ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
BURO STAIRE MILEATA 1913-21
No. W.S. 822

ROINN COSANTA.

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 822

Witness

William James Stapleton,
21 Grosvenor Square,
Rathmines,
Dublin.

Identity.

Member of 'B' Company, 2nd Battalion,
Dublin Brigade, 1915 - ;

Lieutenant same Company, later.

Subject.

(a) National activities, Dublin, 1915-1922;

(b) Jacob's Factory, Dublin, Easter Week 1916;

(c) 'The Squad' and the 'Igoe Gang'.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil

File No. S.1562

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File S.1562.

Bureau of Military History, 1913-1921.

STATEMENT BY

William James Stapleton

Address 21, Grosvenor Square, Rathmines,

Dublin.

Date 28th March, 1953.

ORGANISATIONS WITH WHICH ASSOCIATED.

(a) 2nd Battalion Dublin Brigade

(b) Irish Republican Brotherhood

(c) The Squad and Active Service Unit

POSTS OR RANKS HELD.

1st Lieutenant "B" Company 2nd Battalion
Dublin Brigade

PERIOD COVERED BY STATEMENT.

1915-1922.

COMMENTS OF INVESTIGATING OFFICER.

This statement was dictated by the Witness to a stenographer from memory. A typescript draft was prepared and sent to him for correction. He returned it to me after a considerable period of time with quite a number of amendments and additions, all of which are now included in the signed copy attached. Mr. Stapleton was at one time an officer in the Army and now holds a responsible position with Bórd na Móna.

He is a man of alert mind and memory, intelligent, and he impressed me as a thoroughly reliable and conscientious type.

W. Tommy Comdt.

Signature of Investigating Officer.

Date 28.3.53

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Statement of Mr. William James Stapleton,

21, Grosvenor Square, Rathmines,

Dublin.

I was born and reared in Dublin, being educated at the Christian Brothers Schools St. Columba's, Great Strand St., and the O'Connell Schools, North Richmond St., where I took Intermediate Examination.

My father was in the building trade and conducted a small contracting business in which he employed up to ten men.

I was taken from school after Intermediate Examination to help my father in his business, principally in looking after his books and stores, but I assisted generally in working with him, the carpenters and painters.

When John Redmond organised the National Volunteers after Carson had started the Ulster Volunteers, and around the time of the split in the Irish Volunteers (a Mr. Judge of Fairview was prominent in this split), I remember my father saying to me many times that if he was a young man he would join the Volunteers. He had strong ideas on Ireland and was fond of reading books on Irish history.

Activities pre 1916:

About April or May of 1915, at 17 years of age,

I first became associated with the National Movement, joining 'B' Company, 2nd Battalion, Dublin Brigade. I believe the late Tom Hunter was my Company Captain or Organiser at the time. Another officer was a man called O'Reilly. Leo Henderson was also in some official capacity in the Company. Other members I recall were Mick and Tom Slater, Ned Lyons, Fred Schweppe, Tommy Mason, Harry Williams, S. Ó Maoláin, Matt Stafford and his son Jack, and Eddie O'Mahoney. I cannot recall the names of other officers of the Company. Nothing outstanding of interest occurred; it was merely regular parades and route marches, Company drill, lectures and target practice with miniature rifles. Our parade ground or place of mobilisation was Father Mathew Park, Fairview. We had regular weekly route marches and drills at various places around Finglas and Glasnevin. We were frequently raided by the police during the course of these parades and some arrests were made. I was not, however, arrested at any time up to the Rebellion in 1916, although on a number of occasions I, with others, was chased by the police across country. I encouraged a number of my chums to join by describing the training etc.

In the early spring of 1916 I was selected by the Company to study First Aid, and I attended a course at No. 1 Dawson St. Dublin. The Instructor was Commandant Doyle, who was a member of, I think, 'F' Company, 2nd Battalion, and an officer in the St. John's Ambulance Brigade. On the completion of the course

I took second place in the final examination, which was conducted by Dr. Ryan, obtaining 96 out of 100 marks allowed. This was recorded in "The Irish Volunteer", a paper of the period. In spite of the fact that I was the Company's medical non/com I was continually requesting to be allowed to take part in the training in arms and eventually I was issued with a single-barrel shot gun and some ammunition from the headquarters of Óglach na hÉireann, No. 1 Dawson St., Dublin, some time before Easter Week and I had this shot gun in Easter Week.

Easter Week 1916:

I received a mobilisation order from my Section Commander, Seamus Ó Maoilfhinn, on Good Friday or Easter Saturday to parade with my Company on Easter Sunday. Details of meeting place was to be given on Easter Sunday morning. At this stage I had an inkling that some event of importance was about to take place but did not know at the time what it was. I did not parade on Easter Sunday, as early that morning I was warned that the parade was off by my Section Commander, Seamus Ó Maoilfhinn, and instructed to remain at home and to await further orders. At this time I lived at 30 Nth. Gt. George's St., and I remained near the house until Easter Monday morning when I was instructed, again by Seamus Ó Maoilfhinn, to parade at Stephen's Green West, with full equipment and, I think, to bring twenty-four hours' rations with me. I believe the time of mobilisation was 11 a.m.

I paraded at the west side of the Green opposite the College of Surgeons on Easter Monday morning at 11 a.m., and to get there, although armed with my shotgun and complete with belt, bandolier and a small knapsack, I took a tram. I was then marched down Cuffe St. with a party being led by an outside car on which was Sam Ellis of 'B' Company, 2nd Battalion, and several boxes of ammunition. Quite a number of the men were in Volunteer uniforms. We marched towards Jacob's factory and Whitefriar St. Some of the party, which was led by a man whom I afterwards learned was Mick O'Donnell, went into Jacob's factory, but my party proceeded to a point at Fumbley's Lane off Crosskevin St. and proceeded to erect road barricades of shutters from shops and such things as old carts across the road at the entrance to Fumbley's Lane facing Harold's Cross. I took up a position at the barricade as instructed. Dick McKee, who was murdered in Dublin Castle with Connor Clune and Clancy in 1921, was in charge. That was on Monday, and later in the day I was moved with Ned Lyons and some others to Barmack's Distillery, which is in Fumbley's Lane. In the upper portion of this building we took up positions at the windows. Before occupying Barmack's Distillery we were told that we were to regard ourselves as an outpost of Jacob's factory. Later in the day I was posted to a position at another barricade at the opposite end of Fumbley's Lane. While on duty there I assisted in arresting a D.M.P. Sergeant and I noticed that there were two other

prisoners taken whom I assumed were policemen. I think they were 'G' men (plain-clothes men) as they were in plain clothes. In the evening at Crosskevin St. end a man, who appeared to be a plain-clothes policeman, was ordered to move on. He had been observing our positions and taking notes. He refused to do so, and instructions were given that he was to be fired on. It so happened that one of our best shots was at the barricade and he opened fire and shot the man dead. This was a very hostile area. We were booed and frequently pelted with various articles throughout the day. We were openly insulted, particularly by the wives of British soldiers who were drawing separation allowance and who referred to their sons and husbands fighting for freedom in France. As dusk was falling, about 7 or 8 o'clock, we retreated from the barricades to our headquarters at Jacob's factory, at the Bishop St. entrance, and while waiting to be admitted at one of the large gates we were submitted to all sorts of indignities by some of the local people. It was difficult to preserve control due to the treatment we suffered from these people. We were actually struck, and those in uniforms had their uniform caps knocked off, yet nothing of an untold nature took place by way of retaliation.

We were eventually admitted into Jacob's factory and dispersed throughout the building. I was retained to form part of the guard at one of the entrance gates on the inside. Barricades of bags of flour and carts were set up inside the gateway. Phil Shanahan and

McSweeney of the North Strand were there. They were all 2nd Battalion men. No sooner had we barricaded the entrance when the mob tried to burst the gate in. They kicked and barged it with some heavy implements, but seeing that that was of little effect they tried to set fire to it with old sacking which had been soaked in paraffin and pushed under the door and ignited. However, this was not of much use either as we pushed it back out again and it only smouldered. About this time Major McBride and Commandant Tom MacDonagh, who were on their rounds of inspection, came on the scene. MacDonagh ordered me to remove the shot from my shotgun cartridges and fire a couple of blanks through the iron grid at the top of the gates in the direction of the mob in the hope of frightening them off. I did this and they dispersed after a short time.

I have a vivid recollection of Tom MacDonagh and Major McBride. McDonagh was pale and very calm. He had an electric lamp on a cord around his neck, which he used to consult some papers. Major McBride was smiling and seemed to be in a very good humour. We were naturally somewhat excited and the calmness of MacDonagh and the smile of McBride had a very reassuring effect on us.

On Tuesday (the following day) I was moved to the third floor windows and promoted N.C.O. in charge of the guard in that section. During the week there was regular sniping from Portobello barracks direction and continuous reply from the roof of the building. Quite a number of men joined us by climbing up ropes

we held from the windows and some people cheered us now and then. A clergyman came along the street one afternoon and gave us general absolution. A cycle patrol was formed up on that morning for which I volunteered. Our instructions were to patrol the area, keeping as near to Mount St. Bridge as we possibly could to draw the fire off the British who were in positions attacking Boland's Mills where de Valera was being heavily besieged. A man named Dan Riordan was in charge of this patrol. When we got as far as the corner of Merrion Square and Upper Mount St. we saw a British sentry at the corner of Lower Mount St. and we immediately opened fire - with what effect I am not quite sure. Our fire was effectively returned by a strong fusilade of rifle fire from, I think, the building now forming Holles St. hospital. We returned the fire until we were ordered to retreat by Dan Riordan. Our patrol started about 8 a.m. and finished about 9.30. On the way back at the corner of Stephen's Green South, opposite Cuffe St., we were warned by a number of people shouting to us from Cuffe St., that the British were in the vicinity at the head of Grafton St. Some of us pushed across into Cuffe St. and the remainder went up the Green and down York St. Immediately, on entering Stephen's Green West, fire was opened on us from, I think, the top of Grafton St., and one of our members was wounded turning into York St. We succeeded in getting him back to Jacob's factory where he received treatment and was removed subsequently to the Adelaide Hospital where I understand he was operated on, but he died. I think this man's

name was McGrath. I went back to my post and remained there until Sunday morning. When we brought the wounded McGrath into the building there was considerable distress evident among the small party of girls from Cumann na mBan who were in charge of cooking and attached to the First Aid Station.

I had an interesting experience during the week. One of the men who joined us by climbing in through a window some time after we occupied the building had a marked English accent. After interrogation by senior officers they stated he was one of the London Irish who had recently come to Ireland and was a member of the Kimmage Company which catered for such men. He was posted to my guard and I was told to keep my eye on him on his off duty periods. In the small hours of the morning I found him walking about and duly reported him. I was instructed to arrange the guard duty so far as possible to be off duty during the night with him and to arrest him if necessary. However, except for interruption and upset to my rest by his shouting and talking in his sleep, nothing happened.

After the surrender he was imprisoned in Knutsford jail in Cheshire where I, with many others, was also imprisoned. He suffered badly at the hands of the military warders who, apparently, believed he was an Englishman because of his accent, and eventually he was sent to a lunatic asylum completely broken down in mind and body.

On Sunday morning, at what time I don't know,

we were called downstairs by Commandant MacDonagh and Major McBride who addressed us, explaining that the G.P.O. and other outposts had surrendered and that Boland's Mills was surrendering that morning. At first we did not believe this, but in confirmation MacDonagh stated that he had been taken around the various outposts in a British staff car by a British Staff Officer and he (MacDonagh) was satisfied that there was a general surrender and instructed us to lay down our arms. There was general dismay and a lot of shouting that we should not surrender but that we should get into bands and go out to the hills and continue fighting, but MacDonagh went on to say that he had instructions to surrender but that any of us who wished to escape and not to surrender could do so. A number of the Volunteers got out of the building and cleared off. I think, however, the majority remained, including myself. We eventually formed up outside the building right opposite the Adelaide Hospital. Before leaving the building a number of Volunteers broke their arms and very many of the men were in tears. Finally, we formed up outside, numbered off, formed fours under MacDonagh and MacBride and marched to a position in Bride St. where we were met by British troops under the command of an officer who ordered us to formally lay down our arms. This we did and we then realised that we were under arrest. This was evidently a collecting point for prisoners, as there was a large number of Volunteers there when we arrived and we remained there for a considerable time on Sunday before being marched to Richmond Barracks, now Keogh Barracks.

Before the surrender, apart from foot patrol activities, the main activities of the garrison at Jacob's factory during the week consisted of sniping. We were heavily sniped from the direction of Portobello and our men retaliated by sniping continuously.

We marched to Richmond Barracks under a strong escort on Sunday. There we were put into different barrack rooms. I was put into a barrack room on the ground floor, and it was very crowded. I do not think we got anything to eat that day, but I am not quite sure. Either that evening or the following morning we were given tins of bully-beef and handed in a couple of buckets of tea. We had great difficulty in getting out of the room to use the sanitary conveniences, and I think improvisations were made in the actual room.

In the room with me were Commandant John McDonagh, Major McBride and, I think, Dick McKee. Phil Shanahan and a number of other Volunteers were in that room too.

I remember John McDonagh, who was sitting on the floor with his back to the wall beside Major McBride, calling me over and asking me was I hungry. I said I was, and he smilingly handed me two tablets, which I ate. They were milk tablets or concentrated food tablets.

