

# ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21  
BURO STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21  
No. W.S. 411

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

## STATEMENT BY WITNESS

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 411.....

### Witness

Colonel Eamon Moran,  
"Strathmore", Willbrook Road,  
Rathfarnham, Dublin.

### Identity

Member of 'A' Company 1st Battalion Dublin Brigade  
1913-1916;

O/C. Birr Battalion 1917;

Vice O/C. West Waterford Brigade 1919.

### Subject

- (a) Father Matthew Hall and Four Courts area  
1916;
- (b) Events of national importance,  
Birr and Co. Waterford 1917-1921.

Conditions, if any, stipulated by Witness

Nil

File No. S.1307.....

Form B.S.M. 2.

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Statement of Colonel Eamon Morkan,

'Strathmore', Willbrook Road, Rathfarnham,

DUBLIN.

I was in my 25th year when I attended the inaugural meeting of the Irish Volunteers held at the Rotunda Rink on the 25th November 1913. My recollection is that I joined the Irish Volunteers immediately following that meeting but was not appointed to any unit forthwith. However, in April 1914 Robert Monteith called on me (I at that time lived at 43, Arran Quay) and assigned me to "A" Company, 1st Battalion Dublin Brigade. The company had its headquarters in Colmcille Hall, Blackhall Street. What prompted me to associate myself with the Irish Volunteers in the first place was that I had been reared in a household with strong national leanings and had from childhood heard Home Rule discussed. Under such influence I became an enthusiastic Home Ruler and was dissatisfied with the progress being made by the Irish Parliamentary Party. In common with other young men, I felt that a more active policy would be needed if anything was to be achieved in the line of independence for the country. The declared policy of the Volunteer organisation appealed to me, that is, to secure and maintain the rights and liberties common to the people of Ireland.

From April 1914 I attended all parades and meetings of the Company. The meetings were held in the Colmcille Hall, Blackhall Street. I took part in all the Brigade exercises during the years 1914 and 1915. I was unable to

parade for the Howth Gun-running owing to my having to relieve one of my shop assistants on that day. Following the Redmondite split in the Volunteer organisation I continued as a member of the Irish Volunteers, which body became increasingly active and organised in the District. We had platoon and company exercises and on a number of occasions our Battalion took part in Brigade exercises which were held outside the city.

At Easter, 1915, there was a forced march by selected members of the Dublin Brigade under the command of Seán Heuston and Liam Clarke. I was one of those selected to take part in the march, which I remember coincided with the convention and big parade of the Redmondite Volunteers in Dublin. At five o'clock on the Saturday evening, we started on our forced march to Rathdrum via Glencree, Lough Bray and Roundwood. We marched through the night and, in the early hours of Sunday morning, we rested in the open at a place in the vicinity of Roundwood. After a few hours rest and breakfast, we continued our march and arrived at Rathdrum where we heard Mass. Later on that day - Sunday - we started our return march to Dublin, resting that night in the open in the vicinity of Newcastle. On Monday we resumed our march and reached Dublin by the Bray-Donnybrook road. We halted to rest at a bend of the road, in such a position that we could not see the trams, the idea being that if we saw the trams it might be difficult for our commanding officer to get us to finish the march on foot. It was calculated that, by this time, we had marched almost eighty miles in less than forty-eight hours. We continued on foot to the Parnell Monument where we were dismissed.

At Whitsuntide, 1915, "A" Company of the 1st Battalion to which I was still attached organised an excursion to Limerick. This venture which received the approval of Headquarters fulfilled two objects, one to add to the funds of the company by the profit we expected to make - (we actually showed a profit of over £70) and the other to give a fillip to recruiting by our parade of the Brigade armed with rifles and carrying ammunition, reinforced by local units, through the streets of Limerick. The excursion as can be guessed from the profit was very well supported, but the parade in Limerick had results we had not foreseen and we were received with derision in the Irishtown district. A violent crowd followed us to the station, where it needed the effort of two local priests standing at the pillars of the railway entrance to the station and from that position dominating the crowd to prevent actual physical manhandling of our men. With arms and ammunition being carried such an occasion could easily have ended in a very serious result. However, the discipline of the Volunteers was sufficiently strong, and we left Limerick without anything worse happening than our disappointment at the misunderstanding which had got us into bad odour. Later it transpired that it was represented that we were pro-Germans and that the people who demonstrated had relatives in the Munster Fusiliers - who had suffered very severe losses in France about that time.

I took part in the Wolfe Tone pilgrimage to Bodinstown in June 1915. I was a member of the Guard-of-honour at the funeral of O'Donovan Rossa in August 1915; the Guard-of-honour in that case was also the firing party.

