

Memoir to Family

Written by Brian Corrigan
in the 1970's

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Memoirs for Family - 1971.

I often thought of writing this for my family's future reference but now at the age of 71 years since 24.07.1971 I'll try to put in what I remember of the past into writing.

My Grandfather's name was Brian More O' Corragáin and he had a brother Peter More. ~~They were at~~ big strong men and formerly lived and tilled the land up at Maointrie Mor. Brian More moved down to the road and built a thatched house later re-built by my father where we now live. My father re-built it in 1917, a two storey slated house. My Grandmother, Brian Mores wife, was Brige Lynchehaun. On my mother's side her father was John Gallagher, Bolinglana, Currane Achill, and her mother Breid Corrigan formerly from Achill Beg Island.

In my father's family were Hugh (my father). Tom his brother, Peggie nee Murray, Nancy nee Lynchehaun, Biddy nee Lavelle, Maura nee O'Malley, Catherine nee Corrigan (Corrigan both sides) also Pat Corrigan brother of my father.

In the Maointrie Mor up top of the Stripes there are old ruins of houses and ridges where potatoes once grew also oats. From some of these houses men left-them in 1798 and went and enlisted with General Humbert in Ballina. They never returned to Maointrie Mor. As far as I have heard they were McIntyre's, Molloy's, Corrigan's and O Malley's. Reference Railway: First trainload 1894 was a load of dead 36 Tatíe Hoker's going to Scotland got drowned at Westport Quay)' and when the wagons with the dead was travelling from Westport to Achill my father helped to take off one of the coffins at McIntyre's Cottage, Tonragee as she was a woman from Ballycroy and is buried in Claggan cemetery. Also at Rosturk, a man's body he helped to take off and he was buried in Killeen Cemetery. The disaster was at Westport 14th of June 1894. My father often told me he was at the loading and taking off of the coffins and they were heavy.

'My father Hugh Corrigan and my mother Mary Corrigan nee Gallagher both died at approx. 75 years of age. Father died 05.12.1927 and mother died 20.02.1939. My mother was born in Bolinglana Currane, Achill. She had one sister and five brothers. The sister was Catherine nee Joyce, brothers John (married) died at home in Currane, Hughie went to Cleveland, Ohio when young. Edward Gallagher went to Cleveland, Ohio when young. Terry (married) died at home. Michael the youngest (married) died at home. Michael was in the trouble during the Black and Tan War and was a prisoner in the Curragh of Kildare until December 1921. My mother was a lovely singer and had all the old songs in Irish and English. She was a pleasant woman and a hard worker God rest her soul.

My father and Uncle Tom were both stone masons by trade and my father worked in various places. He built many of the bridges and railway cottages from Mulranny to Achill Sound when the Midlands Great Western Railway was building during 1894, '5 and '6. Also he was at the building of Achill Sound Bridge to the island, at Carey's Ltd Mills, Newport and various other places. I often heard him telling how Casey's Ltd used sit down with him and tell his young life as a boy. Carey the son of a widow went out first with a donkey and creels selling safety pins, boxes of polish, thread, pins, needles. Soap, tea and sugar from village to village. Carey died a wealthy man, but now the place is gone into ruin.

Together with the Masons work my father worked hard on our little farm. There was no artificial manure then and all the manure had to be got from the seashore and bed, such as wrack and scaollac. Wrack cut by comb hooks from the stone of the shore and scaollac dragged up

from the bed of the sea in a channel where often strong current is running, by a long wooden pole, 15 to 20 feet long and at one end a big crook firmly attached.

The operation is: one man from a yawl which is anchored in the current, low tide, pushes the crooked pole and pulls towards the boat and lifts up the catch of sea rods with long Scalloc into the boat and then as quick as lightening a second person (man and often woman) with the comb hook cuts the stones off and drops them back into the sea. Often the man with the pole drops it across the Gunwales and puts his two arms around the catch in order to prevent it going back into the sea again. This is a very messy job as you are all slime and wet to skin.

Also the boat has to be bailed regularly on account of the intake of water in scalloc. Then when you have a cargo of this slimy stuff you had with long heavy oars to pull against current to the harbour. Forking out of the boat this scalloc was a heart break because Lamiuarea Flaxacowlis (the Latin name of it) is 6 to 7 foot long and imagine you having a forkful raised above your head and you standing on the tails of it. When the boat was emptied out on the shore at the harbour they went home wet, tired and hungry and I can assure you there were no novelties or napkins to insult bellies calling. The following day a horse was yoked with two pardogues (*creels with a hinged bottom*) and the Scalloc packed in and on with a big strong rope tying it and then taken up the hillside and deposited on the ridges for setting the potatoes. This was terrible hard work but they had to do it in order to live. Irish families were like army units in themselves. They were trained, disciplined and the Grá mo Croidhe knocked out of them. A lazy person or a pretending sickness one was looked on as "Teanam Abaile" and in the not manly category. Even though their toil was remunerative they kept up a national spirit of working for their living and thrift to build for their future. In winter time if a man or boy wasn't "amuigh a romhair" at 9 o'clock in the morning out digging the soil with the spade he was losing a fortune according to his parents. There was little money in circulation then and they had to go to England and Scotland to seasonal agricultural work in order to pay the shop - keepers for provisions they booked the previous winters. In those day's winter time was not lonely, people visited others at night and told all the old stories of local history, hair raising tales of fairies and Genealogy covering many parishes for generations back. We had sheep and my mother, God rest her, used wash the wool, card it into rolls and she being an apt hand at the spinning wheel she used make huge balls of wool thread. All this during the winter nights. Some of the balls of wool thread used to weigh up to 14 lbs. The spinning was for blankets and quilts and also for frieze stockings and socks. Nothing of such like cloth, was bought in the shop. When sufficient big balls of thread were spun - Warp and Woof-, pegs were put down between the floor- flags in a rather intricate pattern and the day of the Warping, as they called it, another woman or two would come and in their bare feet or stockings they are up and down the floor all day putting the different thread on the different pegs. Then in long skeins and tied with skill the whole braiden was carefully lifted and later taken to the weaver. There were several looms in each parish. Then also we had a Miller in Belfarsad (Hevernán) who used to thicken the frieze.

That time there were no dance halls and the dances were held in different houses every night. A fiddler would come to the village and welcome news would be pushed around. Then about 30 or more youngsters would come to the dance after nightfall. For the following night the dance house would be announced and so continue for the whole week. Then when the final night arrived each dancer gave the fiddler 6d. The dances were well conducted and the man of the house saw to it that there were no drunks or bad acting. The old people were very hospitable to strangers and that time beggars were plentiful as they had no relief or pensions of any sort. There were tramp tailors, silenced priests, tramp musician's imbeciles, outcast teachers and outcast family black sheep. It is true that there were householders in each village (God bless them) who never did refuse a nights

shelter or meals to those travelling people. Strange the poor tramps knew who was kind at heart and mind you they would not go near the rich people or the more well off. I still remember some of the outstanding characters. Pollarie O' Cleary (Michael Cleary) a tramp tailor, Paid Ricker, Noone (Gallagher), Sean Moynehan, Sean McNeela (McNeela), Dan Joe (O'Malley), Tracy Conner, a priest but I forget his name, Jack Vaneen, Jumbo, Darcy (O'Boyle) and her sister Mary O'Boyle, Jude Cleary, Nancoge McCuie (McHugh), Sarah Fallon and last but not least Pat Hughes. Most of them as far as I know are buried in the pauper's grave in Castlebar workhouse. God have mercy on their souls and may he forgive us for all the pranks we played on them in our boyhood days. Most of them were grand company, some were lovely singers, some tin whistle players, some melodeon and some lovely story tellers. Poor Pollarie O' Cleary was a rather cranky fellow and regarding his life a funny book could be written.

My Father's People

My parents had six children the eldest Tom now dead and buried in Cleveland, Ohio. Pat comes next and he also is dead and buried in Cleveland, Ohio. Annie comes next and she is living in Cleveland, Ohio. Mary comes next and she is Mrs Anthony Keane living at Derryhillagh, Newport, Co. Mayo. Brian, myself, comes next residing at the old home. Hughie is the youngest and is living in Cleveland, Ohio. I shall give a brief history of the family.

My brother Tom was born in the old home Owenduff, Achill 15th October 1891 and worked hard as a boy. At an early age after leaving the National School at Ardbawn, Tonragee, *(here is still a large white stone on the side of the R319 road at Ardbawn)* he went as a seasonal worker to Scotland and in later years went to England. Last home in Ireland in 1913 and never saw it again. In April 1914 he left Liverpool on the S.S. Lusitania and worked his passage as a stoker. Arrived in New York on the 17th April 1914. Tom was a very strong built man 6 foot 2 inches and bones as strong as a horse. This ship, The Lusitania was torpedoed south of Kinsale in May 1915. Tom worked as a streetcar builder in Cleveland until he enlisted in U.S.A. Army in 1917 and served in France with the U.S.A. Forces until 1919. Went back by Africa to Cleveland and was a Policeman at Euclid busy crossing, Cleveland for over 25 years. Afterwards he became a bank Policeman. During his time as a Policeman his first wife Grace Joyce from Currane and his two children went to the grave the same day. Children died of scarlet fever and the baby girl the mother gave birth to, lived and was reared by Tom. When the mother heard of the two children's death it killed her. Tom reared a large family and one a priest. Fr Tony Corrigan, who is now in Cleveland and was in Ireland twice. Tom got married again and had two children with his second wife. Tom's son Peter was in the U.S.A. Air force in World War 2 in Europe. Tom died last year and was 80 years. His last wife died some years ago. Tom never returned to Ireland since he left in 1913.

Pat my brother, second in the family, was born in 1892 or 1893. Also he was a strong big man about 6 foot 2 inches. He was a stone mason by trade and worked with my father in many places. He was the first man to turn a sod in the layout of Tonragee National School in 1911 and helped to build it. Also he worked in England and in 1914 he was conscripted into the British Army but got away on a steam ship from Liverpool to New York, as a stoker. The ship was chased by a German U-boat and they had to change course up to near Greenland. When the ship arrived in New York, the passengers disembarked and the ship moved out to deeper water. At night he tied a rope to some bar and slid into the sea and swam ashore. Then in wet greasy engine room overalls he had to wait daylight and having only a few shillings in his pocket he sent a telegram to his brother Tom in Cleveland for money. Had to wait in New York in wet dirty clothes until the money arrived to take him to Cleveland. On arrival in Cleveland Tom was out at work and nobody would believe that he was a

brother of Tom as he looked a dirty tramp. He had to wait for Tom to return in order to be identified. He worked for a time on streetcars and later was pulled into the Army, but instead went into the Merchant Navy. He was torpedoed near France and was rescued from the sea. He came to Liverpool and got home to Ireland November 1918. The war ended 11th of November 1918 and he went back to America in 1919 and got into the Police and served as a Policeman in Cleveland for 25 years. Later his job was preceding and directing funerals through the City of Cleveland to the various cemeteries. A few years ago he died. Dropped dead after coming out of his car when finished work. His first wife was Mary Cusack from Cultrain, Fahy, Mayo and they had 3 or 4 children. With us here this year were Hugh, a Judge in Cleveland, John, an Insurance Director in Cleveland and Patsy, a Mrs Sullivan in Cleveland. Both Hugh and John were in the U.S.A. Air Force in World War 2. Mary Cusack died some years ago. Pat also had another son named Brian who was in Korean War and is now in some part of America. Pat got married again to a girl named Noonan from Co. Clare and had one son named Thomas who is now in Cleveland. Pat's second wife died some years ago prior to his death.

Annie, who comes third in my father's family, worked hard on our little farm prior to going to Cleveland, U.S.A. around 1916 or early 1917. She is still living in Cleveland and has been home to Ireland on two occasions. The last time she was home she used speak Irish fluently, in fact as good as any of the old people around. She could recite my mother's old Irish songs and stories. She is about 77 years of age and was home in Ireland about 4 years ago. She was married to John Corrigan from Dookinally, Achill. His father was a blood relationship of my father. John Corrigan (Annie's husband) went to Cleveland, Ohio when he was a young man and in the outbreak 1914-1918 War he was taken into the American Army and served overseas in Europe for some time. After Demob from the American Army he went into the Police in Cleveland and was a policeman there for 25 years. John (Annie's husband) died about 2 years ago and was home with us prior to his death. Also with him was his son Jack T. who is a County Prosecutor for Cuyahoga County Ohio, with his office in Cleveland. He has over 30 Lawyers working for him. He was taken into the American Army in World War 2. First sent to Aleutian Island and fought against the Japs. Then transferred to Europe and was at Landing in Normandy on D-Day. In charge of a ship in France he got his right eye blasted out and had head and damage to his right side. Flown to England and from there to U.S.A. In hospital for two years. Got decoration Purple Heart and others for bravery on the battle field. Though he lost the eye and had to study lip reading due to the loss of hearing in the damaged side of his head. He studied Law at St. John Carrots?? University and other places and eventually qualified as a lawyer. Also my sister Annie together with Jack T had, Frank, Hughie, Eileen a nun. Jean and Mary both these two married as young women who died all within 18 months' father and two daughters. So my sister Annie went through a hard time. My sister Mary (Mrs Keane) 4th in my parent's family, still living and 75 years of age, is residing at Derryhillagh, Newport. She also moved to Cleveland, Ohio in 1923 or 1924. Returned to Ireland some years later about 1933 or 1934 and got married to Anthony Keane and is in Ireland since. She has 5 children, Loretta, Nancy, Martin, Tony and Paddy. Her husband, Anthony, got shot through the ribs and served terms of imprisonment during the Irish Civil War.

I come 5th in our parent's family but I'll put in Hughie here as I can say more on myself which shall require a lot of space. Hughie my brother was the youngest of our family. He is now 69 years of age and residing in Cleveland, Ohio. Married to Marie Patten and her parents come from Achill. They have two sons and a daughter. Dennis, Hugh and Maura. Dennis and Hugh were in the Vietnam War. Now home in Cleveland, Ohio. Young Hugh was over here this year, 1971 with his father on a holiday. My brother Hughie and I been the two youngest of the family were bought up together and knew each other better than the older ones. In fact, I was his control father and as he got mixed up and was the leader of all pranks committed in the three villages I was always on his trail and giving

out to him. I I don't mean that the boys trick's and devilment as we called it were bad or more or injurious. It was meant to create fun and excitement. In most cases cranky people were the victims. Nature is funny, why is a crank always picked on?

Hughie, my brother, was a good and honest worker at home. He worked for a few years in England. Was in the I.R.A. since he was a boy and was on Active service in the Civil War and got a bad beating up from the Free State Army, a happening I shall come to later in this record. He went to the U.S.A. around 1925 or 1926 and was first a heavy truck driver. Then he went on the Cleveland City Bus Company as a driver. He came home from Cleveland in the early 30's and again in 1939. He went for a trip to London in September 1939 and on arrival there the World War 2 broke out. He was with the big rush of Irishmen and women from England returning to Ireland in September 1939. He was only a few days' home when he got a cablegram from the U.S.A. Authorities to return to Cleveland. He had to go back via London to Southampton and on the S.S. Queen Mary with one of the young Kennedy's whose father was the American Ambassador in London at the time. Only a short time back in Cleveland he was pulled into the American Army and sent overseas to North Africa. Fought in North Africa with General Mark Clark and saw some rough times there. Finished up in Italy and was sent back in charge of prisoners to America. He told me some strange stories about his War experiences in North Africa. Some months after training duties etc. in U.S.A. he got out of the Army and returned to his bus driving in Cleveland and got married. He settled down to his bus driving and got a 40-year's clean record when he finished and has a good pension. He is now working part time for the "Cleveland Plain Dealer" a Cleveland newspaper. His son Hugh jnr. is a fireman. Dennis going to University. Maura his daughter is a chemist and doing medicine.

Of my own place to link up with the family line I shall give it regarding my wife and family before going into events during the war period reminiscences in the course of my life. I was born on the 24th of July 1900 at home in Owenduff and at the time I had a narrow chance for survival due to my mother sustaining a hurt a few days before I was born. I often heard my mother say I was discoloured when born and with much massaging I was brought back to life. I went to Ardbawn old School and when Tonragee National School was built in 1911 I went there to 1917 and finished in the 7th standard. Rosie, my wife, was born on the 25th of September 1910 at her parent's home in Tiernaur. Her father's name was James Joyce and her mother's maiden name was Ann Mc Govern. Both now dead. Their home was at Raigh /Rockfleet. When the family grew up and went away they sold the farm in Raigh and moved in to live in Newport where James Joyce died some years later. He was going up on 80 years. After his death Annie Joyce came down to reside with us until her death. She was over 80 years.

They had two sons and seven daughters viz. Padraic in London, Jim in Dublin, May nee Keane in U.S.A., Anne nee Gray in U.S.A., Nora nee Treacy in Yorkshire, England, Maud nee Chambers, Rockfleet Tiernaur, Peggy nee Halley Australia, Kate died when she was young unmarried. Rose and I were married on the 11th July 1931 in Tiernaur Church by Cannon Thomas Killeen then C.C. of Newport. Commandant Michael Mangan, Glenhest was best man. He died some years ago in London, may God rest his soul. He was my best and trusted friend and the most honest Irish man I ever met. If his patriotic history could ever be written there were not many to equal him as an active soldier of The Irish Republican Army. Katie Joyce (R.I.P.), sister of Rose, was bridesmaid. God rest her she died two years later. As I have said we got married in Tiernaur Church and all I had in cash was £14 and we went to the Erris Hotel, Castlebar for the breakfast and we did not invite a big number. We stayed only one night at the Erris Hotel Castlebar Lane, Castlebar, and as only my old mother was at home I had to return the next day. Gerald Bartley, Clifden, Galway took us home as previously arranged. I became an agent for New Ireland Assurance Co. and Gerald was a Superintendent and

we had arranged to do a canvass for new Insurance's in my area. Gerard was a F.F. T.D. at the time and later Minister for Defence.

My Own family

Before I go into details of my life I'll give my family placing.

We have seven children, Hugh, Nancy, Brian, Rose, Kathleen, Seamus and Maureen. Hugh was born on the 13th of April 1932, just one month after I was released from Arbour Hill, Military Prison, Dublin. He went to Tonragee National School, from there to St. Mary's College, Galway for three years and got his Inter Cert. Booked back again to St. Mary's but Padraic Sweeney MA had opened the Secondary School at Achill Sound and he asked me to send Hughie to him in order to get the school started with advanced pupils. So I did. Michael Joe Sweeney (now a Doctor) also had his booking withdrawn and went to Padraic Sweeney. Hughie did his Leaving and matriculation at Achill Sound School. Then we sent him to Grealys College, Galway for a maths grind and from there to Galway University where he took his B.E. Degrees three years later. He took up a job with Mayo Co. Council and was stationed in Belmullet for some time. Then he went to Lifford, Co. Donegal Co. Council and for two years on housing he served in Letterkenny and Creeslough. Then he went into the Irish Army as a Lieutenant and was stationed at the Curragh of Kildare for a number of years. Spent one year in Collins Barracks, Cork and back to the Curragh and was promoted there, to the rank of Captain. Got married to Mary Haugh who was teaching in Belmullet. The marriage was at St. Muredach's Cathedral Ballina. He built a new house at Green Road, Newbridge Co. Kildare. Was in Gillingham, England for Army Engineers training course. After 8 years in the Army he became Fire Chief in Kilkenny where he is at present. Did fire courses in Belfast, France and Sweden and got Fire Officers Engineering Degree. He has five children.

Nancy was born on the 5th March 1934 and went to Tonragee National School. From there to Achill Sound Secondary School where she got her inter Cert. and Leaving. Then we sent her to Richmond Hospital where she did her General Nursing and obstetrics. After that she served in some hospital in Dublin for a time. Then went into the Army and since then up to the present she is an Army Nurse in the Curragh.

Brian was born on the 16th of September 1936 and went to Tonragee National School. From there he went to Achill Sound Secondary School and reached inter Cert. standard. Went to the Technical School, Cashel and as Hughie was in Donegal he got him apprenticed to the Cunningham Building Firm at Carrick, Co. Donegal and served five years as a joiner and got his Testimonial. Later he spent one year with the Crouch Firm, Dublin in a big machine shop and then to London where he spent some years with his trade. He is at home at present erecting two self-contained flats adjoining the house. The original building was built by my father.

Rose Marie was born on the 6th of July 1938 and went to Tonragee National School. From there to Achill Sound National School and received her Inter Cert. Then we sent her to Sir Patrick Dunne's Hospital for training where she got her Certificate for General Nurse. She worked in some hospital in Dublin for a time and went to London Hospital to do obstetrics but after six months she did not like obstetrics and went back to Edward Road General Hospital to General Nursing. Then she met her present husband Denis McCarthy, Ardgroom, West Cork. They came over from London and got married in Dublin. Went back to London but later came back to Dublin and bought a new house at 35 Santry Close, Santry, Dublin where they lived for some years. They have three children and at present residing at Newport Road, Castlebar where Denis has taken up the butchering trade.

Kathleen was born on the 20th of May 1940. At that time Rose was expecting my death from day to day as I had two operations at Mercers Hospital, Dublin. She had a telegram and letter to expect the worst, as there was little hope of recovery. Kathleen went to Tonragee School and later to Achill Sound Secondary School where she did her Inter Cert. After that she did the Hotel Training course at Bundoran Hotel (G.S.R.), Co. Donegal. From there she went onto Conway's Hotel, Claremorris. Mr. Derrig formerly from Tourmakeady was the proprietor. Kathleen worked as manageress for some years. Then she went to Dublin to her uncle Jim Joyce after his first wife died. Kathleen got trained in hairstyling and worked for some years in Dorset Street. She got married to Rory O'Halloran, Insurance Inspector, and they are at present residing in Passage West, Cork where they built a lovely new house overlooking the river Lee. They have two children Sinead and Grainne.