I think it was on the following Tuesday that we were taken out to the gymnasium and told to sit down

on the floor at one side of the room. I saw the faces of many old friends, who had evidently been locked up in other parts of the barracks. We were kept there for several hours with an escort present and scrutinised carefully by a number of G-men, many of whom we knew, one famous man being better known to us by number, "43", his official police number, than by name. Eventually a number of men were picked out, having evidently been pointed out by the detectives. I cannot remember who were picked out, but I think from amongst us some of the men who were later executed were picked out and removed to another part of the barracks. Where there was a doubt about identification they seemed to select, as important, Volunteers who were in uniform. Dick McKee who was sitting immediately behind me was dressed in full uniform, minus a hat, but wearing a civilian overcoat, and was not identified.

A number of us were asked our ages, and those who were 16, 17 and 18 years of age were called out and, I understand, were sent home the following day. I was not yet 18 but, in spite of the advice of Dick McKee and others, I gave my age as 21 and I was not called out.

Jail Experiences:

I think it was on the following Wednesday or Thursday evening that we were marched under escort to the North Wall, where we were put aboard a cattle boat in the hold of the vessel. There were armed soldiers

posted all over the ship. Each of us had a tin of bully-beef and two hard biscuits which had been given to us before we left Richmond Barracks. We got to Holyhead at about a quarter to two in the morning, and were lined up and counted on the Station platform. While that was being done our escort were fed by the W.A.A.C.S. (British Army Women's Auxiliary Corps) with hot tea and sandwiches, but the prisoners got nothing but were left standing looking at the members of the escort eating sandwiches and drinking hot tea. They frequently joked and pointed at us in derision.

We were put aboard trains for various parts of the country. My eventual destination was Knutsford Jail in Cheshire. We arrived in Knutsford Railway Station some time in the early morning, and marched into the yard of Knutsford Jail, where we were checked, searched and placed in individual cells. My cell was E.2.14. We were in solitary confinement for close on thirty days, with the exception of about fifteen minutes exercise daily, during which time we were kept marching around in circles, six paces from each other and not allowed to talk. We were not allowed to receive letters or parcels, nor could we send out letters. Newspapers were forbidden. The only book in my cell was a copy of the bible.

The cell equipment consisted of three bed-boards, some cleaning utensils, a jug of water, a wooden stool; no blankets, mattress, sheets or covering of any kind were provided.

When we were being taken out for exercise, the order given after our cell doors had been opened was, "Stand to your door and face your window. One pace, step back, march", which meant that every man had to step out of his cell backwards so that he could not see the prisoners on the opposite landing leaving their cells. During exercise period Army N.C.O.s moved around watching us and carrying revolvers in their hands.

During the first couple of weeks we were searched four or five times daily in our cells, and it was a common procedure for two or three men to be called out and searched while exercising. Tie-pins, pins and clasps of every description were confiscated.

Our underclothing was washed once a fortnight in the prison by military prisoners, and we were given grey-back shirts to wear in the meantime.

During all this time Alfie Byrne, a Dublin M.P. afterwards Lord Mayor of Dublin, and others were agitating about our status, and at about the end of May we were recognised as prisoners-of-war and solitary confinement ended.

From this on, until transferred from Knutsford to Frongoch, Nth. Wales, we were allowed to mix freely for approximately 1½ hours in the forenoon and an hour in the afternoon in the prison grounds. We were also allowed to write and receive letters and receive parcels and visitors. We were visited by Alfie Byrne, M.P., Larry Ginnell, M.P., and many other prominent people.

Alfie Byrne supplied us regularly with newspapers and food parcels. (L. Ginnell, M.P., was later refused admission to the prison but succeeded in getting in to see us by giving his name in Irish which, evidently, was not recognised by the prison authorities).

Before being transferred from Knutsford we were each served with a notice under Regulation 14(b) of the Defence of the Realm Regulations, a copy of which I still have, confirming that we were of hostile associations, etc., etc., and giving us the opportunity, within seven days of the date of receiving this notice, of submitting to the Secretary of State any representations against the provisions of the Order, such representations to be duly considered, etc. None of us, as far as I know, availed of this regulation.

About the end of May we were transferred to Frongoch internment camp in North Wales. This camp, which was built round an old distillery and had previously been used for German prisoners, was divided into North and South camps. I was placed in the South Camp.

When I arrived at Frongoch Camp I met many men who had been transferred from other prisons. In charge of the camp was Ginger O'Connell, Seumas Kavanagh, "Mocky" Comeford etc. There I met Donal Ó Buachalla, "Mocky" Comeford (Andy) and Joe O'Connor. Seán T. O'Kelly was also there. The camp was surrounded by a double barbed wire fence which included, we were told, an electric live wire, and it was heavily guarded by sentries in

elevated posts at various points. The British had instructed that a Camp Council was to be formed from amongst us and that cookery, cleaning and sanitation were to be our own responsibilities. The British Camp Commandant and his staff inspected the camp daily. This arrangement brought us all in very close contact, and many intimate associations were formed which strengthened in later years our comradeship and loyalty.

It was then I first learned of the Irish Republican Brotherhood, which shortly after being released I was allowed to join. I learned more about the Volunteer organisation background when in Frongoch than I knew up to then, and got some idea of the vision and spirit of the movement in meeting and talking with many who had been prominent in Sinn Féin, the Gaelic League and the Volunteer movement. Irish classes were held regularly and some lectures in musketry etc.

After about a week, being a qualified first-aid man, I was asked to do duty in the hospital under the civilian doctor and the R.A.M.C. section in charge, and this I agreed to do as in the hospital there was a number of our own men sick or suffering from gunshot wounds. I remained a first-aid man in Frongoch until I was released about the end of August. During this time there was a Citizen Army man in the hospital who attempted to commit suicide by cutting his throat with a bread-knife, which was not sharp enough and he only succeeded in inflicting a slight wound. The effect of this, however, was that he lost his reason and was subsequently removed to an asylum.

I remember a clergyman being appointed as Chaplain to Frongoch Camp. He was an Irishman serving with the British forces, and had been, I understand, Parish Priest in the Terenure district before being appointed as an Army Chaplain. This gentleman appeared in the camp in British uniform and was completely boycotted by all the prisoners, in that they refused to go to him for Confession, etc. He was subsequently transferred and was replaced by an English Chaplain.

The doctor in charge of the hospital was a Welsh man. He was a very decent man and recommended that all the invalids should get special treatment, which had, I understood been enjoyed by the German prisoners when they were there. This recommendation was turned down by the War Department or the Home Office. The refusal preyed on the doctor's mind, it was said, and he subsequently committed suicide by drowning himself in the small river which ran by the bottom of the camp, which in the warm weather we used as a swimming pool. I was closely associated with this doctor in my capacity as medical orderly, and I must say that he was the most sympathetic and understanding man I met during imprisonment.

My work in the hospital included treatment of the British guard in the camp, who attended daily for dressings. Parties of our own men from the North Camp were paraded on sick parade at the South Camp regularly.

Towards the end of July we were taken in batches from Frongoch to London to be interrogated by a Commission, the Chairman of which was Justice Sankey. My party was taken by train to London in locked carriages with an armed British soldier in each carriage. We were brought across London in an ordinary bus with our escort to Wandsworth Jail. During the trip to London the guard in our carriage became quite friendly with us, and we passed the time enjoying a lecture from him on the short Lee Enfield rifle. I remember Alfie Byrne being on a railway station through which we were slowly passing, cheering at us and waving his hat.

We were, I think, four or five days in Wandsworth Jail, where we were treated as ordinary prisoners subject to solitary confinement, and given a badge with the cell number on it, which we were forced to wear on the lapel of our coats when being marched out for exercise. This was the usual procedure for the ordinary criminals in Wandsworth at the time. We were not allowed to smoke or receive parcels or letters while there, and the food was not only scanty but bad.

When I was brought before the Commission I was cross-examined for about fifteen minutes, being asked my age, which I again gave as 21, what part of Ireland I came from, where I was arrested etc.

We were taken back to Frongoch at the end of the four or five days, but later on I was again brought to London with another batch and lodged in Wandsworth Jail. This time I was not brought in front of the Commission but was kept in the jail with the remainder for four

or five days, after which we were all brought back to Frongoch again.

Some time in August, 1916, I was released with a batch of other prisoners, and we returned to Dublin via Holyhead. I think we were given rations of food when we were leaving Frongoch.

Company Activities 1917-1918:

Shortly after returning I contacted some of the Volunteers in the 2nd Battalion, but as most of them were still in prison except for keeping in touch there was no re-organisation until Christmas 1916 when the majority were released from prisons and all from Frongoch. However, during this period I was sworn into the I.R.B. and attended regularly the meetings held in 41, Parnell Square. We were usually called to these meetings under the title of a football or hurling club. I met many members of my own Company there - the Slaters, Lyons, the Goulding brothers, Andy (Mocky) Comeford and others. I was told on one occasion that my father was an I.R.B. member but I am not sure if he was. He died at the end of 1915 and never made any reference to the Brotherhood, although, as I have already stated, he was well read in Irish history and often spoke to me about contemporary Irish affairs and was keenly interested in the Volunteer movement.

During 1917 my Company, "B" Company, 2nd Battalion, held regular meetings in an empty cottage in a laneway off Iona Road. Parades and drills, with general

military instruction were held there and I attended regularly. A man named O'Reilly was in charge of the Company then. When Tom Hunter was released he took over command of the Company from O'Reilly and was subsequently promoted to Battalion Commandant.

No event of military importance, as far as I was concerned, occurred in 1917 or 1918. There were, however, raids for arms and equipment on residences of British Army personnel. We collected a certain amount of arms and equipment on these raids.

Conscription Crisis:

While the Compulsory Military Service Act for Ireland was being discussed in the House of Commons, there was a big rush on the part of young men of military age to join the Volunteers. My Company was increased 100%, and I think the same applied to all the Companies of the Battalion and to the Dublin Brigade as a whole.

The new recruits were very well received by the older Volunteers, and, as far as I remember, some of them went as far as bringing in old guns which they had in their possession. We were a bit sceptical and suspicious of these recruits at the time, but it transpired that there was some very good material amongst them, and as the struggle for independence proceeded many of the new men proved outstanding.

Towards the end of 1918 and at the conclusion

of the Great War, many of these recruits fell away, but the good men remained with us.

The Armagh Election:

The South Armagh election was held in February, 1918. A group of Volunteers from Dublin, of which I was a member, paraded under the command of Dick McKee, and, armed with hurleys, travelled to Armagh to act as escort to the National candidate, Dr. McCartan, and to Countess Markievicz who was the principal speaker on his behalf.

We remained in Armagh for four or five days and conducted various forced marches, such as from Newry to Newtownhamilton and back. There were minor clashes with the Northern police and the Ulster Volunteers, who were also there in force and armed with hurleys. During this time we were accommodated in an old distillery building in Newry where we were fully catered for by the election committee. Our candidate was defeated in the election and we returned to Dublin.

Seizure of pigs:

Late in February, 1918, my Company was instructed to mobilise in Croke Park on a given morning at 6 a.m. under Leo Henderson. We were told to dress in our oldest clothes and to bring sticks to assist in the capture of pigs which were being conveyed to the North Wall for shipment to England. We were standing-to in Croke Park until the afternoon of that day, when word came that the first consignment of pigs had left the

abattoir for the North Wall. We intercepted the pigs and seized them near Dorset St. We drove them into the Corporation yard nearby.

Arrangements had been made to have two butchers in the party, and the butchers, assisted by ourselves, proceeded to slaughter the pigs. In the meantime crowds of people gathered outside the Corporation yard, and close on one hundred policemen waited for us to come out. The policemen knocked at the door to gain admittance, but were refused. There was considerable excitement in the neighbourhood as the news of the capture of the pigs had gone abroad, but in any case the noise caused by the screeching and dying pigs could be heard a considerable distance away. It must have been about four o'clock in the afternoon when we arrived in the Corporation yard with the pigs, and we finished slaughtering them at about nine o'clock. The offal was removed and left to one side, and the carcases were split.

The owners of the pigs were contacted by, I think, Diarmuid Lynch (who was Food Controller for An Dáil) and others, and arrangements were made to purchase the pigs. The buyers got in touch with the authorities and, who, as far as I am aware, stated that they were satisfied with the terms.

The majority of the police were withdrawn, and when the horse-lorries arrived the carcases of the pigs were loaded on them and, escorted by our party, they were brought to Donnelly's bacon-curing factory near

Meath Street. There was considerable excitement and cheering, and we were followed by crowds across the city.

I was one of the party that went back from Meath Street to the Corporation yard to collect the offal which we, in our ignorance, had thought was of no use, but we were informed by Messrs. Donnellys that it was almost as important as the carcases.

I eventually arrived home at about 2.30 a.m. spattered with blood as I had not had time to have a wash. My mother was rather frightened by my general appearance.

I recollect my mother and relatives and friends of our family subsequently talking amongst themselves and referring to the good effect the pig raid had had, in that they could now buy bacon in the shops. It appeared to be rather plentiful.

Raid on Collinstown Aerodrome:

On the night that Collinstown Aerodrome was raided for arms and ammunition, myself and other members of my Company patrolled the road between Whitehall and Santry. We were armed.

Our instructions were not very definite, looking back on them in retrospect, but I believe that we were to open fire on any lorries containing British troops proceeding to or from the city.

Our patrol duty lasted for a couple of hours, but as no British troops passed either way we withdrew.

New arms issued to Company:

Early in 1920 a consignment of American .455 Colt automatic weapons were received into the Dublin Brigade and were issued as far as they went.

I was issued with one, with which I was armed for the first time in the raid on the Rotunda Rink post office.

Raids on mails:

Early in March, 1920, I, with others, was instructed by Paddy Daly regarding the details of the proposed raid on the Rotunda Rink, Parnell Square, on the evening before the date fixed for the raid.

