



BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 470.....

Witness

Denis Lordan,
13 St. Christopher's Walk,
Cork.

Identity

Captain Kilbrittain (Co. Cork) Company
Irish Volunteers 1915-16;
Vice-Comd't. Bandon Battalion 1918;
Q.M. Column, 3rd West Cork Brigade 1919-1921.

Subject

- (a) Organisation of Irish Volunteers and I.R.B.
West Cork 1916-1919;
- (b) Important engagements of the Flying Column
3rd West Cork Brigade 1919-1921.

Conditions, if any, stipulated by Witness

Nil

File No. S. 287.....

ORIGINAL

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STATEMENT

OF

CAPTAIN DENIS LORDAN.

13, ST. CHRISTOPHER'S WALK, MONTENOTTE PARK, CORK.

On Sunday, 16th April, 1916, all men were notified to parade on the following Sunday, 23rd April, at a pre-arranged rendezvous in full service kit and fully prepared for active service. Only a few of the men knew that it was intended to take the field against England. Most of them thought it was only a test mobilisation with, perhaps, two days marching for training purposes.

On Sunday, 23rd April, practically every member of the Ballinadee Company was on parade at the appointed rendezvous. They marched through Bandon where they were joined by members of the Bandon Company and proceeded to Gurteen Cross Roads, where they met Clogagh and Kilpatrick Companies. They then moved on via Beal na Blath to Kilmurray. Shortly after reaching Kilmurray the aforementioned Companies were joined by Cork City Volunteers. During the halt at Kilmurray and after the arrival of the Cork City Volunteers there were rumours amongst the men regarding the capture of Roger Casement near Tralee, and shortly after the arrival of the Cork City Volunteers a motor car arrived in which were Tomás MacCurtain and Terence McSweeney. They conveyed to Thomas Hales (Captain of Ballinadee Company) the information that Owen MacNeill had ordered off the intended operations and after a short discussion the whole force, assembled at Kilmurray, marched off to Macroom from where the Cork contingent entrained for return journey to Cork City, and Ballinadee, Bandon, Kilpatrick and Clogagh Companies entrained for Crookstown from where they were to march back to their respective areas.

On Tuesday night, 25th April, all men of the Ballinadee Company were again mobilised and kept "standing to" until the following Sunday, when a report arrived of the surrender in Dublin.

The Ballinadee Company held their usual Sunday evening parade on the 30th and whilst the parade was in progress a member of the Company reported having seen the local R.I.C. Sergeant receiving what appeared to be a dispatch from one of two motor cyclists who had passed. Shortly after this report being made the R.I.C. Sergeant approached the Parade Ground and two Volunteers were detailed to search him. No documents were found on him but he was deprived of his baton, belt and handcuffs. This was the first open hostile act towards the R.I.C. in the district by the Volunteers.

During the following eight months this R.I.C. Sergeant used every effort to harass the men of the Ballinadee Company whom he recognised on the parade, and their families.

On Tuesday, 2nd May, Seán Hales, brother of Tom Hales, went to Bandon town on business and an attempt was made by a party of R.I.C. to arrest him. He succeeded in evading the R.I.C. and got safely out of the town. On Wednesday morning his home was surrounded by military and R.I.C., Seán was not at home but his brothers - William and Robert -

were. There were also in the house Terence McSweeney of Cork; Patrick and Michael Hyde of Ballinhassig. These had arrived at a late hour the night before, Terence McSweeney having come to Ballinadee to personally confirm the report of the surrender in Dublin and to ensure no isolated action would be taken by the Ballinadee and other local Companies on their own initiative. When the occupants of the house became aware that it was surrounded a short council of war was held. William Hales strongly urged that they should defend their liberties with their arms. The majority decided, however, to surrender to the military, and the whole party mentioned above, together with two other men named Roche and Richard Twomey, were taken under heavy escort to Bandon Military Barracks, and their captured arms. While this raid was in progress another party of military and police surrounded the house of a family named Collins, where they hoped to effect the arrest of the three brothers Collins. Only one of those boys was at home and he made a successful dash for liberty under heavy fire from both military and police. The same party of military and police proceeded to the house of a family of O'Donoghues of Rathrout, Ballinadee. All the men of this family got safely away before military arrived due to the action of Miss Hales who, as soon as the military had left her own house, ran across country about two miles evading the military and succeeding in giving word to O'Donoghues. On the same morning military and police surrounded the house of my Uncle - John O'Neill, Ardacrow, Kilbrittain, with whom I lived. I was absent. The military burst in the door, having shot the lock off, and searched the house and premises, and informed my Uncle that they were looking for me to place me under arrest.

From this date until after the Amnesty, which was, I think, around Christmas, 1916, I was "on the run".

From May, 1916, to December, 1916, a number of men of the Ballinadee Company were "on the run". Most of them worked at home on their farms during the day, while either their parents or their sisters kept a "lock-out" for the approach of military or R.I.C. At night they met in small groups and often travelled six or seven miles from their own homes to sleep in barns and cow sheds on other farms, and often slept in the open. The farmyards selected to spend the night in were generally owned by people of pro British sympathies as such were less likely to be raided by night. Precautions had also to be taken by these men to avoid being seen, or their movements noted by people of pro British sympathies.

When the military and R.I.C. made the first series of raids in the Ballinadee Area a number of men left the area altogether for some weeks because of doubt of what action the British intended taking with prominent members of the Volunteer Force whom they could capture. The history of the aftermath of previous rebellions in Ireland pointed to executions and transportations and news had already come to hand of a number of executions in Dublin.

Amongst those who left the district at the time was

Captain Thomas Hales who, previous to his departure, left instructions that all men remaining were to hide their arms and ammunition and not surrender them to the British Forces. A rumour was put in circulation by the local R.I.C. Sergeant that a number of men had agreed to surrender their arms so as to avoid arrest and in order to comply with a proclamation which had been issued by the British C.I.C., As a result of this rumour and because of the appeal of their parents there were some men who surrendered their arms and equipment at the local R.I.C. Barracks.

On the 29th June, a well organised raid by armed R.I.C., was carried out in the Rathrout district, particular attention being paid to the house of the O'Donoghue family. There were four boys of the O'Donoghues and Patrick McCarthy and myself present in the farmyard when we became aware of the R.I.C. surrounding the place. Two of the O'Donoghues, McCarthy and myself made a dash for liberty and succeeded in getting through the inner cordon. Having got about a field away from the farmyard we were fired on by R.I.C. at about 80 yards' range, but by taking cover of the fences we succeeded in making our escape.

With the exception of frequent raiding the remaining months of 1916 were uneventful.

During the Christmas of 1916 a general amnesty was granted to all those who had been interned, with the exception of notable leaders. At this time it was learned through unofficial sources that men "on the run" would not be arrested. Consequently, all Volunteers in West Cork who had been "on the run" returned to their homes in the New Year.

When our comrades returned home from Frongoch and other English Prisons they were filled with the idea of immediate re-organisation and, in fact, those in authority who had evaded arrest had already taken steps towards this end. Around this period, also, the I.R.B. extended its organisation in the West Cork Area. Thus, in the early months of 1917, men in every district were reorganising the old Companies and forming new Companies in districts where none existed before.

After the release from Frongoch the Committee of the Prisoners' Dependents' Fund and other organisations were engaged in finding suitable employment for men who had no work to return to on being released. Amongst these were many Irishmen who had been employed in England prior to 1916 and had come home to take part in the Rising. One man of the latter category who came to the Bandon area and who, with myself, was employed by Mr. W.K. McDonald of Castlelack, was Hugh Thornton. Both Hugh Thornton and myself gave practically whole time to reorganising Volunteers in the Bandon and surrounding areas. The organising and training had to be carried on more or less secretly to avoid interference by the British Authorities. The R.I.C. were very zealous at this period in preventing display of the Tricolour and every opportunity was availed of to give them plenty of work to do in that direction. A common sight was

to see three or four R.I.C. men endeavouring to get a Tricolour Flag from off the top of a telegraph pole or from the top of a high tree near a Police Barrack - the lower branches of the tree having been sawn off after the flag being securely fixed on top.

At this period, also, the Sinn Féin organisation was becoming active throughout every district and Sinn Féin Cumann were formed in conjunction with Volunteer Companies. In fact in most districts every Volunteer was a member of the Sinn Féin Cumann and every member of the Sinn Féin Cumann was a Volunteer.

Up to this time (July, 1917) although Military training and carrying of arms had been declared illegal by the British Government no proclamation had been issued forbidding marching in military formation or the wearing of Irish Volunteer Uniforms or belts. Every opportunity was, therefore, availed of to hold large public parades of Volunteers. On Sundays several Companies would march to some pre-arranged point and carry on training and on the anniversary of the death of any local Fenian, Companies of local Volunteers marched to a locality associated with his name. Public meetings were generally held on the occasion of such anniversaries and were addressed by some prominent local men. These parades and route marches and public meetings were the means of attracting a good number of recruits to the ranks of the Volunteers and a goodly number of older people to membership of the Sinn Féin Organisation.

In the early period of 1917 Sinn Féin Organisations in West Cork gained considerable influence and in furtherance of its aims regarding the Irish Language Movement many Gaelic Classes were started, and Feiseanna and Aeriodheachta were held throughout the area. At these gatherings support was solicited for the cause of the Volunteer Movement and Sinn Féin, as well as for the Language Movement. In one such Aeriodheacht at Clonakilty a huge gathering of people attended to hear Countess Markievicz address them on the policy of the move for Independence and explain to them the necessity for supporting the Irish Volunteer Movement and Sinn Féin policy. Such means were generally availed of by Company Captains to hold Battalion Council Meetings and to arrange - among other matters - some venue for the following Sunday's parade or route march. Practically every Company of Volunteers had a Hurling or Football Team and Inter-Company Matches were played, the proceeds of which were devoted to the Prisoners' Dependents' Fund and the Arms Fund. In arranging and carrying on the social attractions referred to, that is, Feiseanna, Hurling and Football Matches and Dances, there was perfect co-operation between all the organisations - Volunteers, Sinn Féin, Gaelic League and G.A.A. The Ard Dheis of Sinn Féin was arranged to be held in Dublin on the 25th October, 1917, and a Convention of the Irish Volunteers was arranged for the following Saturday in Dublin also.

