam said "I don't think you will ever need guns here in Ballylanders". Later Count Plunkett and Thomas Ashe addressed a meeting in Kilmallock. They came to Ballylanders the same evening and addressed another meeting in the village. All these meetings helped the Volunteer spirit considerably in the East Limerick area.

Around the autumn of 1917 the Galtee Battalion elected staff officers for the Battalion. Donnchadh Hannigan became Commandant. Jack McCarthy of Kilfinane Company became Vice-Commandant. Tadhg Crowley became Adjutant and I became Quartermaster. This staff worked well into 1918 and held their meetings with the Company Captains of the area at my place in Ballinalackin. My house became the centre for the receipt and issue of dispatches. One particular dispatch carrier who visited my place often was a boy of about twelve years of age. His name was Maurice McCarthy, a brother of the Vice-Commandant, from Kilfinane. If he happened to see anyone in the forge with me when he arrived, he would just pass by into my house where he would talk to my mother about everything except the Volunteers until I would come in.

One Company in the Battalion which I would like to refer to specially was the Cush Company which had been reorganised by Paddy Clancy (R.I.P). Each and everyone of its members did a man's part in the fight. Most of them had been school companions of mine. After reorganising this Company Paddy Clancy left the area to attend his job as Creamery Manager in County Cork. He was replaced as Company Captain by Patrick O'Donnell. Clancy visited Ballinalackin subsequently on many an occasion to see me and talk about every member of the Company. His <sup>heart</sup> and spirit was with each of them. He died fighting in an engagement with enemy forces at Kanturk, County Cork.

During the conscription crisis of 1918, each Company in the Battalion area was very active. Dispatch centres were opened, shot-guns and other arms in the area were collected from the farmers. In some instances where we thought we would not get the guns by consent the houses of the owners were raided and the guns seized. At this time with members of Ballylanders and Mitchelstown Companies, I raided a stores in Mitchelstown and seized a large quantity of shotgun ammunition. Members of the I.R.B. circle decided to make pikes at the same period. Captain Tom Murphy said they would be very useful in a <sup>bayonet</sup> ~~charge~~ charge, so John Fogarty and myself locked ourselves into my forge for a couple of nights every week and with sledge and hammer beat out a number of them from leaves of spring steel. We turned out some very nice <sup>ones</sup> ~~ones~~. One night Fogarty took a turn at filing the blade of one that had been beaten out. When it was finished, he held it up and remarked "Wouldn't any British Tommy like to get a prod of that". Later in 1920 John Fogarty was appointed Registrar of the Sinn Féin Court.

Of course we did not escape the usual visits and raids by the R.I.C. and military around this time. Previous to one of these raids, I had re-roofed the old forge and in doing so found an old type

of pistol which I carelessly left around ~~and~~<sup>as</sup> it appeared to be useless. One day they found it and took it with them but, to my surprise, they returned one morning about a week later. Donnchadh Hannigan was in bed with me when they arrived. They ordered me to get up and dress as they were taking me with them. When I got into the lorry, to my surprise, I saw John Fogarty also a prisoner. Laughingly he said to me, "So they caught you too". I was wondering just then what Donnchadh was saying. He had often said to me in fun, "If ever they raid the house while I am sleeping with you go quietly and be careful you do not waken me".

They took Fogarty and me by train from Knocklong to Cork Jail where they gave me a bath and one of the warders with book and pencil took down all the marks on my body. He told me I had one mark on my back, that there was hardly any other one with a mark like it and that it would be easy to identify me in future.

I was tried before a military officer next morning. At the trial a Constable Cullen, R.I.C. from Ballylanders, in his evidence said he found the pistol in my place at Ballinalackin and suspected that I had it for an unlawful purpose. When he had finished the officer asked me if I would like to put any question to the Constable. I said "Yes, I would like to ask him if he would be able to shoot a person with that." The officer laughed and I laughed the next morning when Fogarty and I were released.

Sometime in this period a dispute arose in the Battalion as to who should be the officer in charge. A Mr. M. W. O'Reilly was sent down from G.H.Q., Dublin, to hold an inquiry into the matter, with the result that the area was reorganised and became known as the East Limerick Brigade instead of the Galtee Battalion, as we were calling it. The Brigade included other Battalion areas as well as the Galtee Battalion. The Battalion in this area was made up of the

Companies in Ballylanders, Galbally, Anglesboro, Glenroe, Kilfinane, Cush, Shraharla, Ardpatrick, Martinstown and, I think, Kilmallock. There may have been others. The Battalion covered a very large area. Sean T. O'Riordan became O/C., and Jack McCarthy became Vice O/C. I forget who the other officers of this Battalion were. This organisation of the various Battalions in the Brigade area lasted until 1920.

As an outcome of this reorganisation the I.R.B. in Ballylanders area were asked by G.H.Q. to work through their own Circle Centres and not to attend Volunteer parades if they thought it advisable. I confined my activities to my own small Circle of five in the Glenbrohane area, making a few pikes at night, carrying out small repairs to old revolvers, attending Irish classes and Sinn Féin meetings right up to May of 1919.

I think it was the night of the 13th May, 1919, when James Fogarty, John Fogarty, Tom Howard, David Tobin, myself and an old man named Dan Quirke were playing a game of cards at my house when we heard a knock on the door. I opened it and went out. Ned O'Brien and Jimmie Scanlon of Galbally were outside. I asked them in. Ned O'Brien declined and said "We have done a great day's work for the East Limerick Brigade today down at Knocklong". He then told me how they had helped in the rescue of Sean Hogan. It was only when he had finished that he told me that Jimmie and himself had been wounded. I brought them into the house. The boys in the kitchen broke up the card game. The old man went home but all the others remained. I got a disinfectant which I <sup>kept</sup> ~~kept~~ in the house for horses, diluted it with water and washed out their wounds with the solution. As we were attending to the two men, they kept repeating, "Go to Dan Breen, he is very badly wounded, bring a priest to him". They told me that they would go to Paddy Maguire's and from there to

friends in County Cork. I sent the two Fogartys and Howard to Shanahan's - where Breen, Tracey and Hogan were located - with shotguns and with instructions to take up positions in a field adjacent to Shanahan's to act as guard. David and I went to Ballylanders where we got the help of the Crowley family. Tadhg Crowley and David went to Dr. Hennessy and from there to Galbally to get some Volunteers to go to Emly railway station for some bicycles the rescue party had left there. Joe Crowley and I got a little pony and trap and brought Father O'Brien, C.C. of Ballylanders to Breen at Shanahan's.

When Father O'Brien had attended to the wounded, he came up to the kitchen and said that I should try and get some quiet safe place and a good Doctor for Breen as he thought his chance to live was very small. He told me also that he did not want to be taken back to Galbally, that he would wait until Doctor Hennessy would arrive and that he would go home with the Doctor.

Tom Shanahan was listening and I thought he looked nervous so I told them I would go to Kilfinane at once for the Doctor there, who had a motor car and who was a great friend of my mother. Motors were very few in the area at the time. Really what I had in mind was to get in touch with Jack McCarthy in Kilfinane. He was an I.R.B. man and Vice O/C. of the Battalion. I knew that all the Volunteers we could muster would be needed to effect the retreat of Breen and his companions in good time before the anticipated raids and searches by the R.I.C. commenced. I also knew what the South Tipperary Volunteers would say if, through any lack of vigilance or co-operation on our part, Breen, Tracey and Hogan were caught by the enemy.

Accompanied by Phil Fogarty, a Volunteer of Cush Company, I walked to Kilfinane a distance of four miles. When I got to McCarthy's business house in the town, the premises were locked. If we were not

to waken up the whole town by knocking, one of us would have to climb over a big iron gate seven or eight feet high which led to the back. Phil helped me up and I succeeded in getting over and down the other side without making any noise. When I flung a few pebbles at Jack's window, who should answer but a strange young man in British uniform (a cousin of Jack McCarthy's home from the R.A.M.C. on leave). "Yes", he said "I'll find Jack for you". While I was waiting I became very suspicious and began wondering whether the military had taken over Jack's house or was Jack under arrest. After a while, however, Jack came down. When I had told him my business or as much of it as he let me tell, he said, "I know and the police know; they are around the town all night; how did you get in at all: get back to them. If you are arrested you will be no help; get in touch with me in the morning".

When I got back to the gate I could see no trace of Phil. The police had just passed by and he had to hide. After a few minutes, however, he came to me and helped me out over the gate.

Half running and walking we made our way to Shanahan's. As we approached the house we met Doctor Hennessy and Father O'Brien, as they were leaving. The Doctor told us that he had done the best he could for the wounded men but that he did not know very much about wounds. When we got to the house Seamus Robinson and Dannie Moloney were there. Seamus had been cut off in the retreat from Knocklong station, so he went to Lackelly, there he was joined by Dannie after which they came to Shanahan's.

It was now full daylight and Tom Shanahan had seen the guard on duty further down in the fields. This did not help his nerves any, so I sent a Volunteer to James Condon's house for a horse and trap and at the same time I sent Paddy Hannigan to Dave Clancy's of Cush to warn him to prepare for the wounded men. When the trap arrived

we placed Tracey, Breen and Hogan in it. Tracey appeared to be fairly good but he had a great number of scars on his face. Breen was suffering a lot so we covered him with coats and rugs. After I had dismissed the guard, Seamus Robinson and I, walking in front of the horse and trap driven by Moloney, proceeded towards Cush. On the way we met the children on their way to school and I am proud to say that not a word was ever heard after them about their meeting with us that morning. When we reached Clancy's, we put Breen and Tracey to bed.

Dave Clancy's was the headquarters of the Cush Company. His brother Paddy Clancy immediately notified the Company Captain - Paddy O'Donnell - who ordered all men of the Company living in the vicinity to be ready for instructions at a moment's notice. I sent a dispatch to Jack McCarthy letting him know where we were and informing him that the four men, Breen, Tracey, Hogan and Robinson, wished to be taken to the West Limerick Brigade area which was in charge of Brigadier Sean Finn.

After an hour or so I got Jack's reply. He had sent a dispatch to Finn by a member of the Kilfinane Company - James Condon - (who had a motor cycle) with a road map indicating the road which a car coming from the 'big four' (as we called them then) should travel and at the same time informing Finn that scouts would be stationed at certain cross-roads with a pass word, from the moment the car reached the East Limerick Brigade area, to direct the driver. In his dispatch to me he also mentioned that he would send a good Doctor from the Ardpatrick area to Clancy's and to complete the message he also said that two policemen had left Kilfinane and had gone in the direction of Cush.

In the meantime Jack McCarthy also ordered a motor car from Bruff, the owner of which was James O'Connor, Company Captain of

the area. O'Connor was engaged occasionally by the Inspector of the R.I.C. for the area. In his capacity as driver for the Inspector, O'Connor was not under suspicion and enjoyed a certain amount of freedom to travel where his business demanded. He was a very useful man to the Volunteers. Jack's intention in ordering the second car was to use it to take the 'big four' to friends of his in County Cork if the West Limerick car failed to arrive.

The Volunteers were now moving like a machine. Jack McCarthy, Battalion Vice O/C., Paddy O'Donnell, Company Captain of Cush, and Con Kearney, Company Captain of Martinstown and their men were great. At home at Clancy's, Davy was coming and going all day bringing supplies. Katie Clancy was attending the wounded, while Mary Clancy looked after the food for all of us. Seamus Robinson, with one eye half closed, was watching and taking in everything. Hogan, I thought, looked very young and boyish until he asked me "Do you think the Volunteers will fight?" I told him I thought they would and expressed the opinion that the time was drawing very near.

Doctor Fitzpatrick of Ardpatrick had a lady patient in the Cush area. Tom Dunne, who had been sent for this Doctor and escorted him to this lady's house on the pretext that she had taken a bad turn, brought the Doctor through some fields to Clancy's.

After examining Breen, Doctor Fitzgerald said that he would pull through if we could find him a very quiet place and a good Doctor. Tracey was very lucky. He had a hair's breath escape from a bullet wound in the neck.

As night was approaching the Scouts went to their allotted positions. Davy Clancy took up his post at Martinstown Chapel gate at which point the drivers of the cars would be instructed to put

out their lights and approach Clancy's in the dark. After a while from our positions we saw a car approach the Chapel gate where it was stopped and its lights switched off. When it reached Clancy's we found it was the Bruff one so we parked it at the back of the house and waited for the West Limerick one.

The best machine will go wrong and always at the wrong time. We saw the West Limerick car coming, stopping at the various posts until it reached the post at Martinstown Chapel gate where it also stopped, but to our dismay it continued to approach with full lights on. It could be the enemy, I thought. I had to act. I went into Robinson and Hogan and in a few words told them the position. We took up our guns and went out to meet them. As we were going through the gate Tracey passed us down the side of the road and got into position to meet them also. I thought he was asleep in bed but it seems he could hear and see in his sleep. If there was going to be any shooting that night, he was determined to get the first shot in as before. Just then it struck me that they may be our own men after all and one shot would ruin everything as we were only a mile and a half from Kilfinane. I called out to the boys to hold it and walked out on the road to meet the car. What a relief it was to see Garrett McAuliffe, Vice O/C. of the West Limerick Brigade, standing on the running board of the car. In his joy that everything was going so well Davy Clancy had forgotten to tell Garrett to turn off his lights.

Garrett was ready in no time for his return journey to his own area, but he too made a mistake in taking a wrong turn at Ballingaddy cross which brought him straight through the town of Kilmallock past the old poor house there where the dead bodies of the two R.I.C. men lay that were shot dead the night before at Knocklong. The reason for Garrett's mistake was due to the fact that he was to follow the Bruff car to Ballingaddy Cross only, but it appears that he continued beyond the Cross for some time, and then decided to carry on.

Back at Clancy's we had to clean up. It was only then that I sent Condon's horse and trap home. My reason for holding the trap until then was to prevent anybody who may have seen us and was inclined to talk from judging how far we had gone.

At home in Ballinalackin again everything was quiet. I worked by day but slept in neighbours' houses at night. From now on the Volunteers in the whole area became very active. Ballylanders Company, although affected by the previous dispute, were doing very well under Captain William Sampson. Galbally Company had given the first blood for East Limerick. Ned O'Brien was right; it was a great day's work for the East Limerick Brigade and I would say for all Ireland. Ned and Jimmy Scanlon went on the run in County Cork. Ned's brother John Joe, Sean Lynch and Ned Foley who also took part in the rescue, put up a bold front and stayed at home by day but slept elsewhere by night. Foley went home one night, however and was arrested by the R.I.C. After a period of two years in prison he and Paddy Maher of Cush Company were tried by a Military Court in Dublin for their part in the rescue. Both of them were executed in Mountjoy jail on the 7th June, 1921.

During this period the other members of my I.R.B. Circle formed a committee for the purpose of running cross-road dances at the South or Kilgarriff end of Glenbrohane Parish. It became a great place for enjoyment on Sunday evenings. I mention this here because I will refer to it later.

I kept in touch with Tadhg Crowley and Tom Murphy of Ballylanders every evening during this time. It was on one of these evenings that Tadhg told me to have the boys in readiness for the following evening to act as scouts for Ned O'Brien and Jimmie Scanlon who were to arrive from the County Cork that evening. It was about the autumn of 1919. After a very rough journey over mountain and bog they arrived late the next evening. At Ballybrien Cross about

halfway between Mitchelstown and Ballylanders, they almost walked into a party of military, but they saw the military in time and took to the fields. The military opened fire on them. When they arrived at my place they were worn out. Tadhg Crowley and Tom Murphy were with them. We gave them milk and after they had a rest we scouted for them to Cush.

It was about two months later before I saw them again. I was working in the forge late one evening when I got a message from Tadhg Crowley asking me to be ready to go to Dublin that night with Ned and Jimmie. A farmer named Mike Sheahan who lived next door to me and who was a cousin of Jimmie's had asked me to let him know if and when Jimmie was leaving as he wanted to give him a present.

I got ready at once, washed and dressed and put a .38 revolver in my pocket, got on my bicycle and called on Mike Sheahan to collect some money for myself against work carried out for him in the forge. When he saw me he said "Simon is going" (Simon was a pet name he had for Jimmie). "Yes" I said. He gave me £5 for Jimmie and I think it was £2 I asked for myself. Money was very scarce with the Volunteers in those days. I went to Knocklong station where I met Tadhg Crowley who informed me that he would not be able to go with us to Dublin but that Sean O'Rourke would meet us at Kingsbridge station. Sean was a Dublin man who had spent a holiday at Crowley's a short time before. I met him there and knew him well.

Tadhg and I talked about the plan for the night. When he told me he had sent a telegram to Sean and how the telegram was worded I thought the whole plan would go wrong, so I asked him for his brother Jack Crowley's address in Dublin. Jack Crowley was learning the motor business in Dublin at the time. Tadhg thought there was no need for it but he eventually wrote it on a slip of paper and

handed it to me. I got my ticket and when the train arrived Mick Scanlon - Jimmie's brother and a National School Teacher in Kilmallock - stepped out and took his place on the train.

The train was crowded so I had to stand in the corridor. I was in no hurry to see where Ned and Jimmie were as I knew they were some place near on that part of the train from which Mick Scanlon had stepped. I was near Limerick Junction before I saw Ned and would not have known him only for his long nose. He looked very well as a priest. A few minutes later I saw Jimmie. He was in a corner arguing with four or five British Tommies and appeared to be enjoying some jokes they were telling. He had a big heavy overcoat on and was wearing glasses. It was a very good disguise.

Cork hurling team were playing a match in Croke Park next day - Sunday - so a great many G.A.A. fans were on the train as well as a number of Volunteers from Kilmallock, Kilfinane, Charleville and other places. Some of the Volunteers knew of our presence on the train but I cannot remember now how many were in the know. We experienced only one bit of trouble. It happened when a young fellow who was passing Jimmie and his Tommie pals said "How are you Jimmie". Jimmie left his pals and went to the toilet. As he passed me he pulled the tail of my coat. I followed him in a second or two. In the toilet he told me what happened and said the young fellow may be from Emly and that many of the young lads from there would know him as he had often carted stuff from Emly station for his father's bakery. Before we reached Dublin I asked this young lad to come with me to the toilet where I gave him a sound bit of advice and to make sure he was listening to me I just brushed my little .38 revolver with my handkerchief.

At Kingsbridge station things did not go too well. I took a quick look around at all the cabs but there was no sign of Sean O'Rourke. The message from Tadhg to Sean had not been understood. Coming back along the platform I met Jimmie Brislane, O/C. of a Cork Battalion. He read my thoughts and said, "You are in trouble, Ned". I told him the position. He stayed with us. We called the last car - an old side-car. We tried to read my little slip of paper but could not make out the address, so Brislane said to the driver "Fleming's Hotel". When we got there it was locked so we had another look at the slip of paper. After a while Brislane got it - Adelaide Road. The old driver said he didn't know where it was. We could see he wanted to get away from us. There were very few people around at that hour of the night. After a little persuasion he remembered it was on the south side and eventually got us there. We had Jack Crowley out of bed in no time. He took the two boys to Flemings of Drumcondra and I took Jack's place in the bed. Next day Jack said to me "Holy God, the old driver pulled up last night at a police barracks to inquire the way to Fleming's".