We mobilised at the Rotunda Rink at about eight o'clock in the morning, and went to pre-determined stations, my station being a telephone switchboard centrally situated in the building. My duty was to take over the switchboard and prevent any person using it. I was instructed to achieve this as quietly and unobtrusively as possible. Other members of our party had similar instructions, and we were at our posts and in control in a matter of minutes, while the work of packing, unpacking and sorting mails was carried on by the post office officials, very few of whom had any idea that the place was completely held by our party.

Through inside arrangements the Castle mails, which I think were contained in green-labelled bags, were quietly taken from the building, and at the end of about ten minutes a whistle was blown and we quietly left the building and went home. The mails were taken to

Intelligence headquarters, wherever it was situated at the time.

A second raid was made on the mails in the Rotunda Rink about the middle of July, 1920. On this occasion I was a member of a party forming a cordon around a number of mail cars parked outside the main depot on the western side of Parnell Square.

Another section of our party entered the Rink depot by sliding down the chutes, and the Castle mails were again taken and brought to Intelligence headquarters. This operation lasted about twenty minutes.

Our job was to hold up any British lorries, escorts or patrols that might be there while the operation was being carried out. We were fully armed. We were briefed for this raid by Mick Collins personally, who addressed us at a meeting the evening before the raid held in a room in a house on Parnell Square.

In subsequent periods we carried out several other raids on mail vans, on the instructions of the Director of Intelligence, Mick Collins. In each case we seized the contents of the vans and brought them to Intelligence headquarters.

There was a subsequent raid on the Rotunda Rink Post Office for Castle mails but of a less formal and pretentious character than the previous one. This raid took place on the western side of the rink and the approach or entrance into the actual premises was made by a number of members of the squad, and some ordinary

volunteers, sliding down the mail bag chute and in that way they entered the building and held up the staff and collected the bags of mails whose location and labelling had been described again, I understand, by Mr. Monaghan, who was a Senior Official in the Rotunda Rink. The entrance was covered by the remainder of the squad, and some other volunteers, cordoning off the complete western side of the Square, stopping all traffic and pedestrians. The raid lasted, in all, about a half an hour.

In that evening's papers there was a considerable amount of amusement caused by the description of the method of entering adopted by the Volunteers. It went something like this, which was one of the captions: - "Shock for Postmen. Armed I.R.A. slide down chutes instead of bags of mails, and capture Castle mails".

Street patrols and attacks on enemy lorries:

About the month of July, 1920, I was promoted 1st Lieutenant of "B" Company, 2nd Battalion, Dublin Brigade, of which Tommy Kilcoyne was Captain. I was given charge of a platoon. The whole Company was well organised for street patrols and ambushes in the Company area, which was roughly North Strand, Fairview and Drumcondra Road down to North Frederick St.

My duty was to take my half Company, organise them into groups of threes and fours and send them out to patrol the streets, principally the Drumcondra Road to Dorset St. and to Ballybough. About eight groups of threes and fours comprised my platoon. They were armed with revolvers of various types and had a limited

number of grenades. Many of the British lorries plying to and from Collinstown were attacked, some effectively and some ineffectively. They were fired on at any rate, and I always felt that the moral effect was quite good.

One one occasion we took out some rifles and shotguns on receiving information from our Intelligence section that a particularly important vehicle was to come into the city from Collinstown. We took up position in the grounds of the Bishop's Palace. We were behind the wall. This position was very suitable in that the ground was high and we would be able to see any lorries going to or from Collinstown. We were there for about an hour and a half when we fired on a military van and a military lorry which were passing, with what result I do not know, as they were not knocked out of action but kept going.

We retreated and hid our rifles in the farmyard of the Bishop's Palace, where we collected them the following morning.

Neither the Bishop nor any member of his staff knew that we had taken up position in the grounds of the palace. We did not ask for permission to use these grounds for military purposes.

There were several engagements of this nature while I was with the Company, including the holding up of members of the D.M.P.,(who were armed with .38 revolvers at that period,) in order to disarm them. We succeeded in disarming two on the North Strand, one of whom resisted and was shot in the mouth but was not killed.

We also carried out regular raids on selected houses for arms and collected a number of shot guns and a few small arms.

Belfast Boycott:

When the Belfast boycott was declared in August, 1920, a special whole time unit was formed to sabotage all goods manufactured in or emanating from Belfast. This unit was composed of men drawn from the various Battalions of the Dublin Brigade. On a number of occasions, with some members of my Company, I assisted in entering shops within our Battalion area, warning the shopkeepers not to stock, for instance, Park Drive cigarettes, and on a few occasions we actually took the stock out of the shop and set fire to it on the roadside. Similar activity was taking place all over the city in connection with the Belfast boycott but the whole-time unit concentrated daily on intercepting goods at the various rail-heads, North Wall, etc. They carried out larger and bigger raids and destroyed equipment. In this connection commercial travellers and others dealing in Belfast goods were, I understand, contacted and warned to cease dealing in these goods. In many cases this approach met with reasonable success, but in many cases travellers and traders persisted in dealing in Belfast goods.

The various Companies in the city not directly connected with the Belfast boycott unit nevertheless assisted generally where requested. In my particular case we arrested on three different occasions three traders or travellers dealing with Belfast goods, and held them in custody for a number of days until they were

subsequently released by our Intelligence section. Before being released they were warned, and promises were extracted from them that they would cease dealing in Belfast goods. As far as I know, the warning in these three instances was obeyed. I cannot remember who these men were, but I do remember that we raided a house on the North Circular Road, it was near the cattle market, and arrested a man. He was apparently a very brave man, because he had refused to obey the instructions he had received from the Belfast boycott unit and practically told them to do their damnedest. In the circumstances we thought that this man might be armed, and the simple arrest in his house became a well planned military operation, in that when raiding the house we surrounded it and approached it, I hope, in the best military fashion.

Bloody Sunday:

On the Friday prior to Bloody Sunday my Company Captain, Tommy Kilcoyne, instructed me to report armed at Baggot St. bridge on the following Sunday morning at, I believe, half-past eight, and there I would meet Joe Leonard in charge of a party consisting of five members of my Company, including Jack Stafford, Hugo MacNeill, who was somehow attached to our Company and two or three others. I understood from Tommy Kilcoyne that on this particular Sunday a general effort was to be made in various parts of the city to liquidate members of the British Intelligence Service who resided in private houses and hotels throughout the city.

I reported as instructed, and our party moved down to 92 Lower Baggot St., where the British agent we were interested in was residing. We knocked at the hall door, which was opened by somebody from upstairs, and entered. Our information was that this British agent occupied the ground floor flat, which consisted of the back and front parlours. We knocked at the door of the front parlour, and, receiving no reply, knocked at the back parlour door. After some hammering on the door it was opened a little. It was evident that the occupant of the room was very cautious and suspicious because he tried to close the door again, but we jammed our feet in it. We fired some shots through the door and burst our way in. The two rooms were connected by folding-doors and the British agent ran into the front room and endeavoured to barricade the door, but some of our party had broken in the door of the front room and we all went into it. He was in his pyjamas, and as he was attempting to escape by the window he was shot a number of times. One of our party on guard outside fired at him from outside. The man's wife was standing in a corner of the room and was in a terrified and hysterical condition.

The operation lasted about fifteen minutes. Our line of retreat had been planned via the South Liffey Wall and ferry boat to the North Liffey Wall, and from there we were to disperse to our various homes. On our way to the South Wall via Mount St. bridge and Grand Canal St. we intercepted a British despatch rider on a motor cycle and held him up. He was unarmed and we were

undecided as to what we should do with him. Finally we agreed to let him go but to take his motor cycle, and one of our party drove it to the South Wall.

We arrived at the South Liffey Wall without further incident, and we found the ferry boat waiting. We reached the North side and dispersed.

Later in the day I went to Croke Park and was present when it was raided by the British. I was beside a man who was shot and I was splashed with his blood. We were on the top step of a new stand which was in course of construction on the North side of Croke Park, and I escaped by jumping over the wall into the back yard of one of the houses in Jones's Road. I went through the house and succeeded in reaching Leech's bridge in Drumcondra. When I got home I had to clean my clothes, which were in a bad condition.

That night I met members of our Company, and there were all sorts of suggestions for reprisals. We were very much upset over the Croke Park incident. Some of us went down to Jervis St. hospital and saw the dead bodies, but as far as I was concerned no action took place that night.

<u>The Squad</u>:

A short time after Bloody Sunday I was instructed to report to a hall in, I think, Oriel St. where we were in the habit of drilling. There I met, I think, Frank Thornton and Bill Tobin with members of other Companies of 2nd Battalion whom I knew rather well, such as the late

Tom Keogh, Jim Slattery, Joe Leonard and some others together with our Company Captain ('B' Company) at the time, Tommy Kilcoyne. I was introduced to those present and the organisation of the Squad explained to me.

The Squad had been in existence for some time before and I was aware of its existence and activities in a general way. I believe a principal mover in the original Squad was Mick MacDonald whom I knew in 1916. After the organisation was generally explained to me I was taken aside by, I think, Thornton and Keogh and Slattery and the function of the Squad explained in greater detail and its proposed general activities for the future. I was informed that I had been selected by G.H.Q. with some others to bring the Squad up to twelve, and they were anxious that I should become a member of it. I was, however, given the option of refusing to join. During this discussion it was explained to me that my background had been very carefully examined and that they knew all about me and would be very anxious to have me. They added, however, that I would have to make myself available whole-time and give up any activities or work on which I was engaged; that I would not receive any salary or wages but a small subsistence allowance which would, they said, be enough to pay my board and lodgings, so to speak. This point was referred to a number of times and the fact that no salary or wages would be paid was emphasised. It was also explained to me that if I became a member it would mean that I could stay no longer at home and that I should be fully available at all times for the Squad activities. I was informed

that my membership would now bring the Squad up to a total of twelve. I understood at that time, and confirmed it at a later date, that the senior members of the Squad were - Paddy Daly in charge, Tom Keogh and Jim Slattery. While the Squad of twelve, I was informed, would operate as a unit, instructions for operations were to be taken that time from either P. Daly, Tom Keogh or Jim Slattery, or directly from G.H.Q. Intelligence. It was clearly pointed out to me how the Squad which, working in close co-operation with the Intelligence Section, not only carried out operations but received direct instructions through the Intelligence Department from G.H.Q., and that Michael Collins was the Director of Intelligence. I asked for a description of what type of operations would be carried out and how they were planned etc., and I was given a general outline with reference to some previous operations as practical examples.

I was also informed that the Squad was made up from selected Volunteers from various Companies in the Dublin Brigade. I agreed to join the Squad and carry out all instructions to the best of my ability. I met the remainder of the Squad shortly after that - I believe in 100, Seville Place. There I met the following: - Tom Keogh, Jim Slattery, Frank Bolster, Mick Kennedy, Eddie Byrne, Vinie Byrne, Paddy Daly, Joe Leonard, Ben Byrne, J. Conroy and P. Griffin. I also met Pat McCrae who was attached to the Squad in the capacity of driver, Charlie Dalton, Charlie Byrne, Frank Saurin, Ned Kelleher and other members of the Intelligence Staff.

From then on the newly formed Squad met daily as

a unit in various parts of the city, especially at 100, Seville Place. We had our own arms' dump off North Great Charles St. near Mountjoy Square where were also kept one or two cars known as Squad cars. These were cars that had been captured from the enemy and included a Super/Six Hudson which had been the property of the British Under Secretary, Mr. Cope. From these centres we moved out to conduct operations as instructed from G.H.Q. Intelligence. Many operations consisted of searching the city as directed by the Intelligence Section for single or small enemy units which we did not always contact and engage. At this time G.H.Q. Intelligence was located, I believe, in Fownes St. and shortly afterwards moved to the ANTIENT Concert Rooms, Pearse St. Paddy Daly and Jim Slattery usually acted as senior members of the Squad and were frequently called to G.H.Q. Intelligence where they received instructions which they transmitted to us, or on other occasions the Intelligence Officers such as Frank Thornton, Liam Tobin, Frank Saurin, Ned Kelleher, Joe Dolan or others brought the instructions directly to the Squad at its meeting place.

While the main function of the Squad was the elimination of enemy agents and spies it was, nevertheless, very active in general raids, arrests of suspected spies for interrogation by G.H.Q. and attacks on the enemy, even to the extent of interrupting the ration supplies to Dublin Castle and other Military barracks, also with raids on the North Wall for arms and general

military equipment. We were also asked to assist in important attacks planned by various Companies. Commandant Tommy Ennis (deceased) of the 2nd Battalion, was a clerk in the Goods Section of the L.M.S. Goods Depot at the North Wall and usually organised raids through his companies in the Battalion, or the Squad, when he believed there was useful military stores, ammunition, etc. consigned to the enemy arriving at the North Wall. On one such occasion, acting on the information received from Tommy Ennis, we staged a raid and confiscated a very heavy case which we thought contained .45 revolvers. We thought we would never get it to our depot to have it opened up. When we did open it we found, to our amazement and disgust, that it only contained handcuffs.

At the L.M.S. Hotel, North Wall, there was a permanent military guard and this was attacked one morning with rifle and revolver fire during which, I believe, one member of "E" Company, 2nd Battalion, was shot dead. I was not engaged in this operation but I am aware that it was organised completely by Commandant Tommy Ennis.

I was still 1st Lieutenant of my Company ("B" Company, 2nd Battalion) and attending parades fairly regularly, taking out patrols or raiding houses for arms, shot guns etc. With other members of the Squad, I received instructions from G.H.Q. to keep away, and if necessary to resign, from the Volunteer Companies, which we did. This had a peculiar reaction in that many old members and new members of my Company, who

were not aware of my permanent whole-time position with G.H.Q., believed that I had left the organisation and shortly after the Free State was founded I was openly accused of desertion on a few occasions.

