

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

BURO STAIRE MILEATA 1913-21

No. W.S. 1554

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 1554.

Witness

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6 & 7 Francis Street
(and 73 Thomas Street),
Dublin.

Identity.

Adjutant, Ballina Company, Irish Volunteers.
Signals Officer, 1st Battalion, North Mayo Brigade,
I.R.A.

Subject.

Activities of Ballina Company,
Irish Volunteers, Co. Mayo,
1919-1921.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil.

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BURO STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21

No. W.S. 1.554

STATEMENT BY WILLIAM J. O'HORA,

6 & 7 Francis Street - and - 73 Thomas Street, Dublin.

My Recollections.

My earliest recollection of any Irish Irelandism, was hearing stories about people who were supposed to be Fenians, and stories about others who were supposed to be friendly with them, and of others in whose houses Fenians were supposed to have stopped, when the British (R.I.C.) were looking for them, and stories of one man of whom it was said, that he had done a turn in Jail, as the result of his actions with, or associations with the Fenians.

Those recollections refer to my school-days.

The first time I can remember being in any way concerned myself was, when we were lined up one day in a side street in Ballina, and being addressed by a man now long dead (Mr. Luke Dodd). The only sentence of his address that stuck in my memory was "It was Dublin's case yesterday, it might be Ballina's tomorrow". I think that he was referring to the shooting at Bachelor's Walk, on the evening of the Howth Gun Running.

My next recollection is being in the Volunteers, and when the Redmond/^{M'NEILL}O'Brien split took place, we were called to the Town Hall a few days before the Tuam Review (of the Volunteers) to decide which party we were to support. The total strength of that mobilisation in Ballina was 84, of which only six supported the ^{M'NEILL}O'Brien faction, and I was one of that six.

On the Sunday following this meeting, I quite well remember standing at a street corner when the Party supporting the Redmond faction were marching to the station on their way to Tuam, and a few of the young men

in that body actually spat towards me because I was not going to Tuam with them. The reason why we, the ^{I.V.}O'Brien section, did not go was because we had only six members.

I have no recollection of how long I remained in the Volunteers at that period, but I think they faded out for a time, and were resurrected again before the anti-Conscription campaign. I quite well remember looking with scorn on the fellows who flocked into the ranks, at the time of the Conscription threat.

On the first occasion of being taken out for a field day (to Gorteens) I was appointed a Section Commander and, on the way back to Ballina, the man in charge of the party, Mr. Tom Ruane (now Senator), was arrested by R.I.C. We were, consequently, left without a leader and, standing on the road in formation, somebody passing by seen our position and passed a sarcastic remark, "They have only one man able to drill them". When I heard that remark, and seeing that nobody was taking charge, I stepped out of the ranks and took the Company into Ballina, and dismissed them in front of two R.I.C. men.

During the 1918 General Election, I took a general part in election work, doing a house to house canvas and a like, house to house collection.

About a week before the date of that election, I remember bringing £75. 0. 0. to the Treasurer of the North Mayo Election Committee, Mr. Pat Beirne (now deceased). He looked at the figures shown on a scrap of paper and asked me what this is for. I told him it was our contribution to the General Election Fund. He then took off his hat, and blessed himself, saying "That's the first big money I ever received from your parish for the National Cause", adding, that if that was a sign of the times, the General Election was as good as won already.

On Election day I was an agent in one of the booths representing Sinn Féin.

Between the date of the Election and the counting of the votes, we kept a day and night guard on the ballot boxes (fearing interference) I took one or two turns on the guard.

For a long time prior to the Election it was presumed by Sinn Féin headquarters at 6 Harcourt Street, that Mr. Darrell Figis, whom Headquarters had sent to Mayo, would be the candidate selected but, at the convention, he was not selected. Dr. Crowley of Ballycastle was selected, and his ratification was held up for about three weeks, and a lot of correspondence passed between North Mayo and Sinn Féin Headquarters on the matter.

