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COSANTA.

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 1,151

Witness

Patrick Joseph Luddy,  
Coolregan,  
Mitchelstown,  
Co. Cork.

Identity.

O/C. Mitchelstown Company I.R.A.

Vice O/C. Castletownroche Battalion Cork II Brigade.

Subject.

National activities, Mitchelstown, Co. Cork,  
1912-1921.

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# ORIGINAL

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STATEMENT BY

PATRICK JOSEPH LUDDY, COOLREGAN, MITCHELSTOWN,  
CO. CORK.

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I was born at Coolregan, Mitchelstown, in November, 1890. My father was out in 1867 with O'Neill Crowley. He was a tenant of the Kingston Estate as was his father, who was apparently in charge of a number of farms on the estate. He was, I have been given to understand, usually consulted by the landlord in connection with such matters as water-rights and sub divisions in the case of the tenants. My father's first cousin and his first cousin's brother-in-law were arrested after '67 and my father was also to be taken up but the Kingston family used their influence to allow him to go free. In addition the Kingston family arranged to have my father's cousin and his brother-in-law released. My father died in 1906 and his first cousin died - still a Fenian in 1922.

My father went through the Land Campaign on the tenants' side. This was a violent campaign in this area and the men and women of the Mitchelstown district took strong and active steps to ensure that landlord's men were effectively dealt with. He was also a follower of Parnell. It was in the atmosphere of the history of these times that I was reared as I listened to the stories of the period being recounted at fireside chats in my home when the neighbours gathered in during the Autumn and Winter nights.

In 1912 I joined the Ancient Order of Hibernians in Mitchelstown. One of my fellow members was Liam Lynch while one of the leading lights in the organisation at that time was J.G. Skinner, father of Leo Skinner, now District Justice for Tipperary-Waterford area. It was in that year I first met Frank Drohan, Clonmel. I went to Clonmel to purchase a pony trap from his firm, which was famous as builders of such

vehicles. When I had made my purchase the political "set up" of the time came under discussion and Frank gave me a copy of a current revolutionary paper (I cannot now remember the name) but it dealt mainly with the Irish Republican Brotherhood. When I returned home I sent a Postal Order for the amount of 12 months' subscription to the address given on the paper but I never got another copy of the paper nor an acknowledgment of the subscription. This was the first intimation I had that there was any national organisation other than the political parties of the time - Redmondite and O'Brienite.

The Irish National Volunteers were formed in Mitchelstown in April, 1914. It is interesting to record that at a meeting of the Mitchelstown Branch of the A.O.H. a resolution was passed asking the younger members not to join the Volunteers. My reaction was to join the Irish Volunteers at the next parade at the Brewery Yard (where parades were held at this time). As far as I can recollect, the organisation was established with the co-operation of Liam Denn, who came over from Fermoy. He was a native of Kilkenny - a teacher I think - and acted as an organiser. Drill instruction was given by Sergeant Major Gleeson, who was a retired member of the British Army. The strength of the unit at the time was about 200. I think that the first officers were:- Wm. Casey, Wm. J. Ryan, Paddy Coughlan and James O'Neill but I cannot recollect the positions held by each.

A review of the Irish National Volunteers from Mitchelstown and the surrounding districts was held in the town in the Summer of 1914. The reviewing officer was Colonel Maurice Moore. Following this review all the members of the A.O.H. joined the Volunteers. The usual

foot drill was still carried on under the direction of Sergeant Major Gleeson and some of the Volunteer officers. Usually at week ends route marches took place to neighbouring areas. About this time a rally was held in Glanworth with a view to extending the organisation in the surrounding districts. I think that following the review James O'Neill (one of the officers) went across to Birmingham and purchased about 50 rifles. Most of these rifles were purchased from a fund raised from the subscriptions of the members. Some members purchased their rifles outright, including J.G. Skinner and Roger Kiely, Kilglass, who never surrendered their rifles afterwards.

The outbreak of the 1914/18 war caused a division in the ranks of the Volunteers, as shortly after the war began John Redmond appealed to the Volunteers to join the British Army and go out to Flanders "to fight for the freedom of small nations". As a believer in the necessity to fight for the rights of small nations I became a member of the Redmondite (The National) Volunteers. I took part as a member of the Mitchelstown Company in the review of the National Volunteers which was held in Phoenix Park, Dublin, in April, 1915. Amongst my companions that day were Leo Skinner and, I think, Liam Lynch. I continued a member of the then National Volunteers until they faded out towards the end of 1915 or early 1916. I was not then a member of any military organisation but was still a member of the A.O.H. I think I should mention at this stage that my brother Liam answered Redmond's call to fight for the freedom of small nations. He served throughout the 1914/18 war and then returned to take his place amongst the ranks of the Irish Republican Army.

On the Friday of Easter Week 1916 (Fair Day in Mitchelstown) I met Roger Kiely, Kilglass, Mitchelstown, who had been out with the local company of the Irish Volunteers earlier in the week. He said that "having regard to what was happening in Dublin any man who would not now fight for Ireland would be a coward". I offered to fight if he would give me a rifle. From that day until I joined the Irish Volunteers on the reorganisation early in 1917 I was sympathiser on the side of those who took part in the Rising at Easter 1916.

