

**POBLAICHT NA h-EIREANN**

**THE PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT  
OF THE  
IRISH REPUBLIC  
TO THE PEOPLE OF IRELAND.**

IRISHMEN AND IRISHWOMEN, from which she receives her life and of the dead generations through us, summons her children to her flag and to her side.

Having organised a general revolutionary organisation, the perfecting of her military organisations, she now reveals herself, she now strikes to the heart of the usurper.

**THE 'BOYS'  
OF THE MILLSTREET  
BATTALION AREA**



**SOME PERSONAL ACCOUNTS OF  
THE WAR OF INDEPENDENCE**

*Aubane Historical Society*

The Irishman's rights and the happiness of the children by an alien government.

Until our permanent National Government, elected by the suffrage of the people, constituted, will administer the Republic in trust for the people.

We place the cause of the Irish Republic under the protection of the Most High God, Whose blessing we invoke upon our arms, and we pray that no one who serves that cause will dishonour it by cowardice, inhumanity, or rapine. In this supreme hour the Irish nation must, by its valour and discipline and by the readiness of its children to sacrifice themselves for the common good, prove itself worthy of the august destiny to which it is called.

Signed on Behalf of the Provisional Government,

- THOMAS J. CLARKE
- SEAN Mac DIARMADA
- P. H. PEARSE
- THOMAS MacDONAGH
- EAMONN CEANNT.

**THE 'BOYS'  
OF THE  
MILLSTREET  
BATTALION  
AREA**

**Some  
personal accounts  
of the Irish  
War of Independence**

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**Aubane Historical Society  
Aubane, Millstreet, Co. Cork  
August 2003**

*To the memory of those whose stories are not recorded.*

# CONTENTS

1.	<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	<i>Jack Lane</i>	6
2.	<b>CON MEANEY, RATHROE</b> Period: 1911 to May 1916. Units: Musher Company, I.V. & Keale Company, I.V. <b>CON MEANEY, RATHROE</b> Captain, Musher (Co. Cork) Company, Irish Volunteers, 1916; O/C. 7 <sup>th</sup> Batt'n. Cork II Brigade, post 1916; O/C. I <sup>st</sup> Batt'n. Cork IV Brigade, later. O/C. 'I' Company and O/C. Battalion Police, 1 <sup>st</sup> Battalion, Cork IV Brigade. Activities of Irish Volunteers, North Cork, 1916-1921.	7	11
3.	<b>WILLIAM REARDON, MAIN STREET, MILLSTREET</b> Assistant Battalion Engineer, Millstreet Battalion, Cork II Brigade, 1917-23.	22	
4.	<b>JIMMY HICKEY, MAIN STREET, MILLSTREET</b> Period: 1913 to May, 1916. Unit: Millstreet Company, I.V. <b>JIMMY HICKEY, MAIN STREET, MILLSTREET</b> Lieutenant Millstreet Company, Millstreet Battalion, Co. Cork. Engineer, Millstreet Battalion. Member of Millstreet Batt'n. Column. National and military activities, Millstreet, Co. Cork, 1912-1923.	26	28
5.	<b>CORNELIUS BARRETT, GLENLEIGH, KILCORNEY</b> Volunteer and Member of Millstreet Battalion Column, Cork H Brigade, I.R.A. Activities of Kilcorney Company, Millstreet Battalion, Cork II Brigade, 1915-1921.	33	
6.	<b>JOINT STATEMENT OF DENIS O'BRIEN, BALLYDALY &amp; DENIS O'KEEFFE, KNOCKNAGULLANE, RATHMORE</b> Period: November, 1915 to May, 1916. Unit: Rathduane Company, I.V.	37	
7.	<b>HUMPHREY O'DONOGHUE, CULLEN, MILLSTREET</b> Lieutenant Cullen Company, Millstreet Battalion, Cork IV Brigade. Member of Brigade Column. Irish Volunteers, Millstreet, Co. Cork 1914-1921.	40	
8.	<b>MATTHEW KELLEHER, SOUTH HORSEMOUNT, KILCORNEY</b> Second Lieut. Kilcorney Coy. Millstreet Battalion, Cork IV Brigade, O/C. Kilcorney Coy. National Activities, Kilcorney, Co. Cork 1909-1921.	44	
9.	<b>DAN COAKLEY, BOLOMORE, RATHCOOLE</b> Column Member, Millstreet Battalion Column. Activities of Rathcoole Company, Millstreet Battalion, Cork II Brigade 1917-21.	49	
10.	<b>MATTHEW MURPHY, CULLEN POST OFFICE, MILLSTREET</b> Battalion Adjutant, Millstreet Battalion, Cork IV Brigade. National Activities, Cullen, Millstreet, Co. Cork, 1919-1923.	53	
11.	<b>ANNEX 1. ELECTION VICTORY MEETING IN MILLSTREET</b> <div style="text-align: right;"><i>from 'The Cork Free Press' (8/6/1914)</i></div>	60	
12.	<b>ANNEX 2. A HISTORICAL MEETING...NOW FORGOTTEN</b> <div style="text-align: right;"><i>by Dan Cronin</i></div>	61	
13.	<b>ANNEX 3. MAP OF THE MILLSTREET BATTALION AREA</b> <div style="text-align: right;"><i>by Con Meaney</i></div>	62	

## INTRODUCTION

The material in this publication was written, for the most part, approximately 50 years ago but was only made available to the public on 11<sup>th</sup> of March this year when the Taoiseach opened the Archive of the Bureau of Military History. The Bureau was set up by the de Valera Government in 1947 to collect accounts of the War of Independence by those who participated in it and witness statements were taken from nearly 1800 people over a ten-year period.

The original material is now available in the Military History Archives at Cathal Brugha Barracks, duplicates are available at the National Archives, copies of some of the material are available in the National Library and much of it has been in private, family, hands since it was written. The material has all become publicly available 25 years after it was originally intended to be made available. It is a great pity that the public has had to wait so long for this type of information on a vital period of our history - the War of Independence.

It has been particularly frustrating because during the last couple of decades the revisionist historians have been allowed to have a field day and make a travesty of this period of our history. This material is the greatest counter there could be to the ritual denigration of the people and the events of that period which we see and hear practically every day in the media and academia.

The people concerned, such as these local contributors, who had to go war to defend the clearly expressed will of the people, in the 1918 and later elections, are constantly having their motives questioned and condemned and even the authorities that forced them to go to war are now given the right to sit in judgement on them. Read *The Irish Times* on virtually any day of the week to see evidence of this.

This material should be seen as very much an introduction to the history of the period for this area. It is the first rather than the last word on it. These are the accounts of just 10 people in the Millstreet Battalion area and as there were probably up to 800 actively involved it is a very small and incomplete record indeed.

The people involved in the War were unassuming, modest, ordinary people who did an extraordinary thing in getting rid of the greatest Empire in the world at the height of its power and setting up their own state. And when they had done what they had to do they got on with their lives and it would not have occurred to them to sit down and write about what they had done. These accounts were only written down because the governments of the day over a period of 10 years succeeded in persuading a handful of them to do so!

With all due respect to those included here there are many others whose accounts might be even more valuable than these but which we will never see

or read for a variety of reasons - including early deaths. We can only hope that more accounts will emerge. No doubt, there are some whose role may be given more significance by the authors in these accounts than it merits - but that's human nature. When recording these statements the contributors were relying on their memory of events that had happened several decades previously and the memory can play tricks over such a time span. And there is clear evidence of this in some accounts here - and I have not attempted to 'correct' them. To have a comprehensive picture the accounts of those on the other side would also be useful and we have included two of these in a previous publication (*'Millstreet - A Considerable Town'*). Also, I may not have located all the local accounts that are available among the nearly 1,800 accounts in the Bureau's Archive. The Bureau's index does not provide addresses.

So, for all these reasons this is not the full story but we in the Aubane Historical Society would welcome any additional information, corrections, contributions of any sort to this period of our history. Dan Joe Cronin, Aunaskirtane, has already provided us with an account of the meeting of IRA leaders at Kippagh on 24<sup>th</sup> April 1921 that set up the Southern Divisional Structure (See Annex 2).

In this regard, readers should be aware that it is possible for direct descendants of those veterans of the War who received pensions or medals to obtain copies of the applications for those awards. This includes reports and confirmation by officers of the activities that justified receipt. Applications for such documents should be made to: The Veterans' Allowances Section, Department of Defence, Renmore, Co. Galway (091 743700).

I would encourage all who can to obtain copies of these and, if they so wish, we will publish them as a further contribution to the history of the period. There may well be other records in the form of letters, notes and reliable verbal accounts that could also be used to fill out the history of the period. If we do not account for our own history in this way it will be done for us by others who will present a very different picture of the people and the events. Some of the people of the period, such as Sean Moylan and 'Big Con' Meaney, deserve full biographies but we will wait a long time for the 'historians' of today to do any such thing.

I have only made one addition to the texts and this is to include some nicknames, which I have put in brackets and italics, (some were automatically included by the authors) and this may help to better identify the people concerned as that is how they were generally referred to. I only hope I got them right.

Jack Lane  
[jacklaneaubane@hotmail.com](mailto:jacklaneaubane@hotmail.com)

Aubane Historical Society  
July 2003

# **(BIG CON) MEANEY**

## WITNESS STATEMENT NO. 64

STATEMENT OF CORNELIUS MEANEY, M.C.C., RATHROE, CLONBANIN, BANTEER,  
Captain, Musherá (Co. Cork) Company, Irish Volunteers, 1916

*Conditions, if any, Stipulated by the witness: Nil*

**PERIOD: 1911 to May 1916**

**UNITS: MUSERA COMPANY, I.V., KEALE COMPANY, I.V.**

The background and the events that gave rise to the formation of the four local Companies of Volunteers, viz. Millstreet, Rathduane, Musherá and Keale, which existed before Easter, 1916, are the same for all of them. Seamus Hickey and Denis O'Brien are giving details of Millstreet and Rathduane Companies, respectively, from their formation, and, in addition, to similar particulars for the Musherá and Keale Companies, I would like to record something of the background of all four.

Some time about 1911 or 1912 two men in the town of Millstreet, Jerry Twomey, baker, Main Street, and Seamus Hickey, blacksmith, Main Street, both members of the Millstreet Branch of the Gaelic League, took part in the anti-recruiting campaign which was then in progress. They were supplied with the essential propaganda material, namely, anti-recruiting leaflets and slogans, by the Anti-Recruiting Organisation. These leaflets and slogans (no one knew from whence they came) appeared on telegraph poles and dead walls of the Millstreet district.

In 1913 I joined the existing workers and the campaign was intensified. After a time the R.I.C. got suspicious of the three of us. They attempted to keep us under observation but failed to catch us out. Each of the three of us had been sworn into membership of the I.R.B. but never attended any meetings of that organisation and, as far as we know, were not attached to any particular Circle.

A County Council election was held in June, 1914. It was contested on party lines; feelings between the opposing parties, the All for Ireland League (O'Brienites) and the Ancient Order of Hibernians (Redmondites) was very bitter in the Millstreet district. Several clashes took place between them (and) extra R.I.C. reinforcements arrived in the town and a number of baton charges took place.

The A.O.H. party, in preparation for an election victory which they did not achieve, formed a branch of the Irish Volunteers, but they did not affiliate with Headquarters. This Volunteer Company was under the charge of an ex-N.C.O. of the British Army, who put them through some close order drill and short route marches. They were armed with dummy wooden guns.

On the night of the declaration of the election results the victory of the O'Brienite candidate was announced. (*Dan Linehan, See Annex 1. J Lane.*) The town of Millstreet was thronged with the supporters of both parties. A large force of R.I.C. stood ready to use their batons. The A.O.H. Volunteers assembled at the A.O.H. headquarters on the Square, fell in and proceeded to march to the West End. The R.I.C. cleared a path through the angry O'Brienites. When the marchers passed clear of the throng there were subdued cries of "*Get them on the return, boys*". At this juncture Jerry Twomey and I, who up to then were standing on the sidewalk, stepped into the centre of the O'Brienite crowd and reasoned with those who advised an attack on their political opponents. On our suggestion this group, over a 100 strong, formed into fours and proceeded in processional order in the direction taken by the A.O.H. men. An ex-British soldier took charge. About midway between the square and the West End both bodies of marchers met. Each got the order, "*Left incline*", and then, "*Eyes right*", and that ended the political feud between the Redmondites and the O'Brienites in Millstreet.

That night the O'Brienites decided to meet again a few nights afterwards. At the next meeting a Corps of Irish Volunteers was formed with a strength of approximately 120 men. A civilian Committee was formed and the Corps was duly affiliated to Headquarters. The members of the Committee included two old

Fenians, Jeremiah Riordan, Corner House, and Jim Buckley, Church Street, Millstreet, as well as the I.R.B. men, Jerry Twomey and myself. Seam us Hickey was not at this time in Millstreet.

Parades were held once a week and a number of ex-servicemen put the new Volunteers through the initial stages of military training. Shortly after the outbreak of war on the 4<sup>th</sup> of August, 1914, the Volunteers received intimation that they were to be inspected by Captain Talbot Crosbie and another Officer. Two bodies of Volunteers existed in the town at the time. The Irish Volunteers paraded in the then football field which is situated on the side of the station road about 800 yards north of the town. The A.O.H. Volunteers paraded in the old Deer park, which is about 600 yards East of the town.

As a result of some ruse, or for some other reason, Captain Crosbie and his companion inspected the men at the Deer Park. About IVi hours after the appointed time, the Inspecting Officers not having arrived at the football field, it was decided to march into town and dismiss the men in front of the Carnegie Library. After the dismiss the Committee retired into the Library.

Just then Captain Crosbie and his companion arrived. After some apologies and explanations Captain Crosbie proceeded to address the Committee, and, in the course of his remarks, spoke somewhat as follows: *"We are actually at war with Germany and the boom of her guns may at any moment be heard on our shores"*. At this point he was interrupted by a member of the Committee who said, *"We are not at war with Germany; England is, but we are not"*. Crosbie replied, *"That is all very well, but if we are invaded and you tell that story to a German soldier his answer would be a crack of a rifle butt across your head, and what would our women and children do?"*. The interrupter answered, *"Our women and children could not fare worse than they recently did at the hands of the British at Bachelors Walk"*.

When the Captain found that he could not make any progress he stated that further discussion would not serve any purpose, and said he was about to take a certain course which he would not state then, but that he would make a public announcement in a day or two. On the following night in Cork he publicly announced his intention of joining the British Army.

*(Captain Maurice Talbot Crosbie was from the 'lords of the manor' family at Ardfert, Co. Kerry. He was the Chief Inspecting Officer of the Redmondite Volunteers for County Cork. He later stood as a Nationalist against Sinn Fein in Cork City in the 1918 Election and lost his deposit. Their estate was distributed to ex-Free State soldiers after the Civil War. J. Lane.)*

Immediately after Messrs. Redmond and O'Brien offered the services of the Irish Volunteers to the British Military Authorities both Corps of Volunteers in Millstreet ceased to exist. There followed a period of apparent inactivity, but a small number of those enrolled in the Irish Volunteers carried on secretly. Rifle practice with a .22 rifle was engaged in on a few occasions. Organisation work was slowly and secretly carried on until November 1<sup>st</sup> 1915. In the meantime, P. H. Pearse, on the invitation of the local Branch of the Gaelic League, had addressed an Aerideacht in Millstreet about September, 1915.

November 1<sup>st</sup> 1915, was a Fair Day in Millstreet. It was also a Church Holiday. Arrangements were made for a parade of the small group of local Volunteers and for a public meeting. Cork Brigade Headquarters sent Terence MacSwiney, who addressed the parade and the members of the public asking for recruits for the Irish Volunteers. Mr. Jeremiah O'Riordan, Corner House, a veteran of the Land League and an old Fenian, presided. As a result of the meeting three Companies were formed immediately, Millstreet, Rathduane and Musherá. Keale Company were established about a week later.

The initiative in the formation of the Musherá Company was taken by me, and seven men joined at the start. I had, by personal contact with likely recruits, arranged for their attendance at the Millstreet meeting, and then arranged for the meeting at which the Musherá Company was formed. As a members of the I.R.B. I had no communication with that body in reference to the formation of the Volunteer Company. I estimated that I was acting in the spirit of the organisation, and anticipated that I would remain in charge, as I did.

No Committee was formed but the following Officers were elected:-

Captain:	Con Meaney
Lieut.:	Denis C. Kelleher
Q.M.:	Eugene O'Riordan

Section  
Commander: Jeremiah Sheehan

There were no changes of officers, and all continued to hold office.

There were seven in the Company at the first meeting, and by December, 1915, the strength had increased to fifteen. That strength was unchanged at Easter, 1916.

Parades were held once a week. There were no ex-servicemen in the Company. The training was carried on by me from what I had acquired in the original Volunteer Company and from the Fianna Handbook. The training consisted mainly of close and open drill, arms drill with dummies, and marching.

The Company attended a Volunteer recruiting parade in Millstreet on 6<sup>th</sup> January, 1916. Some men from the Company had attended the Manchester Martyrs' Commemoration in Cork in November, 1915, and some attended the St. Patrick's Day parade in Cork in 1916.

The arms we had at Easter, 1916, were:-

- One old type rifle, useless as a weapon.
- We had 350 rounds of ammunition, but it was too large for the rifle.
- Seven shot guns, with 175 rounds of ammunition.
- One .32 revolver, with 6 rounds of ammunition.

Two of the shot guns had been purchased, the others were the property of members of the Company or on loan from local farmers. Some shot gun cartridges had been loaded with slug.

I attended the Brigade meeting in Cork at which the orders were issued for the exercises on Easter Sunday, 1916. The orders were for a parade and route march with all arms, ammunition and equipment. We were instructed to bring rations and trench-digging equipment. No special place of parade and no destination for the route march were specified at the meeting. We received no communications or orders between then and Easter Sunday and we had no information that anything more than an ordinary parade was intended. We all expected to be home on Sunday night. We had no information about a concentration of Volunteers in Carriganima and knew nothing of it until afterwards.

We assembled in our own area on Easter Sunday morning and marched into Millstreet. The following fifteen paraded:-

Con Meaney	O.C.
Denis C. Kelleher	Lieut.
Eugene O'Riordan	Q.M.
Jeremiah Sheehan	Section Commander
Denis J. Kelleher.	
John O'Connell.	
Owen O'Riordan. ( <i>Owen Dominic</i> )	
Humphrey O'Sullivan. ( <i>Humphrey Peter</i> )	
Clement Kelleher.	
Daniel Buckley.	
William O'Riordan.	
Michael Healy.	
Cornelius Buckley.	
John Buckley.	
Cornelius O'Callaghan.	

At Millstreet we met the Companies from Rathduane, Millstreet and Keale. The whole body marched as far as Kilmeedy, about 1½ miles South of the town, where training in open drill was carried out. We did not expect and did not receive any order cancelling the parade that day. We did not expect it because we assumed the parade to be just an ordinary one. No one from the Brigade, or on behalf of the Brigade, or any other body of Volunteers, visited us that day. At the conclusion of the exercises the whole body marched back into the town, the outside Companies returned to their own areas and were dismissed.

I met Jerry Twomey of Millstreet on Sunday night and he told me something was coming off on Monday. I re-mobilised the Company late that night, but as no further information or instructions came the men were sent home. On Monday night various rumours of a Rising were in circulation. In the expectation that instructions would be received, I mobilised the Company again on Tuesday morning. We assembled at Lackabawn wood about a mile from the town and remained there all day. The following paraded on that occasion:-

Con Meaney.
Denis C. Kelleher.
Eugene O'Riordan.
Jeremiah Sheehan.
Denis J. Kelleher.
Clement Kelleher.



John O'Connell.  
Daniel Buckley.  
Con Buckley.  
Owen Riordan.  
William O'Riordan.  
Michael Healy.  
Con O'Callaghan.

As no orders came from the Brigade or elsewhere during the day the men were sent home on Tuesday night with orders to send stand to in case they were called on again for active service.

No order with reference to arms were received from the Brigade during Easter Week and no arms were surrendered or lost in raids in the Company areas.

Con O'Callaghan. Mill Lane. Millstreet, a member of the Company was arrested and deported. I was raided by the R.I.C and military but evaded arrest.

There was no Fianna or Cumann-na-mBan organisation in the Company area before Easter, 1916.

#### KEALE COMPANY

About a week after the public meeting in Millstreet on 1<sup>st</sup> November, 1915, I attended the first meeting of the Keale Company. Eighteen men joined, and the following officers were elected:-

Captain:	William Kelleher.
1 <sup>st</sup> Lieut.:	Daniel W. Murphy.
Secretary:	Jeremiah Crowley.

About the same time I arranged for and held a meeting at Buckley's Hall, Kilcorney, but, as recruits did not join, a Corps was not formed.

Keale Company held weekly parades between then and Easter, 1916. Its strength remained unchanged in that period. The Company paraded almost full strength on Easter Sunday, 1916, and took part with Millstreet, Musheru and Rathduane Companies in the exercises at Kilmeeady.

The Company was mobilised again on Easter Tuesday morning in similar circumstances to those under which the Musheru Company was mobilised. The following paraded on that occasion:-

William Kelleher.  
Daniel W. Murphy.  
Jeremiah Crowley.  
Thomas Crowley.  
Timothy Murphy.  
Jeremiah Moynihan.  
James Kelleher.  
Batt Corcoran.

The Company paraded at Drishanebeg. From there they sent a message to us at Lackabawn Wood to the effect that they intended to tear up the Railway line. Con J. Meaney had not yet arrived and we had no instructions to take action. I, therefore, sent them a message that they should not take any action without orders. They remained in position all day and were dismissed that night when no orders had come from the Brigade.

Keale Company had no rifles. They probably had shot guns and some ammunition but I am unable to state the amount.

SIGNED: C. Meaney

DATE: November 25<sup>th</sup> 1947

Witness: Florence O'Donoghue.

SIGNED: C. Meaney  
DATE: November 25<sup>th</sup> 1947

WITNESS: Florence O'Donoghue

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
BURO STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21
No. W.S. <u>627</u>

WITNESS STATEMENT NO. 787

**CON MEANEY, RATHROE HOUSE, DERRINAGREE, BANTEER, CO. CORK**

**Captain, Mushera (Co. Cork) Coy. Irish Vols.**

**O/C. 7<sup>th</sup> Batt'n. Cork II Brigade, post 1916; O/C. 1<sup>st</sup> Batt'n. Cork IV Brigade, later.  
Activities of Irish Volunteers, North Cork, 1916-1921.**

*Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness: Nil*

**O/C. 'I' Company and O/C. Battalion Police, 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, Cork IV Brigade.**

We who were on the run got home some time prior to Christmas, 1916, as interned prisoners were being released from Frongoch and then with the general release it was felt safe to show ourselves once more without fear of arrest. We had been on the run since Easter Week.

Then in the early Spring of 1917 re-organisation of the Volunteers commenced. This took the same form as before the Rising and was started when a number of us met under cover of night and decided to reorganise. The result was that that phase of reorganisation was completed by early Summer of that year.

Gradually the original four Companies were developed as the movement spread out and the formation of a Battalion with Staff completed the organisation.

The 17<sup>th</sup> Battalion was organised in the early Summer of 1917 as a Unit of Cork Brigade I.R.A. It originally consisted of eight Companies, with number increased to ten in 1920 and to eleven in 1921 during the Truce period. This organisation of the men of Millsteeet Area into a Battalion of the I.R.A at this period was merely a resurrection of Companies moribund as a result of arrests and raids in the Area after the 1916 Rising.

The Battalion was originally organised as a Unit of the Irish Volunteers in 1914, after the disintegration of the Irish National Volunteers. It was so painstakingly organised that it was considered by the Volunteer Executive as an Area ripe for development as a nucleus for the Areas of Duhallow and Muskerry. As a result of this, the Executive decided to send Patrick Pearse to Millstreet in 1915 to address a meeting of the public and a Convention of Volunteers. It is a significant fact that all those Volunteers attending the Convention, as well as others associated with them, were interned after 1916 and had to go on the run until the release of the internees at Christmas, 1916.

Herewith are the names of those interned and of those who escaped by going on the run: -

Jeremiah O'Reardon,	Corner House, Millstreet.
Michael O'Reardon,	Corner House, Millstreet.
Jim Buckley,	Church Street, Millstreet.
Pat Carmody,	Main Street, Millstreet.
Jerry Twomey,	Main Street, Millstreet.
Con Murphy,	Ballydaly, Rathmore.
Tim Murphy,	Ballydaly, Rathmore.
Liam Buckley,	Kilcorney, Banteer.
Con O'Callaghan,	Mill Lane, Millstreet.

Men on the Run

C. J. Meaney,	Coolinaree, Millstreet.
William Kelleher,	Drishanebeg, Millstreet.
James Hickey,	Main Street, Millstreet.
Con Meaney,	Gurraneduff, Millstreet.

Jeremiah Reardon and MI. Reardon were father and son. Jeremiah Reardon and James Buckley were old men and members of the Fenian Brotherhood.

When Cork 2<sup>nd</sup> Brigade was formed in 1919, the 17<sup>th</sup> Battalion became the seventh Battalion of the new Brigade. Owing to loss of despatches in 1921 its number was changed to the first, which number it retained after the formation of the Cork 4<sup>th</sup> Brigade.

The 'lost' despatches contained the names of all the Battalion Officers, as well as the names of all the Officers of each Company in the Battalion. They were actually lost to the enemy as they were captured in a raid.

It will be realised that as a result of the post-1916 internments and raids, the difficulties of reorganisation in 1917 were greater than those in areas which had not been so forward nationally. Nevertheless, men were found in every Company Area to carry on the work and the names of those to whom credit must be given for the work of reorganisation are set down here.

