

W.S. 679  
ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

BURO STAIRÉ MILÉATA 1913-21

No. W.S. 679

AN IRISH VETERAN'S ASSOCIATION  
THE NATIONAL MUSEUM, DUBLIN

ROINN



COSANTA.

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 679

**Witness**

John Shouldice,  
19 Inverness Road,  
Fairview,  
Dublin.

**Identity.**

Lieut. "F" Company, 1st Battalion,  
Dublin Brigade, I.R.A.

Captain, Acting Adjutant do.

**Subject.**

- (a) His national activities, 1916-1921;
- (b) Bloody Sunday, November 1920;
- (c) Murder of McKee, Clancy and Clune.

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

Nil

File No. ...S. 256.....

Form B.S.M. 2

# ORIGINAL

## TABLE OF CONTENTS.

Statement of Mr. John F. Shouldice, 19 Inverness Rd.,  
Fairview, Dublin.

---

	<u>Page.</u>
Internment in Dartmoor Jail; prison treatment and conditions .....	1
MacNeill's arrival in Dartmoor; De Valera's Reception of MacNeill .....	2
Prison discipline .....	3
Prison food; boredom and humour .....	4
• Climatic conditions .....	5
Agitation for treatment as political prisoners; Transfer of prisoners to Lewes Prison .....	6
Treatment of prisoners on transfer; grades of society represented .....	7
Amelioration of prison treatments - Lewes - Working parties - conversation .....	8
Thomas Ashe; formation of language classes; plans for escape .....	9
Joe McGuinness candidate for North Longford Parliamentary Election - Result of poll - scenes in prison .....	10
Prison revolt breaks out .....	11
Removal of de Valera and other leaders to Maidstone Prison .....	12
Remaining prisoners given solitary confinement. )	
Prisoners informed of pending release .....	13
Transfer to Pentonville .....	14
Release and return home .....	15
The East Clare, South Armagh and East Down by-elections .....	16
The Volunteer Convention, Croke Park, 1917 .....	16
The G.A.A. and Volunteer Organisation .....	17
The spread of Sinn Féin and the conscription crisis.	18
Volunteer dependants' fund .....	18
The General Election 1918 - The aftermath; Formation of the First Dáil .....	19

	<u>Page</u>
Witness goes "on the run" .....	19
Witness and Harry Boland escape arrest .....	20
Suppression of newspapers - organised defence of Mahon's Printing Works .....	21
Shooting of Detective Officers Smyth, Hoey, Bartón and Wharton .....	22
Witness appointed a Justice of the Republican Court.	22
Destruction of R.I.C. Posts .....	22
Attack on Lord French .....	23
Secretary, Leinster Council G.A.A. ....	23
Synopsis of events January 1920 to November 1920.	23 to 25
Bloody Sunday, November 1920; The Croke Park shootings by British Forces; attempt to cancel match, etc. ....	25 to 28
The murder of McKee, Clancy and Clune .....	28 & 29
Synopsis of events, December 1920 to July 1921. Witness continued his activities as Justice of Republican Courts, member of the committee of the Dependants' Fund, Secretary of Leinster Council G.A.A. ....	29 to 32

---

# ORIGINAL

## Prison Life.

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

BURO STAIRE MILEATA 1913-21

NO. W.S.

679

Continuing my narrative of the 1916 Rising the following is an account of my prison experiences subsequently, so far as I can recollect them. When we reached our destination at the local railway station of Princetown, mainly populated with prison warders from Dartmoor, and their families, our batch of 12 prisoners - De Valera, Harry Holand, Frank Lawless, Jim Lawless, Bob Brennan, Jack McArdle, Con O'Donovan, Jim O'Sullivan, Dick King, Miceal de Lacy, Seamus Rafter and myself - the first of about 65 1916 convicts, were marched under heavy military escort to the Prison gate, a large iron affair with the words in large lettering over it - "God is Love". This seemed rather inappropriate to us under the circumstances then and events following. There was not much love about Dartmoor. We were handed over to the Warders inside and taken before prison officials who took our names and addresses etc. then photographed front and side face, weight and height and colour of eyes and hair noted, including any birthmarks or personal peculiarities. We were then taken to the bath house and had to undergo the humiliating "dry bath" and although protests were made by us we had to submit - the warders were in force and with drawn batons -. We were stripped naked and thoroughly examined from head to foot. This was the usual treatment meted out to convicts and no exception was made in our case. We then had a warm bath which was very welcome, and given prison underwear with tunic, breeches, long stockings and forage cap, all stamped with the broad arrow. We were henceforth to be known by number. Mine was Q.101. I remember Jack McArdle giving a crow of pleasure when he got his -Q.98. Jack was one of the old I.R.B. crowd whose section was known as "The alarmers" in pre 1916 days and he was very

popular with all our prison colleagues. We were shaved with a hair clippers - head and face, moustache and beard (if any) and head hair - all closely cropped. We looked a strange lot to each other and had many a good laugh until the strangeness was overcome. Every day new batches of prisoners were coming in until we had a party of about 65. We had rebels from Wexford, Galway, Clare, Louth and mostly Dublin. A wing of the prison was assigned to us and we had no contact with the other inmates except on Sundays at Church where they occupied separate pews. The last prisoner to come in was Eoin MacNeill, President of the Volunteer Organisation up to Easter Week. Although he was responsible for calling off the big parade on Easter Sunday - no hard feelings against him appeared to be evident amongst the other 60 odd prisoners. It was typical of de Valera in regard to the leadership which he had shown then and later, as on the morning after MacNeill's arrival at the Prison when he came down from his cell to join us in the morning prison parade, Dev to the consternation of the Chief Warder and his assistants stepped out from our ranks and gave the order "Irish Volunteers - Attention - Eyes Left" and he and we saluted MacNeill. It was a thrilling moment for us and any ill feeling there might have been against him vanished from that moment. He was a convicted felon - a brother Irishman - and that was good enough for us and he was treated as such all through our confinement in Dartmoor and afterwards in Lewes prison. Dev was taken out of the ranks and brought back to his cell, as we thought for punishment, but to our delight he was out shortly afterwards with us in the big