The Irish Volunteers were re-organised in Mitchelstown in, I think, April 1917. J.J. Walsh attended the meeting at which they were organised. The local pioneers in the organisation were - Mick Sullivan, Wm. J. Ryan, Paddy Coughlan, Jim O'Neill, John Keane, Tom Walsh, John Sheehan, Tom De La Rue and Dan O'Keefe. The strength of the reorganised unit was about 150. The first Company O/C. was Mick Sullivan but I cannot recollect the names of the other officers. The Company was a unit of the Galtee Battalion of which the O/C. was Liam Manahan - a Creamery Manager at Ardpatrick, Kilfinane. The battalion was comprised of units covering the greater portion of East Limerick and some districts inside the Cork border.

The usual foot drill and parades were carried on. Most of the drill instruction took place in fields in the vicinity of Mitchelstown. After a time arms drill with wooden rifles was introduced to prepare the members for the day when the real guns would be available. In addition to attending parades and meetings at this time all Volunteers were actively engaged in organising Sinn Féin (the political wing) in their areas. As a matter of fact this political organisation was mainly composed of Volunteers and members of their families.

Early in 1918 Liam Tobin arrived in the area. He was ostensibly engaged in organising Sinn Féin while his main interest was in Volunteer work. About this time a branch of Cumann na mBan was formed in the district. The first members were - Julia Ryan, Lizzie Clifford, Margaret Luddy, Annie Luddy and "Babs" Walsh. These were the pioneers in this organisation and were all sisters of Volunteers. Within a short time nearly all the young girls in the district had joined up.

When the Conscription Scare started in the Spring and Summer of 1918 there was a big rush of new recruits and the strength of the unit was doubled, reaching between three and four hundred. At this time, all the shotguns in the area which were not held by Volunteers were collected. All old members of the Company were actively engaged in this work. The captured guns (60) and ammunition were held at O'Donnells, Graune and here at my parents' home in Coolregan.

At this time a number of picked men were continually engaged on the manufacture of buckshot and the loading of cartridges with same. All the work was carried out at my parents' home at Coolregan which, at the time, was like an armed camp. Amongst those who were wholetime on the job were:- Seán Keane, Tom Walsh, Willie Gallahue, Dan O'Keefe, Tim Luddy, Paddy J. Luddy (witness), Wm. J. Ryan and Mick Sullivan. In addition to loading cartridges and making buckshot we also made some mines at this time. These mines were made by packing the centre of the cast iron "box" of a cartwheel with gelignite and other material. The openings at each end of the box were closed by steel plates held in position by a  $\frac{1}{2}$ " bolt which ran through the centre of the "box". A hole was made in one of the steel plates through which the fuse passed to the detonator inside the box. During the

Conscription period Volunteers were also engaged in watching enemy movements and reporting on same to their officers. When the danger of Conscription had passed, all the new recruits faded out of the Volunteers and the Company strength returned to about 150.

With a number of other members of the Company I went to Waterford during the bye-Election in March, 1918, where the supporters of the Sinn Féin candidate (Dr. Vincent White) were getting a tough time from the Redmondite supporters and the "Separation Women" (wives of soldiers serving in the British Army). We were mainly engaged in protection duty e.g. escorting Sinn Féin supporters to the polling booths and doing general police duty on behalf of the Sinn Féin party - the homes of whose members were often subject to attack.

During the General Election in December 1918 we were busily engaged in the home area on election work on behalf of the Sinn Féin candidates - Tom Hunter and David Kent - who were opposed by D.L. O'Gorman - a representative of the Irish Parliamentary Party (Redmonds).

When the Volunteer organisation in Cork was reorganised in January 1919 - there were about twenty battalions in the county at this time - it was decided to divide the area in three brigades. The North Cork area which extended from the Waterford border near Fermoy to the Kerry border beyond Millstreet was made a brigade area and was named Cork II Brigade. At this stage Mitchelstown Company was detached from the Galtee Battalion and became a unit of the Castletownroche Battalion, Cork II Brigade. Other companies in this battalion were Kildorrery, Castletownroche, Glanworth, Doneraile, Ballyhooley, Shanballymore,

Ballindangan, Killavullin, Ballygiblin. The officers of the battalion at the time were:-

O/C. Paddy Barry, Glanworth.  
Vice O/C. Ned Creed, Kildorrery.  
Adj. Dan Shinnick, Castletownroche.  
Q.M. Seán Curtin, Ballylough.

The officers of the new Brigade were:-

O/C. Liam Lynch, Fermoy.  
Vice O/C. Dan Hegarty, Mallow.  
Adj. Tom Barry, Glanworth.  
Q.M. George Power, Fermoy.

It was about this time that an order was issued that all hunting should be stopped throughout the country until the prisoners were released. Arising out of this order Volunteers from Mitchelstown and the surrounding districts proceeded to Kilworth area to hold up a meet of the Duhallow Foxhounds. Some members of the Hunt were not prepared to desist at first but when they saw that we were determined to prevent the holding of the meet they desisted and returned home. Amongst those who were present on this occasion were:- Wm. J. Ryan, Jerry Clifford, - Fox, Patrick J. Luddy (Witness) and two others whose names I cannot recollect.

I think that it was during the Summer of 1919 I was appointed a member of the Parish Court set up under the authority of Dáil Éireann. The other members of the Court were:- Tom O'Brien (Clerk of Mitchelstown Union) and Denis O'Brien. There was also a District Court established, of which the Chairman was Eamonn Condon; Liam Boland, the present District Court Clerk in Mitchelstown was Clerk to the Courts. The decisions in all cases dealt with by the

courts were accepted by the litigants in every case.