The usual method of allocating men to carry out an execution of an enemy agent was for the leader of the Squad, Paddy Daly or Jim Slattery, to nominate two men in turn. This was adhered to very rigidly. This did not mean that two men went forth to carry out the execution as the Squad, at full strength, was always present at every execution and it worked in this fashion. The Intelligence Officer or Officers instructed to identify and point out the individual did so in a very direct fashion, usually by actually speaking to him and then pointing to him by a pre-arranged signal. The two members of the Squad detailed to carry out the actual shooting on receiving the signal usually waited apart from the remainder and walked towards the person and carried out the execution which, in the majority of cases, took place on main public streets. The remainder of the Squad, fully armed, were usually within fifty yards of the scene and at the time of the execution stepped on to the public streets, very often with guns drawn to protect and ensure the line of retreat for the two men who had been engaged on the shooting. In some cases it was usual to have a car in the next street to expedite the getaway but in very many cases the getaway was made on foot. Having temporary dumps on both sides of the city (there was one in a stable at the rere of a

house in Fitzwilliam Place) it was usually possible to dispose of the guns and proceed across the city normally. I should mention that all of us carried fictitious papers of one sort or another not particularly organised by G.H.Q. although it was originally suggested by them. Each man was left to his own devices to have whatever paper or story to suit himself and thus enable him to answer questions without hesitation if held up by the enemy and searched. It was no uncommon thing for the members of the Squad, having safely disposed of their guns, to be held up by the enemy advancing on the site of a recent execution. I was held up on several such occasions and I posed as a house-painter. I had a lot of house-painters' old Union cards and a few letters addressed to me as "T. Smith". I knew a lot of people in the house-building and painting line, as my father was a small building contractor, and I found it easy, if cross-examined, to discuss and explain my assumed trade in detail. Another member of the Squad was a cabinet maker, and Charlie Dalton, Intelligence Officer, who had been a clerk, posed as a law student.

Peter Doran - Spy:

The Squad had information from G.H.Q. Intelligence that the head porter in the Wicklow Hotel by the name of Peter Doran was giving information to the Castle authorities and that it had been decided to eliminate him. Two attempts were made to get this man. On the first occasion he did not appear and the second attempt was on the following day, the 28th January, 1921.

Two of us were detailed to carry out the shooting and the remainder of the Squad to accompany us to secure our getaway. As usual we were given a rough description of Doran. Charlie Dalton of G.H.Q. Intelligence was detailed to accompany the Squad, point him out and give the signal which was the waving of a handkerchief when Doran appeared at the door of the hotel. On the day in question we went up to Wicklow St. and took up a stand close to the main entrance to the hotel and waited for Doran to appear and the signal from Dalton. It was a very quiet afternoon and after about a half an hour's waiting, as far as I can remember, Doran or a man like him came out of the hotel and turned towards Grafton St. We immediately got the signal from Dalton, which was promptly and clearly given, and we carried out the elimination close to the corner of Grafton St. We then withdrew in the opposite direction down towards Exchequer St. There were no immediate reactions from the shooting beyond the usual shouting and some screaming from people shopping and window gazing.

On another occasion we arrested a suspected spy in Wicklow St. on the afternoon of a day when the street was very crowded. Paddy Kelleher, Intelligence Officer, pointed out the man. We had a squad car nearby and took the man away in it, the intention being to bring him outside the city and execute him. G.H.Q. didn't want him executed in Wicklow St. and, in any case, some interrogation was necessary as there was some doubt about him. So Paddy Kelleher sat in the back of the car and questioned the man closely, as a result of which he reported back to the Ancient Concert Rooms

(Intelligence Department) while we waited in a side street with the prisoner. Later we released this man as, it seems, his answers etc. were satisfactory.

On this job there were only myself, two members of the Squad and Paddy Kelleher.

John Ryan and murder of McKee, Clancy and Clune:

John Ryan was a British military policeman and was a brother of Mrs. Becky Cooper of Corporation St. who ran a shebeen which was a favourite haunt of many of the British - Tans, Auxiliaries and Army. It was known through G.H.Q. Intelligence that Ryan was responsible for the arrest and subsequent murder of Dick McKee, Peadar Clancy and Clune who, by the way, were in hiding from the enemy in the vicinity of the Gloucester Diamond very near to Becky Cooper's place. The Squad were told off to have this man executed and as usual an Intelligence Officer was appointed to identify him. In this case it was Paddy Kennedy. Before the two men were detailed to carry out the execution I asked to be allowed to take part in it as I felt very keenly about the murder of Dick McKee who was a great friend of mine with whom I fought in 1916 and served subsequently with him in the 2nd Battalion. My request was granted and the second man instructed to accompany me was Eddie Byrne, now deceased. About 10.30 o'clock on the morning of the 5th February, 1921, our Intelligence Officer located Ryan in Hynes's public house at the corner of Old Gloucester Place and Corporation St. We entered the public house with the Intelligence Officer

and I saw Ryan standing facing the counter reading a newspaper and he was identified by the Intelligence Officer. Before doing the job we held him up and searched him but he had no guns or papers on him. I think we said, "You are Ryan", and I think he rejoined, "Yes, and what about it" or words to that effect. With that we shot him. I have an idea that the chap behind the counter was one of our Intelligence Officers' contacts as he made himself very scarce when we entered. We left the place then and proceeded towards the Gloucester Diamond and as usual the remainder of the Squad were following up to cover our retreat. We went back to the Squad dump which was in a stable off North Great Charles St. near Mountjoy Square and that concluded the operation as far as we were concerned.

In this dump at Charles St. were a number of cars which were being looked after by one Paddy Kelly who used to act occasionally as a Squad or general G.H.Q. driver and he was tuning up one of the cars. These cars were invariably captured from the British and the particular one on which he was working was a Super Six Hudson which had recently been captured from the Under-Secretary, Dublin Castle.

When leaving the site of the shooting at Gloucester Place we had some information that a patrol of Auxiliaries were somewhere in the district and this was subsequently proved to be right as the patrol traced our line of retreat to this garage off Charles St. and proceeded to cordon off the lane and search some garages. In one of these they found Paddy Kelly but fortunately for us

they did not come across our main dump. From a report made to us by Paddy Kelly subsequently they were evidently suspicious of him as they cross-examined him at length and finally gave him a hiding but they did not succeed in getting information then.

Attempted Trap Ambush at Seville Place:

The Squad and sub-sections of the 2nd Battalion were engaged in preparing a trap ambush for the British at Seville Place. The Squad meeting place was at 100, Seville Place which was rented or owned by the St. Laurence O'Toole's Football Club and this was made the focal point for the trap ambush, the idea being to have a message conveyed to Dublin Castle giving information regarding a gathering of important I.R.A. men at this point, hoping that the British would plan to raid it and our intention was to ambush them and attack them, when they came. Very elaborate arrangements had been made and certain sections of the railway including the main signal boxes at Amiens St., and the sentry boxes further down the line, were controlled by our men. They had very heavy stocks of grenades, improvised bombs and a number of rifles, shotguns etc. These men were scattered on the railway bridge which crosses Seville Place and in positions on the bridge immediately in front and at the rear of 100, Seville Place. In addition we barricaded certain parts of the interior of 100, Seville Place giving the impression of occupation. Otherwise the house was completely empty. In addition to the arrangements at the railway we also had outposts at one or two points along the North Strand

and at the Apex of the Triangle which at that time, and I think is now, the premises of Messrs. W. & S. Gilbey. This latter house was taken over completely and two or three members of the Squad with some Battalion and Company Volunteers armed with rifles took up these positions. I was in charge of this outpost. I understand that the message was conveyed to the Castle by one of our men but no raid took place at Seville Place and the whole arrangements had to be abandoned. We had a few tense moments, believing that our plans had succeeded, when we heard the sound of shots from the direction of the North Strand, near Seville Place just as we were evacuating our positions. These turned out to be from a flying attack by some other party of our men on a passing military vehicle which had no connection whatsoever with the Seville Place trap ambush.

There was an uneasy feeling amongst us that the bogus message had not been conveyed correctly and that rather than encouraging the Castle Forces to come out (a thing which they were very prone to do at that time on any sort of information) had kept them inside. Later in the evening after we had evacuated Seville Place and when off duty but around the area, we were in the vicinity of Seville Place and saw a number of big British patrols who didn't appear to be going on raids and were not doing anything except moving slowly up and down the North Strand.

<u>New Headquarters of Squad</u>:

This attempted trap ambush, concentrated as it was,

on 100, Seville Place meant we had to abandon our Headquarters there. G.H.Q. Intelligence arranged a new Headquarters for us in Upper Abbey St., in a yard with a double gate entrance on to Abbey St. and opposite Stafford St. As this yard was not as secluded as our previous headquarters in Seville Place it was decided to put up a front in order not to excite suspicion of the many small shops and tenements immediately adjoining the premises. Accordingly we set it up as a Cabinet Makers Workshop and equipped it with the necessary tools and benches and we gave the appearance of real tradesmen at work. We painted the name George Moreland and Sons, Cabinet Makers and Wholesalers, in large white letters on the gate. A secret place was decided upon in the frame of the gate where a deeply embedded push-bell was installed, and a series of signals arranged for the squad members. Unlike Seville Place where we gathered in a private house and passed the time by reading or playing cards or just chatting we had to put on a show of being Cabinet Makers at George Morelands and I often thought it very funny that we would amuse ourselves playing with bits of timber, making small shelves and unmaking them dressed up in our white aprons, and that underneath these aprons we were usually heavily armed. However, one member of the Squad, Vincent Byrne, was a Cabinet Maker by trade, and put his spare time to more practical use as he actually brought in pieces of furniture which he had to repair and actually repaired them in the workshop. In the early days of Morelands I amused myself by painting the front gate and it was actually I who painted the name in white letters on the

gate. I wore a white apron. I remember one afternoon I was rather late in the place as I had plenty of time and I meant to make a decent job of painting the gate. I remember standing on a ladder painting the gate and feeling my guns were pretty heavy under my apron, when a British Military patrol moved along on both sides of the street at about twenty paces intervals. Sometimes they stopped and searched pedestrians or looked into shops. All this time I was painting. They moved into Capel St. with just a casual glance at me in my white apron painting the gate. I was not interfered with.

Main Squad Dump:

The Squad dump was situated in a stable in a lane off North Great Charles St. In this stable most of our small arms reserves and ammunition and a squad car, the Super/Six Hudson, which was a captured vehicle, were kept. In the same vicinity there were some Company and Battalion Dumps; for instance my own Company's dump ("B" Company, 2nd Battalion) was very adjacent to the Squad dump. It was usual for one or two members of the Squad to return to this dump after jobs and when starting out on jobs to collect arms and ammunition. There was a loft in this stable in which was housed all the equipment which had been captured on the raid at the Kings Inns.

Following the execution of Ryan at Gloucester Place the Auxiliaries traced our line of retreat to this dump, as already stated, and I have the feeling that at that time they got some information that important dumps must be situated in that area.

Mountjoy Square area searched by British troops for dumps:

About the end of February, 1921, the British apparently decided that in or near the vicinity of Mountjoy Square there was some central organisation or dumps of the I.R.A. The recent tracking of the members of the Squad to a laneway off North Great Charles St. on the 2nd February, following the execution of John Ryan at Gloucester Diamond, must have confirmed the British in this belief. However, a very large force, complete with giant tanks, armoured cars and hundreds of soldiers and all forms of machine-guns and, I think, some heavy artillery, invaded and took over the complete area of Mountjoy Square and its adjoining streets on the north to Parnell St. and Summerhill on the south. They extended to North Circular Road on the east and to Hill St. and Temple St. on the west. The majority of the houses in this area were tenement houses. The tenants occupied one or two rooms. At that time there must have been over a thousand tenants in these houses. The British systematically raided house by house and room by room, placing guards on all houses until the searching and interrogations had been completed. To enable them to conduct the searching thoroughly they brought down to the square all the occupants, male, female and children. They lined them up or allowed them to sit about on the roadside while the search was in progress. Other parties raided stables, sheds and workshops at the rere of the houses but, apparently, they did not conduct this part of the search as systematically as they did the houses because, as I have already described, the Squad dump, a headquarters dump and a 2nd Battalion

dump, located in lanes off Great Charles St., and containing a very large number of arms of all kinds, ammunition and at least two motor cars, were not found in this intensive search.

Members of the 2nd Battalion and the Squad stood outside the cordoned off area and watched those searching. We moved from place to place and we were expecting every moment that our dumps would be captured.

The Squad had another important dump of arms under the bakehouse of O'Rourke's bakery, Parnell St., which is, approximately, 20 or 30 yards from the corner of Hill St., at which the British had a strong barricade and outpost. A special meeting of the Squad was held in Oriel Hall to discuss the situation. It was at first felt that we should attack the British with all we had got but it was felt that they were in too good a position to carry out reprisals and such an attack might only result in the deaths of many of the people whose homes were being searched. It was also felt that it might attract too much attention to the aims of the raid, and might only intensify their searchings, and probably result in the finding of our important dumps off Charles St. The final decision was to do nothing in regard to attacking them but any dumps outside the cordon near the area were to be cleared out without delay. I got a car - I forget where - and with a couple of the Squad we drove over to O'Rourke's Bakery in Parnell St. We were very heavily armed and before entering the bakery we stood looking at the British behind a barricade across the road at the end of Hill St. We entered the bakery,

packed all the guns and ammunition, carried the stuff out to the van and under the very noses of the soldiers we drove away. The late Tommy Ennis, who was Battalion O/C at that time, presided at the meeting in the hall in Oriel St. and it was he that finally decided that we should not attack the British troops carrying out the search. The raids and occupation of the Mountjoy Square area by the British lasted, as well as I can remember, close on a week. They then vacated the position, taking a number of prisoners with them, but I think we felt this was only face-saving as they failed in their mission.