exercise yard. He probably got a severe warning as he had committed a serious breach of prison discipline. The warning, however, had no effect as he committed other breaches later on. The discipline was very severe as is the custom in convict institutions. We were searched four times a day - at morning parade, returning from work or exercise to cells, again on going out after mid-day meal and on coming back after work. In addition cells were examined once a week when we had to strip, then put on our clothes and step outside while the cell was ransacked. On one of these occasions the warder found a nail and a piece of string in my cell. I used the nail to mark off the weeks on the cell wall. What the string was for I forget. Anyhow it was considered a serious breach of discipline. Perhaps the prison authorities thought I was going to hang or strangle myself with the nail and the string. I got a severe warning when they saw I had no intention of doing away with myself and cautioned about bringing in furniture not intended for a prison cell. We were not allowed to talk or have any communication whatsoever with each other. At exercise warders were placed at intervals in the circle to see that we did not converse. It was surprising, however, how we managed to hear any news that came from outside. Sometimes an occasional word from the chaplain, an odd visitor, or some conversation overheard between the warders. When we did get any information it was passed on when at exercise at parts of the circle furthest from the warders or when lined up before and after work or exercise. We had to keep three paces apart when marching in single file but would manage to get in a word across the outside shoulder whilst looking to the front, by closing one side

of the mouth. This routine carried on all through the summer with little variation. During the first few weeks the food, especially the ships or rock cocoa, as it was called, a variety of shell cocoa but very greasy, upset most of our stomachs for a time but we had to get used to it. I got a few days in hospital on account of it when I was very sick. I did enjoy those few days but was barely recovered when I was sent out on prison duty again. We had no such luxuries as tea, milk, bacon or eggs and no smoking. I remember one fine Saturday in the August of 1916 when confined to our cells from 12 noon and had nothing to do but read. This often got tiresome with the reading fare provided. Anyhow this Saturday I got up on my stool and looked out through the prison window at the village of Princetown, about a mile away, where all the prison warders lived. I saw a warder puffing his pipe in his backgarden, sitting in the sun, and could see the tobacco smoke curling up into the air. I never had such a longing for a smoke and had to turn away from the pleasant prospect with an aching void for a fag or a pipeful of tobacco. We got a small portion of margarine - not the modern tasty stuff, to put on our little black or dark brown loaf. Patsy Patrick (the late Seán Etchingham) the Wexford wag and rhymster wrote a very descriptive and amusing piece of poetry about "That little bit of Margarine". I have forgotten the words but there were references to the many uses to which it could be put, except eating it, i.e. polishing your boots, greasing your hair, what was left of it after the prison shears had done its work, embrocation for the joints etc. We were engaged during the day in the workshop, making mailbags and sand bags and other kinds of sacks. The work, though monotonous,

was interesting enough and passed the time for us. I think the hours were from 9 a.m. to 4 or 4.30 p.m. I was put on a sewing machine and kept on it for about six months. About late Autumn the fogs or Moor mists came over. These were very unpleasant as the prison walls literally ran with moisture. I was in an end cell where the effects were worst. It was also a good distance from the fire stove in the centre of our prison wing and of course the heat at the end of the building was practically nil. I applied for a transfer out of this cell owing to the dampness and was put into De Valera's cell on the opposite side, but nearer the middle which was vacant as Dev had been transferred, I think to Maidstone for another misdemeanour which consisted this time of throwing a loaf of bread across the wing to Jack McArdle. The loaf did not get its mark and was picked up by the Chief Warder who promptly reported the matter. Dr. Hayes was also transferred with Dev. I cannot recollect what the former was guilty of, unless it was outspokenness and independence of spirit and possibly another leader of a prison revolt. I have no doubt we had a number in Dartmoor that could be included in that category. The view from this side of the prison was different to the other as the moor rolled down to the flat country. The prison is about 1500 feet above sea level. At times the mist did not reach to the prison which gave the impression that you were looking at a sea or large lake with the tops of the trees standing up out of the water. On fine days the view was quite charming. Desmond Fitzgerald, another prominent member of the Dartmoor community was prompted on one such occasion to quote Omar Khayham "Oh, to be there with a good book, a bottle of white wine and thou" (or was it a pipe of tobacco) - and he would not ask for more.



We carried on through autumn and into the winter without anything of much consequence occurring. I had a visit from a brother of mine home from New York on a holiday during that period. We could only converse through an iron grille with a space for a warder intervening between my compartment and my visitor's. A warder was present during our conversation which lasted probably about 10 minutes. My brother told me afterwards he got a shock when he saw me with the prison haircut and the convict uniform. We could not say very much to each other as I was forbidden to discuss anything except purely family or personal affairs. All this time a strong agitation was taking place outside to have us treated as political prisoners. Public bodies in Ireland were passing resolutions which were sent abroad to U.S.A., England, Australia, and wherever the Irish were in any numbers requesting and in some cases demanding support for that object. Irish M.P.s who were friendly disposed were active in the English House of Commons and wherever Irish influence was strong foreign countries were made awake of the position.

The first result of this pressure on the British Government was that the Irish convicts in Dartmoor and Portland, where another Company of about 65 were confined, were transferred to Lewes Prison shortly before Christmas of 1916. The winter of 1916-17 was very severe. The frost was practically continuous up to March or April of 1917. Sometime before our transfer to Lewes during exercise periods we were allowed to trot round the circle to keep warm. This was very acceptable to the more agile of the prisoners who occasionally broke into a full run but this was usually checked by the warders. When we were removed

from Dartmoor we were chained together in batches of six by means of a steel chain through handcuffs. That journey was very enjoyable. We sang rebel songs on the way and even danced. When changing from the Dartmoor railway line to the main line we had a delay (it may have been Plymouth Station). On the platform our squad, who were chained together consisted of Bob Brennan, Harry Boland, Dick King, myself, Con Donovan, and another whom I cannot recollect. Bob asked Dick, another Wexford man, to give an exhibition of Irish dancing, Bob lilted in great style. We held up the chain and King, who was a Leinster Champion dancer, gave a selection of jigs and hornpipes which delighted us and even the English travellers and railway officials who were on the platform and they warmly applauded the performance. When we arrived at Lewes station, all in great form, we were transferred to prison vans but before entering the vans we insisted on singing "The Soldiers Song" and some other national choruses for the benefit of the Lewes residents present. On arriving at the prison we met some of our convict colleagues from Portland but had not much time then for greetings as we were put into our cells without ceremony. We had the pleasure of meeting them all afterwards about 65 of them. Our total party amounted to about 130 and represented nearly every grade of society from Professors and Doctors, Teachers, Civil Servants, Shopkeepers, Tradesmen - skilled and unskilled - farmers, Corporation workers and ordinary labourers. We had Labour Leaders, Corporators, Newspapermen etc. It was from that party of convicts that most of the Dail Eireann Deputies were subsequently elected.