In 1917, I was elected as Captain of the Kilpatrick Company; I had previously reorganised the Company and formed

a Sinn Fein Club in the area, and also in the Tinkers' Cross Area. I was appointed delegate to the Sinn Fein Ard Pheis and the Volunteer Convention, which I attended.

While in Dublin I met for the first time Michael Collins, De Valera and Cathal Brugha. After the Ard Dheis and Convention, reorganising and training made further progress among the Companies in the Bandon area and the procuring of arms was intensified, and, wherever possible, men were receiving musketry training.

A number of men who were prominently identified with the Volunteer Movement in and around Bandon district since 1915 took up an attitude at this period (late 1917) which went very near undoing all the work of organisation in the district. The causes of the misunderstanding numbered three: First, after the release of the prisoners from Frongoch and English Prisons a certain amount of ill-feeling existed between men who had been responsible for or had surrendered their arms and those who had not. Secondly, as a result of the actions of certain Company Officers during Easter, 1916, they were considered locally as unfit to act as military officers in an organisation such as the Volunteers. The trouble in such cases was that no suitable tribunal existed competent to adjudicate the correctness or otherwise of the conduct of these officers and it was only the local knowledge of circumstances which existed around the period of Easter, 1916, that made their suitability, or otherwise, evident. The third reason was that after 1916 the I.R.B. became a numerically strong force in the area. Many men who were approached to become members of the I.R.B. refused through religious or other conscientious motives and thereafter were somewhat suspicious of the activities of known members of the I.R.B. The result of these misunderstandings was that, at the election of Officers for the various Companies in the Bandon Battalion area and the elections of the Battalion Staff which were ordered to take place by General Headquarters at the end of 1917, canvassing was carried on by individuals and the differences already existing were further attenuated. Finally, the result was that early in 1918 a petition was signed by the majority of the Company Lieutenants in the Battalion asking Brigade Headquarters to annul the election as no Lieutenant was present or voted at it. Luckily for the organisation at the time that this new election was ordered the conscription menace was at its height and any differences which had existed were put aside by individuals for furtherance of the welfare of the organisation.

In 1918 I was elected Vice Commandant of the Bandon Battalion, of which Tom Hales was O.C.

From this period until the end of 1919 I devoted all my time to the duties devolving on me in the Movement. During the General Election of 1918 there was no contest in the South East Cork Constituency of which area Bandon Battalion formed part: Diarmuid Lynch was returned unopposed.

Acting on orders from Brigade Headquarters I took a body of about 40 men from Bandon Battalion to Waterford City to assist at the General Election there in December, 1918. When returning from Waterford after the Election I was informed by Tomas MacCurtain and Terence McSweeney that Cork County was to be divided into three Brigade areas, the 3rd Brigade Area to consist of Bandon, Clonakilty, Dunmanway, Skibbereen, Bantry and Castletownbere Battalions, and a meeting of these Battalion Staffs was arranged for the purpose of electing a Brigade Staff. The following are the names of the Staff elected for the 3rd Cork Brigade:-

Tom Hales - - Brigade Commandant.
Hugh Thornton - Brigade Vice O.C.
Michael McCarthy - Brigade Adjutant.
Patrick Harte - Brigade Quartermaster.

At this stage the history of the Volunteer Movement in West Cork begins as the history of the 3rd Cork Brigade.

In March, 1918, when the conscription menace was at its height I received orders from the Battalion O.C. to devote my whole time to the training and organising of the Companies of the Battalion. Hugh Thornton, who was then Battalion Adjutant and was "on the run", having been served with an order by the British Authorities to leave the area, was also giving his whole time to training and organisation in the Battalion Area. We agreed on a plan that he would be responsible for the Companies south of the Bandon River and I would be responsible for those on the north. As the training of the Companies could only be carried on in the late evenings or at night I occupied myself during the daytime in making buckshot and loading shot-gun cartridges with it. We had to utilise old expended shot-gun cartridges; it was necessary to recharge the caps with powdered fulminate of mercury as at this period it was practically impossible to procure replacements of caps. This, and the reconditioning of any weapons, such as, old pattern rifles or shot-guns which had come into the possession of the Volunteers, kept my days pretty full. Whenever possible, and when .22 ammunition was available, Sunday evenings were devoted in one Company or other in range practices. In order to add to the utility of our shot-guns we invented a type of home-made bayonet and these were turned out in fairly large numbers by Con Lehane who had a blacksmith's workshop in Timoleague and who had to go "on the run" in 1918. A portable forge was procured for him and this was shifted from one Company area to another so as to enable him to work and at the same time avoid arrest. The steel for the bayonet was principally procured from pins of hay rakes.

About May, 1918, wholesale arrests of leaders of the Volunteers, Sinn Fein and other National Movements were attempted by the British Government. This action was preceded by the discovery of the famous "German Plot" "made in Downing Street". Amongst local leaders who evaded arrest was Sean Hales, Captain of the Ballinadee Company.

About 4 a.m. on a morning of May, 1918, a party of R.I.C. under the charge of R.I.C. Sergeant Brennan surrounded the Hales's household at Knocknacurra, near Bandon. The Sergeant was admitted and accompanied by four other Constables went upstairs where he had been informed on inquiry that Sean Hales was sleeping. A party of approximately six other R.I.C. men remained outside the dwelling house which they surrounded in case any attempt would be made by Sean to escape. All the police and the Sergeant were armed with carbines. On reaching Sean's bedroom Sergeant Brennan informed him that he had come to arrest him and Sean replied that he would resist arrest. The constables were then ordered to handcuff him but Sean by holding on to the edges of the bed successfully resisted their attempt to get his wrists together. While this struggle was going on a young lady (a cousin of Sean Hales) who was staying at the house dispatched her brother to a neighbour's house where Tom and William Hales were staying to inform them of what was occurring. (The name of the young lady referred to is Miss Hannah Fitzgerald of Clashreagh, Kilbrittain, at present residing at Old Youghal Road, Cork City). The young lad conveyed the information and Tom Hales instructed him to return to Hales's house and have him draw the attention of the police to the movements of men which Tom intended putting into operation. When the lad returned to Hales's he delivered Tom's message, but in the meantime Sergt. Brennan had dispatched one of his men for military reinforcements to Bandon. When the police outside the house saw the movements of some men on the hillside opposite and heard orders being shouted to them they came to the conclusion that the local Volunteers were surrounding the house to rescue Sean Hales. The ruse had the desired effect of making the R.I.C. rather nervous and two actually laid down their arms and refused to take any further part in the attempted arrest and resigned from the R.I.C. When Sean Hales's sister and Miss Fitzgerald saw that the police outside the house were becoming excited as a result of the movements of the men on the hillside they politely requested the two R.I.C. men, who had been left in Sean's room to guard him, to withdraw for sufficient time to allow them to tidy up the room which had become disordered during the struggle. This request the two policemen acceded to and the girls offered them two chairs in another room which they accepted. As soon as the police were seated in another room, the girls closed the door of that room and shouted at Sean to dash for liberty. He immediately dashed down stairs in his night attire. He was met in the kitchen by Sergt. Brennan who attempted to stop him. A short struggle ensued during which Sean succeeded in knocking Brennan on the floor and then he attempted to disarm him. Sean's father, fearing that Sergt. Brennan's carbine, for which they were struggling, would explode and shoot some member of the household appealed to Sean to make good his escape and leave the carbine with Brennan. Sean made a dash through the back of the dwelling house and he was well across the field before the R.I.C. men at the back of the building realised he had made his escape. One of the police attempted to fire on Sean and was prevented from taking accurate aim by being pushed by one of his comrades. When

the military reinforcements arrived from Bandon they found that Sean had made his escape. For several months after Sean Hales's escape police and military frequently raided his home. During the course of one of those raids in the month of July the military were under orders to "fire to kill" on any person attempting to escape from Hales's house or farm. Previous to the approach of the military on this particular raid, Tom Hales, his brother William and myself, were engaged in hiding some material which was intended for use in the making of shot-gun bayonets. We had just placed the stuff in safety when we became aware that there was a party of military and a policeman within 30 yards of us. We made a dash for cover and the military immediately opened fire without even calling on us to halt. The fence we were using for cover was a low narrow stone fence and the ricocheting bullets were whistling around us. Although we were followed for about three quarters of a mile we succeeded in making our escape. The first newspaper to publish an account of this raid and of the firing on us was the "Southern Star" and, as a result of publishing this information, the newspaper was suppressed by the British Authorities.

Around the period of the passing of the British Conscription Act information was received from local sources concerning rifles and ammunition which were supposed to have been hidden in certain districts in the Battalion Area by the '67 men. It was definitely established that an old man in Bandon town, who was a plumber, had been engaged in the preparation and burial of some of the rifles and had made and sealed an air-tight casket in which they were buried. On being approached for information regarding the exact spot where the rifles were buried he described the locality and place as it appeared at the time the weapons were buried. A party of Volunteers went to the locality but found that many of the features of the land which the old man had described as guiding marks had been totally obliterated. A larger party visited the spot at night and after studying the locality decided to search in one particular area which appeared to correspond most nearly to the old man's description. After digging and probing for nearly twenty-four hours the search was abandoned as fruitless. A similar search was made in another area near the Old Head of Kinsale in a field pointed out by a son of one of the '67 men, but with like result.