Seamus was born on the 7th of July 1942 and went to Tonragee National School. From there to Achill Sound Secondary School where he got his Leaving Certificate. Seamus was able to drive my Hillman car at the age of 9 years. We meant to put Seamus through University but after the exams he went to London to work there for the off school period. He met Chrissie Grealis there and they got married and have three children. Seamus works at sub-contracting and has his own home and car over there at present.

Maureen the youngest was born on the 3rd of August 1945 and went to Tonragee National School. Then to Achill Sound Secondary School where she did her Leaving with honours. Then she went to Dublin and did a commercial course on shorthand and typing. She entered the Civil Service- Post Office Branch at the G.P.O. Dublin. Later she left the Civil Service and took up a post with Burroughs Welcome and Company, the International Chemical and Pharmaceutical manufacturing and Research. She got married to Jack O'Hara from Dublin. He is an Electrical Engineer and worked for the E.S.B. After having their first baby, Elaine, they went to New York where Jack is at present as an Engineer with Bell Telephone Co. U.S.A. They were home Christmas 1970 for 4 weeks' holidays. Since returning to New York they have another baby girl.

Scotland and England

Regarding my own life and at this age I'll give as much as I can remember. As I have mentioned before I was born on the 24th of July 1900 the second youngest of a family of six. I went to the old School 2 miles at the end of Tonragee West. It was one big room with no partition, a few long seats, one door entrance road side, a big open fireplace at the east end and inside up against the west gable was always a fairly good stack of turf from the two sods we had to take each morning to school under your oxtier. If you hadn't the two sods you probably got the cane. The big open fire gave good heat to the room. Peter Sweeney and his wife were our teachers and they were pretty hard on our lessons and turned out good scholars. In summer I went to school bare footed and in Winter I had clogs. The procedure was I got a pair of castoff boots, cut the soles and heels off, take them to the local shoemaker and had put on wooden soles. It was a good warm job which gave a noisy sound in walking. I did not get nailed shoemaker boots until I grew up. I was in 4th class when I left Ardbawn and went into Tonragee new school when it was opened in 1913. I continued at school until early 1917. In June 1917 I went to Scotland with Brian Corrigan (Tom) a cousin of mine who was a potato Gaffer for the McAirhna firm of Glasgow. There were several squads travelling and we embarked on an old cattle boat from North Wall, Dublin to Glasgow. On the boat there were many young boys and girls 13 and 14 years of age and we had a rough and sick night at sea. No beds nor seats to rest on but lie on the deck with your bag of working clothes under your head. No food served only what you took from home. Going up the Clyde was slow motion and when daylight came, watching the new land and strange steamers and everything new which helped to forget the hunger, sickness and

sleep. On arrival at Glasgow Docks the excitement commenced, open lorries from the various potato Firms were waiting with their respective Gaffers to transport the Tatle Hokers all over Scotland.

When I came off the old ship I was ordered into an open lorry and with other such sorry people we were driven full jip through Glasgow down to a Bothy in Girvan called Girvan Maine. It was a huge farm with several squads under different Gaffers. There we got something to eat which was cooked out in an old shed. I'll never forget when I was shown where I was to sleep. I think it was a Tommy Horan from the Valley Achill was my bed mate. We were given a bale of wheat straw, cut the wire band off it and spread the rough strong straw in a cow byre. Put on 3 rough hairy blankets - one for under us and two for over us. Packed hay in two sacks for pillows and that was to be our future bed. Men were in one section of the big byres and the woman in another section under the same roof, with only a curtain between male and female. The following morning, we were up at 4 am and after a mug of tea, rough bread and butter, we were hurried out to a field about 10 acres with high green stalks about three and a half feet high. In the squad we had about 35. In the digging with a three flat pronged grape which each digger had was what was called a fore win or fore one. She was a seasonal or experienced girl and she led the digging and she led all the line for the pace of going. Each digger dug two drills and a picker on his or her two knees with a socking cover on the knees picked the potatoes putting the big potatoes in one basket and the small ones in another. They had to trail those baskets up after them until they were full. Then what was called a Trimmer used collect the full baskets and put them in barrels. Later the barrels were taken away on lorries and to the stations for markets all over Great Britain. Then we used to have a break for dinner having our food cooked in an open shed and on an open community fire. The digging and gathering would finish at 4pm. It was a very slavish, underpaid and unsanitary type of work. After work you had no privacy nor other variety only rough and ready dancing. Reading was out because you had nothing to read and no peace to read.

In here at night you could smell the cow dung under your head but being so tired you soon forgot about it. I was getting only 24/- per week and gave 12/- of this to Mary Gallagher (Terry) my cousin to do the cooking for me. She had two brothers there Brian and Ned. When a wet week came along after paying for my food I used not have 6/- for my week. We were shifting from farm to farm throughout Scotland, some better and some worse. I stuck it until November and was very glad to see the end of it and furthermore I went there against my parent's will. The hard lesson taught me I could do better at home if I had only looked for something.

In Scotland, sometimes there was fun and joy in it but no future. The 1914 war in France was on at the time. In year 1918 on account of the big money in England my father decided to go to there and consented to take me with him. We went to a farmer named Hargraves in Barton near Preston in Lancashire. It was nice clean work on the farm and we were engaged for month haymaking. We got £10 each for the month. When the month was finished we went down to Widness to war work in a Chemical Factory. The money was very good there and the work light. There were many Achill men working in Widness at the time, all in good employment. I used to enjoy crossing over on the electric bridge from Widness to Runcorn. It crosses the Mersey and Manchester Ships Canal.

I had contact with the making and packing of chemicals, was getting well paid but always feeling a chemical taste in my mouth and felt like a change of work. My father was working more or less outside the chemicals contact and was quite happy. We had a letter from home saying that my brother Pat had arrived home from the USA Merchant navy. Also we had another letter from home stating that father was asked to take a contract of a new house for Thomas Pat Chambers, Furnace, Newport. Feeling as I was I naturally persuaded my father to return to Ireland, though I knew he preferred to remain where he was until Christmas. Anyhow we came home and my father built the

house for Pat Chambers. My brother Pat went back to the USA after Christmas when the war was over.

I spent that winter at home and early in 1919 I joined the I.R.A. at a meeting up in Tomas O'Donnell's old house held there one night. I remember Pat Lavelle (RIP) was appointed our Company Captain. Those I can remember there, were James Mulloy, Pat Joe O'Malley, Thomas Lynnehaun, Maron and Tom O'Donnell and Joe McIntyre. In the company things went on in the usual routine way with meetings, drill and dispatch work. As was usual the boys migrated to England around June and having nothing to do I decided to go. I went to Widness but no work there. Then I went up to Preston. After long tramping looking for work and through the influence of Big John Corrigan (R.I.P.), a cousin of mine, I got a job on a building site. It was hard work wheeling a half ton weight in a big wheelbarrow on a single plank. All that constant wheeling day after day had the blood out through my feet. I had to sleep at night in a working man's home, which was rough with drunken tramps at night fighting and beds full of bugs and fleas. I got so fed up with this type of life and decided I'd go out to Hargraves farm where I worked last year with my father. I had a nice six weeks on Hargraves farm. The last week on Hargraves farm I got a job for a Peter Shevlin from Bangor Erris. He was years later a Sergeant in the Civic guards and we were in the I.R.A. together. After finishing the hay time, I went into Preston and met a number of Achill men. We heard of a new Reservoir in the making down at a place called Nicky Nook, up in the mountains from Garstang Lancashire. It was a large reservoir putting a high embankment around a valley. Two circular tips carried in on railway locos and a wall of puddle about 15 ft wide in the centre of the two tips coming up with the embankment. We were billeted in huts, bunk type with hairy blankets and full of fleas. I happened to be on puddle pounding wall with timber casing each side, with a big long steel spade with a blade 18 inches long cutting and tramping the puddle and a water hose constantly running to go down in every cut you made. This water, cutting and tramping, made a solid wall to prevent leakage from the reservoir. I was only one day in the loco filling. Each two men had to fill the 4 ton skips with clay, stone and muck and if they hadn't their skips full when the little steam engine was ordered to pull out the 10 or 12 skips they got orders to go to the office for their insurance cards.

I saw men there who started work in the morning and were sacked at 12 noon. This was a daily feature of the job. We stuck it for a fortnight and one day about 15 of us left and went down to Garstang Railway Station and took the train to Clanddnewydd NR Ruthin, North Wales where Johnny Lavelle, Tonragee was a Foreman on a water main for the Cochrane Firm. This was a large pipe from North Wales to Birkenhead which took some 6 years to complete. This was not hard work but rough enough. It was mostly all Achill men and Welsh men. There are very few of the men I knew there alive now. The Welsh language was difficult to understand but gradually I got the words to enable me understand and get through. My job was melting lead for Pat Lavelle(R.I.P.) and Michael Lavelle (R.I.P.) who were pipe joiners by trade.

I returned to home in Ireland that winter and re-entered my I.R.A. Company and carried out whatever I was ordered to do. About June again I went to England and to the same farmer Hargraves, NR Broughton, Preston and had six weeks with him. Later I got a month's haymaking with a farmer up near Inglewhite. I was given a bed upstairs in an outhouse and this farmer was making cheese and had the whey tanks in part of my sleeping room. The first night about 100 rats trotted over me in the bed and the squealing and murder started. I jumped out of bed and lit a candle. I saw the rats swimming around in the uncovered iron tanks of whey and some dead. Next morning, I told Mr Allison, the farmer, about my terrible night and frightful experience. He gave me a different room the following night. My breakfast consisted of porridge and a piece of lettuce, enough for a cow, a cup of tea and nothing else. A cousin of mine Tom Lavelle (R.I.P.) was also engaged but he did not

turn up for a week later. This Tom Lavelle was an ex British Soldier and was in the Royal Artillery Corps and served in Flanders and Mons in the 1914 /1918 War. He was shell shocked as a result. When he did turn up we worked away for a few days. Then one fine day when a lot of hay was shook out and ready for housing, we sat down in the field and refused to work until we got meat and proper food. When Mr Allison saw the position he was in he got his Motor Cycle and went to town for meat and we got good food after that.

Also Tom told me to tell Allison about his shell-shocked condition and to be nice to Tom in every way. When a frog took a jump out of the hay Tom would let a out big roar and go into the bayonet position dancing around the frog for a bayonet charge. Then after an interval he used stick the poor frog with the hayfork and look savagely at the farmer. Poor Allison's heart was in the Zenith. Allison treated us lavishly for the remainder of our term. He told me he travelled so fast going to town on the Motor Cycle for the meat that the telegraph poles appear like teeth in a hair comb. I'm sure he was very glad to see the two of us and our two bags walking down his lane forever.

Tom and I went into Preston and I sent home some money but I had rather rough experience for a month after on account of my two mates. Tom and I met a fellow Paddy Murray, a Tipperary man, who worked for some years in Guinness Brewery, Dublin. Tom being an ex-Soldier got preference for work in jobs. The three of us went down to Liverpool and got work at Lever Brothers, Port Sunlight, Birkenhead. I worked two days and a nice job, but my two mates failed to come to work and would not be accepted when they did turn up. Like a fool I went with them to Manchester and we got work in Trafford Park and after a few days my two men failed to turn out in time in the mornings. We stayed in the most awful kip, a big basement under the street. The first night I was separated from Lavelle and Murray and put in a room with about 20 navvies or better say drunken tramps. We were in single beds and a candle handed to each of us. I was not long in bed when I felt things crawling up my legs and biting like hell. I jumped up and lit the candle and saw the bed swarmed with bugs. No sooner had I the candle lit when an uproar from most of the navvies shouted at me in rough language to quench the candle or they would throw me out. I was frightened the ruffians would go for me, so I blew out the candle, put on my clothes and sat on the side of the bed until morning. I left my two mates then the following night and found another lodge. As at Birkenhead they failed to turn out in time for work through drink. So I got fed up with their company and told them I was going to Wales to Johnny Lavelle. This Johnny Lavelle was an uncle of Tom Lavelle. They also decided to go to Wales but had barely enough of money for the journey. Anyhow between the three of us we managed to buy the tickets, but Murray had to pawn his watch. Lavelle and Murray were physically strong, tall and athletic types. Two of the hundreds of thousands of Irishmen who built England and fought her battles and are now buried in pauper's grave there.

When we got to Ruthin in Wales I was a glad man to be parting company with my two long trail pals. When we arrived at the camps outside Ruthin one was called the " Mayo " hut and I was allocated to another one and a strange co-incident of history who happened to be my bed mate but the famous Lynchehaun who is down in history for burning the Valley House, Achill close on a hundred years ago. Also he injured very badly the then Landlord Lady McDonald. He was then arrested, escaped went to Liverpool and joined the Police there and had a warrant in his pocket for his own arrest. He later came back to Achill and was arrested in a house named Gallagher's Point. Sweeney's. He was sentenced and sent to Mountjoy, Dublin. Later he escaped and got to Cleveland Ohio U.S.A. where he got married. The British Government tried to force the U.S.A. with an extradition order to have him taken back to serve his sentence. A Court was held on James Lynchehaun in U.S.A. but ruled that they had no case to hand him over. Around 1912 /1913 he came back on a bet that he would not be apprehended. He called but made himself known to no one as far as I know. After he returned to

Cleveland he could tell about the Achill people he talked to. Before I go back to continue from Wales I will tell of my first meeting with the "Famous". It was the spring of 1918 one early morning a knock came to our door and my mother got up and opened the door and in walked a Soldier in Canadian Uniform, side cap, putties, a cane stick and a kit bag. My father was in bed and he talked to my father and mother and they told him that they had two sons in the U.S.A. Army in France. He talked things in general but did not say who he was. He asked if we had a horse saying he wanted to go to Mullranny. He said he came from Achill. I was called and asked to put the horse in the cart, which I did. On leaving he talked to my parents in Irish saying he might meet their sons in France. He kissed them when parting and talked local Irish. Mary, my mother, saw a resemblance but could not then place him. It was a lovely calm morning. He was sitting on hillside of the cart and I was on the left. When we reached Bealaboher (*Near Joe Dalys*) the smoke was starting to come up from the houses and he looking at the smoke. He said we soldiers get a great training in the American Army. I'll bet you I can tell you the names of the people residing in each house by spelling the curls of smoke coming up. He looked down at Pat Conway's and started - C.O.N.W.A.Y. - now he said it is a man named Conway who lives in that house. O' Malley's, Corrigan's, Cooney's - the same until he reached the end of the village. Now he said see the training we get in the Army. I was amazed but could say nothing. He was about 6 feet tall and a heavy built man and good looking. When we arrived under the Mullranny Hotel he said I was far enough. He came off and gave me 2/6. Later we heard he was arrested by The Royal Irish Constabulary at Mrs Kilcoyne's, Mullranny where he stayed. He was again sent to Mountjoy Gaol, Dublin. The opinion he gave himself away for some reason only known to himself. Sometime later he was released from Prison and went into plain clothes. Coming in from somewhere he called again to our house but I was not at home. He asked my brother Hughie to put the saddle on the horse and leave him back in Pollranny at his brother Tom's house. The "Famous" went in the saddle and Hughie behind him on the horse. Like a bolt from the blue at Gulletmore Tonragee West, Sgt Hanley and another constable of the R.I.C. jumped up from the culvert and ordered down from the horse. He was walked into Achill Sound R.I.C. Barracks and sent away again to some prison but was out shortly again and for good. He resided for some time with his brother Tom in Pollranny. Later went to England and Wales and spent some years there. He came back to Ireland during the 1939 /45 War and stayed in Pollranny and later took a cottage outside Newport on the Glenhest road and was there for some time supposed to be writing a book on his life but it never appeared. He later went to Glasgow and was buried someplace in Scotland when he died. Onetime I saw in a book a short account of his life. I think the title was "Short Stories of Ireland".

To get back to Wales, it was a rather rough set up. A canteen was in one hut run by a Michael Sweeney from the Valley, Achill, a brother of Peter Sweeney, my teacher. This was a rough joint on Saturday nights. It was like "The Roaring U-P Trail. Huts shifted as the pipe track went on. In the huts as usual you had hairy blankets and no shortage of fleas. I could talk of rough nights there but it is better let the dead rest. Later we got into the town of Ruthin and myself and Michael Cooney (R.I.P.) Pollranny together and got away from hut life. We were quite happy and had a nice time until I left Wales that winter and returned home.

The War of Independence

That winter I re-joined my I.R.A. Company and took an active part in drilling, reorganising and collecting guns and ammunition from anywhere we heard such was to be found. My uncle, Michael Gallagher Bolinglana, Currane was arrested and sent to the Internment Camp, Curragh of Kildare. His son John was on the run and Michael's wife Bridget bed-ridden at home. Early in the New Year 1921 we formed a small active service unit in Achill comprised of Michael Moran, Co. Captain, Dooagh,

John Gallagher (O), Bunaniou, Currane, Austin O' Malley, same address, Tom Sweeney (P), Pollranny, Thomas Lynchehaun, Pollranny, and myself. We got in touch with the flying column, West Mayo but as they and me had not yet sufficient arms we got instruction to operate around our own area for the time being and collect all the arms and ammo. possible. This we did as best as possible and met regularly. We raided houses and places where we had information of shotguns ETC.

During the months of Jan, Feb, March and April we planned a few small ambushes but had only 4 shotguns and a small quantity of ammunition. We held up one R.I.C. man, Brady, and got some dispatches off him and some information. Then in the month of May we made a series of raids for shotguns and Ammo. and got two and some boxes of cartridges. For family reasons I'll not mention the houses we went to but as records of one who got much publicity I will give the true case as it happened. The active service unit were out all night and as we had travelled much the grey dawn was in when we visited the last house.

This was a house, Corrigan's in Pollranny, who were supplying turf to the R.I.C. Barracks at Achill Sound. And as the Royal Irish Constabulary were boycotted at the time our reason for going there was to tell them to stop supplying the turf. When we entered the house and an explanation of our visit was given, one of our men was attacked with a massive fork by a girl named Catherine, who is now in the U.S.A. Also an attack came on another of our men from Polach who is now dead, not then, but years later and he lived to over 70 years. The man who carried the short gun in order to defend himself from a thrust of the fork fired low and Pat got some of the grain of the cartridge in the lower part of the belly. We left and Moran, Gallagher, O' Malley and Sweeney went Currane side. Lynchehaun and I came towards home. Moran crossed in a boat to Derreens and got home to Dooagh. The British Soldiers, Black and Tans, and the R.I.C. were busy all day and that evening they caught Moran and Lynchehaun and took them to Galway Jail. The rest of us went on the run. Lynchehaun and Moran were at a court in Galway and sentenced to a long term of imprisonment. They were sent to Dartmoor Prison south of England. For the sake of truth, I would like to record the following; public gossip had it circulated that the Corrigan's in Pollranny were spies for the R.I.C. and that was the cause of the shooting. No, we had no evidence that they were and did not go there for the purpose of shooting anyone. It was simply a case of self-defence that the shot was fired. Moran and Lynchehaun were released after the truce in December 1921. Moran died suddenly shortly after been released from prison at his home in Dooagh. Thomas Sweeney went to England shortly after the Pollranny affair then to U.S.A. where he died a few years ago.

The Truce Period

The rest of us carried on as best we could up to the truce on the 11.07.1921. A few days after the truce I was appointed Liaison Officer for Ballycroy, Mulranny and all Achill and at that time was Captain of the Tonragee Company, 2nd Battalion, West Mayo Brigade I.R.A. At the time I had about 30 in the Company and later it went up to 60. James Molloy was my 1st Lieutenant, Thomas Corrigan (Pat) was 2nd Lieutenant, Phil O'Malley my Adjutant, James Kilbane my Quartermaster and Tom Cooney O.C. of signals. Together with being Company Captain I was sent all over the Island of Achill to form I.R.A. Companies and gave them lessons in the short Lee Enfield Rifle. Then I was sent into the R.I.C. Barracks at Achill Sound which had been vacated some weeks before the truce. During August 1921 I got orders to build a dugout in my Company area. I chose at the butt end of Abhainn Garbh (river in the present forest in Cortoon townland) near Teach a Cortoon. We and built it by nights and carried New Railway sleepers from Pat McIntyre's cottage up and out the side of the hill on our shoulders in the night to Cortoon for roofing. I'll never forget the hardship and suffering of the volunteers, in Sweeny's Paddy Kirwan and Michael McGuire, now dead. Also Frank Sweeney and

Fr. F. Sweeney, Vincentian order. All the volunteers after a night of such work without sleep had to do their day's work. Funny, we enjoyed this rough life.

During this period, we had orders to commandeer a car or cars of British Landlords residing in our battalion areas for transport purpose. So when I was in Achill Barracks I took Frank Sweeney, Harry McLoughlin and Michael O'Donnell to Claggan, Ballycroy and took Mr Jolly's Ford Model T motor car. He was General Clive's agent. Jolly had the car dismantled but we got the parts and assembled it and got it on the road. This was the first time I drove a motor car. It served us well on organisational work and we used from Achill Sound Barracks. We had our own Policeman and Courts and had to handle ordinary Court cases such as trespass, rows, drunks and malicious damage cases. Also we had to send mental cases to Castlebar Mental Hospital, collect dog licences and porter and spirit taxes. We had to check up on invoices of beer and spirits for the collection of such tax. We had appointed Judges for the local Sinn Fein Courts and clerks.

In August the I.R.A. areas were re-organised all over Ireland, such as the 1st Western Division, 2nd Western Division, 3rd Western Division and 4th Western Division. We were the 4th Western Division under General Michael Kilroy. In August 1921 up a Divisional training camp was set in Sheean, Ballycroy. Company Captains were called there for the first weeks training and the 1st and 2nd Lieutenants for 2nd week. Captains went through a hard course of training for their week or few days.