Next day - Sunday - I met another of the Crowleys - Joe. We went to Mass and then to see the Match from the side line. Joe was a very nice boy. He paid for my chair on the side line. I looked at the man on a chair on my left - I thought I knew him. I asked him "How are you since?" There was no doubt about it because when he looked at me he half closed one eye again - it was Seamus Robinson. I told him Ned and Jimmie were in town and asked about his pals. They must have been somewhere in the vicinity for when we were leaving the field after the Match, he said "I must go or I'll miss the boys". The 'old fox' said very little. I did not see Seamus again until the wars were over or for that matter neither Ned nor Jimmie, but Ned sent his .38 revolver to me a short time before the Truce.

The Match over, we went to Moran's Hotel where we met Jack McCarthy and others from our own Battalion area. We also met Sean O'Murhlie of the I.R.B. who asked us to meet him at 13 Fleet Street on the following day - Monday. Jack McCarthy and I with some others attended the meeting as arranged and discussed with O'Murhlie Volunteers matters in our own area. We told him all we knew of the Knocklong rescue. That night I came home to Kilmallock and was met at the station by Mick Scanlon. I stayed with him for the night at Miss Dwane's. We discussed the journey to Dublin and the future of the Volunteers in our area. I liked Mick very much because of his resemblance to Patrick Pearse and from now on he called to see me regularly at week-ends on his way home to his mother's place in Galbally.

I think it was about the latter end of 1919 or early 1920, that Tadhg Crowley and myself received a message from Jack McCarthy asking us for a report on the possibility of capturing Ballylanders R.I.C. barracks. I understand that this was a general order from the Brigade O/C., Sean Wall to all Companies in the area in which the R.I.C. had a barracks. Tadhg and I went to Kilfinane where we met Jack and had a discussion on the matter. I expressed the opinion that Ballylanders barracks could be captured.

Early in 1920 I travelled to Dublin with Liam Lynch, the details of which journey I gave to a member of the Bureau - Florrie O'Donohoe - some time ago, so I think there is no need to report the story here.

About this time a new R.I.C. man arrived at the barracks in Ballylanders. It was rumoured locally that he had been sent down specially from the Depot. From the moment of his arrival he tried to give the impression that he was a very friendly fellow and tried to make friends with anyone or everyone if they would be friendly with him. One Sunday evening, it must have been early March, 1920,

an incident happened at the crossroads dance which led up to the attack and capture of Ballylanders barracks. On this evening two R.I.C. men, one of them the man from the Depot, arrived at the dance and asked several girls to dance with them but they all refused, so the Depot man took a very young girl by the hand and stepped on the stage with her. Just then James Fogarty and David Tobin - two of the men of my I.R.B. Circle - stepped out on the stage and announced the end of the dance for the night. After some hot words with the two R.I.C. men, the party broke up.

A few nights later Tom Murphy, Paddy Hannigan, John Joe Crawford, his brother Tom, my brother David and myself met and discussed the dance incident and decided that the R.I.C. man from the Depot should be put away for good. Tom Murphy went to Glanworth in County Cork, where he met the Battalion O/C. of that area - Tom Barry - and borrowed a .45 Webley revolver from him to carry out the job with the use of the best of our own revolvers. In the week following we were ready to start on duty.

We took up duty in the village in pairs but nights passed without any action or a chance of getting our man. One night it would be some civilian in the line of fire, next night it would be something else. Tom Crawford on one occasion was about to shoot him in Lena Crawford's public house - she was a sister of Tom's - but Paddy Hannigan stopped him saying "Wait for a better place".

On the following night some two out of the six I.R.A. men on the job, I think it was Tom Murphy and David Tobin, were on duty when Mick Scanlon met me on his way home to Galbally. We called in to see his sister a Miss Burke who had a public house directly across the road from the barracks. Now no one outside the six of us knew

our intentions or the plan we had in mind but I just had to tell Scanlon. When I did so, he said "What good would one dead policeman do, what about the old barracks". I told him that I had reported that it could be captured but that nothing had been done about it. Scanlon then advised me to call off "the pop the peeler"<sup>plan,</sup> so I did. It was agreed there and then that I should write a dispatch to the Brigade O/C., Sean Wall asking him for all the rifles and ammunition available to attack the barracks. John Joe Crawford volunteered to take this dispatch to John Hogan's garage in Kilmallock, where he would be able to meet Sean Wall on a certain day in the week. Scanlon had told us that Sean would be in the garage and that he would be there also and would speak to Sean on the proposal.

Everything worked out as planned. John Joe delivered the dispatch and returned with a reply from Sean saying that he would send a man to meet me on the following Friday night. Scanlon also informed me that there was a man from G.H.Q. in the area and expressed the opinion that this man would be a good man to take charge of the attack. Sean T. O'Riordan arrived on the Friday night and informed me that he was acting for the Brigade Staff and that if my plan of attack was a good one, the Brigade Staff would not object to it being carried out. Sean T. liked the plan so we arranged a further meeting at my house.

At a Volunteer concert in Kilfinane a couple of nights later I again met Mick Scanlon. Sean Ford - the man from G.H.Q. whose real name was Thomas Malone - was with him. When the concert was over we held a small meeting at Dan McCarthy's hardware shop. Jack McCarthy was present at this meeting. We again discussed the proposed attack and, as well as I can remember, it was at this meeting we appointed 'Sean Ford' to take charge of the attack.

Our next meeting prior to the attack was held at my house. It was the most important one we held. We thoroughly discussed every detail of the proposed attack. Sean T. O'Riordan, O/C. of the Galtee Battalion was among those present as arranged. At this point in my story I will refer you to Jack McCarthy's story in "The Red path of Glory" to save repetition. I will, however, add a few details in regard to this meeting. An order was issued directing that no married man should occupy any one of five positions selected for the attack, so Sean T. had to listen to himself being appointed to a First Aid post at Mrs. Burke's house on the Knocklong road. Mick Scanlon was allocated a position at the same post for a different reason. The Cumann na mBan occupied the same post with their First Aid equipment.

Some two or three weeks before the date of the attack on the 27th April, 1920, rifles and ammunition were coming through Cush Company from all over the Brigade area to my house. We also received a quantity of ammunition from South Tipperary Brigade for the attack. During the period my own I.R.B. Circle were on duty night and day. A new member - Bill O'Sullivan - was accepted at this time.

Four or five days before the 27th, Jack McCarthy arrived at my house from Kilfinane with maps, paper and pen. All roads in our area as well as roads in County Tipperary and County Cork had to be blocked. I had to work in the forge by day just to show business was as usual. My brother David was cleaning the guns and was helped by Paddy Hannigan, who was a Lieutenant in Cush Company. One day while they were at this work a shot went off accidentally. Luckily the gun was pointed towards the fire grate at the time. Sean Ford (Thomas Malone) was coming and going and had some information for us every day. He kept in touch with the officers of the Brigade as

well as the officers of Tipperary and Cork Brigades who were to be responsible for attacking enemy reinforcements on their way to Ballylanders during the attack.

All was now ready. Tom Murphy and John Joe O'Brien were detailed to take up positions ~~at~~ Condon's public house and were told to take up those positions when they would see the other houses being occupied by the rest of the attacking party. Two men from Kilmallock had been ordered to report early at my place to go to Walsh's public house situated in Knocklong road to obtain there the key of a house next door to the barracks. Tom Crawford, Christopher Upton, Jack Meade, the brothers Jack, Joe, Tadhg, Peter and Mike Crowley made last minute arrangements in the village. The remainder of the attacking party assembled on the Knocklong road at a point known as Ballylanders bridge. Here we had men from each of the Company areas of Bruff, Bruree, Kilmallock, Kilfinane, Cush and Martinstown. I helped Sean Forde in selecting the men for each of the officers in charge of the five sections.

Paddy Hannigan was the first officer we sent off to take over Upton's house. Chris. Upton the owner and a member of the local Company was waiting for him with six men. I thought this position was the most dangerous, so we advised Hannigan to keep feather pillows on the windows. Sean Lynch of Galbally was in charge at Mrs. Burke's and Jack McCarthy was in charge at O'Grady's. This turned out to be a very hot place, also. (See Jack McCarthy's story). Sean Forde and myself occupied a post at the dispensary which was the house next door to the barracks. We had with us Paddy O'Donnell, Con Kearney, Tom Crawford, Joe Crowley, Davy Clancy and David Tobin. In a stable at the back of the dispensary we placed two men to cover the back of the barracks. In our post we had a crowbar, sledge and two hatchets supplied by Dan McCarthy from his hardware shop in

Kilfinane. Dan himself was in one of the rifle positions that night.

At the signal of a flash light our guns roared from all positions. Ford and myself broke through the roof of our building and got astride a heavy plank of timber underneath the slates like two men on horseback. With the hatchets we cut a big hole in the roof of the barracks through which Ford fired a bomb. After the explosion we thought we would have no trouble from that end of the barracks but, to make sure, we sent in another. The police rifles continued to crack, crack at the men in Upton's and O'Grady's. Ford called on the garrison to surrender but they replied with rifle fire and sent a number of verey lights up through the chimney. Just then I heard a noise at a door leading to the dayroom of the barracks beneath us. I pulled Ford back and got him to lie closer to our roof. It was lucky for him he did so for just then bits of slate and dust fell on us as a result of rifle fire directed from underneath. We directed a few revolver shots at the door and felt comparatively safe. I suggested to Ford that it was time to use the torch - a pole five or six feet long with sacks rolled around one end - but he replied "We are hardly under fire at all yet". At the same time I thought our men in Upton's were bearing the brunt of the fight and were in the greatest danger. When the fight had been in progress for about half an hour Ford and I poured a tin of paraffin oil through the hole in the barrack roof after which we got our torch up. While Ford held it 'at the ready' I set fire to the end with the sack which had been saturated with paraffin. He at once drove it into the barracks: as he did so a great flare of light went up. A few seconds later we heard the shout below "We surrender". Ford gave the 'Cease fire' order which was flashed around from one position to another.

I came down from the roof and looking up I saw Ford giving orders to the police to march out in front of the barracks with their hands up. He reminded me of some story I had read of Patrick Sarsfield. When the police were all lined up outside we noticed that two of them were in their night attire. Ford allowed them to dress. He then ordered a section of our men to go into the barracks and collect all arms and ammunition in the building and at the same time warned the searchers not to touch any money or private property they found. Liam Scully got the job of examining papers, books and anything in that line that would yield information in the hands of the police. While the police were being sent under an armed guard to the other end of the village and as we were about to leave the vicinity I took a tin of petrol and threw it on the stairs. The fire came towards me so quickly that I had to drop the tin and only just got outside the door when the stairs were a mass of flames. It was the end of an enemy garrison in Ballylanders.

David Tobin marched a section of our men with all the captured arms, ammunition, bombs, verrey light pistols and documents to my I.R.B. Circle's private dump, there to be sorted out and counted later. It was only then that <sup>Ford</sup> ~~me~~ told me that one of our men - Jack Meade - had been wounded. I was so busy I did not see him being carried on a stretcher to the First Aid post. It was a great shock to me. I said to Ford, "We will have to remove him from this place", so he agreed. In going towards the First Aid Post we met Father O'Brien returning from there after attending to Meade. He told us he thought Meade was a bad case and that he was as bad as Breen was after Knocklong. As we went into the sick man's room we met Doctor Hennessy coming out. The Cumann na mBan were still on duty, some of them with Rosary Beads in their hands. I said to

Sean, "We will take him away with us". I went to the village and got Jack Crowley, who had a new Ford car, to bring it to the First Aid post. There we placed a stretcher with Meade on it across the top of the seats. There were no hoods on top of those cars then. We drove through a road which had been left open for the purpose, to Ballingaddy cross. Here we came upon a big tree which had been felled across the road - the work of the Ballingaddy Company. We were on the main road between Kilmallock and Kilfinane and wanted to take Meade to Ryan's house on the Ardpatrick Road.

Ford left us and crossed some fields to Tom Sheedy's. It wasn't long before they drove up with a horse and trap to the other side of the tree. We lifted Meade on the stretcher from the Ford car and placed him in Sheedy's horse trap. He was suffering a lot; blood was coming from his mouth as we carried him through the tree. Somebody remarked that he resembled Connolly in Easter Week 1916, but he bore it well. While we were on this job four or five men drove up to the tree on their way to a horse fair in Kildorrery. We warned them to keep their mouths closed.

At Ryan's we put Meade to bed, but we felt that we were too near the Cross of Black on the main road, so Ford left me on guard with Meade while he went to locate some Brigade Officers of the area. The day passed quietly and as it was getting dark Ford returned accompanied by Sean T. O'Riordan, Battalion O/C. They had got a nice place for Meade, well in, in the fields and about a mile and a half from any road and about half way between Kilfinane and Kilmallock. When they had asked Mrs. Burke, the owner of the house for permission to bring Meade there, she replied, "Bring him along and bring a gun for me and I will help you to protect him". Tom Sheedy came along with his horse and trap, so the stretcher which Meade himself had helped to make was used once more.

We had to travel about two miles of the main road before we came to the passage leading to Mrs. Burke's. When about half way along this road our scout at Ballingaddy reported that a strong force of military had arrived in Kilmallock. This news caused us to travel faster with the result that blood again began to flow from Meade's mouth. But when we arrived at Mrs. Burke's things took a turn for the better. We got in touch with Doctor Fitzgerald who walked across the fields every night to attend the patient. Nurse O'Sullivan of the Workhouse Hospital in Kilmallock attended but sent for her sister Babs who was at her home in Tipperary. Babs, who was also a nurse, came to Mrs. Burke's and attended to Meade until he was sent to hospital. Sean Ford and myself did guard every night and slept by day at Sheedy's. One day Sean Wall the Brigade O/C. called and asked me to take over Quartermaster of the Brigade informing me at the same time that Kilmallock R.I.C. barracks was next on the list for attack and capture. I told him I may not be so successful in procuring arms and ammunition as I had been in Ballylanders but he said we could appoint men on the spot to look after the supply of arms and ammunition. After this discussion Ford took Wall to see Meade.

Tadhg Crowley and my brother David arrived soon after to do guard duty, so I went to see Jack McCarthy after which I went to Galbally. It was very late in the night when we got there. There were no lights in any of the houses except a small light - it was a Sacred Heart lamp - at Sean Lynch's house. We knew that Sean's sister, Margaret Mary, was in bed in the room with the light. Ford asked me to stand with my back to the wall underneath her window. When I did so he stood on my shoulders and pulled himself up and through the window. He went over to her bed and began to tickle her under the chin to wake her up and let us in for the night. It was a lucky thing for both of us that she immediately put on a bright light for,

for, unknown to both of us her brother Sean and John Joe O'Brien had us under observation for some time and by this time were directly opposite the house with a .45 revolver each, drawn ready to shoot us under the impression we were two British soldiers or R.I.C. men raiding the house. Margaret Mary, now a very happy married woman, and I have had many a good laugh since over this incident.

From Galbally I went home to Ballylanders area to check the arms captured in the attack. When I arrived the I.R.B. men of the Circle had all the arms cleaned. I discovered we had captured six rifles, 850 rounds of .303 ammunition, two or three .45 revolvers, a small amount of .45 ammunition, one box of egg bombs, a verey pistol with cartridges and R.I.C. notebooks and papers.

During the month of May, 1920, no R.I.C. or military were to be seen in Ballylanders, Glenbrohane or Cush areas. One evening during this time Sean Ford arrived in a motor car driven by Larry MacNamee. They were accompanied by Sean Finn, Brigade O/C., West Limerick Brigade, Tom Wallace and Sean Ready. Ford said they wanted to know what it was like to stay one night in the little Republic. We made them very happy at Luddy's of Spittle near Ballylanders.

Shortly after Sean T. O'Riordan was arrested after which a number of I.R.A. men, who were on the run from around Ballylanders area, went to Kilmallock to attack a party of five or six R.I.C. men there who were in the habit of frequenting Clery's Hotel. When they arrived in Kilmallock they were met by Mick Scanlon who told them that Sean Wall had called a meeting for the purpose of discussing a plan of attack on the barrack there. When our men heard this they decided to postpone the proposed attack on the five or six R.I.C. which they were making in the nature of a reprisal for the arrest of O'Riordan.

Sean Wall, who was Chairman of Limerick County Council, had Meade removed to the County Infirmary in Limerick. Two of Meade's comrades from Ballylanders were on guard duty for a couple of weeks in the hospital. Soon after, the meeting to discuss the Kilmallock attack was called by Wall and was held at Tom Sheedy's of Ballingaddy. Due to a punctured bicycle I was late for the meeting myself but I got in touch with Wall afterwards and heard the details. All details had been completed for the attack to be carried out on the 28th May. The arrest of Sean T. O'Riordan was a great loss to us due to his knowledge of the barracks lay-out, which he knew better than any of the local Volunteers. He had been employed by John Power, State Solicitor, who had offices directly opposite the R.I.C. barracks. Sean T., in the course of his duties, had often been in the barracks and knew it well.

A few days before the attack, Ford, Mick Scanlon and myself called to see Meade in the hospital and told him of the coming attack. He was doing well and hoped to be with us soon again. We returned home by train. At Charleville, Ford invited us to have a drink at the railway bar while we were waiting for the train. I thought this a bit funny as I knew he hadn't a lot of money no more than myself but, to my surprise, the moment the barmaid put the three small wines on the counter Ford and Scanlon took up their glasses and drank. As Ford <sup>walked</sup> out he said, "Pay for them Ned" at the same time reminding me that I was the Quartermaster. They were sure I had no money but after paying for the drinks I had a  $\frac{1}{2}$ d. left. I didn't forgive Ford for that trick yet.

Clery's Hotel was situated directly opposite the R.I.C. barracks in Kilmallock, so two of our men from Ballylanders were detailed to book in there, as Commercial Travellers, early in the day, to make sure the doors would be opened quietly for the members of the attacking party who were to occupy it at nightfall. The two men were

Joe Crowley and Tom Crawford. I had to report early in the day at Jack O'Brien's cottage on the Bruree side of Kilmallock town. When I was on my way there I called to see Paddy Clancy of Cush Company, who had just been home a day from Wormwood Scrubbs Jail where he had served a period and undergone a hunger-strike. He looked very pale. When I told him where I was going he jumped to his feet and said, "I am coming with you". I thought he would not be able for it due to his state of health, but it was no good in telling Paddy that. On our way into Kilmallock we were met by a scout of that Company who led us by the old Abbey to the east of the town to O'Brien's cottage. Sean Ford was there and between us we spent the day looking after the bombs and preparing them for use that night. Sean Wall and Nicholas O'Dwyer arrived during the day and had with them a new type of bomb which they had received from G.H.Q. The bombs were percussion type and were new to us. They were used in the attack that night. Old Dick Fitzgerald was on guard duty outside the cottage and kept an eye on the town.