Our life in Lewes was somewhat more pleasant the main features of which was that we were allowed what the Prison authorities termed "Conversational Exercise". That meant that we were allowed to walk two abreast and converse during exercise with the same companion. That arrangement did not last long as we slipped from one double file to another according as the fancy took us. We even walked in threes and fours later. We were, however, still treated as convicts - same food, clothing, locked in cells after work and exercise. One incident occurs to me regarding the food. Willie Corrigan of Dublin complained of the poor quality of the porridge or gruel that was served to us in the mornings. Willie was brought before the Prison doctor who stated that he "looked into the matter of the porridge" but could not see in it any grounds for complaint. "Faith Doctor", says Willie, "if you looked closely enough into the porridge you could see the bottom of the mug". The weather continued very cold and frosty during the early months of 1917. We were split up into a number of working parties and I applied to get on the "Garden Party" on the plea that my sight was not good. I was wearing spectacles since imprisonment. I wanted to be out of doors anyhow though the weather was severe. We were served with mittens to prevent the skin cracking and I must say I enjoyed that Party as much as if it was a real one. The "digging" of the frozen ground had to be done with pick axes; large layers of earth were piled up in the extensive garden which looked after a time as if a miniature earthquake had occurred in the grounds. Included in the party, I remember were, Tom Ashe, Seán McGarry, Seamus Melinn, also Dev, who joined us later.

While we were working Tom Ashe used to sing us traditional songs and tell us amusing yarns, mostly true, of his young days in Co. Kerry in the musical accent of that county and also of his experiences when he started teaching in north county Dublin. The time passed pleasantly enough, though we were always hungry. After the weather got milder, I often picked and eat dandelion leaves which were good to stave off the hunger somewhat, as well as medically. There were some very fine parsnips stored in the ground which the frost had sweetened and made quite good eating in their raw state. We had to do this, of course, unknown to our warder guard as taking anything out of the garden was forbidden. Seamus Melinn and myself got a nice job in the Governors garden for a while, cleaning up the paths of weeds and grass and mowing the lawn etc. always under observation. Nevertheless we considered it could be possible to escape as the public road was fairly convenient. It would have meant, of course, help from outside - a motor car, change of clothing etc. We had a feeling, however, that we would not have to serve our full sentences from odd reports that reached us from Ireland, due to the agitation which was growing stronger daily, to have us made political prisoners or eventually, release. Our leaders amongst the prisoners were also active especially during exercise periods. Classes were formed for the study of languages, including Irish of course, and other subjects which would be useful to the men after release, with the approval of the Prison authorities. I have reason to know that at some of these classes there was more plotting and organisation work than the mere learning of classics or ordinary subjects. Prison discipline

had become more lax. The Governor, a retired Military Officer, and a very decent type of man, often visited the cells of McNeill, De Valera, Fitzgerald Dr. Hayes, W. Cosgrave etc. to discuss various subjects with them, when he had found out the kind of prisoners he had under his charge. About April we got the biggest thrill of our prison existence to that time. North Longford Parliamentary Constituency became vacant and after Count Plunkett's great victory in Roscommon on behalf of the Sinn Fein movement it was decided to put up Joe McGuinness, one of our prison colleagues, as Sinn Fein candidate. It was a great move and we felt that if Joe was elected it would be a great victory for us and a great lever to get us out. The principal election rallying cry of Sinn Fein for that election was "Put him in to get him out" and it worked as Joe was duly elected though by a small majority. There was nearly a riot in the Prison when we got the news - discipline broke and we chaired Joe in the Prison Hall and put him up on a table to make a speech. Joe obliged and the Prison rang with the cheers of 130 Irish convicts. With some difficulty we were put back in our cells. The end was, however, not yet. Plunkett's victory and more especially Convict McGuinness' election put us in great heart. It was felt by our Prison Leaders that we would have to do something ourselves and the time was coming for a revolt. Plans were worked out accordingly by De Valera, Ashe, Tom Hunter, Harry Boland, Bob Brennan and others and towards the end of May about the Whit Holiday it was decided to take action. One afternoon after exercise when we had lined up before returning to our cells De Valera our automatically chosen leader, stepped out from the

11

ranks and caused consternation to the Prison staff by calling us to attention. He made a short speech in which he stated that we had waited long enough to be regarded as political prisoners and to have the treatment due to such prisoners meted out to us. If our demands were not acceded to we would proceed to break every prison regulation that lay in our power. The Chief Warder was called on the scene and ordered us to our cells. We stood firm and Dev asked to see the Governor. The latter arrived and Dev repeated our demands. The Governor appealed to us to return quietly and save trouble for ourselves and the prison staff, but to no effect. The Governor eventually decided to get in touch with the Home Office in London to report the position and our demands. On this promise Dev stepped back into our ranks and we returned to our cells, where we remained for some days in solitary confinement. Before returning word was passed amongst us as to the further action we must take if our demands were not granted by a certain date. I think it was on the Saturday before Whit that word was conveyed to us that our demands were refused and that we were to act as directed. This was given to us by means of a weighted string with a note attached which was swung from cell window to cell window. The note was examined, retied and passed on to the next window. This was done on each side of the prison wing. The instructions were to the effect that at 8 p.m. that day a verse of God Save Ireland would be sung by Gerard Crofts and Seamus Hughes and at the conclusion of the verse in which we all joined, every prisoner was to smash two panes of glass in his cell window. We did so with gusto and the singing, shouting and crash of glass was heard in the town of Lewes and

some distance away. Some of our party got so elated that they smashed every pane of glass of which there were about twenty-four or more in each window. Every evening at 8 o'clock this procedure was to be carried out. Those who had no panes of glass to smash proceeded to break the glass through which the gas lit up the cell and anything else breakable. We were not, however, left many days in possession. The morning following the first outbreak Dev, Ashe, Harry Boland and Tom Hunter were removed to Maidstone Prison. The next day an increased number was taken away until after five or six days all of us were removed. We were spread over different prisons to undergo our original convict treatment. It was arranged that wherever we were sent we should carry on with non co-operation of the prison regulations, that was - to refuse to work, talk whenever we could, or shout or sing in our cells and demand political prisoners treatment from the prison authorities.