For several months after the passing of the Conscription Act and because of the arrest and attempted arrest of many prominent leaders throughout the country it was usual for a number of the more prominent men in adjoining Company areas to meet at night and sleep in unoccupied labourers' cottages or farmyard dwellings and post armed sentries for protection. This particularly applied to Kilbrittain Company. Due to the hardships incurred on this type of duty, Lieut. William Hurley of Kilbrittain Company contracted pneumonia and died. He was given a military funeral with full military honours, with firing party, etc., despite the fact that the area was under Martial Law. All Companies of the Battalion were mobilised and paraded at the funeral. There was no interference by the British Authorities. With

the ending of the European War in 1918 the enthusiasm of a great number of the men of the Volunteer Movement became cold. This was at least partially due to the fact that the Conscription menace had ceased to exist. The maintaining of discipline and improvement of the training of the Companies were made difficult. Through the persistent efforts of the more sincere men in the different Company areas and particularly through the efforts and examples of members of the I.R.B., the spirit of the men was gradually revived and if anything with more fervour. Towards the middle of 1919 discipline, organisation and training of Companies had made great headway and the men were becoming more certain that their military training and their weapons were to be put to a serious test. Events occurred in the Bandon Battalion area during the early part of 1919 which had a decided effect on the Volunteer Movement in this Battalion, and, in fact, throughout the whole 3rd Brigade area in the following two years. The chief of these events had its origin in an agrarian dispute which occurred in the Kilbrittain Company area (this Company was then 'B' Company, 1st Battalion, Cork No. 3 Brigade).

The following is a brief outline of the dispute and its effects on the local Volunteer Company :

In 1918, Kilbrittain Castle and its grounds were bought by a Company trading as Doyle and Riordan of Cork City. As the grounds were well wooded the Company started to exploit the timber and numbers of men were employed in cutting down and hauling the trees. Previous to the purchase of the lands by Doyle and Riordan a number of families in Kilbrittain village had rented on a yearly basis portions of these lands for tilling and grazing and for most of these people it was their sole means of livelihood. When the date for renewing their yearly leases came up in 1919 they were informed that a local land owner (John O'Brien) had offered a higher rent than they were paying for the whole parcel of land and that for this reason the small holders' leases would not be renewed. As this appeared very like the old style of land grabbing it caused much resentment and as most of the small holders concerned were supporters of the Sinn Fein Movement and members of all the families were in the Volunteers it was decided to take such action as was necessary to prevent them being victimised. Abortive attempts were made to negotiate peaceful settlements of the dispute and finally a boycott was declared and all those working on the Estate in connection with tree felling, etc., were to cease work. A certain number of men persisted in working and one day a steam tractor used for hauling timber to Bandon was fired on and one of the "Black Leg" workers was wounded. After the shooting affair Doyle and Riordan applied to the British Authorities for police protection. The matter was now taken up by the Battalion in view of the fact that Doyle and Riordan had invoked the assistance of armed British Forces. One night all the horses belonging to Doyle and Riordan on the estate, as well as a number of cattle belonging to John O'Brien, were driven off and several tons of timber which were ready for loading on a ship at Burrin Pier were thrown into the sea. A detachment of British soldiers was sent to occupy Kilbrittain Castle after

this incident and was to give protection to the men still working for Doyle and Riordan. John O'Brien and Doyle and Riordan recovered heavy compensation from the British for the cattle driven off and the loss of the timber. The compensation was levied off the district. A patrol of British soldiers accompanied by an R.I.C. man as a guide went each night to Burrin Pier from Kilbrittain Castle and the local Volunteer Company planned to attack and disarm them. After careful scouting this patrol of British military were rushed one night at a point near Rath-Clarín Churchyard and without the use of any firearms were successfully disarmed and left bound on the roadside. The names of some of the men who took part in the disarming of British Military patrol at Rath Clarín were :-

Michael O'Neill.
Jack Fitzgerald.
John O'Neill.
Patrick Crowley.
Con Crowley.
Denis Manning.
David Sullivan.
Paddy Sullivan.
Jim Mahony, etc.,

This occurred on the night of the 28th June. Six rifles and one revolver, as well as the ammunition and equipment, were captured.

During the early months of 1919 the matter of communications between Brigade Headquarters and various Battalion Headquarters received much attention, as, also, did organisation of communications between all units of the Brigade. Brigade Headquarters was then in the 1st Battalion area (Bandon district); consequently all orders issued and all despatches going out to or coming from the Battalions had to be dealt with by 1st Battalion Dispatch Riders and particularly by those of the Bandon Company. All despatches going to or coming from General Headquarters, Dublin, or from other Brigades had also to be dealt with by the Dispatch Riders of 'F' Company. At the time referred to 'F' Company (Bandon Company) had only a strength of about ten men. Consequently, as the work of the organisation became more intense these few men of 'F' Company were practically every night on duty, as communications, when not of a very urgent nature, were always transmitted at night because the dispatch riders were all boys earning their living, who had to work by day.

The 1st Battalion Staff at this period were :-

O.C., - Commandant Seán Hales, Ballinadee,
Vice O.C. - Denis Lordan, Bandon,
Adjutant - Liam Deasy,
Quartermaster - Flor. Begley, Bandon.

To test the speed of the dispatch routes and to ensure that confidential dispatch riders would be known by all Battalion Headquarters a trial run was made by myself and

the Quartermaster (Flor Begley of 1st Battalion). We visited all Battalion Headquarters in the Brigade. Starting one evening on push bicycles from Bandon we proceeded to Dunmanway (4th Battalion Headquarters) via Drimoleague, to Bantry, then by Glengariff to Castletownbere, returning by steamer to Bantry and again by road to Skibbereen, and thence to Clonakilty and Bandon, the whole journey taking approximately forty-eight (48) hours. At this period, too, particular attention was being paid to training sections in the Companies of the 1st Battalion to move quickly in mobile cycling units from one part of the Battalion to another, thus getting them acquainted with all roads in the Battalion area and with men of other Companies and of other Battalions. At a later period this training proved of much value. Towards the end of June, 1919, General Headquarters decided to form a training camp for Officers selected from each Battalion in Cork No. 3 Brigade and instructions were received to make the necessary preparations near Glandore for this Camp. In due course the Battalion Officers selected assembled at Camp, together with Officers sent from Dublin as instructors. A few days after the forming of the Camp the British Forces became aware of its existence and object. A party of British soldiers and R.I.C. surrounded the Camp and on making a search they captured some arms for the possession of which a few men were arrested. The Camp was abandoned as further training could not be carried on.

During the months of July and August the British Forces were particularly active attempting to effect the arrest of several men throughout the Brigade area. Most of these men succeeded in evading arrest by going "on the run". Certain members of the R.I.C. Force were making themselves particularly obnoxious in the hunting down of such men and manufacturing offences against them. An appeal was issued to all Irishmen serving in the R.I.C. asking them to resign or to refuse to carry on armed warfare against their fellow countrymen. Several R.I.C. men responded to this appeal and resigned. In 1919 men from different parts of Ireland who had been sentenced to long terms of imprisonment for political offences were released (after undergoing hunger-strike) under what was known as the "Cat and Mouse Act", that is, these men were to surrender or be re-arrested as soon as health permitted and would then have to complete their sentence of imprisonment. One of these men was from the 3rd Cork Brigade area, that is, Charlie Hurley, and, like the others who were released with him, he went "on the run" as soon as his health became sufficiently improved. Previous to his arrest he had been a most capable and sincere officer in the Volunteers and now he devoted his whole time to organising and training in the different units of the Brigade. At the same period the Adjutant of the 1st Battalion (Liam Deasy) had to go "on the run" to avoid being arrested and he was appointed organiser for the Brigade. The perfect organisation and military activities for which Cork No. 3 became afterwards noted were due, principally, to the activities of these two Officers during this period.

In September, 1919, for personal reasons I had to

resign as Vice Commandant of the 1st Battalion and went to live outside Cork No. 3 Brigade area. I was then resident in Ballinhassig which was in 1st Cork Brigade area. The local Company of Ballinhassig was in a fair state of organisation but scarcely any organisation existed in districts surrounding it to the south-east. During my residence in Ballinhassig area I set about organising Companies in Ballygarvan, Nohoval, Tracton and Kinsale. Early in 1920, an election was held for the formation of a Battalion staff, comprising the Companies in the area from Carrigaline, Kinsale and Ballinhassig, thence forward known as 9th Battalion, Cork No. 1 Brigade. Under protest I was elected Vice Commandant and carried on the duties in the Battalion area up to the end of 1920. During the period the principal activities, apart from training and organisation, were: raiding of mails and the burning of recently vacated R.I.C. barracks, and raiding for arms.

In December, 1920, being satisfied that the 9th Battalion of 1st Cork Brigade was well organised, I made representations to the O.C., 1st Cork Brigade, to be released from my appointment as Vice Commandant of the Battalion and I returned to the 3rd Cork Brigade area to join the Column, to which I was appointed as Adjutant and Quartermaster. Approximately on 17th January, 1921, a Brigade Staff meeting of the 3rd Brigade was held in Kilbrittain Company area and a series of operations for the Brigade were planned. To counteract the actions of the Pro British R.C. Clergy and the British Intelligence Department it was decided to punish any member of the I.R.A., who refused duty because of pronouncements made by the local clergy. The punishment consisted of heavy fines and prolonged terms of hard labour duty in their Battalions. Further, any spy or British Secret Service agent, who was discovered, was to be immediately shot. Another feature of the plan was that the Column would move from one Battalion area to another and carry out one or more operations against the British in each Battalion area with the assistance, where necessary, of further men selected from the Battalion in which the Column was then operating. In this way hostilities against the British would be carried on in every Battalion in the Brigade and so prevent the enemy from concentrating their attacks on any one Battalion area. After a few months these measures had the desired effect of counteracting the intimidation of hostile clergy and of counteracting British espionage.

