

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

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No. W.S. 1,715

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21

STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 1715.

Witness

Comdt. General Seán Boylan,
Edenmore,
Dunboyne,
Co. Meath.

Identity.

O/C Meath Brigade;
O/C 1st Eastern Division.

Subject.

I.R.A. activities, Meath Brigade, 1917-1921.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil.

File No S. 1293.

Form B S M. 2

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STATEMENT BY COMMANDANT-GENERAL SEÁN BOYLAN

Edenmore, Dunboyne, Co. Meath.

Part II.

Just prior to my release from Frongoch, two organisations called "The Irish National Aid Association" and "The Irish Volunteers' Dependents' Fund" had been launched in Dublin and elsewhere for the purpose of collecting funds to help the dependents of Volunteers interned in Frongoch and elsewhere. Those two organisations were amalgamated a short time later and eventually became "The Irish White Cross". Immediately after my release, with the help of the other Volunteers in Dunboyne, I organised collections in the area for the Fund. From this Fund, the Volunteers still interned or in jail received gifts of cigarettes, tobacco and money to buy certain essentials. Their dependents also received gifts of money in necessitous cases.

At the same time, I got most of the Dunboyne Volunteers together again. A few of the original members dropped out. We now had about twelve active men, ready and willing to continue the struggle for freedom. Of those twelve men I would say nine were members of the Irish Republican Brotherhood or Dunboyne Circle. I was the Centre of Dunboyne Circle and got in touch with members of the Leinster and Supreme Councils in Dublin who had been released or who had not been arrested. We met at 35 Lower Gardiner St. Dublin. Amongst the other men attending those meetings at the time whom I can remember were George Irvine and Sean Murphy. They represented other Circles. Apart from regular meetings of the Volunteer Company and I.R.B. Circle in Dunboyne, and an occasional visit by me to Volunteer Headquarters in Dublin during the latter part of

1916 and the first half of 1917, there was nothing very outstanding. The main purpose during the period was the organisation and formation of Volunteer companies throughout the country.

For the purpose of recruiting new members into the Dunboyne Company, I organised an aeriocht, which was held in on of the fields of our farm, in the month of September 1917. Thomas Ashe and other prisoners were on hunger strike in Mountjoy at the time. Michael Collins and William T. Cosgrave attended the aeriocht and addressed those present from the platform. They both appealed to the young men of the locality to join the Volunteers, with the result that we received several new members.

Following the death of Thomas Ashe on hunger strike on 25th September 1917, several members of the Dunboyne Company including myself attended the funeral. The procession included all available Volunteers, many of whom carried arms and were in uniform.

From then to the end of the year and early part of 1918 I travelled all over County Meath and organised new companies in nearly every town and parish in the county including Trim, Navan, Kells, Oldcastle, Summerhill and Stonefield. I cannot remember the earlier officers elected for the new companies. One or two I do remember are: a Seamus Ryan from Tipperary, who was employed in a Navan furniture factory, who became captain of Navan Company; Eamon Cullen, who became captain of Summerhill Company and was later appointed brigade engineer, and Sean Hayes of Drumbaragh, who became captain of Drumbaragh Company and later Vice O/C. Meath Brigade.

Around this time conscription had been introduced in England and the British Government decided to apply it to

Ireland also. It was in the spring of 1918. Throughout the county, anti-conscription committees were formed. Those committees for the most part included the local Parish Priests and Curates. Protest meetings were held in every parish, and anti-conscription funds were opened to fight the measure. The Volunteers took a very active part in this campaign, and, during the period, several new recruits joined the various companies. Here in Dunboyne I would say our strength went up to about 40. When it was all over, a lot of our new men left, which reduced our strength to 24.

In this year, all companies in Co. Meath were formed into battalions. Subsequently, two brigades were formed - one for North Meath and one for South Meath. After a very short time, the North Meath Brigade became disorganised and ceased to function, so I reorganised the area again and formed one brigade only for the county with headquarters at Dunboyne. The meeting for the appointment of a brigade staff was held at Dunderry, Navan. This brigade became known as the Meath Brigade and it comprised six battalions as follows: Dunboyne or 1st; Trim or 2nd; Delvin or 3rd; Kells or 4th; Oldcastle or 5th; Navan or 6th.

The brigade staff elected were as hereunder:

O/C. Sean Boylan; Vice O/C. Sean Hayes; Adjutant, Seamus Finn; Quartermaster, Seamus O'Higgins; Engineer, Eamon Cullen

The officers previously elected for each of the six battalions present at the meeting were:-

1st Dunboyne Battalion: O/C. Barney Dunne; Vice O/C. - Frank Carolan; Adjutant - David Hall; Q.M. - W. O'Toole; I.O. - Bernard O'Reilly; Transport - James Maguire.

2nd Trim Battalion: O/C. Michael Hynes; Vice O/C. - Paddy Mooney; Adjutant - John O'Higgins; Q.M. - Patrick Dignam; I.O. - Transport -

3rd Delvin Battalion: O/C. Michael Fox; Vice O/C. - Patrick Corrigan; Adjutant - Larry Ginnell; Q.M. - Patrick Carthy; I.O. - Engineers - Joseph Martin.

4th Kells Battalion: O/C. Patrick Farrelly; Vice O/C. - Thomas Reilly; Adjutant - M. Cahill; Q.M. - Michael Govern; I.O. - Engineers -

5th Oldcastle Battalion: O/C. Seamus Cogan; Vice O/C. - Sean Farrelly; Adjutant - Peter Connell; Q.M. - Phil Tevlin; I.O. - Patrick McDonnell; Engineers - Matt Tevlin.

6th Navan Battalion: O/C. Patrick Loughran; Vice O/C. - Arthur Levins; Adjutant - Kieran O'Connell; Q.M. - I.O. - Engineers: Joe Hughes.

In July of 1918, a by-election took place in East Cavan for which Arthur Griffith, the Sinn Fein candidate, was nominated. On my instructions, the Volunteers in North Meath went to the East Cavan area where they canvassed and worked for the success of Arthur Griffith. In several instances the Volunteers had to protect the speakers on behalf of Arthur Griffith from very hostile mobs composed of Hibernians who were the main support of the nationalist candidate, Orangemen, and members of the Ulster, or Carson, Volunteers, who all continued to break up or prohibit Sinn Féin meetings.

At the General Election in December 1918, all Volunteers in the county took an active part in the campaign, such as canvassing and supplying personation agents and policing the polling booths on the day of the election. Our candidate, Eamon Duggan, was elected for South Meath, and Liam Mellows was elected for North Meath.

By January 1919, several members of the Volunteers had been arrested throughout the country on a pretext known as

"The German Plot". While all those men were in jail, it came to my knowledge that the Unionist Party in Co. Meath had petitioned the British Government to keep all arrested Volunteers in jail. At this time, the Unionist Party were the main supporters of the hunt (Fox and Stag). I reported the matter to Eamon Duggan and asked for a direction. On the following day, the Sinn Féin Executive had a notice inserted in the daily papers requesting all members of the Hunt to cease hunting until the prisoners were released. The Ward Hunt Club ignored the request.

With other Volunteers I decided to carry out the instructions of the Sinn Féin Executive. A meeting of the Ward Hunt had been fixed for a certain day. We went to the fixture and found that it had been cancelled. A number of such fixtures were published in the local and daily papers and were subsequently cancelled secretly. Those fixtures were published as a ruse to wear us out and confuse us as to the time and place of meeting. They eventually held a meeting at Hollywood, Rath, and, on the following Saturday evening, the "Evening Telegraph" published an account of the meeting, stating that it had been held without Sinn Féin interference.