About the third day of the outbreak I was taken to Maidstone with five or six others where no privileges were allowed us in respect of books, letter writing etc. and continual confinement in our cells. After a day or two we were taken before the Governor who asked us if we were prepared to obey the prison regulations and have our privileges restored. We all refused and repeated our demands for political prisoner treatment. Each of us was then condemned to three days bread and water in special punishment cells supplied with a rubber cup and plate for our meal consisting of one little dark loaf of bread about six or eight ozs. daily and what water we required. Our only reading matter was a small bible. We spent the day singing or shouting to our fellow prisoners

or sleeping if we could. I was an old friend of Harry Bolands for many years in the G.A.A. National and social activities and we had arranged prior to the "smash-up" in Lewes that we would try to communicate with each other if possible by means of singing old favourite songs. I think it was "Galway Bay" I tried in my cell and sure enough I heard Harry's well-known voice from his cell rendering "Twenty men from Dublin Town" one of his favourite ballads. The monotony was the worst feature of this treatment. After three days we were taken back to our regular cells and got the full diet for another three days but were still confined the whole day. When three days had expired we were again taken before the Governor who repeated his questions about compliance and we repeated our demands. Result was three days more bread and water. I was on my second term of bread and water punishment for a day or two when I was taken with the others before the Governor who informed us that we were to be released. We had won and more completely than we had ever expected. The Governor, referring to the gracious action of the Government made a little speech and said that they now hoped that on our return to Ireland we would be good boys and cease our extreme methods of political agitation. His little speech was received in silence. For our release we could thank the efforts of our people at home and abroad and our own fight in the different convict prisons in England where our fellow prisoners were distributed. The prison system and routine was gradually being disorganised. In Maidstone when passing the cells of the regular "lags" - they shouted "stick together boys! Good old Ireland" etc. and continued shouting and singing until we had left. This, I heard,



happened in every prison where our colleagues were held as they carried out the programme arranged in Lewes. We were very happy that evening and were transferred then or the following day to Pentonville Prison in London where all of the 130 of us were assembled from the different prisons to be fitted out in civilian attire before our return home. The clothes we had - mostly Volunteer Uniforms - going into Portland and Dartmoor were destroyed by the British. We spent one night in Pentonville and were put in an empty wing of the Prison which did not appear to have been cleaned for a long period. A number of the men who did not wrap themselves in the clean sheets provided were "tattooed" with flea bites in the morning. Some of us were able to visit the part of the prison where the remains of Sir Roger Casement, executed there the previous year, were laid and said a prayer for a brave rebel and a noble fellow countryman. We had many a laugh and joke at each others expense when we were dressed out in our new 30/- suits, most of which were misfits and of a variety of colours and cuts. J.J. Walsh must have got an extra large suit as he succeeded in smuggling out his complete prison "rig out". All I could manage as a "souvenir" was the little forage cap with my number on it. All were highly elated when we left Pentonville as "freemen" and boarded the charabancs for Euston Station. We enjoyed ourselves like schoolboys going home on holidays. We were jeered at and booed both on our way to and from the Prison when some of the Londoners recognised the Irish rebels. However, that did not worry us. Free tickets by rail and boat were provided for us to any part of Ireland desired. We also each received

5/- and a packet of 10 cigarettes, a poor recompense, perhaps, for 14 months work in prison but nevertheless, welcome, especially the "fags". After the long "fast" from smoking I was nearly sick of the cigarettes by the time we reached Holyhead. We spent most of the 5 bob at Crewe station where we were allowed out for refreshments after being locked in the train at Euston. After an enjoyable crossing with rendering of National songs and ballads by General Crofts, Seamus Hughes etc. including Locke's "Emigrants Return" and sport on deck different to our outgoing the previous year when we were battened down like cattle in the holds of the ship under an armed guard - we arrived at Westland Row about the middle of June. What a reception!, and what an enthusiastic crowd greeted us. It was indeed a change that 12 months brought in the people and how justified we felt in our small Easter Week attempt to cut the shackles that tied us to England. The most of us were taken to Flemings Hotel (John O'Mahoney's) of Gardiners Row where we were liberally dined and wined and then to a civic reception and photographing at the Mansion House and so ended that phase of my 1916-21 activities.

#### 1917, 1918 and 1919.

The balance of 1917 was quiet, comparatively, but it was the calm before the storm. We were not long rested after our release when the West Clare Election took place in July. The ex-prisoners who could give a hand at the electioneering and protection of the Sinn Fein electors, were asked to give their help. A good many had lost their jobs on account of participation in the Easter Week Rising. As I was one

of these I proceeded to Clare to give what assistance I could and especially as De Valera was the Sinn Fein candidate. We looked to him as our Leader and it was of great importance that he should be successful. I linked up with other Volunteers in Ennis. The Old Ground Hotel was our headquarters. We had a hectic few days between canvassing locally and protecting supporters which meant several clashes with the ex-British soldier element in Ennis where they were strong at the time. Paddy Lynch K.C. the Irish Party nominee was a strong candidate, being a local man and very popular with the Clare people. Nevertheless Dev was victorious. The flames of Sinn Fein were spreading and in the following year 1918 at the General Election the old Irish Parliamentary Party, with its policy of participation in the British House of Commons, was practically swept out of existence. Bye-elections in the meantime followed in South Armagh and East Tyrone where I joined up with fellow ex-prisoners and volunteers to help in the electioneering. Our candidates there were not quite so successful but it was very significant that in such strong A.O.H. constituencies, including Unionists, the poll on behalf of the Sinn Fein candidate was so heavy. The sacrifices of the executed 1916 Leaders were having their effect even in northern areas. A secret convention of All Ireland Volunteer delegates was held at Croke Park (then Jones Road) in October 1917. My particular duty that day was with the armed guard protecting the Convention. It was called for the purpose of putting the Volunteers on a proper military basis and to organise resistance on a nation-wide scale. In the Autumn of 1917 I was appointed Secretary of the Leinster Council of the G.A.A. in place of the late Wat Hanrahan of Wexford who had