On the 19th January, 1921, the 3rd Brigade Flying Column was mobilised and a selected body of men from the 1st Battalion was also mobilised to co-operate with the Flying Column in operations planned to be carried out in the 1st Battalion area. On the morning of the 21st January the combined forces took up positions at Mamore, about six miles west of Bandon on the main Bandon-Dunmanway road. The intention was to attack any British Forces that may pass on that road. After a wait of about ten hours as no enemy patrol had passed the force was withdrawn. On the night previous to taking up this position the Brigade O.C.,

(Charlie Hurley), Brigade Adjutant - Liam Deasy; Column O.C. - Tom Barry, and Michael Crowley - an officer of the Column, went to reconnoitre the locality for the purpose of selecting the most suitable position to be occupied by the Column on the following day. They carried rifles, bandoliers and revolvers and wore the usual Column Trench Coats (the British Auxiliary Police often went around at night similarly armed and dressed). At a point on the Bandon-Dunmanway Road near Pallas-Ann the above-mentioned Officers came on an individual who apparently was waiting on the roadside for someone. On seeing them this man approached and on being questioned by the Officer Commanding the Column it became evident that he mistook the party for British Auxiliaries for whom he apparently had been waiting. He started to give information in connection with the movements of certain I.R.A. Officers and of the times and places where they could be most easily captured, and promised further information and assistance in return for money. At this stage the Brigade Adjutant, who was known by sight to the individual, was brought over as if a prisoner, and as soon as the spy recognised him he suggested that he, the Brigade Adjutant, should be shot at once. The spy was probably prompted to this suggestion by fear of the Brigade Adjutant escaping from what he thought were his captors and of his (spy) being recognised by the Adjutant again. At this stage the spy was informed that he was under arrest. On the following day he was courtmartialled, found guilty of espionage and sentenced to be shot. A clergyman was procured to give spiritual aid to the spy before his execution. From previous occurrences it was evident that this name, whose name was Denis Dwyer of Castletownkenna and who was a British Ex-soldier, had been a source of much information to the British. After his execution certain districts in the Castletownkenna area, which had been previously subject to intensive raids whenever I.R.A. Officers were in the vicinity, were rarely or ever visited by British Forces.

On the night of the 21st the Column billeted in the Tinkers' Cross Company Area and on Saturday morning, 22nd January, the Column occupied positions on the Bandon-Newcestown road in the townland of Laragh. Shortly after daybreak that morning Denis Dwyer, the spy who had been captured at Pallas-Ann, was executed on the roadside at Farnalough Cross Road. Saturday being weekly market day in Bandon farmers proceeding to the town had to pass through the position held by the Column. They were halted and any of whom there were doubts that they may give information to the British Forces were detained, and others who were known to be friendly were allowed to proceed to Bandon after being warned not to speak of having seen the Column. One farmer was instructed to inform the British Military that the body of a man bearing a label with the words "Spies beware" was lying on the roadside near Farnalough Cross. It was hoped that this information would cause the British to send out some troops to investigate and so run into a prepared ambush. The Column remained in position until a late hour on Saturday evening and as no British Forces appeared it was decided to withdraw. The men had only marched for about a mile from the ambush position when three lorries of Black and Tans passed the position on their way to Bandon after having come by a circuitous route to

investigate the information re the dead body. They escaped being ambushed by scarcely twenty minutes. As the Column had been without food since early morning it was decided to billet in the nearest farmers' houses to obtain a meal and a few hours' rest. A section was, therefore, detailed to each of the surrounding farmers' houses with instructions to keep a sharp "look out" in case of surprise by the enemy - the British Forces in Bandon were only two miles away. In one of the houses in which a section of the Column was billeted, the owner named T.J. Bradfield, a Protestant Unionist, mistook the party for British Auxiliaries and after a short conversation started to give very complete information as to the movements of local members of the I.R.A., even to the extent of a minute description of a "dug out" in the district in which some local men slept and kept their arms, and detailed instructions as to the best means and time of approaching the "dug out" so as to capture these men. He also arranged to give further information later on through his local clergyman and pressed very hard for the immediate capture and execution of certain local boys who were members of the I.R.A., This farmer was placed under arrest and later tried for espionage and found guilty. He was executed that night.

On Saturday night, 22nd January, the Column marched from the Tinkers' Cross area to Cashel Mountain, crossing the Bandon river at Baxter's Bridge, and reaching billets in the Cashel area in the early hours of Sunday morning. An attack was planned to be carried out against the British Forces in Bandon on Sunday night, 23rd January. The column marched on Sunday evening from Cashel Mountain to Crossmahon at which point the Force was divided into two parties in accordance with plan of attack which was as follows :

About sixty men under Brigade Commandant Charles Hurley were to approach Bandon from the northern side and get as close as possible to the enemy posts (Military Barrack and Devonshire Arms Hotel). This party was to place a road mine at a narrow point in the North Main Street leading from the Military Barracks to Bandon Bridge and the mine was intended to deal with any armoured car which the British may try to rush to the southern side of the town. The men were to be placed in points of vantage in houses close to the military and police barracks so as to deal with any troops sallying out on foot. About another sixty men under the command of Column O.C., Tom Barry, were to approach Bandon from the southern side and take up positions commanding Shannon Street and a detachment was to hold the metal footbridge crossing the river near Bandon Town Hall. Bandon town at this period was under Martial Law, and Curfew Law was also in force there. The British sent out each night a strong patrol of military, sometimes accompanied by an armoured car, to enforce the Curfew Regulations. As this patrol was known to pass along Shannon Street every night when on duty it was hoped that they could be trapped between the railway bridge crossing over Shannon Street and Fox's Street crossroad. The movement of both parties was successfully carried out, but as no patrol was sent out by the British on that night, after a prolonged wait it was

decided to withdraw. An exchange of fire took place between some of the party on the northern side of the town and a British sentry. The "Alarm" was immediately sounded by the British Forces but they did not come out of their Barracks, even with the armoured car. One member of the Column - Lieut. Dan O'Reilly of Kilbrittain Company - was killed by a burst of machine gun fire from the British Post. The party under command of Commandant Hurley withdrew towards Castle-lack and Briar Hill and the party under Commandant Barry withdrew from the southern side to Kildara. Both parties rested in billets in these areas on Monday. On Monday night the men under Commandant Barry crossed the Bandon river in boats from Collier's Quay to Ship Pool and marched north and joined with Commandant Hurley's forces at Cross Pound district on Monday night and Tuesday.

An attack was planned on Innishannon R.I.C. Barracks - to be carried out on Tuesday night, 25th. Half of the Column were to attack the Barracks under the command of Commandant Barry, and the other half under the command of Commandant Hurley were to take up position at Brinny on the road leading to Innishannon from Bandon via Kilpatrick. The purpose of the party at Brinny was to ambush any reinforcements which may be sent from Bandon if the British there became aware of the attack on Innishannon Barracks. All other roads leading to Innishannon from Bandon had been previously made impassable with barricades. At the appointed hour the attack was made against Innishannon Barracks. A charge of explosives intended for blowing a breach in the walls proved ineffective and after several attempts had been made to blow down the door with hand grenades a withdrawal was ordered. The attacking party withdrew to Brinny and having joined forces with the party under Brigadier Hurley the whole column marched northwards and were billeted in the Thuagh district for the remainder of the night and on Wednesday. On the night of Wednesday, 26th, the Column marched to the Newcestown area and remained in billets there until Thursday night, when the force divided into two parties, the one consisting of the Brigade Column and the other composed of the men of the 1st Battalion who had been co-operating with the Column during the previous week. The Column marched from Newcestown to the south of Bandon and entered the town that night and took up positions on the Eagle Bridge in the hope of being able to ambush a British Curfew Patrol. The other party under the command of Battalion Vice Commandant John Lordan took up positions in the northern portion of Bandon town so as to cover the British Posts in case of the ambush under British Curfew patrol developing on the southern side of the town. As no patrol was encountered both parties withdrew. The Flying Column marched to Kilbrittain Company Area and billeted in the Clonbogue district where they rested until Sunday evening. On Sunday night, 30th January, another attempt was made by the Column to ambush the Curfew patrol in Bandon, but, as on two previous occasions, no patrol turned out. The Flying Column returned to the Kilbrittain Company area and billeted in the Maryboro and Cloundreen districts until Monday evening, 31st January. On Monday night the Column marched to Ahiohill and billeted in that

district until Tuesday night. While in billets in Ahiohill reports from the I.R.A. Intelligence Section caused investigations to be made in connection with a farmer named Bradfield who resided in the district. As a result of the investigations it was found that this man was a British spy. He was arrested, courtmartialled, found guilty and sentenced to be shot. He was executed on Tuesday night, 1st February. On Tuesday night the Column marched from Ahiohill to Burgatia, near Rosscarbery town. It was the intention to attack and capture Rosscarbery R.I.C. Barracks and for this purpose the Column intended to occupy Burgatia House and remain in cover there during Wednesday whilst preparing explosive charges, etc., for the attack. Owing to the distance of Burgatia from Ahiohill, and as it was necessary that the Column should be under cover at Burgatia before daylight on Wednesday morning, horses and cars were requisitioned in the Ahiohill area for the purpose of transporting the Column the greater part of the distance. Burgatia House was reached in the early hours of Wednesday morning. This property was owned by Thomas Kingston, a British Imperialist and Justice of the Peace for the British Regime. Entrance to the house had to be forcibly gained as Kingston refused admittance and threatened to use firearms. The whole household were placed under house arrest. The Column remained in the house with sentries posted outside. On Wednesday morning a postman from Rosscarbery arrived with letters at Burgatia House. He was detained by the Guard and after being interviewed by the Column O.C., he voluntarily promised on his word of honour and swore by all he held sacred that he would not divulge the fact that the Flying Column was billeted there. On this understanding he was allowed to proceed to deliver the letters he had for the district. It was discovered on the following day that on his return to Rosscarbery he had the information conveyed to the R.I.C., that the Column was in Burgatia House. On Wednesday evening, whilst preparations were being made by the Column Engineers to produce a mine to be used in the destruction of Rosscarbery R.I.C. Barracks, sentries reported that a strong party of R.I.C. and Black and Tans were attempting to surround Burgatia House. Within a few minutes the Column O.C. detailed the various sections of the Column to such positions as would prevent the enemy from closing in on the house and one section under Jim Murphy (Spud) was detailed to remove the explosives to a place of safety. The British Forces kept up an intermittent fire on the premises and after about fifteen minutes a pony and trap, in which were the local Protestant Clergyman and his driver, were seen coming up the entrance drive from the road on which were posted the R.I.C. When the trap arrived at the building where a section of the Column was posted it was halted and the occupants ordered to enter the house for safety. It was then seen that the approach of the Protestant Clergyman in his vehicle was used as a ruse to enable the R.I.C. to get near the house unobserved by following directly behind the pony trap. Heavy fire was now directed by the R.I.C., on the Column's position, but the Column O.C., had instructed his force to reserve its fire except when an enemy exposed himself. At this point in the engagement a member of the Column named Daly

volunteered to get away a horse used by the Column O.C., for riding and he succeeded in getting clear of the farmyard under heavy fire from the British but was obliged to allow the animal to go free afterwards as he could not reach the roadway with it. The Column was now ordered to retire by sections to high ground on the southern side of Burgatia House. From here they were able to bring fire to bear on the enemy positions and so cover the retirement of the Column. After about half an hour's engagement the Column retired in perfect order from the house having one man - Bob Brennan - slightly wounded. The withdrawal of the Column was considered advisable in view of the fact that strong reinforcements of British Military were available in Clonakilty, approximately six miles distant, and as Burgatia House was situated on a peninsula it could be easily surrounded by a force of superior numbers in such a way as to make it impossible for the Column to withdraw. After withdrawing to a position about 600 yards from Burgatia House a section of the Column was ordered to try again to make contact with the enemy, but it was found that it (the enemy) had withdrawn to Rosscarbery. Daylight was now fading and the Column marched to a district of about three miles distant for a much needed meal and a few hours' rest. The Column O.C. with a selected party of men returned to Burgatia House hoping to find the enemy in occupation of it and with the intention of hitting them up. They discovered the house abandoned and fired it, and proceeded towards Rosscarbery where a feint attack was made on the R.I.C. Barracks. On Wednesday night the Column proceeded to a district near Clonakilty where they rested and where they were joined by the section under James Murphy (Spud), who had successfully removed the explosives from Burgatia House on the previous evening.

