

**ORIGINAL**

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

BURO STAIRÉ MILÉATA 1913-21

No. W.S. 658

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

**STATEMENT BY WITNESS**

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**Witness**

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Dublin.

**Identity.**

Captain Mullaghbawn Company I.R.A., Co. Armagh;  
O/C. Dungooley Company I.R.A., Co. Louth.

**Subject.**

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1918-1922.

**Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.**

Nil

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| BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21 |
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| NO. W.S. 653                       |

STATEMENT BY JOHN GRANT,  
173 Collins Avenue, Dublin.

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I was born and reared on a small farm in the townland of Cashel, Mullaghbawn, South Armagh. I took very little interest as a youth in politics. After I left school I played gaelic football and attended gaelic league classes. I had no connection with the National Volunteers which were organised locally in 1914. This phase of the National Movement only lasted a few months as the 'split' caused by Mr. John Redmond's pro-British attitude when the Great War of 1914-1918 broke out, put an end to any local interest in the Volunteers.

South Armagh Election 1918.

The death of Dr. Charles O'Neill, M.P., about the end of 1917, caused a bye-election in South Armagh, and the polling date was fixed for the 1st February, 1918. When the election campaigning started there was little evidence of any Sinn Féin organisation in South Armagh and although apathy existed as far as the Irish Party organisation was concerned amongst a percentage of the Nationalists, there was little knowledge or understanding of the Sinn Féin policy. The Sinn Féin candidate was Dr. Patrick McCartan, a native of Co. Tyrone, and the Irish Party and Hibernian nominee was a Newry solicitor named Patrick Donnelly. No Unionist candidate was put forward and the Unionists got instructions to vote for the Hibernian candidate. The election resulted in Donnelly winning the seat with a majority of 1019. This election was held on a register of ratepayers only. Adult

suffrage was not a qualification to vote at this election.

I joined the Volunteers at their re-organisation in Mullaghbawn about two weeks before the date of the polling. Our first Company Captain was John McKeown of Adanove. At the start none of us had any knowledge of military drill or the training of men in the use of arms. We procured British Army manuals on drill and on the handling and care of arms, musketry, etc.

During the Bye-Election campaigning the Volunteers marched to different areas to protect Sinn Féin meetings. When the campaigning got under way it soon became apparent that fisticuffs were considered by some as more effective than arguments.

The Volunteers did practically all the electioneering work; canvassing voters, marking the register, providing transport, getting voters out to the polling booths and taking charge at the polling booths.

The South Armagh Election put the organisation of Sinn Féin on a firm footing in South Armagh. The people were changing over so quickly during the few weeks the campaigning was in progress that if the time was extended for another few weeks Sinn Féin should have won.

After the Election the organisation of Sinn Féin and of the Volunteers were firmly established. Sinn Féin Clubs and Companies of Volunteers were organised in practically every parish in South Armagh. I would say that Sinn Féin was promoted, fostered and helped in every way by the Volunteers. It was a young persons movement and it would never have got so popular only for the work and enthusiasm of the Volunteers. The Volunteers helped at collecting funds for Sinn Féin, worked on the register and on voters lists, etc.

The Various Company Officers.

In 1919, Hugh McAleavey was Company Captain. He replaced John McCoy who had charge of the Company for a short time in the late months of 1918, when he became Battalion Adjutant. McAleavey held the rank of Company Captain up to November 1920, when he was captured by Crown Forces and sentenced to penal servitude. Mick McCann was appointed to succeed McAleavey and he held the rank up to his capture in April 1921. In April 1921, I was elected Company Captain to succeed McCann. My election as Captain was carried out by ballot amongst the members of the Company. I held the rank of Company Captain up to the outbreak of the Civil War in July 1922. I was also O/C. of Dungooley Camp during the time the Camp was in existence - May and June 1922. I also acted as Column O/C. on a few occasions.

At the start of the Mullaghbawn Company, Joe O'Hare and myself were the two Company Lieutenants. After April 1921, when I became Captain, Tommie Grant replaced me as Lieutenant and John McPartland replaced Joe O'Hare, who had gone over to England. Jack McCann was at one time a Lieutenant of the Company up to his arrest.

Collection of Dáil Éireann Loan and Republican Police.

In 1919 the Volunteers did all the work in collecting Dáil Éireann Loan. We also set up a Republican Police Force made up of Volunteers who were specially delegated to do police work. From early in 1920 the R. I. C. ceased to patrol the area and took no interest in their usual police duties, such as public house duties and the keeping of order generally. The Volunteers then took over all the duties usually carried out by the R. I. C. in preserving law and order.

The Cumann na mBan and the work of the older women.