retired on account of advancing years and I held that position for ten years. The G.A.A. though primarily a sporting organisation, non-political and non-sectarian was strongly national and even militant in its outlook and membership. It had been a great recruiting ground for the I.R.B. previously and the Volunteers and I.R.A. subsequently. Other sporting and non-sporting bodies, or members of them, contributed their quota to the Volunteers and I.R.A. - Soccer, Rugby, Gaelic League, National University, Literary and Press organisations were represented, especially in Dublin where these bodies were strong. The Dublin Brigade was being well organised by Areas and Battalions, Companies and Squads. Arms and munitions were being procured by any and every means and purchased through various sources. Individual British soldiers ex-Army men, sailors and seamen who transported them across the channel. Raids were made on Military Barracks, usually in connivance with British or Irish soldiers. Small munition factories were being established handgrenades, land mines and explosives manufactured, arms repaired etc. The Volunteers had now become the Irish Republican Army and as such was being organised in all parts of the country. Training and arming was going on apace though on an underground footing late in 1917 and 1918 and later. Activities had largely lapsed after Easter Week owing to the wholesale arrests and deportations but all deportees and convicted prisoners had been released by the summer of 1917. While the Republican Army was working secretly the open political movement of Sinn Fein was getting stronger and spreading all over the country. The British Authorities had again become active in re-arresting prominent Sinn Fein Leaders and Volunteer or I.R.A. Officers. A Defence of the Realm Act known

as D.O.R.A. was established and a German Plot faked for the purpose of arrests and deportations.

I visited my mother's home in Ballaghaderreen fairly often in 1917 and 1918 and helped in the organisation of the Volunteers in East Mayo. Harry Boland was with me in Ballaghaderreen when the big Anti-British Conscription Meeting was held in April 1918. De Valera and John Dillon M.P. were the principal speakers. There was a large attendance from East Mayo and Counties Sligo and Roscommon and a big parade of Volunteers marched through the town. The evening before the meeting my mother's home was raided by the R.I.C. for Boland and myself. We got word of the raid at T.B. Doyle's residence. He was a leading Sinn Feiner in the Town, where we were visiting at the time. We promptly took our departure. Doyle's was raided directly after but we were safely ensconced in another friend's house in the town, which was not suspect. We remained there until the following day taking part in the Volunteer parade and afterwards on the public platform which was well guarded. We got safely away to an adjoining town that evening. I returned to Dublin in May, 1918, and was appointed Brigade Adjutant temporarily after Fionan Lynch's arrest until Dick McKee was appointed a few months later. He afterwards became Brigadier and Geróid O'Sullivan became Adjutant. I was appointed to the Volunteer Dependents Fund Committee as representative of the Dublin Brigade and assisted in organising sporting and other activities to raise funds and having same distributed to Dependents after investigation. The Committee was mostly made up of ladies who were active in National and Cumann na mBhan organisations and included Miss Kathleen O'Brennan, Hon. Secretary, Mrs. Wyse-Power, Miss

Nancy Wyse-Power, Madame O'Rahilly (The O'Rahilly's sister) Mrs. O'Rahilly (The O'Rahilly's widow), Mrs. Tom Clarke, Mrs. Wilson, Miss A. Taffe.

We had a lively time during the General Election when working for De Valera, who was also nominated for East Mayo against John Dillon, the sitting M.P. for that constituency. Dillon who lived in Ballaghaderreen was a very stong opponent being a local man and one of the leaders of the Parliamentary Party. Feeling was running very high and we had many clashes with his supporters, especially in the country areas, near Kilmovee, Kilkelly, Ballaghaderreen, Swinford etc. during the campaign. Nevertheless, Dev was elected by a good majority. Dillon's defeat was a great victory for Sinn Fein. After the great victory for Sinn Fein at the General Election of 1918 the First Dail was formed and various Departments established, which functioned underground, such as Defence, Finance, Justice, Local Government etc. with an Executive Council. One outcome from one of the Departments was the appointment of a Food Controller to conserve food for the Nation and prevent supplies, which were becoming scarce at the time, from being sent to England. Diarmuid Lynch, one of the elected deputies was appointed Controller. With a staff he was instrumental in stopping the export of livestock and food for some time. I was sent to Ballaghaderreen to help stop the sale of butter, potatoes etc. to English agents on one occasion and was successful with the help of Republicans from the local Sinn Fein Club in preventing export. Supplies were sent to Dublin for distribution there. My brother, Frank, who was then Secretary of the Club carried on in that way for some time. While "on the Run" I went west again and got married in Lisacul

Ballaghaderreen on the 31st October. I slipped through Ballaghaderreen under the noses of the R.I.C. who had raided for me several times and went to wife's relations in Co. Sligo - then to Bundoran under a false name and returned to Dublin after two weeks, my wife returning to Lisacul pro-tem. In November, 1918 the European War came to an end with Germany's defeat. 'Roving bands of returned soldiers and ex-soldiers, probably instigated by G. Men attacked the Headquarters of Sinn Fein at No. 6 Harcourt Street. I was detailed to go there and take part in its defence. The house was barricaded and though windows and doors got a bad smashing its defenders held out and the place remained intact.