About November or December 1915 I was appointed 2nd Lieutenant, Quartermaster, to the Battalion. The Battalion Staff at that time consisted of Ned Daly as Commanding Officer, James O'Sullivan as Adjutant, Edmond Duggan as Assistant Adjutant, Gerald Griffin as Quartermaster and myself as Assistant Quartermaster. Pierce Beasley was second-in-command. At that stage, I had gone out of the Company. The paper published by McNeill - "Nationality" - gave our appointments that time, in Irish.

To the best of my recollection, I became a member of the I.R.B. in December, 1915, or January, 1916. I think it was Dinny O'Callaghan swore me in. I cannot recall the name of the Centre or the Circle. We met in Gardiner St. I think Jack Shouldice and Seán Lester were in it. I believe it was probably the Teeling Circle.

I took part in the St. Patrick's Day parade in 1916. The Dublin Brigade paraded in College Green and was reviewed by Eoin McNeill. I paraded with the 1st Battalion. I remember I paraded outside the National Bank where I worked as a Clerk at that time. The men on parade proved to be very efficient and well drilled, and a round of applause from the onlookers spontaneously broke out when on the words of command being given, the Brigade as a whole fixed bayonets and gave the general salute.

I did not know that a Rising was to take place at Easter 1916, but we had a feeling that some definite action would have to be taken by the Volunteers, and in the then state of temper I was willing as I had sworn to follow in whatever progressive path our leaders showed us. At this time the Battalion was reasonably well equipped - having regard to the conditions and sources of supply. Each man had a rifle and fifty rounds of ammunition. Each officer had small

arms - revolver - which he had procured by his own initiative and from his own financial resources as was also the case with the rank and file who obtained and paid for his own rifle.

As far as I was concerned, nothing of importance happened until about the Wednesday of Holy Week when I was instructed by Michael Staines of Headquarter's Staff to lay in a store of foodstuffs. On Holy Thursday I procured a supply of tinned milk - I think it was "Horlicks" - a couple of sides of bacon, cheese and butter. They were stored in Cole's Place in Little Green Street. Ammunition was also stored in this place, I believe; I left an order with William Nolan & Son of Cope Street for these foodstuffs. All these supplies were got in connection with the proposed exercises which were to take place on Easter Sunday and were delivered to Coles from which they were distributed later. Actually I have no recollection of seeing this Horlick's Malted Milk being used during the week of fighting and wonder if that supply fell into hands for which it was not intended.

I had instructions to parade at Blackhall Place on Easter Sunday at 4 p.m. to take part in the Easter manoeuvres. It was intimated to me that the manoeuvres for Easter Sunday were to be considered very important and that we were to be prepared for a strenuous time.

On Saturday night I attended an informal conference at Headquarters in the Keating Branch of the Gaelic League in North Frederick Street, after which I returned to my home at Arran Quay.

On Saturday night, Ned Daly, Jim Sullivan (now living in Limerick), Owen Duggan and Michael Staines were at my place when the news came in of the drowning of Con Keating and two other Volunteers at Ballykissane Pier. This news cast a gloom over us.

In view of the cancellation by Eoin MacNeill announced in the Sunday paper, the parade arranged for four o'clock did not take place. However, considerable activity resulted amongst the Battalion staff.

On Sunday Daly, Sullivan and Duggan lunched with me at my home. I seem to recall that following lunch we watched a parade of Citizen Army men led by James Connolly passing St. Paul's Church, Arran Quay.

On Sunday evening I was again present in the Keating Branch of the Gaelic League when I received instructions to parade at, I think, 10.30 a.m. on Easter Monday, 24th April.

On Easter Monday morning Ned Daly, whose uniform had been left in my place for donning on Sunday afternoon, and Edmond Duggan set out for the parade at Colmcille Hall, Blackhall Street. When we arrived at the Hall there was but a small muster, which later increased to about 80, I think. We were given instructions in connection with the proposed manoeuvres and were told the positions which we were to occupy. At this stage one officer declined to take any further part in the parade and returned home.

The parade moved off at about 11.45 a.m., each Company to take up the position assigned to it. The Battalion Staff established headquarters in St. John's Convent, North Brunswick Street.

A barricade was erected at the Eastern end of Brunswick Street where it reached Upper Church Street. This barricade consisted, amongst other things, of a cab which served as a control point for exit and entrance to Brunswick Street and Church Street. It was so placed that to get into Brunswick Street one had to pass right through the cab.

Further barricades were thrown up at the following points; across Brunswick Street, North of Red Cow Lane; the West side of the junction of North King Street and Church Street; in Church Street at the meeting of May Lane and Mary's Lane on the North side, and finally at the junction of the Quays and Church Street. The lower barricade was manned by, amongst others, Peadar Clancy who was subsequently murdered with Dick McKee.

We manned a house, Clarke's, at the junction of Church Street and New Lisburn Street, which controlled the approach from the Broadstone railway terminus, whence an attack could reasonably be anticipated.

There was a substantial barricade at the junction of Greek Street and Mary's Lane, facing East.