I was determined to put a stop to their meetings. I received information that their next meeting was to be held at the Workhouse, Dunshaughlin. With twelve Volunteers I arrived in Dunshaughlin just as they had assembled with the stag in a box cart. I approached the Master, a Mr. Levins Moore, and told him that we had come along to enforce the Sinn Féin and Government of Ireland's ban on hunting. He replied: "I cannot take notice of political parties". I replied: "It is not a political matter, it is a Government instruction". He said: "The land is ours, we will hunt it, what can you do?". I said: "If everyone had their own land your people would not have much".

Among the members of the hunt present were: Captain Boyd Rochford, General Waldron, Captain Sam Watt, Major-General Hammond and numerous other British army officers, as well as the Whip - James Brindley - who intervened and said: "I think you are strangers". I replied: "We were not strangers in '98 when you burned the house over our heads in Boheravia, 'Dunboyne". I was referring to an ancestor of mine who was evicted and had his house burned at the time. Brindley's father was English and had come over to Ireland to act as Whip to the Ward Hunt. He later became a Catholic and was dismissed by the Ward Hunt Committee. When the local farmers heard of this story, they would not allow the Hunt to pass over their lands until he was reinstated. Brindley was reinstated. After further parley with Levins Moore, he agreed to call the Hunt off, having secretly arranged with the officers present to ride us down.

I had placed six men in front of the box cart and six behind. There was a movement from the rere and a shout: "Charge, let him out", meaning the stag from the box cart. Some of my men in the rere of the box cart were knocked down in the charge. A "lady" came straight for me. I jumped to the left and shouted: "One side, Madam". She said: "Have we not a right to the road?". I said: "Every right but not on top of us". One of my men in front of the box cart opened fire and shot a horse in the flank, the property of Patrick Nugent, Church Road, Dublin. A stampede followed and the Master, Levins Moore, who had been in front of the charge, returned to me and said: "You have shot Mr. Nugent's horse". I said: "He is lucky he was not shot himself". He asked to be given the box cart and stag. I replied: "You won't have the cart now, but I will guarantee that the cart and stag will be delivered safely at the kennels". I accused him of conniving to hold the meeting unknown to us. He denied he did so. Mrs. Sam Watt, wife of the captain, approached and said:

"I will identify the man who shot the horse". I said:
 "If you do, we have made arrangements to deal with informers".
 There were shouts of "Disarm him". I said: "The first one to
 move I will drop you". Shortly after, those of the hunt party
 who had remained to the end rode off. A lot of them had
 scattered when the shot was fired. When they had gone, I sent
 an escort of Volunteers with the box cart and stag to the
 kennels at Ashbourne. As they (huntsmen) proceeded on their
 way home, some Volunteers engaged on road work asked one or
 other of the huntsmen: "Did you have a good run, sir?" and got
 the reply: "It's a bloody war". Next morning, Mrs. Sam Watt
 changed her mind in Dunboyne R.I.C. barracks. When asked
 if she could identify the man who shot the horse, she replied
 that she could not.

The names of those who assisted me in this job were:
 Barney Dunne, O/C., 1st or Dunboyne Battalion. Michael Felix,
 Captain of Kilcloon Company. Stephen Darcy, Peter Callaghan,
 Frank Carolan - all of Kilcloon Company. Christopher Lynam,
 Captain of Dunboyne Company. James Maguire, Michael Toole,
 Peter Keating, James Farrell, Joseph Gaynor and Nicholas
 Moran - all of Dunboyne Company. The Dunshaughlin Volunteers
 refused to co-operate. I reported the matter to Sinn Féin
 Headquarters where I met Eamon Duggan, who said to me:
 "If the people don't back us up we are beaten". I replied:
 "They will, if they don't do it for love, they will do it
 through fear".

On the Saturday following, the Ward Hunt met again at
 Hollywood, Rath, Co. Dublin, under police protection. Dublin
 was not included in my area, so I did not take any action.
 That Saturday evening, when the hunt servants were returning,
 One Patrick Kelly, who was taking some horses home, shouted
 to me: "We hunted today". I replied: "He who laughs last,
 laughs best. Where will you be next week?"

On the following Monday, I prepared a document headed "Sinn Féin" as follows:

"To: The Master and Members of the Ward Hunt Club, .

Acting on instructions from the Central Executive and endorsed by the constituency committees of North and South County Meath, we, the landholders and residents in the Ward Hunt area, hereby call on you and your supporters not to hunt or trespass the lands in our possession until all Sinn Féin prisoners are unconditionally released.

Signed: Elizabeth Boylan (my mother)

John Bruton	Patrick Smith
Edward Cussen	Laurence Ward
Patrick Kelly	Michael Kelly
John Farrell	John Umbley
Frank Farrell	Jim Quinn"

The document was voluntarily signed by each person - all of them land owners.

Another meeting had been arranged for the following Wednesday. That evening I visited Levins Moore at his home in Ashtown, Co. Dublin, and showed him the document. He still refused to discontinue hunting, adding that they could not take heed of political parties. I replied: "It is not a political party order but a direct instruction from the Irish Government. I met you this day week and beat you. I'll beat you today. You are the only Hunt Committee that have defied the wishes of the Irish people; it is war between us". He replied: "I don't mean that". I said: "You cannot have it both ways".

I returned home to Dunboyne and found a message from my I.O. Bernard Reilly, to the effect that 60 R.I.C. in charge of a County Inspector and two District Inspectors had surrounded the area of Batterstown village, with instructions to hold up and search people of Sinn Féin sympathies. The message also conveyed the information that the R.I.C. were supported by two lorry loads of military -

the Black Watch - 80 soldiers in all, and that they were lying in wait at Batterstown railway station.

On receipt of this information I proceeded to Patrick Moore's house in Portmana, Clonee, and told him I wanted him to take me in his motor car to Batterstown, that the area was surrounded and that there was no chance of getting in on foot. He agreed and drove me to the village. On the way, there were 17 R.I.C. men on the road including a Sergeant Neary, who was a friend of ours. Having got through the police cordon, I got out of the car and approached Lord Fingall, acting Master, and read the contents of the document to him. He asked me to wait a moment until he would speak to Mr. Fitzgerald - another member of the Hunt Committee. When he returned he said: "When the farmers and people who supported them forbid them to cross their lands, they had no alternative but to abandon the meeting, but we are not taking dictation from political parties". I returned to the car and ordered the driver to proceed into the village. In the meantime, the R.I.C. and military were brought in.

In the centre of the village I was approached by the correspondents of about 13 newspapers, including the "Daily Mail", "Mirror", "Sketch", "Irish Independent", "Freeman's Journal", "Irish Times", "Meath Chronicle", "Drogheda Independent" and "Leinster Leader". The "Daily Mail" man asked me for the document. I replied: "I'll frame this". He added: "The 'Irish Independent' man is in one of the local pubs, will you allow me to take it to him?". I said: "We don't frequent pubs". By now, the police and military had assembled in the village. The "Daily Mail" man said: "I'll go over to those hardy-faced Black Watch men and have a word with them". I replied: "We are Ireland's watch today". I returned home and reported to G.H.Q., Dublin, that night.

Next day I attended a Sinn Féin meeting in the Mansion House. My photo was on all the daily papers showing me reading the document to Lord Fingall. Mick Collins, Arthur Griffith and other members of the Executive were on the platform. They all gave me a great welcome and called on me to address the meeting. Mick Collins said: "Anyone but yourself would be doing three years in jail". As a result of the meet being abandoned, Fairyhouse Races, which were run by the Hunt Committee, were also abandoned that year.