Towards the end of 1919 following the raid on the British military party on their way to the Wesleyan Church at Fermoy, Liam Lynch came into the area. He was apparently dissatisfied with the position in the Mitchelstown Company as during the previous twelve months there were continuous changes in officer personnel with resultant inactivity in the area and much dissatisfaction amongst the rank and file. Training was actually at a standstill. He called a meeting at Walsh's, Corracunna, to which he invited the following:- Willie J. Ryan, "Moss" Walsh, Dan O'Keefe and myself. He stated that he had decided to dismiss the whole company from the I.R.A. and proposed to appoint the following officers to reorganise the unit:-

O/C. Patrick J. Luddy (Witness)

1st Lieut: Dan O'Keefe.

2nd Lieut: "Moss" Walsh

Feeling that Dan O'Keefe, who was one of the members of the Company in 1916, would be more acceptable to the general body on the reorganisation I suggested to Liam Lynch that I should exchange positions with him and go as 1st Lieutenant. Liam Lynch agreed with some reluctance stating that, although Dan O'Keefe was nominally O/C. he would hold me responsible for the efficient reorganisation of the unit. He then confirmed our appointments and obtained H.Q. sanction for this procedure.

We then set about the work of reorganisation - selecting in the first instance members known to be favourable to us. Mick Sullivan, who had been Company O/C., was taken on again and was appointed Section Commander - all former adherents of his and opponents of the new regime were placed in his Section. It was essential that this section should be catered for as most of the arms were in the hands of the

old officers and their satellites. My brother, Liam, who had seen service in the British Army during the 1914-18 war, was now appointed Training Officer. He set about instructing the members in the use of arms and hardly a Sunday passed that some section of the Company did not have some target practice under his guidance.

At this stage it was decided to organise a company in the Ballygiblin area where a section, which formed part of the Mitchelstown Company, was already in existence. In a short time the strength of this unit was raised to about 60. The officers were:-

O/C. - John O'Brien  
1st Lieut.- Jim Luther  
2nd Lieut.- Patk. Quinlan.

It was now early 1920 and things were beginning to get more lively. When the General Order for the destruction of evacuated military and R.I.C. posts was received at Easter 1920 it was necessary to arrange for the burning of the old Military Barracks at Mitchelstown. This was the only evacuated post in the area. This job was carried out on Easter Sunday night and nearly all the members of the company took part.

When Ballylanders R.I.C. post was attacked by the East Limerick Brigade Column in April, 1920, all members of the Company were engaged in blocking all roads and cutting all lines of communication in the area in order to impede the approach of the strong enemy forces at Fermoy and Kilworth to the beleaguered R.I.C. garrison. Similar action was taken on the occasion of the attack on Kilmallock R.I.C. Barracks at the end of May, 1920.

In May, 1920, a large section of the Company took

part in the removal of a large pump on wheels from Mitchelstown Castle. This pump was used by the Castle Authorities for spraying fruit trees and we thought that we could adapt it for use in spraying paraffin on the roof of Mitchelstown R.I.C. Barracks which we were preparing to attack. On examination, however, we found that the pump was not suitable for our purpose.

Some time about this period arrangements were made by the Battalion O/C. (Tom Barry) - he had now given up his post as Brigade Adjutant and returned to take charge of the battalion - to ambush some members of the R.I.C. who used to travel to Cork to attend the trial of the prisoners taken in connection with the raid on the military party at the Wesleyan Church in Fermoy in September, 1919.

Ballindangan Railway Station was the site selected for the ambush but although the ambush party were in position the enemy party did not travel by the train as expected. Amongst the ambush party on this occasion were Tom Barry (O/C.), Tim Luddy, Patk. J. Luddy (witness) and some members of the Glanworth Company whose names I cannot now recollect.

On July 22nd, 1920, two Volunteers (Dan McGrath and Thomas McDonnell) were shot by a party of British Military at Corracunna Cross about  $1\frac{1}{2}$  miles from Mitchelstown on the road to Cahir. They were standing with a crowd of civilians at the cross-roads. I arrived at the crossroads shortly after the shooting and had to send other Volunteers who had been with me on parade to search the fields to ascertain if any others had been shot. At the inquest held on these Volunteers the jury brought in a verdict of murder against the Crown Forces and I think that this was one of the last inquests held. The Crown Solicitor representing the British Forces involved asked the jury not to bring in a verdict of murder or they would all be shot.

Normal training activities went on throughout the Summer and on September 28th, 1920, Jerry Clifford, a member of the Company, was one of the party which captured Mallow Military Barracks which was garrisoned by a party of the 17th Lancers. This job was carried out by the newly formed Brigade Column under Liam Lynch and Ernie O'Malley.

Towards the end of October, 1920, on the instructions of the Brigade O/C. (Liam Lynch) a Battalion Column was formed in Castletownroche area. The first members of this column were:- Tom Barry, Glanworth (O/C.), Wm. O'Regan (Vice O/C.), Dan Shinnick, Tim Barry, Wm. Barry, Dick Smith, Jim O'Mahoney, Patk. J. Luddy (Witness), Dave Bernard, Paddy Cronin, Jim O'Neill, Jerry Donovan. Later on these were augmented by Jack Sullivan, John Leamy, Jimmie Walsh, Dan O'Keeffe, Tim Fay, Wm. Gallagher, John O'Brien (Ballygiblin), John Noonan, Dave Magner, Michael O'Connor, Jack Leen and Dave Collins.