A branch of the Cumann na mBan organisation was started in Mullaghbawn in 1918. This branch soon became very active in various ways. They carried out work of a political nature such as getting funds by collections and flag days, helping at concerts and aeríochta and in a military way, training in first-aid, manufacturing first-aid kits. In 1920 and 1921 those girls carried despatches on occasions where doing such work was impossible or too dangerous for the Volunteers. They did scout work, intelligence work; they cared for arms and were responsible for the safe keeping of arms for individual Volunteers for short periods between operations. They also on several occasions carried and transported quantities of arms and ammunition when this work was too dangerous for Volunteers to carry it out. Their usefulness was so great in the military sphere that it would not be impossible to give even a small idea of the various ways the Cumann na mBan helped. When mentioning the Cumann na mBan it is necessary also to pay a tribute to the older women, heads of households, who provided sleeping accommodation, food, and the use of their premises for men "on the run". Women of this class were so common that it would be unfair to mention names. Two outstanding examples were Mrs. Betty Grant of Tullymacrieve and Mrs. Mary Muckian of Mullaghbawn. Mrs. Grant's house was used from the end of 1920 up to the Truce in 1921 by Brigade and Divisional officers for sleeping purposes. It was outside her house that John McCoy was wounded in April 1921, and on that occasion by her coolness and native wit she saved a revolver she found hidden in the house during the search of it by the British military after Johnny McCoy's shooting and when the military were threatening to burn down her place.

Mrs. Muckian's house was used from late 1920 up to 1924 by all Divisional and Brigade staff officers. Her house was Divisional Headquarters. She fed and provided changes of clothing for at least three or four officers for a good portion of this time without payment or recompense of any kind. Even when her house became known to the British Authorities she continued to keep officers.

First attempt to capture Newtownhamilton Barracks.

In or about February, 1920, an attempt was made to capture Newtownhamilton Barracks by a ruse. Johnnie McCoy mobilised me for this operation and he, Mick McCann, Company Captain, and myself cycled to Newtownhamilton and took up a position in Dundalk Street at the corner of Castleblayney Hill. Our duty there was to deal with any R.I.C. or others who might pass that way to interfere with the success of the ruse. The plan adopted for this operation was that Frank Aiken and a few men dressed as a British officer and soldiers were to attempt to gain admission to the Barracks on the bluff that they were a military raiding party and when in to hold up the garrison and disarm them. When we were waiting for some time in Dundalk Street, Johnnie McCoy sent me in to the vicinity of the Barracks to find out what was the position as he was expecting some developments before then. When I got near the Barracks I saw a policeman on sentry go in front of the Barracks with a rifle. I could see no other persons on the street and I concluded that the attempt on the Barracks had failed or was called off.

I returned to Johnny McCoy and reported the position as I saw it. Some minutes after I returned a few R.I.C. men hastened past us in the direction of the Barracks.

This rush of the R. I. C. towards the Barracks showed that they had been warned of something afoot. We had instructions on this night not to attack the R. I. C. or to attempt to disarm them on the street as it was planned to stage an all-out attack on the Barracks later if the ruse attempt failed.

#### Burning of Evacuated R. I. C. Barracks.

The R. I. C. evacuated Forkhill R. I. C. Barracks about the last day of May 1920. When we heard of the evacuation we immediately made preparations to destroy the building as General Headquarters had ordered the destruction of all evacuated R. I. C. Barracks. We proceeded to Forkhill and procured flax tow and other inflammatory material from a nearby scutching mill. With this material we prepared for the destruction of the building and set fire to it.

#### General Raid for Arms.

In or about early September 1920, we got orders to carry out a general raid for arms all over our Company area. This raid was general all over the country and was to take place everywhere on the same night. In most districts in our area the arms were handed up to us without any fuss or trouble. It was generally only a question of asking for a shotgun and then getting it. In only one instance was there any serious opposition shown during a raid. In this particular house one of the sons was a British soldier who was home on leave and was in the house when the raid took place. As soon as the raiders appeared inside this man immediately attacked them with the assistance of his father and his mother. A melee took place in the house. I later learned that the father got a serious injury to his head. A young man named Francis Lappin who was asked to do so, went

to report the matter to the R. I. C. in Camlough Barracks. A few nights later the police, accompanied by military, came out to our district and raided a number of houses and made some arrests, including Johnny McCoy, his brother Mickey and his father; a young fellow named Patrick Gallogly and a few others.

Later on Lappin was arrested by the I. R. A. and charged with giving information to the enemy. He was found guilty and was deported and has never returned to live in Mullaghbawn since.