At this particular juncture, the Secretary to the North Mayo Election Committee became ill and, as I was Assistant Secretary, I remember writing to G.H.Q. at the dictation of Mr. Pat Beirne, already mentioned, and Mr. John Moylett (now deceased) informing them (H.Q.) that we, the people of North Mayo, had made what we thought the best selection in the interests of Sinn Féin generally, but if they, H.Q., thought they could win the election by putting up Darrell Figis, we would offer no opposition, but that we would not give one ounce of help.

Early in 1917 I left Ballina and went for a very short period to work in Dungannon, County Tyrone, and while there I went about with a few chaps whose general outlook I liked; and, whether they had made inquiries about me or not, I don't know, but I was asked on one occasion to go with a few boys to remove some rifles, and I heard afterwards that the place from where the rifles were removed was the house of Dr. Patrick McCartan.

During my short stay in Dungannon, I was searched three or four times by the R.I.C. who told me not to mind the search, that it was only a matter of having got instructions to search all strangers from time to time. After three or four months in Dungannon I returned again to Ballina and went to work in another premises, and remained there for about two years.

Sometime in 1919 I was asked to join the Volunteers having it explained to me, that these Volunteers were the men following up the principles and ideals of the men who died in 1916.

After a short period I was appointed a Section Commander and, about this time, I took part in the removal of a quantity of home-made bombs (made from down pipes). When going through the streets of Ballina, with four of these under my coat, I met a party of R.I.C. who were going, as I discovered that night, to raid my own house which was about two miles outside Ballina. When I had proceeded about ten paces past this R.I.C. party, one of the bombs dropped from under my coat and, without even looking back to see if any of the Police were looking at me, I quietly took up the bomb and stuck it under my coat, and walked on. I kept these bombs in my digs, only about 300 yards from the R.I.C. barracks, for some time, until my employer discovered them one day covered with a few scraps of waste paper, in an almost constantly open house.

Naturally I had to remove them at once, and a short time afterwards I had to give them over to another Volunteer, as I was leaving Ballina and going to work in Clifden, County Galway.

Before going to work in Clifden I remember being sent to Attymass one Sunday morning, to form a Company of Volunteers and, when we commenced talking to the young men there of the purpose of our visit, we were ordered off the Church grounds by the then P.P.,

Rev. Father Henry. However, we went across the road and continued our talks, got a few names before the R.I.C. arrived, and when that happened we had to clear off.

Before going from this period I would like to mention an interesting little incident during the 1918 Election canvas. Our parish was divided into two district areas, one (ours) known as the Rehins area and the other known as the Knockmore area.

We, in the Rehins area had completed our work and decided on helping the other half of the parish and, consequently, eight men, including myself, went on a particular Sunday to do this work. We divided into twos, one of our party going with one of the locals. During the evening we came across one little man; he would not be more than five feet, four inches, of very stout build, with a snow-white whisker. When we explained our mission, he told us he was a life-follower of the Irish Party, and that he would not desert them then for a lot of young idiots like us, talking about not sending our Members of Parliament to London, and, even worse than that, hoping to beat the English out of the country. The other canvasser, who was with me, went away after about a half hour, but I remained with the little man for one and a half hours, and when I left him I was sorry for having spent such a long time with him. However, the next day (Monday) was Market Day in Ballina, and at about 4 o'clock the little man came to the shop where I was working and announced in a very loud voice, "Willie, I'm going to vote for you".

A short time after my attempt to organise the Company of Volunteers at Attymass, I left Ballina again and went to work for a short period in Clifden, County Galway, where I associated myself with the formation of a branch of the Workers' Union, and where I met some very good class of Irish workers generally, including one

man, Mr. Gerald Bartley who afterwards took a very prominent part in the fight for freedom, later becoming a T.D. and later still a Parliamentary Secretary.

While in Clifden I became very unpopular with almost all the Upper Ten there, especially the Shop Assistants who were even worse than the Employers, simply because I associated with the Workers' Union section of the townspeople.

