

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21  
BURO STAIRÉ MILÉTA 1913-21  
NO. W.S. 812

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 812

Witness

Patrick O'Brien,  
Girrough,  
Ballineen,  
Co. Cork.

Identity.

Member of Irish Volunteers, Dunmanway, 1916;  
Adjutant, 10th (Dunmanway) Battalion, Cork  
Brigade, 1917 - ;  
Adjutant 3rd (Dunmanway) Battalion, Cork III  
Brigade.

Subject.

- (a) Reorganisation of Irish Volunteers,  
West Cork, 1917;
- (b) Military activities, West-Cork, 1918-1921.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil

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STATEMENT

BY

PATRICK O'BRIEN, GIRLOUGH, BALLINEEN, CO. CORK.ADJUTANT, 3RD (DUNMANWAY) BATTALION, CORK III BRIGADE.

I am the tenth generation of the O'Briens of Girlough to live in that townland. I was born on the 12th December, 1895. My father was a member of the Phoenix Society and so I grew up in an Irish-Ireland atmosphere.

I have given an account of the formation of the Volunteers in the district and the 1916 period to Florrie O'Donoghue, terminating with the release of the prisoners at Christmas that year.

In the early Summer of 1917 the Cork Command called a meeting of the three Companies of Volunteers in the Dunmanway area and the agenda was that we pass judgment on what occurred at Easter, 1916. The result was that there was a unanimous agreement with the position of the Cork Command which had been unable to get the arms for us.

For every bye-Election held in 1917 there was a victory parade in the town of Dunmanway and which resulted in the formation of three extra Companies, namely, Aultagh, Togher and Drinagh. The first three were Dunmanway, Behagh and Ballynacarriga. I was O.C. of the latter Company.

In 1917 there was not a whole lot doing beyond organisation. Later in the year, a Company was formed at Coppeen, also at Shanaway. All the Companies were principally engaged in carrying out drilling and getting disciplined.

The tendency this year was to concentrate on the political

side and as Sinn Féin Clubs were springing up throughout the area the great majority of the members were Volunteers. There was one exception, the Club at Ballineen, where most of the members were non-Volunteers. Still, they did their part and more than their part as they kept the Sinn Féin movement in full swing throughout the area. Principal workers in the Ballineen Club were Dr. Fehily, Seán Shorten, Tom Ahern, John Kehily and Dan O'Regan. These were all elderly men and great men too.

I was O.C. Ballynacarriga Company until March, 1918, and also Secretary of the Ballynacarriga Sinn Féin Club. On St. Patrick's Day that year there was a public meeting at Leap addressed by Michael Collins, Seumas O'Brien, the Irish teacher, being in the chair. The meeting was mainly political, but following it there was a private meeting called by the South Cork Executive of the Volunteers to discuss ways and means of furthering the organisation. Sam Kingston was there from Skibbereen, Jim Walsh from Clonakilty and I represented Dunmanway. Collins was chairman. His brother 'Shafter' was there also. Jim Walsh, Sam Kingston and myself were appointed by Michael Collins to jointly take charge of the three areas in the event of conscription. However, Sam Kingston had too big an area already to take control of, so Mick Ahern and Joe Flynn, both of Clonakilty, were appointed in his place.

The organisation of the areas was suggested then under the following headings :

Feiseanna would be organised in Dunmanway and Clonakilty areas during the Summer:

Battalion Council meetings would be held on the same date and at the same place.

The first was held in Dunmanway on 29th June, 1918, and that was suppressed by the R.I.C. with a baton charge. Jim Walsh, the O.C. of both areas, was badly wounded by baton blows. The Battalion Council meeting was held, however.

The next one was held in Kilbree, Clonakilty, both Feis and Battalion Council meeting.

This method of holding the Battalion Council meeting in private and, as it were, under cover of the Feis was successful. It avoided detection by R.I.C. and military.

The next was held at Aultagh. This time there was a sports meeting as cover. There was excitement when, in the middle of the sports, an aeroplane flew overhead, circled above the field three or four times and then fell into a field of wheat beside the sports field. While this diversion seemed to finish up the sports, still the Battalion Council meeting was held - in Collins' Barn, Kilnadur.

A Feis was held at Ahiohill and, of course, the Battalion Council meeting as well. These meetings served their purpose and made Volunteer organisation progress considerably.

Seán Murphy, one of the senior 1916 men of Cork, was 'on the run' in the area coming on to the Autumn of 1918. He organised two training camps - one at Aultagh for the Aultagh, Togher and Dunmanway Companies, and the other at my house at Gurlough for the Behagh, Shanaway and Ballynacarriga Companies. Each Camp lasted up to a week and ran for the evenings from 4 to 8. Training consisted of drill, close order and extended order or tactical drill. The Camps were very well attended for the

time it was and the awkwardness of Volunteers having to leave their work early and get across country unobserved by the R.I.C.

A Battalion Council was formed immediately after the Companies were finished and all the existing Companies were amalgamated into the Battalion which then became the 10th Battalion of the Cork Brigade.