Before Christmas West Mayo I.R.A. was re-organised and another brigade was set up known 5th Brigade, 4th Western Division with Brigade head office in Belmullet. Achill, Ballycroy and Mulranny was formed into a Battalion and Michael Mangan was Commandant. Mangan was a Glenhest man and the honest and trusted Irish man I ever met. L Power (An Paorach) National Teacher, Achill Beg was Vice Commandant. Lewis Cleary, Ballycroy (R.I.P.) was Company Quartermaster. I was Battalion Adjutant, Anthony McNamara, Dooagh OC of Battalion Police, Sean Lynchehaun was OC Transport, Peter Rowland was OC of Training. Commandant Mangan came out and stayed in our house as the barracks was too cold and damp. Our house was used as Battalion Headquarters. Prior to Christmas 1921 we set up a training camp in Corrymore House, Dooagh. It comprised of offices of the battalion area. The Training Officers were, Jimmy Flaherty and Jack Keane, Westport, both members of West Mayo Flying Column. Jack Keane joined the Free State Army when the split came, Jimmy Flaherty remained with the I.R.A. to the end of the Civil War. He was an Ex Connaught Ranger and a skilled machine gunner. During our last week at Corrymore Camp, Michael Moran, who was with us died suddenly at home. We gave him a Military funeral to Slievemore cemetery and Michael Mullins, Breaffy, Castlebar delivered the oration at the grave side. It was a great shock to us all. After the camp period it was continuous training, drill and parades. Tom Cooney was Battalion Director of Signals and we had him sent to Signals training camp where he got a good knowledge of such and as a result was able to train a signals unit in each Company. We had a Company of I.R.A. in every village all over the country, a military position that Ireland never had before or after the signing of the Treaty with England.

In March 1922 Comdt. Michael Mangan, myself and Anthony McNamara were ordered to go to the 5th Brigade H.Q. Belmullet, which we did. Bartley Hegarty was Brigade OC, Anthony Farrell, Vice-Brigade OC, Seamus Gaughan Adjutant, Comdt. Michael Mangan, Quartermaster. I was OC of the active service unit there. John Fergus, OC of Training, Dick Gibbons, OC of Engineering and Jim Kilroy, OC supplies. There were several others there but I forget their names. The Free State Army were getting recruited by those who took the Treaty side. I remember on two occasions when I had to take the active service unit out as some local Free State member threatened to rush our barracks. During our time in Belmullet Poteen making was bad in the Erris area and we had to go out at night

and destroy the still places. The Poteen was causing a lot of abuse and trouble throughout Erris. We had two cars at the barracks and I used to have to do a lot of driving as we had but very few drivers there at the time. We had an old Chevrolet that I used often drive to Ballina for officer's meetings and all over Erris on I.R.A. work. Mick Carrabine Belmullet was another driver.

The Civil War

The afternoon, Wednesday 28th of June 1922, a message came through to the barracks that the Four Courts was shelled that morning and that the civil War was on. That night in the old Chev. I drove Bartley Hegarty, Michael Mangan and Anthony Farrell to Ballina to an officers meeting, back again that night to Belmullet and again to Ballina the following morning. From Ballina I ran two loads of I.R.A. men to Castlebar Military Barracks. When I arrived in Ballina that evening from Castlebar I had a car accident at the Post Office and caught a Dentist named Dobbin against the wall of a house trying to avoid a Traveller driving another car which gave me no space to get out. This poor man, Dobbin, had a fractured leg and I heard later he spent some time in Hospital. Years after he pulled a tooth from me, but we did not talk about the accident. That night I got another car and drove the three officers back to Belmullet.

The following day I got orders to proceed with my active service unit to Castlebar Military Barracks, so we got packed on lorries and off to Castlebar. From Castlebar a unit was sent to General Billy Pilkington O/C 3rd Western Division and another unit to General Tom McGuire, OC 2nd Western Division. My active service unit was in the unit sent to 2nd Western Division under Tom McGuire. Gerard Bartley was supposed to be in charge of us but he got some illness and did not go. We arrived at Ballinrobe Military Barracks and were there for a week or two. I remember while at Ballinrobe Barracks we had two or three accidental shootings. Young volunteers fooling with loaded guns. We had a very big number in the Ballinrobe Barracks. We packed mines and had lessons on their explosive power. Most of the mines there were electrically detonated. Also we had hand grenades which were made in a small factory in Castlebar. We packed them with T + T and screwed in a detonator cap. The Free State Army was in occupation of a barracks in Mountbellew and it was planned to take it. Transport was lined up on the barrack square filled with petrol, oil and engine tester. Bill Kenny, Kiltimagh was in charge of the transport. Each unit OC lined up his men and had them supplied with a new Mauser rifle (German) and a quantity of ammunition. An officer named Peter McHugh was in charge of convoy and operation. I remember officers such as Tom Powell, his brother Dick Powell, and Paddy May of Ballinrobe. We set off in a convoy of lorries and cars during the night and arrived at Mountbellew at the grey dawn in the morning. I was allocated with my unit to occupy a priest's house across opposite the barracks. We knocked at the back and were admitted in by the maid. I told her to tell the priest which she did. I forget his name at the moment and he was a rather elderly man and not very robust and I apologised and explained our purpose. I got him in a back room for safety reasons. When the first shot was fired a Free State Soldier ran across from the barracks to the priest's door which we opened, admitted him, gave him hands up and took his rifle. Then a shot came through the top fanlight of the door and shattered things around in the hall. The fight was over in a very short time as the Free State Soldiers in the barracks surrendered.

Reference to this attack. I was years later in Mountbellew and called to see Catherine McNamara, Pollagh, Achill who was then maid with Fr Egan. Fr Egan asked me in and we had a long chat and I told him of me been involved in the taking of the barracks. He took me out and showed me the little round hole in the fanlight which was still there. He replaced the priest who was in the house on the morning of attack. The morning of the capture of the barracks we got men on the lorries and cars and headed back for Ballinrobe Barracks. We came through Tuam and got separated from the main

convoy. There was a lorry which I was following up and we took the Tuam - Ballinrobe Road and when nearing Foxhall I been driving a car with 5 of my men in it when we saw the lorry before us crash into a felled tree which was across the road. I had barely time to save my car crashing into the lorry. We jumped out and the big tree was halfway back across the open lorry. The lorry driver was unconscious and had the skin from his neck to the top of his head peeled up one side of his head and his ear was almost severed. I now forget his name. But the one I do remember is poor Tommy Joe Prendergast from Louisburgh who was a unit leader like myself has his head almost severed. We took him down from the front of the lorry and carried him to a hay shed beside a house there. We knew by the discharge of blood that he could not live. We sent for priest and doctor but he was dead inside 10 or 15 minutes. We left a guard and then returned to our base in Ballinrobe as the men were falling asleep. God rest Tommy Joe Prendergast's soul. He was taken home and buried in Louisburgh and had a military funeral.

We were in Ballinrobe for some weeks after on training etc. and our next objection was Mount Talbot near Ballygar, Co. Roscommon. I remember the convoy of cars and lorries set off from Ballinrobe in the afternoon because we had to travel cautiously in case of being ambushed. I remember being with Thomas Hughes on the same lorry. Tom was later executed by a firing squad of Free Staters in Athlone Barracks and as he was a native of Athlone his parents heard the shots that killed their son. What I remember about Thomas Hughes is we were the first lorry in the convoy and Tommy spotted something with his binoculars and ordered the driver to pull up. We got down and took up position and Tommy went ahead to scout but it was ordinary men at some work. We got into the little town of Ballygar at dawn and crossed the bridge over the river Suck. We thought that there would be sentries on the bridge, but there wasn't.

The building in which there were about 25 Free State soldiers was situated in a wood. It was a horseshoe shape with a big open grass lawn in front. Where the Free Stater's were housed was in the centre of the horseshoe and it was impossible to get in by the front as there was no cover. I was ordered to get into the wing - building next to the river and break down doors and walls and get as near as possible to the occupied portion. Peter McHugh was in charge. He was from around Claremorris. The back of the building occupied by Free Stater's was under attack by our own men from the wood, but the building itself could not be reached with blowing down a 10-foot stone wall to get into the back yard. I had gone through about 3 empty rooms or compartments when I found I could go no further without a small mine to blow a wall away. At this time my men had nothing to do so I sent them out of the building to the back in the wood to have some shots at the occupied portion from elevated ground. I put them under Peter Joyce, a Clifden lad. Mark O'Malley from Clifden and I went back into the building we left to examine the room wall for a blast. We returned to go out to contact Field HQ and when we got through the various rooms and downstairs to the entrance to our horror there was a mine place inside the door. As quick as lightning I grabbed the two electric cables and pulled them out of the 10 lb mine. We shouted and had to go out with our hand up to surrender to our own men, ones who came late and took up the first easy position they found. Such a damn mix up and how near our death by our own. Mark O'Malley and I had many a laugh year after about it. Mark is now dead, God rest his soul. Field HQ turned down our request and we went around to the back and re-joined our unit. I am still puzzled about the failure in taking that little garrison. If the man in charge left us at it we would have taken the place. One of our men, a fellow named Harry Burke was taken prisoner found wandering in the woods. We got orders to withdraw and I felt like throwing my rifle into the river Suck. We had a few columns of determined men - but officers?

Incidentally I happened to know two of the Free Staters who were in Mount Talbot. Michael Mulchrone and Tommy Keane, from Glenhest, Mulchrone was in the I.R.A. training camp, at Sheean Lodge, Ballycroy with me in August 1921. Some of the I.R.A. men, some very young lads including a brother of Comdt. Tom McGuire were later put up against a wall at the Magdalene Home near Tuam and shot. The Rev. Mother in charge there some years later showed me the tracks of the bullets on the wall that went through their bodies.

We got back to our base in Ballinrobe and later my unit was sent to Divisional HQ at Brook Hill House, Claremorris. In my unit I'll give all the names I can now remember.

Nicholas Corcoran, a Bank Managers son from Ballina. Mark O'Malley, Ballyconeely, Clifden. Peter Joyce, Clifden and others from Connemara. Anthony Doherty, Barnatra, Belmullet. Anthony Tallot, Belmullet. A McAndrew lad from North Erris. We got stationed in Brook Hill House and Comdt. Tom McGuire and his officer's staff were there. Then I was sent out with my unit to take up out post duty in Ballinlough, Co. Roscommon. We were stationed in McDermott's Hotel, Ballinlough. McDermott had gone to another home outside Ballinlough, so we had the whole run of the Hotel. Free State Company's operated all around Ballinlough and they used to cut the telephone wires at night. I used to send a number of I.R.A. to patrol the railway line, Ballinlough side and on Castlerea side. Our number was small and much night duty gave us a hard time. Nicholas Corcoran and I were in charge on our turns. Nicholas was a saint if ever there was one. Never drank or smoked and was a true patriot and a very mannerly boy.

I think it was early 1923 he was captured around Ballina and the Free State troops were taking some prisoners on a troop train from Ballina to Athlone and Nicholas was one of them. At Knockmore the train pulled up and they took Nicholas out on the line before the engine, put him down on his knees and then put several bullets through his body. In Ballinlough Nicholas and I were great friends and I remember an incident, we had to do a check up on our own men. Two nights in succession we noticed that in the mornings after night patrol some of our men seemed to be under the influence of drink and it was somewhere in the Hotel. I discovered that that there was a cellar in the basement and a few barrels of stout there. I watched and caught two at the act. One was poor Anthony Tallot (R.I.P.) who had experience before at this job, when the ship "Tartar" used come from Sligo to Belmullet. The trick was to beat down an iron hoop, then with a 6-inch nail hammer it in bit by bit and always widening the hole until you, bored through. Then with another vent on top of the wooden barrel the porter came freely. When a couple of cans were out a plug or were rounded and hammered into the holes and the iron hoop with a punch put back in its former place. We stopped that part of the war and had a good laugh later.

Another incident at Ballinlough I remember is: One day wanted a car urgently to take an urgent dispatch to Clonalis House, Castlerea, which the I.R.A. had occupied and I sent out 3 Connemara lads to a garage. I think it was Kean's, to get a car. The man refused to give the car and an altercation ensued with the result this elderly man made a thrust at the I.R.A. man with a huge fork and got him pretty deeply in the chest. One of the boys ran up for me and I got there just in time to save the man's life. The boy that was prod in the chest was a pal of Peter Joyce's and he took up his rifle and the bullet hit the wall 2ft over his head and ricochet out through the roof. I disarmed Peter and got the other fellow dressed by a doctor. To let Peter, cool down I took him with me in the car to Castlerea. Then one day we got three officers sent to our unit. Dr John Callaghan from Newport. An Officer named Malone or Maloney from Tuam and Kit McKeown, a cousin of General Sean McKeown. Kit McKeown was as brave a man as ever lived and later on in the war he was shot dead in Moate, by a Free State Officer named Farrell or Farrelly. Also sent to us was a fellow named O'Hare for fixing phones and wires. Ballinlough then was very anti I.R.A. and we were almost starved

in it. We had to get bags of flour up from Castlebar and get it baked. We had two good friends in Ballinlough. Mr Lang, the Station Master and his wife. She was one of the Hoban's from Castlebar. Mr Lang gave us the use of his car whenever we asked for it. I will come to Mr Lang again later in this. He was in the Dublin Brigade I.R.A. in The Tan War.

With Kit McKeown one day we went up to Castlerea to collect a car from the unit in Ballyhaunis and halfway on our return to Ballinlough the car an old Talbot conked out. I knew it was carburettor trouble and while I was working on it McKeown took up a Guard position as Free Stater's in civilian clothes were active around. I had just the engine running and both of us got in. We hadn't moved 200 yards when two shots were put into the back of the car.

Then one Sunday Comdt. Kit McKeown ordered me to take charge of the church parade, there was about 20 of us in the parade and we marched up to the Ballinlough Chapel on the hill. We stacked the rifles outside and left a guard on them. We took seats both sides up close to the altar and when the sermon came on it was not a religious one but again asking us to go back home and join the Free State Army. Comdt. McKeown told me to get our men out. I gave stand to attention to the men, right and left turn and quick march: The priest Fr McDermott passed not very nice remarks when we were marching out. We marched back to the barracks and continued on with our duties. Also I remember another incident whilst in Ballinlough: One day out on the railway line on patrol duty we met two Free State soldiers with their uniforms on under light macks (*waterproof coats*). When we questioned them they were two Westport boys having deserted from the Free State Army in Athlone and they were walking to Westport. One was Maneen Naughton and I forget the other name. Naughton was out on the run in The Tan War. We took them prisoner and Doctor John Callaghan and I left them back in Castlebar. I was driving Mr Lang's car and on our return that night somewhere near Ballinlough we got a bullet through the windscreen. I managed to keep the car on the road and got to barracks safely enough.

Later my unit was called back to 2^d Western Divisional HQ at Brook Hill House, Claremorris and we were there for a week or so. I remember one day I was in charge of the Guard at Brook Hill House. On the main entrance from the town road to Brook Hill we had two big trees felled across the road and in order to reach HQ you would have to do a detour. At mid-day I got word that one of our transport drivers had rammed the Crossley Tender against one of the trees and that he was lunatic drunk and dangerous. I took a bodyguard down and there he was asleep on the driving seat. He was a big man and as strong as an elephant. I knew he was carrying an automatic pistol and my first worry was to get hold of it. I whispered the others what to do and quietly I got to his hip pocket and jerked up the pistol. As quick as I was he was quicker and grabbed my hand, but the others jumped on him and I managed to get the pistol in my pocket. I'll never forget all the hardship that bully gave us before we got him locked up in the Guardroom. He broke every pane of glass he could see and he was all blood and when the Doctor tried to bandage him he'd tear the bandages off again. It was this night with all the confusion of the madman, when low and behold a phone call came through to Divisional HQ that a troop train had left Athlone for the West. A general call to attention. All available transport got ready. Every I.R.A. man handed his rifle, ammunition and kit. Doctors, Red Cross man etc. We were packed on the lorries and off again to Ballinlough. We arrived there before day light and took up positions from the railway station across the town to the Williamstown Road. I remember I had my unit west side of the station road in between the railway station and the town. Below my unit there was another (under whom I'm not sure) between mine and the railway and down to the lake across the line. The troop train pulled into Ballinlough railway station about 2pm or 3pm. They arrested Mr Lang who spent 2 years in prison from that day. Mrs Lang was phoning Ballyhaunis and Claremorris when she was also arrested but later released.

There were about 2000 Free State troops and about 20 machine guns. On our side we had less than 90 men and no machine gun. Some reinforcements of our men came from the West but as we were in our allotted positions we could not know how many had come. During the retreat bumped into my Brigade OC from Belmullet Bartley Hegarty

having not seen him since June in Belmullet. From this town of Ballinlough to the railway station there are two elevated ridges with the road in the hollow between them. The Free State Army took up positions along the ridge, Castlerea side and the I.R.A. had their positions on the ridge Ballyhaunis side. Across from my position I with the men beside me saw Fr McDermott waving his hat on the Free Staters to come onto their positions. I had him covered twice but put down my rifle. Later in years I was glad I did not fire at him. There was intensive fire for nearly an hour and then the worst happened. The unit at the railway line let the Staters in between the railway and the lake which left us without cover. The general retreat to better positions was ordered and I'll never forget the ground we had to cover. From machine gun fire we were smothered with clay crossing through a ploughed field, taking whatever cover we could find to let others cross or come up, then making a quick sprint and down again. We managed to meet the main road to Ballyhaunis and crossed it to ground with high fences. I managed to keep my unit intact. We had grouped at a place and had a crucial meeting at which I remember there were men from one a John King from Tourmakeady. John had a tunic with brass buttons and somehow got out from our position. We saw a Free State soldier coming towards us. We had him covered but as he was alone we did not give him hands up until he was within a few yards of us. When he saw King's brass buttons he thought we were a bunch of his own men. We made him prisoner and he told us he was a Dublin man. He had a sore nights walk with us after and nearly got us shot on account of his uniform amongst us. We got a guide to lead us the way across during all that night through bogs, swamps and streams until we came out on the main road a mile west of Ballyhaunis. We were starved, wet and sleepy. I remember meeting there near Ballyhaunis Professor Joe McDevitt, a Northern. We were packed into a couple of lorries or three and near Brickens some fools seeing the Free State soldier with us on the lorry thought we were all Free Staters and fired at us. We jumped off, took cover and after a while the firing stopped and I got a going over for allowing the soldier in such uniform to stand up so openly in the lorry. We got to Ballinrobe and met Michael Kilroy and Tom McGuire there. They decided that we return to our own Division 4th Western. Comdt. Kilroy took us back to Castlebar and thank God there wasn't a man lost out of my unit during our service in the 2nd Western. When we reached Castlebar we thought we'd get a rest and a sleep as we were three or four nights and days without sleep or rest and had practically very little to eat. On landing into the barracks square they were burning all the blocks and after something to eat down town, I was ordered out to Manulla junction to take up position at a fence covering the main road from Balla as the Free Staters were expected to come at any time towards Castlebar. My problem all day was going from man to man to waken them up from sleep. At night fall Dr Madden (R.I.P.) came to me and asked me to parade my unit at Manulla junction. We were told we were going to Ballyvary and going down the railway line that night, marching in line at each end of the sleepers. It was sleep walking and when you went down after on the end of a sleeper you then woke up. It was terrible and you could never forget. I got my men billeted in one house and every 15 or 20 minutes I was shook up, the men could not sleep due to exhaustion and fever in the brain. They had gone beyond sleep and rest. I went out and searched up Dr Madden and told him my story. God bless him he went out and got 2 bottles of brandy and sedatives. After the drink and the sedatives, they had a hell of a job to get us back to life and stand on our feet the following day. At nightfall the following day we trudged on to Parke.

We were now in barracks no more and on the hillsides. Spent that night in Parke and Burren the following night marched across the mountains to Glenhest. We had about 200 men in the column.

After we crossed the road at Beltra up into Glenhest a Free State cycle column passed through from Nephin to Castlebar, and at Beltra shot dead Ned Hegarty, a brother of Bartley Hegarty and Paddy Hegarty.

We arrived at the village of Cloontafinna, the best republican village in Ireland. We were lined up 4 deep and addressed by Comdt. General Michael Kilroy and ordered to billet our units around Cloontafinna, Skerdagh and Glenhest. An incident happened about the end of the address. Tommy Heavey from Westport was ordered by Kilroy to go across to McGovern's Post Office for some special purpose. When leaving Tom Heavey came to me and asked me to accompany him to McGovern's. I was about to come out of the ranks when Michael Kilroy spoke to me and said I had my unit to billet and could not go. Tom went off on his own and when he got out on the main road at McGovern's he was arrested by a unit of the Free State Army and spent two years in prison. If I had gone with him I'd be captured also.

I remember the night after crossing through Glenlara and poor Paddy J Rutledge, Solicitor, later for Justice, hanging onto my shoulder, as he was a sick man that night and he had a short Mauser rifle on his shoulder. We billeted that night in Srahmore and spent some weeks around Newport. During our time around there was a great scarcity of flour and a shipload of flour was expected into Westport. For days and nights, a constant lookout was kept for the ship and at last it arrived into Clew Bay. It was boarded by a party of I.R.A. under Joe Baker and taken into Newport Quay because the Free State Army were stationed in Westport. The Staters had not occupied Newport at the time. When the shipload of flour arrived at Newport Quay previous plans were put into operation. Lorries, horse carts, donkey carts, cars etc. were all mobilised and the discharge of the cargo was soon affected. Flour went to Kilmeena, Glenhest, Newport, Srahmore, Tiernaur, Ballycroy, Achill and Currane. The Westport Merchants it was intended for got an awful surprise at the secrecy of the operation. The Free Staters were preventing any flour coming west of Westport as it was the stronghold of republicans.

A couple of months later the Free Staters came to the Newport area. They used to take bags of flour out of Republican houses and put them into Free State houses. Then at night the I.R.A. boys used to come around and put the flour back again into the Republican houses. The name on the flour bag covers was " St Patrick ".