**LIST OF MEN WHO HELPED IN ORGANISATION OF THEIR RESPECTIVE COMPANIES**

	(A)	
Michael Reardon Con Healy Jack Regan Matt Twomey	James Hickey Tim Healy John O'Keeffe  James Lucey ( <i>Jim the 'Doctor'</i> )	Jerry Twomey William Reardon John Riordan
Sean Buckley John J. Hickey	(B)	Jeremiah Corkery
	Con Rahilly Daniel Hickey	
William Kelleher ( <i>The Kaiser</i> ) Jeremiah Crowley	(C)	Thomas Crowley John Lehane
	Daniel W. Murphy ( <i>Dan Bill</i> ) Michael Murphy	
William Fitzgerald Daniel Barrett	(D)	John Buckley John Moriarty
	Daniel Kelleher James Twohig	
Denis O'Brien Denis O'Keeffe Denis Murphy	(E)	John Noonan Michael Lehane
	Con Murphy Bernie O'Sullivan	
Daniel T. O'Riordan Tim Condon William Tarrant Matthew Murphy	(F)	Dan Moynihan Michael Carey Peter Lucey
	Humphrey O'Donoghue Batt Cronin P. J. Murphy Martin Dennehy	
Denis Galvin	(G)	Pat Kelly John Justice
	Daniel Shine	
Jeremiah Long Michael Sheehan John Taaffe Eugene O'Sullivan ( <i>Salach</i> )	(H)	Jeremiah Philpott Jerh. D. O'Keeffe ( <i>Nant</i> ) Tim O'Callaghan ( <i>Doll</i> ) Tim Riordan
	Denis Long Denis Murphy ( <i>Salt</i> ) Denis Bride Pat O'Sullivan ( <i>Salach</i> )	
Con Meaney ( <i>Big Con</i> ) Tim C. Buckley ( <i>Tim Con Tim</i> ) John (J) Kelleher ( <i>Jack Johnny</i> ) Denis Buckley	(I)	Clement Kelleher William ( <i>Bill</i> ) Aherne John D. Kelleher ( <i>Jackie Donny</i> )
	Denis C. Kelleher ( <i>Denny Clem</i> ) John C. Buckley ( <i>Jack Con Tim</i> ) John Kelleher ( <i>Jack the Shop</i> )	
Patrick Healy Pat O'Shea ( <i>Long Paddy</i> ) John Pat Burke Jer. Sheehan Pat McSweeney Tim Herlihy ( <i>Scob</i> ) Con Buckley	(J)	John T. O'Shea Maurice Burke Daniel P. Sheehan Humphrey O'Sullivan ( <i>Peter</i> ) Michael Healy Garrett Burke
	Matt Kelleher Con Barrett Edward Twohig Tim J. Kelleher John McSweeney Denis Barrett	

The strength of the Battalion was about 800 on July 11<sup>th</sup> 1921

The Battalion Staff on this date consisted of: -

Commandant	C. J. Meaney
Vice Commandant	Pat Healy
Adjutant	Jeremiah Crowley
Quartermaster	Tim Condon
Column Leader	Jeremiah Long

COMPANY STAFFS (AND STRENGTHS) WERE:-

<u>'A' Company.</u>	<u>as on 11 July. 1921</u>	<u>On Roll 102</u>
CAPTAIN	Michael O'Reardon	
1 <sup>st</sup> LIEUT.	James Hickey	
2 <sup>nd</sup> LIEUT.	Jackie Regan	
ADJUTANT	Jerome O'Connor ( <i>Thadio</i> )	
QUARTERMASTER	Denis O'Riordan	
<u>'B' Company</u>	<u>as on 11<sup>th</sup> July. 1921</u>	<u>On Roll 60</u>
CAPTAIN	Sean Buckley	
1 <sup>st</sup> LIEUT.	John J. Hickey	
2 <sup>nd</sup> LIEUT.	Jerh. Corkery	
QUARTERMASTER	Denis O'Sullivan	
ADJUTANT	John J. Hickey	
<u>'C' Company</u>	<u>- as on 11<sup>th</sup> July. 1921</u>	<u>On Roll 29</u>
CAPTAIN	William Kelleher	
1 <sup>st</sup> LIEUT.	Dan W. Murphy	
2 <sup>nd</sup> LIEUT.	Sean Reid	
QUARTERMASTER	Philip Mc Sweeney	
ADJUTANT	Mick Galvin	
<u>'D' Company</u>	<u>as on 11<sup>th</sup> July. 1921</u>	<u>On Roll 84</u>
CAPTAIN	William Fitzgerald	
1 <sup>st</sup> LIEUT.	Dan Kelleher	
2 <sup>nd</sup> LIEUT.	Tim O'Shea	
QUARTERMASTER	Jeremiah O'Callaghan	
ADJUTANT	Jeremiah O'Donoghue	
<u>'E' Company</u>	<u>- as on 11<sup>th</sup> July. 1921</u>	<u>On Roll 104</u>
CAPTAIN	Denis O'Brien	
1 <sup>st</sup> LIEUT.	John Noonan	
2 <sup>nd</sup> LIEUT.	Denis O'Keeffe	
QUARTERMASTER	Bernie O'Sullivan	
ADJUTANT	Michael Lehane	
<u>'F' Company</u>	<u>as on 11<sup>th</sup> July. 1921</u>	<u>On Roll 233</u>
CAPTAIN	Daniel O'Riordan	
1 <sup>st</sup> LIEUT.	Daniel Moynihan	
2 <sup>nd</sup> LIEUT.	Matty Murphy	
QUARTERMASTER	Peter Lucey	
ADJUTANT	Daniel McSweeney	
<u>'G' Company</u>	<u>as on 11<sup>th</sup> July. 1921</u>	<u>On Roll 74</u>
CAPTAIN	Dan Shine	
1 <sup>st</sup> LIEUT.	James O'Connor	

2 <sup>nd</sup> LIEUT.	Patrick Kelly
QUARTERMASTER	John Justice
ADJUTANT	Patrick Cronin

<u>'H' Company</u>	<u>-as on 11<sup>th</sup> July, 1921</u>	<u>On Roll 93</u>
CAPTAIN	Jeremiah Philpott	
1 <sup>st</sup> LIEUT.	Michael Sheehan	
2 <sup>nd</sup> LIEUT.	Tim Riordan	
QUARTERMASTER	Denis Murphy	
ADJUTANT	Jerh. D. O'Keeffe	

<u>'I' Company</u>	<u>-as on 11<sup>th</sup> July, 1921</u>	<u>On Roll 69</u>
CAPTAIN	Con Meaney	
1 <sup>st</sup> LIEUT.	Denis C. Kelleher ( <i>Denny Clem</i> )	
2 <sup>nd</sup> LIEUT.	Jerome O'Sullivan ( <i>Jer Denny Darby</i> )	
QUARTERMASTER	Patrick D. Kelleher ( <i>Patsy the Farmer</i> )	
ADJUTANT	Maurice Finnegan	

<u>'J' Company</u>	<u>-as on 11<sup>th</sup> July, 1921</u>	<u>On Roll 67</u>
CAPTAIN	Matthew Kelleher	
1 <sup>st</sup> LIEUT.	Michael Healy	
2 <sup>nd</sup> LIEUT.	Humphrey O'Sullivan	
QUARTERMASTER	Denis Twomey	
ADJUTANT	Tim Kiely	

In explanation of the term 'On Roll' as shown with strengths for the Companies, it may be stated that each Company has a register of the names of all its members and the Battalion Staff had a copy of each register from all Companies.

This register was referred to as a Roll, because a roll was called of all Sections, Half Companies or Companies when on parade.

From 1917 on bi-monthly parades were held by all Companies when men were drilled in the use of firearms. Equipment was made, arms and ammunition were collected and purchased. The Conscription threat of 1918 brought an influx of recruits to the ranks.

The year 1919 was slack and attendance at parades showed a falling off but the men whose names are on the foregoing list, and many of Volunteer rank, carried on through the period of apathy and finally succeeded in bringing the Battalion to such strength and efficiency as to make it a successful and trustful fighting unit.

On the eve of Easter Monday, 1920, in compliance with a general order to all Battalions, the vacated R.I.C.

Barracks at Rathcoole was destroyed by Battalion Forces and the owner of a vacated R.I.C. Barracks at Cullen was compelled to

personally occupy the building. The following took part in the destruction of Rathcoole Barracks:-

#### 'H' COMPANY

O/C. J. Long, J. Philpott, Mick Sheehan, Jerh. D. O'Keeffe, Denis Murphy, Tim O'Callaghan, John Taaffe, Eugene O'Sullivan, Pat O'Sullivan, Dan Coakley, Jack O'Keeffe, Tim Riordan, Sylvester Murphy.-

#### 'I' COMPANY

O/C. Con Meaney, Denis C. Kelleher, William Aherne, Tim C. Buckley, Corns. O'Callaghan, William Fitzgerald, Clement Kelleher, Pat D. Kelleher, John C. Buckley, Dan Cashman, John J. Kelleher.

The whole of 'F' Company and a section from 'C' Company took part in compelling the owner to reside in Cullen Barracks and installing him there.

The success of the Dail Eireann Loan 1919/20 in this district was largely due to the able assistance given by Battalion and Company Officers and men.

Also the whole question of the preservation of order, the protection of Republican Courts and the carrying out of Court Orders fell on them.

Owing to I.R.A. activities all R.I.C. from outlying Barracks were withdrawn and this left the "policing" of the whole area in the hands of the I.R.A. forces.

The lawless element of the population, believing that the time was ripe for acts of lawlessness, tried to indulge in thefts and robberies. The peak point of this development resulted in the Ballydaly bank robbery, which occurred as follows:-

On the 20<sup>th</sup> February, 1919, the officials of two Banks, the Munster and Leinster and the National Bank Ltd., while on their way from Millstreet to Knocknagree fair were held up by masked and armed men at Ballydaly (which was in 'E' Company Area) and robbed of over £18,000.

The only arrest affected by the R.I.C. in connection with the robbery was the then Battalion Quartermaster but after a few days' detention he was released. The public believed that the Quartermaster's arrest was meant to bring discredit on the I.R.A. Organisation.

Acting on the instructions of the Brigade O/C, the Intelligence Section of the Battalion set itself to procure information which being secured, eventually led to the arrest by the Battalion Forces of six men on April 24<sup>th</sup> 1920.

Two others wanted in connection with this crime were not at home when other forces of the Brigade called to their homes on that date. The Brigade O/C. was in charge of the party who carried out the arrest and presided at the I.R.A. Court which found five of the prisoners guilty of Armed Robbery.

Those convicted admitted their part in the robbery and at the interrogation which preceded the trial some also admitted that they were part of an armed gang who contemplated further robberies as well as murder. The whole gang, taking confederates into account, numbered about twenty.

The convicted prisoners were sentenced to deportation and about £10,000 of the money which was robbed was surrendered by the prisoners and handed over to the Banks. During the five days that the prisoners were in custody, three of them were spent approximately a mile from the Millstreet R.I.C. Barracks.

Regarding the other men mentioned, one was captured in September of that year by the Brigade Column, with the assistance of members of 'H' Company, while the other was never taken.

Although it was known that these men had the bulk of the balance of the missing money, it was not recovered.

Prior to these arrests, the Brigade O/C. had several conferences with a small staff of Officers specially detailed for the investigation work. The following comprised who were on that staff: - Comdt. G J. Meaney, Vice Comdt. P. J. Healy, Battalion Adjutant J. Crowley, Captain M. Reardon, ('A' Company) and G T. Meaney, O/C. T Company.

Some of the deportees repeatedly disobeyed the sentence of the Court and returned to the district. This developed into a struggle between I.R.A. forces on one side and the criminal element of the population on the other and put a heavy strain on the Officers and men of the Battalion.

This searching and deportation of the sentenced men and others of the original gang who persisted in the wrong-doing went in until late in the Summer of 1920.

Even then the vigilance of the I.R.A. had to be increased, as hay, the property of some of the Battalion Officers, was maliciously burned and armed guards were posted to protect other haystacks likely to be attacked in this manner.

The activities of the I.R.A. in this matter were, curiously enough, resented by a great number of people. This was due to the fact that the criminals had a wide circle of relatives. The work of the I.R.A. was difficult, dangerous and unpopular, but it was justified by its success and the final winning over of the people to the right point of view.

The following is a list of those who took part in the arrest and guarding of the men who were arrested: -

'A' COMPANY:	Captain M. O'Reardon, Wm. Reardon, James Riordan, Corn. Healy, James Hickey.
'C' COMPANY	Wm. Kelleher, Michael Murphy, Sean Reid, Tom Crowley, Danl. W. Murphy
'E' COMPANY	Con. Murphy, Hugh O'Brien, James O'Sullivan, Bernie O'Sullivan, D. O'Keeffe
'F' COMPANY	Captain D. O'Riordan, H. O'Donoghue, Peter Lucey
'H' COMPANY	Captain Jer. Long, Jer. Philpott, J. O'Callaghan

**'T' COMPANY** Captain Con Meaney,  
 Denis Kelleher, Con  
 Callaghan, Tim Riordan,  
 Con Riordan, John J.  
 Kelleher, John D. Kelleher,  
 Wm. Aherne, John  
 Kelleher

**'J' COMPANY** Captain Matt Kelleher,  
 Sean Healy, Ed. Walsh,  
 Michael Healy

Pat Kelly, John Justice, James  
 O'Connor, John Kelly, Thomas Kelleher, Con.  
 Hartnett, Con. Horgan, Denis Herlihy, Tim  
 Riordan, Jer. Cronin, Con Cunningham, Denis  
 Galvin and four felled trees to barricade the  
 roads: - Jer. O'Connell, Daniel J. Kelleher,  
 Daniel Cunningham, Peter Ambrose.

In the attack on Mallow Barracks,  
 September 28<sup>th</sup> 1920, Vice Comdt. P. J. Healy  
 and Sean Healy of \P Company took part.

At Ballydrochane ambush, October,  
 1920, Denis Galvin and the above-mentioned  
 sixteen men of 'G' Company took part.

At Millstreet town, November 22<sup>nd</sup> 1920;  
 the military stationed there were withdrawn  
 early in October, 1920, and the R.I.C. were  
 strengthened by a number of Black-and-Tans.  
 The latter tried on their arrival to start a  
 campaign of terror. Civilians were held up often  
 and beaten and any spare cash which they had  
 on their persons was forcibly taken from them.  
 As a result, the members of 'A' Company were  
 constantly under arms and on protection duty  
 each night during October and November, 1920.

On the night of the 20<sup>th</sup> November, as a  
 result of a message received from the O/C. 'A'  
 Company, the Brigade Column and a section of  
 'I' Company proceeded to Millstreet where the  
 scouts of 'A' Company reported that a number  
 of Tans, who had partly smashed up the  
 contents of a shop in the Main Street, had  
 retired to the Barracks.

After spending a few hours outside the  
 town the Column and the Section from 'I'  
 Company withdrew, the former to billet and the  
 latter to their respective homes. However, it  
 transpired that early on the morning of the 21<sup>st</sup>  
 November the Black-and-Tans returned to their  
 work of destruction and tried to fire the house  
 but the fire did not catch.

On the night of the 21<sup>st</sup> the Column and a  
 number of men from the Battalion took up  
 positions in the town but as none of the R.I.C. or  
 Tans were visible on the streets the I.R.A. troops  
 were withdrawn in the early hours of the  
 morning of the 22<sup>nd</sup>.

The Column and men from the Battalion  
 took up positions early on the night of the 22<sup>nd</sup>  
 and a number of men armed with revolvers  
 went into the Main Street and opened fire on  
 some Black-and-Tans and R.I.C. A fight  
 followed and the Column Quartermaster, Paddy  
 McCarthy, was killed while one Tan was  
 wounded.

All members of the Battalion Staff  
 participated and practically all members of the  
 Battalion shared in the searches for these  
 prisoners and in the ambushes laid for enemy  
 forces afterwards. Owing to the fact that the  
 R.I.C. dare not venture more than a few  
 hundred yards from their Barracks, and even  
 the military who were stationed at the Carnegie  
 Hall never ventured out except in strength, it  
 was sometime before any real fighting took  
 place, but some members of the Battalion took  
 part in operations outside the area.

The following took part in an attack on  
 Rathmore R.I.C. Barracks in June, 1920:-

**'E' COMPANY:** Hugh O'Brien,  
 Bernie O'Sullivan,  
 John Noonan

**'F' COMPANY:** H. O'Donoghue,  
 R. Kiely

**'G' COMPANY:** Denis Galvin

The men of 'E' Company cut trenches to  
 delay possible reinforcements.

Drominagh ambush occurred in 'G'  
 Company Area on August 14<sup>th</sup> 1920, when a  
 British aeroplane made a forced landing at  
 Drominagh. The Captain of 'G' Company, on  
 hearing of the occurrence from his 2<sup>nd</sup>  
 Lieutenant, sent a Volunteer of his Company to  
 inform the Battalion Commandant, who got a  
 cycling section of men from 'A' and 'I'  
 Companies and came into 'G' Company area. In  
 the meantime, the O/C. of the Fourth Battalion  
 arrived in 'G' Company Area and attacked the  
 British protection party at 2 a.m. on the 15<sup>th</sup>  
 August.

The I.R.A. being then only armed with  
 shotguns were unable to get close to the British.  
 They killed the British sentry but were then  
 driven to retreat, a number being wounded.  
 Twelve members of 'G' Company took part in  
 the fight: -

The whole Battalion Staff and a large number of men (33) from 'A', 'B', 'C' 'E' and 'I' Companies took part.

On the night of November 23<sup>rd</sup> the Brigade Column and a large number of men from 'E' Company took up positions to cope with any attempt at reprisals by the Tans, while T Company in full strength were within a few hundred yards of the town to render assistance if required but the night passed quietly.

After the Millstreet fight a small Battalion Active Service Unit was formed, consisting of: the Commandant Adjutant, Michael Riordan, Wm. Reardon, Con Healy, Denis Hickey, Jerome O'Connor, Con Meaney and James Hickey.

The strength of this Unit was subsequently increased by 32 more. The following Column members were interned some weeks prior to the 12<sup>th</sup> July, 1921:- H. O'Donoghue and John O'Leary.

The small A.S.U. referred to had constant touch with the Volunteers in Millstreet until well into December but as the aggressive attitude of the Tans in regard to the civilian population ceased with the fight in November 22<sup>nd</sup> nothing of note happened.

In January of 1921 the following bridges were destroyed: -

Keale Bridge over the Blackwater, Kilmeedy Bridge, Glantane Bridge, which was in Cork I Area, Inchalay Bridge, Hollymount, Shamrock, Ahane, Small Keale Bridge, Sandpit House, Clonbanin, Drominagh, Rathcoole (2), Knockbrack, Kilmacurrane, and all bridges on G. S. Railway Line in Battalion Area were demolished in April, 1921. The Kerry Branch of the G.S.R. runs from East to West for a distance of 12 miles through the Battalion Area.

In January, 1921, the Officers of 'B' and 'E' Companies planned to attack and disarm one of the small parties of British military whom their I.Os. reported as travelling by train through the area. As this was an operation of major importance, the Battalion Column took charge and after lying in ambush each evening for about a week a train containing a party of military was held up and ambushed near Drishane on the night of February 11<sup>th</sup> 1921.

After a brief fight, the military, who had some dead and almost all wounded, surrendered. Fourteen rifles were captured, 500 rounds of .303 rifle ammunition and 14 sets of military equipment.

To carry out this operation, a number of Volunteers armed with revolvers waited at Millstreet Station to board any East bound train on which a certain number of armed military might be travelling and get the engine driver to signal and stop at the appointed place. Other Volunteers, all armed, had positions taken up at Rathcoole Station to deal with any West bound trains.

Two of the men from Rathcoole travelled each evening to the next station, Banteer, in order to make observations and return in the train to Rathcoole. It was a West-bound train which was eventually boarded and ambushed.

The train, or to be correct, its engine was boarded by two Volunteers - Jack O'Keeffe and Dan Coakley - at Rathcoole Station which is about 3 miles East of the selected ambush position. These men, with their revolvers, informed the engine driver that he was to carry out their instructions or his life was forfeit.

Acting on these instructions the driver blew a whistle blast about a mile from the ambush position and the ambush party then placed a lighted carbide cycle lamp between the rails at the point selected to have the engine stopped.

The engine overshot this mark by about 10 yards and the ambushers on each side of the embankments (the position was in what is known as a cutting) had to readjust their positions accordingly.

Torches made from dry sacking and kerosene oil were then lighted and thrown down the slopes of the embankment, thus giving the attackers a clear view of the interior of the train. An N.C.O. and 13 military were together in one compartment.

The Volunteer Battalion Commandant called on the military to surrender but the answer was a rifle shot from the train, which was immediately replied to by slug loaded shot-guns and limited rifle fire from the Volunteers. The Volunteers had only 4 regular Magazine .303 rifles and two single shot .303 rifles.

The firing lasted about seven or eight minutes when the ambushed party shouted "*We surrender*". The Commandant then ordered, "*Stop firing*". Firing then ceased but after an interval of about 30 seconds another shot was fired from the train and the Volunteers immediately resumed their fire.

In less than a minute, in response to another shout of "*We surrender*" from the train



the Commandant again ordered the Volunteers to stop firing and the military were ordered to come out of the train and leave their arms.

They then opened the door and those not seriously wounded came out as ordered on the Southern side of the train. A member was dying and one, at least, a Sergeant, was dead.

While the troops were emerging from their compartment, a Lieutenant, who was apparently in hiding near the rear of the train, fired a revolver shot at the Eastern end of the ambushers' position, opened the door of the carriage and leaped on to the ground. He was fired at but although a diligent search was made under the train he managed to escape in the darkness.

The Volunteers then collected the arms, baggage, equipment and ammunition, administered first aid to the wounded military, helped them back on the train and departed to the accompanying shouts from civilian passengers of "*Up the Republic*". There were not any Volunteer casualties.

The ambush at Clonbanin, March 5<sup>th</sup> 1921, was a Brigade operation and took place in "G" Company area. AH members of "G" Company were on duty acting as guides, etc., for the various units in the fight. The total casualties of the ambushed forces were 13 dead (including a Brigadier General) and 15 wounded, while the attackers had not one hit.

It appears that Active Service Units from Newmarket and Charleville Battalions, as well as a Kerry Brigade Column, in the early days of March, 1921, lay in ambush for a few days at a spot called the "Bower", three or four miles West of Rathmore, Co. Kerry. The object of this operation was to ambush and, if possible, capture some high ranking British Officer and his escort who were expected to return by that route from Co. Kerry.

In the early hours of the morning of March 5<sup>th</sup> 1921, the O/C. of the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, A.S.U., received a message from Sean Moylan, who was then O/C. of the Newmarket Battalion, requesting to have as many as possible of the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion Column proceed to Clonbanin with all due haste to help the other Columns in any engagement likely to arise.

The 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion Column was that morning quartered at Lackadotia which is about two miles South East of Millstreet town and roughly about eight or nine miles South of Clonbanin. Luckily the Column were already

out of bed and at Battalion Column Headquarters when the message arrived at about 5.30 or 6.30 a.m. Horses and traps were immediately procured, and, still under cover of darkness, the Column, consisting of about 20 men, was drawn to within three miles of Clonbanin where they arrived at about 8.30 p.m. The Newmarket, Charleville and the Kerry men were already in position.

Before the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion had time to occupy positions three British troop laden lorries, Westward or Kerry bound, drove through the ambush position which is on the Mallow-Killarney.

Due to failure to explode some land mines which were laid on the road and also failure to fire a signal shot, the enemy went unmolested and apparently unaware that anything out of the ordinary was afoot.

At about 3 p.m. signallers posted on an elevated observation point reported a convoy of five vehicles approaching from the Kerry direction. A few minutes later a troop laden military lorry drove into the position and when midway a Hotchkiss gun manned by I.R.A. men opened fire on the men in the lorry.

The lorry was put out of action and after a few rifle shots were exchanged all firing ceased. This lorry was apparently about thirteen or fourteen hundred yards ahead of the others who, unaware of the fate of their comrades, drove right in to take position in the following order: a lorry seventy yards behind a touring car with an armoured car within fifteen yards to the rear, and then another lorry 80 to 100 yards behind the armoured car. Lorry No. 2 was attacked by the Hotchkiss gun and the touring car attacked by rifle fire. Lorry No. 3 was also attacked by rifle fire. The Hotchkiss put lorry no. 2 out of commission, while the first two rifle shots put the tourer out of action. The last or No. 3 lorry coming under rifle fire was also put out of action.

When the touring car was disabled the armoured car crashed into its rear and in an endeavour to get clear sank in the soft margin of the road. In the meantime, I.R.A. forces from both sides of the road kept firing on all vehicles. After a delay of some minutes the Vickers Gun in the armoured car got into action but the gunner failed to find accurate range and did not succeed in doing any damage, while the car remained stationary, apparently unable to move. After attack on lorry No. 2, the I.R.A.

Hotchkiss got jammed and except for a few single shots did not take any further part in the engagement.

After about an hour's fighting the Hotchkiss and crew were ordered to retire; this was followed by a general withdrawal of all I.R.A. troops South of the road. This movement was not carried out until all enemy fire ceased and it was found that the armoured car, although stationary at a bend in the road, dominated the road along the whole length of the ambush position.

After the I.R.A. withdrew on the South side a small party of enemy survivors, an Officer and six men, attempted to flank the I.R.A. forces still in position in the North side. After a sharp and short exchange of fire the attempt was broken up.

All enemy vehicles were put out of action, while the I.R.A. forces had not any casualties.

The Brigade had its Headquarters in the Battalion Area for several weeks during the Spring and early Summer of 1921, and for some weeks during the previous year. This threw a heavy strain on the Volunteers of 'E' Company, but still a heavier strain on 'H', 'I', and 'J' Companies as owing to intensive enemy activity a constant armed guard was on duty protecting the Headquarters Staff from surprise raids.

During the early portion of 1921 every Company had a number of damp proof dumps made for the storage of arms and ammunition, and 'H' Company had a large dug-out capable of accommodating over 20 men. This latter entailed a considerable amount of work for the men of that Company as they worked in shifts until the work was completed.

Dumps or Arms dumps were rectangular cases made of wood, covered with damp proof felt. They were about five feet long, two feet wide and two feet high with a shutter door on one end. These cases were usually built into a rough stone faced fence, shutter end outmost. The stones in the fence were so placed as to not attract attention.

The dug-out was made by excavating earth from a natural rise in the ground. This excavating was done by tunnelling. The floor, sides and roof were lined with timber, provision being made for ventilation. The entrance and ventilation openings were camouflaged to prevent discovery. When completed the dug-out was a large underground room, capable of accommodating troops.

In May, 1921, a strong force of military was engaged in searching near the locality in which 'H' Company's dug-out was situated. As a result, however, of an attack with rifles by the then O/C, Jerh. Long, J. D. O'Keefe and Jackie Taafe from the rear, the search party broke up the whole encirclement of the dug-out and the search was abandoned.

On Whit Saturday and Whit Sunday, 1921, an unsuccessful attempt was made by the Column to attack either the R.I.C. at Millstreet or a detachment of military stationed at Millstreet Workhouse. It meant failure to make direct contact with the enemy due to the fact that both enemy parties kept to their respective Barracks.

About mid-May, 1921, 120 members of the R.I.C. Auxiliary Forces took over and made Mount Leader House their Headquarters. This was an unoccupied mansion situated on its own grounds on a hill and was within half a mile of Millstreet R.I.C. Barracks. This enemy force arrived by rail, the rail bridge being recently repaired. A large quantity of stores was left unguarded by them at Millstreet Railway Station on the night of their arrival.

The O/C. and 11 men of 'B' Company set fire to the wagons during the night and the whole quantity of stores was destroyed.