The following were the Officers :-

O/C.	Con Ahern,	O/C. Dunmanway Company.
V/O.C.	Liam O'Driscoll,	O/C. Shanaway Company.
Adjt.	Patrick O'Brien.	O/C. Ballynacarriga Company.
Q.M.	Michael O'Dwyer.	1st Lt. Shanaway Company.

The approximate strength of the Battalion then (September, 1918) was between 700 and 800.

After this, Ballineen Company was organised and then we organised Kenneigh Company. We organised the latter Company in a public way by parading the Behagh, Dunmanway and Ballynacarriga Companies on the Manch road to meet the Kenneigh boys and marched to Ballineen, through the village with two sets of bagpipes playing and back again. After the march speeches were made principally for the benefit of the members of the new Company, but also for the Volunteers in general.

There were four R.I.C. barracks in the Battalion area - Dunmanway, Ballineen, Kenneigh and Ballingurteen, in which latter locality there was half the Ballynacarriga Company.

Each Company took part in extensive training during the Winter nights. The arms had been taken up from all the friendly people at this period, all shot-guns. There were about sixty of

these men in the Battalion and plenty of ammunition. There were no I.R.A. raids for arms in 1918 and a lot of the hostile people gave up their guns on police orders which were not really enforced, as a number of the hostile element, too, kept their arms, perhaps for their own protection.

During the General Election at the end of 1918 chief among those assisting were the Volunteers, working through the medium of the Sinn Féin Clubs. The Battalion area was within the constituency of South Cork, but there was no election here as Michael Collins was returned unopposed.

On the 6th January, 1919, Cork III Brigade was formed by Michael Collins at Shaunlara, Dunmanway, and so the first Brigade meeting was held in our Battalion area in Sweeneys of Kilnadur.

The Brigade Staff consisted of:-

O/C.	Tom Hales,	O/C. Bandon Battalion.
V/O.C.	Seán Hayes.	(fought in Dublin in Easter Week.)
Adjutant.	Dinny O'Connell.	Adjutant, Skibbereen Battalion.
Q.M.	Dinny O'Shea.	Staff, Skibbereen Battalion.

The third Brigade Council meeting was held in our area also, at Mike Donoghue's, Fearlahanes, either in March or April, 1919. It would appear as if the enemy had information as the approaches to Fearlahanes were held by them. The Kilmeen Company got outside the ring and were able to divert our Officers who were on the way there. Eventually we collected those coming and held the meeting at John O'Donoghue's, Ballinward.

Present were: Tom Hales, Dinny O'Shea, Dinny O'Connell, Liam O'Driscoll, representing 3rd Battalion; Dan O'Mahony, 5th Battalion; Liam Deasy representing 1st Battalion; Jim Walsh, O/C. 2nd Battalion, and, I think, Mick Crowley, O.C. 6th Battalion. There may have been others.

The next Brigade Council meeting was held on 29th June, 1919,

in McCarthys', Dunmanway. Michael McCarthy was appointed Brigade Adjutant. Gearoid O'Sullivan attended this meeting.

A number of further changes in the Brigade Staff was made after the Glandore Camp held in August.

Any further Brigade Council meetings held in the 3rd Battalion area, the meeting places were arranged for by us and we also supplied scouts and security.

Such further meetings in the Battalion area included :-

- |                                         |   |                                                                                                            |
|-----------------------------------------|---|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| O'Briens', Girlough                     | - | January, 1920.                                                                                             |
| Murphys', Ardeehan                      | - | July, 1920.                                                                                                |
| Kellys', Gloun                          | - | On the Sunday before Kil-<br>michael (21st November, 1920),<br>where the first Arms Fund was<br>handed in. |
| Buttimers', Ahakeera                    | - | 15th December, 1920.                                                                                       |
| Pat Hurley's, Granure,<br>Ballincarriga | - | 2nd January, 1921.                                                                                         |
| O'Donoghues, Ballinvard.                | - | 6th February, 1921.                                                                                        |

Despite the ban by the British authorities on unlawful assemblies, we succeeded in organising and holding several sports meetings and feiseanna during the Summer of 1919. These and preceding events were very useful for getting money for the Battalion funds. We successfully evaded police and military when holding some of the 'unlawful assemblies'.

A big number of the Dunmanway Battalion was at the Camp at Glandore in August. Dick McKee and Leo Henderson were in charge of training there, tactical training being carried out and lecture

given. Claude Chavasse, dressed in kilts, was at the Camp and the idea, to bluff the British authorities, was that an Irish Course was being carried on. However, when it was raided he was put under arrest, as well as Gearoid O'Sullivan, Bernie O'Driscoll, John Murphy of Dunmanway and Dinny O'Brien of Newcestown. They all got sentences varying from three to six months in Cork Gaol but got out before the sentences expired by going on hunger-strike.

The Camp was broken up following the raid and about twenty of us were selected to attend another "Irish Course" at Shorecliffe House, near Glandore. This was only for two days and nights and then the Camp finished.