THE I.R.B.

I joined the I.R.B. in Dunboyne in the year 1915, when an organiser named Benson, acting for a man named Sean Tobin (Manager of Dublin Cattle Market) visited the Dunboyne area. I was the first to join in the area. Others who joined about the same time were: Michael Kelly, John Kelly, Peter Byrne, Aidan Crean, my brother (Ned Boylan), Christopher Lynam, Peter Keating, Frank Carolan and James Maguire. My brother (Ned) was appointed head of the circle here in Dunboyne. After 1916, I was appointed head and continued in that position until the Truce in July 1921.

After my appointment, I attended meetings at 35 Lower Gardiner St. Dublin, pending the spread of the organisation. Those attending the meetings in Gardiner St. whom I remember were: George Irvine, Martin Conlon, Martin Gleeson, Joe Gleeson, Neil Kerr (Liverpool) and, on occasion, Mick Collins. At the time we were attached to the Dublin Board. A short time later, County Boards were set up. I became head of the Meath County Board. We held regular meetings. Each meeting was attended by a visitor from another County Board, and we in turn sent a visitor to an adjoining County Board meeting. Our main purpose at first was to spread the organisation in the

County Meath. The name of a potential member was first proposed and seconded and placed before the Board before acceptance. If not approved, he was turned down. In a short time, circles were established in every parish. Discussions at the meetings included matters relating to the acquisition of arms and the formulation of schemes and decisions relative to national policy and the appointment of suitable men to guide and direct that policy.

About the year 1918, the British authorities imposed an oath of allegiance on all serving civil servants, the vast majority of whom complied with the order. Those who did not comply lost their jobs. They included John Shouldice, his brother (Bertie) and Maurice Collins. Subsequently, the Central Council of the G.A.A. decided to expel any of its members (the civil servants) who took the oath. The Supreme Council of the I.R.B. instructed its members to support the action of the Central Council of the G.A.A. A short time later, at the annual convention of the Meath County Board of the G.A.A., held at Navan, a motion in support of the action of the Central Council of the G.A.A. was on the agenda and was carried by 72 votes to 11. Previously, I had spent three weeks travelling around the county on my bicycle contacting all our members (I.R.B.) By the date of the annual convention (G.A.A.) we had members of the I.R.B. in the vast majority on the County Board of the G.A.A. The County Board was constituted by members of each G.A.A. club in the county.

At the annual congress of the G.A.A. that year, held in the Mansion House, Dublin, which was attended by delegates from every county, the following delegates were appointed from the Meath County Board of the G.A.A. to support the action of the Central Council: P. de Burca, Christopher Lynam, Patrick Blake, my brother (Peter) and myself. All were members of the

I.R.B. The congress, by a vast majority, supported the action of the Central Council. At an adjourned convention of the Meath County Board of the G.A.A., I was instrumental in having a proposal put forward to debar members of the R.I.C. from admission to fixtures of the G.A.A. The motion was defeated by one vote.

Later, after Meath and surrounding areas had been formed into a Division, I reorganised the I.R.B. in Counties Kildare, Westmeath, Louth, South Cavan and North Co. Dublin, setting up a County Board in each county.

In the months of September and October 1919, special meetings of the Brigade staff were held to formulate plans for attacks on R.I.C. barracks situated in the area. By the end of October, plans were ready to attack the barracks at Ballivor, Bohermeen, Summerhill, and Lismullen or Dillon's Bridge. The attack on Ballivor took place on 31st October. Captain Patrick Mooney of Trim was in charge of this attack. He was assisted by Volunteers from the battalion area. They were armed with shotguns and a couple of revolvers. Captain Mooney and a couple of his men approached the front door and knocked. When it was opened, Mooney and those Volunteers behind him rushed the building. One R.I.C. man was shot dead in the melee, after which the garrison surrendered. All rifles and revolvers were seized and taken away.

A few nights later, a similar ruse to gain admission to Lismullen or Dillon's Bridge barracks failed. The attacking party, which was drawn from the Navan Battalion area, then opened fire from all sides. The garrison replied with rifle fire. After a period of about half an hour, the attackers withdrew. Their arms consisted of shotguns only. The attacks planned for Bohermeen and Summerhill did not take place, due

to a misunderstanding as to the time and place certain officers were to be met.

Between November 1919, and Easter Sunday 1920, Ballivor, Summerhill, Bohermeen, Lismullen, George's Cross, Mullagh, Moynalty, Drumcondra, Crossakiel, Carnaross, Stirrupstown, Drumconrath and about ten other R.I.C. barracks were evacuated and the garrisons transferred into the larger towns such as Navan, Trim, Kells and Oldcastle. On instructions from G.H.Q. all of those barracks were burned down after they were evacuated. The burnings were carried out by the local company or battalion officers.

In the early autumn of 1920, on instructions from G.H.Q., I had all arms in civilian hands collected throughout the brigade area. In most cases the arms were surrendered voluntarily, but in other cases the Volunteers collecting the arms were met with armed opposition. In the Dunboyne Battalion area, Captain Sam Watt of the British army, who lived at Hilltown, Clonee, opened fire on the Volunteers as they surrounded his house, but John Connell, the officer in charge of the raiding party, prevailed on the captain to surrender. The Volunteers then seized a couple of shotguns and a revolver. The arms generally collected were principally shotguns, a few revolvers and a few miniature rifles.

At a meeting of all brigade officers in the country in August 1920, held at the Gaelic League rooms in Parnell Square, Dublin, each officer was asked for details as to the operations carried out in his area and also those contemplated. The officers from G.H.Q. present included Dick Mulcahy, Gearóid O'Sullivan, Diarmuid O'Hegarty and Mick Collins. When my turn came, I said we intended to attack Trim R.I.C. barracks. Mick Collins remarked: "It's a very big job". I replied: "We will take it". He said: "When will you take it?" I said:

"Sunday week". I had to go back to him a few days later to inform him that the job was postponed for a week, for the reason that an R.I.C. man, who was one of my chief intelligence officers, would be on duty on the morning of the proposed attack, and I did not want to involve him.

Trim R.I.C. barracks was a very large building capable of holding 200 men. Its garrison strength was, at the time, approximately 24 men. It had been recently renovated and provided with loopholes. It would have been impossible to take it with the arms at our disposal, so we relied on strategy.

We held a number of meetings at O'Hagan's of Trim, where details of our plan were drawn up and decided upon. Our plan involved the employment of 150 Volunteers, including those engaged in the blocking of roads. All roads within a radius of eight miles were blocked, with the exception of one - the Trim/Summerhill/Athboy to Kildalkey road, which was left open as a way of retreat.

On Sunday morning, 26th September, under cover of darkness, Captain Michael Hynes, with 24 Volunteers, took up a position adjacent to the barracks. With another 20 men I took up a position nearby. Seamus Finn of Athboy, with other Volunteers, stood by in a motor car to collect the arms of the garrison. We all waited for first Mass to start at the local church.