Police Constables shot in Parliament St.:

Three constables - Green, McDonagh and Hoey - were shot in Parliament St. on the 23rd February, 1921, by the Squad. I do not think these policemen were, in fact, spies in the real sense. I believe they were brought to the Castle in connection with general intelligence work for the purposes of identification of names or documents or people. It was the usual practice for some members of this section of the Castle staff to move out from the Castle sometime around lunch hour every day and we were instructed to eliminate them. In this case while the usual two members of the Squad were detailed for the actual job, it was more of a general operation as it was expected that there would be two or more to be handled. As it turned out there were three. They were shot at the corner of Essex St. and Parliament St. and one of them, I think, was wounded and dashed across the road towards Capel St. Bridge and into a tobacconist shop, scrambling over the counter and he was

finally eliminated there by a member of the Squad who followed. At that time there were military sentries on duty at the City Hall behind a canvas screen and they began firing when they heard the shooting at the corner of Essex St. The firing was of a spasmodic nature but all the Squad succeeding in retreating without incident beyond the fact that there was a big crowd of people in Parliament St. and there was quite a lot of screaming and confusion which rather helped us in getting away. The whole Squad were there; myself, Vincent Byrne, Jimmy Conroy, Ben Byrne, Frank Bolster, Tom Keogh, Paddy (Speckie) Griffin and Paddy Kelly. The latter was the G.H.Q. driver who took some members of the Squad in the car in the direction of the centre of the city. Myself and Vinnie Byrne got out by St. Michael's and John's Church, across the Four Courts Bridge on the Liffey and made our way back to our dump in Charles St.

Police Sergeant shot in Capel St.:

A police sergeant was shot in Capel St. by the Squad. I cannot recall his name but I believe he was brought to Dublin to identify an I.R.A. man held over in hospital or Mountjoy Prison. The Intelligence Officer on this job was Joe Dolan. In the usual way we were instructed by G.H.Q. Intelligence of the expected arrival of this man from the country via Kingsbridge railway station and we proceeded along the Quays and got as far as Capel St. Bridge when he was identified by the I.O., Joe Dolan. One of the Squad opened fire on this man about 8 paces away and I am not sure whether he missed him or wounded him, but the man started running and

screaming down Capel St. and got near the corner of Capel St. when he was overtaken and shot. There was pandemonium in Capel St. with people running helter skelter as the shooting was necessarily being done from a distance.

Plans for the rescue of Seán MacEoin at Leixlip:

It was believed by the Director of Intelligence that Seán MacEoin who was a prisoner in British hands, having been captured a day or two before on Mullingar Railway Station after being wounded, would be conveyed to Dublin from Mullingar Station by road via Chapelizod. This information apparently came late in the afternoon and the Director of Intelligence was unable to contact the whole of the Squad but succeeded in gathering myself and, I think, six other members of the Squad. He instructed us to proceed towards Leixlip with the intention of intercepting the car conveying Seán MacEoin. The car was described as a County Ambulance in which there was a British escort. Our instructions were to do the best we could to rescue MacEoin. We got as far as Leixlip having moved slowly along the road watching and expecting to contact the ambulance near Chapelizod. We used our Squad car to get there. On leaving Leixlip it was decided that either we had missed the car or it had come some other way. We held a consultation on the road and then decided to return. We returned to the city and reported back to G.H.Q. Intelligence where we learned that the ambulance conveying MacEoin had come by a different route.

Michael Schweppe's house - raid and arrest:

A very special effort was being made to contact and eliminate a famous British Intelligence Officer known as Hoppy Hardy. This man had been missed on Bloody Sunday. On Good Friday the Squad had been combing the city all day, together with Intelligence Officers, in the hope of contacting Hardy, but we had failed to make any contact. Late in the evening a meeting was held to discuss the possibility of raiding Mountjoy to rescue MacEoin and others. The plan was to have the Engineers make a breach by explosives in the wall on the canal side of the Jail through which a small storming party was to enter. By the way I was named to take charge of this storming party. Other attacks and attempts at entering were to be made at the front and at various other points of the prison. It seemed to me at the time that this was a desperate effort which could not possibly succeed and finally the meeting decided against it. At this meeting was Tom Ennis, O/C 2nd Battalion, and other Brigade Staff Officers. The result of this meeting having been held meant that it was very late for all our members to get back to the dump and I was selected to take as many arms as possible to the dump as I was to sleep on the north side of the city that night. I succeeded in dumping the arms but retained a long and short Webley which were my favourite weapons and some spare ammunition, and then proceeded to 35, Mountjoy Square which was about a quarter of a mile from the dump. I had to move very cautiously as it was 10 o'clock curfew at the time and the district was

apparently being patrolled by the night patrol of Auxiliaries. I got into 35 Mountjoy Square which was the home of Fred Schweppe, who was a 1916 man and a Section Leader in my own Company, and whose home was open and very safe. There was a builders yard in the rear of this house, the property of Keegan and Sons, and a son of whom was a member of our 3rd Battalion Engineers. Sitting in the house when I arrived was Paddy Kennedy, one of our Intelligence Officers. The Schweppe family occupied the front and back parlour of this house which was a tenement house. I was pretty jaded when I arrived and fell asleep very quickly on a sofa in the front parlour. I went to sleep fully dressed with my guns on the sofa beside me. Paddy Kennedy lay on a single bed in the same room as me. My first recollection after falling asleep is that I was being yanked across the floor and I believed I was dreaming. Then I found I was surrounded by Auxiliaries with guns pointing at me. I was still half asleep but I think I felt for my guns and discovered I didn't have any and I immediately concluded that they had been found on me and I thought this was the end. I heard loud shouting, cursing and swearing and a British Officer came in. I think he had on an Auxiliary cap and a military tunic. He was limping and stuck his head into my face and to my amazement it was Hoppy Hardy. The shock of seeing Hardy (apart from my predicament) after the Squad searching the whole city for him in vain for close on 10 hours was most upsetting and I really felt that not only had they found my guns but that they knew I had been looking for Hardy. At this time I had no idea of the reason for the raid.

They yanked me into the other room where Fred Schweppe and his family slept. In this room were Fred, his wife and a baby at her breast and five young children, including Anna Schweppe who was about 19 years old. There was no sign of Paddy Kennedy anywhere. They were interrogating Fred whom they had taken out of bed as he was endeavouring to put on some clothes. They were abusing him - pushing and shoving him and using most foul language. On the walls of this room were large portraits of the 1916 leaders, Pearse, MacDonagh etc., and now and then Hoppy Hardy would point at these pictures and refer to the leaders in most objectionable terms. They left me sitting on the bedside while dealing with Fred, and pushing him about in this way. Once again I had an illustration of the wonderful courage of Fred Schweppe, who in the midst of this excitement was calmly lacing his shoes until Hardy began to describe the 1916 leaders using filthy language, and even though the Auxiliaries were all around, armed with guns and the whole atmosphere was very tense, Fred quietly took his foot down from the chair and stood up looking Hardy straight in the face and said to him. "I object to you using this language in the presence of my wife and children". I thought for one moment that this was the end as Hardy made a stride forward with his gun but stopped and stayed looking at Fred for a few seconds; then turned round and sat down. From then on there was comparative quiet and they began to pay attention to me. They asked me who I was. By this time I had concluded that somehow or other they hadn't found my guns and I was somewhat more composed than when they first came into the

room. On the spur of the moment I gave my name as Michael Schweppe and said I was the younger brother of Fred - that I was home for Easter Holidays from Scotland. Fred was about 45 years of age and at this time I was about 20 and they remarked on the disparity in age between us. I told them there were other brothers and sisters and that I was the youngest. They cross-examined Fred and he confirmed this. At this stage Mrs. Schweppe who was in bed nursing the baby began to wail "Oh! Sure you won't take Michael. He is only home on holidays". Eventually they yanked both of us out and it must be remembered that they hadn't searched me which was fortunate as I had the switch keys of our Squad car and the keys of one section of our Dump in my pocket. Outside the hall door were two Auxiliaries. These held me for the moment as the remainder had gone back with Fred for something and while waiting one of the Auxiliaries handed me a cigarette and seemed to look at me in a rather kindly way. I don't know why. Eventually we were put in an open tender surrounded by Auxiliaries and driven to Dublin Castle. On the way I noticed that there was a large Company of soldiers in Mountjoy Square, and it was raining. I succeeded in getting rid of the switch keys of the car and the key of the dump by quietly dropping one or two on the floor of the tender at intervals, until we reached the Castle when I remember dropping the last one on to soft ground when crossing the Castle yard. We were brought into a room on the left as you enter the Lower Castle Yard which I understand was the official Interrogation Room and there was a Black and Tan on night duty who immediately began to search us. I had nothing at all

on me but Fred and myself got a great start when we saw on a big table in this room a large pile of small arms and ammunition of all descriptions. To our amazement we recognised most of the Squad armoury. There was a big lanky Auxiliary in the room and he picked up a parabellum which I knew very well and waving it at me called me names and asked me if I knew anything about this weapon. It was quite easy for me to pretend to be really frightened because this particular parabellum was one which I knew was very tricky and unsafe and it seemed to be loaded. They eventually brought us to the cellars in the Castle and locked us up in one of these with a sentry posted outside. There were a few other prisoners in this room but we didn't know any of them. Now and then one or two sentries would open the door and look in and say something like this - "Oh! Blimy, look at the two Gerries" (because of the German sounding name "Schweppe").

In the cellar Fred Schweppe told me that his daughter Anna, when she heard the soldiers coming and bursting in the hall door ran into my room and took my guns and ammunition and hid them somewhere and warned Paddy Kennedy who succeeded in escaping from the rear of the house. I was so dog tired I never heard the commotion and she hadn't time to waken me.

The raid on 35 Mountjoy Square formed the basis for Seán O'Casey's play "The Shadow of a Gunman". You will notice that my description of the living quarters of the Schweppe family agrees almost identically with the stage setting of this famous play.

After a few interrogations in the Castle, spreading over three or four days, we were removed by Army lorry, handcuffed in pairs, to Arbour Hill Prison. The prison was apparently very overcrowded as we were lodged two in a cell, Fred Schweppe and myself being placed in the same cell. Conditions generally in the prison, particularly with two in one cell, and the rigid discipline, were very embarrassing as from approximately 4 o'clock each day until about 11 the following day we were not allowed to leave the cells to visit sanitary conveniences.

On the landing opposite to the one in which our cell was, there appeared to be only one prisoner who was allowed out to exercise on the corridor of this landing, and this prisoner I subsequently learned was Ned Broy.

Arbour Hill was a military detention barracks and in addition was being used as a prison for political prisoners, but the sweeping and cleaning of the corridors, etc. were carried out by soldier prisoners. I succeeded in having a message conveyed by one of these prisoners, who whispered when sweeping the landing that he was going out in a few days, conveyed outside and was subsequently posted to some friends I had in a little town called Coatdyke in Scotland. In this letter I told my friends that I had been arrested on the previous Good Friday but had stated I was on holidays in Scotland and would they support this statement. It may now appear to have been a silly or foolish move on my part but my position was rather desperate as masquerading under the name of Michael Schweppe I was afraid that

at any moment I would be identified with the Squad, so I took a chance and sent the letter out. The risk was fully justified as in about a week's time a letter was received from my friends in Scotland, through the Governor of the jail, bewailing the fact that I had been so unfortunate to have been arrested on the Good Friday morning within a few hours of having arrived on holidays in Scotland.

We were allowed to mix, in the forenoon and I think for an hour in the afternoon, with the other political prisoners for exercise. On my first day's exercise Fred Schweppe got into the yard before me and any prisoner whom he thought knew me, he succeeded in informing him that I was to be known as Michael Schweppe. This was a good precaution because the first person I saw with his face very badly beaten up was Tommy Keegan and his father, a very old man, who were the owners of 35, Mountjoy Square and had a building yard at the rere. They had both been arrested and rather badly beaten. Tommy Keegan as I have already stated, was an officer in the 3rd Battalion (Engineers) and I understand that some engineering equipment was captured in the yard.

I was in Arbour Hill for approximately one month, during which I was interrogated twice and brought before an identification parade on two occasions. This parade was organised in this way. A large canvas screen was outstretched across the corner of the quadrangle with holes cut here and there, and behind this screen individuals peered through at a prisoner, in this case myself, who was instructed to walk up and down, turn round, stand, bend down, speak, etc. We had no knowledge of the people behind this curtain except to hear them

whisper. On these occasions the main quadrangle was emptied and the bulk of the prisoners were pushed into the cemetery which was a walled-off enclosure at the back end of the quadrangle. The first and only time I was pushed in there I remember walking round and to my amazement recollecting looking at the graves and I think one or two of them were marked McDonagh or Pearse who had been executed in 1916. At this time, beyond some graves being numbered there were no other name plates on the graves. This was a graveyard where the annual official ceremony to the death of the 1916 leaders is now an historic event.

While it was not the practice to have each prisoner brought for identification, I do not know why I was selected, but I have the impression that "spot checks" were made, and in some way I was selected. I recollect that following the receipt of the letter from friends in Scotland and on the advice of Fred Schweppe, I pestered the Governor for interviews and succeeded in being brought before him on two or three occasions, on each of which I reiterated the statement that I had been innocently arrested while on holidays in Scotland, etc., and perhaps he may have brought me for identification as another precaution. However, I was eventually released as Michael Schweppe, together with the father of Tommy Keegan, while Tommy Keegan was eventually tried and sentenced to, I think, three or four years' imprisonment and I believe he actually did about ten months of this. Fred Schweppe along with many others was interned in the Curragh.