The Glandore Camp was moved from Shorecliffe House after raid on Wednesday morning. We spent Wednesday night in the "Haunted House" at the rear of Glandore Village, and Thursday night in Connanagh Wood. After attending Mass at Union Hall on Friday, 15th August, the Camp was dispersed. We came back then for a sports meeting held in Ballineen for the Brigade Fund.

General training towards war started after the Brigade was reorganised at the Caheragh meeting in October 1919. It took the form of members of the Brigade staff visiting each Company. These were Hugh Thornton, V/O.C., Liam Deasy, Adjutant, and Pat Harte, Quartermaster. They lectured each Company on general training and the type of warfare we were likely to be engaged in.

The Battalion Officers and all the Company Officers attended the Brigade meeting at Caheragh for the purpose of electing the new Brigade Staff. Tom Hales was elected O.C. and the others as in the preceding paragraph.



The first Brigade meeting after doing this tour of the Companies was held at our house at Girlough in January, 1920, and that was chiefly arranging to attack Ballineen R.I.C. Barracks. Charlie Hurley, subsequently Brigade O.C., arranged the plan for this. After a consultation they chose to attack Mountpleasant near Bandon.

About ten men from the Dunmanway Battalion took part in it when it did come off.

At the Battalion Councils from this onwards some member of the Brigade staff always attended. Liam Deasy inspected each Company in turn and also held a Battalion inspection at Behagh, accompanied by Hugh Thornton.

We had at this period to establish an Intelligence system all over the Battalion area in connection with R.I.C. and military movements. Also, intensive training was carried out all through the Battalion.

In March, 1920, Ballingurteen and Kenneigh R.I.C. Barracks were evacuated. We demolished them then on Easter Saturday night. We burned and knocked them to the ground.

On Easter Saturday night when we were knocking the Ballingurteen R.I.C. Barracks, Charlie Hurley, Liam Deasy, Con Crowley and Con Lehane of Timoleague, our Brigade Armourer, were cycling from Bandon towards Ballingurteen, and between Ballineen and Rossmore they ran into a British cycle patrol. They were held up at Hatter's Cross about 11.30 p.m. They all got away with the loss only of Charlie Hurley's bicycle. They got to O'Neills Shanaway, and subsequently to O'Mahonys', Corran, where they

remained overnight and resumed the journey to H.Q., Hurleys', Laragh, next day. They were returning from the 4th Battalion area after an attempt to attack Ballydehob Barracks.

In May eighty military arrived in Ballineen village and took over Dr. Fehily's house. They came here as a result of a boycott we had carried out against Cotter, the baker. He had made himself obnoxious by openly siding with the police against us and used accompany them on raids. His business was boycotted and his vans stopped on the road - in one case a horse was shot when Cotter persisted in sending out deliveries, and also the roads were blocked.

Two Black and Tans reinforced the R.I.C. in Ballineen in June. Five attempts were made to get them on the Manch road but failed as they never turned up.

Liam Deasy organised the Southern half of the Dunmanway Battalion, and Tom Hales and Pat Harte organised the Northern half for the purpose of disarming the cycle patrol that was based on Ballineen. There would have been 100 men from each side of the area, but the arms were few, only a few revolvers and shot-guns. The rest had sticks and clubs. This was known afterwards as the Stick Ambush.

Positions were taken up at Derrygra and at the One Eyed Bridge, South of Ballineen. We assembled there three nights but the patrol never appeared. It was a strong patrol, numbering between 80 and 120.

Shortly afterwards all the police were transferred and the Barracks closed. The military were moved, too. The night of

the evacuation the Barracks was burned. This was a hard job and the building had to be partly demolished first.

A couple of days after, on the 20th July, Tom Hales and Pat Harte were caught at Laragh and brought into Bandon Barracks by Captain Kelly, the I.O., They were struck with rifles first, Pat Harte being knocked unconscious. He never recovered from that stroke, his brain being affected. Then they used a pincers on them to try and get information, pulling the finger nails off them. After this treatment they were taken to the military hospital in Cork, being kept there eight weeks. Then they were tried on a charge of having a revolver, ten rounds of ammunition and a copy of the Constitution of the I.R.B.; none of these had they in their possession. Pat Harte, as Brigade Quartermaster, had £100 and that was taken from him. The two of them had been getting ready to travel to Dublin to G.H.Q., when they were caught. After the trial they were moved to Pentonville Prison in London. Pat Harte never recovered and died some years afterwards in a mental hospital, possibly the Richmond Asylum in Dublin.

Liam Deasy formed a column from the Battalion to attack and disarm the Ballineen cycle patrol on 8th September. The column, to the number of about 40, were well armed this time, every man with a rifle or shot-gun. They were assembling at Carrigmore on the Manch road, West of Ballineen about a mile. Just as they were about to leave, after a lot of rumours of enemy activity in surrounding the column had proved to be false, a lorry came from the Ballineen direction. It was full of troops and the column was not in a position to deal with them at the time. Only about half a dozen, including Liam Deasy, were in

a proper position to delay the enemy by opening fire and enabling the rest to get away, the party on the northern side of the road to move North and those on the southern side being compelled to move South and keep up the fire at the same time and cross the river, too. There were no casualties or no loss of arms. The British had effected a complete surprise and lining the roadside kept up a heavy fire on us retreating. However, they did not follow us up.