#### Camlough Barracks Attack.

The next operation of importance I will describe is the attack on Camlough Barracks. This operation took place on the night of the 11th-12th December, 1920. All the active men of the Company were mobilised for this operation. John McCoy took Mick McCann, Company Captain, Joseph O'Hare and Mick McManus in to Camlough to take part in the active attack on the Barracks. I accompanied the remainder of the men mobilised to Camlough Lake about three quarters of a mile from the Barracks where we took up a position as an outpost, erected road blockades and remained armed at this position to deal with the possible arrival of enemy reinforcements. We remained in this position for about two hours. We heard the noise of the shooting and the explosions of hand-grenades at the Barracks. Later on we heard the noise of machine-gun fire which I since heard was from the guns used by military forces ambushed at the Egyptian Arch. Shortly after hearing the noise of the machine gun fire, John McCoy and the men who were in Camlough came to our position and gave us orders to evacuate as the attack was called off. We all marched home to Mullaghbawn together.

After the attack on Camlough Barracks the Crown Forces carried out a series of raids and round-ups in most South Armagh districts. Mullaghbawn area was visited on a few occasions by large contingents of military, R. I. C. and Special Constabulary making a thorough search of the entire valley. Those raids generally started at daybreak and lasted for a whole day. During those round-ups a few civilians were fired on by Crown Forces when working in their fields. A man named Michael Smyth was shot dead at Balleeks, Co. Armagh, and a young man named Peter Mackin was seriously wounded by Crown Forces at Aughtanduff.

From the attack on Camlough Barracks or at least from early in January 1921, Mullaghbawn was Brigade Headquarters, and from March 1921 it was Divisional Headquarters. There was no other place in our Divisional area where the same feeling of safety existed for men "on the run". The people of Mullaghbawn were one hundred per cent reliable and no matter what their political views were-they were not all republicans - they could be relied upon to protect and help men "on the run". Even the few Unionists in the place were decent and friendly towards us. One of them, Charles Carlyne of Forkhill, was arrested by Crown Forces and kept a prisoner with a number of other republican prisoners in the Military Barracks in Newry. I heard afterwards that Charles learned to recite the Rosary in Irish whilst a prisoner.

In April, 1921, a column of men left from Divisional Headquarters in Mullaghbawn to carry out an attack on a military relief party going to relieve the guard on the house of a Unionist resident at a place named Plaster near Dundalk in Co. Louth. The guard on this house were relieved each morning at 8 a.m. by about thirty military travelling from Dundalk in a big military tender. I was mobilised to take

charge of practically all the active men of the Company to block the roads around Forkhill and Carrickasticken districts. We thoroughly blocked the roads on the Saturday night before the operation - 16th April, and then went home.

On the Saturday night after this - 23rd April - I and a few others were mobilised by John McCoy and we went into Camlough to carry out an operation in that village. I remember distinctly being waiting for some time that night at the old Church on the Keggal road. I am uncertain of the details of what we were to do now. It was planned I think to attack a police patrol if such was out and as no police were about in the village we returned home.

On Sunday morning, 24th April, 1921, a big round-up took place all over the valley of Mullaghbawn and in other South Armagh districts. I was sleeping in a house outside Cashel that night and as this district was not covered by the round-up I didn't know anything of what was happening in the valley. Mick McCoy, a brother of John McCoy, came to me about 11 a.m. and told of the round-up; that Johnny was wounded and captured and that Mick McCann, Company Captain, and Volunteers Barney Murphy and Paddy Kelly were captured. The house where John McCoy, McCann, Murphy and Kelly were captured at was Betty Grant's.

It appears that immediately after John McCoy had escaped from the house and was wounded by rifle and machine-gun fire the Crown Forces adopted a most hostile attitude towards all the people remaining in the house and they had actually made some preparations to carry out a threat to burn the place. About this time Betty Grant found a service revolver and a hand-grenade concealed in the house. She got a bucket and went to a barrel of meal, put some of the meal in the bucket, put in the revolver and the hand-grenade and

left the house. An officer told a soldier to "keep an eye on this woman" and the soldier went after her. She went into a field where young calves were grazing and called the calves. She sat on a ditch on where a hedge was growing and when the calves came to her they would not take the dry meal. The soldier was standing near her with his rifle, tin hat and full war equipment, and she complained to the soldier that the raiders were upsetting everything in the valley, including the calves. The soldier seemed to know little of the ways of calves and he moved off a short distance and when Betty got the opportunity she slipped the revolver and the hand-grenade into the hedge behind where she was sitting, and so by her coolness, presence of mind and ability to bluff she saved the capture of the revolver and bomb and probably the destruction of her house. This was not bad for a woman then over 70 years of age and who had never been more than twenty miles from her home place.

After this round-up a meeting of the Mullaghbawn Company was held in Mullaghbawn Hall, to appoint a Captain to replace Mick McCann. I was appointed Company Captain by a ballot of the men.

After John McCoy's capture the British Authorities concentrated their attentions to the Mullaghbawn area. They apparently knew that John McCoy was a senior officer in the I.R.A. and that his capture in Mullaghbawn was an indication that local I.R.A. Headquarters were there. Heavy military and police patrols in motor tenders were sent in to our district. Individual houses were raided. One of the tactics adopted by the enemy was to drop a man here and there at night at different points from a passing lorry patrol. We knew of this practice and were watching

out for those men but we never got into contact with any of them.