Capture of armoured car to rescue Seán MacEoin:

I was released in the afternoon which was, I think, on a Tuesday, but I did not report back to the Squad until Thursday. It is very interesting and often puzzles me that on the night of the day of my release my home was raided. I was not there as I stayed with some friends not very far away and actually saw the raid taking place. I think it was this prompted me to keep away from the Squad the following day. However, on Thursday I reported to our Headquarters at George Moreland's, Abbey St. At this time the final details of the attempt on the rescue of Seán MacEoin were being discussed, an essential feature of this being the capture of an armoured car which called to the Dublin abattoir daily to collect meat supplies for Military barracks in the city.

Michael Collins, Tommy Ennis, various Intelligence Officers, most of the Squad were back and forward into Moreland's, discussing this project and it was decided to make the attempt on Friday. The scheme was outlined to us by Michael Collins, during which he cross-examined Charlie Dalton on points in connection with the location of the car. I gathered from this that Dalton had first reported the possibility of capturing this car and subsequently it proved to be correct. The members of the Squad were detailed for the various positions for the capture of the armoured car. Specky Griffin and Charlie Dalton were to take up a position in the house of Michael Lynch, who was the Superintendent of the abattoir, and whose house overlooked the main entrance and grounds. Their job was to observe the armoured car, and if and when

the crew left the car completely we were to be signalled by the drawing down of a blind in the first floor of the building. I remember our principal fear at the time was that if we attempted to capture the car and any of the crew were inside we could be annihilated by one or both of the turret machine-guns, so it was essential that we should not make the attempt until the crew left the car completely. Pat MacCrae, who was considered our crack and No. 1 driver, was selected by Collins to drive the car. Up to this I had some training as a driver and in fact had been taught to drive by Pat MacCrae, and I was selected as Pat's assistant. Other members of the Squad were detailed for gate duty to cover the slaughter houses and to engage any member of the crew of the armoured car they met. Members of the Squad were nominated to form the crew of the car - driver, assistant driver, machine-gunner, assistant gunner and one other, a total of five. These five were instructed to be dressed in blue dungarees and a belt, with holsters under our overcoats so that we would look like Corporation men entering the abattoir and if we succeeded in seizing the car, the idea was to throw off our overcoats and take the khaki caps from the British crew, put our guns in our holsters openly and look as much as possible like the crew of an armoured car.

About 10. 30 on Friday morning we met at Aughrim St. and stood about waiting for the drawing down of the blind in Lynch's house, the signal from Dalton, which was to indicate that the crew had got out of the car. We waited about for approximately 45 minutes but on failing

to get the signal we were instructed by Paddy Daly, who was in charge of the party, to report back to our headquarters. We were instructed to make the attempt again on the following day, Saturday, and again at half past ten we were in Aughrim St. After about 10 minutes waiting the signal was given by Dalton and we moved into the abattoir. Our party moved into their allotted positions. Myself and Paddy McCrae went immediately to the armoured car. Just as we reached it a member of the crew came round from behind it. We held him up, disarmed him and brought him to the front of the car, asked him what his job in the car was. He told us he was the driver. Both Paddy McCrae and myself could drive most cars but we had had no experience of a British armoured car. We had taken the precaution of bringing an electric torch and while I kept my eye on the driver Paddy had a good look inside. We decided on the spot that we would make the young Army chap start the car. This man appeared to be almost in a state of collapse with fear. I remember distinctly speaking to him as kindly as possible in the circumstances and assuring him that he would be quite all right - that all we wanted him to do was to switch on the engine and start it. Apparently this could only be done by swinging the car. He switched it on and proceeded to swing the car but in his excitement he almost fell over the starting handle. I then spoke to him a little more sternly and he started the car. About this time some shooting was going on at the back of the abattoir buildings and shouting and screaming. However we proceeded and called over from the main gate the remainder of the appointed men among whom was John

Caffrey. Before entering the car I told the driver to stand facing the wall of the nearest building with his hands above his head and resting on the wall and if he remained this way he would be all right. Shortly before this Paddy had taken the driver's army hat for himself but it would not fit Paddy so I put it on my head much to Paddy's disappointment. We drove the car out the main gate and on to Hanlon's Corner on the North Circular Road. I observed Emmet Dalton and Joe Leonard standing on the footpath in full British Army Officers uniform. I gave the signal by putting a handkerchief out through one of the gun slots of the car. We stopped and Dalton and Leonard got in and we were on our way to Mountjoy. I think at this stage I should mention another aspect of this plan which was arranged. It is an indication of the foresight of Michael Collins: -

It was a common occurrence at the gates of Mountjoy during these times for a fairly large crowd of men, women and children to be gathered outside the main gate with parcels or messages or letters for I.R.A. prisoners, confined inside the jail, and Collins foresaw the possibility of trouble in getting the armoured car out of the jail and made the following arrangements to ensure a safe retreat - In the crowd outside the gate he posted one member of the Squad, Frank Bolster, one 2nd Battalion Company member - Tom Walsh I think and Katy Byrne (one of the Byrne's of 17 Richmond St.) Bolster and Walsh were both armed but Katy Byrne was armed only with a mock parcel and I distinctly remember on the previous Thursday Michael Collins emphasising that there must be no name on this parcel but that Katy Byrne should have a small

piece of pencil. The idea was to keep the wicket gate in the main gate of the jail open so that events inside could be observed by Bolster and necessary action taken. Katy Byrne was to approach the warder before he closed the wicket and ask him to take the parcel, which she had, into her brother who was inside. It was anticipated that the warder would say there is no name on it and ask who it was for. She would then try to borrow a pencil and after some time she would produce her own pencil. The whole idea of course was to delay the closing of the wicket gate.

To revert back to the point where we picked up Dalton and Leonard. We continued on down the North Circular Road and arrived safely at Mountjoy and drove slowly through the crowd outside the gate, who looked at us with very heavy scowls. I think one or two booed us. Dalton got out and he had with him the forged transfer document for the body of Seán MacEoin which he produced to the warder. The warder read the document and handed it back. He went inside and immediately opened the gates. The entrance to Mountjoy is protected by three gates, the main gate which is a solid door and inside it are two other iron rail gates. What appeared to be the usual procedure in entering this jail then followed. The armoured car was allowed into the first section and the main gate was closed behind it. Then the second gate was opened and the car proceeded into the second section and waited there until the second section was locked. Then the third gate was opened and the car moved inside the prison grounds proper and the third gate was locked. One of the things Paddy McCrae

and myself planned to do on getting inside the jail was to turn the car and back it up against the wall facing the first inside gate, the idea being if necessary to drive the car through the gates. We proceeded to turn the car into that position although it was very obvious that we could never have crashed through the three gates. Immediately inside the last gate there was a Black and Tan sentry on duty dressed in the usual fashion with an R.I.C. man's hat and khaki or brown waterproof coat. Leonard and Dalton got out of the car and went into the main hall of the prison. Tom Keogh and myself got out and stood about. Paddy McCrae and the two gunners remained inside. The Black and Tan sentry was standing at ease and I approached him and endeavoured to chat with him and imitating an English accent I said "This is a so and so place". The sentry curtly replied "Yes", or something like that and proceeded to slope arms and march across the gate. I distinctly remember having an intuitive feeling that this man was suspicious and I was very much on my guard. I looked through the rail gates and saw that the wicket in the main gate was open and the warder was having an argument with somebody outside and I presumed it was Katy Byrne. There were three or four warders with keys jingling from their belts inside the main gates evidently listening to the argument going on at the wicket. I moved round to the other side of the car. I remember Tom Keogh standing on the steps of the main wing of the jail and we observed warders, and I think Auxiliary forces, moving about the jail corridors but there was no sign of Leonard or Dalton, and things within the jail wing appeared to be normal. Then there was a sudden

Commotion

and shouting at the front gate and I immediately surmised that Bolster had decided to hold up the warders for some reason. On looking through the railings I saw this was the case as he and Walsh had all of the warders with their hands over their heads standing against the wall. The Black and Tan sentry fired a shot from the hip and I heard Walsh shout or scream. Immediately Tom Keogh and myself opened up on the sentry at close range and I remember the look of surprise on this man's face. As he fell to the ground he turned and pointed his rifle at us and pulled the bolt back and that was the end of it. Almost immediately a machine gun opened up from somewhere on the roof of the walls of the prison and Joe Leonard and Emmet Dalton ran out of the prison wing, down the steps and towards the car. I ran towards the dead sentry, picked up his rifle which had the bayonet fixed, got round to the car and by that time all the members of the crew were in the car with the exception of Emmet Dalton who was standing with a revolver in his hand firing up the corridor of the prison. I chucked the rifle into the car and evidently the bayonet prodded Joe Leonard's leg as the volley of adjectives which was immediately forthcoming indicated. I got into the car and by this time Bolster had the three gates open and the car drove out. Dalton jumped on the back of the outside of the car and continued firing towards the prison. We went as hard as we could down the prison avenue and on to the North Circular Road towards O'Connell Schools, Richmond St., where we had "The Big Fellow's" (Michael Collins's) car in charge of Joe Hyland, waiting to take, as we had hoped, Seán MacEoin away. Emmet Dalton and Joe Leonard transferred to his car and we proceeded

towards Fairview in the armoured car. We drove in a normal manner along Fairview Strand and I remember one of the gunners who looked out through the turret remarking "There is so and so from "B" Company and I looked through the slot in the car and recognised two members of my own Company whose names I now forget. I remember pulling the gunner down as I felt these lads looked as if they were on patrol and might chuck a bomb at the armoured car. We went on towards the Malahide Road and at this time the car had become very hot and stifling and was not pulling well. We got it up the Malahide Road, however, and when very near the bottom entrance of what is now Clontarf Golf Club, the car spluttered and almost stopped. Water was boiling from the radiator and it appeared to be generally very much overheated. We stopped and got out and only then found that in our ignorance we had neglected to open the metal shields covering the radiator which was responsible for the overheating of the car etc. The destination of the car arranged by Mick Lynch was at a farm somewhere between Coolock and Swords where it was intended to hide it in some haybarn under hay for the time being. Now we decided that we could not possibly hope to get to our pre-arranged destination and it was agreed that we should abandon the car. We took out the two machine guns which were of the Hotchkiss type, the Lee Enfield rifle with bayonet fixed and four belts of ammunition, opened the bonnet and fired a shot into the carburettor and set fire to it. There was very little traffic on the road. Some people stopped to look at us but I think they must have concluded we were British soldiers and kept

a respectable distance from us. Pat McCrae and one of the two gunners went across towards Fairview to where Tom Ennis, who was Commandant of the 2nd Battalion, at that time lived, and myself and Tom Keogh and Caffrey agreed to take the Hotchkiss guns and the rifle across country towards Coolock and find a suitable hiding place. After a treck of more than a couple of miles over fields and hedges we eventually found what appeared to be a suitable hiding place in a small culvert at the entrance to a field west of Coolock, and there we carefully secreted the captured guns and ammunition. We then made our way back to the house of Tom Ennis. We washed up and got rid of our dungarees and then Tom Keogh and myself reported back to Oscar Traynor at Brigade Headquarters in The Plaza, Gardiner's Place. At that time Brigade Headquarters was in The Plaza, which had at one time been a hotel, hence the name, but was then general Society Rooms. Before we left Fairview there was an aeroplane hovering around and later in the day we learned that it was spotting for the armoured car. Oscar Traynor asked me if I would contact Paddy McDonnell of Seville Place who was a member of the 2nd Battalion and had a horse and cart, and ask him to go along with me and collect the guns in Coolock. I went to Paddy and he took out a flat bottomed cart, which is a cart without any sides with a hole in the centre for the driver to put his feet through. We took some old sacking with us and jogged along to Coolock on this Saturday afternoon. It must have taken us well over an hour to get to the culvert. The armoured car was gone from Malahide Road and there didn't appear to be any activity. We succeeded

in collecting the guns and ammunition and brought them back to Seville Place where they were taken in charge by Paddy McDonnell.

With regard to the action taken by Bolster at the main gate I was told afterwards by Bolster and Kitty Byrne that they had held the warder in conversation at the wicket as long as possible until he tried to shut the gate and although Kitty Byrne put her foot on the step he was succeeding in closing the gate. Bolster felt that in the circumstances in order to ensure our line of retreat he had to hold him up. I don't think Bolster's action had anything to do with the failure to rescue Seán MacEoin as I understand matters hadn't proceeded as expected inside and that Dalton and Leonard were about to leave in any case. I am quite certain that were it not for Bolster's action we would never have got out of Mountjoy prison alive. Walsh as it transpired was shot through the palm of the right hand but succeeded in escaping and I saw him very often afterwards along the North Strand and at Company meetings with a bandage on his hand. It was not a very serious injury.

With regard to the action at the abattoir after the car had been captured, I was told by Jimmy Conroy, a member of the Squad, and other members of the Squad that as Paddy McCrae and myself were capturing the car the remainder of the Squad looked round the building and had come in contact with the balance of the crew who were standing around looking at the butchers at work. They tried to hold them up but the crew put up a fight

and three of them were shot and the remainder surrendered arms. Conroy who was guarding the gate of the abattoir, said that one of the three shot was the driver whom I had held up, and told to place his hands above his head against the wall. He explained that a short while after we had left, the soldier took his hands down from the wall and turned round and he (Conroy) thought he might be armed and he was shot.

The report of the capture of the armoured car which appeared in the papers that evening stated that the driver of the car had been shot in cold blood, and called the men who shot him the foulest murderers. As I have explained this was untrue. I understand that apart from the armoured car the total arms captured that day was 2 Hotchkiss guns with four belts of ammunition, 1 Enfield Rifle with bayonet fixed and 4 rounds of .303 ammunition and 7 Webley or similar type small arms.