As far as I was concerned, one of my first responsibilities was to secure food supplies in addition to those mentioned earlier as having been got in Holy Thursday. With this object in view, we commandeered supplies from a butcher in North King Street. These supplies were brought to the Father Mathew Hall, where a kitchen had been set up under the direction of the Cumann na mBan.

Other than the manning of the barricades and taking up positions allotted, very little military activity occurred on the Monday beyond consolidating and improving the defence of the posts occupied.

At one stage while we were in the Father Mathew Hall feelings were getting rather tense. It was alleged by somebody that some members of the unit were not taking their fair share of the risks at the barricades, that they preferred to remain with the Cumann na mBan in the kitchen rather than

go out and risk their necks. A young Volunteer by the name of Howard left the Hall to take up a position at one of the barricades. A short time later he was killed there.

There was a much bigger crowd in the Four Courts and they were being looked after by Barney Mellows, brother of Liam Mellows - then a Fianna boy, a Quartermaster Sergeant.

When the Four Courts was seized and the area manned generally, we found we had a number of D.M.P. men who had been on duty there or in the Bridewell in Chancery Street. These men were not kept under arrest but were marched through the North Dublin Union premises and released in the grounds of the Richmond Asylum. Looking back in retrospect, this seems a very ingenuous reaction to the possibility that these men would have secured information as regards our positions and the individuals taking part in the action. To the best of my recollection, these D.M.P. men were released on the instructions of the Battalion O/C. I might add that it is my opinion that none of these policemen made use of the information that they may have acquired while in our hands.

Another incident that occurred on Monday, shortly after we had taken up position in Brunswick Street, was where a young boy of about 16 years of age was followed by his mother, who endeavoured to have him return home, but he insisted on remaining with his comrades.

On Tuesday morning the Battalion O/C, the Adjutant and myself visited the various posts and found the officers and men alert and in good spirits. Their day was quiet and as our positions had not been seriously attacked the day passed in continued reorganisation and strengthening

of our posts and in making our rationing and feeding arrangements more effective.

Two lads, Allen and Walsh were killed. Allen was killed in the Four Courts, and Walsh was killed at the junction of North King Street and Brunswick Street.

On Tuesday we moved Headquarters from the Convent to the Father Mathew Hall. We only stayed one night in the Convent. We had no difficulty in maintaining supplies with our posts.

My wife, who had paraded with the Cumann na mBan at the Black Church in Mountjoy Street, reported on Tuesday to the Cumann na mBan in Father Mathew Hall, and brought with her 50 rounds of revolver ammunition which had been left behind in our place in Arran Quay. She remained on Tuesday and Wednesday, and on Thursday morning went back home in order to get some supplies of brandy which the medical authorities felt it was desirable to have in the hospital. Unfortunately she was unable to fulfil this mission as she found the house in possession of the British military, and once having got outside the cordon which had been drawn around our positions was unable to fall back again through it.

On Wednesday night we moved our headquarters from the Father Mathew Hall to a house just south of the passage-way at the Church from Church Street to Bowe Street.

On Tuesday or Wednesday an attempt was made to destroy the footbridge in Bowe Street leading from the administrative part of the building to the distillery proper. Home-made

canister type bombs were used in this attempt but they had very little effect on the structure, and no harm was done to it. The reason for the attempted destruction of this footbridge was to destroy a possible way of ingress to our positions from Smithfield, which at this time was outside the area manned by the Battalion.

On Friday I changed my own headquarters to the Four Courts, where I slept that night. On Saturday we received an intimation that the Commandant General had instructed us to surrender. This intimation was received with grave disappointment, as the great body of the Volunteers had made up their minds to fight to a finish. Speaking for myself I realise now that I was most unreasonable, and at first refused to hand up arms and ammunition. I think this feeling can be explained by, as already mentioned, the belief that we must not under any circumstances surrender the arms and equipment for which we had made so much effort to obtain.

We were instructed to fall-in in the courtyard and there surrender our arms. Before we fell in a number of Volunteers, including myself, instead of formally surrendering our arms, dumped them on the grass plots surrounding the Four Courts. A party of British military were there to take over the arms.

The Four Courts garrison formed up in column of route and marched out of the Four Courts led by Comdt. Daly, Vice-Comdt. Beaslaoi, Frank Fahy, Edmond Duggan and myself. We marched across Winetavern Street bridge, proceeded down the south side of the Quays, crossed Capel Street bridge and proceeded to O'Connell Street via Capel Street and Great Britain Street, as it was then.

In spite of the seriousness of the situation the Volunteers generally were in very good spirits and insisted on singing and uttering cries like "We'll rise again".

On reaching O'Connell Street we were halted on the west side facing what is now Cathal Brugha Street, where a search for any arms or ammunition not already surrendered was carried out. This was about 7 p.m., I think.