A constant guard was placed on Divisional Headquarters to prevent surprise during the hours of darkness. Mary Muckian's was Divisional Headquarters at the time and the house of Barney Carroll close by was used as a guard house where about twelve or more men were on duty each night fully armed. The Cumann na mBan were so reliable and vigilant that during daylight hours we felt that the girls were sufficiently alert and capable to give ample warning of approaching danger. At this time, from May 1921 to the Truce, our principal duty was the protection of Divisional Headquarters. The long hours of daylight coupled with the constant harassing of the enemy forces, curtailed the carrying out of any large scale I.R.A. operations.

About this time a Constable Harvey of the R.I.C. was promoted to the rank of Sergeant. This man had been most prominent in all R.I.C. and military activities of the Tan War. He was openly aggressive in his attitude towards the inmates of republican houses where he was present during raiding operations. He had served in Forkhill R.I.C. Barracks for some years before 1920 and he knew all the people of our district. We got orders to shoot this man and we lay in wait for him on a few occasions, once near Balleeks and on another occasion at Clonlum near Meigh.

#### Burning of the Rectory.

About May, 1921, our Divisional Intelligence got information that The Rectory near Mullaghbawn was to be occupied by British Crown Forces. This building was situated on an eminence overlooking the valley of Mullaghbawn. If the enemy forces were installed in this building they

could view the whole valley and with the aid of powerful field glasses observe the movements of the people around the various houses scattered over the valley. The Rectory building was formerly occupied by the Church of Ireland Clergymen and was of generous proportions; it was said to contain thirty-two rooms.

We had been discussing the question of burning this place about a week before we actually got orders to do so. We knew that it was an ideal site for the British forces and that if it was occupied that we would be compelled to evacuate Mullaghbawn. It was as well that we waited for orders as the local people who were all our enthusiastic supporters would feel displeased about the imposition of a large sum of money on the poor rates in the form of a decree for malicious injury or damage if they believed that the burning of the building was wanton or unnecessary.

We got orders to burn it late one evening and we immediately made arrangements to carry out the operation as soon as darkness fell. We mobilised between forty and fifty men for the job. We conveyed flax tow from a nearby flax mill and spread it over all the floors of the building. We then got a sufficient quantity of paraffin oil to generously sprinkle the tow. We then set fire to the building which was soon a mass of flames. We had our work completed about 4.30 a.m. and we went home. About 8 a.m. a large force of military in motor tenders equipped with all the material to erect defences around the Rectory, such as barbed wire, stakes, <sup>etc./</sup> also bedding and sleeping equipment, arrived from Armagh City. The advance lorries of this force were close to the Rectory when they suddenly realised that something was wrong. They then immediately got out of their lorries, divided into sections and proceeded to

surround the Rectory and to advance on the building in extended formation. The ruins of the Rectory were smouldering at this time, the fire having burned itself out, and the military apparently thought that the fire was only being lighted and that the I.R.A. could be surrounded at the building in the act of burning it.

When the military realised that the entire building was a ruin and could not be saved they returned back the way they came. There was no other house large enough or as suitably situated for military occupation to be commandeered in the locality so we escaped this great danger. As I said before it would be inadvisable to carry out this burning earlier and if it had been delayed for a few hours it would have been too late owing to the military's arrival. When the job was done every person in the valley was well pleased.

#### Derailment of Troop Train at Adavoyle.

In June, 1921, King George V of England opened a Parliament for Northern Ireland in Belfast. About the day of the opening ceremony a courier arrived at Divisional Headquarters at Mullaghbawn from General Headquarters in Dublin. Shortly after the arrival of this courier the Divisional O/C. mobilised a small number of the Mullaghbawn Company - three or four - to carry out a derailment of one of the troop trains which was conveying British military personnel to Dublin and the Curragh after their taking part in the opening ceremony of the Parliament in Belfast. I was given to understand that a number of trains were to be attacked at different points and that "our train" was the last of those trains leaving Belfast. The Divisional O/C. took charge of this operation and he and the men mobilised in Mullaghbawn arrived at Adavoyle - the place selected for the

derailment about 6 a.m. on the 24th June, 1921. We met there a number of officers and men mobilised from other parts of the Division. Those men included Seán Quinn, Divisional Quartermaster, Mick Fearon O/C. Camlough Battalion, and a few men from both Meigh and Kileavey Companies.