Some minutes before Mass started, several members of the garrison left the barracks, lined up outside and proceeded in a body to church, without arms. As they did so, a sentry, armed with a rifle, took up a position at the front door on the east side of the building. As the R.I.C. left, Michael Hynes and his men left their positions and, one

after another, climbed across a wicket gate set in a wall on the south side of the barracks. When all had silently crossed to the other side of the wall, they approached towards an open side door of the barracka. As they did so, a dog barked and gave the alarm. Most of the Volunteers, however, succeeded in getting through the door, where they were confronted by Head Constable White with revolver drawn. He was shot dead before he had time to use it. The rest of the R.I.C. surrendered immediately. All arms and ammunition were collected, placed in the motor car and driven away by Seamus Finn. In the meantime, I had rounded up the R.I.C. who were on their way back from Mass. When we assembled the lot of them outside the barracks, paraffin and petrol were sprinkled over the building, which was set alight and destroyed.

That Sunday evening, several lorry loads of military and Auxiliaries from Beggars Bush Barracks, Dublin, reached the town of Trim after cutting their way through the blocked roads. They immediately started a period of looting and destruction, accompanied by indiscriminate shooting. They burned down several premises and private houses, including O'Higgins's publichouse, J. & E. Smyth & Co.'s. grocery and provision shop, Allen Brothers' drapers shop, and Mooney's delph and hardware shop.

The destruction and looting were followed by widespread raids throughout the brigade area. In those raids, several Volunteers were arrested and subsequently interned. During the period; I received word from the Rev. Fr. Forde, P.P., Kilskeer, that the enemy were about to burn down my house as a reprisal for the burning of the barracks. Fr. Forde had previously been a C.C. in Dunboyne and he left the message for me at Sean Keogh's of Ballinlough. I sent him a message to the effect that as long as I could elude the enemy and preserve

a whole skin, I did not care if my house was burned. I asked him to have the R.I.C. and Black and Tans informed that if my house, or any other Volunteer's house in the brigade area, was burned down, I would have every British loyalist house in Co. Meath burned as a reprisal. The enemy apparently took heed of the warning and did not burn down my house.

In April 1920, word was conveyed to me that the Duc de Stacpoole's residence at Tubbertydnan, Bordsmill, Trim, had been looted during the previous night and that six shots were fired through the ceiling during the looting by the thieves. His housekeeper, who witnessed the looting, was so terrified that she became insane and had to be conveyed to Mullingar Mental Hospital. This was only one of many similar incidents which took place in the area. John Egan of Bordsmill Company had noticed two men - Michael Higgins and Hubert Quinn - in the locality in the early morning. It was 5 a.m. at the time. He became suspicious and sent a Volunteer to Higgins's house. When the Volunteers went to Higgins's house, he observed traces of black or green paint on Higgins's neck. The details were conveyed to me and I decided to arrest Higgins. In the meantime, I met the Duc de Stacpoole in Trim and spoke to him. I told him who I was, saying that I was the O/C. of Meath Brigade, I.R.A., and that I would have his property restored to him. He informed me that the R.I.C. were working on the case. I said: "They will do nothing; they are in collusion with the robbers". He said: "That could not be". I said: "I will prove it", which I did.

I got Joe Lawless's van and effected the arrest of Higgins and Quinn and two others named Malone and Fitzsimons (an ex-British army man). I interrogated the prisoners and, after a good deal of denials, they admitted their guilt. I released one - Malone - and had him kept under observation, and

subsequently re-arrested him. While he was free, we discovered the whereabouts of the missing property. After re-arrest, Malone implicated two others named Hussey and Quinn. This gang of six men had been terrorising the countryside for some time to the knowledge of the R.I.C., who took no action in the hope that the robberies would be blamed on the I.R.A. and thus bring discredit on the latter.

Malone, after telling me where the stolen property was, also told us that they had been advised by a Sergeant of the R.I.C. at Longwood how to dispose of it. Malone signed a statement to this effect. I sent one copy to the Director of Intelligence - Michael Collins - and one to the Duc de Stacpoole. When I handed the signed statement to the Duc, he was amazed.

I contacted William McLoughlin of Trim, who had a side-car, to collect the stolen property. I had to make numerous calls with the property, as I collected it, to the Duc's residence. It included bags of silver, bags of clothing, household utensils, as well as a gun which was hidden in a grove, the property of a Mr. Connolly, who was a member of the County Council. As I returned the stolen property, I always called to the back door. On one of those visits, the R.I.C., who always called to the front door, were in the hall while we were in the back. The Duc remarked: "Every time you call, you bring me some of my property. The R.I.C. have failed to discover any of it". I remarked: "They don't want to; they are in collusion with the robbers. They are more concerned with arresting us than restoring your property".

During the collection of the property, William McLoughlin became so exhausted that he could not continue driving us, so I asked the Duc for the loan of his side-car and driver.

He supplied both. Volunteer Patrick Mooney sat on one side and I sat on the other. As we proceeded to the home of a brother of one of the robbers - Hussey - we had to pass the R.I.C. Barracks in Longwood, where 12 R.I.C. men were engaged in erecting barbed wire defences around the building. When we got to Hussey's house, we took him out at the point of a gun and forced him to disclose the whereabouts of the Duc's clothing. He led us to the hiding place which was in view of the barracks. We collected the clothing and proceeded to a publichouse to inquire from the proprietor as to the amount of money changed there by the robbers. We were told that they had changed a £10 note.

In the meantime, word was conveyed to us that the R.I.C. in Longwood had sent a message to Trim military about our activities in the area. A lorry load of ten men, armed with rifles and fixed bayonets, was dispatched to Longwood. It so happened that we took a different road from Longwood and escaped arrest.

When I had returned all of the stolen property, with the exception of a silver horseshoe which we could not trace, the Duc offered me a £5 note which I refused, saying: "We are acting on behalf of the Irish Government and are Volunteers. You ought to join us". He said: "I would be with you only for your burning of the police barracks". I replied: "The British built blockhouses to beat the Boers. When we get them out of the small barracks into the big ones, we will get them out of the country altogether and then when you and I meet we will be through". I added: "You lost two brothers in the war; what benefit has it brought to Ireland?" He said: "My brothers fought for Ireland". I said: "They fought for England". He said: "I won't discuss it further with you".

When I refused his offer of £5, he wrote a letter of appreciation to the "Irish Times". I subsequently heard that the British Government reduced his pension over the publishing of the letter, but I cannot verify the truth of the story. When I subsequently met Mick Collins, he remarked that our action in the matter had done a lot to discredit all the false propaganda emanating from the British Government and had brought great credit to the I.R.A. in the eyes of the people of both this country and England.

When all was over, Higgins and Quinn, having admitted their guilt, were stripped and flogged, receiving two cuts of a horse whip each, and compelled to work on a farm for three weeks, after which they were allowed to return home.

In the month of May 1920, it was reported to me by the O/C. 5th Battalion - Seamus Cogan - that a man named Mark Clinton had been shot dead on the farm of his uncle - Phil Smith at Coole, Kilmainhamwood, by a man named Gordon, an ex-British soldier, and that the two horses with which he was ploughing had been shot dead by a man named McGovern, another ex-British soldier. Gordon received the sum of £2 for the shooting from a William Rogers, an ex-South African policeman, who had organised a band of terrorists to seize the land. The objective of the gang was to seize this land and divide it among their adherents.

I secured a lorry from Joseph Lawless and proceeded to Moynalty where, by appointment, I met several members of the I.R.A. in charge of Phil Tevlin, and proceeded to effect the arrest of all those involved. I arrested seven of them the first night and another six a few nights later. Included in the first batch was McGovern who had shot the horses. The prisoners were taken to Harry Dyas house at Bolttown, Kells,

which was unoccupied at the time, where an armed guard was placed on them. They were transferred by stages to Salestown, Dunboyne, where they were lodged in the basement of an old rectory. The basement had barred windows and made an excellent prison.