The crew of the car was made up as follows: - Pat McCrae and myself, drivers; John Caffrey and a man by the name of Goff, machine gunners; and Tom Keogh an ordinary member of the crew. Later Emmet Dalton and Joe Leonard joined us as two British Officers. So in all seven took part in the attempted rescue of Seán MacEoin. The total casualties were three British soldiers shot at the abattoir, one wounded, one Black and Tan shot at Mountjoy and one Volunteer - Walsh wounded in the hand.

Thompson Machine Guns:

The first two Thompson machine guns were brought

into Ireland from America by two Irish-Americans with military rank, whose names I cannot recall. One I believe was Colonel Dinneen. These guns were, I think, shortly after arriving here, brought to the Squad at Morelands in Abbey St. where I remember we had a very happy time dismantling and putting them together and learning their mechanism. The Colonel and his friend gave us instruction on them but we learned all about them very rapidly as we were in our own rights, something of specialists in the use of small arms generally. In fact I was an instructor for the 2nd Battalion in small arms and automatics. It was decided to take the Thompsons to the Casino at Fairview, in which there were a number of tunnels, and one afternoon some of the squad and myself and I believe Mick Collins and Oscar Traynor tried the guns out at the Casino. We fired live ammunition from the small vertical and large round magazines. The tunnels were well below ground and some members of the Squad went outside watching and listening but very little sound could be heard. We succeeded in completely familiarising ourselves with these two guns.

The Igoe Gang:

Sergeant Igoe was a policeman selected from some part of Galway to organise a particular Squad of R.I.C. men for the purposes of spotting, interrogation, raids, arrests etc. in Dublin. Apparently the idea was that the Castle people concluded that a large number of the Volunteers operating in Dublin came from the various parts of the country. The Igoe Squad was built up of representatives of various counties whom it was

expected would be better able to recognise the active Volunteers in Dublin and in particular our squad. At this time the activities of the Squad and their reputation had become very great in the city and while Igoe's Murder Gang, as it came to be called, was probably organised for general duty, I believe that they were specifically developed to combat Squad activities. At any rate we members of the Squad took that point of view and as the Igoe Gang developed we began to feel that our movements were becoming somewhat restricted in that, apart from the ordinary military patrols, policemen, auxiliaries, Black and Tans, staff duties, etc. we had to be continually on the watch for a number of well-dressed men, approximately fifteen, I think, who moved in and out and round the city as would persons on vacation.

Very briefly the modus operandi of the Igoe Murder Gang was to stroll along the streets, drop into shops, pubs, and restaurants, theatres, attend on the fringes of football matches etc. always on the look out for country members of the Volunteers and on one being recognised the well-dressed members of the Murder Gang would quietly move around the individual, or individuals, and smilingly chat and talking quietly force him into a secluded spot and there, while still chatting and smiling, would interrogate him. Rarely, if ever, did they produce guns. Somewhere within 100 yards or so of the Igoe Gang there was invariably an Army Motor Van and when the Gang decided to arrest an individual a whistle was blown, or a signal given, and the waiting van

would arrive and take away the prisoner.

It is not to be thought that the Igoe Gang was always courteous and polite. The procedure just described was simply their method of working which enabled them to effect arrests and interrogations without creating any excitement or drawing any attention to themselves, whatever. They did on occasions, but particularly at night time when darkness helped them somewhat, indeed act very brutally and commit a number of murders.

Our Intelligence Officers were continually on the watch for Igoe and it speaks well of their work that they were able to convey, very frequently, some accurate descriptions of the Igoe Gang and their movements and where they were carrying out their work.

I have seen, when off duty, and on the edge of the crowd, members of the Igoe Gang, as I say well dressed, quietly selecting an individual from a crowd and apparently walking off with him as if they were his friends, but very quickly they got round a side street and carried on their interrogation under more suitable circumstances.

The only direct contact that the Squad had with the Igoe Gang was when numbers of the individual members of the Squad were pushed along or actually interrogated in a general way in crowds in the street.

Eventually it was decided by Mick Collins that the Squad should go all out for the Igoe Murder Gang and to

help us a Galway Volunteer, Sweeney Newell, was brought from somewhere in Galway - the actual town where Igoe had been stationed as a Sergeant in the R.I.C. Sweeney Newell knew Igoe very well and he was attached to our Intelligence Branch with Charlie Dalton to seek out and locate the Igoe Gang in Dublin and point them out to the Squad.

A number of tours of the city were made by the Squad, with Charlie Dalton and Sweeney Newell operating in front of us, but we failed to make contact with the Murder Gang. The strain imposed on the Squad by this class of work was rather great as it meant we were continually moving round the city from early morning - about 9 a.m. to 7 or 8 o'clock at night and our meals had to be taken wherever we could grab a sandwich and a cup of tea, and also because of the fact that we were more fully armed than usual, each of us being equipped with two revolvers, plenty of spare ammunition and a number of us with a couple of hand grenades. We had many exciting incidents moving around in this way and many opportunities of attacking the enemy which we found very difficult to resist but had to as our job was to concentrate on Igoe.

One day having been round the city as described we were informed that Igoe and his Gang had been located at the bottom of Grafton St. moving towards Stephen's Green. We were in Templebar and we got along to Anglesea St. and after a brief consultation we decided to make for the head of Grafton St., and enter it from Stephen's Green. We expected Sweeney Newell and Charlie

Dalton would be ready to give us the signal or to point out the Gang. The Squad moved off in twos, inconspicuously, and I went with Vincent Byrne up Anglesea St. into Dame St. As I have said somewhere before we always took the precaution of dressing in a manner which would make us look like ordinary workmen or tradesmen. This would enable us to move very freely so now we entered Dame St. in the middle of the road, I remember, and just looked left and right for the traffic, but actually we were concerned about a certain Castle patrol car which we knew patrolled this area at this time and our watchfulness was due to this more than to anything else. On looking to the left we saw Charlie Dalton and Sweeney Newell standing, smoking, against the wall of an Insurance building and chatting to one or two others. We assumed that he was about to move towards Grafton St., behind the (Igoe's) men. We continued across the road and up Trinity St. and eventually reached Stephen's Green from South King St., but to our disappointment instead of meeting Charlie Dalton and Sweeney Newell and going into action, we were told by Tom Keogh, an Intelligence Officer, and another member of the Squad, that the job was off as Charlie Dalton and Sweeney Newell had in fact been captured by Igoe. It seems that the two men we saw Dalton and Sweeney speaking to in what appeared to be a friendly fashion were actually Igoe and one other member of his Gang, the remaining members apparently being scattered in the near vicinity.

We were told eventually that Dalton and Newell were,

as already stated, close on the heels of Igoe but that Igoe recognised Newell and somehow turned the tables on them and actually held Newell and Dalton for interrogation. Dalton succeeded, after about half an hour's interrogation, in convincing Igoe that he was a Solicitor's clerk and he had papers on him to prove it. He was let go. Sweeney Newell was less fortunate. He and Igoe knew each other. It seems that according to Dalton, Igoe took Newell down Anglesea St. and it appears they walked down the South Quays (Essex Quay) towards Parliament St. and on up near the Four Courts at the corner of Greek St. (He was interrogating him all the time). They told him eventually "You may go now" and as he crossed the road towards the Bridge they shouted at him to hurry and he, I think, broke into a run and they immediately shot him but not fatally. They wounded him rather badly round the hips and almost immediately the grey van, already referred to, was on the scene and they took him to what was then known as King George's Hospital as a prisoner. The report of this incident appeared in the evening papers something like this: -

> "A well-known I.R.A. man who was on the run - Sweeney Newell from Galway - was recognised passing the corner of Greek St. by some Crown Forces. They called on him to halt but he ran away and failed to listen to the many calls for halt and the Crown Forces were obliged to shoot him, and wounded him slightly in the leg. He was taken prisoner".

Subsequently after the Truce I saw Sweeney Newell in the Mater Hospital. I know he was a long time laid

up as a result of this and in fact he almost lost a leg, and is now, if he is alive, with a stiff leg. I am sorry to say that this was the nearest we ever got to the Murder Gang and I think, if we have any disappointments I consider, this to all of us would be one of the major ones.

Raid on Trinity College:

There was a British Officers' Training Corps (Cadets) for students at Trinity College, and it was said that they had arms for training. The Dublin Brigade O/C, Oscar Traynor, decided that these arms should be captured. The Squad were asked to co-operate. I remember meeting Oscar and members of the Squad, the Brigade Council and the Dublin Battalions at the Plaza Hotel. At this time I was recognised as No. 1 or crack motor-driver, together with Pat McCrae, and Oscar instructed me to obtain a car and bring it to the rere of Trinity College in Lincoln Place at about 6.30 in the evening. He gave me a general outline of what was to take place such as members of the Squad and Volunteers were to approach the training quarters in Trinity College, which were near the Lincoln Place gate, and there raid the hall and capture the guns. My job was to have a car at the Lincoln Place gate at 6.30 to take the guns, and any members of the raiding party that I could, to one of the Battalion dumps off North Great Charles St.

I remember distinctly it was left to my own discretion how I was to get the car, or where I was to get it, and I felt a thrill of pride that such confidence was

placed in me.

We had cars in our dumps but there was no time to go for one of them as I believe the meeting took place about 6 o'clock in The Plaza. I had one member of the Squad with me. It may have been Vincent Byrne - I am not quite sure. He and I walked down Cavendish Row towards the Rotunda and on the way down I decided that the type of car I'd require should be a van. I was fortunate in meeting a Freeman's Journal van near the Rotunda and we stepped out on the road, held our hands up and stopped it. We quietly took the driver out and told him to clear off. I turned the car and drove it over to Trinity College gate at Lincoln Place. I waited there about twenty minutes and some members of the raiding party came out to me - I forget whom - and said, "The job is off".

I am not quite sure why the job was called off. I have an idea that the training hall or gymnasium was locked, barred and bolted and our men were unable to open it. I drove the car away and I think I parked it in some side street and cleared off.

Ambush at Whitehall:

Tommy Ennis, Officer Commanding, 2nd Battalion, Dublin Brigade planned an ambush on a number of military tenders which were in the habit of coming from Collinstown to the G.P.O. each morning to collect workmen. The ambush was planned to take place on the bend of the road at Whitehall which would be now approximately, as far

as I can remember, a half mile above the present Whitehall Garda Station. Selected Volunteers from a number of Companies of the Battalion were nominated with Volunteer members of the Squad, myself, I think Tommy Keogh and Vincent Byrne and two others. The party took up positions behind the wall of a large private house at the bend of the road nearest the city. There was a large wooden gate leading on to the road and behind this gate the party arranged a heavy country cart with which it was intended to barricade the road. On the opposite side of the road, inside an open entrance to some other houses, I took charge of four men each of us armed with, in addition to revolvers, rifles. The idea was to cut off the retreat of the enemy or to hold off reinforcements from Collinstown direction. The cart in the passage behind the gateway on one side of the road would, on the opening of the gates, only require a gentle push to roll right across the road as the roadway was somewhat below the level of the house grounds. Eventually two tenders appeared and passed my position without incident, but apparently the main party on the other side of the road were too anxious about the barricading of the road and pushed the cart out somewhat too soon, with the result that the tender pulled up a considerable distance before reaching the barricade in time to reverse and turn back and drive it into the gateway where there was cover, and behind which we were lying in wait. We were taken by surprise. We opened fire but the whole thing was so unexpected that I am afraid our aim was not very accurate as I don't think we inflicted any casualties on the party.

I remember feeling some admiration for the British party, which consisted of only about four or six armed men including drivers, for the way in which they held themselves and succeeded in getting out of the trap. They finally took up positions by entering a field immediately in our rear, about 100 yards or so from our positions, and almost turned the tables on us by opening fire from the rere. We returned the fire and then withdrew.

I took my party across country and over rivers etc. and we eventually came out on Botanic Road. From there we continued to our dumps. The main party cleared off in the direction of Fairview and got away without any losses of equipment.

I well remember being rather reluctant to meet Tommy Ennis because we had failed so badly. Our attacking party had numbered about sixteen or eighteen in all, but who the Officer in charge was, I cannot now recall.

Burning of the Custom House:

I think it was on the day before the burning of the Custom House the Squad were in their usual place at Morelands of Abbey St., when we were informed of a plan for a very large job which was to take place on the following morning. I remember that Paddy Daly had been with Intelligence at a special meeting from which he had come back to the Squad and intimated, without giving us any details, that there was a very big job which would be more than a Squad job, to take place on the following day. The

following morning we met at Morelands and were detailed for the job - which was the burning of the Custom House. I remember Jimmy Conroy was instructed to take one member of the Squad and enter the Custom House from a quayside door and other members of the Squad were detailed to enter the building by other doors. We were told that there were groups of the 2nd Battalion, and other Battalions, taking up positions round the approaches to the Custom House. I was instructed to meet, I think, a chap named Ryan from "E" Company of the 2nd Battalion, who would be at Marlborough St. I knew this chap well. I was to join his party with a view to checking any military activity while the burning of the Custom House was being carried out. I think there were other parties round Gardiners St. way and I remember before we left somebody asking - what would happen when the Fire Brigade knew there was a fire, and we were told that the Fire Brigade Stations were being taken over by other Volunteers. From this we got the impression that the Custom House was being completely isolated and that the only interruption to the complete destruction would be if some outsider, tout or other person conveyed the information to the Castle or some of the military stations.