On one occasion we applied to the local P.P., Rev. Fr. McAlpine, for the use of the Town Hall to run a dance. He controlled the Hall, having gone to the U.S.A. to collect funds to build it. He refused us point blank to let us use it. We decided to hold our dance in it. Just for the sake of holding it, one Saturday night when the Upper Ten had gone home and the caretaker was locking up the Hall, we arrived, held up the caretaker and had just the form of a dance lasting thirty minutes. We then released the caretaker and went on our way.

On the following day, a member of the Hall Committee came to me and advised me to leave the town for a few days as the P.P. had said he was calling to see me, (he always carried a big, heavy stick). I told this man if the P.P. came to me and commenced to abuse me, as threatened, I would finish the matter - he never called.

About 1920 I went to work in Ballinrobe where I was transferred from the Ballina Company to the Ballinasloe Company under Tom McGuire. After a short time with the Ballinrobe Company I was appointed a special messenger to Tom McGuire who had, at that time, been promoted to, I think, Battalion Commandant.

While in Ballinrobe I was put on police duty one Sunday morning to raid all the licensed premises in the town with instructions to summon everybody we caught breaking the License Laws. In the

performance of that duty, we entered one public house to find two R.I.C. men there drinking. We took their names and the publican's name, and informed them they would be compelled to appear before a Sinn Féin Court.

In another public house we found seven men of our own Company of Volunteers, including the Quartermaster and the Company Captain. We took their names as well as the publican's name (by the way a very prominent member of the local Sinn Féin branch) and told them they would have to appear in Court. We passed on all the names to have summonses issued, and the very next night we were called before a Company Council, and ordered to drop the whole lot. We refused to do so and were brought before a Battalion Council the next night, when we again refused to withdraw and were told, before we left that meeting, that we were not entitled to issue summonses, as we were not on the police section. Neither of us was ever asked to do police work afterwards.

During my short stay in Ballinrobe, I took part in whatever I.R.A. activities were carried on. A rumour was circulated round my own place that I was wounded, as the result of which I went home one night and went into Ballina the next day and was asked to take on a much better position than I had in Ballinrobe. This kept me from taking part in the Partry ambush, as I had left Ballinrobe only a short time before that memorable fight.

On arrival back in Ballina. the Volunteers were very strong, and I at once got going with my own Company at Rehins (C/Company). After a short time I was asked by the Company Captain to take over the work of the Company Adjutant while, at the same time, I was not officially made Adjutant. The man who held that position was an ex-British soldier and, while he was a good man to go round the different sections of the Company (we had five sections in the Company) which covered

a very big area, yet the Captain told me to look after the clerical work and to attend Battalion meetings with him.

Activities at this period had increased to such an extent that it is impossible (after thirty-six years) to remember them all, or to set them in proper formation, so I must ask the reader to try to visualise what it was like, remembering that, after 700 years of British rule, almost everything that could be thought of was done, through the educational system and through brutality, to crush the Irish spirit.

I think one of the final efforts made at this period to break the spirit of the people was the introduction of the Black & Tans. The reader should get whatever books he can lay his hands on regarding the conduct of this force in Ireland between this period and the Truce (July 1921), so that he can visualise the methods used by this armed force backed up by the British Government, a big section of the landed gentry, most of the monied and influential people of the country, as well as the friends and relations in most cases of all whose sons were in the British Army, Navy, R.I.C. intelligence, and all the other sections of the people who had contact with or were earning a livelihood from any Government source (Civil Service etc.). If the reader tries to think of the men who joined the British Army and Navy during the 1914/18 war he might get some idea of the number of families who were under British influence from one direction or another. It is necessary for the reader to have an idea of all the influences against which the Volunteers had to guard and, at the same time, try to carry on living amongst and working with the people of these many factions.

After a short period with "C" Company, even though I was acting Adjutant, I was put in charge of Company dispatches and, as the Company area covered the main dispatch line between Ballina and

Dublin, it meant that a lot of dispatches passed through the area and consequently I was absent from work a lot every-day or rather every-night ^{on} activities of the Company.