Prior to this, Gordon had been arrested by the British and brought to trial in Navan, where he was charged with the possession of arms and ammunition without a permit. He was released and told by the Resident Magistrate that the Volunteers had his comrades and that he would be better off in prison or out of the country. He was given an address in London to report to.

On the day of his trial, I happened to be in Navan on G.A.A. business, and was in the house of Sean Giles, who was then secretary of the G.A.A. While in Sean Giles's house word was conveyed to me that a man was being tried for the possession of arms. I sent a messenger to the Courthouse to find out if it was Gordon who was being tried. I received word back that it was not. I sent the messenger back again, with the same result. I was not satisfied, so I went to Loughran & Woods, Drapers, in Market St. Patrick Loughran, of Loughran & Woods, was then O/C. 6th Battalion. I inquired if he knew the man being tried for the possession of arms. In a moment or two Sean Hayes, who was then on the reporting staff of the "Meath Chronicle", came into Loughran & Woods and told me that Gordon had been tried and released.

I issued orders that all roads leading from the town were to be patrolled by Volunteers and that all pubs were to be searched and that, under no circumstances, was Gordon to be allowed to escape. In the meantime, I secured a motor car from Bernard O'Brien, Navan. Just then, I received word that Gordon had been located in the Flat House (a publichouse opposite the

convent on the approach to the railway station). I called for Volunteers to effect Gordon's arrest. Volunteers Boyle and Keating answered. I instructed them to go the pub where Gordon was located. I asked for arms and was handed an old .32 rusty revolver, the only gun available. I then proceeded alone in the car and got to the "Flat House" before Volunteers Boyle and Keating.

When I reached the pub, Gordon was standing close to the door beside Volunteer Kelly, who had found him. At the other end of the shop were two R.I.C. men - Sergeant Wynne from Nobber and another. I drew the gun and shouted: "Hands up, face the wall!" They obeyed. As they did so I said: "Anyone who leaves this house for an hour will be shot". At the other end of the street were five other R.I.C. on protective duty. I pinioned Gordon and tied his hands behind his back with a piece of thin rope. I then bundled him into the car, took in Boyle and Keating, and proceeded towards Kilmessan. A mile outside the town I dropped the two Volunteers and proceeded alone with the prisoner to Salestown, where the other prisoners had already been detained. I kept Gordon in a separate room.

Having left the prisoner under an armed guard, I proceeded via Leixlip to Bachelor's Walk, Dublin, where I met Tom Cullen, acting Q.M.G., to whom I reported the arrest. I asked him to inform Mick Collins, I.O., G.H.Q., and arranged an appointment for 35 Lr. Gardiner St. Dublin, that night. I called, as arranged, and asked to see Mick. We had a discussion on the matter and I asked him to appoint the members of the Court to try Gordon, as I wished to be impartial. Within a day the Court was appointed as follows:- Judges - Dr. Ted Kelly, John V. Joyce and Sean Dowling, all of whom were officers of the Dublin Brigade. Prosecution Counsel: Seamus O'Higgins, Captain

of Trim Company, Co. Meath. Defending Counsel, or prisoner's advocate, Seamus Cogan, O/C. 5th Battalion, Meath Brigade. Clerk of Court: Peadar O'Brien, Vice O/C. 4th Battalion, Dublin Brigade.

The Court assembled on a Sunday evening later. The members of the Dublin Brigade arrived by car owned by Dr. Russell. The prisoner was brought before the Judges and the trial, which lasted several hours, began. He confessed to the crime and admitted attempted murder in two other cases and the burning of two homes. He was found guilty and sentenced to death.

After the sitting, all the members of the Court left for their various destinations. I went to Dublin with the findings of the Court and presented it to G.H.Q. and the Dáil Cabinet, who ordered another trial.

A fortnight later, Gordon was re-tried. The Judges on the second occasion being Dr. Ted Kelly, John V. Joyce and Patrick Mooney (Captain, 4th Battalion, Dublin Brigade). Prosecution Counsel: Seamus O'Higgins. Defending Counsel: Sean Dowling. Clerk of Court: Peadar O'Brien.

The second trial, which lasted most of the night, resulted in a similar verdict which I again transmitted to G.H.Q. Dublin. G.H.Q., in a day or two, referred the matter back to me, saying I could release him or execute him as I pleased. I decided to execute him and informed G.H.Q. to that effect. When G.H.Q. heard of my decision, they communicated it to Austin Stack who was Minister for Home Affairs. Gordon, being a Presbyterian, Austin Stack contacted the Rev. Mr. Irwin from the North of Ireland to give him (Gordon) spiritual consolation. I met Mr. Irwin at the Russell Hotel, Stephen's Green, Dublin, and brought him to Baytown Park, Dunboyne, the residence of Mr. O'Connor, where Gordon was now detained. He had been moved from Salestown to other

localities to evade capture by the British.

Gordon, in the presence of Mr. O'Connor's maid, told Mr. Irwin that he was not sorry and that he would do it again. During his period of arrest he kept slips of paper with the names of those who had arrested him and kept him prisoner. Mr. Irwin subsequently spoke to me and suggested that if I would have him released he (Mr. Irwin) would have him sent by the Moore McCormack Line to the U.S.A., saying that it was a pity to see a young life going. I replied: "Yes, and let him come back by another line to hunt down everyone connected with his arrest and trial and have them arrested by the British". I parted with Mr. Irwin at Loughsallagh Bridge, Dunboyne.

Gordon was duly executed at Castlefarm, Dunboyne. I took charge. Before his execution he wept. I said: "We have given you more time than you gave your unfortunate victim. If you have not asked the Almighty God for forgiveness, I will give you time to do so." I gave him time to make his peace with God.

In the early morning of the second trial a lorry load of military accompanied by an armoured car pulled up at the gate of the house where the trial was being held, but they did not enter. They proceeded into the village of Dunboyne where they searched several homes, including Brady's publichouse and hotel, which we often used for meetings. The proprietor, by lowering himself out of a back window with the aid of sheets, escaped. The military had arrived that morning following the receipt of information supplied by an English nurse employed by Leonard Morrogh Ryan at Dunboyne Castle, to the effect that there was great I.R.A. activity in the area and that motor cars were coming and going.

During the military occupation of the village, Father O'Neill, C.C., approached the officer in charge and remonstrated

with him on the conduct of his men. As he was doing so, the members of the Court in Dr. Russell's car came into the village. When the officer saw the car approach, he gave the order to his men to open ranks. The car passed through. As it did so, Dr. Ted Kelly, who was, by the way, Commandant of the 4th Battalion, Dublin Brigade, bowed his thanks to the officer. The car proceeded to Mulhuddert, where it took a turn to the left by a graveyard, instead of proceeding direct by the main road to Dublin. They dumped their arms and papers and proceeded to Dublin via Drumcondra, Co. Meath. They were held up at Drumcondra and questioned by the military. They explained that they were going to a race meeting which had been fixed for that day at either Baldoyle or Leopardstown, and were allowed to proceed on their way. That morning, I followed from Salestown via Dunboyne. When I reached the outskirts of Dunboyne, I was informed that the military were in occupation. I waited until they had left and then proceeded to Dublin with the findings of the Court, and arrived safely.

Following the trial of Gordon on the second occasion, the other prisoners were dealt with the same night, or I should say, in the early morning of the next day. All of them were sentenced to from 3 to 15 years and ordered to be deported; their cases to be reviewed when the occupying forces had left the country. John Kelly, brigade police officer, with the help of other Volunteers, had them deported in batches of three and four from Dublin, Dundalk and Drogheda. In Dublin at the time the Great Northern Hotel, North Wall, was occupied by British military. The prisoners were taken to the South Wall and rowed across the river in time to place them on a boat for Liverpool.