Mick Scanlon and Liam Scully were in charge of the town and as night was falling they sent David Tobin in charge of members of Ballingaddy Company to commandeer a length of hose from Mount Coote House. (It was intended to use the hose that night in the attack, but it wasn't needed). This operation took longer than was expected, so Scanlon and Scully sent an urgent message to me to come in and take over Miss Carroll's shop which was situated next door to the barracks. Paddy Clancy came in with us. When we met Scanlon in the town we walked towards Mrs. Carroll's but turned back when we saw six or seven policemen standing around the barracks and went into a Miss Carroll's public house instead where Scanlon bought a bottle of whiskey and handed it to me, saying that it may be needed during the night in our post if any of our men were wounded.

Half an hour later we again went towards Mrs. Carroll's; this time it was clear of police. Mrs. Carroll was in the shop. I asked her, "Where is the boss?" He was in the kitchen. Paddy Clancy remained in the shop and broke the news to Mrs. Carroll. I went into Mr. Carroll and broke the news to him. The poor man got a great fright at first but after a little talk he became calm. I advised him to leave the children in bed until the remainder of the I.R.A. who were to occupy the post would arrive when we would give him every assistance to remove himself, wife and children to a place of safety and out of the line of fire. Mr. Carroll was very relieved to hear this and seemed quite happy about it. At this point I will leave the story of the mobilisation to Sean Ford. (See W.S. 845. ).

It took some time for our men to get into their various positions around the barracks. It was almost three hours - a very long waiting period - before everything was ready for the attack to commence. As our men were going to their posts they made a lot of noise. We could hear the R.I.C. getting ready for the attack also. The Brigade O/C., Sean Wall, and Sean Ford were in charge in Mrs. Carroll's shop. We had a big number of Volunteers in this post. I remarked to Sean Ford that the dark hours were slipping away, so I went up to the garrett which was very small; the house itself was small. I was followed by Ford, Liam Scully, David Tobin, Bill Wall who was a brother of Sean's and Mike Cleary. We had very little room. When the bombs were handed up I broke the roof of our post. Ford started to fire the percussion bombs. Two R.I.C. men at a window near us fell early in the fight. We could see that the bombs were making small holes in the roof of the barracks. Cleary threw a four-stone weight on to the roof but it slid off to the ground. We began to realise that it was going to be a long fight. To add to our troubles

our own roof took fire. I handed down the bombs to Paddy O'Donnell; the remainder of the party took off their coats and succeeded in smothering the fire with them. At this stage I came down from the garrett and went to a room with a window at the back of the house. I fired a bomb from this window, but I don't think it had any effect. From the garrett our men were throwing bottles of paraffin oil on to the roof of the barracks. We could see the fire creeping along very slowly. I went to a front window to have a look at the front of the barracks - the front of the barracks was in a line with the back of the house we had occupied. - Keeping under cover in a corner of the room I could see that all the top portion of the barracks was well on fire. While I was in the corner I saw Paddy Clancy come out on the street and throw a bottle of oil at one of the lower windows but it did not start any fire there. At the off corner of the barracks was a small annex to which the R.I.C. had now retreated as their fire appeared to be coming from a window of this annex. It was from this window that Liam Scully was later badly wounded.

I noticed Clancy was still very pale after his long ordeal in jail, so I remembered Scanlon's bottle of whiskey and called him, Ford and a few others and divided it around. I subsequently heard that this bottle was afterwards re-filled with paraffin oil and that Paddy Hannigan was a very sick man after having a nip of the contents.

It was now over five hours since the fight started. I met Sean Wall and Sean Ford coming down the stairs with the bags of bombs which had not been used. I asked Wall, "Are we to retreat?" He said "Yes, the order has been given. Liam Scully and David Tobin are above and wont come down, go up and bring them down". I went up and told Scully and David that all of our men in the other portions were leaving. They replied, "It's a pity to leave now, it must fall soon". I said, "It's an order". They asked me to wait

wait for them as they had to put their boots on. I went down to the front door and waited. Scully was the first down. He passed me at the door and walked out a little too far into the street and received a bullet in the neck from that window in the annex. I drew my revolver and covered the window, at the same time calling on some Volunteers down the street to take Scully off the street, but at that moment David came along. I could see Kit Mary Sheedy a sister of Tom's - running up to help in the company of some of the local Volunteers. I fired three shots at the window while David and they were removing him.

Ford, who was away down the town with the main body of our men by this time, thinking the police were coming out gave his men an order to charge. Sean Finn, O/C., West Limerick Brigade, Michael Brennan, O/C., East Clare Brigade, with other Volunteers, came up the street at the double. My trouble then was to stop them before they got into the same line of fire that had got Scully. Sean Finn and Michael Brennan were the only ones, as well as I can remember, who had bayonets. I went out into the street with outstretched hands in front of them. This brought them to a halt. I told Finn and Brennan what had happened. As we parted Brennan said "We will have another night; it will be East Clare next time". He asked me to be there.

When they had gone I went to see Scully. I thought he was dead or very near it. I asked my brother David "Did he say anything?" He replied "No, but he smiled". I think that smile was on his face then. The West Limerick men took the body with them and buried him in Templeglantine graveyard. The West Limerick men were accompanied on the journey by some of the East Limerick men.

As we were retreating John Joe Crawford who was travelling home alone by the back or west side of the town, got on to a boreen which was known as the Poor House boreen. As he did so, he observed the R.I.C. leaving the shell of the barracks; I can't say how many of them were there. John Joe drew his .38 revolver and fired one more shot at them wounding one of them - a Constable Hoey - who died later. The R.I.C. retreated back to the barracks. Later that morning they all went to Bruff barracks taking their wounded with them. Two of their men who were killed in the attack were burned to a cinder. A few weeks later, in the month of June, they returned to Kilmallock and took over Ashill Towers, a large house on the Charleville road. This time they were reinforced by military.

#### The start of the Column.

At home in Ballylanders and Cush Company areas all of the officers were on the run although the enemy had made no raids or sent out patrols for some time. Those on the run from Ballylanders Company were Tom Murphy, all the Crowley brothers, John Joe Crawford, Tom Crawford, my brother David, Jerry O'Callaghan, Danny Moloney (Lackelly) and myself. Those from Cush Company were Paddy O'Donnell, the Captain, Paddy Hannigan and Davy Clancy, Lieutenants. We all met every day. One evening Mick Scanlon met us in Ballylanders - he was still teaching in Kilmallock - I don't remember how many of the abovementioned men were present but there were at least five or six. Scanlon asked us "What's next?" I replied we were all agreed that we would not be taken by the enemy without a fight and so started the Column. We were all carrying revolvers by this time. Scanlon said "I'll be with you when they find me out and am sacked from the school". He was very pleased. About three or four nights later Tadhg Crowley and I got into the village very late, so we chanced sleeping in Crowleys. Next day at about 10 o'clock Paddy Slattery arrived from Cush with an urgent message stating that

an R.I.C. patrol of four men carrying arms, had passed from Kilfinane on their way to Elton. When we heard this we jumped out of bed, had a hurried meal, got our rifles which we slung over our shoulders and cycled through Glanbrohane to Cush. Jack Lee and others were waiting for us. After a hurried discussion we moved off and took up positions on the Elton side of Carroll's farmhouse on the road to Elton to meet the patrol on its return journey. It had been agreed to open fire over their heads first to give them a chance of saving their lives. The main body took up their positions on the left-hand side of the road where there was good cover afforded by whitethorn bushes and a few big trees on the fence. I was on the extreme left on this side. Jack Lee was <sup>next</sup> ~~second~~ to me. On the right-hand side of the road it was necessary to have a few men so as to cut off the retreat of the enemy if it came to a fight. Tadhg Crowley took up his position here. I cannot remember now who he had with him if he had anyone. Ballinahinch Castle was at the other end of the same field. We all settled down in our positions to await very quietly the return of the patrol which we knew wouldn't be long.

"They are coming"; the word was passed along from one man to another. Next the steady tramp, tramp of the R.I.C. patrol is heard. They are coming into the ambush position; now they are well in. Next a volley and a roar of "Surrender!" that would frighten the heart of a bull. One of the last R.I.C. men in the patrol named Cleary - a very young man - jumped into a dike on the opposite side of the road. Jack Lee thought he was going to put up a fight. Lee's shotgun was empty and he asked me to have a shot at Cleary, but at that moment Cleary came back on to the road with his hands up.

After this we all got on to the road and took the surrender. One old policeman ran towards some outbuildings at the back of

Carroll's farmhouse, but Davy Glancy followed and took him back. We captured four rifles and between 100 and 120 rounds of .303 ammunition. Paddy O'Donnell, Tadhg Crowley and myself marched the four R.I.C. men to the end of a big field. There each of us spoke to them and asked them to resign from the Force saying that their place was on the side of the Irish people. One of them named Mulvey who was stationed in Ballylanders some years previously said he would not resign as his time had nearly expired. He looked the worse from drink.

About this time Ernie O'Malley was in the Brigade area. He was training officers of the different Battalions and Companies and held classes for this purpose in certain Company areas. The Volunteers of Kilmallock Company had arrested a man for robbery in the Effin area around the same time. As they were taking him through the farmyard of an ex-R.I.C. man, the ex-policeman opened fire on the escort with a shotgun wounding one of them named Mike Mortell. It was around this time also that Donnchad Hannigan joined up with our little Column. Shortly after we received a message from the Brigade staff to arrest the ex-R.I.C. man whose name was Fitzgerald. When we called at his house we learned that he had left the country the night before. We arrested his two sons instead and told their mother that they would be held prisoners until their father returned. We took the prisoners to the Glenbrohane area where they were held for some time before being removed to the Glenbroe area.

Some few days later the Column took up ambush positions between Crawford's Cross and Corbett's Cross on the main road between Tipperary and Kilfinane in the Gush Company area. We had been in positions about two hours when a car driven by a civilian came into our positions from the Tipperary direction. When the driver reached the section situated on the left-hand side of the road, they stopped him. He reversed back and got away. Some of the men in the section knew him.

His name was Saunders, who had a bad reputation as a friend of the R.I.C. The men situated on the right wing could have shot him but refrained as he was a civilian. Tom Murphy remarked "What would we do with his dead body anyway". As no patrol appeared we left our positions shortly after this incident.

That evening we held a council of war. Danny Moloney would like very much if we all went to Emly to locate a Sergeant Browne of the R.I.C. there who was a very busy man and was constantly calling to and searching Danny's place in Lackelly. He was a great bully who was very keen to arrest Dan Breen. So it was decided. We went to Emly that night. The Volunteers making up the Columns were Paddy O'Donnell, Davy Clancy, Paddy Slattery, Tom Howard, Tom Murphy, David Tobin, Jerry O'Callaghan, Danny Moloney, Tom Crawford, Con Kearney, Peter Crowley, Tadhg Crowley, Donnchad Hannigan and myself. We were billeted in farmhouses around Lackelly. Three others and I stayed in Danny Moloney's. Next morning Mai - Danny's sister - had the breakfast ready in no time.

After breakfast we all mobilised in a field at the back of Danny's house. Arms and ammunition were distributed. We hadn't enough rifles to go around but we had a good few shotguns, some .45 revolvers and a Winchester rifle belonging to Ernie O'Malley which he had left in the Brigade area while he went to G.H.Q.. All ready, Mai Moloney and Tom Crawford were sent ahead to Emly to scout around the village and get all available information about the enemy. To see the two of them going off down a path, which was a short-cut, with hands clasped resembled a brother and sister romping off to school.

When they had left, the Column moved off to the south side of Emly railway station, led by Danny Moloney and Jerry O'Callaghan. They knew every step of the way and the best way to keep under cover.

We had only just arrived there and had taken cover under some big whitethorns when Mai and Tom came to us in great haste to report that a party of R.I.C. and Military had gone on patrol on the road near which we had taken cover and that they were due to return at that moment - good scouting for Mai and Tom.

No time to lose we started to get into positions. I told the other members of the Column that I was taking three men to the other side of the road. I took Danny Moloney, Paddy O'Donnell and Paddy Slattery. Before I left the main body I told them the position on the other side which I proposed to take up. We had to go into a farmyard of a man named Burke. As we were passing through the farmyard gate it occurred to us that if the enemy put up a fight and if they came through the gate they would outflank us, so we left Paddy Slattery under cover at this point to cut off that way of retreat for them. We were now only three. We got around a cow-house and extended well towards the direction from which they were coming. Our intention was to let the patrol pass well into the ambush position and attack them from the rear. I will leave it to some one of the men located at the other side of the road to relate the story of the positions *there*.

On the patrol came in twos in very much extended formation. From our positions it was now clear to us that the end of the patrol would never reach the ambush positions or come in to our line and that it was going to be a tough fight. The first four of the enemy were within the ambush positions but the rest of them were well outside it. What was happening - a shot rang out followed by several others. The first four had surrendered to our men on the other side of the road. Six other men who made up the patrol had retreated back a good distance to the south without firing a shot. From our position we could not see where they had gone. It was low-lying country with plenty of cover.

Just then Tom Crawford came across to us 'at the double' saying, "Come on lads, I know where they have gone; follow me". With Tom leading the way we went after them in single file and extended formation. We got on to the road. We had to cross a bridge on the road. It was very high and its side walls were very low. They must have seen us for just then they opened fire. From the sound and intensity of their fire one would think they were using a machine gun. There was a clearing at the bridge which gave them a good view. Tom was the first to cross and was very lucky he wasn't shot as he did not get down low enough. He could hear the bullets tat-tat on the low wall of the bridge. He at once shouted back a warning, "They are firing on the bridge". I was the next to cross and got well down on my knees. It took a little more time but it worked out better. The others followed my example; they numbered six or seven. The rest of the Column were guarding the prisoners.

On up the road to Ardglass beyond a cottage on the right was a gate to the south of which was a passage leading into a field. Some short distance inside the field was a high fence. We made for this fence. When we got there Tom Crawford said, "I think they are in that field on the other side". Several of the boys looked but could see nobody. Jerry O'Callaghan - an old fowler - was still viewing the field. At last he turned round and said, "I see them, I see the peak of one of their hats; give me the Winchester". This is a gun very like a shotgun. One of the boys, who held the Winchester, handed it to Jerry. He took it, loaded it very coolly and steadily, took aim and fired. He reloaded it, took aim again. Before he fired a rifle was standing on its butt with a white cloth blowing in the breeze from the top. Several of the boys shouted the order together "Ground arms and stand with your hands up". They complied. A few of the Volunteers remained at the fence to keep them covered. The rest of us went into the field

to collect their rifles and ammunition after which we marched our prisoners on to the road to be searched for anything that might have been of military use.

Out on the road we saw that the man in charge of the party had the first finger of his right hand broken. It was hanging down and bleeding badly. I thought to myself, "Good man, Jerry, and only one of Ernie O'Malley's bullets spent". Tom Murphy was searching the man in charge; they were both laughing. I went over near them to hear what was going on. Murphy had some letters and a packet of Woodbines in his hand. The Corporal said ". . . . Paddy wont you leave us a . . . . smoke". Murphy handed him back his cigarettes, after which he shared them all round. They were feeling happy. All this time the Corporal was looking at Peter Crowley. Peter was young but looked younger than he really was. "Well", said the Corporal to him, "who trained you, Kid". Peter's reply was good. He said, "All the young fellows here like me are trained now". The Corporal turned round to Murphy and said ". . . . Paddy, where are we going?" The remainder of the Column had joined us by the time we had our prisoners searched. They had their prisoners with them but old Sergeant Browne and another policeman had escaped into the dykes and ditches of Lackelly.

We were in the area now between three and a half and four hours and were only eight miles from Tipperary town where there was a big British garrison. Donnchad Hannigan, Danny Moloney, Tadhg Crowley and the rest of the Column were now planning what to do with the prisoners. It was decided to put all the prisoners into the cottage. When we had locked them in, we handed the key to the old woman of the house and told her not to let them out for the next two hours. The old woman was long past middle age but she resembled an old Irish General walking up and down the yard with the key in her hand.

We were just about to go and to leave the Sergeant and Constable in the dykes when a motor car from Higgins' Hotel, Emly, drove up with the Rev. Father Humphreys, C.C. of Knocklong and Glenbrohane inside. It was driven by a young man named McGrath. Father Humphreys asked us if his services were required. We told him that there was only one of the enemy wounded and that the wound was slight. He was very pleased and advised us to get into the car with him and leave the area at once. We did it a little better; we sent into Emly for Higgins' other car which was out to us in no time, McGrath's brother driving. We loaded into both cars and drove off in real Tan style to Knockarrow on to the Cross of the Tree where Father Humphreys stepped off and walked home. On to Ballinahinch and to Ballinureena where we were in the Cush Company area and met Mike Clohessy the new Company Captain of the area. We told him of our success. He was very glad to hear the good news. From here we proceeded to Glenbrohane village and eventually reached Ballylanders where we stopped at Miss Lena Crawford's house - she was a sister of Tom's. Here we took all rifles and ammunition to an outhouse at the back and checked them. We had captured eight rifles and 550 rounds of .303 ammunition in web bandoliers. Members of Lackelly Company found two more rifles in the dykes after they had been abandoned by Sergeant Browne and the Constable when they were found by a priest from Emly. (Danny Moloney could give this story). Father Humphreys later became a Canon and Parish Priest of Knockaney where he died.

Now home in Ballylanders and Cush Company areas, we put the rifles and ammunition in the dumps and carried our small arms with us. We slept in farm houses around Ballylanders and Glenbrohane. On one of those nights some bombs were exploded in the front of Crowley's house, situated in Ballylanders village. A Volunteer of Ballylanders

Company reported that six R.I.C. men from Kilfinane were responsible for the job. It was decided by the men of the Column to place a guard on Crowley's house to give the R.I.C. a reception if they tried the same stunt again. Captain Sampson told off three or four local members for this duty each night. They were accompanied by one man of the Column.

We had not long to wait. About the third or fourth night after the guard had first been placed on the house, while Tadhg Crowley, Mike Reilly (known as Wild Mike), Sean Walsh and I think Mike Walsh were on duty. They saw a number of R.I.C. men cycle past the village on the road to Galbally. Jerry O'Callaghan, Jack Crowley, Michael and Peter Crowley and myself were sleeping in Crowley's house. Tom Crawford was in his sister's house. Sean Stack of County Kerry, who was in the area collecting for the Dail loan, was sleeping in Connery's across the street from Miss Cranford's. Chris Upton and Jack Walsh (known as English Jack) had been collecting with Sean Stack the day before and it appears Stack had a good deal of money on him or in the house where he was staying.