After some time I was ordered to follow the main body and to take a position on the plot, five or more paces in front of the main body. I was on the right-hand side facing Upper Parnell Street. On my left, about five paces away, was Piaras Beaslaoi, and again at an interval further to his left was Ned Daly. Subsequently Tom Clarke and Edmond Duggan were taken from the main body and placed in isolated positions similar to that occupied by myself. We remained there all through Saturday night.

During the early hours of Sunday morning I took out my watch, a silver lever, from my pocket to wind it and was immediately pounced upon by the officer in charge, who snatched the watch from me and asked me what I intended to do with it. I explained that I was setting it. He asked me for my address and when I gave it to him he called for the sergeant of "D" Division and asked him, "Do you know this man?" The sergeant did not know me personally, but was aware of the address which I had given, and the name was familiar to him. After a number of objectionable remarks by the officer, he roughly gave me back the watch and ordered me to put it away and have no more fiddling with it. Later he turned his attention to Tom Clarke and Ned Daly. The latter had been searched

earlier in the morning and papers and other personal belongings which had been taken from him were thrown on the ground. An N.C.O. passing by was requested by Daly to allow him to pick up the papers. The N.C.O. handed the items back and when the officer in charge later found that the ground had been cleared he shouted loudly for the N.C.O. responsible, soundly rated him and asked him was he "a bloody servant to the rebels".

Pierce Beaslaoi and Tom Clarke were also the object of this officer's insulting behaviour.

As a matter of historic interest it might be mentioned that this officer was later identified as Captain Lea Wilson who was shot in Gorey, County Wexford, in May 1920.

The week had been an exhausting one, and the Volunteers and Cumann na mBan were in a state almost of exhaustion when they had to spend the night in the open, with no facilities or ordinary amenities available to them. No food had been distributed from the time of the surrender until late on Sunday.

Between ten and eleven o'clock on Sunday morning we were formed up and marched via O'Connell Street, Westmoreland Street and Dame Street to what was then Richmond Barracks.

On arriving at the barracks we were put into a large unfurnished barrack room, where members of "G" Division inspected us for identification. A number of officers and men were then taken away. At this time we all had the feeling that we were going to pay the extreme penalty. Later those of us remaining in the barrack room were

ordered out to the square, and at this stage I felt that instead of being executed we were going to be returned ignominiously to our homes. However, such was not the case, and after sufficient numbers had been gathered we were marched off under escort along the route we had taken that morning. Eventually we found ourselves on the Quays, where we embarked on board ship en route for an unknown destination. We arrived at Holyhead, which I recognised from previous visits, and eventually reached Knutsford jail in Cheshire.

Knutsford Jail was a detention barracks for military prisoners, who, apparently, had been cleared out in order to accommodate us.

I was placed in a cell, No. 29, on the third gallery of B block, and immediately the cell door was locked after me I lay down on the mattress which was there. I did not seem to be very long resting, when a peremptory knock came on the door and I was ordered to get up immediately. The mattress was shortly afterwards taken out of the cell, together with the pillow-case, and all that was left then was the plank bed with two army blankets, which was the amount of bed furnishing that I had for the next four weeks.

In the beginning we were not allowed to converse with each other, and when on exercise had to maintain an interval of three paces. The food was very spare, and, as a consequence, I, and I presume all my companions, felt the cold of the early May mornings very much. The absence of a mattress and pillow made sleep

very difficult for me. However, on 28th May the mattress and pillow were restored, but very little improvement took place in the rations issued to us.

During these weeks we had no knowledge as to what had happened to the leaders or to our companions, other than those whom we saw in the exercise ground in Knutsford.

Amongst those who were in Knutsford in the early days were Harry Nicholls, an engineer in the Dublin Corporation and a member of the 4th Battalion, Diarmuid O'Hegarty, Dick Mulcahy and Jimmy Mulkerns. There were no prisoner leaders in Knutsford. A man named Captain Gilson was Commandant of the detention barracks.

On the 1st June - by then we had been allowed to mix and speak to each other - I received a visit from my wife, from whom I was very surprised to hear that instead of our being in very bad odour amongst our people at home, we had gone to the other extreme and were looked upon as heroes. From my wife I also learned of the executions that had taken place following the Rising, of which, up to that date, we were only dimly aware of the executions of the signatories of the Proclamation. I heard with deep regret of the execution of my intimate friend, Edmond Daly, and of my almost equally close friends Con Colbert and Seán Heuston.

Mrs. Morkan stayed in Manchester until 7th June and visited me each day. While in Manchester she became acquainted with Father O'Hanrahan, who had been responsible for organising a prisoners' aid section amongst the Irish in Manchester. These people were, indeed, very kind to us, and, even after such a long interval as from that to the present day, I recollect with sincere thanks the great solace they were to us in our exile.

While in Knutsford we had a visit from Alfie Byrne, who was then an M.P. for the Harbour Division. He brought a number of messages from friends of the prisoners from Dublin, and was most anxious to help, in any way he could, any of the prisoners who approached him.