About this time there was a general order issued for the collection of all arms we could possibly leave our hands on and, after a few weeks, most of the arms were collected. There were, however, a few big places (one in our Company area, and two in the next Company area) that were not raided, due to the fact that they were big mansions, the property of men holding fairly high rank in the British Army and there had to be a special team picked for these jobs. I was one of the team, and on our first raid of one of these mansions my Company Captain gave me charge of the raid as he himself was afraid of being identified by the owner. We collected some hammerless guns and, when handing them over to me, the proprietor asked me to give him my word that the guns would be returned to him when the Trouble was over, to which I replied that I could not give that guarantee. I told him that, if I was alive and still with the Party who had the guns, I would do my best to have them returned to him, and that seemed to satisfy him.

Our party left the place about 1 a.m. and at 9 o'clock next morning a party of R.I.C. and Black and Tans arrived to collect his guns.

The second of these mansions' raids was very different to the first, inasmuch as we had to go through the house ourselves, while the proprietor was held in one of the rooms under guard of two men. It was after this raid I saw a Mills bomb (as we called them) for the first time. Somebody picked it up during the raid and put it in his pocket, not knowing what it was (neither did we) until an ex-soldier came along and told us of the danger of handling such weapons of death.

The raid on the third house was unique because we were very badly let down. The house was about six miles from our place and, after cycling about two miles, the chain of my bicycle came off and, as I was the last man of the party, I could not exchange cycles with anybody else. At this stage I must say I doubt if they would exchange with me, as we were all most anxious to be in all the jobs we possibly could. When the party arrived the Company Captain asked the gate-keeper to tell him in what room or rooms the arms were kept, and the gate-keeper assured him that the R.I.C. were there that evening and took away all the guns. The Captain believed this man and departed without going into the place. Early next morning a messenger was sent to the Ballina Barracks and, about 11 o'clock, the R.I.C. and Tans arrived and took away, in all, eleven cases of various kinds of arms and ammunition.

On the day following the raid on the second mansion, myself and another man had to call to the place to collect money, and the owner told us of the two raids on the night before, by us, and the other the next morning by British forces. He told us he was glad the arms were gone before the Black and Tans arrived, as he did not want them to get the arms.

About this time the consumption of poteen was creating havoc in our area and the adjoining areas, and we were ordered to raid any place we thought the poteen was being made, and to destroy all equipment used in the making of the poteen with the exception of the stills. These were to be taken to the Chapel yard and destroyed in the presence of all who wanted to witness the act. In these raids we seized and destroyed six stills which were spread over four different villages.

The havoc created by the consumption of this poteen was so great that we decided on tying one man to a tree, and leaving him

there with a note pinned on his coat with the word "Poteen" painted in big type, so that everybody who passed the way would see him, and at the bottom of the card we wrote the following :- "This is the treatment for all offenders in future".

At about this time our Company decided on placing a levy on all houses in the parish, the money being wanted to purchase arms. We also organised a huge sports meeting: the money from this was also to go towards the purchase of arms.

After these two events, the money collected was handed over for the purchase of arms for the Company and never heard of afterwards.

About this time I^{was} appointed a special messenger to Mr. P.J. Rutledge (now deceased), who afterwards became a Minister in the first Fianna Fail Government.

Sometime in 1919 there were two criminals sent to my brother's place (This was the period of unknown destinations), and they were guarded night and day by men, not of our Company, until one of them escaped and made his way to Ballina R.I.C. Barracks. He gave a description of where he and the other man were detained. The entire village was surrounded early next morning, and the usual questioning took place but my brother's story was so perfect that there were no arrests made. His story was that he was taken out of his own house a few days before that by two strange men armed with revolvers, and told that they had taken over his barn as a prison, that he was not to go near it, nor was he to report it to the R.I.C. under the penalty of death. The Head Constable who accompanied the Black and Tans and R.I.C. was passing by my brother a few days afterwards and, while he was passing, he told my brother "Stick to your story no matter what happens". For about a month after this, the brother's house was raided four or five times.