This column's first engagement was at Labbacally on November 26th, 1920. A few days previously - on November 23rd I think - a man named Denis O'Donnell was shot by the Tans in Kildorrery. A party of enemy forces came to Kildorrery to attend the inquest on November 26th, 1920. This party came from Fermoy and its arrival was reported to the Column O/C. (Tom Barry) who decided to ambush the party on the return journey.

The column were billeted at Dunmahon about 3 miles from the site selected for the ambush at Labbacally. The arrival of the enemy party in Kildorrery was reported about 2.30 p.m. and there was very little time to get to the selected position as it was anticipated that the enemy party would not delay in the village. The column to the number

of nine supported by a number of shotgun men from the local company had only taken up their positions inside the roadside fence at the top of a steep hill on the Glanworth-Fermoy road when the enemy party appeared. It was now about 5 p.m. All members of the ambush party were on the western side of the road. They were extended over a distance of about 70 yards. Owing to the short time available it had not been possible to arrange for the blocking of the road. The enemy party were travelling in two lorries but the lorries were travelling about 150 yards apart. When the first lorry entered the ambush position fire was immediately opened on it and as a result the driver of the other lorry stopped and changed direction at a crossroads at the foot of the hill. The driver of the lorry which entered the position, swerved his lorry and dashed through but in his endeavour to avoid being hit he struck the side of the fence and the Officer i/c. of the British military party was thrown from the lorry, while the lorry with the other members of the party continued on its way. The enemy party replied to our fire and the Column O/C. was slightly wounded. The Officer who was thrown from the lorry had an injured leg. His Sam Browne belt and revolver were taken from him and the ambush party then withdrew.

The ambush party together with the members of the local companies took up positions in the vicinity of Glanworth village on the night of the ambush as it was anticipated that the enemy forces would raid and loot the village as a reprisal. As a matter of fact a large enemy force in armoured cars and lorries visited Glanworth but beyond going on a drinking spree where all drinks were, of course, free they did no damage. As no damage was done the column withdrew to billets in Skehanagh when the enemy left. The members of the local companies returned to their own areas.

Our column was operating in an area which was practically surrounded by strong enemy forces. They held positions at the following places:-

- Buttevant - Headquarters of an Infantry Brigade.
- Ballyvonare - Headquarters, Machine Gun Battn.
- Kilworth Camp - An assortment of strong enemy forces.
- Moorepark Camp - As in the case of Kilworth.
- Fermoy - Headquarters of an Infantry Brigade where there was also an aerodrome.
- Mitchelstown - Strong military and R.I.C. garrisons.
- Kildorrery - R.I.C. and Tan garrison.
- Doneraile - As in previous case.
- Castletownroche - Military and R.I.C. posts.

The close proximity of such forces necessitated the establishment of an efficient intelligence and scouting system. This organisation was operated through the various company areas where the Company Officers were at all times kept in touch with enemy movements through the activities of the Intelligence Officers in each district who, in turn, reported through their Company I.O. to Battalion H.Q. and so, if necessary, to Brigade Intelligence Officer.

Following the engagement at Labbacally on November 26th, 1920, the column moved round the battalion area for some days in search of an opportunity to attack the enemy under circumstances which would be to our advantage. About the end of the first week in December the column was making arrangements for an attack on a party of enemy military forces who passed regularly between Kilworth and Tipperary via Mitchelstown. The position which was selected for the ambush was in the East Limerick Brigade area on the Mitchelstown-Tipperary road at Glenacurrane. The Column O/C (Tom Barry)

had asked Brigade H.Q. to send along one of the machine guns captured at Mallow with a crew. While awaiting the arrival of the gun and the men he contacted the O/C. East Limerick Brigade (Denny Hannigan) who was in the district with his column. The two columns met at Ballyarthur and the leaders (Denny Hannigan and Tom Barry) agreed to await the arrival of the machine gun and crew. The gun and crew arrived on, I think, December 16th, 1920, and on the following morning about 8 a.m. the <sup>joint</sup> ~~first~~ column took up positions at Glenacurrane about 3 miles from Mitchelstown.

There was nothing strange during the morning but about 3 p.m. the scouts on the Mitchelstown side of the position signalled the approach of the enemy. The signals indicated that the convoy consisted of one touring car and one lorry. As the enemy party approached, the road was blocked at the western end of the ambush position by pushing a pony trap into the roadway at a bend.

The touring car led the convoy and was closely followed by the lorry. As the car was about to reach the bend at which the road was obstructed fire was opened by the Hotchkiss gun crew (Dick Willis and Leo O'Callaghan) who were in position near the Galbally (Western) end of the ambush site. The driver was apparently killed by the first burst of fire as the car crashed into the barricade. The remainder of the ambush party then opened fire on the enemy party, some members of which jumped from the lorry and car and took up positions close to the roadside fence. The survivors continued to fight for a short time but after a few bursts of machine gun fire had been sent into the top of the fence at the spot from which the greatest volume of their fire was coming, they surrendered. This scrap must have gone on for about ten minutes or so. Our booty from this engagement consisted of 14 rifles (I think) and a good

amount of ammunition as well as two bags of Mills bombs. The enemy casualties were two killed and four wounded. The touring car and lorry were burned.