Tadhg Crowley called the lot of us together and made the mistake of assuming the R.I.C. were only a small party - about the same number as had exploded the bombs some nights before. We decided to search the sportsfield at the Galbally end of the village for them. Tadhg stayed in the village while Tom Crawford and I searched the side of field nearest a row of houses in the village. Jerry O'Callaghan, Jack, Peter and Mike Crowley were searching the off side of the field at the same time. Tom and I were about midway at the back of the village when we heard a heavy burst of gun-fire on the street outside. We went through a passage between Crawford's and Martin's houses to the front. When we got there we saw Tadhg retreating up the street towards us and keeping close to the houses for cover. When we called

to him, he came to us and told us the R.I.C. were approaching the village along the Knocklong, Kilfinane and Galbally roads. They were sweeping the street with bullets now, but after a while there was a lull. Just then we saw Sean Stack at Connery's door. He made a dash across the street into Crawford's. As he went past us he said something which I did not catch. Immediately Tom Crawford made a dash away from us saying as he went, "I'll see where they are and come back and let you know". Tom was a very good footballer, but that great dash of his on the field didn't suit now. When he reached the other side, he went down the street under cover of an old thatched house that stood out a bit from the others in the row. There he got down on all fours and crept towards the ruins of the old barracks. He had only gone about four yards when there was another burst of gun-fire. He raised himself and retreated under the cover of the thatched house towards Connery's. Before he reached Connery's - he was about half way - he fell. "Oh, my God" someone exclaimed. We knew he was hit. He managed to reach Connery's. Mrs. Connery was at the door and took him in. Tadhg and I were in a bad way then. We waited for a while to see if the boys who were searching the other side of the sportsfield would come to us. I said to Tadhg, "I'll go to Connery's to see if Tom is badly wounded". After a little time I got in. Mrs. Connery locked the door behind me. In the kitchen I saw Tom laid out on a mattress. He was wounded in the face, neck and chest. To me he looked very bad. I thought his chance to live was very small.

In the meantime Tadhg came to the door, but just then a party of military in force had advanced up the street. In the darkness he was under the impression that the military were our own men and when he got the order "Put them up", he thought it was Jerry O'Callaghan and the others who had been searching the field.

But there was no mistaking the next order "Put them up, Paddy". He pulled his gun and fired at them and then ran for it towards a bog road and got away from them. A number of the military followed. After searching a pigsty they struck two pigs the property of a man named Raleigh. Bill Raleigh has often remarked since that his two pigs died for their country.

The rest of the military with a number of R.I.C. had Connery's house surrounded and were banging on the door with the butts of their rifles. Mrs. Connery was acting a great part. She kept shouting out to them that she was dressing and that she was coming now. Tom Crawford was appealing to me to escape if I could. He said "I am no good now but you may be able to get away, so I took the 100 to I chance. I took off my belt and revolver and gave them to Julia Connery - a school girl of about seventeen years at the time. When she had picked up Tom Crawford's revolver I told her to hide them some place, even in the toilet so that the police would not find them. I took all papers and documents in my pockets and put them on the fire, went upstairs and got into bed with the young boys of the family - Patsy and Eamonn, hoping that if the police came into the room they wouldn't know me. Lucky again, an old grey-haired Sergeant of the R.I.C. with a smile on his face came into the room followed by a big dark-looking policeman. The Sergeant said, "So you did the wise thing". I replied "By all the noise I hear outside on the street, it is no place to be tonight, I have to mind these young fellows". "Ah" said the policeman "he's pretending innocence" and proceeded to search my clothes. He found a Crucifix that I had got blessed by the Pope for a happy death. He held it up and said to the Sergeant, "Look at this". Turning to me he said "Remember we carry those too". My reply was "You couldn't have a better thing; my mother gave me that when I was coming here on this job,

I'm a harness maker". Mr. Connery carried on a general business. I could see the old Sergeant's face softening a bit. He found nothing and was about to leave me when I called him back and asked him to tell me what was happening. He told me about a young fellow down below who was badly wounded crossing the street and advised me to stay in bed and look after the two children.

This bit of advice was alright for the moment, but out in one of the other rooms I could hear Julia Connery telling off one of the R.I.C. - a man named Mulvey and one of those we had held up and disarmed at Ballinahinch. After a while Julia won the battle and shortly after I could hear all the party leaving the top floor. I was safe here for the present anyway, but down on the ground floor I could hear Chris Upton talking very loudly and knew he was a prisoner. He had entered Connery's by the back door to warn Sean Stack to save the money collected for the Dail Eireann Loan. It was daylight now and I had been in bed about three hours. The two boys were aged about six and eight years and were very cute. They were telling me, "You are alright anyway". Eamonn is a Priest now.

I knew there was a strong enemy force below guarding Tom Crawford. The kitchen of the house was situated in the back on the ground floor and over the kitchen was a room with a window facing the back. I didn't know if it was possible for me to effect my escape through this window, so I waited for Julia to come. After a while she came upstairs and went into the back room with a mug of tea and some bread which she left on the window and went away without saying a word. While she was away I could hear the people of the village cheering the prisoners:- Chris Upton - as he was being removed. Crawford was left behind under a small guard.

When Julia returned she had my escape arranged. Mickie Davern - the local postman - was in Noonan's Bakery next door to Connery's.

Both he and the Noonans were to help me off the roof of Noonan's bakery. As soon as Julia reported back to me that the guard below were out of view of the back I was out on the floor and down in Noonan's bakery in no time. There I lost no time in getting into the postman's outfit and out through the guard on the street - a new postman, letters and all. I met some of the local people on my way. They just smiled and passed on. Going round a corner to the Galbally road I saw Mickie the postman following me with a horse's blinkers in his hand - a man going to catch a horse some place. When he came up to me, he told me that Jerry O'Callaghan, Mick Reilly, the brothers Jack, Mick and Peter Crowley, as well as Chris Upton, were prisoners, that all arms had been saved and that the enemy were waiting for a Doctor to attend Tom Crawford before removing him.

Crawford's two sisters had saved Sean Stack with his Dail money by helping him over a wall to Hannon's house which was next door. Over at Molly Joe Powell's, I met Tom Murphy and David Tobin. They had arrived there some time during the early morning. Molly Joe was a leading Cumann na mBan girl, who was staying with an aunt of her's, a Mrs. Coleman. They had a bed at all times for men on the run. Tadhg Crowley joined us later. The Cumann na mBan reported that Dr. Hennessy had seen Tom Crawford and would not certify him for removal. At the same time he asked the Cumann na mBan girls to get in touch with us to see if we could rescue him. We talked about the rescue for some time. I was against it, because Tom would be a dead weight and unless we were lucky we could lose more men and arms. Instead we decided to move to Tom Barry's Battalion area in County Cork with all arms we had in the Ballylanders dump. We first of all sent word to all men of the Column to join us in Glanworth. On this particular day Sean Wall, the O/C. with other officers were in the Glenroe Company area trying the two Fitzgerald brothers. They were also planning the rescue of Tom Crawford

and came to the same decision as we did. As well as I can remember Donnchad Hannigan was one of the other officers with Sean Wall on the occasion.

When night came on we approached a Mr. Walsh - an Undertaker - and got one of his mourning carriages and placed the rifles and ammunition in it with three or four men. Jack Cleary took a further five or six men in his horse-drawn sidecar. The members of the Column who travelled that night with ~~us~~<sup>those</sup> who joined us next morning were Paddy O'Donnell, Dan Moloney, Davy Clancy, Paddy Hannigan, Donnchad Hannigan, T. Barrett, Peter Steepe, Con Kearney, Tom Murphy, David Tobin, Tom Howard, Tadhg Crowley, Sean Stack and myself. I may have missed a name or two. We arrived in Ballinlough area where we stayed for the next four or five days and in the meantime planned an attack on an enemy patrol from Kildorrery. Donnchad Hannigan set off and contacted some of the officers of the Cork Brigade for their consent to the attack. Having obtained the necessary consent he returned and brought with him George Lennon, an officer of the Waterford Brigade, to participate in the proposed ambush.

The night before we took up positions, most of the members of the Column had a few hours sleep at a big farmhouse owned by a Pat Ahern in Ballinlough. The women of the house had to make extra beds. I had to sleep on a sofa in the sitting-room but, when I was about to get into bed I found that someone, for a joke, had put vases of flowers and candles all around. It looked just the place for a corpse. Up in the morning early we marched to about 500 yards of Kildorrery town where we were reinforced by members of Ballinlough Company. We took up positions immediately and waited. Having waited all day without any appearance of an enemy patrol, we decided to call it a day and withdraw with the hope of better luck next time.

After a meal in houses nearby we marched to a townland near Killavulen and stayed in farmhouses on the far side of the main road from Mallow to Fermoy which ran the other side of the village. We had been here about two days when we heard from local Volunteers that a car full of British officers travelled on this road nearly every day.

We took up positions where there was a road branching off to the left as one looked towards Fermoy. On the left hand side of the road the Column were in extended positions behind a ditch. On the right hand side Peter Steepe, who was a very good shot, was allocated a sniping position. My position was about forty yards from him behind a very big lime tree which had a lot of scrub all around the trunk. Peter's instructions were to snipe the driver. If the car did not stop then, I was to fire a percussion bomb.

We were in positions about two hours when Peter gave me a signal that the car was coming. I pulled the pin of the bomb and, of course, had to be very careful that the hammer did not touch the scrub. The car came on and passed Peter. He did not open fire; there was something wrong. Donnchad Hannigan came across and questioned Peter, who told him there was a woman in the car - we didn't shoot girls. All this time I was holding the bomb without the pin. I asked Donnchad to put it back as I couldn't trust my left hand to do it. Instead of doing so he ran away in mock fear. I called after him to send Tom Murphy to me. After a while Murphy came along with a mocking face on him - little did he know the pain I was enduring in my right hand. I shouted to him if he didn't come quickly I would fire it at him. Murphy put the pin back - they were great times.

We remained in positions until dusk when we left and had a meal in the local farmhouses. That night we marched back to Glenroe in

our own Brigade area through Glenenaar (of the well-known book of that name by Canon Sheehan). We rested in Glenroe for a day or two. Georgie Lennon remained in the Cork area and Sean Stack left us to carry on the collections for the Dail Loan. After two days we moved to Martinstown area and from there to Bruree area. Passing through our own Brigade area in this way gave great confidence to the officers and men of the various Companies. The Company officers were responsible for the finding of suitable billets for the men of the Column while their men did guard duty at all points from which an enemy patrol might approach while we slept.

Bruree Company was a very active one. Some of its members were in active positions in the attacks on Ballylanders and Kilmallock barracks. Our Brigade Headquarters was at Bruff only five miles from Bruree. We remained in this area for eight or nine days. In the meantime Father Dick McCarthy - a very humorous gentleman - arrived one day from our Brigade Headquarters to get each member of the Column to take the pledge against intoxicating drink. I noticed while he was administering the pledge to the other men, he kept me very much under observation, as much as to say it's all your fault. After a while he handed me £2 from our Headquarters saying, "This will keep the boys a long time in cigarettes". It was on one of those days we all took the Oath of Allegiance to the Republican Army. In one of our debates after taking the Oath we came to the conclusion that we were ahead of G.H.Q.

After being in the area about nine days, one of our Guards reported that a cycle patrol were on their way to Bruree village from Kilmallock. We took cover in a meadow. As we did so another report was received that they were returning to Kilmallock.

We had to go at the double to cover off a road-side fence. My section took up positions on the right hand side of the road between Bruree and Kilmallock. In the meantime the rest of the Column took up extended positions on the left hand side. As I was within a couple of yards of the fence on the right, a shot rang out. I thought it was very close as I could smell the cordite. I ordered the men behind me to rush for cover. As we got under cover we searched for the man who fired the shot but we could see no sign of the enemy. Where did he go to was a question that troubled me for some time afterwards. I heard all about it in 1925 or 1926 from the man who fired that shot accidentally from behind me. It took the iron tip off the heel of my boot as I was rushing for cover and put it spinning several feet in the air.

The other members of the Column with members of Bruree Company, who were on the left hand side, had by now engaged the enemy who immediately retreated towards Bruree, many of them taking cover in a cottage on the way. After a short exchange of shots with the enemy in the cottage it was decided that we should retreat because Kilmallock, with its strong military and R.I.C. garrison, was less than two miles away and if they moved out to meet us, we could be caught between two fires. In their retreat the enemy left a bicycle behind them which was collected by a member of the local Company. Some time later I heard from members of the same Company that two rifles were also abandoned in their retreat. We retreated across country between Kilmallock and Charleville and arrived in Ballingaddy Company area where we got a meal and proceeded to Martinstown, Cush and Glenroe areas, eventually arriving back in Ballinlough, County Cork, where we planned to meet the Tans who were now in Kildorrery.

#### Kildorrery.

Nurse O'Sullivan, who had stayed at Brigade Headquarters since the attack on Ballylanders, was with us. We left Ahern's farmhouse

early on the morning of the 4th August, 1920, and took up positions about 300 yards from the town. The Column men numbered twelve or fourteen and were reinforced by three or four men from Ballinlough who were attached to Glanworth Company. With Danny Moloney, Paddy O'Donnell and Tom Howard, I was in charge on the right hand side of the road. Tadhg Crowley, with another section, was to my left. Donnchad Hannigan, with another section, was to the left of Tadhg Crowley, all of us on the right hand side. Tom Murphy and David Tobin were on the left flank on the other side of the road - but at the same time out of our line of fire - to prevent the retreat of the patrol. Nurse O'Sullivan was in a cottage with her First Aid equipment. The owner of the cottage - an old man - helped her to get some water boiling and was very pleased to be able to help. I placed Tom Howard about thirty yards from Danny Moloney with instructions to cut off their retreat back to town. I was about four yards from Moloney and O'Donnell was about four yards to my left.

We were not an hour in position when we heard the Tans coming. They were talking and laughing. Looking at Howard we saw him rubbing his gun as they passed him - he was great fun. When they came in a line with my position we opened fire with a roar of "Surrender" - no surrender - instead they got down on one knee and opened a rapid fire on our positions. It cut the top of the fence very near O'Donnell sending a shower of small stones and earth into his face. We fired back as true as we knew how. Crowley's section was firing on them at the same time. They couldn't stand it any longer. When their magazines were empty they surrendered. All of them were wounded. It didn't take too long to collect their arms and ammunition. In searching them we found a number of small boxes of ointment and did not discover what it was for until some days later. Nurse O'Sullivan came along and took over.

One Tan was badly wounded in the leg very near the body and was lying on the road. She ordered one of his comrades to take his coat off and put it under his head. She was not long stopping the flow of blood. When she had this done she advised his comrades not to leave him until he was attended by a Doctor. We heard later that when they reached the barracks they left him and went out drinking while he tore off the bandages and died. While the nurse was attending the wounded man, Tom Murphy asked an R.I.C. man who was with the Tans to resign from the Force. He replied, "If I do so and go back to West Cork I'll be shot as a spy. I've escaped today with one slight wound". On our side no man was wounded. In this ambush we captured six rifles and a quantity of ammunition. We gave a few of the rifles to the members of Glanworth Company - the Ballinlough men who had taken part in the attack.

No time to dally we retreated across some fields in the direction of Castletownroche; Darney O'Regan leading the way. I remember having to cross a river which was too wide to jump, but Darney knew of a spot where a tree was blown down across which we reached the opposite bank. We proceeded towards the Blackwater River, having to get out on the main road from Mallow to Fermoy to reach a bridge to get to the other side. While on the road we extended four paces apart. As the Column men in the front were passing a cottage on the side of the road, which faced towards Castletownroche and had a window in the gable end alongside the road, somebody within started waving a white cloth from the window to attract our attention. Our men in front were informed by the occupants of the cottage that they had seen a strong force of R.I.C. and Black & Tans approaching the road we were on. The men in front immediately passed the order back to double over the fence on our right. There the field was lower than the road with very little

cover. I had only reached the bridge when the order to double was given. As well as my own rifle and a lot of extra ammunition, I had the Winchester rifle. Nurse O'Sullivan ran to me saying, "Give me the Winchester; show me how to use it". I gave it to her and she took her place in the ranks. Some of us had only crossed the fence and were in a field behind high grass. Nurse O'Sullivan was among this party - the remainder had got to a fence further in the field, when the enemy came in sight. They were marching in close formation in three sections of about twelve men each. Our force numbered only fourteen. To our surprise they kept on marching to Kildorrery. We learned later from our Intelligence there that when they arrived in Kildorrery they let it be known that they had avoided being drawn into a trap by the "Shinners".

We retreated into Glenroe Company area which was in our own Brigade area and stayed there for three or four days. While we were in this area some members of the Column complained of a terrible itch in their hands. When Nurse O'Sullivan examined them she said it was Scabies or Itch. We had contracted it from the Tans captured at Kildorrery and it was only then we realised what the boxes of ointment they carried were for. This was a terrible hardship to our men. It kept them from sleeping and very often they had to leave an area at very short notice without any rest or sleep.

Ernie O'Malley was now back. Both he and Sean Wall, Brigade O/C., reorganised the Brigade about this time. Doon Battalion, which was in charge of 'Yank' Carthy, became the 1st or No. I. Battalion; Hospital and Emly became the 2nd; Bruff and area became the 3rd; Kilmallock and area the 4th; Kilfinane area the 5th; Galbally and Ballylanders area the 6th. This organisation was good and worked well.

The Column left Glenroe and went to Banna Company area in the 6th Battalion where we hoped to ambush a patrol from Galbally Barracks. We were now near where Liam Lynch was born at the foot of the Galtee mountains. The men of the local Companies of Galbally, Barna and Anglesboro, kept a close look out for an expected enemy patrol but it failed to put in an appearance. It appears that the enemy in Galbally had changed their tactics about this time and were only making early morning raids on the houses of men on the run. After some days when they did not come our way we left the area and went to the Cush Company area in the 5th Battalion.

When we arrived in Cush I was told to take command of the Column and proceed to a place near Bruff and from there to Lough Gur where a Sinn Fein Court was to be held. We were about fourteen strong, so we got four horse traps to take us part of the way; it was ~~was~~ a distance of twelve miles. When it got dark we moved off. Half way between Elton and Bruff, two of our scouts Tom Murphy and David Tobin, who were about thirty yards in front on bicycles, reported back that a number of men had crossed the road in front of them. Hearing this, we sent the traps back and proceeded the rest of the way on foot in extended order. When we reached Ballygrennan, which was about one mile from Bruff, we went to bed. Bruff was the headquarters of the enemy in East Limerick. We had a strong force of R.I.C. and Black and Tans. Sean Wall, our Brigade O/C., had his headquarters about a mile from Bruff also.

In the morning I was about to call on Davy Cremins who lived a short distance from where I slept. As I was crossing the road I saw Davy coming towards me in a pony trap driving O/C. Wall. As they came near me I could see Wall was disguised. He was growing a moustache and at that stage it didn't look very nice. As they pulled up I began to smile when I saw Wall twisting the ends of his

disguise. "Well", said he. I asked him if there were any new orders. It was only then I knew that I shouldn't have laughed at the General's nice moustache. "See Commandant O'Connor", he replied and turning to Davy Cremins he said "Drive on". There they left me, the little soldier standing on the road and, fool that I was, I remained standing there too long, for they looked back when they reached a bend in the road and saw me. With all that, I thought him a very good Brigade O/C with his headquarters in Bruff area and always giving directions to the different Battalion and Company Officers.

I then took the Column to Lough Gur where I posted them at the best points overlooking the countryside with instructions to keep a sharp look-out for enemy forces. On the second day Tom Howard took a man across a field to D. Moloney and myself. Tom was in great humour so I had to act the part. "Well Tom" I said. Tom replied "A prisoner, Sir. I found him prowling around our lines. What will we do with him. He wants to join the Column. I think we had better take him on". I thought so too because he was as big as two of us with a rifle and ammunition, a haversack and knapsack on his back with enough food and other essentials to keep a man in the field for at least two months - Sean Stapleton from Oola; he turned out to be a great favourite. While located in this area, D. Moloney and one of the Murnane brothers reported to me one morning, that a small lorry carrying eight or nine military and Tans had passed along a bye-road quite close to where we were on their way to Bruff. Moloney and I immediately selected ambush positions in case they returned by the same road. We remained in positions for the attack for some time but the lorry did not return that way.