During this time and until the Truce, I was an active member of the Belfast Boycott Committee and this took up a lot of my time. This Boycott Committee gave particulars of one glaring case of Belfast goods being brought into Ballina, and the Battalion Council decided on burning the house with all its contents, except human beings or animals. At a meeting of the Battalion Council called specially to deal with the case, two Companies refused to carry out the job. It was then decided to make it a Battalion job, but when the Battalion O/C. came to my Company Captain he refused to supply the men, saying "his Company was not yet asked to do it". He was then asked "Would he do it"? and he replied, he would.

On the very next night we called a Company Council meeting and decided on carrying out the job, fixing a date, and informing Battalion Headquarters of all the arrangements. We also decided on having a crack at Ballina Barracks, but we did not disclose this to either Battalion or Brigade, and we proceeded with all the necessary arrangements. Curfew was in force in the district at this time, and we decided on giving the British forces an hour, to be in bed and asleep by the time we were to arrive in the town.

Our mobilisation notice went out to 84 men and out of that number 78 turned up, including the total of one section who were not asked to parade as they lived fairly near the town of Ballina. Their duty was to sneak in as close as possible to the house concerned, with paraffin soaked turf, petrol and any other suitable material they could muster, and await our arrival. When the other four sections were formed up, the Company Captain handed over control to a 1st Lieutenant who was an ex-soldier, and his first words to the men were, "This is our first big job, and the first man I see funking his duty I'll blow the brains out of him". But then he finished up by saying he knew quite well none of them would funk his duty. We were then to have a short rehearsal of the different

positions etc. when an officer arrived with a message from Brigade Headquarters that we would have to cancel the whole affair. He was after seeing one of our men who was wounded a few nights before and he was too weak to be transferred. He told us that we would be recognised by townspeople, and the whole area would be searched in the next few days and the wounded man would most likely be captured.

Even though it was a Brigade Officer who came to call off the operation, he did not know of our arrangements to attack the barracks.

About this time I was selected (in my absence) to go to Glasgow, with a considerable amount of money, to purchase arms. I did not like the idea and did my best to get out of it. I had all the necessary preparations made as the time drew near but, at the last moment I was released from the job and another man went instead. This man succeeded in getting the arms on board a boat at Glasgow, and at that stop he was placed under open arrest by orders from G.H.Q., Dublin, and the arms were confiscated (as far as we were concerned).

The reason given for that action was the fear of exposure of the channels of transport of arms.

After a few happenings in which I was not involved there was a special curfew on the use of bicycles, and only those who got a permit could use them. I was ordered by Battalion Headquarters to use a bicycle, because of the fact that I was on Company dispatches, as well as being a special messenger to Mr. P. J. Rutledge.

About this time I was put on Battalion Dispatches which position I held until the Truce.

There was a small ambush arranged a long way outside our Company area, and the Captain of "C" Company undertook to carry it out with

his own Company without any help from other areas. All preparations were made for this and, on the day we were to leave, the time limit placed on our departure was 7.30 p.m. We were to get in under cover of darkness and wait until about 12 o'clock next day for the small R.I.C. cycle patrol. The Brigade operations Officer came to me where I worked and told me that, under no circumstances were we to go, unless we were on the road at the time fixed by Brigade Headquarters. He went as far as making me promise that, even if the rest of the men departed (after the hour), I would not go. The men selected to go were not ready until 12.50 that night, with result that I did not go, but handed over my revolver to another man and never saw it afterwards. When the men were in their allotted positions for about one hour, they got word from a local that there was a big force of Auxiliaries on the way from Castlebar; consequently, the Company had to withdraw with all haste. It was said afterwards they were seen going to the place, and reported to the Authorities, hence the time limit for departure imposed by Brigade Headquarters.