On Thursday night, 3rd February, the Column marched to Reenascreena district where they remained in billets until Friday night when they resumed their march to a district near Leap. It had poured rain from midnight on Thursday until late on Friday night and the Column during the march to Leap had to wade through water waist high on parts of the road, holding their rifles and equipment head high. Later on Friday night a bitter frost set in and caused much suffering to the men in their wet clothes. Billets were reached in the early hours of Saturday morning and the Column rested until Saturday night when they marched to billets in the district of Revouler. On Sunday night the Column marched from Revouler to Mohana district, close to Skibbereen, where they rested in billets for a few hours. It was intended to take up position on Monday from which to ambush British troops from Skibbereen. Unfortunately, an accident occurred in which a member of the local Company named Patrick O'Driscoll was accidentally shot by a comrade. Owing to this occurrence it was considered advisable for the Column to move to another area owing to the nearness of the British Post at Skibbereen and it being considered likely that the British would become aware of the presence of the Column near the town and that they would possibly procure reinforcements and attempt to surround it. The Column moved on Monday in daylight in sections in extended order across country from Mohana to Kilcoe and went into billets in the local farmhouses in that district. On Wednesday

evening the Column marched to Skibbereen. On reaching a point close to the town the Column were placed in positions to give command of the road leading from Bantry and Dunmanway to Skibbereen. One section under command of the Column O.C., entered the town to attack any British Forces they may contact. Failing to encounter any of the British Forces the section withdrew from the town after having fired a few rounds at the R.I.C. and Military Posts. Two unarmed British soldiers were captured and brought prisoners with the Column, which marched about six miles north-west of Skibbereen where a short rest was given to the men. The two British soldiers were released and allowed to return to their Barracks in Skibbereen bearing a letter from the O.C. of the Column to their Commanding Officer explaining how they had been captured and detained and asking that they be not punished for being absent over time from their barracks. It may be of interest to note that a claim for compensation for personal injuries and loss of equipment was made on behalf of those two soldiers some months later. The O.C., of the Flying Column on having his attention drawn to this matter addressed a letter to the Officer Commanding the British troops in Skibbereen (Colonel Hudson) reminding him that the two soldiers in question had been allowed to return to their barracks uninjured and had not been deprived of any equipment as they had none when captured. Their Column O.C. further expressed the hope that Colonel Hudson, as a soldier and a gentleman, being aware of the facts of the case would take the necessary steps to prevent this unjust claim being pressed any further. No written reply was received to the communication but the claim for compensation was dropped. The Column reached billets in Ahikista and Durrus Road district on Thursday morning and rested until Friday evening. On Friday night the Column marched to Drimoleague, an attack on the R.I.C. Barracks there having been planned. These barracks were protected by barbed wire attached high up on the walls and sloping outwards at an angle to the ground. This made it difficult to place a charge of explosives in an effective position to breach the walls. In order to overcome this difficulty a mine was prepared and attached to the top of two long poles which were carried by four men and placed in a position so as to bring the charge of explosives as near as possible in the walls. The charge was to be exploded electrically but owing to it not being in good contact with the barracks the explosion only caused a very small breach through which it was impossible for the storming party to enter. Pushing home of the attack was made very difficult by the fact that the R.I.C. in the barracks were immediately alerted and dropped grenades out of the loopholes in the building as well as commencing heavy rifle fire. As it was seen that the attack could not be pushed home the Column withdrew exchanging fire for about half an hour. The Column withdrew to the district of Castle Donovan and just as this area was reached several lorries of auxiliaries who were stationed in Dunmanway were observed approaching on the road towards Drimoleague. Positions were taken up by the Column on the hillside north of Castle Donovan so as to engage British Forces if they came sufficiently close. After several hours the Column moved further north and on

Saturday evening reached billets in the district of Coomlea where they remained until Sunday night, when they marched to Kealkil and arrived in billets in that district on Monday morning, 14th February. The Column remained in billets in Kealkil district until Tuesday morning when they marched to a position on the Bantry Glengarriff Road (Sneamh Bridge). Here it was intended to ambush a convoy of British Military or Auxiliaries passing to or from Glengarriff. After spending some hours in this ambush position the Column withdrew to the Kealkil Area where they rested until Tuesday night. On Tuesday evening information reached the Column regarding movements of British troops and as a result it was thought advisable for the Column to move into Cork No. 1 Brigade Area. A despatch was sent to the O.C. Cork No. 1 Brigade informing him that the 3rd Brigade Column would march into his area on Tuesday night through the Pass of Keimaneigh. On Tuesday night the Column proceeded towards Keimaneigh and a scouting patrol was sent through the Pass followed shortly afterwards by the Column in extended formation at scouts' pace. Having got through the Pass the Column proceeded towards Ballingearry where the O.C. of No. 1 Brigade and members of his staff were contacted. On the instructions of the O.C., Cork No. 1 Brigade the Column were marched to Cronin's Hotel at Gougane Barra where they were warmly welcomed by the Proprietress - Mrs. Cronin - and her family. The whole Column were billeted in the hotel and remained there until Wednesday evening, being catered for and attended to by the good lady of the hotel and her family. The Column moved on Wednesday evening from Gougane Barra to Coole-Mountain under command of the Brigade Adjutant - Liam Deasy. The Column O.C., had become ill. The Coole-Mountain is situated at the foot of Sheehy Mountain Range on the opposite side from Gougane Barra. The march for the Column was a very fatiguing one over mountain roads. They reached Coole Mountain on Thursday morning. On Thursday night the Column marched to Ahkeera where they billeted until Saturday night, when they moved on to the Castletownkenna district. Here the Column remained until Monday night when they moved again under command of the Column O.C., to Farrenivane district which lies about four miles north of Bandon. On Tuesday night, two sections of the Column left Farrenivane to enter Bandon town and to attack any British Forces with whom they came in contact. One section under command of their Column O.C. was to enter the town from the north, via Cork Road, and the other section under command of Vice Commandant John Lordan was to approach as near as possible to the British Military Barracks via Dunmanway Road. On reaching the junction of Cork Road with Kilbrogan Cross the O.C. of the Flying Column, accompanied by Michael Crowley, proceeded into the town and gave me instructions to bring on the section about ten minutes after. When I reached the point where Cork Road turns on Bandon Bridge with the section we came suddenly on a party of "Black and Tans" on whom fire was opened. Two of the three "Black and Tans" were killed. The third made a dash up North Main Street where he was met by the Column O.C., who shot him. The Column O.C., then rejoined us at the bottom of Cork Road and ordered the section to withdraw. The other section which approached the town from the Dunmanway road direction shot two British

soldiers a short distance from their Barracks and captured a British Naval Wireless Operator who was afterwards released and given a letter to convey to the O.C. of the British troops in Bandon. The contents of the letter were to the effect that all members of the Essex Regiment, armed or unarmed, whom the I.R.A. would contact, would be shot at sight. The reason for this threat was that the Essex Regiment invariably treated with the utmost cruelty any I.R.A. prisoners whom they captured. Several prisoners had been tortured by them and some had been murdered after undergoing torture. Three cases particularly may be mentioned, that of Tom Hales, Patrick Harte and John Connolly. After the action with the British Forces in Bandon the two sections of the Column engaged withdrew to Newcestown where they joined the other sections of the Column who had marched there from Farrenivane. On this night the Column were demobilised for a fortnight's rest and men returned to their respective Company areas. On Saturday evening, 12th March, the Flying Column were mobilised in a district about two miles west of Castletownkenna. Previously the strength was usually between 40 and 60. On this occasion it was increased to 100. On Sunday night, 13th March, the Column marched to billets in the Balteen Brack district and on Monday night marched to a district a few miles north-west of Newcestown. From here the Column marched on Tuesday night to the district of Rearour. Some short time previous to this the Auxiliaries stationed in Dunmanway had ordered a number of shopkeepers and residents of Ballineen and Enniskeane to act as Civic Guards for the district. These people were instructed to send at once any information they may get regarding the movements of the Column or members of the I.R.A., to the British Military or police. They were threatened with various penalties if they did not comply with these instructions. It was discovered by the I.R.A. that these men attempted to comply with the orders of the British Auxiliary police. The local Dispensary Doctor in Enniskeane had refused to attend the Brigade O.C. when he was wounded at the Upton train ambush and had also refused to attend other wounded men. Both the Dispensary Doctor and those appointed as Civic Guards by the British Auxiliaries were arrested by the I.R.A., and tried by Courts-martial on Tuesday, 15th March. They were found guilty and those who had acted as Civic Guards for the British were fined and ordered under threat of further action to desist from such activities. The Dispensary Doctor was ordered to leave Ireland within twenty-four hours. The fines were paid and the Doctor left the country within the time specified. Leaving Rearour on Wednesday night, 16th March, the Column marched to Ship Pool, south-east of Innishannon, where positions were taken up on the Bandon-Kinsale Road early on the morning of the 17th March, it being intended to attack British Forces moving between Bandon and Kinsale. After remaining in position until dusk on Tuesday evening the Column withdrew to billets in the district of Slievegullane where they rested for 24 hours. From the time the Column left billets on Wednesday night, 16th March, until they arrived in billets in the district of Slievegullane on Thursday evening, 17th, they had partaken of no food, with the exception of one section which was supplied with hot tea and bread and butter which was brought to them in the ambush