In the month of July 1920, the battalion commandant of the 5th Battalion - Seamus Cogan - was shot dead by military

forces near Oldcastle. He, with other Volunteers, was conveying a prisoner in a motor car to an unoccupied house outside the town where the prisoner was to be held pending trial for robbery. Near the town, the driver was called on to halt by a party of military who had just dismounted from a lorry. Cogan ordered the driver to drive on. The military opened fire as he did so. Cogan drew a revolver and returned the fire. In the skirmish, Cogan was shot dead, and a couple of his companions were wounded. The car then mounted the grass margin on the roadside, crossed a fence and landed in a field. Cogan's body was taken to a nearby house. The rest of the Volunteers made good their escape.

Next day the military called, collected the body and took it to Kells, where an inquest was held. Following the inquest Cogan's body was handed over to his relatives, who took it to St. Columbcille's Church, Kells. The funeral took place on the following Sunday to the burial ground at Ballinlough where a new republican plot was acquired. I had ordered every available Volunteer to be mobilised for the funeral. It was the biggest funeral cortege ever seen in Co. Meath and was over four miles long. In order to render military honours to Commandant Cogan, I had all the roads leading to the graveyard effectively blocked by cars, so that the military who were in the vicinity should not approach the lorry. When three volleys had been fired over his grave, we dispersed. The military did not interfere.

Seamus Cogan was a great loss to the brigade. He was one of our best officers and I felt his loss keenly. Following his death, I appointed Sean Keogh, Battalion Vice O/C., as Commandant of the 5th Battalion. At the same time, I appointed Peter O'Higgins, brother of Brian O'Higgins, to be Battalion Adjutant, and Barney Harte to be Q.M.

In the month of October 1920, I presided at a joint meeting of the officers of the 4th and 5th Battalions which was held in the Carnaross Company area. The 5th Battalion officers present included Tom Manning, Commandant (I had appointed him O/C. in place of Sean Keogh, who had been arrested a couple of weeks earlier); Peter O'Higgins, Adjutant; Barney Harte, Q.M. The 4th Battalion Officers present were: Patrick Farrelly, Commandant; Thomas O'Reilly, Vice O/C.; M. Cahill, Adjutant; Michael Govern, Q.M. I had called this meeting for the special purpose of organising attacks on enemy outposts and patrols in each area simultaneously. After outlining the object of the meeting, the 4th Battalion men agreed to organise and carry out an attack in their area. The 5th Battalion officers bluntly refused, saying that their arms were insufficient for any such attack, pointing out the danger of reprisals. Their attitude came as a great shock to me, especially when I realised the effect it would have on the morale of the Volunteers of the area. I suspended each one of them on the spot and informed them that they would be court-martialled within the next seven days.

The courtmartial took place in the Stonefield Company area I presided and was assisted by Eamon Cullen and Seamus O'Higgins (Trim). Manning, Peter O'Higgins and Harte were found guilty of mutiny and sentenced to two lashes of a horse-whip each. The sentence was duly carried out.

After the meeting I proceeded to Ballyhist and stayed in the house of Charlie Conaty. I was very upset, as I felt that all my work of the past two years in the area had been wasted. I made up my mind to organise the area once again and, for this purpose, remained in the area for some weeks. I subsequently appointed David Smith Battalion Commandant, Peter Connell, Adjutant; Mick Tevlin, Engineer, and Patrick McDonnell, I.O.

During the period, I paid a couple of visits to G.H.Q. where I reported the position in the area. Eventually I was asked to arrange for a meeting of all officers in the brigade area, at which an officer from G.H.Q. would be present. The meeting was held in the old Workhouse at Delvin in the month of December 1920. Major General (Ginger) O'Connell, Assistant Chief of Staff, presided. The brigade officers present, apart from myself, were: Commandants Eamon Cullen, Seamus O'Higgins and Pat Clinton. The six battalions in the area were represented by the battalion staffs of each area. Seamus Finn area training officer, was also present.

Major General O'Connell, explaining the purpose of the meeting, stressed the necessity for the immediate consideration and preparation of plans for attacks on enemy patrols and barracks in the brigade area, so as to relieve pressure by enemy forces in Cork and elsewhere. He said that Commandant Cullen would visit each battalion area, where he would instruct the Volunteers in the manufacture and laying of home-made mines, and that Commandant O'Higgins would require a detailed list of all arms and ammunition in the brigade area.

Following the meeting, Commandant Cullen went to the 5th Battalion area, where he started a course of instruction in the making of cement mines. He subsequently visited the 4th Battalion area. In the meantime, I spent a lot of time in the 5th Battalion area. About a fortnight after the brigade meeting, I attended and presided at a Battalion Council meeting in McDonnell's of Stonefield, where we discussed plans for an attack on Oldcastle R.I.C. Barracks. A further meeting was held at Rahard about a week later, when details were completed, and the night of 8th January 1921,

fixed for the attack. By then, Eamon Cullen and his men would have a couple of mines ready for use.

At about 9 p.m. on 8th January, the attacking party, to the number of 50 men, met at Bollies near the town of Oldcastle. They were all armed with shotguns and buckshot cartridges. Two land mines had been taken there by horse and trap. Around 9.30 p.m. two priests from the town arrived on the scene and spoke to some of those present. The priests warned David Smuth that the R.I.C. were aware of the intention to attack the barracks and that they had been reinforced that evening by a party of military with an armoured car which had a machine-gun mounted. After a discussion with other officers present, Commandant Smith decided to withdraw. This was a great blow to the morale of the Volunteers when they realised that the enemy had such first-hand knowledge of their movements. It was thought then that the information was supplied by someone within the ranks of the I.R.A.

After a lot of preparation with the officers of the 6th (or Navan) Battalion, it was decided to attack an enemy patrol in the town of Navan on the same night as the proposed attack on Oldcastle R.I.C. barracks. Here again, due to the treachery of one of the battalion officers (Thomas Duffy, Battalion Adjutant) and the editor of the "Meath Chronicle" - a man named Quilty, the ambush did not take place. Some days before the date fixed, I gave Duffy 200 buckshot cartridges for use in the attack. I handed them over to him in Thomas Gibney's house in Bohermeen. The local company, with a few Volunteers from other companies who were to bring off the attack, never got the ammunition from Duffy. They were in positions for two nights in succession, armed with shotguns. As they were in their positions for the second night, Quilty sent a messenger from his home to the ambush party to say that I had called to

his (Quilty's) house and left word that the ambush was to be called off. I was never in Quilty's house in my life. It was Michael Hilliard, Adjutant of the Navan Company (now a member of Dáil Éireann) who conveyed the information to me about Quilty.

In the month of November 1921, I called a special meeting of the No. 2 Brigade staff to inquire into the failure of Thomas Duffy to supply the cartridges to the ambush party on the night of the proposed attack in Navan. He admitted the fact and signed a statement to that effect. Time and again I tried to persuade the officers of Navan (or 6th) Battalion to drop Duffy and have nothing to do with him, but they would not take my advice. His father, with whom he lived, was an ex-R.I.C. man, and I had a suspicion then that both Duffy and his father were in constant touch with the R.I.C. in Navan and elsewhere. Those suspicions were later proved correct by a letter which I received from an R.I.C. constable named McGarrity who was stationed in Navan for some years prior to the Truce. It shows, if true, that Duffy was being paid by the R.I.C. for information supplied during the pre-Truce period. The communication also refers to certain men in or around the town of Navan at the time who gave information to the R.I.C. during the period 1917-21. A copy of Constable McGarrity's letter is set out hereunder:-

"Thomas Eamonn Duffy.