The place selected for the derailment was at a slight bend to the right on the Dublin up line and at an embankment where a derailed train would fall down a slope with a drop of roughly thirty feet. The plan adopted was to remove the bolts from the fish plates of the outer rail and when the train due for derailment arrived near the spot selected the outside rail was to be removed. After we arrived at the place we concealed ourselves in a vacant house beside the railway. Scouts were sent to a mountain on the eastern side of the position where it was possible to have a clear view of the railway for about four miles and be in a position to identify the kind of train coming so that ordinary passenger or goods trains would be safeguarded. A signal was arranged to warn us of the approach of the military train. The first activity we carried out at the scene of the operation was to take charge of a number of railwaymen working on our section of the line. We took these men into the vacant house and kept them under guard until the derailment took place. Whilst we were still concealed in the vacant house a military train passed through

As we were within view of Adavoyle Railway Station and the absence of the railway workers might cause suspicion at the station, we took off our coats and acted as if we were the workmen engaged on the line. We cut all telegraph and telephone wires along the railway line and waited the expected signal.

We got the signal that the train was approaching and we removed a length of rail as described in the above plans. When we had this done we could hear the train approaching and we cleared off in the direction of Meigh village. When I got 300 to 400 yards from where the rail was removed I looked back and saw that the engine and one carriage had remained on the line and all the remaining carriages had disappeared from my view in the opposite side of the railway track as they had toppled down the embankment on the opposite side as planned. I saw, what appeared to me, a British military officer getting out of the carriage that was attached to the engine, on to the railway line. We retreated away from the vicinity of the crash. We returned to Mullaghbawn that evening but did not remain there. Great military and police activities commenced especially around Killeavey, Meigh, Dromintee and Forkhill areas. Mullaghbawn did not, I think, get so much attention on this occasion. Labour was commandeered around the scene of the train smash to bury the large number of military horses destroyed.

Reprisal for Shooting of Four I.R.A. Men near Newry.

On the 6th July, 1921, four young men were shot dead by a murder gang. Those men were: John and Thomas O'Reill; (brothers) Cloughmore, Newry; Pat McGinnitty, Ballymacdermott, and Patrick Quinn, Derrybeg, Newry. Those young men were all active members of the I.R.A. and their homes were all located close to the Orange village of Altnaveigh where the people were all most antagonistic to everything national and republican.

A few days after the above shooting orders were issued by our Divisional Headquarters to carry out a reprisal for

the shooting of our four comrades by shooting a number of "B" Specials from Altnaveigh who were employed as linesmen on the Great Northern Railway line near Newry. I and about six others, including Paddy Fearon, went on the morning of 11th July, 1921, to a point on the railway line where those men usually passed on their way to work each morning. We waited at a little wall along the railway line for their arrival. About 7 a.m. a man named Holmes came along. This man was from Altnaveigh. We accosted him and suggested that he stay with us for a short time, and we were in the act of taking him behind the small wall near the line when he panicked and refused to move off the line and created a noisy scene. Our idea in getting this man behind the wall was to hold him concealed until the others came up to us. The noise this man made might be intended to warn the others and it did. We carried out our orders as far as he was concerned and about the time he was shot we saw another man, who had not reached as far as we were placed, running from the vicinity of the railway in the direction of Newry. After the shooting of Holmes we made a hasty retreat from the place which was only about one mile from Newry. This shooting was carried out as an official reprisal for the murder of the two O'Reilly's, McGinnity and Quinn. It was purely accidental that the unfortunate man - Holmes - came along first and was the only victim. There was, however, ample evidence to prove that he had such an intense hatred for everything republican that he would go to extreme limits to destroy the movement. In this the man was no different from his other Unionist neighbours in his local village. I wish, however, to record that he suffered not for anything he himself had done but for a deadly danger to the lives and freedom of our companions in arms which men of his class represented. After we apprehended this man his

associates became aware of the intended reprisal and quickly cleared from the vicinity, leaving our score on the losing side.

Some time shortly before the Truce, Barney O'Hanlon who was then Battalion Quartermaster, and I were ordered to go into Dundalk with a horse and van and remove some rifles from Dundalk to our area. We called at Tom Roger's place in Bridge Street and made contact there with the Divisional O/C. who was apparently staying in Roger's. We were handed a number of rifles, four to six, and we took them back to Mullaghbawn with the horse and van.

#### Truce Period.

After the Truce was called on the 11th July, 1921, there was little local Volunteer activities for a few weeks. All the men who were "on the run" and "sleeping out" returned home. About August or early September an I.R.A. Training Camp was established at Killeavey, Co. Armagh. I attended this camp for two weeks, training in the usual courses of drills and in the use and care of firearms. After this about the winter months of 1921, I attended a Training Camp at Giles Quay, Co. Louth. The course in this camp dealt with the mapping of areas and the use of maps generally for military purposes.

From the Truce period onwards the training of my Company was carried out regularly. All the men got a grounding in some one of the special services, as we then called them, such as signalling, first aid, engineering. Another duty, which entailed a considerable amount of time and work, was in connection with police work and attendances at republican courts, dealing with the usual petty offences

such as drunkenness, public house management. We had also to enforce the court decrees, collect fines, etc.