position by Miss Nora O'Leary who lived about a mile and a half east of Ship Pool at Slievegullane. On Friday night the Column marched from Slievegullane to Crossbarry district where the sections were sent to billets. Each Section Commander had as usual received orders to post armed sentries from his section and in case of "Alarm" to mobilise at a point on the Bandon Crossbarry road where were situated two farmyards together on the roadside, that is, Harold's and Beasley's. Four men of the Column were detailed to go in pairs to notify some men of the local Company to come on duty as relief sentries for the different sections. One of these pairs observed a party of British Military crossing some fields close to where a section of the Column was billeted. The noise of the military lorries moving on the Bandon Crossbarry road was also heard. When these reports were received by the O.C. of the Column orders were at once sent to every section to mobilise at the Harold's and Beasley farmyards. When all sections had arrived at the point of assembly the Column was ordered to take up positions by sections lining the roadside fences on either side of the farmyards. One section, under charge of Christy O'Connell of Castletownbere was detailed to occupy some high ground on the right flank of the position and slightly to the rear, that is, on the Bandon or western side of the position, so as to protect the right flank and command the hill road of Skeiheenahain. The following were in charge of the remaining sections :-

Seán Hales, O.C., 1st Battalion.
John Lordan, Vice O.C., 1st Battalion.
Michael Crowley, Column Adjutant,
Denis Lordan, Column Quartermaster,
Peter Kearney,
Tom Kelleher,
Jack Corkery.

Tom Barry, Column O.C., and Liam Deasy, Brigade Adjutant, were in charge of the general operation. It was still dark at this hour - approximately 4.30. Two road mines were concealed in the centre of the road - one in front of the section on the right of the position slightly to the west of the two farmyards, and one in front of the section on the left of the position near a bend of the road approaching Crossbarry. Each section prepared earth works where the fences did not give the necessary cover. The breastworks were loop-holed and camouflaged with shrubs and grass. About dawn some shots were heard which were evidently fired about a mile to the north and rear of the Column's position; a clear view of the ground being now possible there appeared evident danger of British troops approaching from the rear where the ground was much higher than the position held by the Column. After a discussion between the Brigade Adjutant and the Column O.C., a section was detailed to occupy a point about 300 yards to the rear of the Column where they could protect against a surprise attack or act as a reserve for any part of the main position. At this stage it was intended to move the main body of the Column on to the ground covering the road running due north from Crossbarry towards a point known as O'Brien's Quarry. The section sent to the rear

was under the charge of Tom Kelleher. About 6.45 a.m. the noise of a convoy of lorries was distinctly heard approaching from the Bandon direction. The Column O.C. at this time was standing in the position occupied by my section and he asked for four Volunteers to take up positions on the opposite side of the road so that they would be in a position to enfilade the approaching lorries and in case the mine on the eastern side of the position failed they were to use home-made grenades against the enemy forces. Tim Allen of Ballydehob Company, Peter Kearney, a Volunteer from Castle-townbere, popularly known as "Whistler", and myself, volunteered for those positions. I handed over my section to Dan Corcoran of Newcestown Company. We had only just changed to our new positions across the road when a convoy of seven lorries approachd from the Bandon direction. Three of the lorries were about 200 yards in advance of the others and when these reached the centre of the position held by the Column they were fired on and immediately put out of control. The drivers of the remaining four lorries which had not yet entered the ambush position ran their lorries into the fence on the roadside and the occupants jumped out and made a hasty retreat in the direction of Bandon without making any attempt to fight. The British Forces in the three leading lorries were practically all killed in the first burst of fire. A few who jumped from these lorries and attempted to get into position to return the fire of the Column were "picked off" by the four of us on the opposite side of the road. This part of the action lasted scarcely twenty minutes. When the firing started on the lorries Florrie Begley of Bandon, who was with the Column, and had his war pipes, started to play some war tunes and during pauses in the bursts of rifle fire the notes of a war march were clearly heard. A boy whom the British troops had taken prisoner in the early morning when they were passing through Kilpatrick was being conveyed in the first lorry as a hostage, it being usual at this period for the British to capture and take some civilians as hostages in their lorries and in case of attack such prisoners were shot by the British. However, in this instance, although every British soldier in the leading lorry, in which was the prisoner, were killed in the first burst of fire, the lad jumped from the lorry and ran headlong into the farmyard from which position heavy rifle fire was being poured and not a bullet touched him. A few minutes after the firing on the convoy had ceased shots were heard at close range to the north and rear of the Column's position. It was evident that the section which had been detailed to guard the rear left flank of the Column was hotly engaged, that is, the section under the charge of Tom Kelleher. Fire was also opened at this time on the Column from a hill on the eastern side and this firing was bearing on the position held by the section on the extreme left flank. Tom Kelleher's section put up a splendid fight against a numerically far stronger force of British whom they eventually forced to retire. The action of this section undoubtedly saved the Column from being completely surrounded. A small party of British under a Commissioned Officer worked their way into a position covering the front of the Section on the extreme left which was in the charge of myself. The British troops were now in a half circle around the Column's left flank and had complete command of the level ground in front of the Column's whole

position. The signal for the Column to withdraw was then given and as each Section Commander had been previously told what the line of withdrawal would be the Column started to retire by sections from the right in a north-westerly direction. When the time came for my Section to retire from the extreme left of the position a heavy fire was being poured on us by the British. Two men of my section were wounded and one killed and between the section and the farmyard of Harold and Beasley was about 100 yards of open ground without cover from fire. The road mine was right in front of my section and I exploded this and ordered my men to throw themselves on to the road under cover of the smoke and they were thus able to reach the shelter of the farmyard and bring the wounded with them. I succeeded in bringing an electric exploder and a few captured rifles with me. We were able under cover afforded by the fences and the houses of the farmyard to retire in the general direction of the main body. The main body of the Column under the command of the Brigade Adjutant, Liam Deasy, was now about a mile and a half away with a section acting as a rear and flank guard, under command of the Column O.C., Tom Barry, moving about three quarters of a mile to the rear and right. When my section reached high ground to the north of Harold's and Beasley's farmyards we came again under fire from British troops who were on still higher ground to which they had retired after being repulsed by the section under Tom Kelleher. The main body of the Column brought to bear a concentrated volley of fire on this party of British and my section was then able to proceed under cover afforded by the fences. After retiring about a mile my section got in touch with the rear guard of the Column and having procured material to improvise temporary stretchers for our wounded we proceeded until we joined the main body at a pre-arranged point of assembly at Tom Kelleher's farmyard West of Cross Pound. Here the wounded got medical attention (up to this they had only received First Aid) from Dr. Con Lucey - who was the Column Doctor and operating with it. Horses and cars were requisitioned to convey the wounded. A roll call of every section was held and it was found that the Column had lost three men killed and had three men wounded. A check of the arms and ammunition showed that 12 rifles and a Lewis Gun had been captured from the British, with six drums of ammunition for the Lewis Gun, and a further quantity of .303 rifle ammunition which just about balanced the amount expended by the Column in the whole action up to that stage. As the Column was ready to resume its march the outposts reported a number of enemy troops moving on high ground on the right flank of the Column. A section was detailed to intercept the enemy force and, as well, act as a Flank Guard. When the Column had proceeded about a half a mile from Kelleher's a short engagement took place between this flank guard and the enemy force. As a result of the action the British retired and made no further attempt to keep in touch with the Column which proceeded on its line of withdrawal to a point about five miles north-west of Crossbarry. Here a short halt was called on the roadside and the whole Column, having got into a position giving cover from view, were rested for about thirty minutes. During this time a few lorries of Auxiliaries passed within thirty yards of the Column's position on their way from

Ballincollig to Crossbarry by indirect bye-roads. It was subsequently learned that this small convoy had arrived at Ballincollig from Macroom as a result of an S.O.S. for reinforcements and through mistaking their instructions had not come direct to Crossbarry from Macroom. After this incident the Column proceeded on its march for a few miles further on and the various sections were sent to billets to procure food and a few hours' rest. While the Column was resting a despatch arrived with the information that the Brigade Commandant - Charlie Hurley - had been shot in the early morning while attempting to fight his way through a cordon of British soldiers that had surrounded the house in which he slept. This information had a momentarily depressing effect on the Column, every man of which held in the highest esteem and loved as a brother the Brigade O.C., The information also reached the Column that the military had taken reprisals on several houses in the Cross Pound and Crossbarry district by burning the houses and contents. At dusk on Saturday evening, 19th March, the Column resumed its journey and arrived in the early hours of Sunday morning at billets in the district of Gurranreigh where the men rested until the following Monday night, 21st. In the meantime the British had sent strong reinforcements from Cork, Ballincollig, Bandon, Macroom and Kinsale to Crossbarry but they arrived only in time to remove their dead and wounded. The bodies of the three men of the Column who were killed at Crossbarry and also the body of the Brigade O.C., who was killed at Ballymurphy (north of Crossbarry) were conveyed to Bandon by the British. The names of the three men killed in the action at Crossbarry were Peter Monahan, Jeremiah O'Leary and Con Daly. On Monday, 21st March, the four bodies were claimed for burial from the British by members of Cumann na mBhan who represented themselves as relatives of the dead men. The bodies of Peter Monahan, Jeremiah O'Leary and Con Daly were interred in the Cemetery of Bandon Roman Catholic Church and the body of Brigade Commandant Hurley was interred with full Military Honours at his family burial ground in Clogagh Cemetery. On Monday night, 21st, the Column marched from Gurranreigh to Ahichill and on Tuesday night marched from Ahichill to Clogagh to act as a Guard of Honour at the funeral of the Brigade O.C., The funeral left from Clogagh Roman Catholic Church in the early hours of Wednesday morning, 23rd March, it being still dark, and headed by the local Catholic Curate wended slowly to the family burial place. The Column acted as a Guard of Honour and the Piper - Florence Begley - who played during the ambush at Crossbarry now played the Dead March. It was a scene never to be forgotten by those present - the flickering lights of two candles carried by altar boys on either side of the priest to enable him to read the prayers when the coffin was being borne from the Church. By the light of the candles would be seen the glimmer of the bayonets of the Guard of Honour as they stood at the "Present", and then, mingled with the cries of his relatives, came the slow tramp of the Column and the notes of the Pipe March, all in the dark chill hours before the dawn of a morning in March. When the Cemetery was reached the last prayers were recited and the soldiers' last honours paid to one of Ireland's most faithful and bravest. After the funeral the Column remained in billets in the Clogagh area until Wednesday evening when they marched to a