#### Burning of Millstreet Workhouse

On the night of June<sup>3rd</sup> 1921, a number of men from 'A' and 'B' Companies, acting on a general order, destroyed by fire the major portion of Millstreet Workhouse. The patients were transferred to the remaining portion before the fires were lighted. This building was only about half a mile from the Auxiliary Headquarters.

#### Rathcoole Ambush - June 16<sup>th</sup> 1921

This was a Brigade operation but being the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion Area a large number of men from this Battalion took part both in the actual fight, which extended over a mile of the road, and also, in the erection of barricades of types varying from felled trees to upturned farm carts and implements which were bound together with wire.

Each section on barricade work was close to its position and under cover from dawn on that morning until about 6 p.m. that afternoon, when the fight was started. As there was very intense enemy activity in the area at this period

the men on the barricades were in as much personal danger as those in the actual ambush.

The Battalion Column, consisting of 56 men from 'B', 'C', 'D', 'E', 'F', 'G', 'H', 'I' and 'J' Companies took part in the actual ambush. 'B', 'C', 'D', 'G', 'H', 'I', and 'J' Companies supplied 76 men for the barricades.

At the site of the Rathcoole ambush the road runs almost directly East-West.

All I.R.A Units to take part in the actual ambush on enemy forces were mobilised before dawn in a wood overlooking the road from the South. This wood's Northern end was less than 400 yards from the proposed ambush position.

Five or six 5 to 7lb. Land mines were laid at different points during darkness on the road over which the Auxiliary R.I.C. used to proceed to Banteer Railway Station once or twice daily for supplies. The G.S.R. West of Banteer Station had previously been rendered impassable by the destruction by fire of the rail bridge over the river Finnow, which is about 1 1/2 miles East of Millstreet Station. This demolition was carried by I.R.A. forces some weeks prior to June 16<sup>th</sup>.

The Auxiliary convoy passed to and from Banteer twice on that day, but it was only after it went on the second journey to Banter that the I.R.A. forces took up their positions for the actual attack. The attackers were divided into seven or eight sections, plus a number of small groups in position selected to prevent outflanking of the section. The enemy convoy consisted of four Crossley tenders.

On the return from Banteer late in the evening, all four travelling from 200 yards to 400 yards apart entered the ambush position. Just as the rear tender entered the position a land mine was exploded under it and the section covering this position were about to rush it when Lewis Gun fire was opened on them by the crew of No. 3 tender which was about 300 yards ahead of the rear tender.

When the fight started all the Auxiliaries leaped from their tenders and under cover of the road fence opened rifle and rifle grenade fire on the I.R.A. positions. The I.R.A. forces opened shot-gun and rifle fire from their positions behind fences which were from 50 to 70 yards South of the road and about 300 yards from the wood where they had been under cover all that day.

Some of the occupants of No. 3 tender, about five in number, started to proceed in a Westerly direction along the road until they

came in front of an I.R.A. section about a quarter of a mile West of the position of the mine damaged tender when a mine was exploded between three of their number, putting them out of action; the other two kept replying to the I.R.A. fire until both were eventually silenced. Further West a ding-dong exchange of fire went on.

Due to some confusion on the Western flank of the I.R.A. forces and the fact that there were hardly any bends on the road capable of being enfiladed by the I.R.A., the I.R.A. forces retired after about half an hour's fight.

The I.R.A. had not any casualties but the Auxiliaries had their complete transport put out of action as well as an undefined number of killed and wounded.

During the fight an enemy plane was seen flying in an Easterly direction and appeared to be not more than a mile distant from the scene of the fighting, but apparently the occupants were unaware that anything like a fight was on.

Mails were captured twice during the Anglo-Irish War - August 1920, and March, 1921. The former operation was carried out by members of 'E' Company and the latter by the Column A.S.U. while members of 'A' and 'B' Companies took part in scouting operations.

From March, 1921, until the Truce, all Companies took part in organised signalling when enemy forces appeared in their respective areas. Horn blasts were used by day and lighted torches by night.

The principal dispatch riders up to 12<sup>th</sup> July, 1921, were: -

- (i) From 1917 to 1920 - Con Healy and Wm. Reardon of 'A' Company
- (ii) 1921 - Con Cremin of 'J' Company
- (iii) John Kiely of 'A' Company was special dispatch carrier to the Column
- (iv) Joe Kelly of 'B' Company delivered and took dispatches from trains
- (v) From end of 1920 to Truce, Denis O'Riordan and Denis Kiely of 'A' Company

All enemy posts in the area were situated in 'A' Company Area, that is, directly in or close to Millstreet town.

During the Truce period training camps were organised in each Company area. Each Company had the benefit of two week's

continuous training and was mobilised four nights weekly for drills and special instruction.

A specially picked Unit of selected men from each Company got, in addition, seven weeks' continuous training and when the Barracks were taken over in February, 1922, all these men were drafted to various stations: - Mallow Divisional Headquarters, Buttevant, and Ballyvonaire Brigade Headquarters and Millstreet Battalion Headquarters.

The following is a list of activities and events - 7<sup>th</sup> Battalion, Cork II Brigade, subsequently 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, Cork IV Brigade: -

Spring 1919:	Lynch called to meet in conference Officers, Battalion and Company, at Jim Buckley's Church Street, Millstreet.
April 3 <sup>rd</sup> 1920	General burning of evacuated R.I.C. Barracks. Lynch in Battalion area end of March and early April.
May 21 <sup>st</sup> 1920:	Tour of inspection.
June 20 <sup>th</sup> 1920:	Lucas captured.
August 14 <sup>th</sup> 1920	Drominagh fight.
August 16 <sup>th</sup> 1920	Clancy and O'Connell killed.
August 18 <sup>th</sup> 1920	Funeral - Lynch and Moylan present.
October 4 <sup>th</sup> 1920:	Capture of Mallow Barracks.
October 8 <sup>th</sup> 1920:	Keim incident.
November 22 <sup>nd</sup> 1920:	Paddy McCarthy killed in Millstreet
February 11 <sup>th</sup> 1921	Train ambush.
March 5 <sup>th</sup> 1921:	Clonbanin ambush.
March 14 <sup>th</sup> 1921:	Nadd Round-up.
April 15 <sup>th</sup> 1921:	Round-up in Musherá Area.
April 16 <sup>th</sup> 1921:	Lynch and McNeilus arriving in Battalion Area.
April 17 <sup>th</sup> 1921:	Troops fired on at Mauma Pass.
April 26 <sup>th</sup> 1921:	Meeting for formation of Division at Kippagh.*

June 3 <sup>rd</sup> 1921:	Millstreet Workhouse burned by the I.R.A.
June 4-5 <sup>th</sup> 1921:	Movement of troops to Clydagh
June 6 <sup>th</sup> 1921:	Clydagh round-up.
June 16 <sup>th</sup> 1921:	Rathcoole Ambush.
June 24 <sup>th</sup> 1921:	Kilcorney round-up. M. Dineen murdered.
July 6 <sup>th</sup> 1921:	Sniping Mount Leader. Column mobilises.
July 7 <sup>th</sup> 1921:	On way to West Limerick.
July 8 <sup>th</sup> -10 <sup>th</sup> -11 <sup>th</sup> 1921:	In ambush in West Limerick.

The following explains the last two items: As a result of a message from Brigade Headquarters received in the middle of the night, July 6<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup>, about 12 men of the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion proceeded by car to Kingwilliamstown, now Ballydesmond, in the early afternoon of July 7<sup>th</sup> where they joined up with other Brigade Columns, Engineering and Signalling Units. After nightfall the whole force in a convoy of about 30 horse side-cars were transported to the Tournafulla area in West Limerick.

In ambush in West Limerick means that the whole Brigade Column and the West Limerick Column were in actual ambush positions on a road between Newcastlewest and Abbeyfeale on the 8<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> July when it was expected a convoy of British Military would pass. The name of the locality is Barnagh.

The Columns rested in billets on the 9<sup>th</sup> and were together less than a mile from the position on the 10<sup>th</sup>.

The Column left the ambush position at noon on the 11<sup>th</sup> due to the Truce coming into force then.

Signed: Con Meany  
(Con Meany)

Witness: [Signature] LT.-COLONEL

Date: 26<sup>th</sup> January 1953

\*See Annex 2)

# WILLIAM REARDON (*BILLINGS*)

## WITNESS STATEMENT NO. 1,185

WILLIAM REARDON, MAIN STREET, MILLSTREET, CO. CORK

Assistant Battalion Engineer, Millstreet Battalion, Cork II Brigade, 1917-23

*Conditions, if any, stipulated by Witness: Nil.*

I was born in Millstreet on April 7<sup>th</sup> 1900. I was educated at Millstreet National School until I reached the age of 16 years. My father, Jeremiah O'Riordan, and my brother, Mick, were arrested after Easter Week, 1916, and deported to Wakefield. I left school at this time. My brother was released after about six weeks and my father was released with the general release at the end of the year.

When the Irish Volunteers were reorganised in early 1917 I was engaged more or less whole-time as a dispatch rider keeping contact between the various units in the Millstreet area. The strength of the Millstreet Unit at this time was about 12/15.

Some members of the unit were: Tim Healy, Neilus Healy, Denis Healy, Jack Regan, Jimmie Hickey, Denis Hickey, Con Callaghan, Con (Sonny) Meaney, Mick O'Riordan, Jerh. Crowley and Wm. O'Riordan (witness). As far as I can remember the officers of the company were:-

O/C. - Con Meaney  
1<sup>st</sup> Lt. - Mick O'Riordan (brother)  
Adj. - Jerh. Crowley.

Parades were held usually on two nights each week in the fields in the locality of the town. Occasionally parades under the guise of meetings were held in the Town Hall. The only type of drill carried out was ordinary foot-drill.

All Volunteers took part in organising Sinn Fein during 1917. The Officers of the Sinn Fein were, I think, James Buckley, Chairman; Mick O'Riordan, Secretary. The pioneer Volunteers mentioned above were all members of the club.

Towards the end of 1917 the Volunteer organisation had made good progress in the area and Millstreet Battalion was formed. The Companies in the Battalion were:- Millstreet, Rathduane, Cullen, Derrynagree, Rathcoole, Kilcorney, Musherah, Drishane, Cloughoola and

Dooneen. The first officers of the battalion were:-

O/C. - Con Meaney (Sonny)  
Vice O/C. - I cannot recollect  
Adj. - Jerh. Crowley  
Q/M - John Lehane (I think)  
I/O - Wm. O'Riordan (witness)

At this time the strength of Millstreet Company had increased to about 60.

When conscription was threatened in early 1918 there was a big increase of Volunteers - the figure rose to 130. The Company officers now were:-

O/C. - Mick O'Riordan  
1<sup>st</sup> Lt. - Jimmie Hickey  
2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. - Jack Regan

During this period all arms in the area - mainly shotguns - were collected. There were, in addition, a couple of single shot rifles owned by, I think, Jimmie Hickey and Denis Kelliher. These had been purchased by the owners prior to 1916. About this time the Company had about 35 shotguns, together with about 300 rounds of ammunition for same. The usual training went on at this time and the new recruits were being knocked into shape. However, when the danger of conscription had passed a good many of the newcomers faded out and the strength of Millstreet fell to something about 100.

There was no great activity of a military nature during the year 1918, but the approach of the general election in December gave the Volunteers plenty to do on the political side (Sinn Fein). However, there was no contest in this area as the Sinn Fein candidate - Dan Corkery, I think - was returned unopposed.

Up to January 1919 Millstreet Battalion was a unit of the Cork Brigade which was made up of about twenty battalions at this time. It was decided to divide the brigade into three parts

and our battalion became a unit of the new Cork II Brigade. There were seven battalions in this brigade, viz., Millstreet, Mallow, Newmarket, Kanturk, Fermoy, Charleville and Castletownroche. There was no change in the officers of our battalion arising out of the reorganisation.

At this time the training was becoming more advanced and the battalion was holding field exercises in which the various companies took part. In this way we were being trained in scouting and the use of cover, while nearly every company had a miniature rifle which enabled the members to get some target practice. There were also signalling classes in each company where the members were instructed in semaphore and Morse code signalling.

The general order for the destruction of evacuated enemy posts at Easter, 1920, led to little activity in the area as the only such post involved was Rathcoole R.I.C. barracks. This was destroyed by members of the Rathcoole Company.

In August 1920, the office of the Income Tax collector for the Millstreet area was raided by members of the Millstreet, Derrynagree and Drishane Companies. The collector - Jack Driscoll - lived at Clonbanin where he had his office. In company with Neilus Healy, Denis Healy, Jack Regan and two or three more from Millstreet, I took part in this raid. We destroyed all papers in the office and seized a shotgun and revolver. John Lehane was in charge of the operation. I cannot remember the names of the men from Derrynagree and Drishane Companies.

When the Brigade Column was formed in September 1920, three members of Millstreet Company were called up for training. They were:- Sean Healy, Paddy Healy and Con Murphy. Sean and Paddy were the drivers of two of the cars in which the military stores and arms captured at Mallow barracks on September 28<sup>th</sup> 1920 were removed from the enemy post. They also took part in all engagements in which the Column participated during the War of Independence.

On Saturday night (November 20<sup>th</sup> 1920, I think) some members of the Black and Tan garrison who had recently arrived in Millstreet threw a bomb into my house and attempted to burn two other houses (Tim Murphy's and Mrs. Linehan's). They also commandeered drink in several publichouses and held up members of

the public, taking any money they had in their possession. This was an unprovoked attack. On the next day a Brigade Council meeting was held at Com Meaney's, Gurraneduff, and when this matter was discussed it was decided to take reprisal action. I was not present at this meeting but I recollect hearing the matter discussed at the time.

The Brigade Column under Liam Lynch and Ernie O'Malley was in the area and it was decided to take up a number of positions about the town. The Column members were operating with members of the local Company, who were mainly employed in a scouting capacity.

Some, however, armed and operated with the Column men. Positions were occupied in the Market Yard, Fair Field and in Mill Lane about, I'd say, 8 p.m. on the night of November 22<sup>nd</sup> 1920. The intention was to shoot up any Black and Tan or enemy forces who might make their appearance.

I was with the party at Mill Lane. The other members were: Jimmie Hickey, Jerome O'Connor (both of local Company) with Tom Coughlan and Paddy McCarthy of the Brigade Column. All were armed with rifles while the Column men also had revolvers.

When we had been in position for some time there was no sign of any activity but suddenly someone dashed past the end of Mill Lane, at the same time firing a shot. We rushed on to the Main St. at the junction with Mill Lane and opened fire on two Black and Tans who were running up the street towards their barracks. The enemy party escaped but when we returned to Mill Lane we found that Paddy McCarthy had been shot dead by the single shot.

We then removed his body to the Market Yard where H.Q. had been established. The body was later taken to Dromnahilla - about 1/4 mile from Millstreet - where "Miah" Galvin went for Fr. Breen, C.C.

When Fr. Breen arrived he administered the last rites. In the meantime I had been sent by Jerh. Crowley (Batt. Adjt.) to commandeer a motor car. I approached Wm. Kelliher, who was the owner of a car and he volunteered to drive the car himself. We returned to Dromnahilla and put Paddy McCarthy's body in the car.

With "Miah" Galvin I proceeded at a distance in front of the car until we reached the Station Road. The car, driven by Wm. Kelliher, was carrying the body of Paddy McCarthy - with Jerh. Crowley and Jerome O'Connor as

escorts - then preceded to Owen Sullivan's, Gurtnevey, where the corpse was waked.

After about an hour the whole party, including the Brigade Column, withdrew from Millstreet to the neighbourhood of Clara where they billeted. Next night Paddy McCarthy's body was removed to Lismire where he was buried with full military honours. I was not present at the burial.

Following this incident I went "on the run" as did all the other locals who were engaged in the Millstreet attack. This party formed the nucleus of a Battalion Flying Column. They included Jimmie Hickey, "Miah" Galvin, Jerome O'Connor, Neilus Healy and Denis Hickey.

There was no special activity in the area beyond the blocking of roads, cutting of lines of communication and destruction of bridges until early in February, 1921.

Towards the end of the first week in February the Battalion O/C. (Con Meaney) decided to ambush a train which usually carried a party of troops between Mallow and Tralee. The site selected for the attack was on the railway embankment about 1½ miles on the Mallow side of Millstreet railway station. On or about February 4<sup>th</sup> 1921, the Battalion Column, composed of, as far as I recollect, Con Meaney (Sonny), Con T. Meaney, Jerh. Crowley, Tom Crowley, "Neilus" Healy, Denis Hickey, Jimmie Hickey, Jerome Buckley, Wm. O'Riordan, John Lehane, Sean O'Riordan, Mick O'Riordan, "Miah" Galvin, Sein Reid, Jack O'Keeffe and Dan Coakley, took up positions at the selected site about 7.30 p.m. The train from Mallow was due to pass through the position before 8 p.m. while the train from Tralee would pass shortly after 8 p.m. as both trains crossed at Millstreet station. In addition to the men at the ambush position, there were also two I.R.A. men at Millstreet station and two more at Rathcoole whose duty it was to board the train if the military were on the train and to ensure that the driver stopped the train inside the ambush position. There were also two men with red lights - one outside the extreme end of the ambush site at each end - to indicate the driver to halt. If the troops were on the train the whistle was to be blown about a quarter of a mile on either side of the position and the man with the red lamp would then go onto the line and wave his lamp. Everything proceeded according to plan on the night of February 4<sup>th</sup> or

so, but the enemy forces did not travel on either train so all parties withdrew to their homes and billets. The Column and other operatives took up positions at the same places each evening up to and including February 10<sup>th</sup> 1921, without result.

We were all at our posts again on the evening of February 11<sup>th</sup> about 8 p.m. when the train from Rathcoole whistled at the railway arch as it approached our position. This indicated that the military party were on the train from Mallow. Tom Crowley, who was the man with the red lamp at the Millstreet end immediately went on to the railway line and waved his red lamp as a signal to the driver to stop. The train stopped at the selected position and the British party were called on to surrender. There was no reply, so fire was opened by our party and replied to by the enemy. The exchange of fire lasted about 15 minutes and the enemy then surrendered. All members of the ambush party then came on to the railway line and ordered the British military to assemble on one side of the train. It was then discovered that one member of the British party had been killed while several had been wounded. Fourteen rifles and a supply of ammunition were captured. When the booty had been collected the ambush party withdrew to Kilcorney area.

The men who boarded the train at Rathcoole railway station were Dan Coakley and Jack O'Keeffe, while the men who were on similar duty at Millstreet were John J. Hickey and Sean Buckley, I think. The men with the red lamps were Tom Crowley (Millstreet end) and Wm. Kelliher, "The Kaiser", (Rathcoole end). The remainder of the Column were extended over a distance of about 50 yards on both sides of the railway and on the high ground of the embankment.

The next engagement in which the Battalion Column took part was at Clonbanin on March 5<sup>th</sup> 1921. In the period between the Millstreet train scrap and this date the Column had laid in ambush on several occasions without making contact with the enemy.

About 4 p.m. on the morning of 5<sup>th</sup> March, 1921, while billeted at Lackadotia the members of the Millstreet Column who had already taken part in the train fight on February 11<sup>th</sup> were ordered to proceed to Clonbanin on the main Mallow-Killarney road about 19 miles from Mallow. Here we met

members of the Charleville, Newmarket and Kerry II Brigade Columns. They were moving into positions about 1/2 mile west of Clonbanin Crossroads as we arrived. The Millstreet Column was divided into two sections. I was with a section of six under Con Meaney. We were positioned in Shaughnessy's haggard - south of the Killarney-Mallow road - with a machine gun party. We were behind a sod fence about 150 yards from the road.

The members of the Kerry II Brigade Column and the other members of the Millstreet Column were on our left (west) and the whole party were extended over a distance of about 800 yards. It was about 8 a.m. when we took up our positions. The Charleville and Newmarket Columns were on the north side of the road. In addition to the main body on each side of the road there were flanking parties at each end of the position, as well as scouts posted at suitable points. A mine was laid in the road at the eastern end of the position right in front of the machine gun section (Liam Moylan and Denis Galvin).

It was about 10 a.m. when two lorries of military passed through the position from the east (Mallow). They were allowed to go on their way and there was no further activity until 2 p.m. when the approach of an enemy convoy from the west was signalled.

This convoy consisted of two lorries, a touring car followed by an armoured car and a lorry. It drove into the ambush position and as the leading lorry reached our position the signal to open fire was given. This lorry managed to get through the position and got under cover of a farmhouse beyond the eastern end. The touring car was crippled by a burst of machine-gun fire and the armoured car, in an endeavour to avoid the touring car, got ditched. The crew were, however, in a position to continue to use their machine-guns effectively. The remainder of the enemy party left their transport at the opening blast and took cover behind the roadside fences.

The fighting went on for about two hours, but as we were unable to silence the machine-guns in the armoured car the engagement had to be broken off. The members of the Millstreet Column withdrew with the Kerry II Brigade Column towards their home areas. The I.R.A. had no casualties but the enemy lost General Cummings and a number of others as well as several wounded.

During April and May the enemy forces in the area were being continually harassed by sniping. Roads, bridges, and railways were demolished mainly by members of local companies. The Column, however, had in many cases to act as guards for these operations. I think it was about mid-May that a large supply of stores which arrived at Millstreet railway station for the Auxiliaries who were to occupy Mount Leader House were destroyed by the members of the Dooneen Company under Sein Buckley.

About this time the Column was divided into small parties - helping to train the members of the local companies throughout the battalion. This work went on until about mid-June when the Column was again mobilised for Rathcoole ambush. The Columns from Mallow, Charleville, Newmarket and Kanturk were also engaged in this fight. The combined forces were in charge of Paddy O'Brien (Brigade Vice O/C). The combined Columns numbered about 120. About 80 were armed with rifles while the remainder had shotguns. The Columns assembled at Rathcoole Wood - about 2 1/2 miles east of Millstreet - during the night of June 15<sup>th</sup> 1921.

The combined force, which was divided into several sections, took up positions on rising ground to the south of the Millstreet-Banteer road on the morning of June 16<sup>th</sup> 1921. They were extended over a distance of about 1,000 yards, along which six mines had been laid at intervals along the road. I was a member of a flanking party of six at the western end of the position. We were about 1/2 mile from the centre of the position. We were about 200 yards from the road behind a sod fence and were all armed with rifles. The members of the section were:- Jimmie Hickey, "Neilus" Healy, "Miah" Galvin, Wm. Kelliher, Tom Crowley and Wm. O'Riordan (witness). As the enemy party, travelling from the east, did not reach our position, I am unable to give any description of what happened along the line. When firing ceased we withdrew to a prearranged spot at the rear of Rathcoole Wood, where we received instructions to return to our billets.

Beyond sniping of enemy posts, which was a nightly occurrence, there was little other activity in the area up to the date of the Truce on July 11<sup>th</sup> 1921.

I should have mentioned that when I went on the run following the Millstreet attack



at the end of November, 1920, I was appointed Assistant Battalion Engineer.

Rank at the Truce - Assistant Battalion Engineer, Millstreet Battalion, Cork II Brigade. The strength of the battalion at Truce - about 600.

During the Truce I took part in Engineer training camps at Knocknagree (Brigade) and Graune (Battalion), where representatives of the various battalions and companies were instructed in the manufacture of gunpowder, construction of mines and use of explosives. When the barracks were taken over at Millstreet I was one of the staff there and later

transferred to Buttevant, where I served until the outbreak of the Civil War. After the evacuation of Buttevant I took the field with the Republican forces and remained active until the cease fire in May, 1923.

Signed: William Reardon  
(William Reardon)  
Date: 8<sup>th</sup> June 1955  
Witness: P. O'Donnell (P. O'Donnell)  
(Investigator)

## SEAMUS (JIMMY) HICKEY

### WITNESS STATEMENT NO.76

STATEMENT OF SEAMUS HICKEY, MAIN STREET, MILLSTREET, CO. CORK

*Conditions, if any, Stipulated by the Witness: Nil*

PERIOD: 1913 TO MAY, 1916. UNIT: MILLSTREET COMPANY, I.V.

In 1913 the campaign against recruiting for the British Forces was carried on in Millstreet by Jerry Twomey and myself, assisted later by Con Meaney. The O'Briens of Inchamay House, Lyre, Banteer, brought us the first supplies of anti-recruiting literature.

I think "Irish Freedom" kept up the supplies after that. We got small gummed slips printed "Boycott England's Immoral Army" which could easily be posted up in many places.

On one occasion we painted the same slogan conspicuously with tar on the gable end of a house near the Railway Hotel. I was one of the crowd looking at it next morning when the R.I.C. Sergeant came along and demanded to know who had done it. I said, "Probably Mick the Painter" - a local man who was then dead. The Sergeant said sourly that "there was no need to go to the grave for the culprit". The police tried obliterating the slogan with lime, but this only gave it a fine background.

In 1914 I was working in Cork. I was sworn into the I.R.B. there by Diarmuid Lynch. Jerry Twomey was sworn in about the same time. I gave Diarmuid Lynch a few names in Millstreet, but I do not think much progress was made with the organisation there. I attended a meeting of a Circle in Red Abbey Street while in Cork.

The first Volunteer Corps was formed in Millstreet in May, 1914. They were all Redmondites and were formed for a political purpose. None of our people were in it. About this time I was working in Charleville and joined the Volunteer Corps there. Captain Talbot Crosbie addressed the Volunteers there and spoke strongly in favour of control by Redmond. He asked, at the conclusion of his address, to have all those who agreed with him step forward. I was the only one who did not do so.

I was back in Millstreet when the Company was formed immediately after the public meeting addressed by Terence MacSwiney on 1<sup>st</sup> November, 1915. The town of Millstreet was largely hostile or indifferent. Before 1916 the Company never had a strength of more than seven or eight who could be depended upon.

The following Officers were elected at the start and continued to hold office: -

Captain: Cornelius J. Meaney  
Lieut.: Seam us Hickey  
Secretary: Jeremiah Twomey

Jim Buckley, who was too old for active service, acted as Treasurer.

The orders received for Easter Sunday, 1916, were for a parade with all arms and equipment. We had no information of a definite nature that it was to be anything more than an ordinary parade, although there was some vague rumours in circulation. The following paraded in Millstreet on Easter Sunday morning:-

Cornelius J. Meaney  
Seamus Hickey  
Jeremiah Twomey  
Daniel A. Hickey  
Michael Riordan  
Patrick O'Sullivan  
Cornelius Healy

The arms which we had were:-  
Four single shot .303 rifles, with about 200 rounds. Three shot guns, with about 200 rounds. Five revolvers .32 with about 25 rounds.

We had also about 100 three-pronged pikes made by me for use against Cavalry. These were so made that however they were laid on the ground one spike was vertical. We had a number of pikes also. I do not think we had any handles for them, and no pikes were taken out by any of the four Companies on Easter Sunday. We had purchased the single shot .303 rifles in 1914 for 50/- each from Dan Dennehy, Rathmore. He had got 14 of them for sale. I had made a mould for manufacturing slugs in 1915. This had gone round to four Companies; a number of slugs were made and some cartridges loaded with them.