From early January, 1922, it became evident that the Northern Government had decided to enforce their laws in the Six Counties area. Armed patrols in motor tenders in some instances accompanied by armoured cars started to patrol the roads in our area. In areas further north containing strong Unionist elements in the population, the "B" Specials commenced to patrol their areas and whilst armed to act in a provocative and aggressive manner towards their catholic neighbours. In many instances houses were raided for I.R.A. officers and men. We got orders at this time to initiate what was called a Company protection scheme. We took over a vacant house situated in the fields away from a main road and on top of a small hill. This house belonged to Paddy Kelly, R.I.P., who was an active I.R.A. man. We put in sleeping accommodation for about twenty men in the house and took it over at night. The active men of the Company slept in Kelly's house, all armed with rifles, revolvers and handgrenades. Outposts were put into positions covering all approaches to the place. Those outposts were changed every two hours during the night. We carried out this scheme for some weeks and we only dropped it when the Divisional Staff decided that the Company should take over a vacant house at Dungooley in Co. Louth. This house, McNamee's, was occupied by us from about April 1921. After being in McNamee's for about a month we moved to a much larger house, Nugent's, where a few hundred men could be accommodated. This house was also in Dungooley. The garrison in McNamee's were all members of the Mullaghbawn Company and in Nugent's both Mullaghbawn and Camlough Companies formed the garrison. Both those houses were known as Dungooley Camp and the garrison in each were full-

time men. The idea behind those camps was to safeguard the men from our Six Counties area from capture by the Crown Forces there; to provide the men in camp with an intensive course of military training and to use the camp as a base for sending men into Northern Ireland to protect our civil population or to attack the British forces there. Officers from Dungooley Camp were sent into the Military Barracks in Dundalk for short special courses on important branches of military training, use of machine gun - Lewis and Thompson - sub-machine gun; the use of rifle grenades, engineering, etc. Instructors from the Military Barracks came to the camp to put the men through their paces. The objective aimed at in all this intensive training was to turn out soldiers as well trained in the military sense and fitter in the physical sense than the British forces we hoped to meet in the North.

About the middle of May 1922, a column was formed in Dungooley Camp for service across the Border in Co. Armagh. The men selected for the column - between forty and fifty - were picked from about 150 men in the camp, supplemented at times by officers from the Military Barracks.

The Column men were as well equipped as any of the infantry units of the British Army then operating in Northern Ireland. Our only deficiency was in the matter of armoured cars and armoured plated lorries of which we had none. Our men were, however, as well armed individually as most men carried a revolver and a hand-grenade in addition to a rifle. We were also better equipped in the matter of machine-guns. The Column generally carried two machine-guns (a Lewis and Thompson sub-machine gun). Our men were trained to operate from ambush to get close in to the enemy, and the weapons we carried were ideal for our type of fighting when combined with the use of land mines on armoured vehicles.

About the middle of May 1922, a rising had been planned in the Six Northern Counties and an expeditionary force was being put together to invade Northern Ireland from camps like ours situated in Southern Ireland along the Border area. The men in those camps were all I.R.A., forced from February onwards - to leave their homes in Northern Ireland. The garrison of the Military Barracks in Dundalk were also made up of men from the Six Counties area. Other camps of 4th Northern Division men were situated at Ravensdale, Bridge-a-Crin in Co. Louth, at a place outside Castleblayney and at Castleshane in Co. Monaghan. I don't know much about the plans for this attack on the North. I know that large supplies of arms were sent into the various Battalion and Brigade Units in the Fourth Northern Division area in Northern Ireland. I know that arms and ammunition were also sent in large quantities to the Third Northern Division through Dundalk and were packed into oil tankers in the Military Barracks which carried the stuff to its destination as far north as Co. Antrim by road.

I know that the rising in the North was called off about the 19th May, 1922.

A few days later wholesale arrests were carried out in most districts in Northern Ireland where republican organisation existed. The I.R.A., the I.R.B., Cumann na mBan and the Fianna Eireann were proclaimed by the Northern Government about the 23rd May. A feeling of apprehension and fear of reprisals by Crown Forces in the North existed amongst our civilian population in South Armagh districts. This feeling prompted large numbers of the male population residing within four to five miles of the Border to cross into Co. Louth each night for safety and a sleep. In other districts - not so conveniently situated near the Border - men slept out in the fields.

Apparently our Divisional Staff were concerned about the safety of our republican supporters in the Northern part of our Division and were making plans which should afford some protection. Those plans envisaged the capture of a number of prominent Unionists in each district in Northern Ireland within our Divisional area, and also the sending of columns of well armed men into districts where it was a military feasibility to do so. It was hoped by sending our columns into certain areas that we would improve the morale of our own civilians and make the Unionist civilians (if any Unionists could then be classed as civilians) realise that even in their own districts they were not immune from punishment for the misdeeds of their relatives serving in the "B" Specials.