On June 24th we were ordered to get ready for transfer from Knutsford, and eventually found ourselves in Frengoch Camp, North Wales, where we from Knutsford were located in the North, or Upper, Camp. This camp, as distinct from the Lower Camp which was a disused distillery, consisted of a number of huts sufficient to accommodate about 800 to 1,000.

We were amongst the earlier arrivals at the camp, and immediately set up a Camp Council. A Camp Leader was duly elected. The Leader was M. W. O'Reilly. I myself was a Hut Leader, a similar position being held by Michael Collins.

The camp, although situated in an isolated portion of Wales, was very pleasant after the confinement of the detention barracks in Cheshire, and we quickly settled down to run the camp as a military organisation, thus giving ourselves experience, which later, I feel, proved very valuable to many of those who took part in it.

The ordinary camp duties, such as pioneer work, cooking cleaning, etc., were, of course, carried out by ourselves completely.

A Chaplain was appointed to the camp, and it would appear that the British authorities were anxious to make a gesture, as they appointed Father Larry Stafford who had been with an Irish Division in the Dardanelles. Unfortunately Father Stafford did not appeal to the prisoners of Easter

Week as much as he did to the British authorities, and I do not think his ministrations were favourable received, although I must say that I have no recollection of his having done anything contrary to the correct behaviour of his position.

An Advisory Committee had been set up by the British Government to investigate the cases of people who had been interned and who claimed that such internment was not justifiable. Comparatively few made applications for an interview with the Committee and as a consequence the Home Office decided to interview all the prisoners in the Camp. The court sat in London and consisted of Sir Maurice Sankey and two or three others. The prisoners in Fromgoch were brought in batches to London for appearance before the tribunal. They were accommodated either in Wormwood Scrubs or in Pentonville for the couple of days necessary to deal with their cases. In the case of those Volunteers who had been actually engaged, it was decided that no information would be given to the Tribunal, no favours asked, and no representations made. As a result of the Enquiry a number of releases were made and the population of the two camps was reduced to somewhere about 600, which number was only barely sufficient to fill the distillery or South Camp. For the time of my interview by the Tribunal I was lodged in Wormwood Scrubbs Prison.

I should have mentioned that some time earlier M. W. O'Reilly had been transferred, with a number of other prisoners, to Reading Jail, which apparently was considered a more favourable place to exercise supervision over certain prisoners whom the authorities felt should be supervised. On O'Reilly's transfer I became Camp Commandant of the North Camp.

The North Camp was gradually closed down, and we were transferred to the other camp, where a further election of the Camp Council resulted in Michael Staines being elected as Camp O/C, with myself as Camp Adjutant. Richard Mulcahy was a Room Leader and also, of course, a member of the Council.

The South Camp ran fairly smoothly for some time until it was felt that the cleaning of ash-pits for others than themselves; eg. guards, was not<sup>a</sup> job which should be the responsibility of the prisoners, and it was decided to protest against this duty being placed on them. However, the protest was unheeded, and, as a consequence, there was what became known as an "ash-pit strike". Each fatigue that had been detailed for this duty refused to carry it out, and as a punishment were re-transferred back to the North Camp, with the result that after a while, with the comparatively small crowd still left, of which about half were in the South Camp and half were in the North Camp, a considerable amount of trouble was caused to the authorities in the administration of the camp. However, after a fairly protracted strike, the matter was satisfactorily settled, and the task was no longer made the responsibility of the prisoners.

In October, 1916, my wife gave birth to a son, Edward Daly, named after my friend-the Commanding Officer of the 1st Battalion.

Following the birth both my wife and the baby were in very poor health, and, as a consequence, I was allowed parole through whose good offices I am still unaware. The parole was of a week's duration, and at its conclusion I returned to the Camp in Frongoch on 30th October. On 3rd November

I was removed together with Seán Neela, B. J. O'Driscoll and four others to Reading Jail on the instructions of the Home Office. On arrival at Reading Jail, where there were a number of men whose names are now very familiar to the Irish people, I found that conditions while slightly similar to those in Knutsford were actually much more comfortable.

Amongst the prisoners in Reading were Messrs. Seán T. O'Kelly, Tomás MacCurtain, Terry MacSwiney, Arthur Griffith, Cathal O'Shannon, W. L. Cole, Dinny McCullough, Darrell Figgis, Michael Brennan, later Chief of Staff, Ginger O'Connell, P. T. Daly and many others almost equally well known.

The routine in Reading Jail was different from that of the Camp, as there were not so many administrative duties, such as cooking, etc., to be carried out. Our free time was passed in group discussions and reading, and at exercise by the playing of an anaemic game of hand-ball.