When our spell of duty was finished in Lough Gur area, we retreated to Glenbrohane and from there to Kilclooney inside the County Cork border but in the Shraharla Company area which was attached to the

5th Battalion. This was a nice area for the Column where they could rest for a week or so. As they rested, Shraharla, Glenroe and Kilfinane Companies kept a close watch for any enemy movements that would give us an opportunity of a successful attack.

While the Column was in this area, I thought it would be a good time to take a day off and go home to see my mother. It was only a distance of six miles from where we were located. When I told Donnchad Hannigan of my intention, he asked me to take a message to Mai Moloney in Lackelly as soon as I had seen my mother. She was to take the message to Brigade Headquarters. I made no delay at home but went on to Lackelly, accompanied by Tom Murphy. We carried small arms.

When we were nearing Mai Moloney's house she saw us coming and ran to meet us and appeared to be in trouble. She told us that Ernie O'Malley had been in the area for about a week and that he was about to carry out an attack on a lorry or two of Black and Tans or military in the Galbally area within the next few days with the aid of the local Company who were armed with only a few bad shotguns. She expressed the opinion that they would be all killed. She asked me to write a dispatch to Sean Wall, O/C and ask him to intervene to have this proposed operation called off. I refused at first pointing out to her that after all O'Malley was a G.H.Q. officer. She eventually talked me into writing a note to Wall explaining the situation as she had told it to me. I gave her the note which she took to Wall with the dispatch from Donnchadh Hannigan. When Murphy and I met O'Malley in Mai's house, he told me about the proposed attack saying that he had three bombs and didn't know if there were detonators in them. After a while he produced the three bombs; they were covered with rust. I tried to wrench off the heads with a lever but they would not stir. We then tried a chisel and hammer; it was a very dangerous procedure. Having placed the bomb between

between my knees, O'Malley helped to steady it while I struck. I asked him in fun what would happen if it went off. He laughed, saying, "We will go together". When we got the heads off we found they had no detonators. We put in detonators and made them ready for use. This attack never came off. I suppose Sean Wall had stopped it.

Tom Murphy and I went back to our own Column in Kilclooney. After a week or so we moved to the Mitchelstowndown area near Knocklong. Commandant Liam Hayes of the 2nd Battalion joined us here. I think it was on his suggestion we took up ambush positions at Ballinamona Cross on the main road between Hospital and Limerick city. We stayed in positions all day and during that time only one enemy soldier came along on a bicycle carrying dispatches. That evening we went back to Mitchelstowndown area. It was here, as well as I can remember, that 'Yank' Carthy joined us with about twelve men from the 1st Battalion (Doon). In the party were five or six men named Ryan. Each of the Ryans was known by a certain nickname such as Mike, the miner, Danny, Simon, Ned the smith, Paddy, harness, and so on. When they had started out from Doon to join us Paddy Ryan was wounded accidentally. But for having to attend the wounded man they would have joined us earlier. I will leave their story to 'Yank' Carthy who is still to the good.

We soon left Mitchelstowndown and went to the Glenbrohane area. Here Sean Forde came to us in a motor car which had been the property of the R.I.C. District Inspector and had been seized in Pallasgreen some time before 1920. Sean had information to the effect that the enemy were going to burn down Glenbrohane Parish Church and my house in Ballinalackin, (they had burned down houses in the Brigade area before this) so the Column prepared to meet them, extra men being called in from the 5th and 6th Battalions to reinforce the Column.

The main party took up a position near the Church; another party took up a position at a crossroads about one mile to the south side of my house. As I was taking another Column of fourteen men to a position at Boreen Cross, which was about two and a half miles on the old road to Kilfinane, we met a priest in a trap, who was home on holiday from the English Mission. When we met, he stopped and asked to have a word with the man in charge. When I went to him he told me that there was a big party of Tans advancing along the road towards Glenbrohane direction, and was of the opinion that some of them were in the fields. He advised me to be careful. I promised him I would and thanked him. He was Father O'Reilly from Ballintubber in the parish of Glenroe. After this information I got my party into extended formation and proceeded to a place where I knew we could take up good ambush positions. Here I placed seven men behind a ditch on a hill on one side of the road in extended positions four paces apart. I placed the other seven men on the opposite side of the road and had the whole party covering a wide front facing the direction from which the enemy was advancing so, if they were in the fields, we should meet them. I instructed the men to let them advance quite close before opening fire. I took up my own position on the road by the pier of a gate. While I was there the Captain of Cush Company - Mick Clohessy - came to me for permission to go to his house which was right in the enemy's path, for something important which he had left there. I told him it was risky, but he left in a hurry and was made a prisoner near his own home. Shortly after James Condon came to me for permission to go to his mother who was alone at home. I advised him to remain with us, that it would be safer and that the enemy were advancing. Nothing would stop him; he was determined to go to his mother. He had only got home when he too was arrested. Having arrested Clohessy and Condon, the Tans did not come any further but returned with their two prisoners and did not come within range of our positions. None of

the other men at the Church or near my house got a chance of engaging the enemy that evening. The enemy made no attempt to carry out any burnings in our area that night. Years later when I met Condon he told me that, as the Tans were taking him to Limerick jail, one of them gave him a prod of a bayonet in the back. It was a very bad wound and penetrated the lower bowel. He said that Doctor Kelly of Limerick Mental Hospital at the time had attended him with the prison Doctor. On one occasion when they had attended him they had very little hope for his recovery. When they had gone a priest came to him and stayed with him for a long time. After the priest's visit the Doctors were very much surprised at his quick recovery.

In between the ambushes, activities and everything that happened in this Brigade area, it is hard to remember many of the incidents and happenings that took place. The next thing I remember, however, was an occasion when Sean Ford came to the Column one day and brought Davy Clancy, Tom Howard and myself away with him in the D.I.'s car. Its number had been altered to D.I.303. Our intention was to call to our Brigade Headquarters first and from there to proceed to the West Limerick Brigade Headquarters to collect some rifles and bombs we had lent the West Limerick men after the attack on Kilmallock R.I.C. barracks. On our way through Elton we called on Paddy O'Sullivan who had a general business shop in the village. He was a great man for intelligence work. There were some men doing business in the shop but when Paddy saw us, he left them and brought us to a sitting room saying, "I have bad news for you this morning. While you are having a drink on the house I'll tell you all about it". After serving a drink, he said "Tadhg Crowley and Mick Scanlon were taken prisoners last night at Mrs. Burke's in Laurencetown; they took them this morning to Limerick jail". (Mick Scanlon was then O/C of the 4th Battalion). On hearing this news we left and when we were in

the car Sean Ford said that we would try and rescue them, so we proceeded to Limerick city through bye roads and got in at the back of the Mental Hospital where we left the car. We went out to the front of the hospital and down the city to the top of William Street. There we saw a policeman who had been stationed in Ballylanders some years before. He was sure to know the three of us, so Sean Ford said "It's better for you three to go back to the front lodge of the Mental Hospital and wait there for me". As we were returning to the Mental Hospital we heard some shots (the ones that killed Scanlon).

After about two hours wait at the lodge, Sean Ford joined us. He had all the news. It appears Mick Scanlon saw a chance of escape as they were about to take Crowley and himself off the lorry to the police station. He jumped off and very nearly got away. He was handcuffed at the time and ran into a nearby house and down into a cellar. They found him there and shot him dead. Sean Ford told us that he managed to get speaking to the officer in charge and was allowed view the body. A few days later Scanlon was buried at Castlejane near the Cross of the Tree, Knocklong. The military, in great force, were at the funeral. When they had left we moved in and fired a volley over his grave. Sean Ford's wife-to-be, a National School Teacher at Bushfield about half way between Birdhill and Nenagh, was very fond of Scanlon and attended the funeral. The following morning Sean Ford, Liam Hayes, Jim Maloney of Ballingrennan, Bruff, and myself, accompanied her back in the D.I's car.

At Birdhill we stopped at a small garage for oil for the car. The owner there said he was out of oil, but was expecting some in about an hour; so we proceeded to the school where we left the Teacher. I then took her place in the front of the car with Ford

driving and in no time we were on our way back to Birdhill for the oil but, to our surprise, a big party of horse soldiers had come on to the main road from a road leading to Killaloe. They seemed to be treating a horse on the roadside and had two sentries placed near the horse as we approached. Ford was a great soldier and was very humorous, and it was only on that same morning he had said to me, "If we happen to run into enemy forces it's your duty to fight a rearguard action, and let me escape; it would be the best for the Republic". The sentries stood in the middle of the road with their rifles at the ready. We had two bombs and two revolvers in the front seat. Ford said, "Pull the pin, Ned". I did and put it in my pocket holding the lever at the same time. As we neared the sentries we saw an open farmyard gate to our left. Ford took a chance, drove into the farmyard, ~~reversed~~ and in no time we were speeding towards Dublin. The sentries didn't fire. It occurred to me that they were waiting for orders. When we had gone two hundred yards from the sentries Liam Hayes and Sean Ford started laughing and remarking how near the end it had been for me. Just then I put on an act for Ford's benefit. I was holding the bomb with the pin out and started staring in front of me without a smile, like a person in a trance. Ford spoke to me like a father to a child. "Ned; put the pin back in the bomb". Now it was my turn to laugh. It was our No. I. escape that day.

Ford suggested going to a friend's house, he knew of beyond the Silvermines, to spend the day there and come back when it was dark. As we passed the Silvermines there were about seven or eight R.I.C. men sitting on a low wall. When they saw us coming they came on to the road to stop us. Ford slowed down but as he neared them he put his foot down on the accelerator. The car jumped forward and nearly knocked them down. It was escape No. 2.

About two miles further along the road we met Tom Egan, who brought us to a house - I don't know if it was his - where we got our dinner and tea. When it got dark we left for East Limerick. Back again at Birdhill the old car was badly in need of oil now, so we pulled up at a pub on our right; the owner also owned the garage. As we were about to have a drink a lorry load of Tans drove up and stopped. It was like the sentence of death to hear them getting off with their rifles. They were all mad drunk.

Liam Hayes and I gathered all our revolvers and bombs, went out the back and on to a railway line nearby. Sean Ford and Moloney remained inside and had the cheek to ask the driver of the lorry for oil. He replied that he could do with some oil himself but could give them petrol if they wanted it. Ford and Moloney went out to examine their petrol to see if they had enough. They got into the car and drove off. The Tans followed soon after, but they had a good start. Ford turned into a bye road on the left and put his lights out. The Tans continued on their way to Limerick. Having lost the Tans, Ford and Moloney returned to the pub for Liam Hayes and myself after which we travelled to Haye's house in Killeely. When we got there we discovered that the big end of the car was burned out for the want of oil, so we had to send a dispatch to James O'Connor, O/C., Bruff Battalion, to come and repair the car. We had a meal and went to bed.

In the early morning of the next day while we were in bed O'Connor had the car repaired and had returned to Bruff. Lily Hayes was outside the house while we were sleeping when she saw two lorry loads of British soldiers coming up the drive leading to the house. When they saw our car they jumped off and placed a guard on it, while the remainder continued up the drive at the double. Lily rushed in shouting, "Out, and through the window there is no time to lose,

dress outside". It was a bit of an ordeal rushing across the fields at the back with our clothes, boots, revolvers and bombs in our arms. At the cover of a whitethorn fence we dressed and from there could see the military around the house. After a thorough search of the house they went off taking our car with them. We were in a great position for an attack, but we were too few and had no rifles.

We still had to do the journey to West Limerick for the rifles, so Ford and I went across the fields to Knockaney where we knew Paddy Leonard had an old car. With the help of Leonard and Dick Ryan we got it going in a short time. All set for the road we went to the Column for Davy Clancy and Tom Howard. Having collected them we went to Brigade Headquarters to report to Sean Wall and get some money for the journey. Brigade Headquarters was at Purcell's of Uregane near Bruff. Ford left the car inside the gate of the drive, while he went into Purcell's to report to O/C. Wall. He hadn't been long inside when he came out to us with a long sad-looking face. "Ned", said he, "I didn't get much for the road; if you try you may get a little more". I guessed it might be one of Ford's traps for me, but I was going to have a bit of fun anyway. I went into Purcell's and up the stairs of the big house. At the top I found him (the Brigade O/C) behind a big table with his head down working hard. Kit Mary Sheedy was at the table too also working very hard. They never looked up when I came in so I coughed rather loud. Sean looked at me and said "What do you want?" I thought I had a good story so I told him that it was a long time since I had been home and that I needed a change of shirts if he could spare me the price of one. "Come over here" said he; pointing to the car from the big window at his back he said "I saw you planning it all out there, clear out of here and take that thing away out of there".

I thought I was beaten but I didn't show it. Kit Mary was having a good laugh at me. I turned around shaking my shoulders, like a tramp stepping out of a cheap lodging house and left the room. When I was about two steps down the stairs he shouted "Come back, you dirty fellow". Handing me a £1. he said, "Buy a clean shirt for yourself and don't disgrace me".

We started on our journey to West Limerick. The car was giving us trouble on the way but we managed to get within a short distance of Ballyhahill, when it finally stopped at the bottom of a hill near the village. It was dark now. We went into the village and called on Father Hartnett, C.C., and John Tom O'Connor who was Battalion O/C. of that area. With the use of some ropes and their help we pulled the car into a backyard there. Next day we went to Madigan's of Shanagolden. There we commandeered a car the property of a taxi-owner in Rathkeale. With this car we proceeded to Athea where we met Sean Finn, the Brigade O/C. of West Limerick, Michael Colbert another officer of the West Limerick Brigade, and their Column. We were told that our rifles were in Tournafulla.

Next night we went to Tournafulla and got our six rifles together with a further two rifles and a box of egg bombs. Here we met an ex-R.I.C. man named Buckley who had resigned after he had handed over an R.I.C. barracks to Michael Brennan in East Clare. He came with us as far as the village of Ashford to show us the road. As we were having a parting drink with Buckley in a pub there, Ford asked me to put a tin of petrol, which we carried, into the tank. We also carried a tin of water. Handy-Andy-like, I made the mistake of putting the water into the tank instead of the petrol, with the result that we had to drain the tank after which I had to go down across some fields to a Creamery where it cost me 16/- to buy more petrol. I had no luck with Sean Wall's £1. note.

Owing to this mistake we were delayed in Ashford for about two hours but it proved to be our luck, for we learned later that the next village through which we passed had been subjected to searching and raided by the Tans and Military all that day in very strong force and if we had proceeded in the ordinary way we would have driven into them and stood a very poor chance of escape. Our next stop was at David Keane's of Castletown ~~CONTINUED~~. David fixed our spare wheel, putting a new tyre on it. We proceeded to Patrick Sampson's of Glenbrohane; he was a great friend of the I.R.A. especially Sean Ford. From there we got in touch with our own Column.

Grange Ambush 8th November, 1920.

We moved with the Column to Kilkilane a place between Herbertstown and Lough Gur. After a few days rest we took up ambush positions at the village of Grange which is situated at a left-hand bend on the road from Bruff to Limerick. In a public house - situated on the right hand side of the road as one looked towards Limerick - which was owned by a man named Clancy, four men - Bill Burke, Phil Fogarty, Owen Keefe and another man - were placed, all rifle men. The windows in the gable end of this pub commanded a good view of the bend which was approximately in the centre of the village. On the same side of the road but nearer Limerick was a high wall surrounding the grounds of a large farmhouse owned by a man named O'Neill. In the wall was a large wooden door which gave access to the front of the farmhouse. The pub and the farmhouse were separated by a small bridge over a river and were about 200 yards apart. Inside the wall on the Limerick side of the bridge we erected a platform to enable us to see over the wall which was about ten feet high. The platform adjoined the gable end of O'Neill's farmhouse which faced Clancy's pub. To erect the platform we rolled a number of porter barrels across the bridge from Clancy's and through the big doorway,

closing the door later. When we had the barrels in position we placed planks on them. Morgan Portley - an officer of the Mid Limerick Brigade - and I got on to the platform to open the attack with bombs. Behind the big door, which was a few yards to the left of the platform, Martin Conway in charge of six men was placed with instructions to open the door at a given signal and push out a horse cart into the road as a block or barrier. Away back behind Conway were posted a further six men armed with shot guns to cover the doorway in case the enemy would try to retreat through it. In extended formation around the bend and on the right hand side also, were posted the Lough Gur Company with a number of Mid Limerick men all armed with shot guns, in charge of Bob Ryan. Across the road from Clancy's pub on the left hand side of the road and on the Bruff side of the little river were Donnchad Hannigan and Sean Ford in charge of a number of the Columm men. They all had rifles. Around the bend on the left hand side but a short distance nearer Limerick than the shot gun men on the opposite side were posted the remainder of the Columm men, all with rifles too. All of the Columm men were well experienced by this time and had several engagements to their credit. Before leaving me, Hannigan and Ford told me not to attack any lorry coming from the Bruff direction as there may be prisoners on it but, within half an hour, they were back to me again to tell me that they had just received a signal from a hill beyond Clancy's which, as I have said, was on the Bruff side of the ambush position - saying there was one lorry approaching from Bruff which was not carrying prisoners. They told me to open the attack on the lorry. As Ford left me he said "Give it the bombs Ned and we'll finish it off".

They returned to their positions and we waited. What a surprise for Morgan Portley and me, looking from our position on the platform to a band in the road from Bruff to see one, two, three, four lorries

and I think one armoured car included among them, with more behind. I had to think and be quick about it. I was going to let them pass. Portley said, "What will we do?" As he did so an accidental shot went off, fired by one of our men on the other side of the road. There was no mistaking the sound of that shot; it was that short, sharp bark of a Peter the Painter. Because of that shot I decided to attack. Without answering Portley I pulled the pin and he did likewise. We peeped over the top and let fly. The two bombs went right into the first lorry. After the explosion it swerved to the left and stopped. In a matter of seconds the enemy's machine guns and rifles were spraying the area with bullets. I turned to look for Martin Conway at the door. In my rage I forgot to tell him not to open the door. He had it open and he and his men were retreating past O'Neill's house. I jumped off the platform and was about to lay my hands on my rifle which was standing at the gable end of O'Neill's house when I saw a British Officer and one soldier coming in through the gate, but thanks to the quick action of the six men covering that door with their shot guns - I only knew one of them; his name was Murnane of Lough Gur - they let bang and down went the two men in the doorway. With that the retreat was sounded by one of our men in charge on the other side of the road. As I was in charge of the men on our side of the road I got my whistle and gave the signal to retreat to the men on the right hand side. As I looked across the river I saw Bill Burke. By the way he was using his leg I knew he was wounded. I also saw Phil Fogarty as he came out from the back of Clancy's; one of his hands was very dead looking.