I remember at this time going home to see my parents as I had not seen them since last March. I stayed with them for some hours as I had to return to my unit as arranged. After returning to Newport and to my unit, the Free State Army came in and occupied Newport and things started to get action again. I with my unit were out Glenhest side when an ambush was planned and one fine Sunday I proceeded with my unit and at 2pm occupied the block of houses at the mills. McGuire's were the owners. Then on the hill over the Newport river and House I was in, another unit under Dannie O'Donnell took up positions. When I had my men positioned in McGuire's at each window and door, I went out in my uniform and rifle and was seen by a woman whom I knew, but I'll not give her name. When she got back into Newport Town she told the Free State Army that she saw a Bolshie (as we were called) at McGuire's door. Immediately after, the Free State Army came out by the church and convent to surround the house I and my unit were in. They managed by a fence cover, to get down pretty close to the house due to one of my men who flunked it at the window observation post when the firing started by Dan O'Donnell's unit. Quite a few bullets came through the upper windows but Dan O'Donnell's unit made them to retreat back to town. I got two or three of my men at the old mills on road guard and a car came along from Newport, which was held up, and who was in it but a wounded Free State soldier who got shot on the hill coming down to surround the house my unit was in. I had a look at him and knew he was badly wounded and let them off

Immediately for Castlebar Hospital. He was a man named Sullivan from near Binghamstown Belmullet. He died in Hospital that night. May the lord have mercy on his soul.

Some days later I remember to spend a day and a night under Comdt. Kilroy waiting in ambush for a troop train at Rossow, Gortawarla, up by the fence from the railway cottage. Then the column went back and into smaller units around Newport. The Free Staters had a block house or guard house on the bridge at Newport railway station, Chapel Road. One morning Michael Kilroy asked me to take a man with me and snipe the block house from Jackson's Hill, South - West of the post. I took Red Tom Cooney, Tonragee, one of my old company, on which I could rely on to the last. We had two Lee-Enfield rifles and about 100 rounds each of 303 ammunition. Got down at back of Giblins and Caher bray over the top of the seashore and crawled over the top of Jackson's Hill.

The cover was bad and we put two stones before our heads and started to fire when we saw activity around the block house. After a time, the Free Staters got a Lewis gun trained on us. Bullets were ricocheting off the stones at our heads and a furrow from bullets was cut between us. Getting too hot each one on his turn crawled back on his belly for a better position until the hill covered us. Then we got back the way we came and not in time as some of the Staters who were down at the Quay started to move by the shore to cut us off. I often think poor Tom Cooney, who is now dead, was a brave soldier and reliable. God rest his soul. Later on I got orders to go with my unit to Gortawarla railway bridge and blow it up. I had Paddy Keane, Tiernaur (R.I.P.) as engineer in my unit. At nightfall we went to Feehan's, Rossow and got 2 ten pound mines. I positioned the unit at the railway cottage, Newport side, as the Staters were in Newport. I'll never forget the jolt the fusing of the mines gave us. We dug two holes, one each end of the bridge, under the sleepers and rails each side. We placed down the mines in the holes opposite sides and at each end of the bridge. Paddy was Newport side and I was Westport side and covered and packed down the mines. Each of us had a box of matches and left down our bandoliers and rifles. Paddy shouted over to me to light my fuse. I put my coat over my head and scratched the powder end of the cord and lit it. I picked up my rifle and rushed towards Paddy. When I reached Paddy he was cursing and stated he could not get his fuse to light. He shouted on me to run back and cut my fuse and just when I was looking for my knife to do so, Paddy shouted he had his lit. When I came across Paddy was picking up his rifle and kit and I tripped on him and the two of us were knocked to the ground. It being a dark night we had to abandon some of our kit and run for our lives. When the first bang went off we jumped together down the slope of the embankment and put a coat over our heads where we were together as we had only one coat. My God there were stones and gravel coming down on top of us for 20 minutes. With the unit we took up ambush positions all night. Next morning with day light Paddy Keane and I went to examine the effect of the blast. The bridge from wall to wall was cut off and a piece of rail about 3ft long was fired across the main road to the side of the hill about 150yds distance and the other two rails were little ram's horns. We spent a whole week at Gortawarla holding up cars for dispatches between Newport and Westport. At last I had to contact Field HQ for to get relieved from the post for a rest for my men. I was here on 23rd or 24th of August we heard of the death of Michael Collins. Also we captured two Free State Officers in plain clothes on their way to Westport.

Kilroy with some units were at this time in action around Ballina which they took. Also in the fight at Glenamoy. About a week later a convoy, under Dr. Madden, we went to Glenamoy for rifles and ammo captured there by Kilroy, Baker etc. We travelled via Mulranny, Ballycroy and Bangor. It was a very dark night but dry. We had about 10 cars and some lorries. The Free State soldiers left Newport and went back to Westport. About this time, it was decided to build an armoured car, so Mulranny was the venue. There was a big boiler at Mulranny Hotel, similar to an oil tank. It was bolted onto the body of Crossley Tender and steel plates got from the windows of R.I.C. Barracks were bolted

along the sides and out over the engine. The principal man on the making of this armoured car, called "The Queen of the West", was Tom Moran, No. 9 Mulranny, as he was a mechanic and fitter by trade. Also there was Jim Moran, Tiernaur, who was a crack marksman with a rifle. Jim had a Mauser rifle with brass bull nose bullets which could bore holes in steel. This helped to eliminate a lot of hand boring.

There were a few more men with Engineering and blacksmith experience. One I remember was Christy Breen from Tipperary. This work of building the armour car was kept very secret and most of the I.R.A. did not know what was going on. I was on duty at Rosturk with my unit all during the operation. Then one day I got orders to commandeer all bicycles around the place, and anyone needing repair parts or tyres were sent on to Mulranny for the needful. Then we were allocated a bicycle each for which we were responsible for return.

Then one day the armour car was ready, only unit leaders had confidential and personal knowledge of our destination. The cycling columns went first and travelled via Newport, Castlebar Road to Islandeady Across at the railway station and came out on the Erriff Leenane road. Then on to Leenane and Letterfrack. The same day a column under Comdt. John Gallagher, North Mayo Brigade, left by a convoy of cars from around Knockmore and arrived at Kylemore, Connemara. The armour car "Queen of the West" and other lorries and cars came up behind the cycling column. We dumped the bikes in Letterfrack and stayed there that night. I remember I had a bad cold and feeling rather sick. Next evening, we marched from Letterfrack to Clifden our destination. At Skies (*Sky Road*) we had a rest and had tea in houses. I was in Tom Whelan's father and mother's house (Whelan executed in Mountjoy prison 1920). We marched and surrounded Clifden town before daybreak. There were two barracks in Clifden Town. One an old R.I.C. on the main entrance street and the other above it called Sunnybank opposite the Chapel. Prior or earlier in the night the column under Comdt. John Gallagher, all men from around Ballina, were sent and surrounded Marconi Station at Ballinaboy about 6 miles south of the town of Clifden. Marconi Station was occupied by about 30 Free State soldiers. We knew their orders at Marconi Station was to surround us if ever Clifden was attacked. Gallagher's orders were to keep then back in such event. My unit was from the Chapel down to the Courthouse. It was a lovely calm morning when daylight broke. From my position we saw two Free State sentries marching from the Post Office down to the barracks at the end of the street and up again. This was the sentry beat. We could hear knocking on backdoors of every street by our men trying to gain entry also dogs were barking like hell. The sentries used stand wondering what noise was going on, then they'd continue on their beat. Our orders were not to fire until two blasts of a whistle went. Then somewhere from one of our men up the town a shot went off accidentally. We could have shot the two sentries but puzzled by the shot and no whistle blast we let them get back into the barracks. Then the whistle went and the attack was on.

The "Queen of the West" came slowly down Chapel Street and a wild cheer from our men went up. In the armour car were Matty Flaherty, driver from Knock, Spiddal, Galway. Tommy Joe Gibbons, co-driver from Quay Road, Westport, Jim Gray, Engineer from Pollagh, Achill. Paddy Keane, Co-Engineer from Tiernaur, Carrowbeg. The armour car went down Chapel Road, turned up right up the Main Street, and back to the corner house barracks. The two Engineers were about to drop out the mine through the side shutter at the back end of the armour car when a Free State soldier crept out from the front door of the barracks under cover of the sandbags which were erected there and managed to get a hand grenade in between the front right wheel and the steel plating on the engine which badly buckled the wheel. Jim Moran Tiernaur, was the officer in charge of the crew inside the armour car and on seeing their dangerous position stopped the dropping of the mine as it would blow up the armour car. We saw the armour car limping across the street and guess what happened.

The four men got out the front and into houses under cover of the shade of the "Queen of the West" which was left to repose for the rest of the day. The fight dragged on all day with no apparent sign of success. Tunnelling through buildings to the lower barracks under Jack Feehan, Divisional Quartermaster failed and had to be abandoned. As I have already mentioned my unit was from the Chapel to the Courthouse and once through carelessness, talking to the bell-ringer beside the Chapel corner wall support, I exposed my head around and a bullet from the loophole of the lower barracks hit the stone at my face and the gas from the stone and the bullet knocked me to the ground. One of my men pulled me to cover before other bullets came and they and I were surprised to find I wasn't even wounded. I remember after going down to the Courthouse to have a consultation with Charles Gavin, Westport, who was in charge of the unit there. I got back to my unit again and now it was getting late in the afternoon and we got word from Field HQ that they were considering calling off the battle.

In charge of the operation were as far as I remember were Comdt. Peter Joe McDonnell, Leenane, Comdt. Jack Feehan Leenane, Brigadier J. Conneely, Leenane, Dr. Chris Macken, Galway and I think Paddy Higgins, Galway, who O/C Training was on the Field HQ staff.

When we heard of the proposed decision a number of officers and the men had a meeting and we decided at all cost to take Sunnybank first if possible. Then we pulled our units out of the old positions and surrounded Sunnybank Barracks. We got a long ladder. Then we got a big concentration of fire directed on the windows which were sandbagged inside. First a man named Jock McCormack, a Scottish man, who was in the I.R.A. and Martin O'Malley, Cushleeka, Muiranny, both went up the ladder to the roof. One had a hammer and broke the slates but the ceiling inside prevented getting hand grenades down to inside the two-storey building. This idea was abandoned and we took the ladder down and got a 10 lb mine to the butt of the building and blew out a big hole in the wall of the barracks. After the mine went off the Free Staters surrendered and came out with their hands up and white flags. I remember going in with Jim Moran to collect the arms and ammunition. We collected approximately 18 rifles, 1 Thompson Machine Gun, 1 Lewis Machine Gun, a good supply of ammunition and some pistols. The sad memory of this entry into Sunnybank Barracks I remember is when we entered the main room there was a young Free State soldier lying on the floor. I went over to him and asked him how he was. He looked up at me and did not answer but started calling for his mother. His leg was broken and bleeding profusely. We immediately got a stretcher and carried him down to Lydon's Hotel and got a doctor to attend him, but the poor boy died that night. May God rest his soul.

After Sunnybank was taken we concentrated all our men on the lower old barracks. I remember, with Jim Moran and the captured Lewis gun, ripping lines of slates from the eaves to ridge tile of the lower barracks with bursts from the Lewis gun. In the evening or an hour after the fall of Sunnybank the garrison of the lower Main Street barracks surrendered. All the Free Staters were marched up to a big school and a guard put on them. When the last soldier came out of the lower barracks he told us that Comdt. O'Malley who was in charge was inside and would not surrender. Matty Flaherty from, Knock Spiddal and I were ordered to go in and talk him out. When we went in arms at the ready, he was standing at the top of the stairs in full uniform and his Webley 45 revolver in the holster strapped to his leg. We gave him hands up but he refused to do so. Matty told me to go up the stairs close to the banisters and that he would keep O'Malley covered with his rifle.

I also kept him covered in case he moved for action. He was watching the two of us and when I reached his side I pulled his revolver up from his holster and tore the lanyard from his epaulette and marched him down the stairs before me and we got him out onto the street. His girlfriend a Miss Lee

was on the street and put her arms around his neck and kissed him saying, " the murderers have got you ".

Throughout the rest of the war I managed to hold on to Comdt. O'Malley's revolver and have it yet with me for a memento of Clifden. Both barracks in Clifden now taken by us our attention was then directed to the operation at Marconi Station. My unit with other units were ordered to get aboard transport lorries and cars and proceed to Ballinaboy and with us were a Free State Officer and Jim McGoff, a Northern I.R.A. man. They carried a dispatch, jointly signed by Comdt. O'Malley's staff and McDonnell Staff of the I.R.A.

This dispatch stated that the two barracks had surrendered, and a reply was to be given as to whether they continue the fight or surrender. As previously stated a column under Comdt. John Gallagher was sent to Ballinaboy before daylight and took up positions there and prevent the garrison in Marconi from surrounding us during the taking of the Towns two barracks. This did actually happen as anticipated and the fight at Ballinaboy was fierce and long with two I.R.A. men and two Free Staters killed. Our men killed were Thomas James and Paddy Morrison both from Knockmore, Ballina. One of these boys was in a bad cover position and could not get out of it, with the result he decided to surrender and left down his rifle and came out with his hands up.

The Free Stater to whom he surrendered shot him dead when he was within a few yards of him. Comdt. Gallagher's column managed to hold the line and the Free Stater had to retreat back again to Marconi Station, which is on the hill to the south of Ballinaboy.

Into the cottage at the end of the buggy line - narrow gauge railway line, buggies drawn by a small locomotive engine from main road approx. two miles up to Marconi Station. In this small cottage near the main road two bodies of the dead men were laid. One I.R.A. man and the other a Free Stater. When we reached Ballinaboy after taking Clifden, we encircled Marconi Station and sent in McGoff and the Free State Officer with the dispatch and on hearing the official news of the fall of Clifden, the garrison at Marconi surrendered. We got approx. 30 rifles, 2 or 3 Machine Guns, a lot of ammunition and small arms.

I and my unit were put in charge of the prisoners and we marched them down the buggy line. It was night when we reached the cottage at the end of the line and I remember I had approx. 23 prisoners. I halted the prisoners outside the cottage (the name of the owner I now forget) and told them four at a time to go in and say a prayer for the repose of the souls of the dead inside. When they had finished I went in and going down on my knees I felt the fall through fatigue too fast, so to cushion the fall to the flagged floor I put my hand before me onto a sack containing something I was not then aware of. I felt my hand getting wet from the contents and when I looked at my hand it was covered with blood. I cleaned my hand to some extent on the sack and when I stood up and looked at the two dead Irishmen. I asked the man of the house what was in the sack beside the doorway. He told me it was some of the clothing of one of the dead men which had to be taken off for some reason.

I went outside and turned my back to the formation of prisoners I was in charge of and gazed for a silent time on the beautiful calm full moon which had arisen above the 12 Bens. I could not bring myself to speak, but thought and said to myself oh God, what has it come to? I thought if it were an Englishman and an Irishman that were dead inside there might be some reason to rejoice in the victory, but to think they were two Irishmen killed fighting each other. It gave me a very sad feeling over the curse of Civil War. I was aroused out of my reverie when a dispatch rider arrived and told me that my unit must march the prisoners all the way into Clifden, as no transport was available. Fatigued, tired, sleepy and hungry we marched in approx. 6 miles and handed over the prisoners to

HQ Staff. The other prisoners were marched down to the main street from the school and all prisoners were lectured on the National position of the Republic and told where they stood regarding the sell-out of the Republic by their leaders. The prisoners were then dismissed as we had no prisons or places to detain them. I remember walking on broken glass everywhere and the two barracks blazing away as they had been set fire to. Also I remember the explosions of some bullets and hand grenades going off, some which were not taken out when evacuated. I got tea and sandwiches for my unit and then had to comply with the General Order to evacuate the town of Clifden as soon as possible in the event of Free State reinforcements coming from Galway City. I remember a laughable incident. There was in my unit a Red Cross man whom I missed when mobilising the unit for going to Ballinaboy and on our return and after the tea and the order to evacuate, I made a roll call of my unit on parade and found my Red Cross man was absent. I made enquiries and I was told he went for a drink, hence his absence from the Ballinaboy operation. I remember him the night marching from Letterfrack to Clifden having no leggings. When the fight was over in Clifden he got from the Free State Quartermasters Stores new red leggings and a supply of Red Cross aid. Then he had a meal and a few more drinks and naturally having nothing to do he met a girl and they went for a walk out the Kylemore Road. They sat down by the side of the road and talked a while. Anthony fell asleep due to fatigue and want of sleep.

The girl got up and left him and when Anthony awoke he was minus his girl, new leggings and equipment. The lot was stolen from him. I picked him up when we were on our way for Leenane.

The " Queen of the West " had to get a wheel on and she was taken to Derrynasliggaun Lodge, down in the wood by Killary Bay. Some weeks after the Staters got the " Queen of the West " and took her to Athlone. We never saw her again. We came to Leenane that night and most of the column billeted around Leenane area. That night we got coffins for Thomas James and Paddy Morrison and left them in Leenane Chapel. The following day we had mass in Leenane Chapel for the repose of their souls- then took the two draped coffins out to two cars. We gave them a military funeral for a mile and a firing party fired a volley over the cars and the two cars set off for their native place Knockmore, Ballina. The column returned by cars, lorries and bikes to the Newport area. General Michael Kilroy who was not at the Clifden operation, as he was down the South of Ireland at a conference of Divisional Officers and Headquarters Staff. It was some important conference of Military Officers from all over Ireland. After the column returned from Clifden, North Mayo men went back to the Ballina area and the rest operated around Newport, Westport and Castlebar.

I remember one attack we had on Castlebar and a Free Stater was shot on the Mall. My unit came down Spencer Street and we joined Paddy Horkan with a unit at the Courthouse. The Free State garrisons were then no nearer than Castlebar and Westport. With the column things were routine and normal around Newport and I decided to come home and see my parents and on the way back to my unit I learned at Mulranny about noon that the big operation during the night of the Free State Army from Athlone, Castlebar, Ballina and Westport had advanced with thousands of men and an 8 pounder - Artillery piece and had surrounded Newport. I got to Newport in the evening and joined my unit. It was about the 10th or 11th of November 1922. Comdt. General Michael Kilroy was captured and wounded at Kilbride, above Newport and several of our men were taken prisoner. The operation on the Free State side was under the command of Tony Lawlor. There were two Free State soldiers from Westport shot dead at Kilbride. None of our men were killed but another Free State soldier was shot in Newport. Here I wish to mention the brave act of a girl named

E. McManamon, when the fight was on and the 8 pounder going she walked out and cut the bandoleer off a dead Free State soldier and took the ammunition back to some of our men who had run out of ammunition. That night we got a general order to mobilise at Skerdagh and Comdt. Dr.

Madden took over. I remember we had approx. 200 men. About midnight we crossed the Newport river on the stone steps at Glenhest up near Beltra lake and through Derryloughan and came out on the main Castlebar to Newport road at Logjudy. Then across country to the Partry mountains, Sraheen, Derreendafderg, and Kinuary.

Imagine my forced march from Owenduff to Newport, and across country from Glenhest to the Partry mountains. The Column got billeted in the villages all around and I remember going to bed in a house, Mrs Maloney's, who had a little shop. Tired, sick and sore I went to bed at daylight and when I awoke in the evening I could not put my feet in my boots, as they were swollen and bleeding. Poor Mrs Maloney got hot water, linen bandages and ointment to dress them. I had to use linen cloth in my boots for days after instead of socks. The following night the column moved further back in the glens of the Partry mountains, to Glantrague on the borders of Connemara.

The people there were poor but god bless them very good to us. We slept in houses where the cattle and a horse were in, and I remember one house where in a bed in which another man and myself slept, a horse putting his head across the low partition and making a big snort into our faces which woke us up. After we went for a week to the big lodge at Aashleagh Falls, source of the Killary. I happen to be in charge of the Guard one night. Had 3 men on the Leenane road, 3 men on the Erriff road and 3 men on the Bundorragha road. I had to inspect the outposts several times during the night and one post I found them drunk with poteen. I had to get them disarmed and taken back to Aashleagh House. Naturally I had to do some scrapping to get the guns off one or two but this is the case in any Army.

Next we moved to Kilmilkim and Maam bridge. I remember a cycling corps of the Free Staters running into us one day at Maam and they got away all but one who was shot. We put the remains in an old Courthouse or Dispensary and at night Mattie Flaherty, Knock Spiddal, and myself were asked to do Guard at the gable of the Courthouse. Mattie had the nose of his rifle on one of his boots and his forehead resting on the butt which was held by both hands. He fell forward and when he hit the ground it did not awake him. I thought he was shot but I heard no report and I had to shake him twice before he awoke. We had a good laugh. Later that night the column tramped back into and Glencroff in the Twelve Bens. We stayed there for a few days and I'll never forget the starvation we got. We had no bread only potatoes from the pits of small farmhouses. In the glen there were plenty sheep and we used to shoot two or three at a time and as we had a butcher named Owen Kilbane from Belfarsad, Achill, with us he used to do the cleaning. We made turf fires outside and boiled the meet in big pots. I saw most of the men eat that mutton half raw because we could not get it boiled properly due to wet turf and due to the hunger of the men not having patience to wait. There we lived on poor quality of potatoes and half-raw mutton for a few days. Thence we moved from Glenglosh and Glencroff onto Tullycross and Renvyle and stayed there for two days more. Then one evening we got word that we were surrounded by thousands of Free State troops who had positions taken up from Killary Bay to almost the top of the mountain east of Tullycross and on the south side the 75 troops had taken up positions from Letterfrack to almost the top of Tullycross mountain. We had information that the pincer movement was to close in on us at grey dawn. A meeting of officers was held and a decision was made. The Atlantic Ocean to our west we had no way to go but up straight to the peak of Tullycross Mountain. Some in the few available small boats at our disposal got away to Inishbofin and Clare Island, but to get 200 men or 150 out of the ring surrounding us was a problem. After dark we proceeded to climb. In the column we had a Lewis gun and a machine gun crew under Jimmy Flaherty from Westport. Jimmy found he had not a full crew in the circumstances and asked me and my unit to assist him. I had got training in a camp some months previous on the Lewis gun from Jimmy.