About the last Saturday night in May orders were issued to capture a large number of prominent Unionists as outlined above. I got orders at Dungooley Camp to arrest four men - Jim Murdock, a man named Patterson, Richard Stokes and William Smyth. We captured three of them, William Smyth being away from home when we called. Many others were captured from Mid and North Armagh, Newry and South Down. All those Unionists were taken into the Military Barracks in Dundalk and informed there that they were being held as hostages for the good conduct of the other Unionists in their several districts.

Shortly after this general effort to obtain hostages, the First Lieutenant of the Mullaghbawn Company, John McPartland, and two other men from the Company crossed into Northern Ireland carrying revolvers. They went to within about one and a half miles of Newtownhamilton on the Newry road and waited there at a bend of the road. I don't know if McPartland had any clear idea as to what he intended doing; just waiting and watching I expect for something to

turn up and having no idea as to what might come along. Suddenly he saw two motor tenders of police in uniform and a model T Ford motor car following close on the tenders, coming up the road from Newtownhamilton. McPartland and his men hid themselves at the side of the road and when the two motor tenders passed they jumped out in front of the motor car with revolvers in their hands and forced the car to pull up and the two occupants to put up their hands and surrender. Whilst this was taking place the two tenders of police had passed round a slight bend on the road and were lost to view. One of the men who surrendered in the car was a Captain McMurren, then an officer in the Special Constabulary, who was in charge of the "B" Specials in the southern half of Co. Armagh. The second man in the car was Captain McMurren's driver. McPartland and his men got into the car after disarming the occupants and forced the driver to turn off the main road and drive the car over bye-roads to our camp in Dungooley. The two prisoners were then taken into the Military Barracks in Dundalk where they were held prisoners up to July 1922. They were released by the 5th Northern Division troops after their capture of Dundalk on the 16th July.

#### Column Activities in South Armagh.

About this time the Column I mentioned above started to cross into Northern Ireland. One of the first places this column moved to was on the road from Lislea to the Mountain House where we took up a position along this mountainous road. We put down two land mines on the road to deal with either armoured cars or armoured lorries if they came along in a patrol. This was the direct road from Markethill to Forkhill and we had information that strong motor lorry and armoured car patrols passed over this road at least once each day. We remained in this position for at least two days and

as nothing came our way and as it would be poor military tactics to remain too long at one position we took up our land mines and evacuated the position.

Some time later two men were found murdered on the place we put down the land mines on the road. Those men had been "lifted" by men in a motor tender near their homes the evening previous to their being found. Both the men were republican in politics but had no connection with the I. R. A. Their names were Crawley and Creegan.

After this the Column went across and took <sup>up</sup> positions at the following places: Longfield Road, once; Ummeracam, three times; Gargin, Silverbridge and Mullaghbawn. At Mullaghbawn a fight occurred with a strong force of military and police in armoured cars and armoured lorries at an ambush position taken up beside the village. This affair took place about 2 a.m. on a Saturday night. I was not in this affair myself so I will leave the description of it to participants.

Shortly after we moved to Co. Louth. The lorry patrols on the roads in the Mullaghbawn area became a matter of frequent occurrence and a system of regular movements of Crown Forces - generally a mixed force of Specials and British Army - passed on our roads between the various occupied positions, such as Urcher Camp and Crossmaglen Barracks on our western side to Newtownhamilton, Whitecross and Newry on the north side, and to Jonesboro', Dromintee and Captain Alexander's place on our southern side. At this time also a number of plain-clothes men who were attached to the Specials' Camp at Captain Alexander's place near Forkhill were seen often by our Cumann na mBan girls and other reliable sources of intelligence. Those men were loitering about on the roads and sometimes went into our people's house as they did just before the Truce in 1921.

It was assumed by us that those men knew that all our active local Volunteers were then domiciled in Co. Louth, and that occasionally some of us did go down to our home areas for different reasons. In fact there was daily movement of individuals back and forth between Dungooley and Mullaghbawn and other areas.

When the Column started to go into South Armagh and to remain for a few days at a time in one position awaiting to ambush any British Army or Northern police forces which would come along, it was found that although an ambush was laid on a road that was very regularly used by Crown Forces, none of them made their appearance whilst the Column was in position. This state of affairs looked at first as a matter of bad luck; that it was a coincidence that other roads were used during the time the Column was on a particular road. It soon dawned on us, however, that it would be unlikely that we could remain in a position for say twenty-four hours without the British Authorities getting to know of our presence. The positions occupied by the Column were at least five to six miles inside the Northern Frontier and it would have been a simple matter for the British to throw a few thousand men around the Column and deal with it in the usual military manner. The fact that no action was taken after the Column had made repeated visits seems to prove that the Northern Government - or should I say the British Government - apparently wished to avoid any large-scale military clashes in their area during the month of May 1922.