I had to make some attempt to get away myself, but I had a haversack with about 300 rounds of .303 ammunition, the weight of which was too much for me to jump over a wire fence at the back of O'Neill's house as Morgan Portley had done. I went to the front

of O'Neill's, but the enemy were firing a machine gun on it. All my own men were gone too far to call on them to cover that doorway; I was like the boy on the burning deck. During a lull in the firing I got safely across the farmyard and over a low wall where I got down to draw my breath, travelling about ten yards at a time and using all the military training I had learned from the little field exercise books. I had gone about 100 yards across a <sup>big</sup> field and was about to take it easy thinking the enemy had ceased fire - the weight of the ammunition was telling on me - when all of a sudden it started up again; the bullets were going into the ground all around and very close to me. I surmised they were by this time firing from O'Neill's haybarn. First to the left and then to the right and lying down flat for a while, I kept going for another 100 yards. The land was very flat; I hardly knew where I was going by the time they eased off firing. All the men of that section situated on the right-hand side of the road had by now gone out of sight. I saw a fence to my right where I took cover and had a smoke and there I decided that the only thing to do was to go back to the house which I had left early that morning - Moloneys of Kilkilane.

When I got there it was getting dark. Peg Moloney told me that the Column had passed by quite close some time earlier, but she did not know where they had gone. Mick O'Brien, a cattle dealer who lived nearby, came in. After I had a good meal, O'Brien suggested that I should sleep in his house that night. I accepted the offer and went to bed in good spirits. Next morning O'Brien and I went across the fields to Paddy Kennedy's of Kilballyowen, who was an old man but a great worker in the Sinn Féin cause. I guessed he might know where the Column had gone to, and he did.

In Paddy Kennedy's I met Jim Moloney, who was a Clerk and an officer of the Bruff Battalion. He had been in the Grange ambush and had a rifle which he gave to me to take to the Column. Paddy had the

horse and trap ready and was about to leave for Limerick with his wife. The Column had gone to Elton. He and the wife took me in the trap to Elton. I covered my own rifle and Jim Moloney's with the rug. It was six miles away, but he had a good horse and the journey did not take long. The boys of the Column were very glad to see me alive. As I had surmised they had two of their comrades wounded - Bill Quirke and Phil Fogarty. We learned later that the enemy had two wounded also, probably the officer and the soldier fired at in the doorway.

Garryspillane or the Red Gate Ambush.

As well as I can remember the next ambush by the East Limerick Brigade was near Garryspillane. The night before it we were in Martinstown in Con Kearney's Company area, when Donnchad Hannigan asked me to go to Lackelly to get Mail Moloney to take some dispatches to South Tipperary Brigade Headquarters and asked me to stay there and get the local Volunteers to prepare to receive the Column who were to join me that night. Before I left I had to find someone of the Column who would be responsible for my rifle and all the bombs and ensure that they would be taken to Lackelly that night. By this time we had taken on some new men from the different Companies and Battalions, including Justin McCarthy of the 5th Battalion, so I asked him to be responsible for the bombs. He would not hear of it if the detonators were in them. I told him that they would be no better than stones if I removed the detonators. However, seeing that they were to join me that night I removed them and put them in my pouch.

I went to Lackelly and in no time Mail Moloney was on her way to South Tipperary. The local Volunteers got all the houses in the area ready to receive the Column. I stayed at O'Callaghan's and waited up all night and until 11 o'clock next day for the Column but they never arrived. Thinking they may have run into the enemy on

their way I went to Father Humphreys near the Cross of the Tree, hoping to hear what happened. When I arrived there Molly O'Reilly, the housekeeper, had gone to the butcher's at Knocklong. Father Humphrey suggested that she would probably have some news of the Column when she returned.

Molly came back and told me the Column were in ambush positions at the Red Gate which was just half way between the Cross of the Tree and Garryspillane. I should explain that this gate was a large wooden gate leading into a large country house. It was always painted red so it and the locality around it was always referred to as the Red Gate. On either side of it was a low wall. I was standing at the table in the kitchen having a cup of tea. I put down my cup and told them I was going to the Column as the bombs they had were useless. I had only got to the door when we heard rifle fire. I was too late then so I can only tell what Davy-Clancy (R.I.P.) told me about the ambush.

Davy told me that most of the Column men were on the left hand side of the road looking towards Knocklong with a small section on the right. Davy and Dinnie Noonan - a Kilfinane man now living near Mallow, were in a position near the Red Gate. A Ned Costello, who was also a Kilfinane man and an ex-British soldier was posted near them to open the attack with the dud bombs. A short time after taking up positions a man with a large horse load of straw drove into the ambush position. The officer in charge got the man to take cover and left the load of straw in the middle of the road. A big lorry full of military then drove into the ambush positions; the big load of straw brought it to a halt. The lorry was followed by a big car with a number of officers within, one of whom was an officer named Browne from Kilmallock barracks. It also came to a halt behind the lorry. Browne stepped out and stood on the road.

Ned Costello fired the bombs. Davy Clancy and Dinny Noonan got Browne level on their sights and fired point blank. He didn't fall, but turned and fired back at them. His bullet hit the muzzle of Davy's rifle and glanced off cutting him across the forehead. The officer must have had a coat of steel on him. Of course, the bombs didn't explode. One of our men in charge sounded the retreat. As the main body retreated, Davy and a few others covered the retreat. Sean O'Riordan - one of those covering the retreat, another Kilfinane man and not long out of the British Army - crossed the road to the right to get a better position. In doing so he received a bullet wound in the lower part of the body; it was a bad wound, but he was able to go a short distance until he met Tom Ryan of Garryspillane who took him in a horse trap to Glenbrohane to where the Column had retreated. He was later taken to the Poor House Hospital in Kilmallock where he died a few days later. After this attempted ambush some of the Column men maintained that Costello never fired the bombs, but Davy assured me that he did. Later the enemy were reported to have remarked about this ambush that they hadn't met the right kind of 'Shinners' as their bombs were no good. I should have mentioned that previous to the Red Gate ambush, the men of the 1st and 2nd Battalion, who were attached to the Column, had left to carry out operations in their own areas. Liam Hayes or 'Yank' Carty could give the details. Sean O'Riordan was our only casualty. The enemy had no casualties.

#### Glenacurrane Ambush.

The Column moved to Knockadea where they planned an ambush for a place named Glenacurrane on the main road between Mitchelstown and Tipperary. Just prior to the attack a number of men attached to the North Cork Brigade arrived to participate in the attack. They carried rifles and a machine-gun which they had captured early in the fighting period. On the evening prior to the attack I went to the

Glenabrohane area for reinforcements and brought fifteen men from each of the Cush and Knocklong Companies. We took a number of bombs and some ammunition with us for the attack. We left the bombs at William Lee's of Knockadea, the headquarters of the Column, for the time being. It was a very frosty night and to ensure that the bombs were fit for use - they were gelignite filled - I got a big pot which I filled with water and boiled it. When the water had boiled I got a smaller pot into which I placed the bombs. I then placed the smaller pot into the big one so as to have the boiling water all around it to keep up the heat. When this was done we carried the pot to the sitting room where we left it in a corner. I told the members of the Column who were staying at Lee's that night not to allow anybody near them.

That night Jack McCarthy arrived from his headquarters for the attack. He told me he would sleep with me that night and remarked, "I know you always keep the best houses for yourself". We went across some fields to a Mrs. Morgan O'Brien's who had a grand bed ready for us. When she awoke in the morning and gave us our breakfast in bed Jack looked at me as much as to say, "I knew it". In the morning men with rifles and shot guns were moving out of every house in the area. Shrahala Company under Captain William Riordan, and Ballylanders Company under William Sampson attached to the 5th and 6th Battalions respectively, met in this area..

When Jack McCarthy and I arrived at Lee's we had to listen to a very lucky story. It seems that after we had left Lee's the night before, William Lee the owner of the house and another man, through curiosity, took a bomb out of the pot. While examining it one of them pulled out the pin. Lucky for them Danny Moloney and Mick Shanahan came on the scene. Danny snapped it out of his hand and fired it to the other end of the room where it exploded and damaged

some of the furniture. One splinter, however, hit the only son of the house in the leg. He was only about six years of age and was standing beside his father. Danny and Mick rendered first aid. It was only a flesh wound; no bones were broken but there was some blood. The father calls him the Fenian ever since.

At each side of the road at Glenacurrane there had at one time been a wood, the big trees of which had been cut away, but now the stumps had thrown out shoots and long branches: in between grew stunted oak; ash and scrub. Behind a bank to the right looking towards Mitchelstown there was a sharp rise of ground, 50 to 100 feet in places, with a level countryside behind stretching towards Kilfinane. A mile or so further along the road to Mitchelstown, was a bye-road which led to Kilfinane. Off this bye-road were other bye-roads which led into the back of the ambush position on the right. On these roads several parties of our men had to be posted to cover the flank and rear. On the left hand side again looking towards Mitchelstown, the ground was flat for a width of about 30 or 40 feet inside the fence, with a small river running through. There was a big rise of ground with small hillocks dotted here and there; the whole was covered with brushwood. The little hillocks afforded good shelter to the riflemen who had been posted there.

Willie Walsh of Kilclooney and myself were in a position on the hill on the right where we could sit down and couldn't be seen because of the scrub, but we had no cover from rifle fire. Willie was on my right. On my left was a quarry or sand-pit from which County Council workers drew sand and gravel for the repair of roads. A small roadway led into the sand-pit. At the extreme end of the sand-pit, the Tipperary end, was a big cliff standing straight up from the road. Behind the cliff was posted Dick Willis of Mallow with the machine gun. With him was Jimmy Howard with a shot gun.

Jimmy was a good experienced fowler and a brother of Tom Howard of Glenbrohane. Sean Ford was in between the two of them giving orders. They were in a very good position and had the main road from Mitchelstown to Tipperary covered for at least 100 yards.

All was ready when two lorry loads of military were signalled coming from Mitchelstown. It was only then I realised that Willie Walsh and I were unable to drop our bombs into the lorries when they reached the opening into the quarry, due to the high bank below us which separated us from the road. When they reached this bank Dick Willis with the machine gun and Jimmy Howard with the shot gun opened fire. They stopped; the rifle men on the other side of the road then opened fire on them. Willie Walsh and I had the pins out. I said, "We wont be able to get them from here". Willie, who was trained in the British Army, said he would try. He fired the bomb but it landed in the river on the other side of the road. I put the pin back in my bomb with the intention of taking up a better position. Before I had gone five or six yards the Tommies had surrendered.

When I got down to the road I saw that all of our men in the near positions had moved in and were very busy collecting rifles and ammunition from the soldiers. I remember seeing Bill Kearney of the Cork Brigade up in one of the lorries where a soldier was telling him that his best pal had been killed. We captured a number of rifles, ammunition, Mills bombs and bags of Christmas mail. As I was not at the check I cannot give the exact quantities. As well as I can remember two soldiers were killed and three or four were wounded. We had no casualties.

When the lorries had been set on fire the military prisoners (with their dead and wounded) were taken to a crossroads 400 yards towards the Tipperary end of the ambush positions where they were

held for some time to give the bulk of the attacking party time to retreat. As well as I can remember the Cork Column retreated towards their own area. The East Limerick men retreated to their respective Company and Battalion areas, their own officers in command - Phil Ryan in charge of the Cush Company, William Sampson in charge of Ballylanders Company, Con Harty and Tom Dwyer, Knocklong Company and William Howard, Anglesboro Company. The East Limerick wholetime Column men retreated to the Glenroe Company area. At Tully, on the south side of Lee's, McSweeney's and Lyons' houses at Knockadea, Sean Ford, Donnchad Hannigan, Jack McCarthy and others remained and checked the captured stuff the following morning. With about twenty men I moved to the north of Knockadea and stayed that night at James Condon's, Walsh's and Jim Howard's.

On the following morning early, I got a message from Donnchad Hannigan saying that an enemy lorry had passed along the road from Kilfinane to Mitchelstown and asking me to go to a place known as the high bridge and attack it on the return journey.

After breakfast I gave the fall in, in James Condon's yard and proceeded to the high bridge where we took up ambush positions. We were reinforced by about ten men from Glenroe Company. The road at the high bridge was very low with a great rise of ground at each side. The bridge itself was over the road and was really very high over it. It was made of stone and arched and was wide enough to drive a horse and cart across. It was ideally situated for a bombing position. With the help of Tom Murphy I placed the main body well extended on the left hand side looking towards Kilfinane. They were in very good positions. Tom, who in the earlier days of the Volunteers was a baker, had read a good number of military books and was a great help. On the right hand side I placed eight men. I placed a further eight men on the Kilfinane flank because that town was only about two miles away and was garrisoned by both

Tans and Military. With one rifle man and the bombs I took up my position on top of the bridge where we had a good command of the road on either side.

Every man on the job knew what we were to do, let it be lorries, bicycle or walking patrols. We settled down to wait and I must say I felt that we would give a good account of ourselves that day because every man there was tried and true. Tired out from waiting all day, it was getting dark when we got a message from Tully, Glenroe area, to proceed to Tully where a good meal was waiting for us. We stayed there that night. Next morning, as we were preparing to leave for Glenbrohane, Molly McSweeney asked four or five of us to her house, where she treated us to high tea with sweet cake from the captured mail in Glencurrane. We had some fun there reading the Tommys' love letters. When all was ready we marched to Glenbrohane where we handed the rifles over to a number of men from Cush and Kilfinane Companies to be dumped in the 5th Battalion area until the Christmas holidays were over.

The Column then broke up and went in twos and threes to friends all over the East Limerick Brigade area. A number went to the Cork Brigade area. Tom Murphy, David Tobin, Jack McCarthy and myself stayed in the Glenbrohane area for a few days before Christmas. On Christmas Eve Jack McCarthy left to visit friends near Kilfinane. I went to O'Donnell's in Garryspillane and from there to Father Humphrey's at the Cross of the Tree. Tom Murphy, David Tobin and Paddy Hannigan stayed in the Glenbrohane area where they received a great welcome in every house there. Their favourite house for sleeping was, however, Mrs. Barry's of Cloghast where there was a nice room with a big bed always ready for the boys on the run. To the best of my knowledge that bed was never without three or four of our men for the three years prior to the Truce.

On the night of New Year's Eve Donnchad Hannigan arrived at Father Humphry's from Cork City. I was still there. He told Father Humphry and I that Sean Ford had been arrested in Cork City. After talking the matter over we decided to go to Kilclooney and from there to call all of the Column men to active service again before we would lose any more men. Ford's car was in a big farmhouse at Garryspillane so we sent for Maurice Connors of Knocklong Company, who was a driver. He got the car out after which we proceeded to George Fox's house in Cullane which was a short distance from Kilclooney. While going in the passage to Fox's house the car got stuck in the mud, so we had to get Tom Fox with his old grey jennet to pull us to the house. There was one remarkable incident about that journey to Cullane which I would like to mention. On our way to Cullane we had to pass my house in Ballinalackin. As I wanted to have a message sent from Ballylanders to Father Humphry the following morning I called to the house. When my mother answered the door she was surprised to see that I was alive. She asked for David. I told her he was alright. "Well" said she, "some of you are going to be shot tonight".

On New Year's Day, 1921, after hearing Mass at Shrahalla we went to James Hennessy's of Kilclooney, from where we sent word to each Battalion in the Brigade to send all Active Service or Column men to report to us in Kilclooney. Davy Clancy, Tom Howard and Maurice Meade - an ex-British Army man from Elton whom I had taken on the Column about three or four months previously, were the first to arrive. They had come from the County Cork area and brought with them a report which they had heard while passing through one of our Company areas, to the effect that we had lost two of our men at my house in Ballinalackin. On the following day - Sunday - we sent Tom Howard and Maurice Meade to Mass at Glenbrohane to ascertain

the true facts. While on their way there, they had a very narrow escape from the Tans and Military who were very active around the area.

Tom Murphy and my brother David Tobin had slept in Mrs. Barry's the night before and about mid-day on New Year's Day they called to see my mother before leaving to join us in Kilclooney. Dinner being ready, they were having some when a lorry of Tans and Military was seen coming from the direction of Maguire's Cross to the south side of our house. They left the house and went towards a hill at the back and took cover at a cross fence. As the lorry approached, it stopped now and again and dropped two soldiers at a time. The first two went to the hill thereby outflanking the two boys. In the first exchange of shots my brother David fell dead. Tom Murphy got away for about a distance of about a quarter mile, but the two soldiers who had outflanked him were now above him with others coming on behind firing as they came. The lorry itself with the rest of the party had proceeded along the road to Sheahan's Cross.

At the north side of Sheahan's Cross Murphy must have realised that his chance of escape was gone, because he put his revolver into a furze bush where it was found a few days later by a Volunteer and subsequently given to me. In a final bid to escape he crossed the road and, as he did so, he was hit by a tracer bullet in the groin. The officer in charge had his men remove him to Mick Burke's house nearby where he died later that night. Dr. Lee, who attended Murphy some time after he had been taken to Quirke's house, told me that a man could put his closed fist into the wound.

Having shot our two men the enemy made a quick getaway to their barracks in Galbally. While they were gone William Sampson and a number of Volunteers from Ballylanders Company made a dash to the

area to remove Tom Murphy but, finding that he was too badly wounded they had to leave him. He shook hands with them and asked them to carry on the fight. As they were leaving the lights of several lorries were seen approaching. Volunteers of the Glenbrohane area searched the position for David's body but had to abandon the search when the enemy arrived. Next morning - Sunday - the military returned to the area in force. It was this force of military from whom Tom Howard and Maurice Meade had the narrow escape on their way to Mass in Glenbrohane. On that Sunday morning they found David's body and took it to Kilmallock to where Tom Murphy's body had been taken earlier.

The Column men were coming along in twos and threes to rejoin us at Kilclooney. That Sunday night we moved to Knockadea in the 4th Battalion area. From there I left to go to Ballylanders to hear what arrangements were made for the burial of the two boys. Maurice Meade came with me. The Volunteers of Ballylanders had a Republican plot ready and some of the Cumann na mBan with the relatives had gone to Kilmallock to claim the bodies. I met Father O'Brien, C.C. He had been to the spot where the shooting had taken place. He was always with us when he was needed. Father Crowley, just home from the U.S.A., was with Father O'Brien. I remained with them until the arrival of the funeral from Kilmallock late that night. Meade kept a good look-out for the enemy in the meantime.

At the burial next day a big force of Tans was present, so Meade and I had to leave and go back to the Column. The Tans took up positions at the graveyard and tried to prevent the general public from going in, but the people were in a temper and broke through. After this the Tans tried to seize the flag but Nellie Maguire snapped it out of the Tan's hands and got away with it. She had to pay for this some days later when they arrested her and gave her

a very rough time. The officers of Ballylanders Company later fired a volley over the grave.