The joint columns in this engagement were in charge of O/C. East Limerick Brigade (Denny Hannigan) and numbered about 40. They were positioned on high ground overlooking the Mitchelstown-Tipperary road at Glenacurrane and were extended over about 200 yards. The machine gun crew were in position near the Western (Galbally) end. There were some members of the ambush party further west as well as the usual flanking party. I was with a party of about a dozen riflemen on high ground on the opposite side of the road to the main body. Our party were so placed that we could enfilade the road for some distance East of the barricade. We were then able to bring fire to bear on the members of the enemy party who jumped from the lorries at the opening burst of fire and who took up positions along the roadside fence. The party was in charge of Wm. ("Dorney") O'Regan, Battalion Vice O/C. When firing ceased and the arms and other stores had been collected, I withdrew with the members of my column to the Aughaphooca district where we billeted that night at William Sullivan's.

Early next day a report was received that three lorries of military had passed along the Kilfinane-Mitchelstown road. The joint columns moved into a position at Ballynacourty in the Kilfinane area about 2 p.m. that evening on the off chance that the enemy party would return through the ambush position. The site selected enabled the members of the ambush party to take up positions on high ground, on the two sides of the road, while Dick Willis

and Leo O'Callaghan with the machine gun were positioned on a high bridge which spanned the road and from which they could enfilade same. Sometime about 3 p.m. a priest drove into the ambush position in a pony and trap (I believe he was Fr. Ambrose, P.P., Glenroe). Some distance inside the position he stopped and spoke to some of the officers (I think it was the O/C, East Limerick Brigade (Dinny Hannigan). He then drove away and within a short time we got instructions to withdraw from our positions. I do not recollect why our plans were changed.

On the evening of December 18th, 1920, I moved off from the Kilfinane area with the other members of the Castletownroche column. We returned to Knockaneevin and Kilclooney in our own area where we billeted that night. We moved on next day to Dunmahon where the column was disbanded for Christmas. I then returned to my home area.

The column was to re-assemble early in January, 1921, but because of the disorganised state of the Mitchelstown Company (due to the arrest of a number of the Company Officers) I was ordered by the Battalion O/C. (Tom Barry) to remain in the area and to re-organise the Company. Jerry Clifford - another member of the column and of the Mitchelstown Company - was also instructed not to report but to assist me in the re-organisation. In reality these duties were delegated to us to ensure that vacancies were available on the column for some of the other officers and men, who were anxious to get an opportunity of serving on the column. At this stage Dan O'Keeffe joined the column and as a result the Company Officers were:-

O/C. - Paddy J. Luddy (Witness).  
1st Lieut. - Jerry Clifford.  
2nd Lieut. - Wm. Gallahue.

Some time about the middle of January, 1921, I was requested by the Brigade O/C. (Liam Lynch) to send him a good man from the area for his staff. I selected Mossie Walshe, who continued to serve on Liam Lynch's staff - both in Brigade and Division - until the "Cease Fire" in May, 1923. It was about this time also that I was notified that some important officers (I.R.A.) would pass through the area and I was instructed to arrange to have them billeted at Martin Lynch's, Broomhill. I sent Jerry Clifford to prepare Lynch's, to arrange for guards and to return to me so that the two of us would be there to take them along. I remained at my H.Q. on the borders of the East Limerick-South Tipperary area to await the arrival of the party. Jerry Clifford was arrested by a party of enemy forces who were lying in ambush. The party of officers did not, however, pass through my area and I later learned that they had been escorted by members of the Araglen Company to their destination. As far as I can recollect, these officers were travelling to a meeting at which the formation of the First Southern Division was being discussed.

At this time I was mainly engaged in the selection and training of men for duty with the Battalion Column as well as in organising intelligence and other services for the Mitchelstown and Ballygiblin areas. I was also acting as Liaison Officer between Cork II Brigade and the neighbouring brigades of South Tipperary and East Limerick. In order to keep lines of communication open in the area I arranged that in each district a cyclist or horseman would be available at all times to travel with despatches from the various centres. Should it not be found possible to employ a horseman or cyclist there were always Volunteers on hand to travel on foot. In addition we were able to utilise Jackie

Ryan - a fireman on the Mitchelstown-Fermoy branch of Great Southern and Western Railways - as and when required. This was the position up to the arrest of the Battalion O/C. (Tom Barry) in March, 1921, when I was appointed Battalion Vice O/C. as Wm. O'Regan (Dorney) then became Battalion O/C.

The Battalion Officers now were:-

O/C. - Wm. O'Regan, Doneraile.  
Vice O/C. - Patk. J. Luddy, Mitchelstown (Witness)  
Adjt. - Dan Shinnick, Castletownroche.  
Q.M. - Sean Curtin, Ballylough.

At this stage the officers of the Mitchelstown Company were:-

O/C. - Wm. Roche.  
1st Lieut. - Jack O'Neill.  
2nd Lieut. - Wm. Condon.

Wm. Gallahue had rejoined the column and I had become Battalion Vice O/C.

About mid March, 1921 a South Tipperary Brigade column under Seán Hogan were to attack Ballyporeen R.I.C. barracks. The column were billeted to the West of Ballyporeen in the townland of Kiltankan on the borders of the Ballygiblin Company area. Acting on information received, the British forces surrounded the area from Mitchelstown to Ballyporeen. The area was bordered by Kilworth Camp to Ballaghaderrig Bridge and by the Funchon river to Kilbehenny and Kiltankan on to Ballyporeen. When their scouts reported on the enemy movements the column left their billets at Kiltankan and moved on towards O'Donoghues, Gurteenaboul in Cork II Brigade area. This house had just been raided by a party of British troops under a high ranking officer when the column under Seán

Hogan reached the farmyard. The column remained for a short time but, as the enemy ring appeared to be closing in, they vacated O'Donoghue's house and led by Jim O'Donoghue and his sisters moved about six or seven fields further west - into a swampy area.