district in Abiohill area. From this date until the 30th March the Column made a series of approach marches towards Rosscarbery avoiding as far as possible giving any indication of their next objective, which was the capture of Rosscarbery R.I.C. barracks. On the night previous to the 30th the Column had reached a district to the West of Rosscarbery town and by this time a substantial land mine containing approximately 1 cwt. of explosives had been prepared and was to be used in the destruction of Rosscarbery R.I.C. Barracks. A number of crude home-made grenades had also been prepared. These were made by inserting a stick of gelignite into coffee tins which were then packed with scrap metal and clay, and detonator and time fuses inserted. As well as these there were also prepared short lengths of sticks like half a broom handle, around which was wound pieces of sacking. These were intended to be saturated with paraffin or petrol and to be used to throw through any breach made in the barrack walls in case a storming party could not enter, and the intention was that they would assist in setting the barrack on fire. Orders had been issued to the various Companies in the areas surrounding Rosscarbery to have all roads leading towards Rosscarbery completely blocked by falling trees and cutting trenches on the night of the 30th. As soon as dark had fallen on the night of the 30th March the Column proceeded from its billet area towards Rosscarbery town. On the outskirts of the town the main body of the Column was posted in position to cover the roads leading from Skibbereen and Clonakilty which were the nearest points from which British reinforcements could be expected. A specially selected party then prepared to advance on the Barracks. The men of this party removed their boots and leggings and secured any loose equipment so as to prevent it rattling and making any noise. Each man was armed with a rifle and 100 rounds of ammunition, and also carried a revolver and ammunition, as well as a number of home-made grenades and torches. The land mine which was made up in a coffin-like box was carried on the shoulders of four men in turns. Having reached a point in the town about twenty yards from the Barrack building the road mine was placed on the shoulders of four men who had volunteered to carry the mine to the barrack door and place it in position. There were two detonators and two time fuses fitted in the mine, the fuses being coiled on cover. I lit the two fuses and as soon as they started to hiss the four men moved off accompanied by the Column O.C. and Michael Crowley who, on reaching the gate leading into the barrack yard, opened the way for the mine party. On reaching the door of the barrack the mine was placed against the porch and propped into position with a few stones, and the party then withdrew and rejoined the remainder of the section who waited where the fuses had been set going. In the meantime another selected party from the Column had entered houses on the opposite side of the street to the front of the Barracks. Those of us who were on the roadway lay flat and waited breathlessly for the explosion which occurred after what seemed an eternity. As soon as the terrific explosion took place we rushed forward as pre-arranged but when we came in sight of the Barrack we could only see a dull glare and clouds of dust and smoke. It was apparent that a substantial breach had been made in the barrack wall but owing to the amount of debris which was

piled up on the roadway and because of the haze of smoke we could not immediately rush forward to the breach. At this point a voice was heard shouting from the Barracks "We surrender", we surrender", and the Column O.C., replied "Come out with your hands up". Immediately another voice shouted "Hold the barracks" and this shout was accompanied with a mill's bomb. The mill's bomb burst within a few feet of our party, but as it had fallen amongst the loose debris on the road it fortunately did no harm. The Column O.C., then ordered us to open fire on the barracks, and the party who had occupied the houses opposite the barracks opened heavy fire on the breach made in the wall, as well as on the windows from which some of the steel shutters, which had been protecting them, had been blown by the explosion. Grenades and rifle fire were coming from the barracks and were returned in kind. After considerable time no progress was being made in the attack and the O.C. instructed us to procure buckets of paraffin oil from the local shops. These were thrown into the building and to do so the Column Commander and some of our party had to approach within yards of the barrack under heavy rifle and grenade firing. Lighted torches were thrown after the buckets of paraffin and were followed by more grenades from our party and after a brief interval flames suddenly shot up and the whole building quickly became enveloped. We waited for some further time hoping that the garrison of the barrack would come out and surrender, but without our knowledge they had already succeeded in withdrawing from the rear of the building and getting into cover in the local Convent grounds from which they later escaped and made their way to Clonakilty. When the whole building was a mass of flame and when it was seen that nothing further could be done by us the Column O.C., ordered a withdrawal. The attacking party withdrew to a point where they made contact with the main body of the Column and still in our stocking feet we withdrew from Rosscarbery district, partly at the double. The need for haste was obvious as the day was then breaking, and the noise of the explosion of the land mine, the heavy rifle and grenade firing and the glare of the burning barracks were bound to give warning to the surrounding garrisons who would be on their way to reinforce or help the garrison of Rosscarbery. The Column got safely away and suffered no casualties and went to billet about five miles to the north of Rosscarbery town. The Column rested here during the day and on the following day set out on a march which finished at Newcestown Area about eight miles north of Bandon. Here the Column rested for another night and day and then proceeded to Beal na Blath area where they rested for another night and day. On the following evening the Column was broken up into small Units composed of men from various Battalions. The reason for this was that the Column O.C. had become seriously ill and it was decided that the men would return to their respective Battalion areas and carry on armed activities there until such time as the Brigade Column would be again mobilised. Several men who had put in very strenuous work during the period from the 12th March up to this date were given leave to go to quiet areas to rest. I went east to the 9th Battalion area of Cork I Brigade where I remained for a week at the house of Cornelius Cronin of Carran, near what was then known as Warner's Cross, about two miles north of

Ballinhassig. After a week I received instructions to report to the newly appointed Brigade O.C., Liam Deasy. I met him near Newcestown and at a meeting at which were John Jordan, Vice Commandant, 1st Battalion; Sean Buckley, Brigade I.O., Eugene Callanan (now Dr. Callanan); Michael Crowley and Peter Kearney, instructions were given to us by the Brigade O.C., who had returned from General Headquarters, Dublin, to proceed to the 4th Battalion area, and, working in pairs, we were to remain and make preparations for an expected landing of arms near Myross. As the greatest secrecy had to be observed we were supposed to be on a tour of inspection of Companies of the 4th Battalion and not even all the Officers of the Companies, or Battalion Staff, were aware of the real purpose of our visit to the area. After some weeks we had prepared plans which, if the landing had taken place, promised more than a reasonable hope of the arms being successfully brought inland. As a matter of interest this cargo of arms, or part of it, was landed after the Truce in 1921 at or near Helvick, Co. Waterford. On the termination of this detail of duty I was ordered to proceed to the 3rd Battalion Area to conduct a Training Camp for Battalion and Company Officers. The Camp had been only in existence a few days when a large scale round-up by British Forces was reported. British Troops in Flying Column formation moved from all military posts in and around the West Cork Brigade Area, e.g., Kinsale, Bandon, Clonakilty, Skibbereen, Dunmanway, Macroon, Castletownbere and Kenmare. Orders were issued for mobilisation of the Brigade Column in the Drinagh Area, from where it moved to an ambush position on the Dunmanway-Bantry Road at Cloundagh. The intention was to ambush a convoy of auxiliaries moving from Dunmanway to Bantry. Positions were taken up in the early hours of the morning and the Column remained in ambush position until late evening. It was afterwards learned that the Auxiliary Forces in Dunmanway were aware that the Column was in position on the Dunmanway-Bantry Road and a convoy of Auxiliaries actually set out from Dunmanway but only travelled a short distance on the road and returned. Having withdrawn from the positions the Column moved from this area towards Kealkil. We moved from there into the Mountain Area north of Kealkil; (Barlin Valley). Intelligence reports from all over the Brigade Area indicated that British Forces were slowly closing in from the East, from Kerry and Castletownbere direction, as well as from Skibbereen, and it was decided to cross over the mountain from Barlin Valley into Gougane; the intervening mountain between Barlin Valley and Valleydesmond is approximately 1,800 feet, and the only way of reaching Valleydesmond from this mountain top is via a watercourse which in Summer time is dry and is locally known as the "Coom". With the aid of a local guide the Column crossed the mountain at night in single file and after a hardshipping journey got safely into Valleydesmond and on to Gougane Hotel where, for the second time during the course of the War of Independence, the 3rd Brigade Column was warmly received and generously accommodated by the Cronin family of Gougane Hotel. After resting for a day in Gougane the Column proceeded via the Pass of Keimaneigh back to Kealkil and thence to the mouth of Barlin Valley again. A night and a day were spent in this district and the Column then marched south to Caheragh Area where it was divided into Battalion Units and the

Brigade Column as such demobilised. From this period until the Truce activities in the Brigade Area were carried on by Battalion Columns and local Companies. At this period the British were operating in the 3rd Brigade Area in mobile Columns billeting in the open, having their own Field Kitchens and portable wireless installations and were composed of Cycle Units and, in some instances, specially trained men dressed in running shorts and armed with rifles and slings of ammunition. The weather at this time was extremely dry and the road trenches, which had been cut by the I.R.A. in different areas to prevent movement of British Motorised Columns, were proving ineffective as they could be by-passed owing to the dry nature of the ground in the vicinity.

At this period the protection system for the men of the 3rd Brigade Area was fairly well perfected. It consisted of a number of scouts in each Company Area being posted day and night at vantage points overlooking main roads along which enemy troops were in the habit of travelling or overlooking enemy posts. By day, those scouts on observing any enemy movements gave a signal either with a blast of a horn or with flags and these signals were taken up by the scouts in the adjoining Company area, and thus the movements of any enemy forces were passed on from Company to Company and served as a protection against surprise enemy raids.