The East Limerick Brigade had very hard luck between Christmas 1920 and New Year of 1921. The 1st Lieutenant of Emly Company - William Slattery - was arrested. I was told that in his case the enemy tied him to the back of a lorry and dragged him along the road before they shot him dead near Latten on their way to Tipperary. Paddy Quish of Emly could give details. At Grange in the 3rd Battalion area we lost three or four officers, - Martin Conway and others. James Moloney now Clerk at Croom Hospital could give full details. The Column had now lost some of their best men - some dead and some in jail - but we had enough and more to call on from the different Companies in the Battalions. The 1st Lieutenant of Ballylanders Company, Paddy Maguire with Jimmy Davern and Jim McCarthy, now came on whole time to replace the men we had lost. Dick Kinhead and Mick Shanahan of Cush Company also joined us full time at this period. Kilfinane Company had a rule of their own in regard to the Column. The Captain, Paddy Ryan, with Paddy Hayes joined full time very early in 1920 for a period, when they were replaced by two others. When those two went back they were replaced by Micky Hennessy and Maurice McGrath who continued whole time. Sean Murray from Bruree and Dick Mortell of Kilmallock were old timers by now. Mick often told me he was like a tinker's jennet with all the scars from the itch and scrapes he had on his body. Tim Keane of Knocklong was now on the Column for some months and was regarded as an old timer also. 'Yank' McCarthy of the 1st Battalion and Liam Hayes of the 2nd Battalion could supply the names of the Column men from those Battalions who were in a separate unit for a time. But now we had all come together again I think it was somewhere nearly Emly, where we prepared for the Drumkeen ambush which took place in the first week of February, 1921. Early in the month of January the Company Captain of Cush was appointed an official of the Sinn Fein Court and was replaced by Phil Ryan.

I should have said that a short time previous to arriving in the Emly area the Column men were located in an area west of Ballingaddy, Kilmallock, on the border of Jimmie Brislane's Battalion of Charleville, County Cork. Pa John O'Brien, an officer in charge of one of the Cork Companies of the Battalion, reported to us that an officer of high rank who was in charge of enemy forces in Kilmallock - I think Hope was his name - was exercising four hunting horses in the bye roads there three or four times every week. Liam Hayes, P. J. O'Brien, Mick Leonard, another man and myself took up positions at a sharp bend on one of the roads. We were determined to take the enemy's horses and guns. Liam was a great lover of horses so this job was very important to him. I was thinking, however, how I would manage to stay on the back of one of them to make a getaway if we did manage to capture them. We took up our positions for two or three days in succession but there was some change in the officer's routine; the horses never came along, so we had to do without a winner for Liam Hayes this time. As we left the area Mick Leonard of Ballingaddy Company joined up with the Column and came with us. Another member of the same Company who had been on the Column for a long time was Paddy McNamara. I know that I'll miss some names but as the story runs I think of others.

#### Drumkeen Ambush.

Jack McCarthy gave a very good description of this ambush under the title "The Red Path of Glory" in 'The Kerryman' which was illustrated by a sketch of the ambush position, so I will only tell the story of my own position and what happened there. It will be noted that two enemy lorries were returning to Pallas from Fedamore. I had been put in charge of twenty or twenty-five men in an old churchyard on the right as one looked towards Pallas. This position was about 25 yards from a bend in the road at the Fedamore end of the ambush positions. At a gateway on the off side of the road but at

the same end of the ambush positions Mick Shanahan, Maurice Meade, Bill Duggan and another man - whose name I am sorry to say I cannot remember - were posted. It was a very good position. See the map; they were in command of the road to the Pallas end of the whole position. Now I had not been told of the positions by the rest of the attacking party but owing to the fact that I had the bombs I knew that I had to deal with the second lorry. In the churchyard there was an old ruin. I had, among the men on my side, one very young lad named Seamus Finn of Ballylanders Company. It was his first engagement. I posted this young man in the old ruin. Sean Stapleton was posted away back to protect my left flank. This done I posted the rest of my party in extended formation behind the old wall of the graveyard. Liam Hayes came in at my right just as I got the signal that the two lorries were coming. We all kept well down so as not to betray our positions.

The first lorry passed. As the second one was coming round the bend Shanahan, Meade, Duggan and all the other men opened fire. They must have got the driver because the lorry moved to my right side and stopped right outside the fence where I was located. As it did so fire was concentrated on it by our men on the other side of the road. The bullets were cutting the top off my fence. It was only then I knew that some of our men were posted almost directly opposite on the other side of the road. I held my bomb and gave the order "No man get up".

As the fight progressed I knew that my own men would be under the impression that I was falling down on the job. Just then the man on my left asked me if he could do anything saying that he felt like a coward. Sean Stapleton from behind called to me what was wrong. Liam Hayes on my right asked me what is wrong. I asked him if he could tell me whether there were any of our men on the opposite side of the road. It was only then he saw Dan Grace with others of

our men on the other side. Trying to mend matters he jumped up, put his hand on the fence and shouted an order across to Grace. This was a mistake because a bullet hit him in the hand and ripped his coat open. I was very annoyed then and again issued the order "No man get up without my orders". I called Seamus Finn from his position to attend Liam Hayes. All of our men in my position wanted to fight that day but I think I did the right thing.

Dan Grace and his men and the four men in the end position were making a nice job of the second lorry. Shots were becoming fewer and fewer until they stopped altogether; then there was no life in the second lorry.

(Out on the road it did not take too long to clear up all the captured arms and ammunition. We were then only <sup>twelve</sup> ~~ten~~ miles from Limerick City where there was a big enemy garrison. Tipperary, another military town, was only thirteen miles away. We didn't want another fight that day because we were all tired after a long march a day or two before. The enemy dead numbered eleven.

Our Column retreated in the direction of Herbertstown. As we proceeded across a field it was easy to see that Liam Hayes was in pain from his wound. He had another wounded companion with him, Davy Barry from Glanworth, County Cork, who had come on with our Column sometime earlier in the period. Barry had sprained his ankle and was very lame. We left Herbertstown to our left and got on to a bye road leading to Lough Gur. At a crossroads on the way we stopped where there were four or five farmhouses close together. Their owners' names were Kennedy, Meaney, Scanlon and others I don't remember. In those houses we got food and rested for about three hours.

It was in the small hours of the next morning when we started to march off to Ballinascalla. As we were passing Joe Higgins' public house at a crossroads I gave the order to double for a joke. As a

result of that order I was tried while on the march. Davy Clancy was appointed Judge. He sentenced me to be plugged without fixing a date - I suppose I have this sentence hanging over me yet. At Ballinascalla we rested for some time before going to Con Kearney's Company area at Martinstown.

Here I will relate a funny incident which I think happened in one of the latter months of 1920. Father Dick McCarthy, Davy Cremmins and myself were staying at Father Humphrey's of Knocklong one night, when Lily O'Donnell of Garryspillane sent us word that she was having a party for Father Dick that night as he was leaving for the U.S.A. shortly. O'Donnell's house was in a boreen off the main road. In between O'Donnell's and the end of the boreen was Mick Callaghan's cottage. Mick had a little donkey which he usually tied with a long rope in the boreen every night so as to have it handy to take him to work in the mornings. We three started off for the party across the fields. I was acting as scout. When we came to the boreen fence Father Dick and Davy Cremmins got over first and soldier-like stepped it up the boreen towards O'Donnell's. Then it happened; the little ass had crossed to the other side of the boreen with his rope hanging about a foot off the ground. It caught them in the shins and put them sprawling on the ground. I once again made the mistake of laughing. Davy started to swear. Father Dick was in a bad mood too. They stood up. I started to run: they followed. If they caught me they would have killed me, but I didn't know the little ass was going to upset their dignity.

After Drumkeen, the Column were in Martinstown area for some few days now, when Father McCarthy and Nicholas O'Dwyer arrived from our headquarters in Bruff. Father Dick, as all the boys called him, wanted to meet a friend in the Ardpatrick area so he brought Maurice McGrath and I as a guard and to scout for him and O'Dwyer across the fields. Father Dick had become fond of me again and had forgotten:

all about the little ass. He and O'Dwyer left us at Mrs. Burke's of Laurencetown and proceeded to their destination and asked us to wait until they returned.

When they had returned to us we received word from Martinstown that the Column had fired on and brought down an enemy aeroplane and had taken the pilot prisoner. With their prisoner the Column moved to Howardstown area which was on the west side of Bruree. Father Dick, who was going to the U.S.A. on behalf of G.H.Q., had to entrain at Knocklong so some two others and myself got a horse and trap and drove him to Father Humphry's where he would be near the station.

Back with the Column and their prisoner in the Howardstown area, I was one of a guard over him one day and had taken him outside for a little walk when he told us that he would know the part of the country he was in again by the hills he could see all around. He seemed to be very happy with us and I thought he was a nice fellow - not like the Tans. After about a week he was taken in a car to Charleville railway station and released there. He didn't return to the area with raiding parties.

The Column from Howardstown proceeded via the Knocklong Company area and stayed for a short while near Mitchelstown where we prepared to leave East Limerick for the West Limerick Brigade area. Around this time an old R.I.C. man named Sergeant Maguire was shot dead in the townland of Kilmallock. He was a very dangerous man as he had been stationed in Ballylanders and Kilfinane in the early days before taking up duty in Kilmallock. He was a great guide for the Tans as he knew every I.R.A. leader in the area. Before leaving we took on some new men on the Column while some of the old men of the Column remained in East Limerick to rest. Jack McCarthy had by now set up his headquarters at Elton from where he helped the Brigade O/C, Sean Wall, to run the Brigade. With him in a dug-out there were a few of the old Column men.

The Glenroe Company Captain through a row between neighbours there had to leave his own area about this time. I am not sure of the cause of the dispute, but one of the participants was ordered to leave the country. I wouldn't say it was a case of spying. When the Captain - Mick Walsh - joined the Column, I think it was Jack Lyons replaced him as Company Captain of Glenroe. Before we left, Tom Tobin, Glenbrohane Company, and Tom O'Rourke of Kilmallock Company, had joined the Column.

All ready we moved off from Maurice Raleigh's yard in Mitchelstown to an area west of Bruree where we remained for one night. Next night we moved to an area east of Ballingarry. I think it was in this area where we had Mick Hennessy, two others and myself were staying in a long, low farmhouse, the two young girls of the house had all our dirty underwear in the wash, so as to have it ready for us before we would move that night, when one of them reported that four Tans were approaching the house across the fields which separated us from the road. We got on all fours and took up a position at a fence near the house. From here we selected a Tan each and had them covered level on our sights. For the want of knowledge of the positions of the remainder of the Column we did not open fire. If we had only known that six of our men located in a two-storey house away up on the roadside had a number of Tans in a couple of stationary lorries also covered we would have had a good day.

When night came on we moved off in two units which became known as No. 1 and No. 2. Columns. Ned Ryan, a blacksmith of Cappawhite and known as 'Ned the Smith' was in charge of No. 1, and Dan Allis was in charge of No. 2. We crossed the country between Ballingarry and Croom around in a half circle leaving Rathkeale to our left. It was a long march. When we got about two miles west of Rathkeale we halted at two country pubs where we, while standing on the road, received two pints of stout each. Dick Sheehy with his sister Delia and all of the local Cumann na mBan were in attendance.

Our next stop was at Ballyhahill where we got a meal of bread and cheese in a Creamery there. John Tom O'Connor, Battalion O/C. of the area with members of the local Company, were there to attend. Scouts from the same Company led us to an area nearby where we had a sleep and rest in the farmhouses around. Next morning we were on the march again and soon arrived in the area of Athea where we rested and remained for a few days until we were all feeling fit again. One night we were told to prepare for Confession and Holy Communion on the following morning.

All ready in the morning we marched to Mass in a body and stacked our rifles outside the Church. We went to Confession, heard Mass and received Holy Communion. After Mass we paraded to the centre of the village where we got the 'dismiss' for breakfast. The local people treated us very well but, during breakfast and after and before the 'fall in' some of the old timers on the Column came to me and asked me what I thought about all this show business and speeches by some of the leaders. They were feeling in a very bad mood over the whole thing and expressed the opinion that the enemy would certainly hear of it. They requested me to lead them back to East Limerick with all our arms where the fight could be carried on as before. I asked them to have patience saying that everything would come right in a short time.

On the following day a number of the men who had been on the Column from the start, had another little talk between ourselves. They included Davy Clancy, Sean Stapleton, Ned Ryan, Donnchad Hannigan and myself. There may have been others whom I have forgotten. At this meeting I stated what I thought was wrong - the show business and speech making referred to above - I also stated that it was my opinion that smaller units would be much better and that they could be reinforced from the local Companies as the need arose. Sean Stapleton who followed me expressed his opinion which was similar to mine.

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After this I think <sup>A</sup> certain men didn't like me anymore. I should have mentioned that the West Limerick Column was in the Ballyhahill area at the same time.

That night we were billeted at a place called Cratloe between Athea and the Kerry border. The West Limerick men reported the same night that a big enemy force was located on a road to the south-east and was very close to our Column. It appears that an armoured car they had, had sunk on the soft road and they had put a guard on our side of the road which gave us the impression that the enemy knew we were there. Sean Stapleton, with about fifteen of our Column men and myself took up positions facing the enemy. There were no raised fences or earth banks in the area; the ground was a kind of bog all round, so we had to take cover in trenches. There was a frost the same night so it was very hard on all of us to stick it out until daybreak. Once or twice during the night I went from the extreme right of our guard to the extreme left where Sean Stapleton was posted. I spoke to each of our men as I passed. Some of them told me they would never be able to stand up straight again; they were cramped and stiff with the cold. When I reached Sean we discussed the possibility of opening fire on the enemy. They were so near we could hear them talking. After a while we decided that their force was too big especially as they had the armoured car and a number of machine guns. It would have been reckless, but oh, the cold that night. Sometime around daybreak we received word from the O/C. to withdraw to the Athea area. The rest of our Column who had not been on guard during the night were up and ready in a short time. We retreated to the east of Athea. As we arrived there all of us who had been on guard duty during the night were more or less in good form again but we all needed sleep. We went to bed while the remainder of the Column did guard duty. On the following night we left the Athea area and went to Ballyhahill.

At Ballyhahill that night No. 2. Column of East Limerick were billeted in the village and No. 1. Column was located in farmhouses to the north of the village. I don't know where the other Columns were staying. Four of the men attached to No. 1. Column were staying in a house at Whiskeyhall Crossroads. They were Bill Burke, Jimmy Davern, Tom Tobin, O'Rourke and another man. To the west of Whiskeyhall Cross the rest of No. 1. Column were located in the farmhouses of the area. The rest of No. 1. Column included Sean Noonan and Davy Quane of Ballyoogan Company. I forgot to mention them before. The others and myself were located in a house - the owner's name was, I think, Connors - some distance across a couple of fields to the north of Whiskeyhall Cross.

The surprise enemy attack and the cause.

Because of the late arrival of our two columns in the area the night before, we all remained in bed until late in the day. One of our men in No. 1. Column wanted to have one of his boots repaired so he proceeded along the road towards Whiskeyhall Cross where a shoemaker lived. As he approached the Cross a couple of lorries came up behind him. When he discovered their presence he made the mistake of running towards the house occupied by our four men thereby giving away the position. The enemy opened fire on the man with the boot and, hearing it, the four men in the house at the Cross got out by the back door carrying their arms. As they crossed a fence at the back they fell over some barbed wire and into a trench on the other side. It was full of muck and water but it saved them for the time being. The enemy turned to the west down the road alongside the field in which our four men were trapped, firing as they went. Their bullets passed over the four of them, but the enemy continued along the road still firing. The rest of our men were by this time coming out of every house in the neighbourhood and taking cover as best they could. About a half mile down this road from the Cross, Sean Finn, Brigade O/C., West Limerick,

Donnchad Hannigan, Jimmie Finn, Sean Noonan, Davy Quane and others engaged the enemy. It was then and there that Séan Finn fell dead as our men were retreating for cover. Jimmie Finn, a very young boy of Ballylanders Company, went back for Sean's rifle saying an Act of Contrition as he got near him. After collecting the rifle he rejoined Hannigan and the others. In the same engagement Davy Quane was hit in the jaw by an enemy bullet. His jaw was broken but he was able to carry on and was nursed back to health in the West Limerick area.

At Connors where I was located we also got out when we heard the shooting. We didn't know what was happening until Bill Burke arrived across the fields, when we heard the story related above. All of the men attached to No. 1. Column were scattered in twos and threes around the neighbourhood and arrived at or near Connors at different times until we numbered about ten. We were considering the possibility then of advancing towards the sound of the shooting, but were handicapped for the want of a local man to guide us. All of the local men were to the south and the No. 2. Column were in the village itself. The area was strange to all of us. We then thought it was possible that the No. 2. Column men, being together in a body, would make a move to attack from that side, so we decided it was better to wait until we would hear from them. Why they didn't move to the attack in the early part of the day I cannot explain.

It was near night when other members of No. 1 Column arrived near Connors. After this we got word that all of the East Limerick men were mobilising at a certain point to return to the East again. When we had all assembled the big march back began. There was a lesson to be learned from this surprise enemy attack, but it was at the loss of a very brave officer - Sean Finn. It was now plain to all the old timers of the East Limerick Column, that the movement of such a large body of our men through the different Company areas was certain

to reach the ears of the enemy who could then put a proportionately larger force, with much superior equipment, against us. But the lesson was not learned.

Before we reached the East, however, we received more bad news. It was that we had lost another of our men, Ned Crawford of Cush Company in the 5th Battalion. The following is the story as told to me by his comrade Bill Condon: The Company Captain of Cush - Phil Ryan at the time - with Ned Crawford, Bill Condon and Denis Howard were escorting a spy prisoner when they were surprised and fired on by a party of Tans. Crawford fell badly wounded and died next day in Kilmallock Hospital. The escort had only one old bull-dog revolver between them at the time and were unable to defend themselves. Their spy prisoner escaped and presented himself to the Tans at Emly barracks and was not seen in the area since. Accompanied by the West Limerick Column in charge of Michael Colbert we proceeded on our way. I remember crossing over Knockfierna to Castletownconnors where we remained for one or two nights. At the time between local scouts and guides we numbered close on eighty men. The old timers among us were now convinced that the movement of such a large force gave the enemy a better chance to trace us, so we in my unit made preparations each night as to how we would act in case of surprise.

Back in Shraharla in the 5th Battalion area of East Limerick Brigade, it now was the practice for two or more Column men to come on guard each morning at 3 o'clock to reinforce the local Company guard. This turned out to be a very good move as the following story will show :- One night soon after coming to this decision, it was my turn to come on 3 o'clock duty, I was sleeping this night at Mrs. Dunne's a couple of fields up a hill off the main road from Kilfinane to Mitchelstown. To the right on the same road looking towards Mitchelstown was a farmer's house the property of a man named Frank Sweeney. The house was situated at Shraharla Cross. Two men of

the local Company had been detailed for duty all night near the house. I was to join these two men at 3 o'clock. This position was at the Kilfinane end of the stretch of road being guarded. About two miles away at the other or Mitchelstown end two more local Volunteers had been posted and Davy Clancy was to join those two at the same time. Now Mrs. Sweeney the farmer's wife had asked me to come to her house for a cup of tea as soon as I got out of bed and told me that she would wait up to make it for me - the people were great at this period. By 3 o'clock I was up and down at the Cross where I met the two local men. They were standing on the road. I asked them what they would do if the enemy stole on them on bicycles. They said that their orders were to open fire. I changed this and placed them in a position about ten yards behind a fence on the right hand side of the road where they could keep a good look-out on the cross roads and from where they had a good view of anything approaching.