Being "on the Run" I slept in different friends houses in the city. One experience turned out rather enjoyable though not at the actual time it occurred. I happened to be stopping with Harry Boland at his mother's house in Marino Crescent on this occasion. Harry was a wanted man. We slept in a room at the top of the house and were roused about 6.30 or 7 a.m. by Kathleen, Harry's sister, who told us that D.O. Smyth and other police detectives were trying to get into the house. She saw them through the window of her room. We were prepared for such an eventuality and pulling on trousers scampered up a little ladder leading to an attic door on the roof, pulled up the ladder and bolted the door from the outside. The bolt had been put there in anticipation of such a raid. Boland's house was about the middle of the Crescent and a raised balcony extended from one end of the Crescent to the other. We went along inside the balcony to the end house, where fortunately we found the attic roof door there was not locked. We

let ourselves in as quietly as we could with the intention of returning without arousing the occupants but must have made some noise as the good lady of the house happened to be getting up and hearing something - she said afterwards that she thought it was cats - came up and Harry, whom she knew, declared ourselves before she might faint, which she nearly did, at the sight of two dishevelled characters in shirts and trousers and bootless. When matters were explained she brought us down stairs and gave us a cup of tea. In the meantime Smith and his partners had got in to Harry's and having seen how we managed to escape gave up the pursuit. When we learned all was clear, we returned the same way by the roofs.

In 1919 the pressure of the Crown Forces became stronger. National bodies were being suppressed or their activities curtailed, such as the Gaelic League, G.A.A. Irish Ireland papers suppressed. Raids on printing offices became frequent, but all managed to carry on in one way or another. The I.R.A. paper "An t-Óglach" was very much sought after by the G. men. It was seized in shops that kept it for sale, Railway Stations etc. and the printing of it became more onerous and difficult. Mahon's of Yarnhall Street had been printing it at the time and unsuccessful raids were made by Castle Detectives. I remember one night a number of us were mobilised to defend Mahon's where the I.R.A. paper was being printed. Amongst the party were Seán T. O'Kelly, Fionán Lynch, Con Collins, Gearóid O'Sullivan and others whom I cannot now recall. We were all armed and remained there at night but the threatened raid did not come off. The paper was duly printed, and distributed in the morning to the different Railway Stations for the country and I.R.A.



Centres in the City. Somewhat later Joe Stanleys Printing Establishment in Liffey Street was subjected to many raids. The "Mosquito" Press which was published under different names such as "Honesty" "Opinion", "Scissors and Paste", "Nationality" etc. were all suppressed from time to time. In the end the printing machines were dismantled, smashed or taken away by Crown Forces. Still printing plants were being privately maintained and National Papers continued to appear. The Detective Force of G. Men in Dublin had a bad time this year and early in 1920 Sam y t h., Hoey, Barton and Wharton were shot. These men had been very active during and since 1916.

I was appointed a Republican Justice sometime this year, 1919, under our Department of Justice and sat with other Justices at regular intervals at 41 Parnell Square and other Centres and decisions of Courts were in the main faithfully carried out. We had our own Republican Police, of course, who saw that where opposition occurred the Courts decisions were observed. I can recollect Messrs. Reddin and Goff who subsequently became District Justices under the established courts, attending at our courts on behalf of litigants. All Departments of the "hidden" Dail were functioning and generally with success, despite the efforts of D.M.B. detectives and R.I.C. men. Attacks on R.I.C. barracks in the country were an everyday occurrence. Most of the outlying stations were closed and staffs withdrawn to large towns or strongly fortified buildings. This did not save them as the I.R.A. had become quite expert in attack with rifles and grenades, in the use of land-mines and petrol, with the result that most of these garrisoned fortifications fell with loss of life

mostly on the enemy side, and capture of their arms and stores. All vacated barracks were burned out either during successful I.R.A. attacks or afterwards.

Just prior to the attack, in December, 1919, I was with some of the participants in Parnell Square who took part in the ambush of Lord French at Ashtown. Martin Savage, one of the ambushers, was killed there. French escaped.

The efforts to suppress the G.A.A. failed badly. One day set aside as Gaelic Sunday was arranged about the end of the year, on which it was decided to have hurling or football games played in every county and parish in the country. As Secretary of the G.A.A. in Leinster it fell to me and the Chairman of the Council to see that every County Board or Secretary in Leinster carried out this decision. All games were played at the same hour. The Crown Forces could not be everywhere at the same moment. This procedure was carried out in each of the other Provinces with the result that more hurling and football matches were brought off in the country on Gaelic Sunday than ever took place on the one day in the history of the G.A.A.

#### 1920.

Curfew was introduced for the first time in Dublin about February of 1920. Five more detectives and Secret Service Agents were shot between January and March. Activities in Dublin and my work in connection with the G.A.A. in Leinster curtailed my visits to the West, where my mother's home was raided a few times. My prison cap was seized on one of these raids. Travelling was getting more difficult and arrests more frequent. I managed to evade arrest though raids took place in 68 Upper

O'Connell Street over Purcells tobacconists shop where I had my office and later at Maurice Collins's shop at 65 Parnell Street where I had transferred.

The tempo of activities increased all over the country, raids and arrests became more numerous, occupied Police Barracks were being attacked and usually captured or vacated with the result that the Police Forces were unable to cope with the I.R.A. This led up to the advent of the Black and Tans who were composed of the most tough and desperate of the British ex-Army Forces in the late war, supplemented by members of the R.I.C. who acted as guides and spotters. They were called Black and Tans as their uniforms were a mixture of Khaki and police outfits. This force soon made themselves felt everywhere. Raids, shootings and burnings were becoming commonplace. The I.R.A. retaliated wholeheartedly and ambushes and attacks occurred frequently, particularly in Dublin, Cork, Tipperary, Kerry and to a less extent in Connaught, parts of Limerick and Ulster. Income Tax Offices in cities and large towns were raided and contents destroyed. Raids for arms and ammunition were of frequent occurrence viz; British and Irish Steam Packet Company at the North Wall, Kings Inns, on Military, Police and Convoys, raids for mails at Rotunda Rink in Dublin and at various points in the country. A good many of the R.I.C. resigned sooner than carry on with the measures adopted by the Black and Tans. Those of them who remained and who were active with the new Force suffered the same fate. They had heavy losses in many ambushes. The I.R.A. suffered casualties but not to the same extent. Some were murdered in cold blood in their homes or taken out and shot outside. Many of them were not