I remember a tender of Auxiliaries coming down the Quay. We were at the corner of Marlborough St. I gathered that information had been received by the British. Our party moved down towards the Custom House and on the way down we heard some shooting and I saw an Auxiliary standing beside Liberty Hall with a Lewis gun almost on his shoulder and turned in the direction of the Custom House, slamming shots from the gun. We fired

a few shots in their general direction but we could not do very much good. I could hear shooting on the Quay, so we decided to move away and pot shot where we could but we hadn't moved very far up Abbey St. - by the way there were groups of people all over the place - when we saw a figure running out of the Custom House. I should have pointed out that at this stage the building was well on fire and clouds of smoke were belching from the windows and apparently from the roof. We tried to get down to the corner of Abbey St. and I remember seeing a figure running right across the road from the Custom House into a laneway which is at the back of Dunlop House and leads into Marlborough St. I subsequently learned that this was Tommy Ennis who made his escape in the teeth of the enemy fire but was badly wounded in doing so. My party seemed to get broken up with the exception of one chap and myself. We got round eventually to the corner of Gardiner St. and there we heard from the crowd that some of the Volunteers had run out towards Talbot St. We picked up different information here and there and eventually we moved to a house in Corporation St. where we were told that a girl had got a cab and driven off with two men, who appeared to be badly wounded, to the Mater Hospital. We made our way to the Mater Hospital and had no difficulty in locating the two wounded men as the Mater Hospital authorities all through the troubled times were wonderful people in looking after our wounded etc. One of them was Seán Doyle who had been shot in the chest and was dead and the other was Jim Slattery whose right hand had been shot off. I saw Jim and considering all the circumstances he was in remarkably good condition.

He had been placed in what we called the 'secret ward' which was a ward in the heart of a number of wards and for that reason very difficult to locate because of the many approaches to it. Somebody else came in then and told us that a chap who was with him, and was badly wounded, had been brought to a private nursing home in Eccles St. on the opposite side of the road to the hospital.

In the meantime we took all papers and everything from Jim Slattery in case the place was raided by the British. In this way we made sure that he would not be identified with the movement, and we impressed on him he was to insist that he was simply passing by and, attracted by the crowd, was shot accidentally.

We went across to the Eccles St. Nursing Home where we saw Tom Ennis. He was still conscious but rather badly wounded round the hips. I remember distinctly he recognised me and the first thing he said to me was "Bill, did the lads get away?". Just at that moment he was moved out of the room for an immediate operation.

Attack on troop train at Drumcondra:

The first time I think that the Thompson guns were brought into action was shortly after testing them at the Casino when we endeavoured to ambush the military train conveying troops from the North Wall to somewhere in the north of Ireland, on the Drumcondra main line. The first attempt was made on the Drumcondra road. At the old Drumcondra railway station, there is a stretch of approximately 100 yards of open embankment and myself

and one member of the Squad took over a house overlooking this embankment and took up positions with the two Thompson guns. The engineers moved a rail with a view to derailing the train on the embankment and so bringing it within the immediate range of the Thompson guns. Other members of the Squad were in various positions which would have enabled them to use small arms and bomb the train. I remember we were in these positions waiting for the train in the afternoon for about half an hour and then we heard the puff-puff of the engine as it climbed a rather long slow gradient from the North Wall to Drumcondra, and finally when it came across the road bridge and fell into view we realised that it was not a passenger train but a cattle train and all we saw were the heads of cattle. The engine proceeded on and became derailed at the loosened spot. We immediately packed up and retreated back. It appears information our Intelligence /had in regard to the troop movements was not correct. However, two days afterwards, and I think on a Saturday morning, we were told that the train carrying the soldiers would start from the North Wall and we were instructed to plan an ambush on slightly different lines. Parallel with Iona Road, the Drumcondra line runs at the back of some houses along an open embankment and it was decided to take up positions between those houses, which were semi-detached in groups of two, and attack the train in this way. I met Charlie Dalton early that morning as my job was to pick up the Thompson guns and Charlie Dalton with the help of a taxi, the property of Batty Hyland, which was in a garage in Denzille Lane,

very near our dump and factory. I picked up the car about 7 o'clock and Charlie Dalton, and we got the two Thompsons from Morelands and went on towards Drumcondra. Our instruction was to select an open space between the houses and as the train passed to spray it with the Thompson guns. A little further on several members of the Squad and some Battalion members were stationed on the roadside armed with bombs, small arms etc. Their job was to throw bombs on to the train which passed approximately 15 or 20 feet above the road level. This time the train arrived and I distinctly remember the sight of khaki clad figures - some lying against the window panes sleeping. The whole attacking party appeared to open fire simultaneously and we sprayed the train as it passed with the Thompson guns and I think with very good effect. The train didn't stop and when the last carriage had gone, which was only a matter of a few minutes, Charlie Dalton and myself went off in the car with the Thompson guns, left them back in the dump and handed the car back to Batty Hyland. The remainder of the attacking party went to the various dumps and dispersed. There was a big splash in the papers that evening and I remember Leonard and Dalton or some of those told us that they had a report back from Dundalk (where the train finally reached) saying that the number of stretchers carried out was about 25 or 30. There were no casualties on our side.

<u>Auxiliary Cadets shot in Grafton St.</u>:

It was well known to G.H.Q. and in fact to people in the city that Grafton St. and many of the public houses

and restaurants adjoining it were frequented by members of the Auxiliaries and Castle people regularly. G.H.Q. decided on an effort to carry out a mass execution and to close off Grafton St. at a certain hour on a certain day and eliminate every member of the British Forces who happened to be there. I understand that this operation was planned carefully some weeks in advance of the date on which it was carried out, which was about the middle of June 1921, and most of our best Intelligence Officers spent a lot of time in Grafton St. noting the habitués for this purpose. I remember being in Grafton St. on private business and recognising some of our Intelligence Officers, many of whom appeared to be rather well dressed and with the appearance of students - plenty of time and nothing to do.

It was decided by G.H.Q. to amalgamate the Squad, the A.S.U. and prominent reliable members of the various Companies of the Brigade for this operation. The way it was to be carried out was to fill Grafton St. with our men and to have groups of them attached to our Intelligence Officers patrolling Grafton St. The Intelligence Officers would identify the British forces for elimination. My part in this job was to take a Ford van, which, by the way, had shortly before this time been captured from the British when they came to the Fruit Market one morning to collect vegetables. Together with Charlie Dalton and two others, whose names I now forget, some spare guns and bombs and two Thompson guns were brought in the van. My instructions were to park the van in Dawson St. at the corner of Duke St. and when the shooting started to move the van gradually in towards Grafton St. and to fight off

any British reinforcements that might come along, using my own discretion to fit in with the general scheme as well as possible. I had a narrow escape from being captured on my way to Grafton St. from our dump in Charles St. The British at this time had a practice of conducting street patrols with Infantry soldiers who walked along the footpaths mixing with the ordinary public, with an officer somewhere in front, making themselves as inconspicuous as possible. On the blast of a whistle from the officer, the soldiers held up and searched all the people near them. A similar patrol operated in a slightly different way by occasionally cordoning off, again at the blast of a whistle one of the bridges over the Liffey and searching everybody then on the bridge. My experience while proceeding to Grafton St. via the North Strand and over Butt Bridge was that on arriving about the centre of the bridge there was a blast of a whistle and out from among the pedestrians on each footpath a cordon of soldiers rushed across and closed the bridge in front of me. As I have explained, this van had recently been captured from the British and had not been altered in any way. It had the usual tilted cover and was painted a khaki grey. I slowed up but continued moving forward, my intention being to accelerate rapidly. There was some hesitation on the part of the soldiers and I was suddenly prompted to stick my head and arm out of the side window and shout something like, "Gor blimey, haow are yaow" in an English accent. Fortunately the soldiers concluded, due to the colour of the car and my accent, that we were members of the British

forces and passed us through. We continued and reached our point of contact in Dawson St. After about a half an hour's waiting we heard two shots and I started to move the car, as instructed, and got half way into Duke St. when a number of our lads whom I recognised came running towards the van and said, "The job is off; there is a mix up". We got out of the van and walked with guns drawn towards Grafton St. and then we met, I think, Frank Saurin who confirmed that two police cadets had been shot at the corner of Harry St. before the general signal had been given and the job was called off. Charlie Dalton, myself and one other person returned to our van and drove towards Molesworth St. when we saw a heavy Army lorry fitted with the usual cage, packed with soldiers coming down Dawson St. very rapidly. When we got into Molesworth St. we found that the lorry was following us but we succeeded in turning into Kildare St. in spite of the fact that the front tyres of the Ford van came off. However, I was able to take the van down a laneway off Kildare St. and into a garage which, fortunately, was open. We closed the door of the garage and had great pleasure in seeing the military lorry passing the head of the lane with great speed. We left the van in the garage overnight and the next morning at 6 o'clock I went to the garage accompanied by a member of the Squad whose name I have forgotten. Arriving there, we fixed the tyres and took the van out complete with two Thompson guns and other armaments and brought it safely to our dump at North Great Charles St. off Mountjoy Square.

Amalgamation of Squad and Active Service Unit:

As a result of the casualties suffered at the burning of the Custom House, particularly through the taking of prisoners, the Squad was reduced to more than half so that there were only approximately five active members left. G.H.Q. then decided to amalgamate the Squad and A.S.U. into one whole-time Active Service Unit. And this unit, operating under Paddy Daly, endeavoured to continue the fight against the British. But we were greatly handicapped due to the lack of arms and ammunition, a large amount of which was lost in the Custom House and in dumps - principally the Squad dump which had been captured by the enemy.

I cannot remember any outstanding incident that this newly formed unit was engaged in between the Custom House burning and the Truce. But I do remember that it worked well as a unit, and that patrols were being carried out and attacks made frequently on the British moving in tenders etc. throughout the city. I have a recollection that we did ambush a number of such tenders in the Dorset St. - Blessington St. area and near Findlaters Church, Parnell Square, and that various attempts were made which did not succeed because the enemy did not appear at the time planned for these ambushes.

While we were using "George Morelands" in Abbey St. as our main dump, most of the meetings of the new unit took place in the Plaza Hotel in Gardiner's Row. The new unit numbered approximately 25. While I think the new unit was made up of the remainder of the A.S.U. and the Squad, it is possible that a few new men from the

Battalion Companies may have been added to increase the strength. The unit operated in two sections to cover specifically the north and south sides of the city. The southern section was in charge of Pádraig O'Connor and the other section in charge of a combination of Paddy Daly, myself and, I believe, Joe Leonard.

First Unit of the Irish Army:

The Squad and A.S.U. unit was held together after the Truce and was brought up to approximately a strength of 60 by the addition of those old members released from prison who rejoined and a few outstanding ordinary Volunteers. On the recommendation of Paddy Daly, and the senior officers of the unit, arrangements were immediately made to set up a camp near Brittas for the unit. This was done, and in a big tumble-down house well off the main Brittas Road the camp was set up. The name of either the house or townland - I am not sure which - was Mount Seaskin.

This camp was organised on strictly military lines and a full programme of training was also drawn up, so that, as in a regular army, we had our main guard duty, the usual 24-hour guard duty and the responsibilities of a main guard. We had our early morning parades commencing with physical training and courses and lectures in musketry etc. throughout each day given by those of us who were fairly proficient in the subject. There were also lectures on camp administration and its attendant responsibilities such as hygiene and sanitation. The Mount Seaskin camp was not equipped with water borne

sewerage, and field sanitation was installed strictly in accordance with that laid down in the British manuals. I acted on the administrative staff of this camp with Paddy Daly and Joe Leonard. We were agreeably surprised to find how quickly and apparently enjoyably the members of the unit took to camp life when it was run according to military discipline.

We divided the unit into two Companies complete with the necessary officers and N.C.O.s. We also had our Orderly Room and we published in long-hand, of course, our Daily Orders. Part of the training we organised was attack and defence of the position and in this connection we carried out a number of manoeuvres by sending one Company away to selected positions and approaches, with a view to attacking Mount Seaskin, while the other Company planned to defend it, which included the setting up of reconnoitring parties on both sides and a sort of military intelligence and so on. Another aspect of this camp organisation was that we provided our own cooks and did our own cooking. I remember having a slight knowledge of cookery myself, reading up some books and lectures on cooking and the production of food on a basic ration scale.

The camp was financed by the Dublin Brigade who paid for the purchases which we made locally. We had visits and inspections carried out by members of the Dublin Brigade Council - the Brigadier, Oscar Traynor, Messrs. Cronin and Dinneen who brought over the Thompson guns, Dan Breen and some other noted personalities at the time. They all seemed much impressed.

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This camp was run, as well as I can remember, for several months until Paddy Daly was instructed to form the first Company of the Irish Army - namely the Dublin Guards. Certain other members of the unit, principally the Squad members, were eventually selected to act as staff liaison officers in the taking over of the various British military barracks in the city and country as they were evacuated by the British. But all members of the unit reported to Celbridge to assist Captain Daly in forming the Dublin Guards. The formation and equipping of the unit took place in part of a convent in Celbridge. And from this place the first Company of the Irish Army, fully equipped with uniforms etc. under Paddy Daly and Joe Leonard and I think Pádraig O'Connor, took over Beggars Bush barracks. The senior members of the unit, i.e. the Squad members, including myself, although officially members of the Dublin Guard, were appointed staff liaison officers and visited the various parts of the country to train, or take charge of the country units, in taking over the barracks from the British, and to equip and direct these units. For my part, and that of Tom Keogh, Ben Byrne, Jim Slattery and one or two others, we operated in the counties Limerick and Clare. And finally on behalf of the provisional government we took over almost all the R.I.C. and military barracks in these counties, including the city of Limerick, and the town of Ennis. This meant checking equipment left behind against stock lists, the posting of guards and the running of each place as a military barracks. In addition to this it was necessary to set up a simple schedule of training for the country units, who had very little military training and were not fully equipped.

Signed: W. J. Stapleton
(W. J. Stapleton)

Witness: W Ivory Comdt
(W. Ivory) Comd't.

Date: 28th March 1953
28th March 1953