The Battalion selected and sent four men to the training camp organised by Tom Barry at Clonboig near Kilbrittain. There were about 40 in training under Barry and it consisted of foot drill and arms training; no ammunition could be used, partly not to waste it and partly not to draw attention. It was aiming and loading was practised.

Tom Barry organised his first ambush position in the area at Fanlobbus to the East of Dunmanway on the main road. We went into position there about 1 or 2 o'clock in the day and we stopped there until dark. I was sent into Dunmanway to look for information and to procure a motor car. I was suitably disguised in a borrowed suit of clothes, not by any means tailor-made, and I walked it into the town and right through it, and in the midst of the enemy too.

There was no unusual activity at all and I succeeded in getting in touch with Harry Smith whose father - a big business man in Dunmanway - had a car which was used as a hackney. Harry Smith himself was a Volunteer and he drove me out in the car to Corcorans of Balteenbrack. Tom Barry took over car and driver. In the meantime he had captured an R.I.C. man named McCarthy,

formerly stationed in Ballineen and now on holidays from Ross-carbery. He was put into the car and myself beside him with a revolver and in my own clothes again. Barry sat beside the driver. The column had moved off to Ahakeera and we followed on. Our R.I.C. prisoner was released the next day and on conditions.

Members of the Column who belonged to the 3rd (Dunmanway) Battalion were now demobbed as we were in our home area, but 1st and 2nd Battalion men moved off in their home direction towards Bandon and Clonakilty. That night the 1st Battalion under Seán Hales got in contact with the enemy at Newcestown. One of the enemy was killed and two wounded. This was 29th September.

At this time, too, twenty of us raided Connors' of Manch and got British Officers' uniforms and pouches and two sets for making buckshot. We also raided Coxes' of Carrigmore, and there were two Officers there, both on leave, and their father, an ex-R.I.C. Sergeant. We had to fire through the windows here and burst in the door and overpower the father whom we found inside and we grabbed the gun from Capt. Michael O'Neill of Shanaway. We got two revolvers here. We also raided Mortons' in the same locality but got nothing but two petrol tins full of water, as we discovered after carrying them for five miles.

At Kilcaskin Castle, the big house below Gírlough, and which we raided at this time also, we got two trunks containing property belonging to a Colonel Kirkwood of Cappoquin and who was stopping in the Castle then, and to Captain Wilmer, the son-in-law of the owner - O'Neill Daunt. We held up these two and then searched for arms. We took down the trunks thinking we would find some

there, and so there were. One revolver was got and a .38 automatic and also a Volunteer Officer's uniform complete with sam brown belt and revolver holster, though there was no cap. We took this, though we never found out the history of it. This was the uniform which Tom Barry subsequently wore during the whole campaign in West Cork, and which he refers to in his book 'Guerilla Days'.

In October, 1920, the O.C. Ballineen Company, Timothy Warren, and Jack Hennessy of Ballineen were arrested about 4 o'clock in the morning by the Essex and were taken down separately to the Ballineen Water Bridge and were severely beaten. When they were completely knocked out they were both hung over the bridge by the legs. They were pulled up again and then released. Both went 'on the run' and joined the Column, Warren on the night of Kilmichael ambush and Hennessy actually fighting in that ambush, where he was wounded twice. He is still alive, and so is Warren (December, 1952).

The Arms Fund was the big work of October. This consisted of a levy on all householders throughout the whole III Brigade area according to the valuation. When there were refusals cattle were seized and sold at fairs and the proceeds went into the Fund. At the Brigade meeting at Gloun on 21st November there was £2,400 handed in and this did not represent the money got on seized cattle.

While the Fund was working, that night, 21st November, after leaving the Brigade meeting a party in three horse cars was intercepted at Coppeen by the Macroom Auxiliaries. They all bluffed their way out except two, Coneen Crowley of Kilbritten and John O'Mahony of Laragh, who were taken prisoners. Charlie

Hurley, Dick Barrett and Bridget O'Mahony of Belrose were in one car, with the £2,400 for the Arms Fund handed in at the meeting. Dan Harte, Seán O'Donovan, known as 'Cash', Lizzie Harte and Liam Deasy were in the second car. Seán Hales, Jim Lordan of Newcestown, Con Crowley and John O'Mahony were in a horse and trap. The latter two only were arrested after long investigation.

The first official Column of Cork III Brigade was started on the night of 21st November, 1920, at Farrells of Clogher in the Toher Company area. The Toher Company had orders to raid a house, then belonging to Lord Bandon, near Dunmanway, in the townland of Coolkelure, for bed-clothes for the Column. This they did and brought about a dozen blankets and a dozen sheets back to Clogher. The orders that were given at this time for forming the Column were to get the men actually 'on the run' and who could not stay at home and not the official Brigade and Battalion Staffs.