I do not recollect clearly why it was decided on Sunday night that I should go to Cork on Monday. There must have been anticipation on our part that orders would come to us, and, when they did not come, I was

instructed to go to Brigade Headquarters in Cork to seek them. I went by train on Monday. The local R.I.C Sergeant travelled to Cork on the same train, whether for the purpose of keeping me under observation or not I do not know, but I think he followed me to the Volunteer Hall in Sheares' Street.

I did not see Tomas MacCurtain or Terence MacSwiney at the Volunteer Hall, although I waited until the last possible minute which would enable me to catch the train back. They had not arrived at the Hall up to the time I left. Sean O'Sullivan and Tadhg Barry were in and out, but neither they nor Pat Higgins, whom I saw also, had any information other than that fighting was taking place in Dublin. From those present in the Hall I could get no definite orders, other than the general advice that we should evade arrest and be ready in case word was sent to us again. I returned to Millstreet on Monday night.

In the hope that some orders would come to us we mobilised on Tuesday and kept together all day. No word of any kind came. I heard that a despatch came from Kerry to Millstreet on Monday night, to be forwarded to Cork. I do not know what became of it, but I do not think it went to Cork. When no orders had come to us on Tuesday night we dismissed.

As far as I know, the only members of the I.R.B. in the area Jerry Twomey, Con Meaney and myself. There was no Fianna or Cumann-na-mBan organisation in the area before Easter, 1916.

SIGNED: SEAMUS O h-IOCADHE

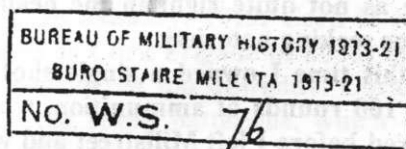
DATE: 10-12-47

WITNESS: FLORENCE O'DONOGHUE

SIGNED: Seamus O'Keefe

DATE: 10-12-47

WITNESS: Florence O'Donoghue



WITNESS STATEMENT NO. 1,218

**JAMES (JIMMY) HICKEY, MAIN STREET, MILLSTREET, CO. CORK.**

**Lieutenant Millstreet Company, Millstreet Battalion, Co, Cork.  
Engineer, Millstreet Battalion. Member of Millstreet Batt'n. Column.**

**Subject: National and military activities, Millstreet, Co. Cork, 1912 -1923.**

*Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness: Nil*

I was born in Millstreet on June 29<sup>th</sup> 1889, and was educated at Millstreet National School until I reached the age of 16 years. I then went on to serve my time as a blacksmith with my father.

The first national movement with which I became associated was the Gaelic League. I was one of the founder members when a branch was established in Millstreet about 1912. Other members were Mick O'Riordan, Con Meaney, Jim Buckley, Molly Tucker, Dan Enright, Mary Hickey, Tom Griffin, Kathleen Tucker, Jerh. Bresnihan, Lena Hickey, Kathleen Manley, Julia Sullivan, Jerh. Twomey, John and Phil Dennehy, Ellie Regan, Jerh. McSweeney, Dan Leary, Andy Hickey, Con Murphy, Denis Manley, Michael Hickey, Brian McSweeney, Wm. O'Riordan and Pat Griffin. The teacher was Liam Buckley. We had Irish classes one night each week and there was also Irish dancing. The membership of the Gaelic League about this time was in the neighbourhood of 25.

When the Irish Volunteers were formed in Millstreet early in 1914 I became a member. I cannot recollect who the officers were or the names of any of the members.

I left Millstreet late in 1914 and went to work in Charleville where I joined the unit there. I remember that Captain Talbot Crosbie arrived there to address a parade some time after the outbreak of the 1914-18 war. He appealed to members to unite with the Ulster Volunteers to defend the coasts of Ireland. As I did not agree with this policy which appeared to use the Irish Volunteers to hold Ireland for Great Britain, I protested and left the meeting. Being the only vocal dissenter, I'm afraid I was looked upon by the people and Volunteers in Charleville as not quite right in the head and one who was seeking notoriety.

At this time I owned a single shot rifle and about 100 rounds of ammunition, which I had procured before I left Millstreet and which

to me appeared to be the first essential if Irish Volunteers were in earnest.

Early in 1915 I left Charleville for Cork City, where I rejoined the Volunteers at Sheares' St. I cannot remember the name of the company to which I was attached or the names of the company officers. I joined the I.R.B. while in Cork. I was sworn in at Red Abbey St. but I do not know the name of the man who was in charge there. I continued to serve with my unit in Cork city until the end of the summer of 1915, when I returned to Millstreet. I then rejoined the unit there when Con Meaney was O/C. Other members of the unit were Denis Kelliher, Con Meaney (Big). The unit then had two single shot rifles and about 200 rounds of ammunition. The other members had shotguns.

On Easter Sunday morning 1916 the company was to march to Carriganima to meet the Macroom contingent, but when the countermanding order was published there was no parade.

On Easter Monday morning I cycled to Cork city to try to contact the leaders there - Tomas MacCurtain and Terry MacSwiney - but I failed to do so. However, I met Sean Sullivan and Tadhg Barry but they could give me no information. They knew at the time that they were fighting in Dublin, but they had no instructions to give me beyond saying that we should 'stand to' and avoid arrest. I then returned to Millstreet and with the others remained out during Easter Week. We billeted in a disused house at Priests' Cross, Drishane. Amongst those who were out during the week were:- Con Meaney (Sonny), Mick O'Riordan and Jim Hickey (witness).

I think I should record particulars of an incident which occurred on Easter Sunday night. About 11.30 p.m. that night a despatch arrived from Rathmore for transmission to Con Meaney (Sonny) - O/C. Millstreet. The

despatch was handed to a young brother of mine - Danny - who was a despatch rider. He did not know the country too well and he lost his way in the dark and mislaid the despatch. When he returned he was unable to explain what happened to the despatch and he appeared to have fallen from his bicycle. It later transpired that he was subject to fits and the explanation appears to be that he got a fit on this occasion. It was never ascertained what the message from Rathmore referred to, but possibly it had to do with the official cancellation of the manoeuvres fixed for Easter Sunday.

Early in the week following the surrender in Dublin we returned home from Priests' Cross, but we were vigilant and endeavoured to evade arrest. A party of R.I.C. and military raided my home but I escaped. The following were arrested: - Jerh. O'Riordan (an old Fenian), Mick O'Riordan (his son), Paddy Sullivan, Jerry Twomey and my brother (John Hickey). All were despatched to Frongoch. Mick O'Riordan was released after a few weeks but the others were detained until the general release of internees at the end of the year (1916). I was 'on the run' from Easter Week until the general release.

The reorganisation of the Irish Volunteers was undertaken early in 1917. At this time most of the members were from the rural area. The O/C. was Con Meaney (Sonny), while some of the pioneer members were Mick O'Riordan, Jerh. Crowley, Wm. O'Riordan (despatch rider), Jack Regan, "Neilus" Healy, Jimmie Hickey, Tim Healy and Con Callaghan. The strength was about 15.

The usual close order drill was the only activity at parades - usually held in the surrounding country - at this time. Weekly subscriptions of 2d or 3d were collected for the arms' fund.

The organisation of the Irish Volunteers went hand in hand with the progress of the political wing of the Republican Movement - Sinn Fein. This organisation was composed mainly of Volunteers and members of their families. All recruits to the Volunteers at this period were usually vetted by officers of the unit before being accepted.

There was no unusual activity during the year 1917. The Volunteers were mainly engaged in organisation work and in selecting new recruits. The strength of the company had

increased to about 60 towards the end of the year. I think that it was at this time that Millstreet Battalion was formed from the companies in the surrounding area. The companies were: - Millstreet, Drishane, Rathcoole, Kilcorney, Rathduane, Derrynagree, Cullen and Dooneen. The first officers of the Battalion were: -

O/C. - Con (Sonny) Meaney  
Vice O/C. - Denis O'Brien  
Adj. - Jerh. Crowley  
Q/M. - Denis Kelliher

When conscription was threatened in the spring of 1918 the Redmondite party approached the O/C. ("Sonny" Meaney) seeking information about the plans of the Volunteers in this emergency. He informed that he could not disclose the plans, but the Redmondite leaders in the district advised all their members of military age to join the Volunteers. As a result the strength of the company rose to 130 or so. There was no change of officers. All guns in the area were collected now. They were surrendered voluntarily by the holders, who were mainly farmers. We now had about 40 shotguns with 300 rounds of ammunition, in addition to two single shot rifles and ammunition which were the property of Con Meaney and myself. All shotgun cartridges held were reloaded with buckshot.

When the conscription scare had passed, a large number of new recruits fell away but many remained on to give good service. The strength of the company was in the neighbourhood of 100. The officers of the company - following the appointment of Con Meaney as Battalion O/C. - were:-

O/C.-Mick O'Riordan  
1<sup>st</sup> Lt. - Jimmie Hickey  
2<sup>nd</sup> Lt.-Jack Regan

There was no activity in the area in connection with the general election in December, 1918, as the Sinn Fein candidate - Dan Corkery, I think-was returned unopposed.

In January, 1919, Cork H Brigade was formed as Cork brigade of about 20 Battalions was considered too unwieldy. Cork II Brigade embraced seven battalions, which covered the area of North Cork from the Waterford border

near Fermoy to the Kerry border near Millstreet. The battalions in the brigade were:- Millstreet, Fermoy, Mallow, Kanturk, Charleville and Castletownroche. The Brigade officers were:-

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

Cork III Brigade, which embraced West Cork area, was also set up at this time.

During 1919 and early 1920 there was very little beyond normal training and parades. Classes in signalling and scouting were held and training was becoming slightly more advanced. Occasionally field exercises were organised in which the whole or sections of the battalion took part. These were carried out with a view to helping the men on parade to learn how to make the best use of cover. In addition, nearly every company had a .22 rifle, which gave the members an opportunity of having some target practice.

There was no activity in Millstreet Company area following G.H. Q. general order of Easter 1920 re destruction of evacuated enemy posts. The only evacuated post in the area was Rathcoole R.I.C. barracks and this was destroyed by members of Rathcoole Company.

When the Brigade Column was formed in September, 1920, Millstreet Battalion was represented on same by Paddy Healy and *Sean Hurley*. Both these men drove motor cars which removed the captured arms and stores from Mallow Military Barracks on September 28<sup>th</sup> 1920. They also took part in all column engagements throughout the brigade area in which the Brigade Column or many of the individual columns were engaged.

Following the capture of Mallow Barracks the Brigade Column carried out a successful ambush of a military party in the vicinity of Kanturk on October 11<sup>th</sup> 1920.

They later moved into the Millstreet area during November and on the night of November 22<sup>nd</sup> 1920, they moved into Millstreet with the intention of attacking the Black and Tans who were stationed there.

The column was assisted by a number of members of the local company who were acting as scouts.

All sections took up positions about 8 p.m. (I think). The members of the Brigade Column were distributed over positions at the Market Yard, Fair Field and Green's Lane.

With Paddy McCarthy, Tom Coughlan, - Kennedy of the Brigade Column, I was acting as scout at Green's Lane on the right-hand side of the Main St. facing Mallow. I was accompanied by "Neilus" Healy. The members of the column opened fire on an R.I.C. man and a Black and Tan who passed the end of the laneway. We all then dashed across the Main St. to Mill Lane, which was almost directly opposite Green's Lane. We were now in a position to cover Mill Lane and Mill Road. We remained in this position for at least 1½ hours after firing had ceased.

At this stage Paddy McCarthy suggested that there was little likelihood of any more activity and "Neilus" Healy proceeded to the junction of Mill Lane with Main St. to have a look round. As he reached the junction he noticed two people leaving Nicholson's publichouse at the opposite side of the street. He returned immediately and reported accordingly. We were then about 20 feet from Main St., and as the message was being conveyed by "Neilus" Healy a shot rang out and Paddy McCarthy dropped. He had been shot through the head and was killed outright. The Tan who fired the shot dashed for the R.I.C. barracks and escaped. I then picked up Paddy McCarthy's rifle and we removed his body to the rear. I then went to report the position to the Column O/C. (George Power).

I was then sent to make contact with the Brigade O/C. (Liam Lynch) at Lombardstown where I met Ned Murphy, who took me to Liam Lynch. When I had reported we both cycled back to Millstreet area, where we made contact with the members of the Brigade Column who were standing guard over the body of Paddy McCarthy where he was "waking" at Owen Sullivan's, Gurtnevehy.

With all the other locals who were engaged in the Millstreet job, I went 'on the run' from this date. We formed the nucleus of a battalion column from, as far as I can remember, the following: - Mick O'Riordan, Wm. O'Riordan (his brother), "Neilus" Healy, Con (Sonny) Meaney, Con Meaney (Big) and Jimmie Hickey (witness). There were also a number of others. Con Meaney (Sonny) was in charge.

This column went into training in the Kilcorney and Rathcoole area areas and after a few weeks were lying in ambush in various positions throughout the area on a number of occasions but failed to make contact with the enemy. On a few occasions we took up positions in the town of Millstreet at night but met with no success. This column - to the number of about a dozen - with the exception of two who were armed with single shot rifles, had shotguns. This type of activity continued over Christmas and into the New Year. In addition, we were engaged with members of the local companies in the work of impeding enemy movements by blocking roads, destroying bridges and cutting railway lines.

Early in February it was decided to ambush the evening train which passed between Mallow and Tralee each evening about 8 p.m. It was reported that this train occasionally carried a party of British military. The column took up a position on the railway embankment about 154 miles on the Mallow side of Millstreet station about a week before February 11<sup>th</sup> 1921. During the period to this date the nightly watch was in vain as there were no enemy forces on the train when they passed through our position. In the period up and including February 10<sup>th</sup> 1921, the column had withdrawn to billets without firing a shot.

I should have mentioned that, in addition to the main body at the ambush position, there were two I.R.A. men on duty at Millstreet railway station and a similar number at Rathcoole. These were the stations between which the ambush position had been prepared. The duty of the men at these stations was to board the engine if there were troops on the train. They further had instructions to signal by blowing the whistle on the engine at a certain point if they were on the train. There were also two men with red lamps just beyond the extreme ends of the ambush position to signal to the driver to stop. The men at Millstreet station were Sean Buckley and Pat Joe Hickey - both from Dooneen Company. The men at Rathcoole station were Dan Coakley and Jack O'Keefe, while the men with the red lamps were Tom Crowley (Millstreet end) and Wm. Kelliher ("The Kaiser") at the Rathcoole end.

The remainder of the column were extended over a distance of about 50 yards on both sides of the railway and on the high embankment overlooking the train.

On the night of February 11 about 8 p.m. the train from Rathcoole whistled at the railway arch as it approached our position. This indicated that the enemy party was on board. Tom Crowley immediately went on to the railway line with his red lamp and signalled to the approaching train to halt. The train stopped at the selected position and the British party were called on to surrender. There was no reply and fire was immediately opened by our party and replied to by the enemy. The exchange of fire lasted about ten to fifteen minutes and the enemy then surrendered.

All members of the ambush party then came on to the railway and ordered the enemy to assemble on one side of the train. When all had been rounded up it was found that one of the party had been killed and several wounded. We then collected our booty - 14 rifles and a good supply of ammunition - and withdrew to Kilcorney area where we billeted.

In addition to those already mentioned, the men who took part in this engagement were, as far as I can recollect, Con Meaney (Sonny), Con Meaney (Big), Jerh. Crowley, "Neilus" Healy, Denis Hickey, Jerome Buckley, Wm. Riordan, Mick Riordan, "Miah" Galvin and Sean Reid.

We now had a stock of rifles and ammunition and we continued our efforts to make contact with the enemy in our area, but with no results. However, while we were billeted at Lackadotia on the morning of March 5<sup>th</sup> 1921, word was received about 4 a.m. that we were to report to Clonbanin without delay. We immediately left our billets and travelled by car and on foot to Clonbanin, where we met the members of the Charleville, Newmarket and Kerry II Brigade Columns. They were moving into position when we arrived about 9.30 a.m.

The position selected was about 1/2 mile west of Clonbanin Cross on the main Mallow-Killarney road. Our column was divided into two sections. I was one of a section of six who took up position in Shaughnessy's haggard - south of the road. A machine-gun party from the Newmarket Column (Liam Moylan and Denis Galvin) were also positioned here. We were all behind a sod fence on high ground about 150, yards from the road. The members of the Kerry II Brigade Column were on our left (west), as were the other members of our column. Our men were armed with the rifles captured in the train ambush on February 11<sup>th</sup>.

The Newmarket and Charleville Columns were on the north side of the road. There were also flanking parties at each end of the position as well as scouts at suitable spots. A mine was laid in the road at the eastern end of the position just in front of the machine-gun section.

We had only just moved into our positions - it was nearly 10 a.m. - when two lorries of military passed through the position from the east (Mallow). There was no further activity until about 2 p.m., when the approach of an enemy convoy from the west was signalled by our scouts. As far as I can recollect, the convoy consisted of two lorries, a private car and an armoured car, followed by another lorry. As the leading lorry reached our position at the eastern end the signal to open fire was given. The leading lorry managed to get through, but the second lorry and private car were disabled by the opening burst of fire from the machine-gun and the armoured car got ditched in an attempt to pass the disabled transport in front. The party in the leading lorry, under cover of a farmhouse beyond the eastern end of the position, were pouring heavy fire on our position, while the crew of the armoured car were still able to operate their machine-gun effectively. The enemy in the other lorries, who escaped the opening fire, took cover beside the roadside fences and continued to reply to our fire.

The fighting went on for about two hours and we were eventually forced to evacuate our positions and break off the engagement as there was no hope of silencing the guns of the armoured car. When we withdrew from our position we moved with Kerry II Brigade Column to Cullen area, where we billeted. The members of the Charleville and Newmarket Columns moved off towards their own districts. The enemy lost their Brigade O/C. - General Cummings - and, I believe 14 others in the engagement, while they also had a large number wounded. The I.R.A. had no casualties. The combined I.R.A. forces were, I believe, under the command of Sean Moylan. The Kerry II Column was under Tom McEllistrim.

Following this engagement the column continued to attempt to contact enemy patrols, and on two or three nights each week individual members were engaged in sniping enemy posts throughout the area. In addition, the local

companies were engaged more or less full time keeping the enemy lines of communications closed. Roads were being continuously blocked by trees, trenches and the destruction of bridges. Occasionally it was necessary to supply guards from the column for these operations, especially when they were in close proximity to enemy posts. Activities of this nature continued until mid June, when the column were mobilised for Rathcoole ambush on the night of June 15<sup>th</sup> 1921.

The whole force was divided into sections. There were from six to eight men in each section. The sections were extended over a distance of about 1,200 yards, along which six mines had been laid at intervals. I think that all sections were on the southern side of the Millstreet-Banteer road. With five other members of the Millstreet Column,

I was a member of a flanking party beyond the western end of the ambush position proper. We were behind a sod fence about 200 yards from the road and about 1/2 mile from the centre of the main ambush position. We were all armed with rifles. About 10 a.m. an enemy convoy of four lorries passed through our position from the west (Millstreet) towards Banteer. As it was known that the convoy usually made two trips each day they were allowed to pass through and they returned some time after midday.

About 3 p.m. the convoy passed through on the second journey to Banteer. All this time we had been under cover in Rathcoole Wood, which is on the road between Drishanebeg and Rathcoole. When the lorries had passed through to Banteer, all sections moved into their prearranged positions and awaited the return of the convoy.

It was now shortly after 3 p.m. and within an hour we heard an explosion and an outburst of machine-gun and rifle fire. We knew then that the scrap was on and we prepared to attack any enemy forces that might get through to our position. However, although the fight went on for about an hour we did not see any sign of the British. When firing ceased we withdrew to the rear of Rathcoole Wood, where we received instructions from Paddy O'Brien to return to our billets. The members of the flanking party with me were:- Wm. O'Riordan, "Neilus" Healy, "Miah" Galvin, Wm. Kelliher, Tom Crowley. We were all armed with rifles.

Between June 16<sup>th</sup> and July 11<sup>th</sup> 1921, the column were mainly engaged in sniping enemy posts in the area. My rank at the Truce - Battalion Engineer, Millstreet Battalion, Cork IV Brigade, I.R.A. The strength of the battalion was about 600.

During the Truce I took part in a Brigade Training Camp at Knocknagree, where I underwent a course of instruction in the use of explosives, the manufacture of mines, demolition of railways and buildings. I cannot recollect the name of the officer in charge of the course which lasted about a fortnight. This camp was held during September, I think. I later attended a more advanced course at Fermoy, which was visited by the Director of Engineering (Rory O'Connor) during my stay there. Engineer training camps were held at

Graune and in other company areas up to the end of 1921.

When the Millstreet barracks was taken over I went home to work at my trade as a blacksmith and remained at my job until I was called to Battalion and later Brigade H.Q. after the outbreak of the Civil War. During the latter I took part in a number of engagements against Free State forces in Limerick and Cork area up to the cease fire. I was arrested on May 6<sup>th</sup> 1923, and was detained in Cork Prison until the general release.

Signed:-

*Seamus O h-Iceadha*  
(Seamus O h-Iceadha)

Date:-

30 Iúil 1955

Witness:-

*P. Lonnell*  
(?fj\$ tr^UX)

Witness:-

(Investigator)

## CORNELIUS (NEILY) BARRETT

WITNESS STATEMENT NO. 1,405

CORNELIUS BARRETT, GLENLEIGH, KILCORNEY, BANTEER, CO. CORK

Volunteer and Member of Millstreet Battalion Column, Cork II Brigade, I.R.A.

Subject: Activities of Kilcoyiey Company, Millstreet Battalion, Cork II Brigade, 1915-1921

*Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness: Nil*

I was born on 8<sup>th</sup> May 1895 at Horsemount, Kilcorney; I was educated at Kilcorney National School until I reached the age of 15, when I left to go to work with some of the local farmers.

The first unit of the Irish Volunteers was formed in Kilcorney area towards the end of 1915. There were about eight members including: Matt Kelleher, Jerry Burke, Paddy O'Shea, Paddy Sheehan, Tim Kiely, Jack O'Shea, Neil Barrett (witness) and one or two others. The first O/C. was Matt Kelleher. He was, in fact, the pioneer member. I think it was on his suggestion that the unit was formed.

We were, I think, an independent unit of Cork Brigade. However, we were never really effective in the early stages as we had nobody with any military training or experience to help us.

This was the position in Kilcorney at Easter Week 1916. I have no recollection that we got any orders in connection with Easter

Week, but, in any event, we did not have any activities during the week. Whenever we met each other at this time, we naturally discussed the happenings in Dublin and we began, before the week was out, to realise that the Irish Volunteers meant business. When following the surrender, the executions took place, we realised that we were Irish and there was (a) need for us to stick together.

So, in the months following Easter Week to the end of 1916, the members of the unit, although not in a position to take any action of a military nature, met regularly - usually on Sunday evenings - and discussed the change in national outlook that appeared to be coming over the people. We helped to collect funds for the National Aid Committee and generally to influence the general public to support the republican viewpoint.

When the Volunteers were being re-organised early in 1917, our unit (Kilcorney) really became effective for the first time. We



now had a membership of about 20 and this was added to slowly until the end of 1917 when, I'd say, we had about 30 in the company. Each of the new recruits were 'vetted' by the officers before being invited to join, as we realised it was necessary to ensure that, as far as possible, each member was trustworthy.

The officers of the company in 1917 were:- O/C. Paddy Healy; 1<sup>st</sup> Lieut. John O'Shea; 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieut. Matt Kelleher. These officers were elected by members of the unit.

The only drill was close order foot drill. The training was carried out by the O/C. (Paddy Healy). He had been a member of the R.I.C. for a very short time but had resigned. He was, however, a keen disciplinarian and terribly strict on time-keeping.

During the summer of 1917, he suggested that we should get hold of all shotguns in the district. This was done by members calling in twos and threes on the owners. All guns were surrendered voluntarily. We had now about 25 shotguns and 300 cartridges. This was done, as far as I recollect, prior to the conscription scare in early 1918. Drill was carried out in the fields and at the crossroads.

In early 1918, when the British threatened to enforce conscription, there was a big increase in membership. The strength increased to about 80. There was no change in officers. I don't think that we carried out any raids for arms at this time as we had already collected all the shotguns in the district. When the conscription threat passed, a large number of the new recruits faded out.

They were really followers of the Irish Parliamentary Party and only joined the Volunteers because of conscription. However, when things resumed their normal routine, we had about 60 members.

During this period, the 'old reliables' were engaged in making buckshot and reloading the supply of cartridges, which were held by the company with same. Pikeheads were also fashioned at the local forge.

There was no contest in the area at the General Election in December 1918. The Sinn Fein candidate-Terry MacSwiney-I think, was returned unopposed.

I should have mentioned that during 1917 and 1918, all Volunteers were taking an active part in the political movement - Sinn Fein. This organisation was made up mainly of

Volunteers, members of their families and members of the Gaelic League.

Cork Brigade of the Irish Volunteers embraced the whole county at this time. The area and the strength of the Volunteers in it was considered too large for one command, so it was divided into three brigades. Our unit, which was in Millstreet Battalion, became part of the new Cork II Brigade.

The battalions in this brigade which covered the northern portion of the county were:- Fermoy (1<sup>st</sup>), Mallow (2<sup>nd</sup>), Castletownroche (3<sup>rd</sup>), Charleville (4<sup>th</sup>), Newmarket (5<sup>th</sup>), Kanturk (6<sup>th</sup>), Millstreet (7<sup>th</sup>).

The officers of Millstreet Battalion were:- O/C. Con J. Meaney; Vice O/C. Denis O'Brien; Adjutant Jerh. Crowley; Q.M. Denis Kelleher.

The officers of the new brigade were:- O/C. Liam Lynch; Vice O/C. Dan Hegarty; Adjutant Tom Barry; Q.M. George Power.

Usual training went on during 1919, but on odd Sundays there were field exercise in which some of the other companies in the battalion took part. The drill usually consisted of moving in extended order, advancing and withdrawing under cover.

When the raiders, who held up some members of the staff of the Munster and Leister Bank on their way to Knocknagree Fair and seized about £18,000, were being rounded up in the spring of 1920, nearly all members of the company took part. The raiders were natives of the area and were all captured by the I.R.A. They were tried by some members of the brigade staff and were all deported from the country - some to England, others to Canada.

This job was taken on by the I.R.A. because of the failure of the R.I.C. to trace the robbers. The R.I.C. when investigating the hold-up, questioned a large number of I.R.A. men and, as a result, some of the general public appeared to get the impression that the robbery was carried out by our men.

In the circumstances, the Brigade O/C. ordered an investigation to be carried out with the result that the robbers were captured. The names of those arrested and deported were - , - , - , - (2) and two others.