prominent in the fight but as revenge for local ambushes the innocent, even clergy, women and children were not spared. During this year and up to the Truce in July the active fighting men were in the Flying Columns. In the country many had dug-outs in safe places where food was brought to them by local helpers. Out of the way farm houses were often used especially by the men in command who were well guarded. Special men were used as Intelligence Officers, generally not suspected of I.R.A. service. Couriers or despatch riders kept the Flying Squad linked with each other and with Battalion and Brigade Headquarters. Women and girls, usually members of the Cumann na mBan did very good work in this respect. Many households gave shelter and food to men on the run and often the women unattached to any military or political organisation carried despatches and messages between one point and another by pony and trap or bicycle. Numbers of the I.R.A. not armed through difficulties of supply of guns or inability to use them were utilised for blocking and cutting of roads, felling trees, blowing up bridges, scouts and despatch carriers. Men with a knowledge of engineering and explosives prepared and planted land mines at strategic points and supervised bridge destruction, the road blocks and cuttings to trap the enemy lorries. Brigade areas in some counties, Tipperary and Cork especially, were well organised in this respect. Ambushes in the streets in Dublin were organised after careful observation of movements of enemy troops in different areas and at fixed times. The attackers usually got away safely and pedestrians vanished at the first shot or hand grenade explosion to avoid the raking of rifle and machine gun fire which followed in the streets. Areas were often cordoned off and  
/wholesale

searching of the public by the British Forces occurred but little assistance or information was obtained by these methods. The enemy authorities were in a bad way for information. In the country the R.I.C. were an inactive body now except in the larger towns and garrisoned quarters of the Black and Tans and dare not expose themselves. The D.M.B. as a body did not co-operate with the Black and Tans or the Military except some members of the G. Division who were being gradually wiped out by the I.R.A. in Dublin. Michael Collins who was being sought for like the "Elusive Pimpernel" and his co-operators often cycled in broad daylight in the streets and although known by many was never betrayed. A number of spies who had dared to intervene were traced and executed by the I.R.A. There were no traitors in the Republican Army. The British Authorities were getting desperate. They were not making headway in their efforts to destroy the Republican Leaders, Military and Political, who were all functioning. Collins and his lieutenants were in close touch with trusted men in the Castle who supplied valuable information of enemy movements and individuals at home and across channel who were endeavouring to locate the I.R.A. Leaders, especially. The mails were raided frequently. Important despatches for the castle were opened and examined either by special men in the Post Office employment or transferred where they could be conveniently seized, examined, noted and replaced. The names of some spies, active or potential, were obtained in this way both in city and country and these people invariably paid the penalty with their lives. Some hard and sad losses, of course, occurred such as the death of Sean Tracey in Talbot Street, the hanging of Kevin Barry, the death of Terence

MacSwiney from Hunger Strike etc. each of which proved glorious events in the general fight. A new body was now organised by the British Military Chiefs in Ireland, known as the Auxiliaries, recruited principally from ex-officers reputed brave and reckless, as undoubtedly numbers of them proved to be subsequently. They were distributed throughout the country in the most active I.R.A. centres. They had more discipline than the Black and Tans but none the less ruthless. About the Autumn of 1920 a small special body of British Intelligence Officers was formed in Dublin, some of them of Irish blood, who had proved themselves during the European War. They were dressed as civilians and mixed with the general public, their object being to get in touch with the I.R.A. Leaders to get to know them by appearance or find out their places of abode and dispose of them in the only effective way possible. However, the I.R.A. Intelligence was too good for this. The names of the officers were obtained and also where they were residing. Their movements were watched and on the night of Saturday 20th November the I.R.A. took swift action in Mount Street area and 10 or 12 of those men met the doom they intended for the I.R.A. officers. Bloody Sunday followed. A football match had been organised by the Volunteers Dependents Fund Committee. The match had been fixed some weeks in advance - the teams taking part being selected from counties Tipperary and Dublin and I was in charge of the arrangements. The venue was Jones Road Ground, now Croke Park. We were rather unfortunate in the date selected. About an hour or more before the game started officers from the Dublin Brigade came to the grounds. and advised us not to proceed with

the match as they had reason to know that a raid would take place on the Grounds. I consulted with G.A.A. officials present including Alderman Nowlan, Luke O'Toole, Andy Harty, Dan MacCarthy etc. They considered that if we called it off the G.A.A. would appear to be identified with what happened the previous night at Mount Street. Raids anyhow were common but we never anticipated such a bloody raid. Though anxious about its outcome we decided to carry on. Stilesmen, ticket sellers and ground staff had been appointed and the gates opened about 1.30 or 2 p.m. The game was fixed to take place about 3 p.m. A good crowd attended and the game had only started when the trouble began. An aeroplane, rare at that time, flew over the grounds and returned, apparently to report or give some signal to the Black and Tans and Auxiliaries. We had not long to wait for the game was not in progress more than 15 minutes when lorries of the raiders swooped down on the grounds and without any warning burst their way to the railings surrounding the playing pitch, opened fire on the people on the far side and on the players. Fortunately they were scattered and only one of them, young Hogan of Tipperary, was shot dead - the other players threw themselves flat and managed to crawl off the pitch and mingle with the crowd who were flying in panic behind the banks or tumbling over the wall into the waste ground on the Ballybough side. It was amongst the spectators on this side that the greatest havoc occurred. Fifteen people of both sexes were killed. murdered in cold blood would be a more correct description. Hundreds were wounded or injured in the mad scramble that followed, trampled on torn with barbed wire on the walls. The spectators on the Jones Road side were more