The Deputy Inspector General - Typewritten small envelope about February 1921.

Some communications in regulation box the private property of Sergeant Neilan, and some in regulation box the property of Head-Constable Queenan.

Opened Sergeant Neilan's box on some Sunday about five months prior to the Truce and discovered a typewritten letter signed Thomas Eamonn Duffy, and initialled in manuscript 'T.D.'. Owing to the fact that Neilan might come in at any moment, I was too nervous to read the letter through, but I noticed it contained information about the shooting of policemen to take place at a future date.

"Head Constable Queenan's box contained a typewritten letter of the same nature, except that it was not signed; the initials 'T.D.' were at the end of the typewritten communication in manuscript.

In April 1920, the police were informed that an ambush was to take place on the Dublin Road, and twice previously or subsequently not certain.

I heard this information was secured by Constable Shea at the Navan County Infirmary from some nurse in that place - name unknown.

Neilon remarked that this Thomas Eamon Duffy was a harmless Sinn Féiner.

I clearly recollect Sergeant Neilon sending up a Constable to T.E. Duffy's father with money in Bank Notes for young Tom.

Sergeant Neilon said he had nine single notes for the C.P.S. He left the envelope on the mantelpiece in the guard room for a few minutes, and I noticed it was addressed in type to Thomas E. Duffy. I noticed this kind of an envelope going twice a week for about five months in 1920 and 1921.

About one month before the Truce he was not getting much money.

I saw an ex-Irish Guardsman (living in Barrack Lane, Navan) in the C.I.'s. office five or six times. Heard he was a good fellow and had some useful information.

12.30 to one.

J.A. Cornwall, Post Office Clerk, overheard by me giving information to the C.I. prior to the Truce.

Alban, Bank of Ireland, gave useful information.

Bell, Insurance Inspector (N.H.I.), another spy.

Mrs. Hunt, Brewer's Hill, not much money, information not much use.

Paddy Moran badly paid - just a few shillings.

Fullar of Millbrook, Oldcastle, fairly well paid.

Believe Walsh, Jeweller, a spy, but wouldn't swear it.

Captain Duffy told Neilon about Dunne. Can swear this.

Heard Jim Hilliard had an important rank during the trouble.

Canty's in Trim (supposed spies). Publichouse opposite barracks.

Samson's of Slane in the swim (not certain").

In the last week of January 1921, the 5th Battalion staff, after a couple of meetings near Virginia Road railway station, had made preparations to attack an R.I.C. and Tan patrol just outside the town of Oldcastle. The attack was to take place one night in February. Due to their failure to contact the local Volunteers in Oldcastle on the night arranged, the attack was postponed until the following night. It was lucky for them that it was postponed for, next day, they received the information from Patrick McDonnell, Battalion I.O., that the R.I.C. and Tans had actually taken up positions the night before, behind the walls from which the attack was to have been carried out. It was obvious that the enemy were well informed and that the information was supplied from within the I.R.A. organisation.

The residence of Mr. J.J. McCarthy of Courthill, Dunboyne, was often used by Mick Collins, Gearoid O'Sullivan, Austin Stack, Harry Boland and other G.H.Q. officers as a safe retreat from time to time. Mr. McCarthy, who was a native of Kerry, was a Justice of the Peace. He had often offered to resign, but was prevailed on by Michael Collins not to do so. Dunboyne Castle, the residence of Leonard Morrogh, overlooked McCarthy's house. Leonard Morrogh had an English nurse employed. Her name was Lang. From her window she could observe the comings and goings of strangers to McCarthy's. It was thought she reported all this to the R.I.C. for, one day, McCarthy received information from a friend of his in the R.I.C. that his house was to be raided by the R.I.C. His friend was Head Constable Bonham, who was an R.I.C. instructor at Dollymount, Dublin. It appears that Bonham threatened to resign if McCarthy's was raided.

As soon as the information was conveyed to me that McCarthy's was to be raided, I placed an ambush party in the old cemetery nearby to await the raiding party. During an inspection by an I.R.A. officer of an outpost occupied by a section of the I.R.A.,

a young Volunteer named Bernard Reilly was called on to halt. It appears that he (the Volunteer) replied in an English accent (his mother was English). He was shot dead in error. It was on the night of 9th December 1920. When I heard he had been shot, I sent Volunteer Joseph Lawlor of Trim, who happened to be in the area at the time, to Fr. Kelly, C.C., to tell him what had happened and to ask him to render spiritual aid to Bernard Reilly. I had realised at once that an inquest would be held and that Fr. Kelly, who did not know Volunteer Joseph Lawlor, could truthfully say he had never met the man before. At the inquiry in Dublin Castle, Father Kelly was threatened with detention if he did not disclose the name of the man who called on him, but he was able to convince them, however, that he did not know the man. After the inquest, the body was handed over to his parents and was later buried in Dunshaughlin. The death of Volunteer Bernard Reilly occurred on 9th December 1920, and the expected raid on McCarthy's never took place. Whether this was due to the threatened resignation of Head Constable Bonham, we do not know. I do know, however, that Nurse Lang sent a letter to the military officer in charge of the area informing him that I had called to McCarthy's on a subsequent occasion with a number of tools to demolish bridges in the area. The officer sent this letter to Leonard Morrogh for verification, after which she was dismissed.

In the spring of 1921, I received a message from G.H.Q. to the effect that the Auxiliaries were about to occupy Summerhill Castle, the property of Lord Langford, a Unionist M.P. and absentee landlord. It appears that the information was received by the Director of Intelligence, Mick Collins, from one of his men in Dublin Castle who had seen a decoded message to that effect. I called on Battalion Adjutant

Bernard Dunne and instructed him to have Summerhill Castle burned down immediately. He conveyed the message to Michael Graham, Captain of Summerhill, who, with the help of Summerhill Company, carried out the order within 24 hours. It appears to have taken some time to set it alight, as they had to use 56 gallons of paraffin oil before it went up in flames. Summerhill Castle was situated at a very strategic point on high ground which commanded one of the routes to the west. The Auxiliaries with field glasses could have swept the country. Following the burning of Trim R.I.C. barracks, the Auxiliaries had established a strong post in Trim and the intention was to establish another at Summerhill.

When Graham and his Volunteers raided the Castle, the kitchen staff were preparing a reception luncheon for Colonel Rowley, the representative of Lord Langford, who was to hand over the building to the Auxiliaries. He had arrived that evening in Trim, where he was met by the Auxiliaries. They proceeded to Summerhill and were in time to see the Castle go up in flames. Graham told me that chicken was on the menu that night and that 36 chickens were ready for roasting.

On 28th March 1921, I received a dispatch from G.H.Q. to report to Barry's hotel, Dublin. There I met Mick Collins, Gearóid O'Sullivan, Dick Mulcahy and the Director of Organisation, Diarmuid O'Hegarty. O'Hegarty handed me a map of Ireland marked in divisions and told me that all brigades in the country were being formed into divisions and that I had been appointed O/C. of the 1st Eastern Division, which comprised the Co. Meath, Co. Kildare, North Offaly, South Louth, East Cavan and part of Westmeath.