So carrying the pans, Magazines and extra ammunition and parts together with our own kits was a heavy load. When we reached near the peak of the mountain there was nothing but sheer cliff and rocks. One man used go up with only a rifle to a ledge then stick it down and pull up another man. Then with a rope pull up the cumbersome stuff. This slow procedure continued until we got all the men to the peak. To our right and left the Free Staters were not far from us on either side. We managed to get through the pincers before the moon got up and we proceeded down the mountain slope towards the Leenane Kylemore road. I shall never forget the line of about 150 armed marching men on the brown mountain with a lovely moon shining. There was complete silence all through except a whisper passed back the line when an order was given. We crossed the main road and into Glencroff and in this Glen there I think there were only two houses. We had some bread with us and some tea and we managed to get a short rest and tea in Glencroff.

I remember an incident in the house my unit was in, as we were having tea. I had a few men out on Guard duty. Then I sent out a few more to relieve them, and when the relief Guard came in, one man hit the butt of his rifle down rather heavy on the floor with the result, he having left a bullet up the breech, it went off and the bullet nearly hit a child in bed upstairs. We all got a big fright over it.

I think the owners of the house were O'Neill's. After the tea and rest, we set off again. We had a talk about who knew the way into Glenglosh (or Glenlosh) and Paddy Higgins and I thought we knew the way as we crossed it before. The moon got a bit cloudy and we thought we were over the low ridge dividing the two Glens. We took a turn to the right and after an hours walk didn't we land back in Glencroff again. Well Paddy and I got hell. We set off again and kept well to the mountain

behind Leenane and into Glenglosh and across the mountain at Padraic O Máilles dugout and down to Kilmilkim and to Shanafaraghaun, Finney and Glantrague near the Partry Mountains where billeted early in the morning. Oh such a terrible forced march from Tullycross out the mountains at the back of Leenane and across the main road at Kilmilkim to near the Partry mountains. I was glad to be relieved of the load of machine gun ammunition. We stayed a couple of days on the Partry mountains and eventually worked our way to the Newport Glenhest area.

During the time we were in the Connemara area a small column under Jack Connelly, Tiernaur were in the Half Parish area around Brockagh and one morning this small column was surrounded and a man of the column, Paddy Mulchrone was shot dead and Anthony Keane (my brother-in-law), Derryhillagh, Newport had a bullet through his ribs. Some were captured but most got away. Anthony Keane some weeks later escaped from Hospital though guarded by the military. He had a pretty rough time often carried from place to place. The Free Staters this time were now in Newport and Mulranny Hotel.

It was now drawing near Christmas and a bad winter it was. The columns now got into small units in order to avoid any big capture. A few nights or a week before Christmas 1922 all the units were called to Srahmore and we got orders to proceed to our home areas and take a rest for two weeks or so and report back again in Srahmore at a given time. The evening we divided up it was a terrible bad day with rain, snow and storm. About eight of us decided to get to Tiernaur that night and we were across the black river in Srahmore. We went by Glenamong and when we got as far as the river coming down the Glen into the big Srahmore lake the river was in full spate. It was coming near night so we would have to trudge back again to Srahmore, so we had a talk on the matter and decided to face the river. I being a swimmer agreed to take the lead and strapped my rifle and kit well to my body and got across though taken down stream for a bit. Then I looked for a narrow part of the river where from hips deep I could reach them with my rifle by stretching it out and pulling them to my side. This way I managed to get them all across. Wet to the skin and cold we trudged on

and tried to get across the hill to Tiernaur but some range of-cliff prevented us and we had to turn left and go by upper Lettermaghera. We got on the old hill road from Lettermaghera to Glendahurk and when we were descending to Glendahurk at an old bridge we got the halt " Who goes there ". It was a very dark night so I whispered my boys to take cover which they did immediately. Again the call " Who goes there " and I recognised the voice and I asked aloud " Is that you George ". George was the column name that was on Dr. John A Madden since the time of the Tans. We got into conversation across the old broken down bridge and needless to say we all felt much happier. Madden told us the area

of Tiernaur was alive with Free State soldiers on both sides of us and he and another man were out on Guard duty letting a few fatigued I.R.A. men have a cup of tea in McNulty's, of Glendahurk. We explained to Dr. Madden the ordeal we had gone through in crossing the river and not a stitch dry on us. The I.R.A. men who were with me in crossing the river from Srahmore - Pat Feehan, Kossow, Newport, (still living to date). Owen Kilbane, Belfarsad, Achill. Anthony Barrett, Erris. A Carolan lad from Murrevagh and I forget the rest.

Pat McNulty's was the only house in Glendahurk and he had three sons on the run. Dr. Madden came back with us to Glendahurk and we thought that we might be able to dry our clothes, first we had hot tea and some food to eat. Then like a bolt from the blue a dispatch rider came in and told us the Staters were heading for Glendahurk. There was a large dugout far in Glendahurk and we got orders from Dr. Madden to leave McNulty's at once and proceed to the dugout. My God, in our wet clothes we had to set off for the dugout and by this time we had a big number of men. In the dark and cold we pulled ourselves, rifles and wet kits and wet clothes into the dugout. We had a candle and lit it but soon it was useless as the steam from our wet clothes drying from the heat of our bodies caused a vapour that was so thick you could not see through. The dugout was not high enough for us to stand up fully in, so we had to lie on damp straw side by side and packed almost to suffocation. It was one of the longest and most miserable nights I ever spent. We had to keep as silent as we considered safe. One ventured out every now and again to see was there any noise or light. When daylight came we were glad. Our clothes had partially dried on our bodies; but we were trembling with cold. Two of the McNulty girls came up to us with two large cans of tea and a hamper of bread and butter. It was one of the most welcome cups of tea I ever tasted. The girls had also the news that the Staters had gone back to Mulranny and Newport. All our men went down to McNulty's and dried our clothes. When night came we went our different directions to get near our homes as arranged. Owen Kilbane, the Carolan man, and I went towards Mulranny. We had tea at Carolans and then Owen and I had to get by Mulranny. We went down Lower Murrevagh to Pollnagorr and the wild birds were giving us away as they kicked up a hell of a noise. We had to wade through some salt-water channels before we got to Cushlecka. The Staters were in Mulranny Hotel and had sentries on the main road. I called in at Cushlecka to see my Aunt Mary (Mrs O'Malley) who was residing there. She also had a son Martin on the run. Oweney and I took the hill again and came down through the long heather at Cleary's on the Mulranny Achill main road. When we got on the main road at Oweney said, "outside Mulranny will not see me again until the war is over". Oweney confined himself to Achill until the war was over. I went to Thomas Tom or Neil Lynchehaun that morning and Oweney went towards Belfarsad. I spent time around home for the Christmas 1922 and after back again to the column after Christmas. My brother Hughie and sister Mary were at home at this time.

Sometime in January 1923 Frank Sweeney, Achill Sound (now Fr. F. Sweeney Vincentian order), Tom Cooney, Tonragee (Red Tom) and I crossed to Ballycroy, up to Shradaggan and crossed the mountains to Srahmore and re-joined the column. The column operated mostly around Newport

and Glenhest. I remember we used to have some fine dancers in Glenhest School. The people of Glenhest were very good people and fed and housed the column for a number of years. During the period from January to March we had only scattered engagements with the Staters here and there. I remember being on a sniping operation from Carrowbaun into the town of Newport with Jack Feehan, Rick Joyce, Bartley Hegarty and others. It was an afternoon operation. Another night we went to take the Free State Garrison and got into the town but a machine gun nest we failed to dislodge after spending most of the night in the town and wasted a lot ammunition we withdrew in case of being surrounded from Westport and Castlebar. The people outside Newport, such as Glenhest, Derryloughan, The Half Parish, Brockagh, Buckagh, Skerdagh, Ross, Rossow, Furnace, Srahmore, Derrygarve, Corrick, Letterlough, Lettermaghera, and all the villages down to Mulranny were good people and helped the boys on the run. But for these people were good and kind to us we could not have held out for so long. There was of course an old sour one here and there but they were in the minority. Like most of the boys I was two and a half years without a penny in my pocket. I never smoked or drank during the war years or for long after. I remember one incident that is still in my mind. I was sent to Achill, somewhere down in Keel or Pollagh, for a car as Field HQ wanted it for the by-roads 'between Newport and Lahardane. I arrived in Keel in the afternoon and delayed as I had to get another man to take it through Mulranny and I had to go over above the railway station. It was dark when I reached the car at Murrevagh. The car had no lights and when I reached the wood at Rosturk all I could do was to look up at the sky and follow the sky line. I was frightened that I would hit a person or animal, but it was then about 2am. On that dark night I was glad to be out of the car at Shanvallyhugh. Another incident I remember is a General Order came from GHQ, Dublin stating that Railway Locomotives were much used conveying Free State Army Troops and that as many as possible of them to be put out of action. We heard there was a Steam Engine at Achill Sound Railway Station and another mixed good's used come in at 3pm. So I got orders to take down two or three I.R.A. men and put engines out of action. From the column, in Glenhest area, I took Frank Sweeney and Tom Cooney. We stayed the night we came down near Achill Sound and in the afternoon we got into the railway station and cut the telephone wires and got the engine drivers to take the three engines out to Owenduff. At the end of James Cooneys stripe where the railway where the railway is on the brink of the river I got our men to take out a rail on the river side. I meant to get the engine into the river. When the rail was out I thought the job was right for the river but it wasn't as I should have disconnected the other rail and slew the line towards the river. On the first engine the driver was a Mr. Sherlock whom I knew. I asked him on the way out from the Sound to give me a lesson on getting up steam and speed, which he did. The two engines were standing at Mock Neddy O'Malley's. I walked over and got the men clear from the removed rail to a safe distance in case of a boiler burst. Then Mr. Sherlock and I started off the first engine and I told him to get down the running board or steps and get off. I pulled the steam arm over to the full when I got to James Cooney's gate and I got down from the engine at about 100 yards from the rail cut. We watched and the damn engine ploughed along the sleepers and bedded herself in the bank and nearly got on the rails again. I thought that I would do the job by running the other engine into her so I walked back to Mock Neddy's gates and boarded the other engine. A chap named Eddie Higgins was the other driver and we started the second engine and I asked him to get off and then I brought over the steam arm to full and descended at about 100 yards from the derailed engine but only put steam and pieces of metal into the sky. Anyhow the two engines were scrap. The drivers and Firemen walked towards Mulranny and went up to the Main Road. The evening train should be at Mulranny Station around 4pm, so the Staters in Mulranny Hotel got the tip that there was something wrong. So at old John Conway's the Engine Drivers and Firemen met a body of Free State soldiers coming down on foot. They asked the drivers what had happened and they of course had to

tell them. The Officer in charge asked Mr. Sherlock how strong we were in number and apparently Sherlock was on our side in sympathy and told the officer that we had a very big number of men and appeared well armed. The Officer in charge decided as a result not to proceed any further and returned to Mulranny again. In fact, I had only three armed men and myself.

Having written about the Railway Engine I now remember there were 3 engines derailed. The third one was a tow-out being left at the Sound for some days due to engine trouble. The names of the engines were: "Racer Rover" and "Bulldog". They were left at Owenduff derailed for many weeks after.

We went back to the Newport area and to the column sometime after and operated out around Aghagower, back Louisburgh, Tallavbaun and Creggawnbaun

In February 1923 the big column went into small flying columns as our men were getting captured and sent to various prisons. Mark Killalea was in charge of a small column around Castlebar. Joe Baker was in charge of a small column around Glenhest and Newport. Ballina men had their small column operating around Ballina. Things were getting bad for us as most towns and small towns were occupied by Free Staters and raids were getting frequent. We had a small column operating around Ballycroy and Achill and I think it was under Anthony Farrell. I was sent on some business to Achill, Ballycroy area. I remember one night being in Castlehill, Ballycroy with Peter Cafferkey and early in the morning we got word that a few lorries of Free Staters had come from Mulranny and gone down through Ballycroy. We had a feeling they had gone to Sheean to surround the little column who were around there. We decided, the two of us, to go to Ballyveeney bridge, block the road and engage the Staters there on their return. We would have a good retreat up the mountain Mulranny side of the river. We got to the Ballyveeney bridge and put a stone block on the bridge. Then we were told that a car conveying the Staters was left about a half mile up the Mulranny road which broke down and was left there on the side of the road. We went up the Claggan road to a house for paraffin oil so that we could burn the abandoned car. Petie Cafferkey and I proceeded towards Ballyveeney bridge with the paraffin because we thought we might have the car burnt before the return of the Staters, but we had only reached the stream entering the wood when we saw the lorries coming on the main road across from us. There was no chance of us reaching the bridge and getting across barricade, so all we could do was to drop inside the fences and bushes. The lorries halted at the barricade and one lorry load turned towards Claggan and where we lay we could see their faces in the lorry as it passed beside us. They went up to the house where we got the paraffin oil and made enquiries if the I.R.A. were seen around. They got the information that paraffin oil was taken for burning the abandoned car. On thinking back on this incident perhaps it was fate for the two of us because if they made a search of the shrubbery we would both be killed or captured. They were so eager when they got the information about the car to be burnt that they raced back and passing us we heard them shout to the other lorry "that the I.R.A were gone up to burn the car". We sneaked out and crossed the road and got down by a fence to the seashore. Across the Ballyveeney river we saw the two lorries proceeding towards Mulranny. We got into a firing position and when they passed up at the abandoned car we got several shots at them but I don't think we got anyone. They got under cover and returned a sporadic fire of bullets all up at the village of Claggan. There were people returning from a funeral and they had to take cover. Peter and I got back by the valley via Drumgallagh school to Castlehill. Funny, Peter and I were later pulled over the coals for engaging the Staters alone.

I remember some days later I was sent with two more I.R.A. men to Achill on some purpose and it was after nightfall when we reached Claggan to get a boat across to Tonragee. On arrival at Claggan we were told that Joe McBride T.D. Westport was taken prisoner at Keel, so I decided to go back to

HQ at Sheean and tell them of McBride's capture. There happened to be a commercial traveller at Fallon's shop, Claggan, so I had to commandeer his car to take me to Sheean I had to take over the wheel as he was nervous. Anyhow I got to Sheean and told Column HQ. I was told to take McBride from Keel to Sheean. When we reached Keel that night McBride had escaped. I got a report on the case which is: Thomas Lynchehaun and others were in Keel area and heard of McBride being staying at the Amethyst Hotel (John and Mrs Barrett, proprietors). They arrested Joe McBride, a Free State Dail Representative, and had him under observations pending direction from Field HQ. In Keel there were a lot of Free State sympathisers and John Barrett and John McNamara and others contrived McBride's escape. The I.R.A. lads were watching him. He had his coat and hat left on a table. The boys were watching the coat and McBride told them he was going to the toilet, but the Hotel proprietor and others got him out the back at night and took him to some house in Pollagh. The boys later discovered the hat and overcoat left deceived them. The following morning, I sent a dispatch back to Field HQ at Sheean informing them of the escape. A couple of days later a couple of hundred of the Free State Army came down from Newport, Mulranny and Westport and escorted McBride from Keel to Westport. I happened to be in the Pollranny Tonragee area the day they were taking him out. I had only four armed men. We took up positions at Tonragee across on the hillside and when they were under us we discovered that some of the Mass people coming from Belfarsad Chapel were mixed up with the Free State Army who were walking. It was Sunday and about 2pm. Mickey Molloy asked me would I give the order to fire. We discussed the matter and came to the conclusion that the risk of shooting some of our own people coming from Mass would not be any good so we let them pass. Later we were more pleased that McBride did escape as we had no place to keep him and he was of no importance to us because he was not a military man.

Then some of us separated from the Sheean unit. I went to Achill Island for a time and was around Cloghmore, Dookinella, and River. During this time Mick Walsh and Mick O'Brien, both Dublin men, were arrested in Achill and taken to Athlone or the Curragh. They were captured near Jockey Cafferkey's in Bunnacurry. I remember during this period a few of us were in Tom Lynchehaun's, Polranny and we got word to get out because the Staters were having a round up in Achill on their return to Mulranny and Westport. We went up Pollranny hill before daylight and took up positions in case we were surrounded. With me were Mickey Molloy, my brother Hughie, Thomas Lynchehaun and others, about seven or eight of us in all. It was a fine calm morning and when daylight came there were about 10 foxes all around us not a bit disturbed. We had a few rifles but the strange thing it would appear as if the foxes knew we could not fire at them. If we fired a shot we would give our position away. Many a time later we talked and laughed about the incident. The Staters raided all the houses out before them from Achill but their numbers were too much for us to engage. Red Tom Cooney and Frank Sweeney went to Newport area and were in some engagements around Treanbeg and Furnace. One-day Mick Molloy and I went over the railway line and got up and beyond Peter Joyce's to the hill nearest Mulranny Hotel. It was a clear day and the Staters were in occupation of Mulranny Hotel. We got a sight of them on the lawn outside the hotel. We opened fire for about 10 minutes but the distance was too long to be effective. They returned the fire but it was random and off our position.

I was in Achill area when we got word of Capt. Jim Moran being shot in Glenhest on the 7th of March 1923. Comdt. Joe Baker, Westport, was in charge of the column. The column left Jimmy Joyce's Rockfleet on the night of the 5th - 6th of March and went to Cloontafinna, Glenhest. There were about 20 men in the column all armed with Lee Enfield rifles and about 80 -100 rounds of ammo each. Apparently, a round up was planned by the Western Free State Command, Claremorris and a big frontal movement extending from Clew Bay to Nephin. The column got word from Newport that the Staters were advancing towards Srahmore and the Glenhest mountains and they got away from

the village of Cloontafinna and with the aid of their binoculars they saw the Staters on the top of Buckagh Hill between Srahmore and Skerdagh. The Column decided that they would go up north of Glenlara valley through Gortnaheltia and get across Mount Eagle towards Nephin. The column got only to the valley above Gortnaheltia they came under fire from both sides. Had they been 30 minutes sooner they would have got to the top of the hill and gained a firing position. They had to take cover in the valley and in a hopeless position. When the firing was on a while two men, Jim Sweeney, Newport and Tom Lavelle, Burrishoole made a sprint for it and got up the little drain or hollow to the top of the hill and away. The I.R.A. men were in no firing position and eventually poor Jim Moran got a bullet in the forehead and out the back of his head. The column had no option but to surrender. A strange story was told by Padraic Joyce (later my brother in law). He was lying in the rushes behind Jim Moran and he knew Moran was shot. Padraic made a move to get up but somebody caught him by the arm from behind and pulled him down again. He looked behind him but could not see anyone near him. He lay in the same position and when all the shooting, noise and loud talking was over he put up his head over the rushes and saw column move off prisoners down the glen. He knew from the talk he heard that it was Jim Moran who was shot. Padraic Joyce stayed alone in the glen until all was clear. Until the war was over he was not captured. To this day he is puzzled as to who or what caught his arm and pulled him back to his lying position.

The column was sent off to prison and poor Jim Moran's body was taken into Newport, thrown into an old railway wagon and taken up to Claremorris where it was held for a few days, sent down again to Newport in a railway wagon. My Father-in-law Jimmy Joyce, Raigh was one of the men helped to get a coffin etc. and make the funeral and burial arrangements. Jim Moran is buried in Burrishoole old cemetery. Jim fought all through the Black and Tan war and was an expert rifle shot. He was an active, alert, intelligent, always smiling and in good cheerful form. A good living young man and a lovable companion. Around this time Comdt. Michael Mangan, who was divisional O.C. of Communications, and other officers of the 4th Western Division were arrested. Some days after the arrest of Comdt. Mangan I received a dispatch from Divisional Headquarters to report at Divisional HQ in order to take up position as O.C. of Communications for the 4th Western Division. The dispatch was delivered to me at Dookinella so I came home to say goodbye to my parents, as the Staters were not at the Sound then. I called home about midday, then went across the ferry at Tonragee, walked it down Ballycroy and up to Shradaggan and across the mountains into Srahmore where I stayed for the night. Next day I proceeded to Glenhest to Divisional HQ. The Divisional Headquarters was in a large dugout at the back of Anthony Callaghan's house in Bracklagh, Glenhest. It was in a flat rough ground covered with furze and with whin bushes. There was a hole and a ladder down to the floor.

Then when the last man was down there was a fresh whin bush pulled down wide enough branches to cover the hole and it looked like all the other whin bushes around. Then we had a rope and a stone attached to the end of the stem which was down the hole. The dugout was approx. 14ft long 8ft wide by 6ft high. Covered with corrugated iron and timber and green grass was growing over the soil on top. We had about 4 or 5 beds in it, a table for writing and a car battery for light. Many of the G.H.Q officers from Dublin on official business slept in it - such as General Frank Aitken etc. It was never located by the Staters, though they walked over it a few times. We used to go down into it at day light in the morning and come up at night. The air ventilation was poor and we felt it having an effect on our health. We were fed by Anthony Callaghan's parents and his sister Bridget. Nephin mountain was across the valley from us. I remember in the dugout with me was Dr. John Anthony Madden, officer Commanding 4th Western in place of General Michael Kilroy who was then in prison.