I was not long out from Sweeney's after my tea and on duty with the two boys when we observed the lights of about twelve lorries on a road near Ballygan. They were travelling very slowly. They were six or seven miles from us. I took it that they were about to round up the area around Ballygan so we settled down to watch. But what was on the road near us! We kept silent: it was a Crossley tender travelling without lights towards Mitchelstown and stopping every twenty yards. It was plain to the three of us that this was a big round-up. Three other tenders followed <sup>the</sup> first one in the same manner. They were scouting for the big party behind.

It was time for me to do something. We moved close to one another so that we could talk in whispers. As there was a bend in the road between my position and Davy Clancy's, I decided to send the younger of the two boys with me to Davy to warn him not to fire on them. I knew that the boy, by taking a direct line across the fields, would reach

Davy before the lorries. The other man - I think Dawney was his name - and I moved to an old road about two fields up towards a mountain and proceeded along this road until we met Davy and Jimmy Hennessy coming to meet us. At that moment I thought Jimmy Hennessy was the boy I had sent to warn Davy a short time earlier. I congratulated Jimmy for the smart piece of work he had done and asked him if he could manage to cross the road upon which the enemy was travelling and proceed across a river to Cullane South and Knockadea where the rest of the Column men were sleeping, to warn them of the enemy's approach. Before Hennessy left I told him to warn every man of the Column not to show lights. Jimmy replied "I'll do it unless I am shot", and off he went with a smile.

When Jimmy had gone we called the rest of our men who were billeted on our side of the main road and all moved to a fence near the top of the mountain where we had a great view. In this position when daylight would come we would be able to see all the farmhouses where our men were located as well as the enemy. There were twelve of us in position up there. I can only remember Davy Clancy and Ned Ryan.

We waited for daylight. The picture before us was this :- The position occupied by Davy Clancy and Jimmy Hennessy was now to our right and was about fifty yards from Turrick Cross. Here the enemy lorries were parked with an extended guard near them, while the rest of the enemy were moving in extended order across the country towards Glencurrane and Mitchelstown. From our position looking down on Turrick, Cullane south and Knockadea where the rest of the East and West Column men had been billeted we could only see the farmers going about their work. Thanks to Jimmy Hennessy's good scouting. But anything could happen yet. We could hear the drone of aeroplanes overhead; one of them came down so low and circled over us that we thought the occupants had spotted us. We passed the

word from one to the other to lie down and not to move while it was overhead. Davy Clancy remarked "If they see us they will put as many holes in us as there is in a strainer". They hadn't seen us but left us and went off in the direction of Kilbehenny. It appears that the enemy had moved in for the round-up from Buttevant in County Cork, (It was this party that passed through our lines) from Tipperary town and from Cahir in County Tipperary and all met at Kilbehenny. I heard afterwards that the South Tipperary Flying Column had a narrow escape from that round-up. At the East Limerick end they got one man named Dan O'Keeffe who happened to be in the area that night.

Jimmy Hennessy of Kilclooney, who was only eighteen years of age at the time, was promoted Battalion Adjutant of the 5th Battalion, East Limerick Brigade, for the good scouting he did that night. Jimmy died in 1955. About two years previous he told me that the young fellow I had sent to warn Davy Clancy was courtmartialled and dismissed from the Volunteers for failing to carry out my instructions. It seems that when he left me to warn Davy he went home instead.

Another good young fellow from Glenbrohane area who was a member of Cush Company in the 5th Battalion was Mick Dalton. Around this time also he was taking a dispatch to James O'Doherty's which was the dispatch centre for Ballylanders Company when a lorry load of Tans approached from behind. The lorry pulled up; they asked him the way to Galbally. Mick told them the correct road and said "I am going that way to see an uncle of mine". They were delighted to give him a lift. You can imagine O'Doherty's surprise when Dalton told him the way he had travelled.

After the round-up I took a few days off from the Column to meet two sisters of mine who were home from the U.S.A. My home was eight miles away. Danny Moloney came part of the way with me. We carried small arms because with them we could put up a better fight and the

old members of the Column were pledged now not to be taken alive. Next day I met my sister on the mountain near my home. They had been in touch with Harry Boland, Ned O'Brien and Jimmy Scanlon (of the Knocklong rescue party) before they left New York, so we had a great talk about the Movement here and in the U.S.A. that day and the next.

That night I went to O'Donnell's of Garryspillane for a sleep. Before I went to bed old Dick O'Donnell had a story to tell me. It seems that he had been speaking to a General Franks - ex-British Army - of Ballysciddane House. Franks discussed with him the great fight the Volunteers were making, telling old Dick that he admired them and that they were welcome to the shelter of his house if they needed it. He asked Dick to convey the message to the Volunteers. I thought it right to mention this. Dick O'Donnell's son, Tom, was Captain of Garryspillane Company of the 2nd Battalion, so Tom and I talked Volunteer matters late into the night. Next day I was in bed late in the day while Tom was out and around the farm, when a member of his Company reported that the Column men had been attacked at Shraharla and had passed down to Lackelly the night before. As I was not in Shraharla I will only tell the story as I heard it from Jim Ray, Danny Moloney and Paddy Hannigan.

The Mid Limerick Column had moved up through the East Limerick area and joined East Limerick and West Limerick Columns in the Shraharla-Glenroe and Knockadea areas. Paddy Hannigan told me that on a Sunday morning a day after I had left to meet my sisters, Dan Allis was sent with a party of Column men to Garryarthur which was situated on a road between Shraharla and the Cross of the Red Chair to the west to carry out an attack on a patrol of the Green Howards on bicycles who earlier that morning had left their barracks in Galbally and had proceeded in the direction of Red Chair. The Green Howards were in command of an officer who was known locally as "Old Shakey";

the local people were of the opinion that he was mad. Dan Allis was to attack the party on their return journey to Galbally. It appears that Allis and his party took up ambush positions as instructed. The Green Howards who, on their return journey, were in much extended formation, were allowed to pass through and were not attacked. They proceeded towards Kildorrery. It is surmised that they saw our men in positions and sent for reinforcements. Paddy Hannigan expressed the opinion that if the attack did take place, it would have saved the Mid Limerick Column who, in a surprise attack later in the day, lost four men who were shot dead; Paddy's argument being that if Allis had attacked, all of the Column men in the area would have to move to another area as soon as possible or else make arrangements to meet the enemy in force. Tom Fox told me that in the afternoon of the same Sunday nine enemy lorries and two small cars carrying enemy troops arrived in the area. When they reached Aughaphuca bridge on the main road from Kilfinane to Mitchelstown, the leading lorry stopped when the Military saw a section of the Mid Limerick Column in a field on their right near Shraharla Church. Jim Ray, a local Volunteer, who was with these Mid Limerick men told me that immediately the leading lorry stopped the military jumped off and opened fire on them. Jim Ray told me that he called on the Mid Limerick men to follow him. If they had done so he would have led them out of the trap because he knew every field and ditch on the hillside but, they refused to follow, with the result that four of them were killed.

In O'Donnell's, which was about three miles from Lackelly, I got up and was having a cup of tea and something to eat when Tom O'Donnell came in once again and told me that <sup>two</sup> ~~one~~ members of his Company were outside and had with them a wounded Volunteer as a result of a skirmish with the enemy that morning. They were waiting for instructions as to where they would take him. When I went out I discovered that the

wounded man was Stephen Ryan of the Murroe Company, Mid Limerick Brigade. He was wounded in the arm and told me he had left his rifle with a member of the Garryspillane Company whom he had met earlier. He told me also that a group of Tans were not far behind and were retreating in our direction. I started off with the wounded man for the Glenbrohane area where I knew the local men would look after him and get a doctor to attend him.

Before we got out on the road near Garryspillane, we saw the Tans coming along about 100 yards away. They looked very beaten up. Stephen Ryan remarked that their ammunition should be all spent. We thought then that if we had another four men with us and were all armed we could easily have taken them prisoners. I brought Stephen Ryan to Katie O'Sullivan's of Glenaree where he stayed for a time and was attended by Doctor Lee. On the following day I went to Father Humphry to find out the result of the Lackelly fight and to get in touch with the Column again.

Father Humphry told me the story of the fight at Lackelly or as much of it as he had learned at the time. It seems that Mai Moloney was travelling along the Knockcarron road on her bicycle on Volunteer business when she saw a patrol of the Green Howards in charge of 'Old Shakey' on their way from Galbally and moving in the direction of Lackelly where a number of the Column were staying. She turned her bicycle and went as fast as possible to O'Callaghan's and Fitzpatrick's to warn the Column men there. The patrol saw her and followed her. On hearing that the Green Howards were coming, Tom Howard, Willie Riordan and their companions from the Mid Limerick Column took up positions and engaged them. Howard was one of the old timers now of the East Limerick Column and could be trusted to lead and do the right thing in a surprise attack. Captain Willie Riordan of Shraharla Company, 5th Battalion, East Limerick Brigade, was very good but had not been long on the Column and didn't have the same experience.

I didn't know any of the Mid Limerick Column men. The area around was very low lying country. To the right of O'Callaghan's and Fitzpatrick's and about 200 yards further along looking towards Knockcarron was a farmhouse on a hill, the property of a man named Kinkead, and known as Kinkead's of the rock. Four of the Mid Limerick Column men were in this house. Father Humphrey expressed the opinion that if the four men at Kinkead's had gone into action at the same time as Tom Howard and his companions they could have taken the Green Howards on their left flank and the fight would have resulted in a victory. These four men in a very good position could have picked off the military one by one, but unfortunately they didn't and Tom Howard, Willie Riordan and two mid Limerick men died in action. Later reinforcements arrived for the Volunteers from Mitchelstown and other areas around Lackelly and the fight continued throughout the day, but the Green Howards managed to get away. The Column men retreated with their dead to Lough Gur area where the four dead men were buried in a corner of a field. Their remains were removed from this field during the Truce.

I stayed with Father Humphrey that night and talked about Volunteer activities until bed time and for some time the following day. After the talk Father Humphrey suggested that I should go to the Glenbrohane area and await there for the Column. It was a safe area and we expected that the Column should arrive there soon. He also asked me to investigate a very serious matter which took place in the area a short time previously. It was a case of robbery of a rent collector by a number of Volunteers. Father Humphrey was very sore about it as the honour of the Volunteers was very dear to him. Before I left him he mentioned the possibility of a spy being in the 6th Battalion area as, among other things, the Green Howards had traced the movements of the Columns for two days now.

From Glenbrohane I got in touch with a number of officers of the 6th Battalion on the subject of the spy, but it took us until 1924 to prove to everyone's satisfaction who the spy was. Although the year is outside the period of the story I may say here that we held a courtmartial on the man in that year. On the instructions of our headquarters at the time I acted as Judge. Officers of our headquarters were in the area at the time. The man, who was very well-to-do and the son of a very big business man was, due to the time of his trial and the period that had elapsed, ordered to leave the country, which he very promptly did. His method of conveying messages to enemy barracks was through a courier or runner. Years later, through ill-health, a plea, on his behalf by his relatives to me through a couple of the old timers, to allow him to return home was, needless to say, agreed to by me. Since then we have often met and saluted one another as if nothing ever happened between us.

I remained in Glenbrohane for some time waiting for the Column to turn up but, instead of coming to Glenbrohane, they went to the Kiltely area in the 2nd Battalion where they had another narrow escape from a big Military and Black and Tan round-up. As I was not there I cannot give the details. Some short time afterwards most of the East Limerick Column were sent to their own Battalion areas. The West and Mid Limerick Columns returned to their respective areas..

It was about this time that our Brigade O/C., Sean Wall, while on his way to attend a Council meeting in the South Tipperary Brigade area, accompanied by a strong party of the East Limerick Column men as guard, was killed. As I was not present at the time of his death. I will tell the story as Davy Clancy told it to me one month before he died in 1955. It seems that Sean Wall, Donnchad<sup>Hannigan</sup>, John Joe O'Brien and Liam Hayes were staying in a farmhouse in the County Tipperary, while Davy Clancy and Bill Burke were on guard duty during the night

convenient to the house. Another party was on guard at another farmhouse some distance away in the same area. Danny Ryan of Doon, 1st Battalion, East Limerick Brigade, was one of the other party on guard. Danny is at present in Tipperary town. Davy Clancy told me that he and Bill Burke had just come off guard duty in the early morning and were about to go to bed when Donnchad Hannigan, who had just gone out to the front to have a look around, ran in and told them that a party of Tans were approaching the house and were quite close. He told Davy to take up duty at the door and allow nobody in or out.

In the meantime all the others were preparing the house for a battle with the enemy. The owner and his family were all crying and there appears to have been a great deal of confusion. Sean Wall came to the door and walked out into the hands of the Tans. "Now," remarked Davy Clancy, "I could not stop him because he was our Brigade O/C". In a few seconds when two Tans and a plain clothes man appeared in the yard Davy fired at them through the window/without waiting for an order to do so. They were quite close to him. The Tans replied with rifle fire. After a lull in the firing all of our men in the house left one by one, went around by the gable end and into a field from where they continued to engage the enemy until their ammunition was exhausted. After this the enemy withdrew taking Sean Wall's body with them. I asked Davy whether his comrades in the other house had taken any part in the fight. He said "Not to my knowledge and I don't know the reason". He was tiring. There were a lot of other things I would have like to have asked him but he said "Ned, your story for the Bureau will do for all of us", and he bid me good-bye.

Some time after the above engagement the members of the Column, as I have already stated, were moving through the Brigade area in twos, threes and fours. I was staying in the Martinstown area at this time.

While there, an urgent dispatch arrived for Sean Ford who had escaped from Spike Island a short time before and was back again with us in the Brigade area. Davy Clancy, Mick Shanahan, Phil Fogarty and others were with me on the occasion. As the dispatch was urgent and not knowing Sean Ford's whereabouts, it was decided that I should open it. It was from Donnchad Hannigan asking Ford to go to Major Webb's house to the south side of Elton and arrest an English visitor who was staying there. I decided to bring our party there to carry out the arrest. We numbered about eight.

When we arrived at Major Webb's I posted our men around the house and with Mick Shanahan went to the front hall door. At the door, what a surprise. On the top step a person was lying with a fawn coat as if asleep. At first glance we took the person to be a British soldier; but no, it was Mrs. Webb. She told us that another party had arrived earlier in the night and taken away a cousin of hers who had been on a visit, saying that he had nothing to do with the war and that her husband Mr. Webb had gone with him to offer himself as bailee. I told her that our men were all men of honour and if they found her cousin was innocent of any connection with the enemy, she could expect him back in a few hours' time. This seemed to ease her mind somewhat. "But" she said, "there was one very rough man in the first party". I got the maids in the house to come out and look after her and bring her into the house. We parted good friends. Next morning I heard that her cousin and Mr. Webb were released.

The companies in the different Battalions were very active around this time, trenching roads and felling trees around bends in the roads so as to give the enemy a quick drop. This was very good and a few lorries did get a drop in some areas. Around this time also the men

of the 6th Battalion carried out a sniping attack on Galbally Barracks. John Joe O'Brien told me subsequently that in this attack they gave the Green Howards such a shaking that he was sorry that they had not planned to take the barracks. In other Battalion areas similar sniping attacks were carried out. A little later Sean Lynch, O/C. of the 6th Battalion, with Danny Quish, Sean Walsh and others were surprised at Walsh's of Carraturk in the Ballylanders Company area, by a party of Tans and soldiers. Skirmishing lasted for about two hours. The Volunteers managed to disengage without suffering any casualties.

In the Bruree Company area we had a Volunteer named Jack O'Brien. We called him 'Holy John' because he attended Mass every Sunday no matter where he would be located, but 'Holy John' had been in the attacks on Ballylanders and Kilmallock barracks. He was also in the Glenacurrane ambush and could have been in others. Holy and all as he was he would steal rifles even from ourselves when going home to his own area. He told me himself that he had a few rifles in a dump. He had a little column of his own, made up of four or five young boys around the ages of 14 or 15 years, trained in the use of rifles. During the month of June before the Truce 'Holy John' carried out sniping attacks on British Military in Kilmallock. The Horgan brothers and O'Keeffe brothers of Bruree Company and, I would say all of the Bruree Company, were very good and active men. Sean Morrissey was their O/C.

#### Truce Rumours.

I had one more talk with Father Humphry before going to the Kilclooney area in company with Davy Clancy, Paddy O'Donnell and Sean Murray (Bruree Company). Father Humphry told me he had had a long talk with Archbishop Harty in Thurles a short time previously and had been told by him that a Truce was coming in the near future. Father Humphry asked me to inform all the old boys of the Column and

advised us to be careful and not to lose any more of our men in the next month or so.

Archbishop Harty.

It was the morning after the rescue of Sean Hogan at Knocklong in May, 1919, that Archbishop Harty was giving Confirmation to the children of Galbally parish. During his sermon he condemned the shooting of the R.I.C. at Knocklong in the course of the rescue. After the confirmation ceremony, while he and some visiting priests were having dinner at the Parish Priest's house, Father O'Brien, C.C. of Ballylanders, gave him a surprise when he informed His Lordship that he (Father O'Brien) had been out all night attending the wounded Volunteers who had taken part in the rescue. Father O'Brien told the Archbishop the names of the men involved saying that they were very brave men who had risked their lives to save a comrade. His Lordship was very interested and for the following two years up to the Truce always enquired from Father O'Brien and Father Humphry about their Volunteer friends. When Father O'Brien died during the early Truce period His Lordship attended the funeral and was very proud of the Military Guard of Honour provided for him by Captain Sampson of Ballylanders Company I.R.A. that day.

With Paddy O'Donnell, Davy Clancy and Sean Murray I went to the Glenbrohane area where we stayed for a night before proceeding to the Kilclooney area where we remained for a few days, and in the meantime called on Tom Walsh, who was a big farmer and brother of Bill and Mick Walsh, leading I.R.A. men in that area. Tom Walsh, who was a great big man and I would say a little older than most of us, usually took his milk to a Creamery in Kildorrery every morning and was always on the look-out for information or news for the I.R.A. The Tans were great men to drink and whatever public house they frequented Tom usually selected the same pub for his pint of stout also.

In this way Tom and the Tans became great friends . They, as a rule, referred to him as the 'mad fellow' due to the fact that Tom always spoke very loudly even to his jennet when driving it to the Creamery. When the Tans were in good form they often stood Tom a pint while he, in the course of conversation over it, usually picked up some information which he passed on to the Volunteers. This ruse of Tom's worked well throughout 1920 and early 1921. During this period he yoked the jennet every evening to drive to Kildorrery for his couple of pints and returning home after them he could be heard shouting at his old jennet three miles away. A short time before the Truce, however, the Tans became less talkative during his presence in a public house and Tom, observing this, decided to stop visiting the town at night.

After some days, O'Donnell, Clancy, Murray and myself left Kilclooney area for the Cush area keeping close to the mountains as we went. Nearing Cush at about 2 a.m., as we looked down from the mountain side, we saw on the main road from Kilfinane to Tipperary a line of stationary military lorries between Cush Cross and Ballinvreena Cross with lights switched off. They numbered six or seven. It seems that the enemy party was one of many who had been sent out throughout the Brigade area that night to capture our men engaged in trenching roads and felling trees. Our Company officers were careful men and I don't think they lost any men captured on the occasion.

Signed: Edmond Tobin

Date: 14th July 1956

Witness: John J. Doherty

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