The Column stayed in Clogher until Wednesday night, the 24th. Seven of the carbines captured in Schull R.I.C. Barracks by Seán Lehane were sent to the Column. On Wednesday night, the Column marched from Clogher to Ardkeelan in the Kenneigh Company area. This house, owned by Sullivans, was vacant at the time. The men now were drilled and trained constantly day and night. They were called out suddenly at different times in the night as tests to see how fit they were to respond to a call to action. Tom Barry at this time had Michael McCarthy and Sonny Dave Crowley mapping the district with him for the purpose of selecting suitable positions for operations. They selected Kilmichael on the road from Macroom to Coppeen as they had definite information

that the Auxiliaries had travelled it on the two or three previous Sundays.

I had been sent by Barry to the Ballynacarriga Company to get four men to augment the Column and brought these on Saturday night, the 27th. They were Michael Con Driscoll, Dan Hourihane, John Ahern and Pat Donovan. Including myself this brought the Column strength to 32.

We had Fr. O'Connell that Saturday night from Enniskeane to give us General Absolution. We left about 5 in the morning and we were North at the ambush position about 8. The Column was divided up then into two parts, one each at the two positions selected to deal with the two lorries. Michael McCarthy was in charge of one and Tom Barry in charge of the other. McCarthy had to build little barricades on the edge of the road. He had to place a few men outside the Section's position on the high ground overlooking the whole place. Scouts were placed then. Every man was placed in his position then as described by Tom Barry in 'Guerilla Days', except that he does not mention Sonny Dave Crowley, Vice O.C. 3rd Battalion, who was alongside himself for the duration of the fight. Myself with Stephen O'Neill and Jack Hegarty were to the left of the road in a bog-hole for all the day awaiting the enemy.

The Auxiliaries in two tenders came along about four o'clock. The driver of the leading one was shot and this tender stopped immediately. Firing had started when Barry threw a Mills bomb and landed it definitely into the tender. Barry's section including we three jumped out on the road immediately and rushed the first tender. As well as the driver, two Auxiliaries in the back were killed, four others had taken cover underneath, two more were lying wounded on the road. Barry



rushed on to the second tender where firing was going on, and where three of our men had been shot, one being killed outright and two seriously wounded.

The driver of the second tender had not been hit as he had not driven right into the position when the attack on the first one commenced. He was manoeuvring it, trying to turn it, while the Auxiliaries in it had jumped out and were trying to get into position. The fight was short, however, and only one of the enemy succeeded in getting away from the scene. He was shot later in the day near Macroom. All the others were fatal casualties, except one who survived his wounds.

Our three casualties were taken away on improvised stretchers: Tim Sullivan, who was killed instantly, Michael McCarthy who died soon after and Pat Deasy who lived only a few hours. They were taken out of the Company area to the townland of Ahakeera. The local Company there took charge of the dead and they were temporarily buried. When coffins were provided in Inchigeela, Charlie Hurley, Brigade C.O., came immediately to the area and took charge of the dead. He also had the local Company armed to defend the area in case of reprisals during the three following days of the ambush. He arranged the funeral and for a priest to be at the burial at Castletown-Kenneigh, where it was carried out at night. Now there stands a Celtic Cross to their memory over the grave.

The Column had moved off bound for Ballynacarriga, every man doubled with the weight of the captured arms and ammunition as well as his own. There were seventeen rifles and seventeen revolvers, seven or eight Mills bombs, equipment and a big weight of rifle and revolver ammunition. Our progress was very slow as we moved in the darkness, from 4.30 until 12.30, when we

arrived that night, about eleven miles away.

We settled down in the Camp at Granure where beds were prepared with straw and the requisitioned bed-clothing, and the local Cumann na mBan had all arrangements made for a hot meal for us. In the meantime, there were two rings of the local Company - 60 to 70 strong - strung out around the Camp for a radius of a mile on the outside and a quarter-mile on the inside, to protect the Column while it rested or to give the alarm should any enemy approach. Only 25 of the scouts, placed at definite vantage points, were armed. We rested here at Granure until the following Wednesday evening.

The Column moved into Lyre Company area that night, 1st December. Then it went on to Gaggin. Tom Barry fell sick at Ahiohill. Charlie Hurley took over command of the Column, and Tom Barry sent for Seán Lehane to take over the Column as Charlie Hurley had the responsibility of the Brigade. Dan Hogan was sent for Lehane and succeeded in getting him and returning with him in two days and two nights.