Director of Engineering for the Division. John Barrett, Crossmolina, was acting Adjutant there for a short time. I was ordered to reorganise communication lines between the Connemara Brigade, 2nd Western Division south Mayo and also 3rd Western Division Sligo. I set off for Tiernaur and at night was taken by boat from Raigh Pier. Tom Fergus, Ardagh was in charge of the boat crew and I was landed in Islandmore Island where I stayed until the following night at Gills of Islandmore. Next night by another boat crew I was landed at Old Head and walked into Louisburgh and onto Creggawnbawn behind Louisburgh. Stayed in a house named Corrigan's there and the following evening I walked through Delphi and on to Bundorragha. It was a dark night when I arrived there and went to an old I.R.A. man, Jimmy Walsh, who had a boat for ferrying I.R.A. men across Killary Bay. Jimmy got the boat out and as there was two holes in the bottom of the boat he put in two chunks of bog sods. Crossing the bay was as black as ink on account of the high mountains. We arrived at the Connemara side and walked over to Cuffs in Leenane. I was advised to discard my uniform and get into plain clothes. I felt sorry for parting with my uniform. We went to McKeown's Hotel and I asked him if he had any old cast off suit. He gave me one with light leather patches on elbows and cuffs. I gave my uniform to Jim Walsh and I told him to put it away safely and I'll collect it when the war was over but alas the dugout it was in was captured and all contents taken by the Free Staters and also I never met Jimmy Walsh since as he died some years ago.

I went back to Cuffs, Leenane and after tea I was told to go towards Clifden to Derrynasliggaun Lodge and as the caretaker there was father-in-law of Brigadier Conneely I'd make contact with Conneely the officer I had instructions to see. It was a dark night and a lonely long road to Derrynasliggaun Lodge, off the main road down by the shore of Killary Bay. When I reached the lodge at 2am I saw a light in a small window but I could hear no voices. I went up to the window and had to raise myself up to see inside. What I saw was 3 lighted candles on a table and what appeared to be a corpse on the table inside the lit candles. My first impression that it was a haunted house I was at; as I was not told by the Cuffs that anyone was dead at Derrynasliggaun. I cautiously moved down along the big building and at another entrance heard voices in another room. At long last a man or two came out and I asked them if it was a wake. They told me there was a baby dead inside belonging to the caretaker of the Lodge. I asked one of the men to tell the caretaker that I wanted to talk to him. He came out and I sympathised and explained who I was and that I wanted to see his Son-in-law Brigadier Conneely. He told me Conneely was away on the run and that he might be back after the burial of his child. Then he took me to another room and gave me a cup of tea. Then he took me down to a dugout by the shore of Killary Bay and he gave me a candle and some matches. It was a hole into the bank. Inside was an old plank bed on the floor and two or three blankets on the boards. It was covered with shrubs around. I took off some of my clothes and tumbled in. For a time, I left the candle lit and the noise of the big waves hitting the rolling stones at the top of the beach

prevented me from going asleep. There was a sort of shutter on the entrance hole and I closed it. I had a haunted feeling being alone and in a strange environment. The candle started to fade out because the heat of my body was emitting vapour from the damp blankets. Also frogs were jumping across me so I lay very low and flat. Also the rats and weasels were fighting outside the shutter and at times they caused me to jump up. The steam or vapour grew so bad that in the candlelight I could barely see. When I thought it should be daylight I took off the shutter, but then on account of the funeral from the Lodge I considered it unsafe to go up to the Lodge until after 12 noon. I went up after the funeral had departed and had a meal in the Lodge. I thought the Brigadier would turn up early at night but he did not come. I waited for his arrival until 12 midnight. With a very depressed feeling I had to go back to the lonely and frog infested dugout. The same haunting noises persisted outside my den. I swore I'd risk capture before going back to it a third night. Had a meal or two in the Lodge and to my delight after nightfall the Brigadier, whom I met before, turned up and I

discussed with him the formation of Communication lines with Divisional Headquarters at Glenhest, Newport. He gave me a list of dispatch riders and places of contact which I took back to Division HQ. I slept with Conneely that night in a village near Leenane and the following day I walked to Maam Bridge and turned left to Shanafaraghaun and Finny. I went across the hills overlooking Finny Lake. I sat down for a rest and saw bonfires along the road the far side of the lake from Finny to Cloughbrack and Glantrague. Later I found out it was a marriage and this was the custom there.

My instructions were to meet Comdt. Josie Doherty's column which was in the vicinity of Glantrague at the time. I knew Josie Doherty well as he was a Newport man. That night I met Doherty and his column in Glantrague and they asked me to go with them to the wedding house which was at the end of the Glen. The newlyweds were Mr. and Mrs. Kearney. I'll never forget that enjoyable wedding. Doherty and a few of his men were in uniform and all had short Lee Enfield rifles.

The men, women, boys and girls started to gather in the wedding house. Some man had kegs of poteen and the dancing started. It was not a case of asking a girl out to dance but just go to the seats and catch her by the hand and out you come on the floor. Tea, singing and dancing had no slack moments. Drink of every sort was plentiful, too plentiful, and some were drinking cups of poteen and got knocked out. To the credit of Doherty's flying column, they took very little drink. For years during the war period I was a non-drinker, therefore I enjoyed the wedding. Comdt Doherty gave me a list of dispatch riders and contacts. We slept in Cloughbrack the night after and I went up the far side of Lough Mask the following day and I went to a Public House, Melletts of the Neale and most of the family were in prison. I wanted to make contact with the local boys on the run. Miss Mellett sent a man over with me to a house named Duffy's on the shore of Lough Mask and she sent a message for me to be put up for the night. I remember in this house there was a deformed child and I had the pity of my heart for the poor Mother. Next evening Miss Mellett got a guide for me to Ballygarris near Hollymount where I met Paddy Kelly and others who were on the run around there. Kelly's sister I think May was her name and to a republican sympathiser in the midst of other houses who were all Free State supporters. I stayed there for a couple of nights as I had to go in at night and leave it at night. With Kelly and the others, we fixed up dispatch riders and places of contact. The night after Kelly took me to Ballintubber and stayed in the village for a couple of nights with a man named Doherty who was an old Republican and on the run. This being near Castlebar we had good contacts on all sides from Castlebar. Doherty and I some nights after got to Islandeady and I went alone at night across to Islandeady and I went alone at night across to Glenisland and to Beltra Lake where I stayed in a house, I think Walsh's. The following night I was put in a boat across to Glenhest and I reported back to Divisional HQ in Bracklagh. Then some night after I had to go it alone to Terry near Massbrook Pontoon. While there I heard of the death of poor Nicholas Corcoran, my best pal, who was with me in Ballinlough fight. He was a prisoner taken on a train from Ballina and at Knockmore near Foxford there was supposed to be an obstruction on the line. The Staters took Nicholas out to remove it. He stood beside the obstruction and when he refused to remove it they put several bullets through his stomach. God rest his pure soul.

After that I went to Knockmore and then across to the Ox mountains where I met a courier from Dublin sent to the West with important dispatches. Her name was McNulty and she was a maid in Count Plunket's family, Dublin. She had an important dispatch for Dr. Madden which had to be delivered personally by her. The next night we trudged along by road and crossed bogs, all wet, until we got to Buckagh, where we slept all next day. Then at night we crossed through Lettermaghera and down to Ardagh because I got the information that Dr. Madden was on one of the Islands in Clew Bay - Islandmore. There was a dance on in John Fergus's in Ardagh. Tom, his son, was the LR.A. boatman. About 11 pm after the dance Tom and his crew came with us to Rockfleet and taking that

boat through the Islands of Clew Bay on dark and rough nights is ever a puzzle to me. Tom Fergus and the likes of him were really the main stay in the fight for Irish freedom. About 2am or 3am we reached Islandmore at Gills and the boat crew got tea before their return to sea. Miss McNulty delivered the dispatch to Dr. Madden in the early hours of the morning before daylight. She had all her dispatches delivered and the night after we returned to the main land and she went back by train from Newport to Dublin. Later I had Fiona Plunkett, daughter of Comdt. Plunkett, down with me having dispatches from HQ Dublin. She was a nice quiet girl and very simple. We went one night quietly into Grady's, Newport as she had contacts to make. I was pretty busy with communications between Erris, Ballina, Castlebar, South Mayo and Leenane.

Arrests were frequent and the prisoner and concentration camps were full. Then came the end of 30th April 1923 when we got the cease fire order and to dump safely our arms. After that it was a wandering life and reorganising Sinn Fein and keeping the army of the I.R.A. intact. The raids and searches for I.R.A. men on the run was worse than ever. Communications to and from HQ Dublin and to the various Brigades had to be maintained throughout. Then a General Election was called at the end of August 1923 and we got instructions to proceed to the Achill area and help in every way I could. The night I left Furnace for Achill I was coming out at the end of Derrylahan by road to join the Achill road and walking on the grass margin I turned on my ankle and sprained it. I limped along to Collins at Cahergal and saw a white horse in a field beside the main road. I said this is my chance so in I went into the field and caught the horse and took it to the big stone fence but I could not get a gap, so I let the horse go and knocked the wall to the ground. I went back to catch the horse again and the horse turned round and let fly with the two hind legs and but for I threw my head back I'd had both shoes in the face. One of the shoes tore my trench coat. I had to trudge limping and at Newfield Lake on the hillside of Newport I lay down on the side of the road against the bank and being so tired I fell asleep. When the grey dawn was coming I awoke from some noise and beside me was a little man crying. He thought I was dead. His name was Keane. I went on and stayed in Murrevagh and slept throughout the day. The ankle was giving me trouble. When night came I went down at the Golf-links and across at Pollnagorr (*near Mulranny pier*) and up to Cushlecka. The Staters were in Mulranny Hotel at this time. I called to see my Aunt Mary (O'Malley) who was in Cushlecka. I got across at Ardnacairigh (*at the west end of Cushlecka*) and out on the Achill road and stayed in Thomas Tom's that night as I could not stay at home as I was a wanted man. For a few days I remained around home and came in when one of the movement required me for Election purposes. I remember one day that Ernie O'Malley's Brother, a red haired boy, and his mother called. This boy, I forget his first name, but he had a bit of a limp. He gave me a bundle of Election posters, personating Agents papers for different polling booths. Then one evening Tom Cooney (Maire), Mickey Molloy and I meant to go to Currane to contact ones for Election work. So we set off in the evening and as we were going back at Miley (Myles) Corrigan's we met Peter Joyce, Cuillaloughaun coming out with a cart of meal stuff and we talked with him for a while. We were wearing trench coats and as was our rule in the column we wore our cap peak to the back which I believe made us suspicious. Just at the bend at the old pound and the gale a bit against us we never felt until there was a Crossley Tender of Free State on our heels. I told the other two to keep calm and keep walking on. The lorry passed out between us, two of us on one side and one on the other. The lorry went about 100 yards and they got suspicious and pulled up. It was then getting dark and we bolted for the hill but not quite off the road when the ground was torn up with bullets at our feet. They fired several shots at us but we got away up the bogs. When the chase finished and the firing stopped Tom Maire and I were together. The moon was rising through clouds and we could not see far. Mick Molloy was missing but we had a feeling he was not captured. He was carrying a revolver. Tom and I were not armed. It was an old rule in the flying column that if ever a scatter

came in the column through raid or action the remainder were to proceed to the known destination. Prior the three of us were to call to Tom Lynchehaun on our way to Currane. Tom Cooney and I went back the hill to Tom Lynchehaun's. When we got there Pat Lynchehaun, home from the U.S.A., was ironing a pants and we asked him if Mickey Molloy had called and if there had been a visit by the Free Staters. He said nobody had called so we decided to proceed to Currane. Going down the road from Lynchehaun's to the main road we met my Sister Mary and Annie Madden going up to Lynchehaun's to leave word there that that they met Mickey Molloy under Michael Lavelle's in Tonragee and he told them he'd be around there. Mary and Annie Madden were going to Glan to the wake of Pat Masterson who died. Tom Cooney and I returned to under Michael More Lavelle's and Mickey listening inside the fence recognised us and made a low whistle. In the field inside we had a whispered chat about the event and decided to proceed to Currane as arranged. We thought it safe enough to walk along the main road on the grass. The moon was somewhat obscured but not very dark. The strangest thing happened when we reached the bend. Within 20 yards of where the lorry of soldiers shot out between us another lorry of Free Staters without lights came upon us from Mulranny and we bolted towards the hill. Immediately the lorry stopped they turned a machine gun in our direction. Bog was splattered up in our faces. Soldiers at close range were firing their revolvers. The place is all tortogs (a growth on the surface of the bog about 300 mm high) and it was tumbling and rising between them. Then Mickey and I got into scraw - woogan and two Free State Soldiers were on our heels shouting at us in the semi dark to halt. When we got out the scraw - woogan or quagmire the two Staters got stuck so we managed to get up to the rocks where there was an old Monragh?. My ankle was giving me awful trouble. So Mickey pulled his revolver and said cease fire or not he would shoot if they followed us further. They did not and apparently returned to their party. The machine gun kept spraying over our heads and ricocheting from the rocks around us. Tom Maire got separated from us near the main road where we started off and he veered to the left towards Pat McGintys. We were exhausted and lay at the rocks until the firing stopped. Then when we got cold after the rest we decided to climb the hill and go over high to Owenduff. I had to put my arm around Mickey's shoulders and he had to half carry me due to the painful ankle. We got down beyond James Cooney's and before daylight got into Maney Patches, Michael Corrigan's, the Navvy. After something to eat we went to bed and about 10 am we were awakened by Sibby Corrigan who told us that the Free State Army were raiding the village of Owenduff and she saw them driving down to Mock Neddy's. So we got up and through the cover of the bog banks we got into Garrythiarsin (where Brian cut turf) and to the ardauns (small hills) commanding a view of the village. We saw the Staters finishing their search and returning on the lorries towards Achill. We came out again in the evening to Ml. Corrigan's and were told Tom Cooney was captured. After his release about a year later we got the story of how he was captured. He separated from us near the main road and turned left towards Pat McGintys and lay down at the butt of an old fence. It was too dark for him to be seen where he lay. But strange, down on the top of this old sod fence two Staters who were using the machine gun came going toward their lorry on the main road. Just in the spot over Tom the man carrying the machine gun pans of ammunition let one pan accidentally drop and almost down it came on top of Tom. So when they went down off the old fence looking for the pan they found Tom. Tom had no gun but he had good binoculars, which was taken. Tom was removed from Achill Sound Barracks to Castlebar Jail where he spent with others over 20 days on hunger strike. Later in the Curragh he did with others over 30 days' hunger strike. The Jails were full and raiding brutally continued by the Free State Army all over the country despite us having dumped our arms and ceased fighting.

The Election was a one sided affair as there was no chance for Republicans to organise. Intimidation, threats and confiscation of Republican literature was the order of the day. Of course the Staters won

the Election but the Republicans got a good vote under the circumstances. After the Election I went back to Divisional HQ and on Communications with the various Brigades. During this time around Newport area one night a lorry of Staters raided our home. My Brother Hughie was home off the run. It was me they were looking for and they started to beat Hughie and took him out to the lorry. They again started to beat him and my Mother ran out to save him. They hit my Mother with a rifle and knocked her on the road. Then my Sister, Mary, grabbed the rifle and took it out of the Staters hands and fired it into the shough of the road. Then they caught my Brother Hughie and pushed him onto the lorry and drove off towards Achill as they were stationed in the Sound Barracks at the time. They gave him an awful beating on the lorry and at times used tell him run for it. Hughie knew it was the usual trick and they wanted to shoot him on the pretence of escape. Hughie refused to run away. Then outside Achill Sound they gave him a final beating and threw him out of the lorry. The Free Stater's who did this was a Capt. Curry and Capt. Trilby both ex British Soldiers. The third officer that was present I forget his name and a few privates. Hughie was lame and had bad face wounds. Our house was the subject of many raids all hours of the day and night for many years. God rest my father and Mother they got more than their share of trouble in those years. The raids at night were carried out by drunken thugs and the supposed officers worse than their privates.

As I said previously I operated around Newport and Glenhest and I must say I found the Glenhest people the best in the world. It was getting very monotonous with no sign of an end in view. The people were great - gave us a bed and fed us free all along as we had not a penny in our pockets. I remember one night I was coming up from Massbrook and meant to stay in Cloontafinna, Glenhest. When I got to Bracklagh I found Glenhest covered with Free State Army raiding every home. I made my way to Gillespie's to Gortnaheltia but was advised it was not safe to stay. I went towards back the side of the mountain. It was a dark night and I got into a ravine with a stream rushing down. I was very tired and considered unsafe to stay in a house. I pulled a bed of long heather and settled it under a bank hanging out about 2 feet. I went back under the bank and lay on the bed of heather. I fell asleep and at daybreak I awoke from the chirping of wrens who had nests in the bank over me. When I tried to put my feet under me I found it impossible. I was cold and almost stiff. I tried again and again to put my feet under me but failed. I got the queer (sic) feeling that I was finished. If I shouted in that lonely ravine nobody could hear as it was rarely frequented by anyone except men looking for stray sheep. I rubbed my legs as best I could and even rolled my heather bed to the flat grass space on the verge of the stream. I kept rubbing my legs until at last I could bend my knees. Then when I tried to stand I used fall backwards and it was leaning against the bank I managed to learn to walk. When I did get my walk back I went to the village of Cloontafinna and stayed there for a couple of nights. I used stay in Mullarkey's, Cloontafinna. Later on I remember I got a bicycle in Cloontafinna and cycled to Lahardane for a parcel of clothes. On my way back coming down the big hill at Beltra School the forks on the bike broke and I lay unconscious for about 15 minutes until I was picked up by some of the local boys. I spent a full week in Mullarkey's and hardly fit to turn in the bed. I had an I.R.A. man Joe Brown who used to help me to get the dispatches to different places. This Joe got shot in America years after.

I remember all the lonely long mountain path trampling I used do around Glenhest, Skerdagh, Buckagh, Derrylahan, Derryloughan, Brockagh, Half Parish, Srahmore, Cuilmore, Rossow, and Tiernaur. It was lonely travelling alone at night and always walking on the grass margin to avoid making noise. Then when you heard a noise you had to stand and make sure it was not enemy noise because they lay out at crossroads awaiting to capture the officers left on the run.

Things continued in a rather dull way down to Christmas 1923 and after down to Spring 1924. I remember being around home Spring time 1924 and one night I decided to sleep at home. My

father, mother and my sister Mary were sleeping upstairs. My brother Hughie slept down stairs where the sitting room is now. Before daylight came the front door was hammered with rifle butts. I jumped out of bed grabbed braces pulled them on. My waistcoat was upside down. Pulled on my jacket and stuck my bare feet into my boots. I stepped noiselessly up from the room and at that time from the kitchen there was a door leading into the stables with a hayloft overhead. I heard the Staters hammering the front door and my sister Mary put her head out a window upstairs and told the soldiers to have patience until she got dressed. I went up the ladder to the hayloft and then I saw a tall Stater shining a flashlight in the open shutter door. The officer in charge shouted to them to surround the house. Mary at that moment opened the door of the house and in they rushed to every room and upstairs. The tall Stater left his position and had gone around the back of the house. I considered myself captured so I looked out the hayloft door and saw a lorry back at the front door another behind it and then a car to the rear. Two men had the bonnet of the first lifted and adjusting some trouble in the engine. I pulled my feet out of my boots and stuck the boots under the hay. I took a chance and slid down to the street stooped and out between the car and lorry and across the main road and into the shough opposite. I lay low and trusted in my luck. I heard the officer in charge come out and arraigned the men stating to them I had slept in the room as they had found my trench coat and the pillow track of my head which was still warm. Hughie, my brother, denied I was there but the Staters had sufficient proof. They then made a thorough search and even put the bayonet on their rifles here and there through the hay on the loft. I heard the officers giving them hell telling them I must have got out the back, but I remember we had no back door from the dwelling house. The officer told the soldiers to get on to their lorries as it would be daylight before they could reach the other houses they had planned to raid. Thank God they moved off at last. I was perished with the cold and bare footed. I came to the front door and knocked, and when Mary came to the door she thought it was the Staters back again. She got the surprise of her life as she thought I was captured. My parents, Hughie and Mary were delighted that I evaded capture. I grabbed the rest of my clothes and off towards the hill and back to Mickey Molloy's. When I got to Johnny McIntyre's I listened carefully in case the Staters were around the house. I crept down to Micky's window and tipped on the window. Mickey got out and we both went up to Keer (*a high point above Tonragee school*) which gives the view to Achill Sound and Mulranny.

When daylight came we saw a man and a dog coming along under us. At last we recognised it was Lynchehaun's black and white dog. We whistled on the man and who was in it but Thomas Lynchehaun. The Staters raided Lynchehaun's Pollranny and Thomas got up into the ceiling to a hide-out and escaped capture. I should have mentioned the morning Mickey Molloy, Thomas Lynchehaun and I escaped capture the Staters raided Sweeney's, Cloghmore and they captured Pat Rock Sweeney in his home and took him away to prison.

I went back to Newport and Glenhest area again and on the Communications work, but stayed on the run. During this time Comdt. Gen. Michael Kirby had escaped from the Curragh of Kildare. I remember sleeping in a tent with Michael for a week in a bushy field at the back of Paddy O'Malley's, Rossanrubble, near Newport.

Later at the end of spring the Free State Government started to release some of the prisoners and several of the men on the run started to return home. I returned home in the early Summer and my sister Mary went to America and my Brother Hughie went to England. I had to adapt myself to the hard chores around home and help my father and mother to clear some of the debt that occurred during the war years. Any type of work I got I took it, horse and cart work with Land Commission, Board of Works or Co. Council. I meant to go to the U.S.A. but then I could not leave my parents

alone with nobody to keep help around the home. Hughie, my Brother, returned home from England around Spring 1925 and went to Cleveland Ohio, U.S.A.

Peace Again

The prisoners were getting released and a lot of them went to England and U.S.A. because there was no chance of getting a job of work for a Republican in the Free State. The Government and their agents were anxious to get Republicans as far away from Ireland as possible and to confirm this please see a letter from Detective James Kinsella, Castlebar to my comrade O.C. of Signals who was a faithful and good soldier all through the fight for Irish freedom - Tom Cooney (Maire), Tonragee West. As you will see by the letter Sgt Kinsella wanted the letter back to avoid exposure. How did Kinsella get Tom's address in London and why was he interested to get an I.R.A. man away to the U.S.A.? In case the letter should get lost here is the copy.

" To Thomas Cooney Esq No 1 Saratoga Rd Millfield Road, Clapton, London.