The local Volunteers and Cumann na mBan acted as Scouts in an endeavour to ascertain if the column could get through the enemy lines to the North of their position. This escape route and all others were closed so the Column O/C decided on a last stand where they were. Some enemy cavalry were actually entering the field in which the column were in position when Jim O'Donoghue, who had been acting as Scout, voluntarily walked into the enemy party. His appearance distracted the attention of the military. They placed him under arrest and, instead of continuing their search in the area, accompanied their prisoner to their base on the main Mitchelstown-Cahir road. They did not return to the area where they had taken Jim O'Donoghue prisoner and so enabled the column to remain undisturbed. The escape of the column may safely be attributed to the efficiency of the scouting and intelligence organisation in the area. Jim O'Donoghue was later released before the enemy withdrew.

The nett result of this large-scale round up by the enemy was the capture of one Volunteer. - my brother Tim Luddy - who was making his way through the enemy lines to advise me that the roundup was taking place. I had been visiting a neighbouring company area to contact the Battalion Training Officer \_\_\_\_\_ and escort him to Ballygiblin with two rifles to be used for training purposes in the Ballygiblin Company area. Owing to a change of dumps the rifles were not available and we

had to move into another company area to collect the rifles. The delay involved in obtaining the rifles forced the Training Officer and myself to remain away from the Mitchelstown area overnight and so we escaped the round up.

I should have mentioned that, when the military party raided O'Donoghue's, Gurteenaboul, the Officer-in-charge suggested to Jim O'Donoghue (a Volunteer) that he should become an Intelligence Officer for the British. When the suggestion was made O'Donoghue asked the officer to state how and whereto information was to be conveyed. The officer suggested that he (O'Donoghue) could call to the barracks in Mitchelstown or to a publichouse opposite the R.I.C. barracks in Fermoy where an R.I.C. man would always be available. O'Donoghue bluntly refused stating that he would rather see his blood run down the road before he'd betray his countrymen. The British officer then stood up and shook O'Donoghue's hand saying - "I'm proud to meet an honourable Irishman".

The experience of this round up and a former one which I accidentally escaped convinced me that it would be next to impossible to keep a full column in existence in the area, having regard to the disposal and strength of the enemy forces and the terrain of the battalion. I discussed this matter with the Brigade O/C. (Liam Lynch) and Battalion O/C. (Wm. O'Regan) at a Battalion Council meeting about this time. Some short time later as a result of their own experience of enemy round up, activities they came to the conclusion that the column as such could not exist in the Battalion area. The column was then

disbanded some time early in April. The members were ordered to return to their own areas and to take part in the training of the members of the local companies. They were also instructed to do everything possible to hinder the enemy administration in the district.

About this time the details of the levy for the Arms Fund had to be worked out and steps taken to arrange for its collection. The members of the column in conjunction with the members of the local companies were engaged on the making of arms dumps, blocking roads and cutting lines of communication. This work engaged the wholetime attention of the majority of the members of the local companies at this time.

The arms dumps were built mainly in fences - near gaps where there was usually a good amount of traffic by cattle. Waterproofed wooden containers were built into the fence and the opening was blocked by a suitable sized keystone which could be easily removed and replaced. Inspection officers were appointed to visit the dumps in each battalion area and to examine the dumps and their contents. These inspections were carried out by an officer from another battalion. Tom Joyce (Fermoy Battalion) carried out the inspections in this area while Dave Bernard (Castletownroche Battalion) carried out a similar duty in Fermoy area. Some dumps in this area were condemned and had to be re-constructed.

The intensive training of the local companies, which had been carried on by the members of the disbanded column, was now having good results. The Battalion Staff were of the opinion that a column could be formed from the trained personnel in each pair of companies and it was suggested to the Brigade O/C. (Liam Lynch) that the battalion should be

sub-divided into four sub-battalions as follows:-

- (1) Mitchelstown and Ballygiblin Companies - O/C. Wm. Roche.
- (2) Glanworth, Kildorrery Ballinlough Coys. - O/C. Tim Barry.
- (3) Doneraile and Shanballymore - O/C. Dick Smith.
- (4) Castletownroche, Ballyhooley,  
Killavullen Companies - O/C. Jack Lane.

This suggestion was approved by Brigade HQ. and it was then decided to dump most of the rifles in the battalion in the Glanworth, Kildorrery, Ballinlough area as it was in the centre of the battalion. Each of the sub-battalions retained two or three rifles for training purposes. At this time Seán Curtin was replaced as Battalion Q.M. by Mick O'Connor, Doneraile.

Regular meetings of the Battalion Council were held at fortnightly intervals and the O/Cs. of the sub-battalions were usually in attendance. All companies were engaged in the work of blocking roads, cutting lines of communication and watching enemy movements so that plans could be made for a combined operation should conditions be suitable. However, from this period to the Truce no such opportunity occurred but all units were more or less regularly engaged on sniping operations at enemy posts.

About the end of April, 1921, arrangements were made to demolish Ballygiblin Bridge and all members of the Mitchelstown and Ballygiblin Companies were mobilised for the job. However, two members of the Mitchelstown Company (Patk. Clifford and Mick Sullivan) were arrested on their way to the assembly point by a party of military. Both men were armed with revolvers. A despatch was found on one of the arrested volunteers which indicated that Ballygiblin Bridge was to be demolished. The enemy were now aware of the mobilisation point and took immediate

steps to surround the area. Large forces of military from Kilworth Camp and Mitchelstown converged on the Ballygiblin area but the efficiency of the I.R.A. scouting and intelligence service enabled all our men to get through the enemy encircling movement.