The dispatch rider system in the Brigade Area was well organised and perfected at this period. As Brigade Headquarters was, of necessity, mobile, and was frequently moved from one part of the Brigade Area to another in order to maintain communication with the various Units of the Brigade and with adjoining Brigades and General Headquarters, a number of dispatch riders were at all times available at Brigade Headquarters and despatches were carried by them generally on horseback and frequently by bicycle. Relays of horses were arranged for at various points throughout the Brigade and record time was made by dispatch riders from one point of the Brigade to another, when necessary. The Intelligence organisation was very thorough and daily Intelligence reports were received at Brigade Headquarters from all Units all over the Brigade. As well, the principal telegraphist at Bandon Post Office was one of our Intelligence Agents: her name was Miss May Twomey. Every telegraph message passing through Bandon Post Office for Units of the British Forces, whether Military or R.I.C. and whether in plain or in code, was smuggled out by this agent to the I.R.A. In Bandon town there were three other girls who, on receipt of those messages, conveyed them to an appointed call house a few miles outside the town from where they were rushed to Brigade Headquarters by dispatch rider. An interesting example of the efficiency of this system can be best conveyed by the following incident: A residence overlooking Innishannon Bridge on the Bandon river, which was the property of Lieut-Colonel Peacock (this Lieut.-Colonel Peacock had been executed by the I.R.A., for conveying information to the British Forces) was to be occupied by a force of the Black and Tans at 6 o'clock in a morning in May. A coded telegraph order was sent to the Black and Tans in Bandon on the previous evening and a copy of the

code message was passed out by our agent in the Bandon Post Office and reached Brigade Headquarters about 7 o'clock that evening. Orders were immediately issued to the Officer Commanding, Ballinadee Company, to mobilise sufficient of his men and to proceed to Peacock's house and destroy it. These orders were carried out and on the following morning when the convoy of Black and Tans moved out from Bandon to Innishannon for the purpose of occupying Peacock's residence they only found smouldering ruins.

A force of Auxiliary Police from Macroom occupied Rosscarbery some weeks after the R.I.C. Barracks had been destroyed there and it was decided to attack this force and for this purpose a party, composed of members of the Flying Column reinforced by men from the Skibbereen and Clonakilty Battalions, was mobilised and moved on Rosscarbery Village from the north-west. The intention was to set fire to a quantity of hay belonging to a local British sympathiser with a view to attracting out at least part of the Auxiliary Force to investigate the burning and then to open the attack on the Auxiliaries both in the town and those who may come out. The I.R.A. party was divided into three sections and one section was detailed to move off the road when near Rosscarbery and set fire to the hay. As this section was moving into position it ran into a number of Auxiliaries who were walking through the fields and both parties opened fire. The sound of the firing gave a premature warning to the remainder of the Auxiliaries in the town of Rosscarbery and from the town fire was returned by them. A Lancia armoured car, on which the Auxiliaries had mounted a machine gun, was stationed at a position in the town from which fire was brought to bear on the hillside where the I.R.A. Sections had taken up positions. After the firing had continued for a short interval the machine gun from the Lancia car ceased firing and it was afterwards discovered that a stray bullet from the I.R.A. had put the gun out of action. The Auxiliaries then tried to rush in their Crossley Tenders through the town towards the I.R.A. position but came under such heavy fire that they had to abandon their cars. After about twenty minutes of exchange of fire the I.R.A. party withdrew as it was then getting dusk and shortly afterwards the Auxiliaries packed up and left in their cars for the nearest Military Post - Clonakilty town. It was ascertained later that a number of Auxiliaries had been killed and some wounded. One member of the I.R.A. party was wounded slightly. The Auxiliary Force did not afterwards return to Rosscarbery.

A number of men of the 3rd Brigade had been captured in various raids by the British Forces up to the middle of June, 1921, and some of these men had been courtmartialled or were to be courtmartialled and it was well understood that in most cases the results of the courtmartial would be a death sentence for these men. It was, therefore, decided that a number of prominent British supporters, preferably administrative officials, such as Resident Magistrates, would be taken as hostages by the I.R.A. and the British informed that if any of our men were executed at least one of these would be executed for each I.R.A. prisoner.

On the 21st June, plans were completed for the taking as hostages of the Earl of Bandon, Charles C. King, J.P.,

and several other prominent pro-British individuals. As I was one of the party detailed for the taking of the Earl of Bandon I propose to give a detailed account of the particular incident: According to information available to the I.R.A., a Guard of Military or Black and Tans was posted each night in or around Castlebernard, the residence of the Earl of Bandon, and at this period Martial Law and Curfew Law were in force in and around Bandon town. On the night of the 21st May scouts were detailed by the I.R.A. to keep Castlebernard and the grounds around it under observation and to report the movement of any parties of military or police which may be moving in or out of the Castle and its grounds. A party of I.R.A. under the command of Commandant Seán Hales waited at Knockbrown, about four miles from Bandon, until the early hours of the morning of the 22nd and then proceeded to within a mile of Castlebernard where a report was given to them by one of the scouts who had been on duty keeping under observation Castlebernard and its grounds during the night. This report was to the effect that whilst no British Forces had been seen moving into the Castle there was no certainty that the party of British Forces was not actually in the Castle. Commandant Hales decided that the party would proceed to the Castle and endeavour to take the Earl of Bandon as a hostage even if it was necessary to fight our way in and out. Our I.R.A. party consisted of nine men. We approached the Castle from Old Chapel side in extended formation and as the dawn was just breaking we moved up to the Castle building proper. Six of the party took up positions covering the windows of the back and front of the Castle and three approached the main door on which they knocked. No response was received to their knocking and no appearance was made by any British police or military from within the Castle. In order to effect an entrance an attempt was made to burst the front door lock with a sledge but this was not effective. At this stage I was posted at the rear of the Castle and as there was no appearance of any enemy I moved up to a conservatory, the door of which I found open. I walked in and moved through the conservatory into another apartment and found I was going in the direction of the front entrance to which I was being attracted by the noise of the blows of the sledge. After passing through a few rooms I came to the main hallway and shouted to my comrades that I would open the main door for them which I did. Leaving four men posted on the outside of the Castle the remainder of us started to search through the rooms for any occupants and after a considerable time searching nobody could be found in the building. Commandant Hales then decided (to use his own words) "as the bird has flown we will burn the nest". No preparations had been made to burn Castlebernard and we simply piled up some furniture in a few of the rooms and put the curtains from the windows over it and set fire to the curtains. While these preparations were being made two of the party had found their way into another wing of the Castle, the entrance to which had up to this escaped our notice. Shortly, they shouted back to us that they had discovered the Earl of Bandon and members of his household staff. At this stage the fire was beginning to get a grip of the building and we quickly removed the Earl of Bandon and the other members of his household and staff. Female

and male members of the household and staff were placed in safety in a garage in the out offices and we marched off with the Earl of Bandon as a hostage. Castlebernard was situated about 400 yards as the crow flies from the Military Barracks at Bandon and we were aware that on the previous evening a Column of the Essex Regiment under command of Major Percival (of Singapore fame) had moved into Bandon from Kinsale. It will be understood that it was expedient for us to get away from the vicinity of Castlebernard as quickly as possible with our hostage, particularly as the fire in the Castle would attract the attention of the Military quickly. The party moved south from Bandon and the hostage was placed in security in the early hours of the morning. Approximately two weeks before the Truce the Brigade O.C., Liam Deasy, and the Column O.C., Tom Barry, and myself proceeded to Cronin's Hotel, Gougane Barra, having received orders to meet Liam Lynch there. We met him there on Sunday with other members of the Divisional Staff and arrangements were made to set up a Divisional Headquarters Staff. About a week later I received orders to report to Divisional Headquarters for training in the use of the Thompson Gun. A number of these weapons had reached the country just previous to this period and it was understood that a large number would become available as soon as sufficient instructors were trained in their use. Before the time arrived for me to report to Divisional Headquarters the Truce intervened.

From 1916 up to 1919 the intensive organisation, training and arming of the Units of the West Cork Brigade were principally influenced by Officers and men who were members of the I.R.B. and from the time that engagements with British Military Forces and the attacks on British Military Posts started these were almost invariably planned by and carried out by members of the I.R.B. up to the end of 1920 when the Active Service Unit or Column was organised. From that period on every member of the I.R.A. who was capable of using arms was drafted into the various attacks on British Units and Outposts. What I want particularly to convey is that in the initial stages of the fight when trustworthy men had to be selected they were always men who were members of the I.R.B.

I wish to put on record from the very earliest period, but particularly from 1917 to the Truce, the invaluable assistance that was given to the I.R.A., by sympathisers and families who were not actually members of the I.R.A. In this connection I wish to refer particularly to the assistance given in the nature of food, shelter and comforts to men who were organising or "on the run". In addition, I wish to put on record the invaluable assistance given by the Cumann na mBhan from pre 1916 days right up to the time of the Truce, with special reference to the period from 1918 to the date of the Truce. During the latter period when the Cumann na mBhan organisation became more widespread through West Cork and the 3rd Brigade Area the members of the Cumann na mBhan made equipment such as haversacks for the I.R.A., supplied changes of underclothing and socks, carried despatches night and day, actively engaged in intelligence work, arranged for the burial of

men killed in action and assisted the parents and families of men who had been killed in action, as well as through the medium of entertainments and dances procuring money for the arms fund and equipment for the I.R.A., From the end of 1920 to the Truce throughout many Battalions of the 3rd Brigade there were recognised houses where first aid and dressing stations were permanently maintained and during this period when there was a serious epidemic of scabies in the Column disinfectant baths and curative ointments and changes of clothing were always available at these houses for any men affected. From my own knowledge and experience I am satisfied that many households stinted themselves in the ordinary necessities of life and even ruined themselves financially through their enthusiasm in providing food, clothing and finances for the I.R.A.,

Signed

Denis J. Keenan

Witnessed

William J. Keenan 1st Col.

Date

18th December 1950.

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
BURO STAIRE MILEATA 1913-21
No. W.S. 470