Barry was ill in McCarthy's house at Kilmoyarne near Ahiohill and he sent for me. I thought him real bad and so did the people of the house and I immediately sent for Dr. Fehily. When the doctor came he found Barry kneeling at the side of the bed. The doctor was alarmed at the appearance of him with the two eyes turned in his head and he got to work on him. He gave Barry two injections and then took out a blue pencil and marked the position of his heart. I saw him doing this myself and Barry's heart was quite out of place - about one inch down. I stayed with Barry two days more in McCarthys'. Mary O'Neill, who was a trained nurse of some years' experience, came here and

between us we brought Barry to her house at Shanaway. This was on the night of 7th December and next day the Gaggin ambush was carried out by the Column. This was too near to be wholesome and on the 9th we brought Barry to Reardons' of Granure. Mary O'Neill accompanied Barry and myself in a pony and trap. During any of the moves this was the usual way we carried Barry, having the road well scouted in advance.

While in Granure John Lordan came with his sister, Bébé Lordan. She was a Nurse, too, and she took over from Mary O'Neill. Herself and her brother brought Barry to a house at Newcestown, Seán Buckley of Bandon, the Brigade I.O., having sent word that Barry could be got into hospital in Cork. From Newcestown he was brought to Cork, and made his recovery in hospital there. It must have been just about the time of the burning of Cork that Barry was brought into hospital there.

About the 12th or 13th, 'K' Company of the Auxiliaries, the crowd responsible for the burning and who wore burnt corks in their bonnets to proclaim this exploit, were shifted out of the city and sent to Dunmanway. Another crowd of Auxiliaries from somewhere else was sent there also and then two parties held positions at opposite sides of the town. 'K' Company was in the Workhouse and the other crowd took over the Model Schools. They didn't stay long in the Schools but were sent off some other place.

It was on Wednesday, the 15th, at Acres on the Dunmanway-Cork road, a mile from the town, Canon Magner and Tadg Crowley were shot by Cadet Harte when members of 'K' Company held them up there.

The Auxiliaries' C.O. was de Havilland and Brownie was the I.O. He instituted a very perfect intelligence system and, probably with the help of the local police, drew up lists of all the houses in the Dunmanway Battalion area, both friendly and hostile to the British régime. He also listed every man who was wanted with a description of him in detail, height, looks, voice, manner and so on. However, any of his investigations once recorded by him were with us just as soon, thanks to Florence J. Crowley, the Clerk of the Union.

How Crowley carried on, living and working in the middle of the enemy, I don't know. The death of Canon Magner which indicated how the Auxiliaries were prepared to deal with anyone they disliked or had anything against must have shaken Crowley, but he stood firm and was a great counter-intelligence officer in himself, and was invaluable to us.

There was a R.I.C. man in Dunmanway who was friendly and useful to us, too, and did give us information beforehand of raids that were coming off. His name was Cahill.

Seán Lehane brought the Column back into our area and demobbed the men on the 22nd December, the rifles and some ammunition being stored in the Kilmeen Company dump, the ammunition being put in churns got from the local people. The bulk of the ammunition was stored there. A small amount of ammunition and the equipment were stored in the Ballynacarriga Company dump.

On New Year's Day, 1921, Liam Deasy and Tom Barry, now recovered, came to O'Neills' of Shanaway. Liam sent a despatch for me after his arrival there, to bring along four rifles and four revolvers immediately. I got the arms and four men and

struck for Shanaway. The four were Dan Hogan, John Ahern, Jack Nyhan and John Nyhan (second cousins).

We hadn't gone a half mile when the first lorry of two with Auxiliaries nearly ran into us. We heard the grinding as they changed into lower gear to climb the hill quite near my house. Only for the sound we were caught, but we got over the ditch and across another one that ran away from the road. Two of the men with rifles lay on top of it with their weapons trained on the two lorries as they each passed, sliding over the top of the ditch and down on the other side and so away.

The two lorries went on and spotting a man near the back of his house the Auxiliaries opened fire on him. He ran and they sprang from the lorries and spread out through the fields. They didn't hit him but they shot an old man further on and then put him on a shutter and had him brought to hospital. Afterwards he got about £1,500 compensation.

In the meantime we reached Shanaway and found Liam Deasy and Tom Barry there. We weren't well settled in when along came the same two lorries of Auxiliaries. They belonged to 'K' Company in Dunmanway and had made the round and caught up with us. We got out the back and up the hill, though Barry was all for opening fire on them. He was dissuaded as seven of us would hardly have been a match for them. They raided the house and went away again.

This happened about 2 o'clock and between then and 5 o'clock they came again twice and raided O'Neills' each time. It could hardly have been doubted but some spotter had seen Liam and Barry coming there earlier and sent in the information to Dunmanway.

The Brigade meeting was held the next day, 2nd January, in Pat Hurley's of Granure. It was for the purpose of organisation and to remobilise the Column. The remobilisation took place in Kilmeen on 12th January, and we proceeded that night to Bealad.

We stayed in Bealad one night and then we came back to Ballinard, where we stayed for about two days before we moved on to Mawbeg. There we took up ambush positions and stayed for the next few days on the alert but nothing came our way.

We did the same thing at Morrha and at Cashel and with the same result. It was no good sitting down waiting on the chance that some party of the enemy would come along. We decided to go in and attack the enemy in his own stronghold. That is how Bandon Barracks came to be attacked on the night of 24th January, 1921.