The general body of the internees, i.e., those in Frongoch, were released coming up to Christmas of 1916, but there seemed to be some delay by the British Government in reaching a decision as to what should be done with the prisoners in Reading Jail - there were only 35 prisoners there - and, as a consequence, it was not until Christmas Eve that the order to release us reached the Governor, Major Morgan.

It might be mentioned at this stage that the prison Governor was very courteous to us and seemed anxious to make our detention as little irksome as possible. Arrangements had been made to allow foodstuffs, etc., in to the jail in order that a suitable Christmas atmosphere would

be created. It need hardly be said that, even at that stage, the provision of facilities for the creation of a Christmas atmosphere was not allowed to delay, for even a moment, our preparations to leave for home, and we were ready within the space of an hour or less.

I arrived home on Christmas morning and found both my wife and son in very good form. My wife was particularly glad to see me so unexpectedly. However, one of her first requirements was the removal of the moustache, which most of the prisoners had begun to affect.

Early in January, 1917, there was a meeting of the surviving officers of the 1st Battalion, at which it was decided to re-organise the Battalion at its old headquarters in Blackhall Street. I was tentatively appointed Battalion O/C, but the appointment did not become effective, owing to the fact that some time in February or March, 1917, I was reinstated by my employers, the National Bank, and appointed to their branch in Birr, Offaly.

In April or May of that year my family joined me in Birr and we set up our home there.

In mid-summer 1917 the general body of sentenced prisoners were released, and this gave an impetus to the re-organisation of the Volunteer movement.

In September or October of the same year, after getting in touch with Michael Collins and others in Dublin, it was decided to organise a unit of Volunteers in the Birr area. For this purpose I availed of the services of my old friends, Edmond Duggan and James O'Sullivan both of whom had been sentenced to penal servitude, to convene a meeting of those interested in the area. As a result, the Birr Company was formed, and I was elected Captain.

We started to recruit suitable members, and later had weekly meetings at which lectures and drill instructions were given. At the same time Mrs. Morkan started a branch of the Cumann na mBan.

When the Birr Company had been safely launched, we proceeded to organise Companies in the surrounding districts. Companies were formed at Banagher, Coolderry, Lorrha, Killyon, Kinnitty, Drumcullen and Eglish, Rathcabin, and Ferbane. These Companies later constituted the Birr Battalion, which was part of the South Offaly Brigade. Felix Cronin, later Q.M.G. of the Defence Forces was O/C of Lorrha Company, Seán Mahon was O/C of Banagher, Mick Cordial was O/C of Kinnitty and Jimmy Riordan was O/C of Coolderry.

I became O/C of the Birr Battalion, with Eamon Bulfin as second in command, and functioned until my arrest in July, 1918, in connection with the "German Plot".

In May, 1918, when the British Government were contemplating putting the Conscription Act into operation, we took the opportunity to hold a recruiting meeting in the town of Birr, at which Madame Markievicz and Joe McDonagh spoke. The meeting was a great success as far as numbers were concerned; over 1,200 men paraded in military formation, and a number of these later became members of the Volunteer organisation.

At that time we had a number of copies of the words of "The Soldiers Song", and it might be interesting to recount that that was the first occasion on which the song was generally heard in this area. Copies of the song were widely distributed, which helped to familiarise the people with what is now our National Anthem.

The parade took place on a Sunday, and on the following Monday morning orders were received from the head office of the National Bank in London suspending me from duty until an explanation had been received from me justifying my taking public part in such an activity, which participation the Bank felt was prohibited by their rules for the discipline of the staff.

The suspension lasted for a week, after which I was allowed to return to duty. This suspension, however, did not interfere with the continued organisation of the Volunteers and parades were still being held in Birr and in the outlying Company areas. In spite of the arrests in connection with the German Plot in mid-May of this year, the Birr Battalion continued to function.

Some time in mid-July my house in John's Mall, Birr, was raided in the early hours of the morning, and I was arrested and lodged in the local police barracks, later in the evening being removed to the military barracks at Crinkle, Birr, accompanied by Messrs. Frank and Eamon Bulfin who had been arrested on the same morning. Within a few days the three of us were transferred to Maryborough Prison, where we were detained until September.

A Court of Inquiry into the circumstances of our arrest was held some weeks after our arrival in Maryborough, but a subsequent Courtmartial did not take effect and we were transferred in September to Durham Jail, where we found ourselves with a number of those who had been arrested in May in connection with the German Plot.

Amongst those in Durham Jail at that time were An Seabhaic, Darrell Figgis, Art O'Connor, later Judge O'Connor, now deceased, Dan McCarthy, one-time political organiser for Sinn Féin, and Frank McGrath from Nenagh.

Conditions in Durham were similar to those we had experienced in Reading Jail in 1916, the main difference being that we were smaller in number and had not as great an area of accommodation as we had in Reading. While Reading was a detention prison, Durham was a prison in which were housed actual delinquents. One of the interesting recollections I have of our stay there was a lesson in pocket-picking by one of the inmates, of which information we did not later make any use.