I set to work at once and reorganised the divisional area into nine brigades. No. 1 Brigade took in all of the

1st Battalion, old Meath Brigade, and part of North Kildare with H.Q. at Dunboyne. David Hall was appointed Brigadier. No. 2 Brigade comprised most of the old 2nd Battalion and all of the old 6th Battalion former Meath Brigade. Its H.Q. was at Navan. Paddy Kelly was appointed Brigade O/C. No. 3 Brigade took in all of the old 4th and 5th Battalions of Meath Brigade with the addition of three battalions in East Cavan extending to Kilbride East. Its H.Q. was Kells and Patrick Farrelly, the Brigade O/C. No. 4 Brigade included the old 3rd Battalion Meath Brigade and a adjoining area in Westmeath. The H.Q. of this brigade was at Delvin and Michael Hiney was appointed Brigade O/C. The 5th Brigade was composed of a number of battalions in Westmeath with H.Q. at Mullingar. Seamus Maguire was the Brigade O/C. The 6th Brigade took in all of North Offaly, with H.Q. at Edenderry. Sean Powell, the Brigade O/C. No. 7 Brigade included all of South Kildare with H.Q. at Naas. Tom Lawlor was appointed O/C. No. 8 Brigade included North Co. Dublin and was known as the Fingal Brigade. Michael Lynch was the Brigade O/C. No. 9 Brigade included South Louth with H.Q. at Drogheda. Eugene Kavanagh appointed Brigadier.

After the death of Brigadier Dick McKee, the Fingal Brigade had become disorganised, but with the help of Michael Lynch I got it into a very well organised brigade. It was subsequently transferred to the 2nd Eastern Division.

Following consultations with the various brigade officers whom I had appointed, the brigade staffs were appointed as follows:

No. 1 Brigade.

O/C.	David Hall
Vice O/C.	Mick McCormack
Adjutant	Bernard Dunne
Q.M.	James Maguire
I.O.	John P. Costigan
Engineer	William O'Neill

No. 2 Brigade.

O/C.	Patrick Kelly
Vice O/C.	William Booth
Adjutant	Thomas Coyle
Q.M.	Michael Hynes
I.O.	Michael Hilliard
Engineers	Joseph Hughes

No. 3 Brigade

O/C.	Patrick Farrelly
Vice O/C.	Sean Farrelly
Adjutant	T.P. McKenna
Q.M.	David Smith
I.O.	Ralph McKenna
Engineers	Dick McKenna

No. 4 Brigade

O/C.	Michael Hiney
Vice O/C.	Patrick Corrigan
Adjutant	Joe Monaghan
Q.M.	John Tyrrell
I.O.	Edward Thornton
Engineers	Joseph Martin

Other than the brigade officers appointed for the other five brigades, I cannot with accuracy recall the names of the men appointed to the brigade staffs, except that of Tommy Lennon who was appointed Adjutant of No. 5 Brigade. The officers appointed on the Divisional staff were: Seamus O'Higgins as Q.M., Eamon Cullen, deputy O/C. and Engineer, Patrick Clinton, Adjutant and I.O., and Seamus Finn, Director of training.

After the reorganisation, I met Mick Collins by appointment at 6 Harcourt St. Dublin; I was accompanied by Michael Lynch. Mick asked me to make arrangements for the landing and distribution of a cargo of Thompson machine-guns from the U.S.A. due to arrive off the east coast in the vicinity of Loughshinny in the month of May. At this period there were a number of coastguard stations along the coast between Dublin and Drogheda. We three discussed the possibility of landing the guns under the eyes of the guards. I eventually said "we will have to burn the lot" and decided that they would

have to be burned down simultaneously. Michael Lynch and I discussed details with a number of newly-appointed staff officers. To the best of my knowledge the meeting took place at Rowlestown. The job was going to be a difficult one and great care had to be taken to avoid enemy outposts and barracks, not only in the immediate vicinity of the coastguard stations themselves, but also further inland, and I warned our men of the necessity to keep under cover and not to be seen in large groups moving towards their objective with petrol and paraffin for the job. After some further meetings all details were completed and the men appointed for the different tasks, including those who were to do guard duty at the different stations while the job was being carried out. The operation was a complete success. At least ten stations went up in flames that night and every one of our men got back to his own area without interference by enemy forces. Unfortunately, the American Government stepped in and did not let the ship leave dock. The cargo of Thompson guns was seized and taken ashore in America.

In my many informal meetings with Mick Collins we often discussed the situation in the country. On one occasion he said to me: "For what period will we be justified in carrying on the guerilla warfare. What will be the effect on the children unborn. There is a danger of going too far and giving the British an opportunity of committing her entire army to wholesale war on our people". Macready, the G.O.C. British forces in Ireland, at the time wanted a free hand to crush our forces. Following the Local Government elections in June 1920, Mick said to me: "It is more important to get our people to refuse to recognise British Local Government than to attack their armed forces".

In June 1921, I was ordered to report at Barry's Hotel,

Dublin, When I got there I met Mick Collins, Gearóid O'Sullivan, Dick Mulcahy and, I think, Eamon Price. A few days earlier, two troop trains had been sent from the Curragh to Belfast for the opening of the Northern Ireland Parliament by the King of England. One of those trains carried 700 men and the other 250. G.H.Q. had decided that those trains be ambushed on the return journey. Mick Collins produced a map and, pointing to a spot thereon, suggested that one of the trains be attacked at this point. The name of the place was Stackumney. The times of the trains' departures from Belfast were known to G.H.Q. and the one selected for attack was the one carrying the 700 troops. Mick asked me to make preparations at once and advised me not to take part.

I called a meeting of the Divisional Staff to discuss plans. Those present included Eamon Cullen, Pat Clinton, Seamus Finn, Seamus O'Higgins, Tom Lawlor, O/C. No. 7 Brigade (Kildare); Paddy Mooney, O/C. Fingal Flying Column; William Booth, Vice O/C. No. 2 Brigade (Navan), and Barney Dunne, Adjutant, No. 1 (or Dunboyne) Brigade.

The major part of the preparation and planning was carried out in the Dunboyne Brigade area. When everything was ready, members of the Fingal and Navan brigades were mobilised with the members of the Dunboyne Brigade in Dunboyne. They numbered 100 men and were all armed with rifles and a couple of Thompson machine-guns, as well as a quantity of explosives including gelignite and tonite. The mobilisation took place on the night of 1st July 1921, after which they proceeded across country to Stackumney. On arrival, all of the party, except the engineers, occupied two houses near the selected spot. The engineers, in charge of Divisional Engineer Eamon Cullen, and Brigade Engineer William O'Neill, proceeded to lay the explosives on the railway in the early morning.

The details in regard to the laying of the explosives may be obtained from William O'Neill. The railway ran through a cutting at the point selected for the attack. The attacking party were to take up positions behind the embankment of the cutting.

By 6 a.m. the explosives had been successfully laid for a distance of 110 yards and connected up to the batteries. The ambush party then got into positions. The troop train was due at midday and, in the meantime, several trains passed up and down. Near midday a military aircraft reconnoitring the railway line in front of the troop train spotted our men in position and apparently conveyed the information to the ~~Commander~~ ^{Baldonnell} garrison, for, a short time later, several lorry loads of military arrived on the scene and opened fire on our men. A short fight ensued, but our men extricated themselves without suffering any casualties.

The Dunboyne men were in charge of Bernard Dunne; the Fingal men were in charge of Paddy Mooney and the Navan men in charge of William Booth.

Signed: Sean Boylan

Date: 16th December 1957

Witness: John J. Kelly