The O/C. of Kilcorney Company (Paddy Healy) was appointed Vice O/C. Millstreet Battalion early in 1920, as Denis O'Brien, who held the post, was forced to retire owing to ill-health. The officers of the Kilcorney Company

now were:- O/C. Mattie Kelleher; 1<sup>st</sup> Lieut. Mick Healy; 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieut. Humphrey O'Sullivan; Adjutant Tim Kiely.

AH members of the company took part in the destruction of Rathcoole R.I.C. Barracks at Easter 1920. This job was done in conjunction with the men of Rathcoole Company. The post was destroyed by fire after we had failed to blow it up with gelignite. I suppose the failure was due to lack of experience in the use of explosives.

With nearly all other members of the company, I was engaged on continuous guard and scouting duties when the brigade flying column came into the area to billet towards the end of November 1920. The column withdrew from the district within a day or two after the attack on Millstreet (22<sup>nd</sup> Nov. 1920) in which Paddy McCarthy was killed. He was a member of the column. I had no activity in connection with the attack on Millstreet.

Immediately following Millstreet attack, a battalion flying column was formed from members of local units who had been engaged in the attack. This column was composed of Mick O'Riordan, Wm. O'Riordan, Jimmie Hickey, 'Neilus' Healy. Con J. Meaney (Sonny), Con Meaney (Big), Jerh. Crowley, 'Miah' Galvin, Denis Hickey. This column were billeted in Kilcorney area for some time while in training. The duty of providing guards and scouts fell to members of our company. This column were armed with shotguns and, on a number of occasions, lay in ambush for enemy patrols but failed to make contact.

The first job carried out by the battalion column was the train ambush at Glebe Bridge on the Mallow-Killarney line between Rathcoole and Millstreet stations. This took place on 11<sup>th</sup> February 1921. This was a very successful job as the column captured 14 rifles and about 600 rounds of ammunition.

I had no active part in the ambush, but after the fight the column withdrew to Kilcorney area where they billeted in Crinaloo. This meant more guard duty for me and other members of the company. There was hardly one night in any week, at this time, that we were not called on to act as guards or scouts either for our own column or for the members of columns from battalions which were passing through the area. In addition to this work, the members of the company were engaged on the cutting of lines of communication, the demolition of

bridges and the digging of trenches. I joined the column about this time.

The battalion column left the area on the night of 5<sup>th</sup> March 1921, to take part in the Clonbanin Cross ambush, but beyond acting as scout for part of the way I had no further connection with this job. However, the column were back again within 24 hours and the usual routine of guard duty had me again moving round. About the same time, the brigade staff with the members of the Mallow and Kanturk battalion columns, who had escaped from a British round-up in the Nadd area, came into the area where billets had to be found for them. In addition, this meant an increase in the number of scouts and guards to be found, with the result that I was now engaged full time on these activities.

Things were now getting more lively and the enemy were moving around in large bodies, so constant watch was necessary. As many members of the company were now engaged whole-time on military duties, the battalion O/C. ordered that these men should be trained so that they could be ready to replace or reinforce the men on the column. As a result, the following underwent a course of training in the use of arms (rifle and revolver) and were formed into a kind of company column:- Mattie Kelleher, Dan Sheehan, Mick Healy, John Burke, Tim Kiely, Tim Kelleher, Paddy O'Shea, Maurice Burke, 'Neilus' Cronin, John P, Kelleher. The training was carried out by the members of the battalion column.

I was one of the party (nearly all members of our company) who co-operated with Rathcoole Company in the destruction of the railway line between Rathcoole and Millstreet in May 1921. I took part in the sniping of a large party of enemy troops who were taking part in a round up of Clydagh Mountain, where Millstreet Battalion H.Q. was situated, in May 1921. By our activities we delayed the enemy who failed to close the ring round the area and our battalion staff escaped. I was accompanied on this operation by Mattie Kelleher, Jack Burke and Dan Sheehan.

About mid-May 1921, I was one of a party from Kilcorney company who moved in on Millstreet to shoot up any enemy troops who might be seen. This was to be a reprisal job for the execution of I.R.A. men found in possession of arms. There were no enemy troops to be seen, so we returned to our billets.

Beyond the usual scouting duties, blocking of roads and cutting of communications, there was nothing of note until the night of 15<sup>th</sup> June 1921, when the columns from Mallow, Kanturk, Newmarket, Charleville and Millstreet assembled at Rathcoole Wood. The combined columns together with members of local companies acting as scouts numbered about 150. Paddy O'Brien (Brigade Vice O/C.) was in charge. The Millstreet column [Jimmie Hickey, Wm. O'Riordan, 'Neilus' Healy, Wm. Kelleher, Tom Crowley, Jerh. Crowley (column leader), Neil Barrett (witness), 'Neilus' Cronin, Bernard Sullivan, Con J. Meaney, 'Miah' Galvin, Sean Reid, Jack O'Keeffe, Dan Coakley, John Carey and, I think, two others] were armed with rifles. The majority of the members of the other columns had rifles. The others present had shotguns. There was also a machine gun in charge of Leo O'Callaghan (Mallow Battalion).

When the whole party had assembled at Rathcoole Wood in the early morning of 16<sup>th</sup> June 1921, we learned that it was proposed to attack an enemy convoy of 3 to 5 lorries of Auxiliaries who usually travelled between Millstreet and Banteer. The position selected for the ambush was on high ground on the south side overlooking the road, and the whole I.R.A. force was divided into eight (I think) sections to be placed in selected positions extending over a distance of about 1500 yards. Six mines were laid in the road. They were spaced at the estimated distance between lorries travelling in convoy. When the mines had been laid everybody except a few scouts moved into the cover of the wood. It was now 8 a.m.

The enemy convoy moved through the ambush position from Millstreet about 10 a.m. and returned about 12.30 p.m. It passed through on a second journey about 3 p.m. When it had passed, all sections left the cover of the wood and took up their selected positions. I was with 'Neilus' Cronin (Kilcorney) and Ben Sullivan (Rathduane) in position behind a fence about 200 yards from the road and nearly in the

centre of the ambush position. We were armed with rifles and were responsible for covering off a small breen which led from the road into our position, so that none of the enemy could get from the road. About 4 p.m. the approach of the convoy was signalled from the east and within a minute or two the first of the lorries entered the ambush site. The third lorry was just opposite our position when the mine at the eastern end exploded under the last lorry (4<sup>th</sup>). All sections immediately opened fire. The Auxiliaries immediately tumbled from the lorries and took cover behind the roadside fences while we continued to fire at any available target. The enemy returned our fire. The lorries (1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, and 3<sup>rd</sup>) had stopped between mines so that the mine at the eastern end was the only one to be exploded to any effect. Fighting went on for about two hours and eventually the signal to withdraw was given. We then withdrew from our position to the rear of Rathcoole Wood where we met all the other sections. The I.R.A. party had no casualties. Enemy losses were not made known.

Later on the night of the ambush, I returned with Mattie Kelleher (O/C. Kilcorney Company) to the scene of the ambush to collect a mine and some wire which had been dumped in the vicinity. Within a week the enemy brought large forces into our area and engaged in a large scale round-up. I was billeted in the Musherua area at the time and was lucky to escape after coming under heavy enemy fire. I continued to operate in the Kilcorney area until the Truce. Rank at Truce:- Volunteer and member of battalion column. The strength of Kilcorney Company at the time - about 60.

Signed: Cornelius Barrett

Date: 24 April 1956

Witness: P. O'Donnell

Witness: P. O'Donnell

Signed: Cornelius Barrett  
Date: 24<sup>th</sup> April 1956

# DENIS O'KEEFFE & DENIS O'BRIEN

## WITNESS STATEMENT NO. 60

JOINT STATEMENT OF DENIS O'BRIEN, BALLYDALY, MILLSTREET, CO.CORK  
& DENIS O'KEEFFE, KNOCKNAGULLANE, RATHMORE, CO. KERRY

*Conditions, if any, Stipulated by the Witnesses: Nil*

PERIOD: NOVEMBER, 1915 TO MAY, 1916. UNIT: RATHDUANE COMPANY, I.V.

The Rathduane Company of the Irish Volunteers was started on 1<sup>st</sup> November, 1915. There was not at any time a Company of National Volunteers in the district, though they had a strong Company in the town of Millstreet.

We heard of a public meeting to be held in Millstreet, and we understood its purpose was to recruit for the Irish Volunteers. Nine or ten of us from this parish went to the meeting, which was addressed by Terence MacSwiney. We had no discussion with him that day, but we decided to form a Company from the parish of Rathduane.

Two nights later we held the first meeting at Ballydaly. The following twelve men attended: -

Denis O'Brien  
Con Murphy  
Michael Lehane  
Timothy Murphy  
Denis Murphy  
Eugene O'Sullivan  
Timothy Collins  
Denis Ring  
Patrick Twohig  
John Noonan  
Denis O'Keefe  
Edmund Murphy

The following officers were elected: -

Captain	Denis O'Brien
1 <sup>st</sup> Lieut.	Con Murphy
2 <sup>nd</sup> Lieut.	John Noonan, Knocknaloman
Adjutant	Michael Lehane
QM	Eugene O'Sullivan

After the first meeting we went out for organisation. In a short time we had 24 men in the Company and at Easter, 1916, we had 29. Public feeling was not hostile in this parish, which was substantially O'Brienite in political

sympathies. All the early Volunteers were O'Brienites; none of the Redmond followers joined us before Easter 1916. The town of Millstreet was very hostile.

Parades were held on one night each week and every Sunday. The usual training was close order drill and route marches. Jimmy Hickey and Jerry Twomey of Millstreet gave us the initial training. They had had training in the Millstreet Company. We were on several parades in Millstreet between the start and Easter, 1916. These were all in conjunction with the Companies at Millstreet, Musherah, Drishanebeg and Dernagree. These Companies, with ours, formed the 4<sup>th</sup> Battalion of which Con J. Meaney, Millstreet, was the O/C Denis O'Brien attended the Course for Officers' training carried out at the Hall in Sheares' Street, Cork, in January, 1916.

Four of us from the Company were in the St. Patrick's Day parade in Cork in 1916, armed with shot guns. That was the first time we carried arms openly. An attempt was made to disarm us by some soldiers and ex-soldiers in Millstreet when we were coming home. Although they outnumbered us the attempt did not succeed.

At the end of 1915 we had one shot gun, the property of the Company, which we had purchased, and an air rifle with which we had some practice.

The men paid 3d. a week into a Company fund for the purchase of equipment. We also made a house to house collection for the same purpose, but we did not get very much. About 12 of the Company were equipped with belts, caps, haversacks and putters by Easter, 1916. We had no uniforms in the Company.

The orders for the parade on Easter Sunday, 1916, came to us from the Battalion O/C, C. J. Meaney, about the Friday before. They were to the effect that we were to parade in Millstreet at 1.30 p.m. on Sunday and meet

in Millstreet at 1.30 p.m. on Sunday and meet the other Companies of the Battalion there. We were to bring all arms, ammunition and equipment. Nothing was said to us about rations.

We mobilised the whole Company, and the following paraded: - (29)

Denis O'Brien  
Con Murphy  
Denis O'Keeffe  
Tim Murphy  
Hugh O'Brien  
Denis Murphy  
Daniel Murphy  
John Noonan  
Eugene O'Sullivan  
Denis Cronin  
Edmond Murphy  
Denis Ring  
Dan Healy  
Tim Collins  
Michael Murphy  
Francis Hickey  
Denis O'Connor  
Edward Tucker  
Patrick Buckley  
Patrick Twohig  
Michael Lehane  
Thomas Clifford  
Bernard O'Sullivan  
John White  
Patrick White  
William Collins  
Dan Scannell  
Denis Long  
Mortimer O'Callaghan

We marched into Millstreet and met the other Companies of the Battalion in the town. The arms of Rathduane Company on that day were: -

Six shot guns, with about 600 rounds of which 200 had been loaded with slug.  
Twelve pikes.  
One .45 revolver and 12 rounds.  
Twelve sticks of gelnite, which Denis O'Brien had got when leaving the Course in Cork in January.  
We had no rifles.

The Battalion O/C, C. J. Meaney, took charge in Millstreet and marched the whole

Battalion to Con Rahilly's field at Mount Leader, South of the town. Some exercises were carried out there and some efforts at digging trenches were made. We do not know if these were for training purposes or were intended as part of the preparation for a defensive position. We were there for a few hours. As far as we know, no message of any kind came to us, and no one visited us from the Brigade or elsewhere. We had no knowledge of a parade of Volunteers at Carriganima. If the Battalion O/C. knew, he did not tell us. We knew nothing of an intended Rising or of a landing of arms. The whole Battalion marched back to the town and was dismissed on the Square about 6 o'clock. We marched back to our area and dismissed.

Denis O'Brien was very much puzzled by this parade and the fact that nothing had happened on Sunday, because he had information about ten days before from Dan Dennehy, Adjutant of the Rathmore Company, that an important job was timed for Easter Sunday and to be in readiness. When he got that information special efforts were made in the Company to have everything in the best order possible for Easter Sunday. Cartridges were loaded with slugs, and all the shot guns it was possible to get were secured. Con Murphy may have had that information also; he worked as if he knew something was on. We do not know where Dan Dennehy would have got the information, unless it was from Pat O'Connor who was in Rathmore on holidays at the time and who returned to Dublin that week and was killed in the Rising.

No order came to the Company on Easter Monday. On Tuesday morning Jerry Twomey of Millstreet came to Murphy's and said the Rising was on since early on Monday. He said the Companies of the Battalion were mobilising, that we should take what men we could and take up a position South of the R.I.C. Barracks in Millstreet. When this order was conveyed to Denis O'Brien, the Company Captain, he assumed, because Twomey was one of the earliest men in the Volunteer movement and because O'Brien thought he was possibly an I.R.B. man, that he knew more than the Battalion O/C, and, in view of the information Denis O'Brien had earlier from Rathmore, he decided to carry out this order. The order was brought to him verbally by Timothy Murphy. Whether it came from the Battalion O/C. or not, Denis O'Brien accepted it as genuine and

failure that nothing was going to happen, but, although he had no further information on Tuesday morning when Murphy came to him, Twomey's message revived the possibility that a general rising was taking place.

There were only four serviceable shot guns in the Company. Denis O'Brien had a Mauser rifle and 20 rounds, which he had got from Jerry Twomey in Millstreet on Sunday. He also had the .45 revolver. Five men were mobilised, viz, Denis O'Brien, Tim Murphy, Pat Twohig, Denis O'Keeffe and Tim Collins. We took 200 or 300 rounds of shot gun ammunition, 4 shot guns, the rifle and revolver, with what ammunition we had for them.

We went by the Southern road to Mount Leader, South of Millstreet, and took up a position covering the R.I.C. Barracks at a distance of 600 yards. We arrived in the position at about 12 noon and waited for a considerable time for someone to get in touch with us. No one did, except someone who brought us tea but had no information.

About 5 or 6 o'clock, when no one had made contact with us, Denis O'Brien decided he would go into the town and seek information, leaving the other men in position. He went in from the East, saw the Barracks shut up and barred, and no sign of a policeman anywhere.

He went to Radley's forge, as he believed him to be connected with the Volunteers, but he was unable to get any information. He went back to his party. They remained in position until nightfall, and then, as no one had made contact with them, they returned to their own area.

Before going to Millstreet on Tuesday, Denis O'Brien had left orders that the

remainder of the Company be mobilised to await any further order. On his return he found that this had been done.

The men were then dismissed, after arrangements had been made to mobilise them again quickly if any further message came. They were available at short notice during the remainder of the week, but no order came to the Company. Denis O'Brien never questioned Twomey afterwards as to the circumstances in which he gave the order on Tuesday. He assumed Twomey was in the I.R.B. There was no I.R.B. Organisation in the Company area.

On the 10<sup>th</sup> May Murphy's and O'Brien's were raided. Tim and Con Murphy were arrested, but Denis O'Brien was not at home. A policeman named Sullivan, on the raiding party at O'Brien's was asked by Mrs. O'Brien (Denis's mother) what they wanted Denis for and replied "To give him the lead". Denis O'Brien and other members of the Company were on the run for some time afterwards. No order for the surrender of arms came to the Company. No arms were surrendered or lost in the raids. There were no Fianna or Cumann-na-mBan organisations in the Company area before Easter, 1916.

SIGNED: Denis O'Brien

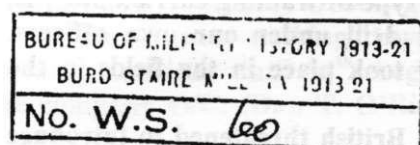
SIGNED: Denis O'Keeffe

DATE: 3<sup>rd</sup> November, 1947.

WITNESS: Florence O'Donoghue

SIGNED: Denis O'Brien  
Denis O'Keeffe  
DATE: 3<sup>rd</sup> November 1947

WITNESS: Florence O'Donoghue



# HUMPHREY O'DONOGHUE (*THE KID*)

## WITNESS STATEMENT NO. 1351

STATEMENT BY HUMPHREY O'DONOGHUE  
Cullen, Millstreet, Co. Cork.

*Conditions, if any, Stipulated by the author: Nil*

I was born in November 1894, at Cullen. My parents were teachers. I was educated at Cullen National School until I reached the age of 15 years. I then went to work on my aunt's farm.

I joined the Irish Volunteers in Millstreet in 1914. Pdraig Pearse and Terry MacSwiney were the principal speakers at an Aeriocht there on the day I joined. Others who joined on that day were Denis O'Leary, Tim Condon, Dan T. O'Riordan, Humphrey Lynch and William Ring. These formed the nucleus of a Volunteer unit in Cullen. The strength of the unit was about ten.

We were drilled in the initial stages by Jimmy Hickey and Jerry Twomey from Millstreet. When things settled down Denis J. O'Leary was elected O/C. Weekly parades were held in the fields at night and on Sunday evenings.

This type of activity continued up to Easter 1916, but we did not receive any orders in connection with Easter Week, However, when some of the Volunteers in Millstreet were arrested after the Rising, Humphrey Lynch, Denis O'Leary and I did not sleep at home for about three months. There was no activity in the area at Easter 1916.

When the Irish Volunteers were reorganised in the summer of 1917, all the old members joined up as well a small number of others. As 1917 advanced, the company grew in strength until the membership reached about 50. At this time the officers of the company (elected) were: - O/C. Dan T. O'Riordan; 1<sup>st</sup> Lieut. Humphrey O'Donoghue (witness); 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieut. Dan Moynihan.

Although the members of our company resided in Co. Cork, our unit was attached, at the time, to Rathmore Battalion, Kerry Brigade. All the other companies in the battalion were in Kerry. The only type of training carried out was close order foot drill under our own officers. Training usually took place in the fields in the vicinity of Cullen.

When the British threatened to introduce conscription in early 1918 there was a big influx

of recruits to the Volunteers. Nearly every man of military age in the area joined up and the strength of the company increased to about 130. About this time our company was detached from Rathmore Battalion and became a Unit of Millstreet Battalion, Cork Brigade.

During the conscription period all shotguns not already held by Volunteers were collected together with any available ammunition. The guns were surrendered voluntarily in every case. We now had between 30 and 40 shotguns and about 400 rounds of ammunition. All who could not be armed with shotguns were provided with croppy pikes which were made in the local forge. The ordinary charges of shot in the cartridges were replaced by buckshot.

The activities in connection with the manufacture of arms, in addition to the work of watching and reporting on the movements of the R.I.C. and other enemy forces, helped to make the work of the Volunteers more interesting and turned their minds towards military affairs, in many cases for the first time. When the conscription scare had passed, a small number of members drifted away, but the main body continued to serve up to the Truce.

When the threat of conscription had passed, activities became somewhat slack, but the approach of the General Election in December 1918 gave the Volunteers an opportunity to work for the political wing of the republican movement - Sinn Fein. However, there was no exceptional activity in our area as the Sinn Fein candidate - Paudeen O'Keefe - was returned unopposed.

When Cork II Brigade was formed in January 1919, our Battalion (Millstreet) became the 7<sup>th</sup> Battalion in the new Brigade.

The companies in the Battalion were:- Millstreet, Rathduane, Cullen. Drishane, Dooneen, Rathcoole, Derrynagree, Kilcorney, Musherah.

The officers of the Battalion were:- O/C. - Con J. Meaney; Vice O/C. - Denis O'Brien; Adjutant - Jerh. Crowley; Q.M. - Denis Galvin.

The officers of the new Brigade were:-  
O/C. Liam Lynch, Fermoy; Vice O/C. Dan Hegarty, Mallow; Adjutant - Tom Barry, Glanworth; Q.M. - George Power, Fermoy.

There were seven Battalions in Cork II Brigade)- Fermoy, Castletownroche, Mallow, Kanturk, Charleville, Newmarket and Millstreet.

The usual training went on at this time and there was occasionally a little target practice with .22 rifles when ammunition could be procured. About this time, the various companies in the Battalion occasionally assembled on Sunday evenings for combined exercises - moving across country in extended order, scouting. Units were often called out at night and sent on cross country exercises.

About mid-Novembers 1919, officials of the Munster and Leinster Bank in Millstreet were held up on their way to Knocknagree Fair and a large amount of money was taken from them. The R.I.C. when investigating the hold-up confined the questioning to members of the I.R.A. and, as a result, everybody hostile to the I.R.A. began to suspect that they were responsible.

When the attitude of the general public in the area was brought to the attention of the Brigade O/C, he ordered an investigation into the whole affair. Arising out of the investigation by the brigade and battalion intelligence sections the hold-up was traced to a number of individuals from Millstreet area. Eventually, about eight men from the Millstreet battalion area - all non-members of the I.R.A. - were rounded up. They were tried by the brigade staff and sentenced to be deported from the country. They were, I think, deported in May 1920, but one of them returned later and considerable difficulty was experienced before he was again captured and deported.

At Easter 1920, an order was received to destroy the evacuated R.I.C. barracks at Cullen. This was in connection with a G.H.Q. order for a general action on these lines throughout the country. When the order was received, arrangements were made to obtain a mine from Rathmore. I went to Rathmore to prepare the mine with Fred Crowley. We made the mine, using the metal box of a cart wheel as a container. We filled the box with gelignite, closed the ends with two metal plates held in position by three bolts - one passing through the centre of the box. The charge of gelignite was then fitted with a detonator and fuse which was passed through a hole in one of the end plates.

When I arrived in Cullen with the mine I found the company O/C. (Dan T. O'Riordan), Liam Lynch (Brigade O/C), Jerh. Crowley (Battalion Adjutant) and Con Murphy at the rear of Lislehane School. There was also a big muster of members of the local company. The Coy. O/C was opposed to the destruction of the barracks because the building was owned by a supporter of the I.R.A. and Sinn Fein. Eventually it was suggested that the owner - Jerry Singleton, who lived in another house close by - would occupy the barracks and evacuate his own home. Singleton agreed to the suggestion and the I.R.A. moved his household and chattels to the evacuated barracks.

I think it was some time after the barrack incident referred to in the previous paragraph that we decided to hold up the local J.P. (Justice of the Peace), Wm. C. Casey, who was hostile to the I.R.A. and Sinn Fein. He had been asked to relinquish his post as J.P. under the British regime, but he refused. He was held up on his way from Knocknagree Fair by a few members of the Cullen Company including Matt Murphy, David Ring, Dan T. O'Riordan, Dan Moynihan, John O'Connor, Tim Lynch and Humphrey O'Donoghue (witness). He was found to be in possession of a revolver and a box of ammunition for same and these were taken by us. We also held him prisoner in a house nearby while some of the party searched his home for any more arms, but none were found. On reconsideration, I think, that this incident must have happened in the summer of 1919.

The local mails in the area were raided on a number of occasions during the summer of 1920, but no information of any military value was obtained. After censorship by officers of the company, the mails were usually re-posted in a neighbouring post office.

Some members of the company (Cullen) were mobilised when a British army aeroplane crashed in the vicinity of Drominagh in August 1920, but we only reached the area just as the local I.R.A. with some men from the neighbouring Kanturk Battalion were withdrawing after having unsuccessfully attacked the guard on the plane. The members of our company, who were on duty on this occasion were:- Denis Galvin, Dan T. O'Riordan, Matt Murphy and Humphrey O'Donoghue (witness).

There was nothing beyond the usual training activities until 14<sup>th</sup> August 1920, when the company O/C (Dan T. O'Riordan) received



word that a British military plane had made a forced landing at Drominagh. He immediately mobilised a party of about five or six to go to the scene of the crash which was just across the border of our company area in Kanturk Battalion. When our party, which included Dan T. O'Riordan, Denis Galvin, Matt Murphy and Humphrey O'Donoghue (witness) reached the vicinity of Drominagh, we found that the guard on the plane had already been attacked and the I.R.A. attacking party were withdrawing. This attack was a failure. The party from Cullen company now returned home. It was about 3 a.m.

Within a few days of the death of Paddy McCarthy, Q.M. of Newmarket Battalion and a members of the Brigade column, in an attack on the Tans in Millstreet, I joined the brigade column at Kilcaskin. The British endeavoured to round up the column on the evening of the day I joined and it was only with great difficulty that the column evaded the encircling ring. I then withdrew with the column to Ballygiblin in Kanturk Battalion area. We then moved on to Nadd in which district we remained until close to Xmas 1920 when the column was disbanded and most of the members returned to their home areas.

While I was with the column at this stage, Dick Willis and Leo O'Callaghan - both of Mallow Battalion - left for Castletownroche Battalion area where they operated a Hotchkiss gun in an ambush at Glenacurrane, about mid-December 1920. Amongst the members of the brigade column at this time were:- Bill Moylan, Sein Healy, Denis Galvin, Dick Willis, Denis Lyons, Charlie Reilly, Leo O'Callaghan, Ned Creed, Jim O'Neill, Denis Murphy, 'Congo' Moloney, Joe Morgan and Paddy Healy. When disbanding the column, Liam Lynch (Brigade O/C. instructed us to go home to our own areas and Westablish battalion columns. When leaving, I took back the two Lee Enfield rifles to Cullen area.

When the Newmarket Battalion column, under Sean Moylan, took up positions at Turengarrive on the Kingwilliamstown-Castleisland road on 27<sup>th</sup> January 1921, I received instructions from Sean Moylan to report with 3 or 4 men from Cullen company at Clonbanin where I would meet the Millstreet and Kanturk columns. We were to take up a position at Clonbanin in case the British officer party, for which he was waiting at Turengarrive on the Tralee road, should travel via Killarney. With

Dan T. O'Riordan, Matt Murphy and Jack O'Leary, I went to Clonbanin where we met the Kanturk column. We took up positions north of Mallow-Killarney road, about half a mile west of Clonbanin Cross. It rained heavily all day and no enemy convoy passed. About 4 p.m. a messenger arrived from Sean Moylan with instructions that we were to return to our home areas. We then retired to Cullen and the Kanturk men went home. Shiels, (*Dan Shields, J. Lane*) who was later accepted as a spy and responsible for giving information to the enemy which led to incidents at Nadd and Mourneabbey where I.R.A. columns were surrounded, was with the Kanturk column on this occasion.