Liam Lynch now became O/C. of the newly-formed 1st Southern Division and was replaced as O/C. Cork II Brigade by Seán Moylan. The Brigade Officers now were:-

O/C.	-	Seán Moylan.
Vice O/C.	-	Geo. Power.
Adjt.	-	Dan Shinnick.
Q.M.	-	Paddy O'Brien.

When the General Order to shoot-up any enemy forces seen in the area was received about mid-May, 1921, all units in the area took part in sniping enemy posts but I don't recollect that there were any casualties. With Wm. Gallahue, Jimmie Walsh, Wm. Roche and Leo Skinner I visited Mitchelstown on 3 or 4 nights about this time but there were no enemy troops to be seen.

The Brigade O/C. (Seán Moylan) was arrested (I think) on May 16th, 1921. This led to further changes in the Brigade Staff which now was :-

O/C.	George Power
Vice O/C.	Paddy O'Brien
Adjt.	Dan Shinnick
Q.M.	Ned Murphy.

About this time it was decided to divide Cork II Brigade, which consisted of seven battalions, into two - Cork II and Cork IV Brigades. The new Cork II Brigade was composed of the following battalions:- Fermoy (1st),

Castletownroche (now divided into Castletownroche (2nd) and Glanworth (3rd)) and Lismore Battalion of neighbouring West Waterford Brigade. The officers of the brigade were:-

O/C.	Paddy O'Brien, Liscarrol.
Vice O/C.	Ned Murphy, Lombardstown
Adjt.	Eugene McCarthy, Charleville
Q.M.	Mick O'Connell, Lombardstown.

This re-arrangement of the battalions did not actually come into effect until the day prior to the Truce (I think). As far as I can recollect, the names of the officers were approved at a Brigade Council meeting held on July, 10th, 1921. I was not present at this meeting as I was engaged in an attack on a party of British military at Mitchelstown on that date.

About mid May, 1921, orders were received from Brigade H.Q. to shoot District Inspector Walsh, R.I.C. Arrangements were made to carry out this job but before an opportunity presented itself countermanding orders were received. The new order specified that he should be taken prisoner and held as a hostage for Seán Moylan and Seán McKeon who were, at the time, prisoners in enemy hands. As District Inspector Walsh never moved out without a strong escort it was not found possible to carry out this order.

At a meeting of the Battalion Council held at Battalion H.Q. in Droumadeer about June 20th, 1921, a captured British intelligence report was read. This report stated that the area North of the Blackwater was "quiet" and that the enemy were to concentrate on the Southern district. As a result, instructions were issued

to boost up activities. During the quiet period sniping parties were out all over the area but were meeting with no success as the enemy convoys either travelled in too great strength or did not travel on the roads selected by our forces. I recollect that I took back from this Council meeting £2,000, which I lodged with Mr. J.G. Skinner, Solicitor, for the defence of Volunteers Sullivan and Clifford who had been sentenced to death for being in possession of arms and whose case was being appealed to the House of Lords.

The weather was now exceptionally dry and the water supply to the Military Barracks began to run short. In order to supplement the supply available a military party travelled each day to The Fountain on the Clonmel road. This party consisted of a Sergeant, Corporal and 14 soldiers escorting a water cart drawn by two mules. The escort usually travelled in extended order and covered an area on either side of the fountain while the water cart was being filled. It was decided to snipe this party from a position about 100 yards North of the fountain. About 27/6/1921 a party of eight riflemen were moving into position when they were informed that a column of 100 enemy forces had moved out the Cahir Hill-Limerick road and were somewhere in the rear of the position selected by the sniping party. The I.R.A. party received this information before they had actually taken up their position and they withdrew in an Easterly direction.

When I reached the assembly point about 6 a.m. there was no trace of the other members of the sniping party but a scout informed me that they had withdrawn to the East. He also advised of the presence of the enemy party so I withdrew towards the new assembly point. When I reached the latter I found that my party had moved on towards Ballygiblin so

I called to my home in case a message had been left for me but there was none. I was then driven by my sister (Margaret) accompanied by my first cousin (Miss Molly Moriarty who was a trained nurse staying at my home on holidays) in a pony and trap to Ballygiblin Cross (approx. 3 miles). Here I found that the column were in ambush position on the Mitchelstown-Clonmel road. Having examined the position I decided that it was unsuitable as the I.R.A. did not appear to have a line of retreat that could not be dominated by the enemy fire. This position had been selected by the sub Battalion O/C. (Wm. Roche) who had no previous experience.

As we were about to move, the ambush party to new positions a large convoy of enemy forces appeared. It consisted of an open touring car (driver and one passenger), four lorries and a double turreted armoured car. I ordered our party to hold their positions but not to open fire until ordered to do so. The armoured car halted at the top of a hill on the road from which it commanded our position as well as our line of retreat. I ordered the I.R.A. party to hold their fire. The armoured car held its position on the highest portion of the road until the convoy had passed through our position and over a slight rise on the road out of our view. When the convoy had cleared the rise in the road the armoured car moved on after the convoy. It was now about 2 p.m.

We then took up new positions in the same area which gave us more favourable cover and a line of retreat. We remained in position until 8 p.m. but no enemy party appeared. We occupied the same position next day from 6 a.m. to 8.30 p.m. but there was no sign of the enemy. The strong column of over 100 referred to previously was still operating in the

area and so made it impossible for us to take up sniping positions for the water-cart party.