Garda Siochana, Detective Branch, Castlebar, Co. Mayo.

21st May 1929.

Dear Sir,

I have been informed that during the past few months you were anxious of proceeding to the United States of America with a view of improving your position in that country. Will you please let me know if you are still desirous of going to the above mentioned country in which event I would be prepared to assist you in every way possible to reach the United States.

You can forward reply on back of this paper in the stamped addressed envelope enclosed.

James Kinsella

D/Sergeant

After the release of the prisoners in 1925 the Divisional Commands were done away with and Comdt. Michael Mangan, Glenhest was appointed Brigade O.C. covering practically all Mayo. He set to reorganise the I.R.A. and made a good job of it on bicycle and he was an untiring worker and a very intelligent man. He organised Commemorations, Battalion and Brigade Council meetings and was directly in touch with G.H.Q Dublin. I attended several Army Council meetings with him in Dublin where we had I.R.A. officers from all over Ireland. In 1926 I worked mostly at home as I knew from Dr. Donnelly that my father had a heart condition though I could not keep him from working as that was his nature. I worked with horse and cart on roads or any job I could find. I kept the local company of volunteers going and used to drill them almost once a week. Then 1927 came along and Annie Madden (now married in Cleveland) used come to help us with everything. She was reared by her Aunt Mrs Neil Lynchehaun, Tonragee as her mother Mrs Madden who was married to Willie Madden, Bolinglana, Currane died when Annie was born. Her mother was a first cousin of mine on my father's side. Ticklers bridge near Cleary's on the Mulranny road that spring got ripped away by a big flood and I worked with the horse and cart for Pat Tom Corrigan drawing stones and gravel to it. Pat Tom was the contractor. An incident comes to mind from this. We had a few cattle out on the mountain and one-day Peter Joyce, Cuillaloughaun with our two carts were carting gravel to Ticklers bridge about the end of October. It was on a Monday morning we counted the cattle which were above Srahmore. Tuesday morning again from the road we counted the cattle near the same place and there was one missing. Wednesday the same. Thursday the same and the following day the cattle had moved out to Cortoon . When Sunday came I was asked to drive a car by some Mulranny

boys to a football match in Galway. Having told my father that I thought that one of the cattle was missing he kicked up against me going to Galway. So I took his advice and on Sunday went to Cortoon and searched miles and miles and failed to find the big strong heifer. It was almost night when I came home wet and tired. I knew the heifer was in a hole somewhere so I got a carbide bicycle lamp and on my way I called to old James Cooney R.I.P. and he said he'd go with me to search as we knew all the dangerous holes around Srahmore. The night was dry and calm. James had another lamp and we searched several holes. Then I thought of where there was one where an old bogdeal stick was lifted years ago. When we reached the hole poor heifer made a feeble low. There she was jammed and the water on level with her back. She had the bog eaten each side of her head from hunger - been there from Monday evening until Sunday night. We had no spade and it was a long way to go home for one and it was a very dark night. We set to with our heels breaking all the tortogs we could get and packing them down under her. Then with our heels and hands we sloped the end of the bog hole at her head. Behind her we put strong tortogs that might keep her up. I threw off my pants and went down in the hole behind her and I was down to my armpits when I caught her by the tail. Bit by bit we got her to the end of the drain and managed to get her two front legs up at the sloped end. The poor thing she did her best to help us. At long last we pulled her out but she could not get her hind legs under her. With the walloping of long gossauns of heather we brought the blood circulation back into her legs - so we got her to stand. The night was now very cold and we managed to get her over to the big river. I told James I'd go home for a hot mash for the heifer and to change my clothes as I was all wet and covered with black bog and slime. I left the lamp on the bank of the river and out I went into a deep hole and with only my drawers and shirt on I washed myself fully and told James to keep walking the heifer as best he could. I set off for home in my bare feet as fast as I could and changed my clothes and had a hot drink.

With the hot mash for the heifer I set off again and met James with heifer coming down by the river. We gave her the hot mash and managed slowly to get her home. We had the tea and then decided to go over to the river pools in the strand where this time of the year big trout come up and lie in the pools after the tide goes out. We soaked rags in paraffin oil and tied them with wire on the top of two poles. We put on wellingtons and went over to the strand pools. We had a gaff and a beating iron. When we had searched two pools with the torch ablaze we heard noise and saw a flashlight coming towards us. We dropped the torch into the water and made off into the bogs. They were two Garda Siochana but when they got to the pool their chase ended. Indeed, it was a night for us. The heifer survived and made a good animal. Oh how glad I was to take my father's advice.

I continued on working but not feeling happy as I knew my father could pass away anytime. His legs started to smell and Neil Lynchehaun and his wife Bridget (my father was Bridget's uncle) used to come to us almost every night. Then the night he died Neil and Bridget and Maggie Tom Corrigan and others were with my mother and me. Some hours before he died he called me over to his bedside. He asked me to make him a promise before his death. I didn't know what it was to be. He asked me to promise him never to sell the house that he worked hard to build with his own hands, sweat and very little money (no grants or loans those years). I thought it over as I had it in my mind to go to the U.S.A. I promised him before he died that I would never sell the house. Strange later in life I was offered a farm in Kildare or Meath but on account of my promise to my father I refused the offer. Thank God it worked out lucky for me that I kept my father's promise.

I shaved my father that night after him dying and he is buried with my mother in Kildownet Cemetery. It was on my Uncle Michael's sidecar he was taken and including myself and many others we walked all the way from Owenduff to Kildownet. He was three nights waked at home as there

was no taking of remains then to the church. Fr. Andy Moran C.C. said Mass upstairs in the far room where he was overboard.

Then only my mother and myself at home it was a lonely Christmas. We had good neighbours and they used to help my mother a lot. I wish to go back to a reminiscent of my father in January 1927. It was on a Friday 27th when we were awoken by a terrible storm. It was a dreadful hurricane with an ominous rumble in the air in between squalls. The wind was from the south and from the hill, at short intervals you could hold a lit candle outside, then you'd hear the roar of the squall coming from the hill, knocking fences and taking everything before it. It was dark overhead and you would think it was rain that was falling but no it was strong saltwater spray from Atlantic. The slates from the roof started to fly like crows. Then our three stacks of oats, which was in a haggard across the road, were taken and my father went across to the haggard to see what he could do. I had to run across as he was getting tumbled and slates getting buried in the ground around him. I was frightened he'd get a slate in the head. I got him into the house and at that moment a slate from a whirlwind came through the front window and broke three cups on the dresser which was up against the wall the hill side opposite the front window. The cows were lowing in the stable with fear - some broke their tying's. A 3-ton Yawl we had on the shore well up from the high tide mark and half full of water was taken out on the tide and across to Rosnafinna (*an island between Claggan in Ballycroy and Owenduff in Achill*) and in the bogs there they smashed it in smithreens. The boat was new. Also over 50 slates were taken off the house and several more cracked.

My father and mother were very upset and the tension and anticipation of the worst to come I can never forget. My mother was praying all the time and blessed candles lit. It continued for about two and a half hours and then it eased off to a calm. I got soap and went out to the stream to wash off the grit and slime but to my surprise the soap had no effect as I was all covered with dried salt from the Atlantic spray. I got Neil Lynchehaun and a couple of more men and we cut scraws and got ladders and put large bog scraws on the roof to keep out further rain until I got the roof re-slatted. I went down to Cashel with my horse and cart and bought over 50 slates from a Tom Ruddy. Two days later I got a handyman to re-slate it.

The day of the big wind was a "Fair Day" at the Sound but only one cart of pigs from Currane got as far as Belfarsad only. The trains did not run from Achill Railway Station as the Tilly poles and wires were felled across the rails. Since that day I have an awful hatred of storms. It was a day of terrible destruction all over the country.

1928 I went along attending to home and the little farm. Also I kept the local I.R.A. company going and I got quite a number of young new recruits. Also on the instructions of Comdt. Ml. Mangan I went to Achill Island and reorganised new companies, also to Ballycroy and the Newport areas. Contact with G.H. Q in Dublin was reorganised and frequently G. HQ officers were with us. Raids on our homes were a regular feature by Guards and Detectives. These raids and actions we reported to An Poblacht which got publicity.

1929 We were getting back into a rather good organised position again but migration had a slowing effect on us. Not many of the I.R.A. throughout the country joined the Fianna Fail party but naturally at a General Election they would support Fianna Fail against Fine Gael.

1930 It was trying to make ends meet at home and it was hard. Early in the year I was appointed agent for New Ireland Assurances Company on Industrial Book, Ordinary Book, and Fire and Accident and I put up a lot of business for the company. My Supt. was James Lavin from Leitrim. Also I spent a few months driving a car for a professor T. Nally who was organising a Corrageen Moss industry

along the West Coast of Ireland. We were staying in Pat McHugh's at Bullsmouth. At the end of the year I got rheumatic fever and spent 2 months very bad. Also I got a nervous breakdown and suffered from insomnia. It was hard on my mother as there were only the two of us at home. Annie Cooney, Owenduff, my cousin, used help my mother a lot. Also the neighbours were good. I remember the summer of 1930 going to Inishbiggle in a currach belonging to Denis McGinty, Tonragee. This currach later capsized and drowned Michael O'Malley (Hugh) and nearly drowned Neil Lynchehaun who was fishing with Michael O'Malley. I left the harbour at Island Tonragee and set off rowing for Inishbiggle to complete an Insurance proposal on the life of Mary O'Connor N.T. When I got outside Annagh Island a thunderstorm arose and the rain came down in torrents. I had to bale out the currach with my shoe and when I reached Inishbiggle there was not a stitch dry. I pulled the currach up on the shore and turned it over to spill out the water. Then I carried the currach upside down to the top of the shore. I think the house near me was a Mrs Grealis and I told them my story. I got old clothes from the man of the house and put my own over the fire to dry. Then I walked across the Island and when I arrived at Mary O'Connor's she thought first I was a tramp. The proposals I had were wet so I had to dry one for completion with the fire. Then I returned to Grealis's by the shore. Passing down by the school house I met a man named Henry and I asked him was it safe to go to sea. He looked up at the sky and said " Sir I consider the atmosphere too obscure for you to contemplate going on the sea tonight " I thanked him and went to Grealis. Grealis would not advise me to go but I did after I got my own clothes on. Out at the top of Mweelaun point the big swells I got into were dreadful. One time I'd be below in a trough with no sight of land and next time I'd be above on top of the world. I tried to keep her head to the swell. A couple of times from exhaustion I was about to give up but I knew she would get swamped. I kept at it and edging for Tonragee shore. It was about 12 at night I got into the shore under Hugh Gallagher's. Some of Tonragee boys were watching me but they had no boat to go out to meet me. My mother was also back on the shore to meet me. I'll never forget the ordeal and how near it went to my death. During the Summer of 1930 I started to go to Raigh to Joyce's when I started to do a line with Rose, my wife. I used to go up on the bicycle almost every Sunday and often Tom Cooney Maire, Tonragee accompanied me. Tom and I used be out pretty late on Sunday nights at dances etc. I remember one incident - The cows that time were driven over to Owenduff river and up the mountains in the morning and taken home at night for milking. This particular Sunday night the cows did not come home and naturally she was upset and it meant a telling off to me for not being home. Tom Cooney and I arrived home about 3am in the morning and I went to the stables to see if the cows had arrived. They were not there, so with our bikes and lamp and the dog we set off to Owenduff bridge and left the bikes there and went up the mountain. He was a good dog and found the cows for us when I set him off in the dark to search. When he got the cows he started to bark, so we knew we were happy. We took the cows home and tied them in and both of us went to bed. When my mother got up in the morning she went out to see if the cows were around, then she went to the stables and found them tied in, so reprimand was off and she had a happy feeling towards us when we got up to breakfast. Tom and I used pal a lot and we hardly ever indulged in taking intoxicating drink.

IRA Work

Comdt. Michael Mangan was a very active officer and getting to be a dangerous man in the eyes of Garda Siochana, Detectives and Free State Government. He was watched night and day and they had touts on his track. Mangan built in all towns and country a very good intelligence service and he was able to find out many important things valuable to the I.R.A. movement. I could not keep any important documents around the house because it was raided night and day. Often at 2am in the night they used knock my mother and myself up and they used to leave their car crosswise in the middle of the main road to hold up any other car for searching. Then they'd set to pulling out

drawers, presses, tapping the walls for secret places, ripping up floors, linen and bed clothes were tossed out and left there in a heap for my old mother to put back in place again. They even used rip up parts of the stable. The notorious detectives were Sergeant James Kinsella who was in charge. Lewis Conway an Ex R.I.C man's son and Tim O'Shea. Sometimes another strange Detective used to be with them. In order to save my confidential documents received from head office I had a true and trusted member of the I.R.A. and he was Patrick McIntyre (Johnny) who lived above Pat Molloy's on the side of the hill in Tonragee. In a large tin biscuit box out in a stone wall by his house we kept the documents. Also under the flagged floor in his kitchen were my rifle, revolver and ammunition. Poor Pat Johnny was one of the most trusted man one could ever find (R.I.P.). Also his brother Thomas was one of the best. Due to constant raiding and the dumping of important document a lot of them got destroyed.

Comdt. Michael Mangan used arrive maybe once a week, or once a fortnight at 3am or 4am on the bike and go off again the following night. Sometimes with him were some HQ officers viz. Tom Daly from Kerry, John Killeen Westmeath, Dan O'Donovan Cork or Maurice Twomey.

The local I.R.A. company started to grow in strength and we had regular weekly drillings and meetings. I used to go to Joyce's in Raigh almost every Sunday and often met Michael Mangan there as he'd have left orders from G.H.Q for me. As I said before I used to go to Achill I.R.A. companies to supervise parades at night and give them up to date instructions from G.H.Q. I remember going to one of those parades in Ballycroy and it was held a moonlight night at the old R.I.C Barracks which was burned previously. At the parade two young lads in knickerbockers came to me during the parade and asked to be taken into the Army of I.R.A. The two young lads were Joe Moran, Claggan and Jack McNeela, Claggan. I gave them the oath of allegiance which was then given to all volunteers. Jack McNeela died on Hunger Strike in St Bricins Hospital on the 19th April 1940 and is buried in Claggan Cemetery.

In February 1931 I remember I was ordered to go to a General I.R.A. Convention in Dublin. The evening before going Tom Cooney, Mickey Molloy and I cycled to Joyce's, Raigh. There was a dance there, but at 9 pm I had to leave on my bicycle to meet Comdt. Ml. Mangan at Knockmore near Ballina as arranged. I had a terrible cold and cycled on with my carbide lamp through Glenhest, Beltra, Bofeenau, Pontoon, and when I turned to the Knockmore road by Lough Conn and two miles down the road and going up a hill I had to walk. I heard a noise and became suspicious. I pulled off the lamp and covered it with my cap and got inside the fence. I heard a voice but kept silent. Again the voice called - is that Brian? I recognised it was Mangan's voice. I was delighted as I was getting very sick from the flu or cold and almost unable to cycle. Michael said he came to meet me as it was long behind the time I should have arrived. We cycled along to John Gaughan's, Corroy, Knockmore and after a cup of tea I had to go to bed and I said I would not be able to travel to Dublin in the early morning. John Gaughan went out with his car somewhere and got a bottle of poteen. In bed they made me drink over a half tea cupful of it hot and I started to perspire and fell asleep. At 4.30am in the morning they awoke me and to my surprise the fever was gone. Mick Mangan asked me did I feel I'd be able to travel and I said I would. Around 5.00am we set off for Sligo and picked up Peadar Glynn O.C. of Sligo area and another officer. Then on to Carrick-on-Shannon and picked up Comdt. Sean O'Farrell, O.C. of Leitrim area. We got into Dublin in the afternoon and made the arranged contacts with G.H.Q guides for direction to the Convention venue which was to be held that night. I remember John Gaughan having to leave his car in some backward place outside the City. The General Army Convention was held on the 15th of February 1931 at a house belonging to Roisin Walsh at Templeogue, Dublin. She was a Librarian. At nightfall Mick Mangan and I were sent in a taxi to Broadstone railway station to pick up a Galway officer - Leonard - who was coming up by

train. At the station we bumped into a Garda in plain clothes who we believed was sent purposely to look for us. As he was an old I.R.A. man and with us in 1921 and early in 1922 in the same Barracks in Belmullet we know he spotted us and on purpose we approached him and had a chat. Whether he reported meeting us we could never know. Anyhow we changed taxies a few times to shake off touts who were on our trail. I remember the Convention was out at Step-a-Side, South side of Dublin. It was a big mansion in a field out on its own. Some I.R.A. officers from the South of Ireland tried to get in a back way to the mansion and were interrogated by a Garda on duty as to their reason for going to an unoccupied house. The I.R.A. men gave some excuse and the Garda continued on his rounds of duty. A private meeting was held by G.H.Q officers as to the incident. Should the Garda be arrested for the night and the following day or chance he had no suspicion of the general Convention. If he did not return to barracks a search for him would inevitably be instituted which could be worse for us. No action was taken so the General Convention was under a shadow of fear all night. The General Convention lasted until well into the following morning.

That day after the Convention George Plunket was arrested in the City. This been over 41 years ago I have memory of only some of the officers who were at the Convention. viz: Maurice Twomey, Dublin - George Plunket, Dublin - George Gilmore, Dublin - Seam McBride, Dublin - Sean Russell, Dublin - Peadar O'Donnell, Dublin - Michael Price, Dublin - David Fitzgerald, Dublin - Michael Fitzpatrick, Dublin - Jim Killeen, Rathoath, Co. Dublin, Tom Barry, Cork, John Joe Sheehy, Tralee, Co. Kerry, John Joe Rice, Kerry, Sean McGuinness, Westmeath, Peadar Glynn, Sligo, Sean O'Farrell, Leitrim, Michael Mangan and myself, Mayo.

After the General Convention we got back safely to Mayo and things were getting active again. I remember one incident in the Spring of 1931; there was bus strike and the I.R.A got instructions to help the strikers as much as possible. There was a new Lancia bus plying between Mulranny Hotel and Clifden, Co. Galway. The driver and Conductor were known as scabs and would not come out with the other bus drivers. I got orders from G.H.Q to burn the Mulranny bus and to prepare my plans. The Mulranny Garda were guarding the scab buses so I had to get my local intelligence working there. This Lancia bus was locked at night in one of the big garages up at the railway station. I had to confide my confidential plan to only three people in Mulranny, two Republican friends and an old I.R.A. man - Tom Moran, No. 9 and Sonny Ginty, and the I.R.A. man Frank Berry, Ballycroy who was staying in Josie Moran's. Tom Moran supplied the hacksaw and Sonny Ginty, residing opposite to the steps up to the station and in touch with movements concerned, was able to keep me up to date. It was in May or June and the nights were short. I set the appointed night and proceeded to Mulranny on my bicycle. But about a mile from Mulranny at Cleary's Martin (Darby) McManamon was also proceeding via Mulranny to his home in Tiernaur with a cartload of winkles. I had to stay behind him as I wanted to be not seen or recognised by anybody.

When I reached Mulranny chapel I put my bicycle into the bushes and walked on the grass margin to the village. I contacted Sonny Ginty and got the low-down of things to enable me consider if my plan was feasible. As prior arranged with Frank Berry we met at the appointed place and time. We knew that the bus garage at the railway station was guarded at night by the Mulranny Garda and we watched their movements. Shortly after nightfall they left the garage and went down to the barracks. When we gave them time to get into bed we set to with a hacksaw and cut the heavy lock bolts. It was a calm night and sound carried. When the locks were cut we got the Lancia bus out of gear and handbrake off and pushed her out across the yard. Then we realised the petrol tank was not sufficient to destroy her. We knew there was a petrol store, the opposite side of the yard, so we cut the lock of the store and took 3 two gallon tins out. A damn dog started to bark like hell and we thought the Station Master, Forbes, would come out as a result. We sprinkled the contents of the 3

tins inside the bus. Then as Frank, who was staying in Josie Moran's at the time, which was beside the Garda Barracks, we decided that I should not crack any match until I considered Frank had got into Josie Moran's say eight minutes. Frank set off and I waited patiently there on my own listening to the damn dog still barking. I had no gun to protect me if I were surprised. Then when I considered Frank was in and safe I went into the bus took out my box of matches and cracked one. Oh I was enveloped in flames. My trench coat was on fire and my hair singing. I jumped out and rolled on the ground and managed to quench my coat. I ran down by Tom Ryan's cottage (the Hotel gardener) and I had to cross barbed wire fencing. My coat got caught on the top wire and I fell on my head onto near the main road. I must have been knocked out for a while because when I came too I could see the red flame of the lighting bus over me in the sky. I got to my feet and started to recollect where I was. Then I set off like a bullet to where I had left my bicycle. Once or twice I looked back and could see the red glow in the sky. That night I had left a boy, Myles Corrigan, a cousin, to stay with my mother and he was in my bed sleeping. When I arrived down home I threw off my partly burned clothes, tied them in a bundle, and went up to where we had potatoes sown and buried the bundle of clothes. Daylight had arrived when I got into bed. Later in the day I heard there was a big round up of Bus Drivers and Conductors taken in and questioned; one I remember was Ted Vesey from Keel. As far as I know the burning of that bus hastened the settlement of the bus strike.

As Myles Corrigan has now come into my narrative I would like to mention something, he told me years after the above event. Myles is now dead and buried in London for a number of years back. In September 1946 I went to London to Heathrow to work as my job in Ireland interviewing workers at Employment Offices, where they registered for work in Britain, had ceased. 1943 or 1944 Myles being in England and he was conscripted into the British Army. He joined Air Corps and served a time in the Azores. When I went to London in September 1946 he was demobbed from the Army and one night speaking to him in London he told me when he was the first week in training he was called to Air force HQ in London for screening. Apparently it was the Secret Service Head Office. He was questioned if he was ever in the I.R.A. They asked him what relation was Brian Corrigan, Achill was to him and if he associated much in his life with Corrigan. Also they asked him if he knew an I.R.A man named Michael Mangan who was a comrade of Brian Corrigan. Also they asked him about others around Newport etc. Myles thought to himself, here I am far away from home in London and my neighbours and local is read out before me from records. Myles said he knew me as a neighbour only and knew nothing of the others. This shows of the activity of British Intelligence even in the most remote parts of Ireland.