Tom Barry was in charge of that part of the Column that entered the town from the North side while Ted Sullivan was in charge of the party on the Southern side. I was with the North party and we came from that direction down across the fields and past the houses just near where the road from Dunmanway runs down on to the open square which has the Devonshire Arms Hotel on the Eastern side and the Shambles with its high wall around it just opposite and the military barracks on the South side with its entrance gates fronting the big open space across which we had to launch our attack.

This was to be no great charge across the square and a storming of the enemy stronghold, garrisoned chiefly by several hundred of the Essex Regiment under the notorious Major Percival.

We were not strong enough or well armed enough for such a dashing venture.

It looked fool-hardy enough as the couple of dozen Volunteers crept as near as possible to the objective and took up positions each man behind a gate pillar. Then on the arranged signal, a shot from Barry, we all opened fire on the barracks gate. There was a terrific din and uproar immediately, shouting in the barracks and the letting off of hundreds of rifles, as it seemed, from enemy loopholes in the walls.

Along with our fire came the fire of the Southern part of the Column directed at the Barracks here from the streets of the town across the river. The barracks was being hit up from all sides and as we had plenty of ammunition we blazed away. There was no thought of overrunning and capturing the position but just to make a nuisance of ourselves.

We kept up our fire for a long time and so did the British but they did us no harm and I'm sure we didn't hurt any of them. Then the word was given to withdraw and soon I found that only myself and a fine tall strong fellow whom I hadn't known before were the only ones left. His name was Danny Reilly and both he and I found ourselves planted directly in front of the barracks and apparently the only two attacking it, except for occasional shots from down across the other side of the river.

We decided it was time to move after the rest of our party when suddenly in the glimmer of light there was, we could see the barrack gates swinging open and then a terrific burst of machine gun fire swept the square. Without waiting for more of this we cleared back from our pillars dodging into the shelter

of similar ones as we fell back towards the Dunmanway road.

The machine gun kept up its fire and traversed the whole place and by a miracle we got up to where we had come down a little short avenue on to the road from some private houses. Reilly was all for going up that way but I said no, that we would be going into country we didn't know, better keep the Dunmanway road. He agreed and we moved on, while the bullets from the machine gun cut sods from the surface of the field just above us. In a moment Danny Reilly was killed. He was caught by a full burst from the gun and just cut to pieces. He was our only casualty that night.

I made my way by a route I knew to the house of a family called Hurley, where I expected to find a good hide out. I dumped my stuff and turned into the bed provided and slept from early morning all through the day and through the following night, too. In the meantime, one of the Hurleys told his cousin, Frank Hurley of Laragh, about me, as Frank was a member of the Column.

Once awake and refreshed I got my stuff out of its hiding place and set off for O'Mahonys' of Belrose, a usual gathering place for the Column and often used as Brigade Headquarters. I found the Column here alright saying the Rosary for Danny Reilly and myself, for they thought we had both been killed.

The next object for attack by the Column, or by half of it, was Innishannon R.I.C. Barracks, the very same building now occupied by the Civic Guards and at the extreme Eastern end of the village street. We advanced on it from the Western end, coming down the bye road that turns on to the street between



the bridge over the Bandon river and the Protestant church. We had a mine this time with a long fuse attached and it was to be put against the porch door and when a breach was blown, six revolver men were to storm into the barracks. Barry said he would go in first and said he: 'If I am shot you are to go in over my dead body'.

We didn't quite get to this point for though the mine was placed in position without raising an alarm and the six revolver men were ready to charge across the road covered by riflemen from points all round, when the fuse was lighted and ran its full length, there was a faint 'fuzz' from the mine and that was all.

The detonator must have failed to act, so without firing a shot we left the village of Innishannon and joined Liam Deasy with the rest of the Column at Brinny, a few miles to the North. This attempt was on the night of 26th January, 1921. Innishannon R.I.C. Barracks was subjected to a good many attacks between then and the Truce in the following July but they were all more of a nuisance value than anything else.

A Brigade meeting was held at O'Donoghue's, Ballinvarney, in the Dunmanway Battalion area, on 6th February, 1921. This meeting lasted from 2 p.m. on that Sunday until 5 a.m. on Monday morning. Some time after there was a general order - about mid-February - to cut and trench all roads and bridges around Dunmanway. Every man in the Battalion took part in this operation and there wasn't a main road or byroad or bridge for miles all round the town that wasn't cut. The Auxiliaries spent days getting the damage repaired, in a kind of way, drawing on all the unoffending citizens to do the spade work for them.

The Column was demobilised for a little while and then was mobilised in Kenneigh about 12th March, 1921. Seven days from this date there was a great fight at Crossbarry, but I wasn't in that operation and was only called up when the Column came back into the Battalion area and rested at Ballynacarriga. From here the Column went to Clubhouse and spent one night there and then went to Drinagh, between Drimoleague and Rosscarbery.