In the early days of March 1921, the battalion columns from Newmarket and Charleville were in Kerry II Brigade area in the neighbourhood of Killarney. They were lying in ambush at the Bower on the Mallow-Killarney road and were accompanied by a Kerry brigade column. They were in position for two days when they decided to move to the east into North Cork, as they had been told that the British were aware of their position. When withdrawing from this position, the columns passed through Cullen area. They were on their way to Clonbanin where an ambush position had been selected on the Mallow-Killarney road. Several members of the Cullen company travelled with the columns in order to prepare the road for the laying of mines. I accompanied Wm. L. O'Keefe (Newmarket), "Free" Murphy (Kerry), and another whose name I cannot recollect, in the last car to leave Cullen.

When our party arrived at Clonbanin, the mines had already been laid in the road. It was about 9.30 a.m. Sean Moylan, who was in charge of the operation, asked me to send two of the Cullen men to Drominagh from where they could signal the approach of any enemy convoy from the east (Mallow). I selected Matt Murphy and Jack O'Riordan (I think) for this job. They had hardly begun their journey when a convoy of two lorries drove into the ambush position from the east. Paddy O'Brien, Brigade Q.M., who was standing beside me, raised his rifle to fire a shot which was to be the signal to open the attack. The safety catch was on and there was no shot, so the lorries passed through unmolested.

This ambush position extended over a distance of about 400 yards. The Charleville and Newmarket columns were north of the road and in position at distances varying from 50 to 60

yards from same. I was at the extreme western end of the positions occupied by these columns. The Millstreet and Kerry columns were south of the road and extended from Shaughnessy's haggard behind a stone fence about 100 to 150 yards from the road.

When the lorries from the east had passed through about 10 a.m., there was no further activity until about 2 p.m. when the scouts to the west signalled the approach of a convoy from Killarney direction. This convoy consisted of two lorries, a touring car, an armoured car and a lorry in this order. The leading lorries, touring car and armoured car drove into the ambush position. The last lorry in the convoy had not reached the western end of the position before fire was opened on all sections of the convoy. The mines failed to explode and the last lorry was stopped by the fire from our section about 150 yards outside the western end of the ambush site. The occupants of the armoured car continued to reply to the fire of the I.R.A. party with their machine guns. All the occupants of the other lorries who had not been killed or wounded by the opening burst took cover behind the roadside fences. Fighting continued for about 2 hours and as we were unable to silence the guns in the armoured car, the engagement was broken off. The I.R.A. had no casualties. The enemy losses were not definitely known, but amongst those killed were General Cummings and Major Manning. When the engagement was being broken off, I was instructed by Paddy O'Brien to contact Dan Vaughan, Mick D. Sullivan and Jim Riordan, who were in position on the fence of the field to the east of where I was, and to instruct them to withdraw. I did so, and then withdrew to Hanlon's at the rear of the position to the north.

Here I again met Paddy O'Brien, but Dan Vaughan and the others had not arrived. Matt Murphy was then sent by Paddy O'Brien to Dan Vaughan's position to tell the men there to withdraw. Matt Murphy then moved off to again contact Dan Vaughan and his party, and within a short time all sections north of the road had reported to their base. I then withdrew with the members of the Cullen company to our home area. The Charleville and Newmarket columns made their way in the direction of their home districts. The date of this engagement was 6<sup>th</sup> March 1921.

Following Clonbanin, I was engaged with members of the local company in blocking roads, cutting enemy lines of communication and generally doing anything that would impede enemy troop movements.

When a strong force of military from Kanturk arrived in the area in the early morning of 11<sup>th</sup> June 1921, I was rounded up with a number of others including Roger Kiely, Sean O'Leary, Dan J. O'Riordan. We were taken to Kanturk and later to Cork - Spike Island - and Maryborough. I was released on 8<sup>th</sup> December 1921.

My rank at Truce :- 1<sup>st</sup> Lieutenant, Cullen Company, Millstreet Battalion, Cork IV Brigade. The strength of the company was about 130.

Signed: Humphrey O'Donoghue

Date: 8<sup>th</sup> February 1956

Witness: P. O'Donnell

Signed:

*Humphrey O'Donoghue*

Date:

*8<sup>th</sup> February 1956*

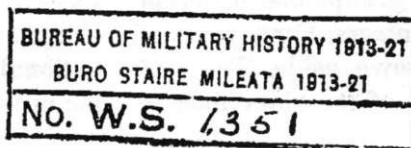
(Humphrey O'Donoghue)

8th February, 1956.

Witness:

*P. O'Donnell*

(P. O'Donnell)



# MATTHEW (*MATTY*) KELLEHER

## WITNESS STATEMENT NO. 1.319

STATEMENT BY MATTHEW KELLEHER, SOUTH HORSEMOUNT, KILGORNEY,  
BANTEER, GO. CORK.

*Conditions, if any, Stipulated by the author: Nil*

I was born here on March 1<sup>st</sup> 1890. My parents were farmers. I was educated at Kilcorney National School until I reached the age of 16, when I went to Kanturk to serve my time as a hardware assistant at Cronin's, Hardware Merchants, there. Having spent four years in Kanturk, I returned home to work on the land with my parents.

My first connection with any political organisation was when I joined the Gaelic League at Kilcorney in 1909. There were about 20 members in the branch - the pioneers being Dan Harmon and Tim Riordan. The teachers and organisers were Sean O Murchadha and Liam Buckley. Classes were held once a week in Kilcorney National School.

In or about the outbreak of the Great War in August, 1914, the political position in Ireland was, to say the least of it, very uncertain. For forty years the Home Rule question was, it could be said, the burning question. The Irish Parliamentary Party, led by the late John Redmond, held the balance of power in the English House of Commons, and some Irishmen, in fact the majority of them, made out that the whole question was all but accomplished.

However, it seems that a bombshell burst on them when they read of the "Ulster Gun-running". What were the guns for, they asked at first. Then it dawned on them that they were to be used by the Orangemen to fight against any measure of self-government for this country. Still the people and the politicians looked to Westminster for redress and the prevention of gun-running, but the next sensation was the Curragh Mutiny. Surely they will put a stop to all law-breaking now was the feeling of the people, but nothing was done to the mutineers or those engaged in the gun-running.

Then all over the country sprung up the Irish Volunteers - different groups and different outlooks - but still the Volunteers. Forty years of peaceful methods were thrown aside. The gun was now the weapon. Some of the older men in

the political parties (Redmond's and O'Brien's) saw in the Irish Volunteers the end of peaceful methods. They tried at the last moment to do something to stop the tide by trying to get a certain representation on the Irish Volunteer Executive, but then came the war. Mr. Redmond pledged the Irish Volunteers to the defence of the coast of Ireland against the Germans.

But there was a new party to come now actively on the scene - the Sinn Fein party - new but old. This party naturally asked the question - why any Irish Volunteers should defend the shores of Ireland for England? Why not defend them for Ireland alone? What had we got from England that we should help her? Where now is Home Rule? Where now is the fairness of England's laws? One law for the North and another for the South.

Only a few weeks after the Ulster gun-running the Irish Volunteers landed a cargo of arms at Howth, but some of the Volunteers on their way into Dublin were fired on by the English military and some civilians were shot, while nothing had happened to the gun-runners in the North. The commonsense of the argument made many think and, as a result, they joined Sinn Fein and the Irish Volunteers.

This was the position in Kilcorney late in 1915 when I was approached by Jerry Sheehan, Musher Company, Cork Brigade, Irish Volunteers and asked to form a company in Kilcorney. I formed a unit of about ten members. Pioneer members were: Neil Barrett, Jerry Burke, Tim Kiely, Paddy Sheehan, Paddy O'Shea, John O'Shea and Matt Kelleher (witness). There was no one with any military training or experience in the area and I cannot say that, beyond forming the unit, anything else was done. I was O/C. on the unit.

There was no activity in the area at Easter, 1916, but following the execution of the leaders there was a slight re-awakening of the national interest in the district. The members of the unit still kept together, but it was not until the

general reorganisation of the Irish Volunteers early in 1917 that Kilcorney Company became firmly established. At the time the strength was about 20. It increased steadily until towards the end of the year the strength reached 30/35. The officers of the company were: -

O/C. - Paddy Healy.  
1<sup>st</sup> Lt. - John O'Shea.  
2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. - Matt Kelleher (witness).

The company was a unit of Millstreet Battalion of the Cork Brigade. Other units in the Battalion were: - Musher, Millstreet, Dooneen, Rathduane, Rathcoole, Derrynagree, Drishane and Cullen. The battalion officers were: -

O/C. - Con J. Meaney (Sonny)  
Vice O/C. - Denis O'Brien  
Adj. - Jerh. Crowley  
Q/M. - Denis Kelleher

During 1917 all Volunteers were busy organising the political wing of the Republican movement - Sinn Fein. At this time the organisation was mainly composed of Volunteers and members of their families. The pioneers of Sinn Fein in the area were: - John Horgan, Chairman; Tim Horgan, John Kiely, Tim Kiely, Dan Harmon and Tim Riordan.

The only drill carried out in the early stages was ordinary close order foot drill. Training was usually carried out in fields\* and at crossroads. The only arms held by the unit were about a dozen shotguns and 150 rounds of ammunition for same.

There was a big increase in membership when the British threatened to enforce conscription early in 1918. The strength of the company increased to 84. There was no change in officers. All shotguns not already held by Volunteers were collected at this time. They were surrendered voluntarily in all cases. We now had about 30 shotguns and 300/400 cartridges. When the threat of conscription had passed, a number of the new recruits dropped out and the strength of the company fell to 60.

The next activity of note was the general election of December, 1918. All Volunteers were active on the political side, but as the Sinn Fein candidate for the area - Terry MacSwiney - was returned unopposed, we were not as busy as the Volunteers of other districts where contests took place. The success of Sinn Fein in the election

gave a general boost to republican activities and the general public became more interested in the activities of the Volunteers.

It was early in 1919 that the Cork Brigade, which was made up of about twenty battalions distributed over the whole country, was divided into three brigades. Our battalion (Millstreet) became a unit of Cork II Brigade, which embraced the area of North Cork from Fermoy to Millstreet. There were seven battalions in the new brigade as follows: - Millstreet, Mallow, Fermoy, Kanturk, Newmarket, Charleville and Castletownroche. Our battalion was the 7<sup>th</sup> Battalion. The officers of the new brigade were: -

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

Normal training went on during 1919 and nothing unusual took place in the area until November 17<sup>th</sup>, when officers of the Munster and Leinster Bank at Millstreet were held up on their way to Knocknagree Fair with cash to pay for the transactions there. The amount taken was something in the region of £18,000. Within a few days the R.I.C. in the district, in the course of their investigations, were questioning I.R.A. men in connection with the matter. Soon the rumour got round that the robbery was the work of the I.R.A. When this was reported to Brigade H.Q., the O/C. (Liam Lynch) ordered a special investigation of the case, in which he himself took a leading part.

As a result, seven men from the Millstreet area were arrested in a round-up by the men of the Millstreet and Mallow battalions of the I.R.A. in the spring of 1920. They were detained for about one week in Drishane and a few days in Laught area before being handed over for trial by members of the Brigade Staff in Mourneabbey area. All the men arrested were sentenced to deportation.

Early in 1920 Denis O'Brien retired from the position of Battalion Vice O/C. owing to ill-health. He was replaced by Paddy Healy, O/C. Kilcorney Company. I was then appointed to take charge of the company. The officers of the Kilcorney Company now were:

O/C. - Matt Kelleher (witness)  
1<sup>st</sup> Lt. - Michael Healy  
2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. - Humphrey O'Sullivan

Adjt. - Tim Healy  
Q/M. - Denis Twomey

When the general order for the destruction of evacuated enemy posts was received at Easter, 1920, all members of the Kilcorney Company, under their own officers, were engaged either in the destruction of Rathcoole R.I.C. barracks or on the scouting and outpost duty in connection with the operation. This was the only evacuated enemy post in our section of the battalion.

In November, 1920, the newly formed Brigade Flying Column, which had been in action at Mallow (capture of military barracks) and Ballydrochane (ambush of party of British military), came into the battalion area. While there, the members of the Kilcorney Company took turns at guard duty. When the Brigade Column left the area following the attack on Millstreet in which Paddy McCarthy (a member of the column) was killed on November 22<sup>nd</sup> 1920, there was nothing beyond routine activity until early in February, 1921.

The routine activities involved the demolition of bridges, cutting of trenches on various roads and cutting of telegraph wires in order to impede enemy movements. This work engaged the full-time attention of the majority of the members of the company during this period.

I should have mentioned that a Battalion Flying Column was formed just after the Millstreet fight at the end of November, 1920. This column was composed of a number of men from the battalion who had taken part in the scrap mainly as scouts and outposts.

The members of this column, as far as I can recollect, were:-

Wm. O'Riordan, Mick O'Riordan,  
Jimmie Hickey, Con Meaney,  
"Neilus" Healy, "Miah" Galvin,  
Denis Hickey and Con Meaney (Sonny).

This column was billeted in the area for a great portion of the period to February, 1921. Their presence required the attention of local Volunteers, who were engaged in guard duty both by night and day.

After the ambush of a party of British military on the evening train to Killarney on the night of February 11<sup>th</sup> 1921, by the Battalion Column, the latter withdrew with the captured arms and material to the Kilcorney area, where

they billeted at Crinaloo at Burke's, Toohey's, Horgan's and Sullivan's.

The members of the local company were engaged on guard and scouting duty for the column following the engagement. With the other officers, I was responsible for ensuring the safety of the column at this time.

Towards the end of February, 1921, a prisoner was handed over to Kilcorney Company by members of Macroom Battalion of Cork I Brigade. He was held prisoner in the area for about a week before he was tried as a spy and executed. He was tried by members of Cork I Brigade but I am unable to furnish any details. I think the name of the prisoner was Dan Lucey. This was during the week prior to the ambush at Clonbanin Cross.

The Battalion Column were in the area on the night of March 5<sup>th</sup> 1921, when they received orders to be at Clonbanin Cross next morning. Transport was arranged by the Kilcorney Company and the column reached its destination in good time. The column left the area sometime after midnight on March 5<sup>th</sup> 1921. I was not at Clonbanin.

When the British failed to round-up Brigade H.Q. and two Battalions Columns (Mallow and Kanturk) at Nadd on, I think, March 10<sup>th</sup> 1921, these units retired into our area, where arrangements were made by me for their billets and guards for some days. All members of Kilcorney Company were engaged on guard and scouting duties night and day during this period.

The Brigade O/C, Liam Lynch, was in the area for some days following the round-up at Nadd until, I think, St. Patrick's Day, 1921.

I recollect that during his stay I had to go to Tim O'Shea's, Liscarrigane, - in Cork I Brigade area - to collect despatches. Some of the despatches were for Liam Lynch and the remainder were for Kerry brigades.

I left the latter messages at Finnegan's, Lackadotia, where they were to be collected by despatch riders from Kerry II Brigade.

It was about this time that an Active Service Unit was formed in the company (Kilcorney). The members were: -

Neil Barrett, Dan P. Sheehan, Tim Kelleher, John Burke, "Neilus" Cronin, Mick Healy, John P. Kelleher, Tim Kiely, Paddy O'Shea, Maurice Burke and Matt Kelleher (witness).

These men were specially trained and were always available to reinforce the Battalion Column on demand.

When the 1<sup>st</sup> Southern Division was formed at the end of April, 1921, Liam Lynch, who was appointed Divisional O/C. moved into Kilcorney area. He was billeted with some of his staff at Ivale House, Kilcorney. While Divisional H.Q. was in the area an elaborate system of guards was established in the surrounding area. At night, men carrying electric torches (flashlights) were posted at a number of points - some of them were over three miles away. Signals flashed by torches from the guard at Ivale House were to be answered at half-hourly intervals by each of the guards at the outposts. In this way it was not possible for enemy troops to get within some miles of Divisional H.Q. without being observed and their presence reported to the main guard. At this time, also, another signalling system was installed throughout the battalion. Two posts were erected at the highest point in each company area. Torches or inflammable material of some kind were affixed to the top of the poles. When enemy forces came into any company area at night, the torches were lighted to indicate their presence.

Early in May, 1921, all members of our company (Kilcorney) were engaged with representatives from Rathcoole and Coole Cross Companies in the destruction of the railway lines between Rathcoole and Millstreet. About this time a strong body of enemy troops moved into the area to take part in a round-up at Clydagh, south west of Millstreet. This part was sniped at while in the area by the members of the Company A.S.U. and were delayed for about three hours. As a result they were late to close the ring, which was intended to encircle Clydagh Mountain where some of the battalion Column and the Battalion Staff were billeted. Amongst those who took part in the sniping were:- Dan Sheehan, Jack Burke, Neil Barrett and Matt Kelleher (witness).

On May 18<sup>th</sup> 1921, several members of Kilcorney Company, including the members of the Company A.S.U. (Dan Sheehan, Tim Kelleher, Neilus Cronin, Neil Barrett, Jack Burke, Mick Healy, John Kelleher, Tim Healy, Paddy O'Brien, and Matt Kelleher) went into Millstreet to shoot up any enemy forces to be seen in the street, but there were no members of the British forces to be seen. This was in accordance with a general order issued following the execution of I.R.A. men in Cork for being in possession of arms. Having fired a few shots, the I.R.A. party withdrew to their home districts.

There was no unusual activity now until the night of June 15<sup>th</sup> 1921, when the Millstreet Battalion Column and the columns from Mallow, Kanturk, Newmarket and Charleville Battalions were mobilised at Rathcoole Wood for an ambush of the Auxiliaries stationed at Millstreet next day. At this time, it had been established from Intelligence reports that a convoy of Auxiliaries travelled from Millstreet to Banteer on a couple of occasions each Friday. The convoy usually consisted of 3 to 5 lorries. When the combined columns were assembled in Rathcoole Wood on June 16<sup>th</sup> 1921, there were about 150 men on parade. About 100 were armed with rifles and the remainder with shotguns. There was, in addition, one machine-gun manned by Leo O'Callaghan (Mallow Battalion) and crew. Paddy O'Brien (Bde. O/C.) was in charge of the whole party, which was divided into sections of varying strengths. There were also flanking parties and scouts. Mines (six, I think) were laid in the road in the early morning. They were spaced at the estimated distance between lorries travelling in convoy and extended over 1,500 yards. When the mines had been laid and all positions selected, the whole party retired into Rathcoole Wood. It was then about 8 a.m.

About 10 a.m. four lorries passed through on their way to Banteer. These lorries returned and were allowed through to Millstreet sometime about noon. During this period the column, except for scouts, were under cover in Rathcoole Wood. It was about 3 p.m. when the enemy convoy of four lorries passed through to Banteer on the second trip. The various sections then left the wood and moved to their selected positions. I was detailed to scout the sections to the eastern side of the ambush position to their posts. Having done so, I returned to the position occupied by the O/C. (Paddy O'Brien). He instructed me to go and see about a barricade which was to be erected on a by-road beyond the eastern end of the position. This road led to Kilcorney area and would enable the enemy to take the I.R.A. party in the rear if left open. When I reached the spot selected for the erection of the barricade I found nobody there. I immediately set about making a barricade with three carts which I took from a farmyard close at hand. When I had blocked the roadway with the carts, I chained them together to make sure that they could not be moved too easily. I then returned to report to Paddy O'Brien but he had left his base for another position. Before I could trace him the enemy

convoy had re-entered the ambush position on its way back from Banteer and the fight was on.

While still searching for the O/C. I came across the section in charge of Jerh. Crowley (Bn. Adj. Millstreet and Column Leader), who handed me his own rifle. He was not well that day but he remained with the section. I remained with this section until the order to withdraw was given when the fight had been going on for about two hours. Before I reached Jerh. Crowley's section, which was covering the second last mine at the western end of the position, this mine had been exploded. There were five or six in this section but the only one I can remember is Tom Lucey.

Our section, as well as all sections south of the road, kept a regular fire on the enemy, but the failure to get the enemy lorries into positions from which the mines would be effectively exploded left the enemy with too strong a force - armed with automatic weapons - for us to handle. When the signal to withdraw was given, all sections retired to the rear of Rathcoole Wood and then withdrew to their home areas. There were no I.R.A. casualties and there is no record of enemy losses, although rumours circulating at the time put their losses between dead and wounded at from 20 to 30.

On the night of the fight I returned to the scene of the ambush with Neil Barrett to collect a mine and some wire which had been dumped in the wood.

On June 24<sup>th</sup> 1921, a large force of military, Auxiliaries and Black and Tans surrounded Kilcorney area where the Divisional O/C. (Liam Lynch) and the Vice O/C. Cork II Brigade (Paddy O'Brien) were billeted at the time. As a result of good intelligence work and efficient scouting, we were able to get these officers safely outside the enemy ring within a matter of hours.

\* A favourite location was Leader's Lawn (J. L.)

During this round-up Mick Dineen - a member of Kilcorney Company - was shot by the enemy and about six members of the company were taken prisoners and later interned in Spike Island.

About the end of June or early July, 1921, I moved with the Battalion Column to West Limerick Brigade area, where we joined up with columns from Charleville and Newmarket Battalions. We lay in ambush on two occasions but the enemy did not turn up. The members of this column were:- Wm. O'Riordan, Jimmie Hickey, Jerh. Philpott, Wm. Kelleher (Kaiser), Con Meaney and Jack Taaffe.

Just prior to the Truce Cork II Brigade was divided into 2 brigades - No. 2 and No. 4. Our battalion (Millstreet) became a unit of the new Brigade IV. The other battalions in this brigade were:- Mallow, Kanturk, Newmarket and Charleville.

The officers of the new Cork IV Brigade were:-

O/C. - Paddy O'Brien.  
Vice O/C. - Ned Murphy.  
Adj. - Eugene McCarthy.  
Q/M. - Mick O'Connell.

There was no further activity to the Truce.

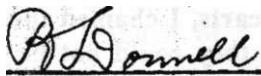
Rank at Truce - O/C. Kilcorney Coy., Millstreet Battalion, Cork IV Brigade. Strength of the company - 60.

Signed:- Matthew Kelleher

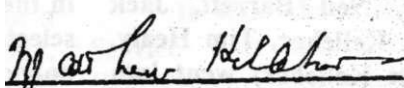
Date:- 18<sup>th</sup> December 1955

Witness:- P. O'Donnell

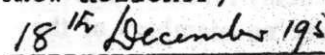
Witness:

  
(P. O'Donnell)

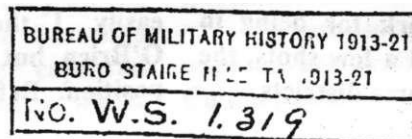
Signed:

  
(Matthew Kelleher)

Date:



18th December 1955.



# DAN COAKLEY

## WITNESS STATEMENT NO. 1, 406

STATEMENT OF DAN COAKLEY, BOLOMORE, RATHCOOLE, BANTEER, CO. CORK.

*Conditions, if any, Stipulated by the author: Nil*

I was born at Bolomore, Rathcoole, on March 12, 1895. My parents were small farmers. I was educated at Rathcoole National School until I was twelve years when I left to go to work with other farmers in the area.

I joined the Irish Volunteers in Rathcoole early in 1917. The strength of the unit was about twenty-four. The officers were: -

O/C. - Jerh. Long  
1<sup>st</sup> Lieutenant - John Lehane

Other members of the company were: - Jack Coleman, Jerh. Coleman, Mick Sheehan, Denis Bride, Ned Forde, Roger O'Brien, Neilus Heame.

The company was a unit in Millstreet Battalion, Cork Brigade\* Other companies were Lyre, Drishane, Millstreet, Rathduane, Kilcorney and Cullen. The officers of the Millstreet Battalion were: -

O/C - Con J. Meaney (Sonny)  
Vice O/C. - Con Meaney (Big)  
Adjutant - Jerh. Crowley  
Quartermaster - John Lehane  
John Lehane was replaced in the company by Jerh. Philpott.

Training was carried out under our own officers. It mainly consisted of close order foot-drill. It was carried out in the fields around Rathcoole - usually at night and on Sunday evenings. The only arms held were a few shotguns - the property of members - but there was also a Mauser rifle and five rounds of ammunition. I cannot recollect where or how the rifle was procured.

The strength of the company was doubled when the conscription scare started in the spring of 1918. The membership now increased to about fifty. There was no change in officers. All arms in the area were collected at this time, and we now

had about twenty-five or thirty shot guns, with a supply of cartridges.

Cork Brigade was divided into three brigades in January, 1919, and Millstreet battalion formed part of Cork II Brigade. The other battalions in this brigade which covered the North Cork area were:- Mallow, Kanturk, Newmarket, Charleville, Fermoy, Castletownroche. There was no change in the officers of the battalion or company at this time.

Training went on as usual throughout 1919 and there was nothing of importance to report. However, on November 17<sup>th</sup> 1919, two bankers from Millstreet branch of the Munster and Leinster Bank were going to the branch office at Knocknagree for the Fair Day there. They were carrying a large sum of money and were being driven by - - from Millstreet. When they reached Ballydaly Cross, on the Millstreet-Killarney road, they were held up by a number of masked men and the money being taken to the fair was seized. I think the amount was about £18,000. The R.I.C. in the area investigated the robbery and questioned a number of I.R.A. men in the course of their investigation. As a result, a rumour began to get about that the raid had been carried out by the I.R.A. Liam Lynch (Brigade O/C.) immediately ordered an investigation, and it was then discovered that the raiders were not I.R.A. men.

They were, however, natives of the district and were arrested by members of the Millstreet and Mallow battalions. Their names were: - - , - - , - - , - - (driver of the car), They were tried by members of the Brigade Staff and were deported from the country. With several other members of the Rathcoole Company, together with representatives of other companies in the battalion, I took part in the arrest of - - - and

These men, after arrest were removed to Mourneabbey area by men from Mallow Battalion. They were tried in Mourneabbey and deported. I think that the activities in connection



with the arrest of these bank robbers took place in March and April, 1920.

When the order for the destruction of evacuated R.I.C. posts was received at Easter, 1920, our company was responsible for the destruction of Rathcoole R.I.C. barracks. This was a Rathcoole Company job. An attempt was first made to blow up the building with charges of gelignite, but it was not a success, due, I suppose, to our lack of experience in the use of explosives. However, the building was later destroyed by fire, a quantity of hay being obtained from a neighbouring haggard and sprinkled with paraffin oil, in order to help on the fire. Amongst those who took part in this job were:- Mick Sheehan, John Lehane, Jack O'Keeffe, Dan Coakley (witness), Denis Murphy, Ned Forde, Jack Coleman, Jerh. Long. There were a number of others whose names I can't remember, engaged in scouting and outpost duty.