Fairly near this date I was sent with three others to select an ambush position at a place near Pontoon. While we were inspecting the first position, we sighted a small party of about three lorry loads of Black and Tans coming in our direction, and we withdrew from the place. We waited for about an hour, but the party in the lorries halted near where we had been on the road and, after a short time, two of the lorries proceeded to Knockmore (a village within about two miles of our position). The third lorry waited there, and we had to abandon our selection for that day, and we never went back to it.

A short time after this we again decided on having a bang at Foxford R.I.C. barracks, again without the consent of Battalion or

Brigade Headquarters. And two days before our arranged date of attack, I was casually informed by a man, who did not know of our arrangements, that a large quantity of arms and ammunition was expected to arrive in the Foxford area; and he told me not to allow any activities whatsoever near that area until the arms were secure - we never went back to the idea again.

A few days before our expected burning of the house for getting Belfast goods I had to find a Doctor to visit a wounded member of our Company and, after trying three or four Doctors in Ballina, I was obliged to call on a British Army Doctor and, when I told him where he had to come to, I warned him of the consequences if it leaked out from him of what he had learned. Naturally, he told me that professional etiquette would not permit him to divulge anything like that. However, he visited the patient, and had to arrange for an operation the next day, and my job was to get two more Doctors (one Surgeon and one Doctor) to perform the operation in a country house.

When the operation was in progress, I was holding the patient on the table, and got nearly as much of the ether as the patient, with the result that I coughed out and had to go outside and lie on my back on the grass until I recovered.

The effect of that dose of ether affected me for about three years afterwards, causing me to conk out again, on one occasion when I was applying iodine to another wounded man.

During 1919 and 1920, anytime we had to go to another Chapel in our parish to Mass we always remarked the young men scurrying away immediately after Mass. This was the Company area in which our Company had to carry out the two big raids for arms.

On one occasion, I think it was in 1920 or 1921, we were asked to supply five men to go to the relief of the South Mayo Brigade (under Michael Kilroy) as they were surrounded in the mountains bordering the two Brigade areas. Our Captain called in twenty-two men of No. 1 Section and told them he only wanted one man (we had decided on taking one man from each section), but out of the twenty-two men called in, twenty-one volunteered to go, and none of them would stay behind. We prepared ourselves and took whatever arms we had, some clothing, and one day's ration. We had gone about two miles when an officer overtook us, and informed us that the West Mayo Brigade had escaped the net that was thrown round them. When the Captain announced that we were not going any further, one of them put the rifle he was carrying over his head and smashed it on a rock in front of him saying, at the same time, "That's the last time I'm going out".

At, or about, this time I was given the job of collecting men, particularly ex-soldiers, for the Flying Column, and on one or two occasions had to accompany them to the nearest friendly house, to where the Column was. On one of these occasions I had a very narrow escape when returning home early in the morning. Curfew was operating in the area at this time and, as well as that, the use of bicycles was prohibited. But, as I have already said, I was permitted by Battalion and Brigade Headquarters to use a bicycle. I was within about a mile of home and, on turning a corner too short, the pedal of my bicycle hit a stone and fell off. When I had dismounted I heard the purr of motor engines and sensed at once that it was Police and Black and Tans. I took the bicycle and threw it across a gate into a field, got in myself and I was only just lying down when the first of the lorries (there were five) halted right beside me on the road, and I had to wait there for about

ten minutes before they moved off. (I thought that ten minutes an eternity). As I had dispatches with me, concerning a serious operation that had taken place a few days previous, I knew my fate if captured.

Sometime in 1920 or 1921 we had to take over a few wounded men and some prisoners from the West Mayo Brigade, who were then taken across Lough Conn in a rowing boat. I had to take charge of this job as our Company Captain was laid up at the time and a junior officer in the district, could not show himself, after having a look at the prisoners as there was one of them who knew him very well.

This job had a sequel a few years later when I was going through France on my way to Lourdes. A young priest, who was with the West Mayo Brigade on that particular night (he was a student then), identified me, and we had a long talk on the matter.