During our stay in Durham, the 'flu epidemic, which resulted in so many deaths, raged, but luckily no casualties occurred amongst our number although some of us got slight attacks.

The 1914-18 war came to an end during our detention, and on the morning of 11th November, 1918, the Governor of the jail, very excited, came in to announce the news that an armistice had been signed. I think he was quite surprised to find that this news did not appear to be so important to us as it was to him, and he expressed disappointment at our detachment. At first we thought that an early release - possibly before Christmas - would take place, but our detention continued into the early months of 1919, which included the period of the 'flu epidemic earlier mentioned. Contrary to the practice followed in the releases in 1916, we were on this occasion released in batches of twos and threes. I do not think Eamon Bulfin was released with me, I believe he was held for some time after my departure from the prison and was later deported to the Argentine.

I was released in March, 1919, and on my journey from Durham to Birr I was met at Westland Row station by Michael Collins, who welcomed the prisoners home. At Birr station I was received by the usual band, tar-barrels and general illuminations.

My employers, the National Bank, after due consideration reinstated me in their service, and in May, 1919, I was transferred to their branch in Lismore, Co. Waterford. Before my transfer became effective I got in touch with the headquarters of the Volunteers in Dublin and was advised by Michael Collins to establish contact with Liam Lynch, who at that time was employed in Fermoy, 14 miles from Lismore. Accordingly, on the train journey from Birr I took advantage of a long stop at Fermoy to contact Liam Lynch. Later that evening I proceeded to take up my appointment in Lismore.

During the early weeks of my stay in Lismore, I attended Brigade Council meetings, having been appointed second in charge of the West Waterford Brigade, the O/C of which was Pax Whelan of Dungarvan. The Adjutant was Georgie Lennon.

During the year 1919, as far as the West Waterford Brigade was concerned, there was little aggressive military activity and our energies were centred in recruiting, drilling and general organisation and building of local Units.

In April 1920, at Easter, instructions were received for the destruction of Income Tax offices and court premises, and arrangements were made to carry out these instructions. The operation was successful and the

courthouse in Lismore was totally destroyed. As a consequence of this activity a garrison of British soldiers was established in Lismore, and one of the houses commandeered for the purpose was that of Seán Goulding, now Senator Goulding, Leas-Cathaoirleach of the Senate.

About this time, April 1920, I had been written to by Mr. Blythe, who was then Minister for Trade and was recruiting staff for the National Land Bank, which had been set up by the First Dáil for the purpose of dealing with land tenure, etc.

Some time in July, 1920, General Lucas was kidnapped while fishing on the Blackwater between Fermoy and Lismore, and taken away to an unknown destination. Intense military activity took place in the surrounding areas, in an endeavour to locate his whereabouts. In this connection, the local garrison, the establishment of which is mentioned in a preceding paragraph, were directed by a member of the local R.I.C. to my house, as a possible likely place where the General might be hidden. The house was surrounded. A peremptory knocking resulted in the door being opened in a rush by troops who went all over the house and proceeded to break every window, back and front. Shots were fired over my head and I was asked to produce the missing officer. As a matter of fact I was not aware that he had been captured. The house, as a result of the damage done by the soldiers, was uninhabitable, and I had to move into a local hotel for upwards of a fortnight before the damage was repaired. Two other houses were attacked on the same night. As a matter of interest I may mention that one of these houses was owned by a Protestant lady, a tenant of the Duke of

the Duke of Devonshire, and great damage was done. It transpired afterwards that this house had been raided in error, owing to the directions of the local R.I.C. man being misunderstood, the house to which they should have been directed being occupied by Mr. Golding. The third house was occupied by, I think, a bootmaker named Duggan, who received very rough treatment from them.

As a result of the activities of that night, I decided that my wife and myself would go to Cork city for a quiet week-end. When we went to Cork we stayed in what was then Turner's Hotel in which is now Oliver Plunkett Street. Curfew then was at ten o'clock, and a visitor whom we had in left about that time. My wife and I retired to our bedroom. An hour or so later a considerable amount of shooting broke out, and in the quiet of the curfew I heard the tramp of military coming towards the hotel. Looking out through the window I noticed the troops were proceeding in single file on both sides of the road. For the moment I thought that a raid was about to take place on the hotel, and, not too comfortably, I awaited the outcome. Suddenly there was a violent knocking on the bedroom door and a voice said, "Don't worry. They've shot out' Smith over at the County Club" - this was County Inspector Smith, who, earlier in the month, had made a very provocative speech to men of the R.I.C. in Listowel in Kerry. Needless to say, this atmosphere did not conduce to a quiet week-end, and we both got back to Lismore at the earliest possible moment.

In June I tendered my resignation to the National Bank, and on 20th July took up duty with the Land Bank, which had its headquarters at that time in 68, Lower Leeson Street.