At this stage we examined the possibility of an all-out attack on the water-cart party at the Fountain and decided to arrange for same, utilising all available men in Mitchelstown and Ballygiblin Companies. We arranged to obtain 4 rifles and 5 revolvers from the central battalion dump in Kildorrery area. Having examined all positions and consulted the Brigade Engineer (Paddy Coughlan) as to ranges, we allotted our forces as follows:-

- (a) Three riflemen to cover R.I.C. and "Tan" Barracks.
- (b) Three riflemen to cover Military Barracks.
- (c) Six riflemen, six shotgunmen and six revolver men to attack the water-cart party. The riflemen and revolver men in this party were to engage in a hand to hand fight - the riflemen to use fixed bayonets.

The positions selected were as follows:-

- (1) Covering party, R.I.C. Barracks - behind a sod-faced fence approximately 50 yards from front of barracks. This party was made up of John O'Brien, 1st Lieut.; "Pa" Quinlan, 2nd Lieut., and Mce. O'Donoghue, Adj. - all of Ballygiblin Company.
- (2) Covering party, Military Barracks. - behind sod fence 450 yards from main entrance (only position available). Battalion Vice O/C - P.J. Luddy, Sec. Commander - Thomas Roche and Q.M. - James Hurley as well as Scout Brian Roche - all Mitchelstown Company.

(3) Main Attacking Party - Six shotgunmen on roofs of buildings over the position and on same side as fountain. Two of the men in this party were Mick Dunne and Matt Slattery.

Six riflemen - in Creamery Yard opposite fountain viz., Wm. Gallahue, Tim Fay, Jim Luther, Jack O'Neill, Leo Skinner and Mark Ahearne.

Six revolver men - at junction of Lr. Cork Street and Clonmel road - within approximately 5 to 10 yards of military escort. The only member of this party whose name I can recollect is Henry Feeney.

This main attacking party was in charge of Wm. Roche, Sub-Battalion O/C.

When the enemy party arrived about 9 a.m. they took up their usual positions in extended order from the junction of Clonmel road with Lr. Cork Street to a short distance beyond the fountain. The attack opened with the six riflemen charging through the Creamery gates with fixed bayonets - shouting "Hands up". Some of the military party ran away taking their arms with them while others took up positions to defend themselves and opened fire. The Sergeant-in-charge tried to rally his men and stood out in the open firing at the I.R.A. party until routed by shots from the revolver men. Two of the I.R.A. party were wounded - Leo Skinner (through thigh) and Wm. Gallahue (shoulder and lung). Three of the enemy party were wounded and the remainder escaped, carrying their rifles with them. Mark Ahern - one of the I.R.A. revolver men - captured a rifle from one of the military party and picked up another which had been left behind. The main attacking party (I.R.A.) withdrew Eastwards to the Ballygiblin area taking their wounded comrades with them.

I was in charge of the party covering the Military Barracks. It was agreed that, when the attack opened at the fountain, the party covering the R.I.C. Barracks would open fire and that my party would follow suit. Both covering parties operated as arranged - the party at the R.I.C. Barracks continuing to attack until approximately twenty minutes after operations had ceased at the fountain while my party kept up our covering fire for about 35 minutes in order to enable the party at the R.I.C. barracks to withdraw. When I withdrew with my party we had been under heavy machine gun and rifle fire for about 15 minutes. We withdrew in an Easterly direction, dumped our rifles in a prepared dump and circled round on the outskirts of the town until we reached Tom Roche's house at Ballybeg. From here we watched the military pouring into Mitchelstown from Kilworth, Moorepark and Fermoy. While at Roche's I had my hand dressed (I had received a slight flesh wound).

Leaving Tom Roche at home I withdrew to Walsh's, Skeheena and then to Jack O'Neill's of same place where I learned from a member of Cumann na mBan (Miss O'Neill) that two members of the main attacking party had been wounded and were in Ballygiblin Company area. I then proceeded to the home of "Pa" Quinlan, who had been in the attack, to find that the wounded men were farther East. It was then 10.30 p.m. and "Pa Quinlan" had not arrived home. I decided to await his return. He arrived about 2 a.m. and informed me that the wounded men had been attended to by a medical student - Scanlan of the East Limerick Column - who happened to be in the area. They had also sent to my home for my sister and Nurse Moriarty to attend them. I remained at Quinlan's that night and had reports early next day that the wounded men were doing well.

At 12 noon on July 11th, 1921, James Quinlan (father of "Pa" Quinlan) arrived home from Mitchelstown with the news that the Truce was on. At 1.30 p.m. a despatch rider arrived with a despatch from the Battalion O/C. to notify me of the date, hour and conditions of the Truce. This despatch rider arrived in Mitchelstown shortly after noon on July 11th but was taken prisoner by the military. Captain Webster, who was in charge of the military party, then took the despatch rider to the barracks, opened the despatch and, when he had read same, sealed it in its own envelope with a slip endorsed "On His Majesty's Service - Opened in error after Truce". He then returned the despatch to the messenger and set him free. The despatch rider was Thomas Lee - a member of the Battalion Column.

Rank at Truce - Battalion Vice O/C. Castletownroche.  
Strength of Battalion at Truce - 750.

Signed

F. J. Luddy  
(P.J. Luddy)

Date

27<sup>th</sup> April 1955

27th April 1955.

Witness

P. O'Donnell

P. O'Donnell