Sometime in 1921 we were handed over a prisoner who had been sentenced to death, and we were ordered to carry out the sentence; but we hesitated, as I knew the man fairly well. And, after repeated inquiries as to whether we had the man or not, we announced that we had not, and would not shoot him. We were brought before the Brigade Council on the matter and informed them that it was our opinion that the man was not guilty; and about a month before the Truce his case was re-opened and he was declared Not Guilty of the crime for which he was sentenced to death. He was subsequently released, and died a natural death within a year of his release.

From the time of the establishment of the Sinn Féin Courts we were almost every fortnight occupied with them, as well as other Army duties.

On one occasion I arrived late at a Battalion Council meeting with the Captain of my Company; the meeting had already decided on the shooting of a particular R.I.C. Constable. I asked if there was any reason for selecting this man, and was told there was not. I then asked why not shoot the local D.I. who was a blackguard. The decision was then switched, and within a short time an attempt was made on this D.I. when leaving a house party at the residence of the then Crown Solicitor. His two braces were cut and it then became known that he was wearing what we called a coat of armour.

On the day following the shooting of two R.I.C. Constables in Ballina, I purchased a webley revolver for £6. 0. 0. (my own money). I had this revolver and six rounds in the chamber and six loose rounds in my pocket, as well as a written report of the shooting addressed to the Adjutant-General, G.H.Q., I.R.A., Dublin, in my pockets, when two Black and Tans came to the shop where I worked. I was standing on the floor outside the counter. They walked straight over to me and, during the time it took them to walk the five or six paces, I think a thousand thoughts passed through my mind - what to do; but the thought struck me that they had not revolvers drawn, which was the usual method of approach, and I just waited to see what would happen. They asked me for a Velour Hat, and I think that was the most welcome expression I ever heard from human lips. They selected two hats, and broke into the shop that night, and stole the two hats.

The night following this raid on the shop, the Manager asked me to sleep with him. (I was then stopping at my own home about two miles outside the town). When I was undressing the Manager saw me taking the revolver and putting it under my head. He told me the next morning that he never slept a wink during the night. He also told me he would not ask me to sleep with him again.

We were out one night on a raid of the house of a party we doubted as a spy. Our pretence for the raid was the making of poteen which we had condemned at the time. When crossing fields a short distance from the house we were after raiding, we came to a field where there were some cattle. One bullock started to run towards us and, as the night was dark, we could not clearly see what it was and one of the men shot the bullock. The owner was partly compensated afterwards.

At the approach of the Quarter Sessions on one occasion I was selected one of a party of six to take part in the shooting of the Judge, who was to be pointed out to us by his own nephew who was a member of the Battalion, "A" Company. This was called off as the distance between the Railway Station (at Ballina) and the Courthouse was too short.

One night as my own Company were cutting the roads, I was put on scout duty with another chap. I was armed with a rifle. After about fifteen minutes I thought I heard men approaching (in rubber shoes, as was the almost general habit of a few of the Black and Tans) and, after bringing the noise to the notice of my pal on a few occasions, I became partly satisfied that they were not about. I put down my rifle and, on putting my hand inside my coat, I discovered it was my own heartbeats that were worrying me.

Sometime - I think it was early in 1921 - I took all the dispatch riders in the Battalion area to a farmhouse outside Ballina, on the trial of a new system of dispatch safety I had thought out myself, and in the course of delivery of a dispatch and getting a receipt for it in code. I discovered one man who could neither read or write (completely illiterate). I then questioned him about dispatches he had received for transmission

over a period of about three or four months. He gave me a correct account of who he had received the dispatches from, and to whom he had delivered them.

On the Sunday night before the Truce I was in Enniscrone with about six others when a convoy of mixed Tans and R.I.C. arrived and parked their lorries under one sentry. This was brought to my notice and I suggested attacking them, but we were informed that the Truce was almost on and it was decided that it would be next to dishonourable to attempt it, and in consequence the attack was called off.

Signed William J. Horan

Witness [Signature]
Capt

Nov 1st - 1956

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