The Directors were Messrs. Blythe, Sir Henry Grattan Bellew, Erskine Childers, James MacNeill, R.C. Barton, and Henry Dixon. Mr. Smith Gordon was Secretary and Manager and Mr. T. Caffrey was Asst. Secty. and Manager of the Bank. In addition to myself there was also at that time Mr. Michael Cowley, whose services with the bank, under its new name of the National City Bank, continued up to very recently. The female staff consisted of Miss O'Brien.

Another very important member of the staff, although in a subordinate capacity, was John or Jim McCloskey who held the post of porter and general messenger. He is still employed in the National City Bank in College Green.

My principal function during the early days of my service with the Land Bank was the securing of suitable, experienced staff presently serving in other banking organisations. Recruitment of staff was necessary in order to open Branches throughout the country. I was fortunate in obtaining the services of quite a number of men who later proved their ability by being appointed to agencies in the Bank of Ireland, when that organisation absorbed the National Land Bank about 1925 or 1926. Branches were opened in Cork, Limerick, Waterford, Tralee, Enniscorthy and Macroom.

Later the head office of the bank transferred from Leeson Street to No. 10 College Green, now the premises of the National City Bank.

The capital of the bank amounted to £406,000 odd, of which £203,000 was supplied from the funds of the Dáil, and on this capital advances were made to Co-operative Fishing Societies to enable them to obtain equipment and develop the fishing industry. The bank advanced money to the West Carbery Co-operative Fishing Society, the Gorumna Fishing Society in the West, and five or six others. As well as to the Fishing Societies, moneys were advanced to Co-operative Creameries and Co-operative Farming Societies .

In addition to these special activities the bank engaged in general banking practice, and, in spite of a certain amount of prejudice and doubt as to the bank's capabilities of holding its own, its resources grew and it was successfully managed throughout the pre-Truce period and the Civil War period until its absorption by the Bank of Ireland as already mentioned.

The National Land Bank was set up to give effect to the development of the Dáil programme in regard to the utilisation to the utmost of the natural resources of the country, particularly land, agriculture and fishery.

It was felt that the ordinary joint stock banks were too tied up with the existing administration to have any freedom in regard to undertaking the developments that the Land Bank had visualised. Any steps taken by one of the existing banks to implement the rather shadowy and possibly idealistic programme set out by the First Dáil might conceivably have brought unwelcome attention to them from the British Government. I think it may be said, however, that, apart from the open association of the joint stock banks with the developments already mentioned, there was an

underlying desire to help the new bank as far as was reasonably possible. In this association I think that the Munster and Leinster Bank proved to be exceptionally helpful. The foregoing statement should not be taken as implying that any of the banks were actively or intentionally hostile.

During my period with the bank in Leeson Street and prior to 11th July, 1921, a number of raids were carried out on the bank, mainly by members of the Auxiliary force, who were trying to trace what they described as illegal funds. On one occasion they insisted on being paid over a large sum of money, somewhere in the neighbourhood of £20,000, which they had traced to the possession of Michael Collins, who at that time was Minister for Finance. A receipt, of course, was given for the money. After the Truce this money, with interest, was returned.

Amongst the means by which the true identity of the holder of the balances in some of the current accounts was cloaked was the description of prominent and likely to be unsuspected parties. I recollect one account which was operated by Michael Collins in the name of the then Cardinal, Michael Logue. I am not quite sure whether it was from this account that the large sum mentioned in the preceding paragraph was seized. However, I would like to make it quite clear that this practice of using disguised names in the accounts happened in isolated cases only.

In regard to the seizure of the £20,000, Michael Collins, who was at the time Minister for Finance, was very upset, and refused to accept the explanation tendered by the senior officers, Messrs. Smith-Gordon and Caffrey, as being satisfactory in the circumstances. Personally, I

felt that the staff had done very well in the matter, and had possibly avoided having a much larger sum taken. However, in view of the conditions at the time, the loss of such a large amount, which, of course, we could not foresee would be later returned under more favourable circumstances, was a blow not lightly to be borne, and certainly not lightly to be borne by Collins, who by his nature was intolerant of any slips-up in such matters.

As already mentioned, I took up duty with the Land Bank in July, 1920, and my most intimate association with the Bank was from that date until 11th July, 1921, when the Truce became effective and I was instructed to take over the duties of Liaison Officer for the Kerry Brigade British organisation area. This area comprised North-West Cork and Kerry. I reported to the military headquarters at Buttevant on the date mentioned. I was away from the Bank until November, 1921, when I returned to the Leeson Street branch, the headquarters at College Green having then been opened. As a consequence of this break, and a final break in July, 1922, my knowledge of the activities of the Bank is not as clear as it was in the early days of 1920.

Signed; Eamon Moran  
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Date;

19 July 1950

Witness;

W. Dmy Bondi