During the summer of 1920 several raids were carried out on the mails in the area, but no information of any importance was obtained. These raids, however, tended to make the general public, as well as the I.R.A., more careful of what they wrote and said.

Normal training, which was becoming more advanced - the use of cover, scouting and target practice with .22 rifles being the main aspects - continued throughout 1920. There was no great increase in I.R.A. activities in the area. The members were, however, engaged in impeding enemy movements by blocking roads, cutting telegraph wires and generally upsetting enemy plans.

Early in 1921, the cutting of many lines of communication by blocking roads, demolishing bridges, kept a number of men fully occupied. Seven bridges in the area were destroyed about this time, while nearly all roads were being continually blocked by fallen trees and other obstacles.

During the first week in February 1921, I was called to a meeting at which the Battalion O/C. (Con J. Meaney) and Brigade Vice O/C. (Paddy O'Brien) were present. I was accompanied by Jack O'Keeffe. There was also a number of other present. I think that it was a meeting of the Battalion Council. The Battalion O/C. explained to the meeting that it was proposed to ambush a party of British military which occasionally

travelled on the train between mallow and Killarney. The site selected for an ambush was on a high railway embankment, about three miles from Rathcoole railway station and one mile from Millstreet. The main ambush party was to be composed of the members of the Battalion Flying Column, all armed with shotguns. At the meeting it was decided that the maximum strength of the party should not be more than seven. It was arranged that one man would board the train at Banteer station (this station was on the Mallow side of Rathcoole) each evening, while another waited at Rathcoole to hear his companion's report as to whether there were any enemy troops on the train and, if so, in what strength. The man at Rathcoole was to carry two revolvers - one to be given to the man travelling from Banteer, if it was proposed to carry out the job. The train usually reached Rathcoole about 7.15 p.m. The Battalion Column would, of course, be in position at the site selected for the ambush, beyond Glebe bridge.

With Jack O'Keeffe, I was selected for the scouting job between Banteer and Rathcoole - the journey from and to Rathcoole to alternate between us. Each of us, in our turn, walked from Rathcoole to Banteer every second evening for about a week, and travelled back on the train to Rathcoole where the other was waiting with the guns. Jack O'Keeffe travelled on the first evening, but there were no enemy troops on the train. Next day, I did the journey, but there were only five soldiers on the train, so we decided to let them go on their way. This activity went on for about a week, and on February 11<sup>th</sup> Jack O'Keeffe went to Banteer. When the train reached Rathcoole where I was waiting, Jack O'Keeffe came along and reported that there were fourteen soldiers in the train - all in one carriage. This was the opportunity we had been waiting for, so, as the train began to move out from Rathcoole station, Jack O'Keeffe and I boarded the engine and held up the driver and fireman. We told them to drive on as usual till we reached the Glebe bridge (about four hundred and forty yards at the Rathcoole side of the ambush position where the Column were). At this point, we ordered the driver to blow two blasts on the whistle of the engine. This was to indicate to the ambush party that the enemy troops were on the train, and also to give the man with the ambush party who had

been detailed to place a red lamp on the line, to show where the engine had to be halted, due notice. As well as ordering the driver to blow the whistle, we also ordered him to slow down gradually and to stop the engine at the red light when it came into view. When the train drew near the selected spot, the red light was clearly to be seen, and we again told the driver what to do. He said it was a hard thing to do, but he would try his best. Anyhow, the train was halted at the right spot, and fire was immediately opened on the carriage in which the enemy forces were. After shooting had gone on for about twenty-five or thirty minutes, the enemy were shouting that they would surrender, and firing ceased. All this time, Jack O'Keeffe and I were on the engine with the driver and fireman. On the surrender of the enemy, we left the engine and helped to collect all enemy arms (fourteen rifles) and equipment, as well as about six thousand rounds of .303 ammunition. When the engagement was over, I went with Jack O'Keeffe to find billets for the members of the Column at Jerry Hallahan's, Cuarrague, about five miles from the site of the ambush. The enemy lost one dead and several wounded. The I.R.A. had no casualties.

Following the engagement, I joined the column which was billeted at Lackadotia and Kilcorney areas. Jack O'Keeffe also joined at the same time. Between the date of the train ambush and the first week in March, 1921, the Column took up ambush positions on a number of occasions, but failed to make contact with the enemy.

On the night of March 5<sup>th</sup> 1921, when we were billeted in Mushera area, orders were received to go to Clonbanin next morning. The column left billets about midnight and travelled by horse and trap to Keale bridge, from which point we walked to Clonbanin, a distance of about three miles across the country. We reached Clonbanin Cross about 6 a. m., and here we met the members of Charleville and Newmarket battalion columns as well as a column from Kerry II Brigade. The combined columns were in charge of Sean Moylan, Paddy O'Brien and Tom McEllistrim.

Our column - Neilus Healy, John Reid, Jimmie Hickey, Jack O'Keeffe, Dan Coakley (witness), Jerh. Philpott, Con J. Meaney, Jerh. Crowley, Wm. O'Riordan, Mick O'Riordan, Miah

Galvin, Matt Kelleher, John Lehane, Sean Kelly and two or three others - were first placed in position in Shaughnessy's haggard, south of the Killarney-Mallow road. Con "Sonny" Meaney was in charge. All were armed with the rifles captured in the train ambush. The Kerry column was south of the road and to the west of our position. We were behind a sod fence, about two hundred yards from the road. There was also a machine gun and crew posted in position to the east of our party in the haggard. The Newmarket and Charleville columns were north of the road. The parties at both sides were extended on high ground over a distance of about one thousand yards, with flanking and outpost parties in addition. Two mines - one at each end of the position - were laid on the road. When all preparations had been completed, all sections moved to their selected positions to await the arrival of the enemy.

About 10 a. m. three lorries of military moved into the position from the east (Mallow), but they were allowed to pass through as the signal to open fire was not given. This was, I think, due to the failure of the mines to explode. There was no further activity until about 2 p.m. when the scouts to the west signalled the approach of an enemy convoy. The convoy consisted of a lorry, a private car and an armoured car, followed by two lorries.

I should have mentioned that, while awaiting the arrival of the enemy, about half of our party moved to a new position to the east where we took up positions behind the road-side fence. Included in this party were Neilus Healy, Sean Reid, Jack O'Keeffe, Dan Coakley (witness). We were more or less a covering party whose duty it was to ensure that any enemy forces could not take the forces on the southern side of the road from the rear.

We had only taken up our new position when firing broke out, and our party, with all other sections, opened fire on the enemy. The mines did not explode - I'm not sure that they were tried a second time. The leading lorry got through under heavy fire, but the private touring car was disabled at the first burst of fire. The armoured car ran into the ditch, but the crew continued to use their machine guns. The enemy forces in the other lorries, who had not been wounded by the opening volley, took cover behind the roadside fences. From our position, we were

able to cover the lorry which got through, and we opened fire on the party in it. They replied to our fire and all sections were heavily engaged for about two hours.

As the I.R.A. forces were unable to silence the guns in the armoured car, the signal to break off the engagement was given, and all sections withdrew to a pre-arranged meeting place. The Millstreet column withdrew to Kilcorney area. They were accompanied part of the way by Kerry II brigade column. The Charleville and Newmarket columns moved towards the north-east and their home areas. General Cummings of the British party was killed, and several of the enemy wounded. The I.R.A. had no casualties and no captures.

During the next couple of months, every effort was availed of to harass the enemy forces in the area. Posts were being continually sniped as were strong convoys. Roads were blocked and bridges demolished regularly by members of the local companies, while, in many cases, the members of the column acted as guards while these operations were in progress. At this time, owing to the extent of these activities - being spread over the whole area perhaps on one night - the column was broken up into small parties of two or three. They were billeted in the various company areas and undertook the more advanced training of the members of the local companies where they billeted. This was more or less the general position until June 1921.

On the evening of June 15<sup>th</sup> 1921, the column was again mobilised for Rathcoole ambush. The column assembled at Rathcoole, about two and a half miles east of Millstreet, on the Banteer road, after midnight on June 5<sup>th</sup> 1921. The numbers of the column were:- Jimmie Hickey, Jack O'Keeffe, Dan Coakley, (witness), Wm. O'Riordan, Mick O'Riordan, Neilus Healy, Jerh. Crowley, Miah Galvin, John Reid, Jerome Buckley, Tom Crowley, Con J. Meaney, O/C. There were or two others. During the course of the night, we were joined by the members of the Mallow, Newmarket, Charleville and Kanturk battalion columns. The combined columns, to the number of about one hundred and twenty, were in charge of Paddy O'Brien (Brigade Vice O/C). About eighty members of the column were armed with rifles. The remainder carried shotguns. The combined force was divided into, I think, six

sections - one to cover each of six mines which had been laid in the road, early in the morning of June 16<sup>th</sup> 1921. The whole party extended over a distance of about one thousand, two hundred yards, and there were, in addition, flanking parties and scouts both to the east and west. All these sections were in position on rising ground to the north of the road, and within about two hundred yards of same. I was one member of a party of six or seven who were detailed to take up a position at the opposite side of the road (north) and about the centre of the ambush position. We were armed with rifles and were behind a sod fence, about three hundred yards from the road. Our party were to attack any of the enemy who might take cover behind the north side of the roadside fence when the fight began. We were extended over a distance of about four hundred yards. Some members of the party were: Jack O'Keeffe, Jack Carey, Eugene Sullivan, Dan Coakley (witness), Jack Kelleher and one other whose name I cannot recollect.

About 10 a. m. a convoy of four lorries of auxiliaries passed through our ambush position. They were travelling from Millstreet to Banteer. As it was known that they passed that way twice each day, they were not attacked on the outward or inward journey in the forenoon. I should have mentioned that all I.R.A. forces were, at this time, under cover in Rathcoole Wood and not in the selected ambush positions. When the convoy had again passed through on its way to Banteer, about 2.30 p. m., all sections moved into the pre-arranged positions.

We all awaited the return of the convoy, and about 4 p. m. we - in our position at the northern side of the road - heard the lorries approach. Within a few seconds, there was an explosion and, at the same time, an outburst of rifle and shotgun fire. From our position, we could not see what was happening, and we concentrated on our job of ensuring the enemy could not take cover behind the roadside fence, at our side of the road. None of the enemy forces did succeed in getting cover at our side. Fighting went on for about an hour when the signal to withdraw was given. Our party then moved east and crossed to the south side of the road where we joined the remainder of the ambush party at the rear of Rathcoole wood. We were instructed to withdraw to our billets.

During the remainder of the period to the Truce on July 11<sup>th</sup> 1921, the column were mainly engaged on sniping enemy posts in the area. Rank at Truce - Column Member, Millstreet Battalion Column. Strength of Company (Rathcoole) - about 50.

Signed: Dan Coakley  
Date: 24 April 1956  
Witness: P. O'Donnell

# MATTHEW (MATTY) MURPHY

## WITNESS STATEMENT NO. 1,375

STATEMENT OF MATTHEW MURPHY, CULLEN POST OFFICE, MILLSTREET, CO. CORK

*Conditions, if any, Stipulated by the author: Nil*

I was born at Gortnacreha, Cullen, on 26<sup>th</sup> May, 1899. I was educated at Lislehane National School until I reached the age of 16 years.

The first national organisation in which I became interested was the Gaelic League. This association with the Language Movement in my early days can surely be attributed to the activities and outlook of my schoolteacher - Sean O Cadhla. When the Gaelic League paper - 'An Claidreamh Soluis' - was issued he circulated copies amongst the senior pupils and invited us to carry on a discussion on the articles in the paper. He encouraged us to study Irish History, the Language and to take an interest in all things national. While still attending school I took part, with a number of other pupils, in the Language competitions at Feiseanna and Aerideachtna throughout the district.

It was while engaged in these activities that I first met Padraig Pearse, Fionan MacColum and Peadar O'Hanrahan. My sound foundation of national principles may be due to the education I received at Lislehane National School from Sean O Cadhla.

Prior to 1916 there was a branch of Sinn Fein in Cullen. The pioneer members and organisers were:- Denis O'Keeffe, Donal O'Connor and Edward D. Hickey. I did not have any active association with the organisation as I was too young. There was a small unit of the Volunteers in Cullen prior to 1916. I was not a member but I recollect that the unit was under the control of Denis J. O'Leary. There was no activity, that I am aware of, in the area in 1916.

When the Irish Volunteers were reorganised in Cullen in the late summer of 1917 I joined up. The pioneer organisers were Humphrey O'Donoghue, Tim Condon, Donal MacSuibhne, Dan Moynihan, Dan T. O'Riordan (Sonny), Matt Murphy (witness). All these were, at the time, members of the local Sinn Fein Cumann. In the early stages the strength of the unit was about ten. The O/C. was Dan T. O'Riordan.

Training in the form of close order foot-drill was carried out in the fields and in the hall used for meetings of the Sinn Fein Cumann. The training was carried out under Dan T. O'Riordan. I was Adjutant of the unit and was responsible for keeping all records and dealing with all correspondence. Our unit was attached to Rathmore Battalion of Kerry Brigade.

On the Pattern Day of St. Laitiarian (the Sunday nearest 25<sup>th</sup> July) in 1917, the members of Kiskeam Sinn Fein Cumann marched into Cullen behind their local band. They carried Tricolour flags and banners indicating that they were Sinn Feiners. The strength of the display created a bit of a stir in the area and some alarm amongst the local members of the R.I.C.

I should have mentioned that I was aware in advance of the proposed visit of the crowd from Kiskeam and had arranged to fly the Tricolour from a number of vantage points in the vicinity of the village. This was done after Mass on the Sunday in question but the R.I.C. on their way up from Mass later on, removed one of the flags. They were unable to get at the others. The display by the Kiskeam contingent aroused considerable interest amongst the people of Cullen and as a result Sinn Fein and the Volunteers increased their membership. There was no change in the officers of the Volunteers.

When, towards the end of November 1917, Kiskeam Sinn Fein Cumann organised an Aerideacht, we were able to muster a strong crowd and march to Kiskeam to lend the organisers there our active support. The principal speaker at Kiskeam that day was Larry Ginnell, M. P. He was, at that time an Independent Member of the British House of Commons representing, I think, Westmeath. He was the only member of that House to speak in favour of the men of 1916, at the time of the Rising. About the same time a large contingent from Cullen attended an Aerideacht at Millstreet where the principal speaker was Sean Milroy. I have a

distinct recollection of the opening words of his address - "*Fellow Rainbow Chasers*".

Beyond organising and recruiting new members there was very little doing until the British threatened to introduce Conscription in the spring and summer of 1918. This threat led to a large increase in membership of the Irish Volunteers. Nearly every man of military age in the district joined up and the strength of the Cullen Company reached about eighty. The officers of the Company were:-

O/C.	Dan T. O'Riordan
1 <sup>st</sup> Lieut.	Humphrey O'Donoghue
2 <sup>nd</sup> Lieut.	Dan Moynihan
Adjutant	Matt Murphy
Quartermaster	Tim Condon

During the period all members of the Company were engaged at one time or another on the manufacture of pikes and the fashioning of other weapons in the local forge. The pikes were made mainly from the springs of side-cars. Others were engaged in the making of buckshot and refilling the available supply of shotgun cartridges with same. I should like to record that the mould used in the making of the buckshot had come into the hands of Denis Galvin (Battalion Quartermaster) and had been seized in a raid on Allcott's gunshop in Cork by Captain Mackey before the Fenian Rising in 1867. There was no need to raid for arms in the area as all guns were held by members of the Company. The armament of the Company consisted of fourteen to twenty shotguns and about 300 rounds of ammunition. The members, who did not have shotguns, were armed with pikes. When the threat of Conscription had passed the membership of the Company fell to about sixty.

While an Aerideacht, which had been organised by the Volunteers and Sinn Fein Cumann, was in progress at Cullen on 25<sup>th</sup> May, 1918, British Army planes swooped down on the area and dropped some fire rockets in an effort to disperse the gathering. There were ten bands in attendance at this Aerideacht and the gate receipts were £52. Although a number of those present were inclined to stampede when the planes flew overhead their self-confidence was restored by the action of Father Joe Breen, C. C, who addressed the crowd. The speaker at this function was

Professor W. P. Stockley, University College, Cork. He afterwards published an article in the College journal of the time describing the whole incident.

From the reorganisation in 1917 up to the time our Company of the Irish Volunteers (Cullen) was attached to Rathmore Battalion Kerry Brigade. The Battalion O/C. was Dan Dennehy. At the same time the local Sinn Fein Cumann of which we were all members was attached to Newmarket (Cork) Comhairle Ceanntar of Sinn Fein. The officers of the latter were:-

Chairman:	Michael B. McAuliffe, Newmarket
Vice Chairman:	Con Sullivan, Drouminarrigle
Hon. Secretary:	Sean Moylan, Newmarket
Hon. Treasurer:	D. D. Curtin, Newmarket

As we were all politically associated with Newmarket area our Company of the Irish Volunteers was anxious to become a unit of Newmarket Battalion but, in the reorganisation which occurred following the establishment of Cork II Brigade in January 1919, our Company was allocated to Millstreet Battalion of the new Brigade.

The preparations for the General Election in December, 1918, were now the main activities of all Volunteers. The candidates for the various constituencies were selected by the representatives of the Sinn Fein Cumann in the area. I was not present at the Comhairle Ceanntar at which the Sinn Fein candidate to contest our area (North Cork) was selected. However, I recollect that the names of four candidates - "Paudeen" O'Keeffe, Tom Hunter, Con Sullivan and Sean Nunan - were placed before the meeting. The latter pair were eliminated on a vote. In the final poll Tom Hunter and "Paudeen" O'Keeffe received an equal number of votes. Both names were then submitted to the Standing Committee of Sinn Fein to make the final selection. However, in the meantime Tom Hunter had been selected by representatives for North East Cork constituency and "Paudeen" O'Keeffe was approved as the candidate for our area. There was no election as he was returned unopposed.

At a meeting of Cullen Sinn Fein Cumann held following the election of the candidate for the area, grave dissatisfaction was expressed at the

manner in which representation had been granted to Cumainn at the Comhairle-Ceanntar meeting. It was discovered that three Sinn Fein Cumainn had been affiliated from the Parish of Knocknagree while normally there was only one club to each parish in rural areas. These clubs were Umeraboy, Knocknagree and Nohaval Daly. In order to prevent a recurrence, Cullen Cumann submitted a resolution to the Sinn Fein Ard-Fheis of 1919 which was approved. The resolution was in the following terms:-

*"That where in a rural area two or more Cumainn exist in one parish area their representation at Comhairle Ceanntar meetings shall be so limited so as not to exceed that of any other parish area."*

When Cork II Brigade was formed in January, 1919, our Company, as stated previously, was, I think, transferred from Kerry Brigade (Rathmore Battalion) to Cork II Brigade (Millstreet Battalion). The other Companies in Millstreet battalion at this time were:- Millstreet (O/C, Mick O'Riordan); Rathduane (O/C. Denis O'Brien); Rathcoole (O/C. Jeremiah Long); Kilcomney (O/C. Matt Kelleher); and Derrynagree. Millstreet Battalion was the 7<sup>th</sup> Battalion, Cork II Brigade. Our Company (Cullen) was 'B' company. The Battalion officers were:-

O/C	Con J. Meaney
Vice O/C.	Paddy Healy
Adjutant	Jeremiah Crowley
Quartermaster	Denis Galvin

On the anniversary of the air raid on Cullen Aerideacht (25<sup>th</sup> May, 1919) we had arranged to hold a similar gathering to that of the previous year but the holding of the function was prohibited by Military Proclamation. A large force of military was drafted into the district on the Sunday morning fixed for holding the Aerideacht. We had provided against this emergency by deciding on a different venue. All band instruments had been removed from the Club rooms to a place outside the village. All arrangements regarding the holding of the event at an alternative site were decided on at a meeting held in the out-offices of the home of Denis O'Keefe, N.T.

The new venue was at Raenagoshell close beside Glaskinleen R.I.C. barracks. When a

decision had been reached on a new venue, messengers were dispatched to our prominent supporters in the surrounding districts to advise them of the altered plans and they, in turn, took steps to mobilise the republican supporters in their areas. The Aerideacht was held as arranged.

The principal speakers were: - Donal Og O'Callaghan and Seamus Langford - both from Cork City. Just as our Aerideacht was about to conclude Father Tomas De Ball from Drumcollogher, who had earlier that day addressed a similar gathering at Tullyease, arrived. He also addressed the crowd and they moved off to their home areas. While the Aerideacht was in progress the British had scoured the country in the vicinity of Cullen in search of the gathering for a clue as to its whereabouts, but in vain.

When we returned to Cullen the British Military party had withdrawn to its base. It was on the evening prior to the holding of the Aerideacht that Sean Moylan escaped from Cork Mental Hospital where he had been transferred from Cork prison while feigning illness.

During the summer of 1919 some members of the Company decided to hold up a local J. P. (Justice of the Peace equivalent to Peace Commissioner under existing regulations) named William C. Casey who was hostile to Sinn Fein. He had failed to sign the anti-Conscription Pledge or subscribe to the Defence Fund. He had also refused to relinquish his honorary post as J. P. He was held up on his way from Knocknagree Fair. A revolver and a box of ammunition were taken from him. He was then held prisoner in a house nearby while his home was being searched by some members of the I.R.A. party for further arms. No arms were discovered. He was then released and informed that if he required any assistance to protect his crops we would be prepared to help him in every way possible but we could not allow him to hold arms. Denis Galvin was in charge of this operation. Others who took part were:- Dan T. O'Riordan, Matt Murphy (witness), Humphrey O'Donoghue, Tim Lynch, David Ring, Dan Moynihan and John D. O'Connor. This was the first activity of this nature in the Company area.

There was nothing out of the ordinary in the area during the remainder of 1919. Normal training and parades continued.

When the G.H.Q. order for the destruction of evacuated enemy posts was secured at Easter 1920, the R.I.C. post in Cullen was one of those marked down for destruction. The owner of the building, Jerry Singleton, was an ardent supporter of Sinn Fein and the I.R.A. In the circumstances the officers of the Company (Cullen) decided that it would have a bad effect on the morale of the movement in the parish if we were to demolish a house the property of one of our own supporters. The views of the local officers were placed before a Battalion Council meeting. It was pretty hard to make some of those present at the meeting to see our point of view and I'm afraid some of them felt that we were looking for special treatment for our friends because of ulterior motives. It was eventually decided that, if Jerry Singleton - the owner of the evacuated R.I.C. post - transferred his family and household effects from the house in which he was living close by to the evacuated post, no further action would be necessary. Singleton agreed to do this and the Brigade O/C. (Liam Lynch) came to Cullen to supervise the transfer and to ensure that there would be no favouritism.

During 1919 and early 1920 the members of the Irish Volunteers and Sinn Fein helped to keep the interest of the general public resurgent in national affairs by organising and attending demonstrations in connection with the release of I.R.A. prisoners and helping in every way to prepare for the day when they could avail of a suitable opportunity to strike a blow for freedom.

In the early months of 1920 the men of the Millstreet Battalion were engaged for long periods at night in endeavouring to round up a gang of locals who robbed about £18,000 from bank officials in the area. Some officials of the Munster and Leinster Bank, Millstreet, who were carrying a large amount of cash to Knocknagree Fair in mid-November, 1919, were held up at Ballydaly Cross - on the Millstreet-Kiilarney road - by armed men and the money was taken from them. Suspicion for the raid rested on the I.R.A. due mainly to the activities of the R.I.C. who questioned only I.R.A. men in the course of their investigations. In order to clear themselves the I.R.A. were compelled to investigate the matter as they did not want their honour besmirched or sullied. The Brigade O/C. (Liam Lynch) arranged for the investigation and eventually the

perpetrators were traced. They were all resident in Millstreet area. Orders were given for their arrest. Accompanied by Humphrey O'Donoghue, Dan T. O'Riordan, Tim Condon and Peter Lucey I went to Priest's Cross on the Millstreet road where we met the Battalion officers and some members of other Companies in the Battalion. The whole party then proceeded into Millstreet where we arrested - the - brothers (three), - - and two others. The prisoners were removed to the old creamery in Drishane (now a knitting factory) where they were left under guard. We then returned home. These men were later sentenced to deportation. One of them returned later and during the spring of 1921 members of the various Companies in the Battalion had to take part in "round up" activities in order to re-arrest him. He was eventually captured and again deported.

When a British Army aeroplane was forced down at Drominagh in August 1920, some members of our Company were mobilised and proceeded to the scene. The party arrived in the vicinity of Drominagh just as the I.R.A. attacking party had broken off the engagement. The members of the Cullen Company were:- Dan T. O'Riordan, Humphrey O'Donoghue, Matt Murphy and Denis Galvin.

When the Sinn Fein courts were established in June 1920 the following were selected as members of the Cullen Parish Court: Jeremiah O'Keeffe, Mologhroe; James Dennehy Two Gneeves; Donal J. Mac Suibhne, Ahane. The Court Clerk was Tim Condon. Courts were normally held in the Catholic Hall, Cullen. This hall was formerly St. James' Roman Catholic Church. Parish Courts only dealt with minor cases such as non-payment of small debts, trespass, non-payment of rates. Cases involving questions of title or where the sum involved exceeded £300 came under the jurisdiction of the District Court. These latter Courts were composed of representatives from the various districts. I think that the members of the District Court were:- Tin Condon, Sean Nunan, Con Sullivan and Michael P. McAuliffe. The Court Clerk was Sean Moylan and later Dan Browne. One of the most important cases heard by the District Court in Cullen area was that of Murphy v. Murphy - both of Ahane. This was a case of the question of title to a farm arising out of a marriage agreement. It had given rise to considerable

agitation before the case was submitted to the Court, but after a prolonged sitting the case was settled to the mutual satisfaction of the parties concerned.

A case or a somewhat similar nature between John Hickey, Knocknagarrane and Tim O'Connor, was similarly settled.

The Republican Police was established throughout the country about this time. The members were usually selected from the members of the I.R.A. by the officers in charge of the local units. The police force in Cullen was commanded by Dan Moynihan - he was also 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant of the Cullen Company, I.R.A.

About this time an Emergency man, who had taken over the farm from which Tim Murphy, Coolekeerane, Millstreet, had been evicted some years before, decided to leave the area because the R.I.C. authorities were riot prepared to afford him further protection in the changed circumstances then existing. This man had been under police protection from the date on which he originally took over the farm. Immediately he evacuated, the local I.R.A. decided to reinstate Tim Murphy, who was somewhat reluctant to take up possession. Due to the persuasion of the I.R.A. authorities he agreed to be reinstated. The I.R.A. then removed his family and household effects to his old home where his family still reside.