About early June 1922, a change of policy became apparent in the attitude of the British Military Authorities in Northern Ireland. In our area an unprovoked attack was made by Special Constabulary on our position at Dungooley Cross. This attack was initiated by a small number of men,

perhaps a dozen Specials, all told. It may have been planned to test the alertness of our outposts. The Specials came along singly in an unobtrusive manner to the borderline between Armagh and Louth, took up firing positions and opened fire on one of our outposts at Dungooley Cross. This fire was replied to with such vigour and effect that the Specials could not get a safe line of retreat from their positions. The firing was only a short time in progress when reinforcements came, including an armoured car, manned by British military forces. Soon what commenced as a minor affair involving about thirty to forty men all told, became a sort of general battle involving several armoured cars and perhaps one hundred military and Specials against all the combative strength of Dungooley Camp. Early in this affair the British forces took over Flynn's house facing our outpost at Dungooley Cross. When they desired to withdraw from this position they found it almost impossible to safely evacuate their men as we controlled by our fire all avenues of retreat. It was only by the employment of an armoured car and all the available rifle fire on our positions that they were able to get their men away.

About a day or so after this affair a battle started at Jonesboro', Flurrybridge Border, where also the British Army Units helped the Special Constabulary in an affair which commenced with the raiding of Gallagher's pub at Flurrybridge on the Free State side by Specials. The Specials' Barrack and the pub were less than one hundred yards apart with the Frontier passing between them. The fight here lasted for about two days.

James McGuill's, Dromintee, was raided also early in June by Specials wearing masks. There were only women and children in the house, - Mrs. McGuill, her young family, her mother and a domestic servant. The Specials threatened

and abused the women who evacuated the premises the next day, and the following night the house, shop and out-offices were burned to the ground by Crown Forces, who claimed later that this burning was a matter of military necessity. A few days after the burning a column of men from the Military Barracks, Dundalk, under Frank Aiken, took up position in the ruins of McGuill's house to ambush a passing patrol. The Specials apparently got to know that the Column was waiting for them and a force of them came along from Captain Alexander's and approached our men's position in their stockinged feet and commenced the attack, a most unusual occurrence.

At this time also large-scale attacks were carried out by the British Crown Forces at Pettigo, Co. Donegal, and Beleek, Co. Fermanagh. At Carrive Grove near Dungooley Cross the Specials fired on some of our men without provocation and wounded a young civilian named Arthur McPartland.

Those incidents in our area and on the Donegal/Fermanagh Frontiers and other incidents that could be mentioned, which occurred at other places should prove that a change took place in the military policy of the British Government between the end of May and early June, 1922.

I took the republican side in the Civil War. I had a couple of engagements with State Forces in Dundalk - Dundalk Barracks and Dundalk Gaol. I had also a couple of engagements with State Forces at Dungooley, Co. Louth.

I was arrested with Gerald Davis at Annagasson, Co. Louth, about the end of February 1923, and taken into Dundalk Gaol. We were courtmartialled after our arrest. Later I was sent to Mountjoy Gaol and the Curragh Prison Camp where I did thirty-five days' hunger strike. I was released from Hare Park Camp, the Curragh, in June 1924.

I returned to my home area after my release but I did not sleep at home for a considerable time after my release.

I have no desire to deal in any more detail with any of the engagements I had with former comrades during the Civil War, but I do want to place on record that I took the republican side. As a Northerner and Six-Counties man I could not willingly accept partition. I do not mention this as an excuse for my anti-treaty attitude or as an apology for my republican activities as I realise that people born in any other part of Ireland were entitled to object on the same grounds if they so decided. The only difference, if any, is that in my case I did not have to ponder over the arguments used in the heavy Treaty debates in An Dáil at the time the acceptance of the Treaty was passed, to decide the difference between tweedledum and tweedledee. My reason for rejecting the Treaty ("partition") was all too evident at home. The correctness of a northern republican's anti-treaty attitude was later amply demonstrated when the Northern Government began to feel secure enough to enforce their powers to govern the six partitioned counties in the years 1923, 1924 and since. In this period my cousin, Patrick Grant, R. I. P., was shot dead at his home in Mullaghbawn by the Royal Ulster Constabulary. His only offence at this time was the natural instinct to evade the danger of capture by a band of undisciplined ruffians wearing Government uniform.

In conclusion, I must explain that it would be impossible to give an historical account of the events in our area with anything pertaining to completeness and stop at the 11th July, 1921. An account stopping then would not record half the events that took place during a very troubled period and would be useless as an historical document.

SIGNED

*John Grant*  
JOHN GRANT.

DATE

*21.3.52.*

21.3.52.

WITNESS

*John McCoy*  
(John McCoy)  
*21/3/52*

21.3.52.