After Crossbarry and the death of Charlie Hurley, the Brigade Commanding Officer, Liam Deasy, who was Brigade Adjutant as well as being a Column officer, went to Dublin in connection with the future of the Brigade and was there and then made O/C. Brigade in place of Charlie Hurley.

After this came the big attack on the R.I.C. Barracks at Rosscarbery. This was in April.

The 14th of May, 1921, was the date fixed for the general attack on the British forces, wherever they could be found. A big attack on the Auxiliaries stationed in Dunmanway, right in the middle of our Battalion area, was planned, and the Column was to carry out this attack, with local security provided by the adjoining Companies of the Battalion, as well as other members of the Battalion taking a direct part in the operation, along with the Column.

Liam Deasy was to take charge of the Northern half of the attacking party but got hurt two days before, on the 12th, so Ted Sullivan was put in charge. I was put in charge of the Southern party and selected 40 good men from the local Companies. We commandeered several horses and carts and loaded them with bags full of sand and drove them right into the town. There wasn't

a sign of an enemy but we proceeded with our plan and halted our carts right where all the streets met and made a barricade right across the open space and shot the horses in the shafts.

Even the sound of the shots failed to draw out the Auxiliaries and we had the town to ourselves for some time until we were ordered to withdraw. It was said afterwards that the enemy thought they had done the wise thing by not letting themselves be drawn out of their quarters when they saw the elaborate barricade completely blocking off one half the town from the other and came to the conclusion that there must have been a very big job planned by the I.R.A.

On 26th May, Barry assembled the whole Column at Gloundaw on the main road about a mile West of Dunmanway. This was the biggest lay out of the Column that I had yet seen and the idea was to ambush the Auxiliaries if we could draw them out. Word was even sent into the town that we were there, but there was nothing doing. Like on the 14th May, they were not to be drawn and so that job didn't come off.

Brigade H.Q. had necessarily to keep on the move and from 20th March to 15th May spent quite a while in the 3rd Battalion area. The different places H.Q. were established were Cronins, Munigare; Shortens, Moneynacroha; Delaneys, Lissicurane; Duggans, Aherlick; Farrells, Clogher; Kellys, Clogher.

Before the Truce a 3rd Battalion Camp was established at Drounfeigh and up to 50 members of the Battalion were picked to attend this. Signalling, scouting and tactics were the subjects given at the Camp and range practice was also held. Dan Barrett, an ex-British Army officer and a member of the Column was in charge

As regards the reference to the attack on the R.I.C. Barracks at Rosscarbery, on page 25, I was not actually in this attack because I had been sent on a special mission by Tom Barry to meet Liam Deasy at O'Sullivan's of Gurranreach on his return from Dublin after his appointment as Brigade O/C. and to bring him by car to O'Donoghue's of Ballinyard. This I did and then rejoined the Column at Castletown Kenneigh.

It was after the Brigade Meeting held on Sunday, 6th February, 1921, that I heard - about 11 o'clock on the following morning - of my home at Gurlough being burned to the ground by the Dunmanway Auxiliaries and of my father, then aged 65, being pulled out of bed by them and shot there and then. He was not killed but seriously wounded and maimed for the rest of his life, losing the right eye and having portion of his nose shot away.

This happened on the 6th February and it was I who was being raided for. Not content with the destruction and shooting, the Auxiliaries took away four bonhams, three turkeys and about twenty fowl. Incidentally, Neilus Dave Crowley, who was a prisoner in Dunmanway, was made fatten up the pigs which were killed according as the Auxiliaries required them for their table.

All our farm implements, picks, shovels, spades, forks, rakes, saws, axes and even a clock off the wall were taken away by the Auxiliaries when they burned the house.

Before concluding, there are a few points which might require a little explanation.

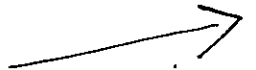
The Phoenix Society referred to in the first paragraph was a Fenian body and carried on as a link for the Fenians

and for any later Irish-Ireland organisation. It was secret and sworn.

My account of the 1916 period already given to Florrie O'Donoghue was for the Bureau of Military History.

On page 1 in the third paragraph I refer to the Cork Command. This was Brigade Headquarters in Cork.

The South Cork Executive mentioned on page 2 covered the areas Clonakilty, Dunmanway and Skibbereen for the Volunteers there prior to the formation of the three Brigades in County Cork.



CLIPSE.

There were many important operations carried out by the West Cork Brigade Column in that year before the Truce of 11th July, 1921, and I would like to have taken part in them all, but as Battalion Adjutant I had often, for long periods, to stay in my own area and carry out the duties of that appointment. Still I was able to be in some of them, and I am particularly proud that I fought in the first important one in West Cork, the big blow struck at British might, when we attacked and completely defeated the Auxiliaries at Kilmichael.

SIGNED:

Patrick O'Brien  
(Patrick O'Brien)

WITNESSED:

C. Saurin  
(C. Saurin)

LT.-COLONE

DATE:

5th March 1953

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

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