Beyond usual training activities which were now becoming slightly more advanced - there was nothing to report until 16<sup>th</sup> November, 1920, when a force of military arrived in the area and raided the homes of Humphrey O'Donoghue, Dan T. O'Riordan, Roger Kiely, Jeremiah Cronin and Matt Murphy (witness). The raiding party failed to collect any prisoners as we were all away from home. Following this raid I went 'on the run'.

The first major activity of the Millstreet Column which was organised about Christmas 1920, took place on 11<sup>th</sup> February, 1921 when the evening train from Mallow, which was carrying a party of military, was ambushed. No members of our Company were engaged as they did not receive instructions to report for duty.

The Battalion Columns from Charleville, Newmarket and Millstreet were retiring from the position which they had occupied for two days at the Bower on the Mallow-Killarney road in the early days of March, 1921. They passed through our area and were accompanied by a Column

from Kerry II Brigade under Tom McEllistrim and "Free" Murphy. The combined Columns were on their way to Clonbanin where an ambush position had been selected. The following members of Cullen Company joined the Columns:- Humphrey O'Donoghue, Dan T. O'Riordan, Matt Murphy (witness) and David Ring. I was armed with a shotgun and a revolver. We travelled to Clonbanin by horse and car. This was 5<sup>th</sup> March, 1921.

The whole party reached the selected position about half a mile west of Clonbanin Cross on the Mallow-Killarney road about 6 a.m. next day. Two mines were laid in the road - one at each end of the ambush position, which extended over a distance of about six hundred yards. The Millstreet and Kerry Columns were divided into a number of sections and took up positions south of the road. The Newmarket and Charleville Columns were in positions north of the road.

With David Ring of Cullen Company I was placed on outpost duty at a point about 100 yards west of Clonbanin Cross to the east of the main position, and north of the road. It was now close on 10 a.m. and all sections were in position. We were behind a sod fence about thirty yards from the road. Sean Moylan was, I think, in charge of the combined columns.

Within a short time the scouts to the east signalled the approach of an enemy convoy from Mallow direction. This convoy consisted of two lorries. They drove into our position and were allowed to pass through as the signal to open fire was not given. It was about 10.30 a.m. There was no further activity until after 2 p.m. when firing broke out to the west of our position. This was the first indication we had received in our position that the convoy from the west had arrived.

When the fight had been going on for some time and we (David Ring and I) had seen no trace of the enemy we decided to link up with the main body on our side of the road. This we did by crawling along under cover to a suitable vantage point some four hundred yards from where we had been in position. When we reached our new position we met Paddy O'Brien (Brigade Vice O/C.) who ordered us to get down towards the road and to make contact with a party which was covering off the retreat of the main body. Amongst this party was Dan Vaughan, Jim Riordan and Dave McNamara.



We immediately proceeded to carry out this order and, crawling under cover of the fences, eventually made contact with the covering party. We all then began to withdraw towards the main body, who were now on high ground to the rear of our position. When we had moved only a short distance to the rear we suddenly discovered that the enemy were trying to outflank our section. We immediately opened fire on the enemy flanking party which had come into the adjoining field. Some of the enemy fell; the remainder dashed for cover and we availed of the diversion to rejoin the main body of the I.R.A. to our rear. Here I made contact with my Company O/C. (Dan T. O'Riordan). The whole party then withdrew to Lomanagh Cross via Lisheenafeela.

The Charleville and Newmarket Columns then made their way towards Kiskeam. With David Ring and Dan T. O'Riordan I retired to Cullen area. The I.R.A. had no casualties in this scrap. The British lost General Cummings together with several others killed and wounded.

Between March, 1921 and June, 1921, all members of the Cullen Company were engaged, as occasion demanded, on blocking of roads, cutting lines of communications, providing transport for the officers of the Brigade Staff and the various Columns when in the area. In addition, they were building "dug-outs" and dumps. We built two of each in the Company area. The "dug-outs" were made by digging out an oblong section of ground about 10' x 7' to a depth of 6' 6" or so. The earth was removed to a distance and distributed over ploughed fields. The "dug-out" was then lined with railway sleepers and roofed with galvanised iron which was covered with clay to a depth of about 12". The sods were then replaced and there was nothing to indicate that there was an open section underneath. These "dug-outs" were built close to a fence on the opposite side of which there was a deep dyke covered with bushes and briars. The entrance to the "dug-out" was through an opening in the base of the fence which was well secured by briars and bushes.

During this period also regular guards and scouts were posted each night at vantage points throughout the area. There were two men to each post and all were provided with flash lamps to enable them to signal to each other in the event of a round-up. At the Company parade each week men were allocated to this work and they were

inspected at regular intervals by the officers of the Company.

On the night of 9<sup>th</sup> June, 1921, a large party of Tans and Auxiliaries from Millstreet came to Cullen and raided a number of houses. They did not make any arrests and they returned to Millstreet. Next morning at daybreak a large force of military, accompanied by a Sergeant of the R.I.C. who formerly served at Cullen, carried out an intensive round-up in the locality.

They arrested Humphrey O'Donoghue (1<sup>st</sup> Lieutenant of "C" Company), Sean O'Leary, Roger Kiely, Dan J. O'Riordan and Martin Deimehy. They were all taken to Kanturk from where Martin Dennehy was released after a few days. The others were removed to Buttevant and later to Cork, Spike Island and Maryboro. They were all released in December, 1921.

On the evening of 15<sup>th</sup> June, 1921, the Company O/C. (Dan T. O'Riordan) received instructions to send a number of men to report at Drishanebeg. The following were mobilised at short notice:- Tim Ring, Bill Tarrant, Dan Moynihan, John O'Riordan, Dan Lehane, Dan T. O'Riordan, Matt Murphy (witness). There may have been one or two more but I cannot recollect their names. We walked to Drishanebeg where we met scouts that led us to Laught at the rear of Rathcoole Wood. It was now about 3 a.m. There was a big number of men present as the Columns from Charleville, Kanturk, Mallow, Millstreet and Newmarket Battalions as well as several men from local Companies, were also assembled there. There were about 150 in the whole party. The site selected for ambush was about 2 $\frac{1}{2}$  miles east of Millstreet on the Banteer road.

A number of mines were laid in the road in the early morning. They were spaced at the estimated distance between lorries travelling in convoy. When this work had been completed the whole force, except for a few scouts, retired to the cover of Rathcoole Wood. We remained in the wood throughout the day until we were ordered to our respective sections about 3 p.m. The members of the Cullen party were all armed with shotguns except Dan T. O'Riordan who had a rifle. In addition I carried a revolver. I should have mentioned that Paddy O'Brien (Brigade Vice O/C.) was in charge of the operation. There were about 80 riflemen. The whole force was divided into a number of sections to cover the mines laid

in the road. There were also flanking parties and scouts.

With the exception of two sections which were north of the road, all others were in position on high ground overlooking the road on the south side. Riflemen and shotgun-men were interspersed in all sections. There were eight to ten men in each section. I was a member of one of the sections north of the road. The O/C. was Denny Mullane and the only other member I knew was Ned Cronin, Charleville. We were in position on the Millstreet-Mallow railway line about 200 yards from the road. Denny Mullane was responsible for exploding one of the mines. He was in position behind a turn in the fence about midway between our position and the roadway.

About 3 p.m. we were all moved to the pre-selected positions outlined in previous paragraph. At this time the enemy convoy of four lorries of Auxiliaries, which we were to attack, had made a return journey to Banteer while we were in the wood and had now passed through our position for the third time on the way to Banteer. Some short time after all sections had taken up positions scouts reported the approach of the convoy from Banteer on its return journey. The lorries were allowed to drive into the ambush position until the last lorry in the convoy reached the mine at the eastern end. The explosion of this mine was to the signal for opening the attack and if all went according to plan the other lorries should each be over one of the other mines laid in the road.

When the mine at the eastern end was exploded it blew up the last lorry. The other lorries halted immediately but were not in contact with the mined positions. As a result Denny Mullane, who was in charge of the mine opposite our position, did not explode the mine, so we did not take part in the attack.

Fighting went on for about an hour and eventually the signal to withdraw was given.

The two sections north of the road withdrew across the Blackwater through Rathroe, Lyreavocane and Cullen to Doonasleen where we billeted. Amongst those who billeted with us that night were:- John Jones, Dan Vaughan, Jim Riordan, Denny Mullane, Ned Cronin. All were members of Newmarket Battalion Column. Next morning they resumed their journey to their home area and I returned to Cullen. The I.R.A. had no casualties while enemy casualties were reported to

be heavy. There were no further activities beyond road-blocking until the Truce on 11<sup>th</sup> July, 1921. The officers of Cullen Company at the Truce were:-

O/C.	Dan T. O'Riordan
1 <sup>st</sup> Lieut.	Matt Murphy replacing Humphrey O'Donoghue (arrested)
2 <sup>nd</sup> Lieut.	Dan Moynihan
Adjutant	Donal McSweeney
Q.M.	Peter Lucey replacing Tim Condon (now Battalion Quartermaster)

Just prior to the Truce, Cork II Brigade was divided into two Brigades. The Western Battalion - Mallow, Kanturk, Newmarket, Charleville and Millstreet formed the new Cork IV Brigade. The officers were:-

O/C.	Paddy O'Brien
Vice O/C.	Ned Murphy
Adjutant	Eugene McCarthy
Quartermaster	Mick O'Connell

My rank at the Truce - 1<sup>st</sup> Lieutenant, Cullen Company, Millstreet Battalion, Cork IV Brigade.

The strength of the Company was about 110.

During the Truce I attended a Battalion Camp at Cullen. The O/C. was Con J. Meaney and the training officers were William Kelleher (Kaiser) and Jeremiah Long. At this camp those present were given lectures and instructions on the care and use of arms, scouting, outpost duty, the selection and use of cover, selection of ambush positions. This camp continued for about a fortnight and was held, I think, late in August, 1921. When training at this camp had been completed similar camps were held in each Company area - with Dan T. O'Riordan and Jeremiah Long. I conducted camps at Lisnaboy, Lyreadoune and Clonrath.

When the barracks were being taken over from the British in early 1921 I was called to Carnegie Hall, Millstreet, where Millstreet Battalion had established its Headquarters, and was appointed Battalion Adjutant. The officers of the Battalion now were:-

O/C.	Con J. Meaney
Vice O/C.	John Lehane

Adjutant	Matt Murphy
Quartermaster	Tim Condon
O/C. Transport	Jack Regan
O/C Engineers	William O'Riordan
Signals & First Aid	Tom C. Buckley
LO.	"Miah" Galvin

Following the outbreak of the Civil War I took part in several engagements with Cork IV Brigade Columns against Free State Forces in Limerick, Bruff, Knockaney, New Ross and Waterford.

### ANNEX 1

#### MR. LINEHAN'S ARRIVAL AT MILLSTREET ENTHUSIASTIC RECEPTION

Millstreet, Friday night.

Possibly the oldest inhabitant of Millstreet never witnessed anything approaching the dimensions as well as the enthusiasm the procession that awaited the arrival of Mr. D. J. Linehan J.P., this evening after his successful return. Several tar barrels, as well as torches borne by stalwart All-for-Irelanders were ablaze and headed by the Millstreet All-for-Ireland Brass and Reed Band. They were with some difficulty formed into line on the arrival of the train whilst cheers were repeatedly given for Mr. Linehan and Mr. William O'Brien. The procession on reaching the town was further augmented, and when after parading the principal streets they stopped opposite O'Callaghan's Hotel there was indeed an Immense gathering. As Mr. Linehan stood on the steps of the hotel the band played "See The Conquering Hero Come" there was great cheering.

Mr. D. Linehan, J.P., M.C.C, who was greeted with a roar of cheering which lasted for several minutes, said - *My friends, my first duty, and a very pleasing one it is, is to return my heartfelt thanks to my supporters for placing me in this proud position I occupy to-night - (cheers) - and if I may say so, my thanks are due in a special measure to the Millstreet Band (Loud cheers). I fought this election as an All-for-Irelander, and I won it as an All-for-Irelander - (cheers) - and if our opponents are not satisfied with their beating I am ready and willing to fight them again and beat them again. (Loud cheers). I fought this election fairly and decently, and won despite every low trick and vile slander that they could use against me. (Cheers). Nothing was too mean for these people to use. Influence and intimidation, clerical and lay, of such a character, that no decent man could speak of it was used, but all to no*

I was arrested by Free State Forces on 1<sup>st</sup> December, 1922 and interned in the Curragh until 1<sup>st</sup> December, 1923.

Signed: Matthew Murphy  
Date: 14<sup>th</sup> March 1956  
(Matthew Murphy)  
14th March 1956.  
Witness: P. O'Donnell  
(P. O'Donnell)

*purpose, and the Park grabber - (groans) - is politically dead and damned to-night. (Loud cheers). They tried felon-setting, they tried bone-setting - (groans for Lane) - they tried the bogus lodgers who never earned a shilling in their lives, and our answer to all their drink, all their bribery, all their clerical intimidation, all their mean and dirty tricks and lies is this - that in the Banteer County Division that Millstreet stands firm behind William O'Brien. (Loud cheers).*

*Three years ago we hoisted the flag of the All-for-Ireland League over this district and it is flying as high as ever to-night and I promise you that we shall keep it flying here as long as the breath of life remains in William O'Brien. (Loud cheers). We have proved to-day that Millstreet is as loyal as ever to him and when the opportunity offers we will prove that the same is true of Mid-Cork. (Loud cheers).*

*We have fought a great fight in this County Council election and when you are dealing with a certain class of patient the doctor always gives an order to repeat the dose and please God we will do that tomorrow in the District Council Elections. (Loud cheers).*

*Boys, as you know, I have put in six weeks very hard work and I am sure you do not expect a long speech from me to-night. (No, no). You have done me the greatest favour you could do to anybody by electing me to-day. (Cheers and shouts of 'We'll do it again').*

*And I want you to do me another favour now. If we were beaten in this election we would take our beating like men. Let us show that we take our victory like men also - (cheers) - by going home quietly and peacefully.*

*Again, I thank you and in the forefront of my thanks I put the Millstreet Band (Loud and prolonged cheering).*

("Cork Free Press", Monday, June 8<sup>th</sup> 1914)

## ANNEX2

### A HISTORICAL MEETING.,, NOW FORGOTTEN.

In the electoral division of Cahirbarnagh and towards the south-eastern side, there nestles a beautiful hillside townland, Kippagh. On a glorious day, in the early summer of 1921, one of the most important assemblages in Southern Irish history was staged in a little farmhouse in that lovely hillside area. Many individuals would argue that this statement was gross exaggeration, but no, it is not. But I think it a poor reflection on those who examine and arrange to commemorate events such as this, that nothing was ever done with regard to the events enacted on that lovely summer day in Kippagh.

The meeting held up there at the "Top of Kippagh" lasted from early morning until late in the afternoon. The main topic on the agenda was a directive from the Chief of Staff of the I.R.A., General Dick Mulcahy. The leaders of the various Brigades in Munster, together with their advisers and Column Leaders, rather unwillingly agreed, after prolonged debating to act in accordance with the directive.

Many well-known celebrities were present at the meeting in Kippagh on that 'scorcher' of a summer day. Dan Breen was there from Tipperary as was Liam Lynch. John Joe Rice and Humphrey Murphy were present from Kerry as was Sean Moylan from North Cork. Liam Deasy and Tom Barry represented the 3rd West Cork Brigade, while Sean Power of Cork No. 2 Brigade and Paddy O'Brien from Lisccarroll were also in attendance.

There were many others, but the most flamboyant individual present was, without doubt, the extremely remarkable O.C. of the First Cork Brigade. He rambled in from the Kerry direction, elaborately dressed up in all his finery ... bowler hat and swallow tail coat. The many sentries and look-out men and the numerous officers present, who had come from all over the south, gazed in amazement at the strange and peculiarly dressed sight. How little they knew that the exuberant outfit worn by Sean Hegarty - he being the man dressed up as if he were going to a wedding - was the highly successful disguise, by which he avoided capture day in, day out, in his native Cork City. This despite the fact that he was one of the most wanted men.

Several of those present wore breeches and carried Sam Browne belts, others had revolvers. Tom Barry had the one weapon he regarded with a peculiar favour, the versatile 'Peter the Painter'. This weapon could, in one moment be transformed from an automatic hand gun to a light machine gun by the simple addition of a stock. Comdt. General Ernest O'Malley, who was a native of Castlebar, was

the Officer who had brought the directive from General Mulcahy and the General Staff of the I.R.A., in Dublin. He had brought with him instruction books, stationary, maps and training manuals. O'Malley was a man of positive dedication and indescribable bravery, yet, in so far as the leaders present at Kippagh were concerned, he was not held in the highest esteem.

He spoke at length to the leaders on the various aspects of army training methods and organisation, and he wrote extensively on his observations, which notes were to be presented to Richard Mulcahy and the General Staff.

It was indeed a strange situation up there in Kippagh on that warm summer day. Many, indeed most, of the Volunteers present had been trained in remote glens and valleys - their weapons being hurling sticks and hafts of various kinds. They may have had the use of a shotgun periodically, but such was the situation for a long time.

The weapons held by the Southern Brigades, at the time of the Kippagh meeting, consisted mainly of arms captured in attacks on R.I.C. and Black and Tan convoys. Tom Barry's men had, on the other hand succeeded in capturing vast amounts of machine guns, rifles, revolvers, grenades and various other types of arms, during satisfactory ambushes at Kilmichael, Crossbarry and many other places. Moylan's and O'Brien's men had amassed vast stores of ammunition, and various types of weapons at Clonbanin, Rathcoole and Turengarrive; there was of course much acquired from Mallow and Fermoy Military Barracks.

The talking and lecturing dragged on, and past mid-day an adjournment was called for... empty stomachs were rumbling. There were some packed lunches, but the generous and kind neighbours also came to the rescue, and a tasty and appetising meal was spread out on the green in front of the house.

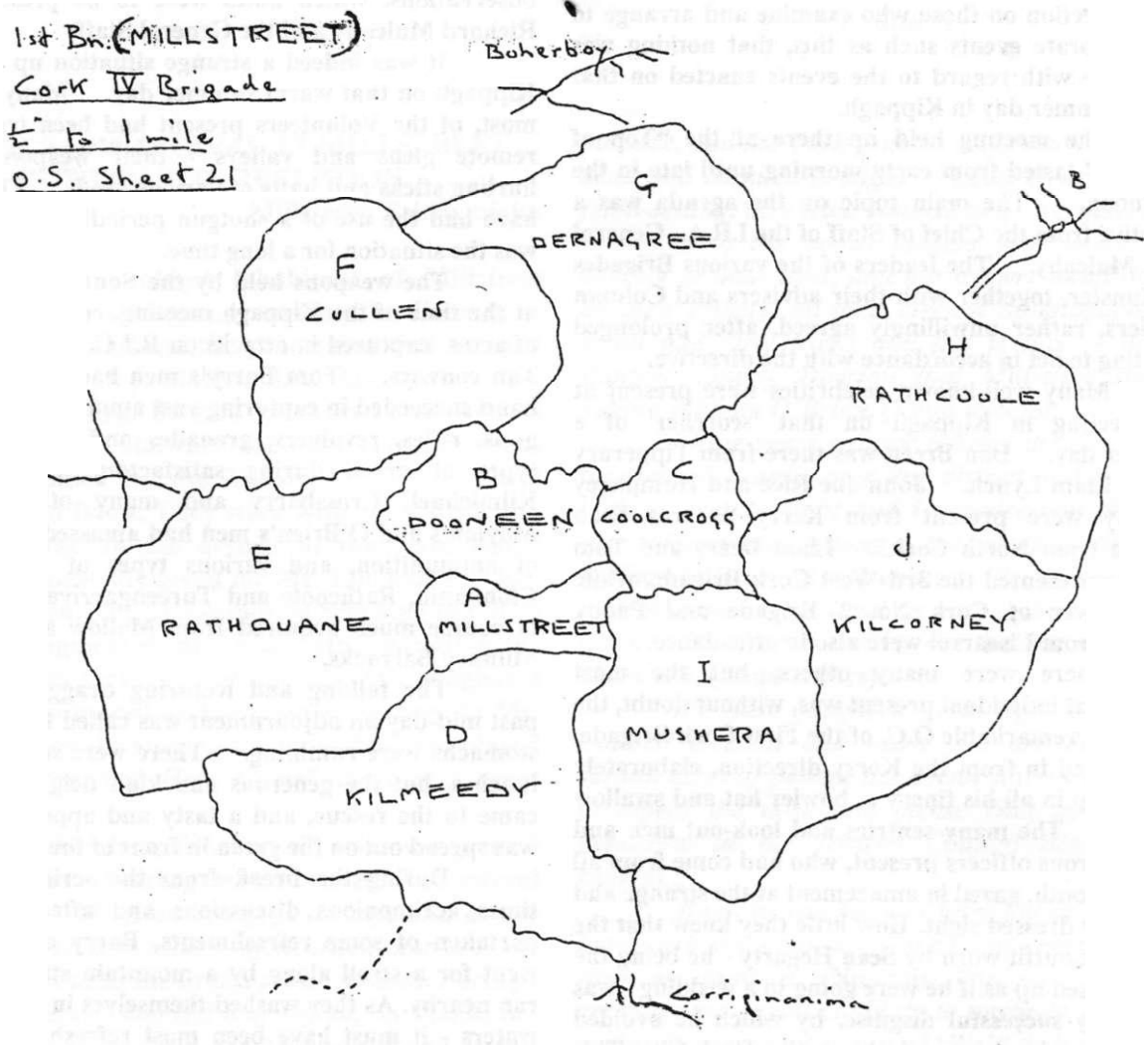
During the break from the serious, and at times acrimonious discussions and after they had partaken of some refreshments, Barry and Moylan went for a stroll along by a mountain stream which ran nearby. As they washed themselves in the cooling waters - it must have been most refreshing - Barry shot a question to Moylan:- "What is your honest opinion on the proposals of the General Staff, and what is your overall verdict on this bloody meeting where we now are?"

In a flash Moylan replied, "By God", he said, "we commenced this war with hurling sticks, and do you know, we seem to be preparing to end it with pen and pencil". They sat for a while on a mossy bank and agreed that O'Malley was, if nothing else, a soldier.

Dan Cronin

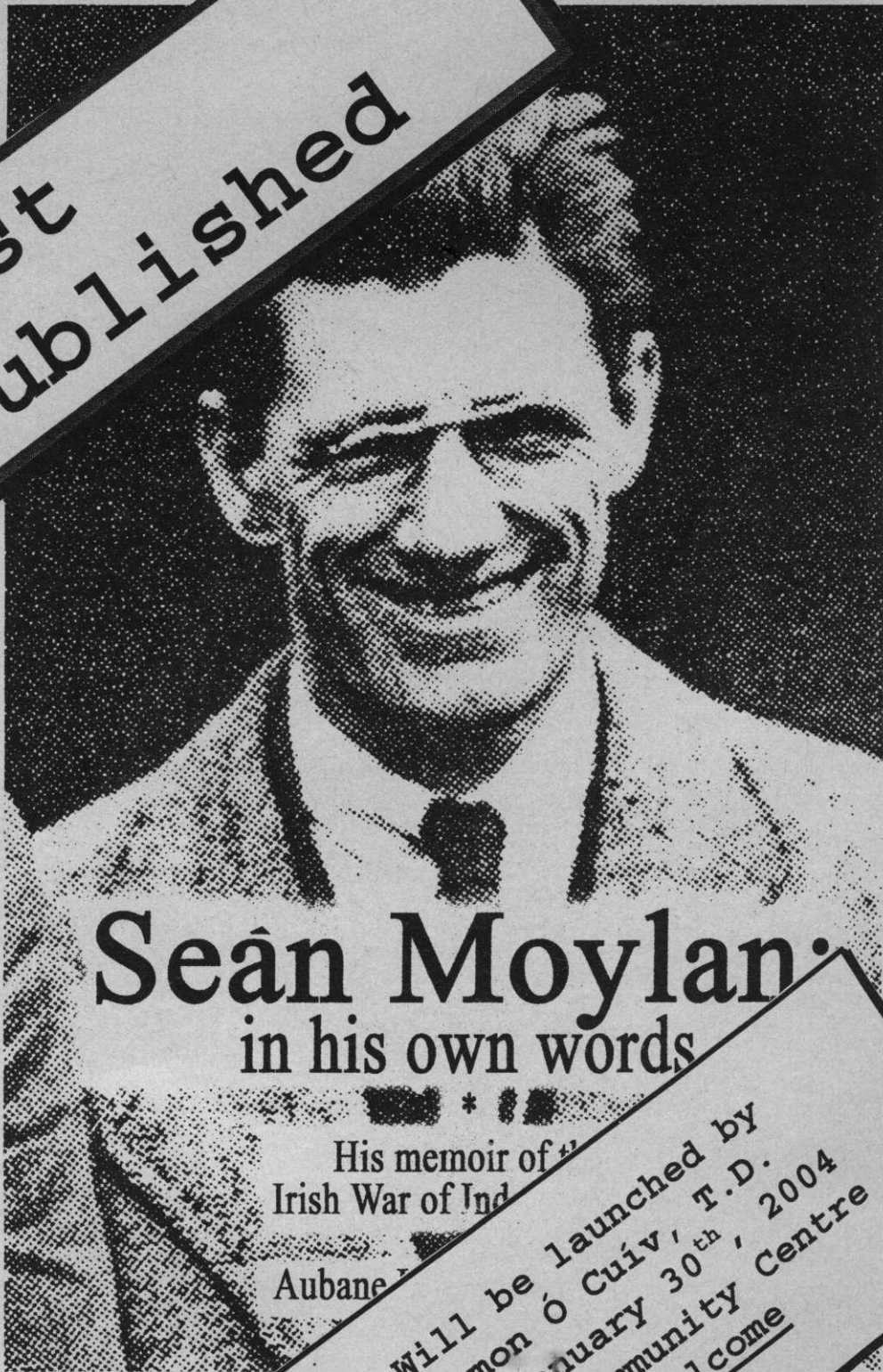
ANNEX 3

**MAP OF THE MILLSTREET BATTALION AREA  
BY CON MEANEY**



**ATTACHED TO HIS WITNESS  
STATEMENT NO. 787**

Just  
published



# Seán Moylan

in his own words

His memoir of the  
Irish War of Independence  
Aubane

Will be launched by  
Éamon Ó Cuív, T.D.  
Fri. January 30<sup>th</sup>, 2004  
Aubane Community Centre  
All welcome



# AUBANE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Aubane, Millstreet, Co. Cork.  
Secretary: Noreen Kelleher: 029 70360  
[jacklaneaubane@hotmail.co.in](mailto:jacklaneaubane@hotmail.co.in)

## PUBLICATIONS

### **Ned Buckley's Poems**

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**A North Cork Anthology**, *by Jack Lane and B. Clifford*

**Local Evidence to the Devon Commission**, *by Jack Lane*

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