fortunate. The crowd here rushed to the back of the small stand that was erected at Railway side over the main entrance and dressing rooms and offices. The bulk of them were on the large terraced bank (there was no covered stand then) which reached within four or five feet of the high garden wall at the end of the houses in Jones Road. There must have been 15 or 20 feet of a drop into these gardens, yet hundreds, perhaps up to a thousand or more, jumped or fell into the gardens and took refuge in the houses. A number were injured, probably not seriously but there were plenty of cuts and bruises and torn clothes experienced. The bulk of those present remained in the grounds - they had to do so - as the whole place was now surrounded by the Crown Forces and a wholesale searching began. I had my little office under the old stand but vacated it when the shooting started and mingled with the crowds, with armed forces all round. They were perched up on the old stand, on the railway walls and any position overlooking us. Rifles and machine guns were trained on us, the commands rung out "put up your hands and keep them up". The searching went on for an hour or more. Those searched were passed out the main gate. The others tiring of keeping their hands up generally sagged their arms but a loud command to "keep these hands up" rung out at regular intervals and it was a tired crowd that eventually got away from Jones Road. Not more than four or five were detained and only on suspicion. I was one of that number. When I was searched by one of the troops a small diary I had was examined and taken before a little officer who was very much under the influence of drink. The trooper said there appeared to be some suspicious entries in it but the officer did not trouble to look at it but ordered me to be detained *mv*



convenient dressing rooms and that I would be dealt with later - which did not look too healthy for me. There were three or four others there. The searching went on and when the grounds were eventually emptied - another officer came along - fortunately a decent and sober man - who appeared to be an Auxiliary Officer with a number of decoration bars on his tunic. He appeared to be disgusted with the whole business and inquired why we were detained. The armed guard handed up my diary and said that some of the entries in it appeared to require some explanation. The Officer turned over some of the leaves and asked a few questions which I was able to answer without difficulty. He handed me back the book and said, "I don't see anything worth special interrogation here" and remarked quietly to me "There has been enough shooting and bloodshed here to-day and I advise you to get away as quickly as you can". I obeyed the order with alacrity. I was the second last to get away and the last, a young lad not out of his teens, was released after me. So ended a day that I will not forget as an official and spectator like the thousands of others who came there to enjoy a football game but who witnessed something entirely different. A remarkable fact was that I got most of the receipts from the ticket sellers except one bag was missing. Anyhow I was able to hand over about £160 to the Volunteer Dependents Fund. The Crown Forces, however, had their revenge for the night before, though at the expense of innocent lives and another black record for the British Government.

More blood was to be spilt that day as Commandant Dick McKee, Vice Commandant, and Peadar Clancy of the Dublin Brigade and Conor Clune, a member of a Clare Brigade were arrested a short time

previously and detained at the Detective Headquarters in the Castle where they were that evening or night battered and beaten with guns and then shot out of hand. The bodies were removed the next day to the vaults of the Pro-Cathedral where I saw the battered dead faces of McKee and Clancy. Curfew hours were increased and wholesale arrests took place all over the country after this. Some thousands were put behind barbed wire at Ballykinlar and Curragh Camps. Hostages, usually prominent in military or political activities were taken round in open lorries. Often they were told to run for it and then shot for "attempting to escape."

### 1921.

Feverish activities continued into 1921 on the part of the Crown Forces with corresponding resistance by the I.R.A. Raids and ambushes, destruction of roads and bridges, cutting of trees for road-blocking destruction of enemy communications, attacks and burnings of barracks where left standing and strongholds of the Crown Forces wherever and whenever possible, were occurring regularly. In May, 1921, a great blow was struck at British authority by the destruction of the Custom House which upset the enemy's administration considerably.

The I.R.A. was gradually getting the best of the fight and the Dail Departments were functioning satisfactorily. I was kept busy between attending Republican Courts, acting on the Dependants Fund Committee and keeping the G.A.A. going in Leinster. This was not an easy matter. Contact had to be kept up with the different Counties, meetings of the Council held, fixtures made and carried out at

different points. Difficulties had to be overcome in the way of transport, suitable venues arranged, accommodation of teams etc. We managed to keep going, however, and had games played in Athy, Kilkenny, New Ross, Portlaoighise, Drogheda and other centres. Some obstruction was experienced at a few venues where we had visits from Crown Forces when searchings occurred and threats of arrests and other action were made. The attendances at the games, suffered considerably but we kept on and our persistence paid unexpected dividends eventually.

County Council and other public bodies functioning under the Dail Local Government Department were having a bad time in administering their several activities. Raids had been made by Crown Forces on Offices and premises and individual collectors and public money confiscated. About April of this year the rate collectors, mostly elderly men, of the Dublin County Council resigned owing to the onerous and difficult nature of their work. The Council had to get in the rates and asked the Dublin Brigade to recommend half a dozen I.R.A. men to fill their places. Michael Cremen, Liam O'Doherty and myself (Ex-Civil Servants) and a few others were asked to take on the work which we did. We succeeded very well and by the end of twelve months gathered in over £110,000 in rates for the Council. We had to lodge the money in our own or some other name with whatever Banks we had dealings and then transfer it to the Council. We had to run the gauntlet of raiding forces during our collections and had to coerce a number of unwilling ratepayers who were taking advantage of the situation but under the threats of the I.R.A. "Gunmen" and the Republican Courts these would-be defaulters practically all paid

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21  
BURO STAIRE MILEATA 1913-21  
No. W.S. 679

up.

Rumours of peace or a truce were in the air from May and June. Important public men like Lord Derby had been over from England to discuss possible terms with Michael Collins to cease the fighting. Lord Craigavon from Belfast paid a visit to Dublin in connection with the matter. Our Bishops at home were striving hard for peace as well as Dr. Mannix of Australia. Bitter fighting, however, continued up to early in July when the Truce was finally declared to take effect on the 11th of that month. It was a great relief to everyone, and especially the general public, particularly in the country where homes had been raided, ransacked, shot up and in many cases burned out, by the Crown Forces. A good many had died, most of them heroic patriots, in the cause of Freedom from the period of hungerstrikes in 1918 and in the fighting, especially in 1920 and 1921 but from the point of view of numbers, the losses inflicted on the enemy forces were much greater. The terrific strain was over, for the time being anyhow, and social and sporting activities were resumed with great freedom and enjoyment. The Leinster G.A.A. competitions from looking like a financial failure were never so well supported with the result that we finished with a record season in the annals of Gaelic Athletic activities in the Province up to 1921. The Summer that year was very fine. Republican Army training camps were established all over the country after the Truce and training went for a few months under canvas and in vacated country mansions.

Signed: J. F. Shouldice  
(J. F. Shouldice).

Witness: M. F. Ryan Comdt Date:

M.F. RYAN, COMDT.

15th May 1952  
15th May 1952.