During the Spring of 1931 I had a large company of volunteers in the area and I remember having selected Currabeg, (*probably a small Corry in the townland od Srahmore*) a valley in the hills near home, as a suitable place for a Rifle Range. I notified all the volunteers of the Sunday and time. I got two short Lee Enfield rifles and a good supply of 303 ammunition. The day was fine and all attended and they were eagerly looking forward to having their first shot out of a short Lee Enfield rifle. It was an ideal place for a practice Rifle Range as the bullets lodged in the mountain to the back of the valley and the sound was confined to the valley between the mountains. As I had a plentiful supply of old 303 I gave all the boys plenty fire to get familiar with trigger pressure and correct aiming. I also gave them lessons on the 45 Webley revolver but hadn't much 45 stuff to use. The boys were delighted with their day out and when we had finished I sent them away in 3's and 4's across Cortoon to avoid suspicion.

I would like to relate a sequel to this rifle practice. This been old .303 ammunition and dumped since 1923 I found about two in every ten rounds missing. So I put all the duds in a box and took them near home and concealed the box in a fence up the boreen. Little Bernie Corrigan discovered the box

of duds later and put a few in his pocket and took them to Tonragee School. That time the kids used to cut some turf near the school in order to supplement the normal turf for the school. When they were footing the turf Bernie stuck one of the bullets into a sod of turf. Later from the turf house when a big fire was on one day and the Teacher, Peter Sweeney, having his back to the fire and giving the lessons to the big pupils in the west room, the explosion occurred and put some live coals out through the room. Poor Peter Sweeney (RIP) must have got a fright. For a long time, it was a mystery. But a year later I found out that Bernie caused it and it was one of my dud bullets which Bernie stole and put in the sod of turf nearly causing a tragedy. I felt very upset over it and gave Bernie a dressing down.

Things went on in the usual way up to July 1931. Then on the 11th of July 1931 I got married to Rosie Joyce, Raigh in Tiernaur church.

Married by Rev. Fr. Thomas Killeen, P.P. Newport. My best man was Comdt. Michael Mangan and Kathleen Joyce, sister of Rosie, bridesmaid. Not a big number at the marriage. After the marriage in a car or two we went off to the Erris Hotel, Castle Lane, Castlebar and had breakfast and the party socialised there for most of the day. As I was working for New Ireland Insurance Co. at the time I had arranged to meet Gerald Bartley the following day. He was Fire and Accident Inspector for New Ireland. Also there was only my old mother at home and I could not afford to be long away. The following day Gerald arrived and he took Rosie and myself home in his car. Gerald was later Minister for Defence. During this period, we had a Parish Priest in Achill named Fr. James Campbell from butt of the Reek. He was very anti I.R.A. and anti-Republican. He branded us all I.R.A. men as Communists and called meetings to denounce us publicly. Also his sermons in church were painful to listen to Sunday after Sunday. But the people were broad minded and good to us and therefore took but little notice of what he said. A small number did but were not willing to openly show themselves. The boys in the I.R.A. had no Communist tendencies and were only following the tradition and ideals of those who died and suffered for Irish Freedom. As a matter of fact, I had about 15 of the volunteers in the Total Abstinence Association and we all wore the badges for many years. Despite this the Parish Priest stated to people that we were using the badges for a cover up. This was the type of propaganda used against us.

My mother was very happy to have Rosie and it made our home much brighter and pleasant. I continued with my Insurance canvass and was doing fairly good and had a much increase in the building up of my Industrial Book. Also I was doing ordinary Branch and Fire and Accident. Things went on very happy down to October 1931 when the Free State Government brought in The Military Tribunal. Rather strange things were happening during the time the Government was bringing in the Public Safety Bill and the Military Tribunal. It was after I was released from prison I found out that some I.R.A. men were walked into similar ruses and locked up for supposed robbery or attempted break into premises. I reported this to my Brigade O.C. and from HQ he had it later that McGraith was eccentric but I had my doubt because John Joe Kenny, Kearney and Moran, East Galway were victims to this similar ruse. Some weeks before I got his letter which is Appendix 1 I met Sean McGraith in Pat Vesey's, Dugort when I was on Insurance business. He was an elderly man and supposed to be connected with Sinn Fein in Dublin. Why he was staying in Dugort nobody knows. As you will see by his letter he wanted me to go down to Dugort with six I.R.A. men to tie up some unknown persons. The letter was handed to the mail van driver supposedly by McGraith and he gave him some money to deliver it personally to me. The letter was in an inside envelope to Brian Corcoran and another envelope outer one addressed to Brian Corcoran, Tonragee, Mulranny. After I read the letter I thought it over and came to the conclusion that it was a ruse. I watched the road during the evening and before nightfall I saw detective sergeant James Kinsella and Lewis Conway

passing in on a motor bike and another car after them. Later I was told they were seen in Dugort. Now to be fair to McGraith, I could not swear that this letter was written by him, nor shall I ever know, because he had left Achill when I came home from Arbour Hill prison the following March. As you will see if I had fallen for the ruse, something would happen in Dugort that night and I was to be charged for it. The letter is dated Dugort 14/9/31.

After that our house was raided night and day with the result I had to again go on the run and slept in houses near home. Also Sean who had come home from U.S.A. some months previously had to go on the run in October. Comdt. Ml. Mangan was a much sought for man and he also was on the run. Again I say that Mick Mangan was one of the most sincere and truest Irish man I ever met and he suffered a lot in the fight for Irish Freedom and had many narrow escapes. He was a very tall man, impressive and intelligent.

Jail

I kept away from home as much as possible and used only call for short periods to advise about things at home. At this time, I knew that Rosie was pregnant and she and my old mother, the only ones at home, made things harder for me. On Tuesday morning 27th of October 1931 at 8.00 or 9.00am I came up home from Thomas (Toms) Corrigan where I had slept for the night and I was having my breakfast about 9.00 am when I walked Detective Sgt. James Kinsella, Tom O'Shea and Lewis Conway of Castlebar Station and Civic Guards Sgt. Murray and Guard Johnston of Mulranny Station. The house was searched and I was placed under arrest. I was put in the back seat of their car between Sgt. Kinsella and Guard Johnston and when about 2 miles' distance from home on the lonely part of the road to Mulranny Sgt. Kinsella was the first to hit me on the head with a blow of his fist. Then C.I.D. man Tom O'Shea commenced hitting me from the front seat. I was getting hit from both these men in the head and stomach since I passed Conway's old house till we reached Cleary's which is over a mile distance. Sgt. Kinsella drew his revolver and stuck it into my ribs saying he'd finish me. I told him I was not afraid to die and then got the two bullies losing their temper. Guard Johnston caught the muzzle of the gun and I believe prevented my death. Also Guard Johnston warded off some of the blows. On our arrival at Mulranny Garda Station Sgt. Kinsella kicked me out of the car. All sort of threats was used towards me, such as, my nails being pulled from my fingers and being tied to a tree and shot etc. These threats were used while they were beating me. In Mulranny they had Johnny Berry from Ballycroy and he was handcuffed with me to Castlebar but was let home the following day. In the afternoon we were taken via Glenhest and at Cloondaff they raided a few houses for Mick Mangan but without success. Lewis Conway the detective was crouched behind the car with his revolver watching us and listening to any words we spoke. I coached Johnny on what to expect and Conway jumped up from behind the car and threatened me. We were taken via Glenisland to Castlebar and it was then a dark night. The barracks was on the main street near Bourke's Garage. I was put into a cold cell in the backyard. I got to know that this cell contained dogs for some time previously. The smell in it was terrible to endure and I got a weakness at daybreak from the effects of the beating and the smell in the cell. I lay in my clothes all night on a plank bed but could not sleep. During the night I was handed in one single blanket and a hard pillow for my head but I did not use them as sleep was impossible.

Next day, Wednesday, I was taken up 3 times for long periods of interrogation, bullied and threatened. One man, a stranger to me, was at a table writing, taking down anything I answered. Then two bullies stood each side of me. I would not be let sit down. It was question after question such as the strength of the I.R.A. Brigade, West Mayo. Where the arms were. References to Brigadier Ml. Mangan and his activities. Then when I denied and told them what they said was

untrue I used to get a revolver stuck into one ear and pushed over to the man on my left. Then the other man on left would stick his revolver in my other ear and push me over to the man on my right. Then one would say don't shoot him yet, we'll make him suffer before he dies. Then I'd get a blow of a heavy ruler across the back of the neck, which threw me forward almost falling face wards to the floor. Then 3 or 4 fresh bullies used come in and take over. The outgoing ones used say now God help you. With them it was the same questions, punching and threats of death. Then I'd be put down to the old cell and taken up again and put through the same punching and interrogation. Finally, when the bullying and interrogation failed to elicit any information. Words of pretended advice and offers of compensation if I'd do spy work was their last resort. The County Inspector O'Dwyer also interrogated me and said it did not matter what organisation I belonged to so long as I gave the necessary information I could go home and not have to go before the military Tribunal.

I was taken back to Westport Garda Station on Wednesday night by two detectives and handed over to the Garda there. That night I was interrogated by Superintendent Molloy and accused by him of threatening to burn the house over some man in Achill if the man did not hand me out 2/6 for the I.R.A. ammunition fund. When asked he refused to give me the name of the supposed man. On Thursday 29th Supt. Molloy interrogated me three or four times during the day. He begged me to take the appointment of Secret Service Agent and if I did not wish that I could personally with himself and the I.R.A. nor another person would know it but the two of us. Also he told me at the end, when he saw that I laughed at him, that even if I gave him one round of 303 ammunition it would justify my release. I had a good bed to sleep on and the food was good enough and I got no punching or pushing.

On Friday morning the 30th October 1931 I was interrogated by Supt. Molloy, a Leitrim man, and asked if I again refused to give information before being sent off to Galway Gaol. I refused and then a Peace Commissioner or Commissioner of Oaths - a T.M. Joyce or some Joyce was taken into the Barracks and the Superintendent asked me in his presence if I would sign a statement to have nothing further to do with the I.R.A. When I refused that finished the interrogation in that barracks. There was a Guard Friel there from Donegal and he was a humane man and decent. He told me I was going to Galway Prison. I asked him if he'd go out and get some underwear and get the bill sent to my wife as I had no money on me. He did get the underwear and I parcelled the ones I took off and told him to send the parcel down with John McNulty (Eneas) on the mail van. Guard Friel said he paid for the underwear and If ever I come out of prison I could pay him. Ten years after when I was travelling I went out specially from Ballina to Bonniconlon Barracks where he was stationed and he would not accept a cent for the underwear, even though I threw it on the table he forced it back.

Memoirs for Family (Disc 2)

Barracks where he was stationed and he would not accept a cent for the underwear even though I threw it on the table he forced it back. There is no harm now to mention this. I asked him out for a drink but before we went out he went over to a locker and took out a bottle of poteen and needless to say we would have a chaser in the pub after.

To go back to Friday morning 30/10/31 I was handcuffed and placed in the back of a new Ford car between two detectives and taken from Westport to Galway Gaol and put into a cell to the left of the main door entrance. I was in Galway Gaol from 30/10/31 to the 10/11/31. The site upon which the new Cathedral is now built. While there my fingerprints were taken by force. When I refused I was jumped on by a few warders and laid flat on the floor of the Governor's office. Two sat on my body and one on each arm. Even one of them stood on the palm of my hand with his boot and the Governor assisted them. The food, was black bread and potatoes. Potatoes I could not use because

of the condition of my stomach. I had a peptic Ulcer. Galway old Gaol gave me a terrible feeling and out in the exercise yard in the morning I had to exercise around the flagged ring with tramps and criminals. One thing that struck which I remember my own shoes were taken away and I had slippers with a thin sole and around the flagged ring, which was about 2ft wide, there was a hollow worn in the centre of the flags caused through wear by generations exercising. After a rainy night there was a ring of water in the centre so each one marching had to keep a foot on each verge of the old flags in order to keep dry. While in Galway Gaol Gerard Bartley, old I.R.A. man, and my Insurance Supt. Jim Lavin called into see me. But I could only talk to them through a wire screen for a few minutes and a warder listening all the time. Around the old Gaol the walls were about 36ft high with barbed wire on the top. I had an old plank bed and very little clothes. At night I could hear the soldier sentry on beat outside, up and down, up and down all night. Also I would hear the rumbling flow of the Corrib down by the prison.

On the 10th of November 1931 I was taken from my cell handcuffed to a Free State soldier and put on an open Army truck. There were Three other I.R.A. prisoners taken in from East Galway and they were put on the same open lorry, John Joe Kennedy, Moran and Kearney. It was a cold day and raining showers of hail. On our way to Dublin when I wanted to urinate the stepladder would be put down to the road and the soldier handcuffed to me had to come with me to the hedge. Also when the soldier had to urinate I had to go with him.

We arrived at Arbour Hill Military Prison before nightfall and were taken into the medical room and ordered to strip by a Sergeant Major Heneghan an ex Irish Guards man from the British Army. Later we learned he was from Milltown, Co. Galway and a bad bastard he was. All my clothes were minutely searched and every little thing found in my pockets were taken away. There in my bare skin the doctor examined me, weight and height etc. were noted down. When all that was finished the rigorous rules of the prison was read out to me and then I was put into cell no. 5 on the ground floor. The heavy iron door was slammed and the key turned by a corporal. The cell was about 5 feet wide and 12 feet long, stone-arched roof, narrow windows to the South with strong iron bars 9" apart. Beside the iron door there was a 9" square frosted thick glass and a gas jet the outer side of the glass in the wall. This was the only little light you had at night. A stump of a cut tree about 18" high was your seat. Your table was a shelf affixed to the wall. Your cutlery consisted of one spoon, your knife was a piece of latten stuck into a piece of wood (this was a precaution in case you would cut your throat). The plank bed was on the floor and a mattress, the material that makes thatching twine and a bolster that a sledgehammer could not soften. Then you had a urine pot that was well coated inside. Three single hairy blankets, one under you and two over you - no linen. These were the contents of my future home. That night the iron door was opened and I was told to pick up my meal - one round tin can 4" high by 4" wide and a lid turned upside down left on the top of it containing two slices of bread with a slight smear of butter on them. Underneath in the tin was the tea. I felt hungrier after I had it eat than before I took it. At night the thought of home, Rosie and my mother, was uppermost in my mind and sleep was impossible. Next morning at 6.30am the door was rattled and the Corporal shouted to get out of bed. When I was dressed I was ordered to take my pot to the lavatory and bring back a bucket of water and scrub my cell floor. This been done I was ordered to fold my blankets and place them on bolster?

. Then at 7am the door was opened again by the wing Corporal and the Sergeant Major stepped in for roll call and inspection of your cell. Then 8.20am the door was opened again and you were ordered to pick up your breakfast. I thought the breakfast might be better, but no, it was the same old round tin of tea and slices of bread on top. No cup to drink to pour the tea in and I had to drink it out of the tin. The food was simply nominal served only to keep us alive. Then after imitation

breakfast we were taken out into the backyard for exercise, lined up on a concrete circular path and put 5 paces apart. The first day there were only about 8 prisoners and there were about Military Police men guarding us marching around with us, some on each side of the ring having loaded revolvers in their holsters. If one prisoner got nearer than 5 paces to the other, he was yelled at. One day I whispered to Paddy Hannigan, Dublin, to find if he had any news. Next thing I was before the prison Comdt. Windy Barney Dunn and had only bread and warm water for the next two meals. Silence was a terrific torture.

The walls around the prison were about 30ft high and at the wall of the exercise and general yard the 1916 Leaders are buried. At each corner of the high walls there was a sentry box and wooden stairs going to them. From those sentry boxes they had under observation the yard and a commanding view of all the approaches to the Military Prison of Arbour Hill. We were not allowed any newspapers, no talk with other prisoners, no letters in or out were allowed and you were kept confined to your cell except for the little exercise period you got on the ring. The first few days I was there all I'd be allowed to have in my cell was a big old Bible, as a result I hate the sight of one ever since. Trying to keep yourself warm in a cold prison cell and nobody to talk to is a terrible feeling. You had only three steps from the iron door to the back wall and you had to do this to keep yourself warm. The Military Police man in charge of the wing could not talk to any prisoner because he was watched by the Sergeant Major. There were only two Military Police men who were inclined to be friendly, Dick Troy from Swords and a man from Donegal. The rest were no good.

On Tuesday 24th November 1931 a Sgt. Joe Kirwan came into my cell and told me that I was that day going before the new Military Tribunal. Later on I was handcuffed to Corporal Pat Hodges (or Hodgins), I found out their name later. Before the prisoners no names of soldiers would be mentioned - only Corporal, Sgt. or Comdt. From Arbour Hill to Collins Barracks down the road, two soldiers with rifles marched 10 paces in front of me handcuffed to Hodges the Military Police man. Then 10 paces behind us marched two more soldiers armed with rifles and an armed Guard each side. Then Comdt. Ml. Lennon with a revolver strapped to his leg marched between me and the two first soldiers. We arrived in Collins barracks and were taken upstairs. The handcuffs were taken off and I was asked to sit down, sitting on the bench were four Free State officers and a man in plain clothes. I did not know any of them and had no means of knowing. They went on with some rigmarole and said they were remanding me in custody until next Monday. With my Military escort in handcuffs I was marched back again to my cell in Arbour Hill. This is one thing I can claim, I was the first I.R.A. man in Ireland taken before the famous Military Tribunal and that was on Tuesday 24th of November 1931. I have not the official document for the 24th as apparently they did not mean to go ahead with my case but were keeping within some clauses of time under the Act. As you will see by the official document is Appendix 2 on Monday 30/11/31 I was taken in the Black Maria with other prisoners down to Collins Barracks. Before the Tribunal I was asked but very little and I saw detective James Kinsella from Castlebar Barracks there. At the court there was no mention of a sentence but on the following Wednesday, December 2nd at 10.30am, the Military Governor came into my cell on the usual inspection duty. He asked me if I knew my sentence, which well he knew I did not. When I said I had no knowledge of a sentence, he then asked me whether I would take 6 months' hard labour or my freedom. I said provided it was unconditional I'd take my freedom. He then said I had ten days to get bail and sign an undertaking for three years. I replied that I would neither sign nor take bail.

At 2.30pm I was taken out before the Governor, Comdt. Windy Barney Dunne, by Sgt. Major Heneghan and Sgt. Kirwan. In their presence the Governor asked me again if I would sign an undertaking for three years and take bail. I again refused and said the six months' hard labour was

more preferable which was commencing from the 1st of December 1931 though I had five weeks served in the prison already. After refusing to sign and take bail I was thrown into a cold draughty cell and from that cell I could hear the screams of a prisoner being tortured. I got to know after our release that he was Richard Stephens from Dublin. That night I was taken back to my own cell no. 5 and after the gas light was screwed off, it was later lit again and the iron door was opened and in walked a Military police man with a bundle of convict clothes. He took up my clothes and even ordered me to take off the woollen underwear and threw me a hard calico shirt collar attached. We had a row but he walked out with my clothes. I did not sleep that night but thinking should I wear the damn ugly rags. On account of this upset my stomach ulcer gave me terrible pain and I would not get up in the morning. I insisted on having the Doctor. In fairness the Military Doctor called to my cell and I explained how I suffered from the stomach ulcer. He gave me a glass of Bisurvated Magnesia. I told him I had to wear woollen underwear and it was taken away from me. Before night he got the woollen underwear back for me. Many a night the pain was so bad that I used to catch the end of my plank bed with my teeth to ease the pain. This was not the sort of prison that one had a chance to consult with other prisoners what they were going to do. You had to act on your own what you were going to do. I considered that if I were not to wear the prison clothes I would not stick it for the winter. So the following night I considered to wear the prison clothes and stick it to the end. The following day when I went out for exercise I was glad to see the other prisoners wearing them - they also had to make up their minds individually. Only the two Gilmores, George and Charles, stuck it from the 10th of December 1931 to the 10th of March 1932 with only a towel around their middle once they got up in the morning at 6.30am to 8.00pm when the bed clothes were thrown into them in the cells. The bedclothes were taken away by the Military police in the morning. We were then convicted prisoners and had to do some work and we were glad because it kept us warm and fit and there was a chance of getting a word or whisper from another prisoner.

The type of work they put us to for the first week was something to sicken us. Each prisoner was put into another cell across the compound alone cells which were unoccupied perhaps many years back.

Prisoners were put into separate cells and a dump of old tins, pots and pans, kettles and old black rusty drums. Also a supply of bath brick, soap and rags. I was ordered to scrub clean and shine the junk. The dust from the tins and bath-brick which I used was inhaled up my nose, so it was terrible to be confined all day inhaling that damned ugly dust. Breakfast was at 8.00am and the only difference in the food for tried and untried prisoners was we got a little bit of porridge for the breakfast. While at my breakfast on the morning of 4th December the Sgt. Major came into my cell and told me it was on the meal hours I'd have to clean and scour the bucket and wash-dish of my sleeping cell and that they would always have to be shining like silver and if found otherwise but shining, bread and water would be the result for me. From Thursday morning until Saturday night from 7am each day to 5 pm I was kept confined scouring those tins and pots. On the following day, Sunday, I got one half-hours' exercise. Until the 10 days were up I was put to all sorts of dirty hard work to try and make me surrender.

The following week about Thursday or Friday I was taken out to the yard and put into a sort of stall to break stones. I was supplied with goggles and a hammer and also kneepads which were as hard as the stones themselves. The prisoners in the other stalls were treated the same. We were the first months not allowed to sit down breaking the stones but kept on our knees. I asked Sgt Kirwan if it was for penalty we were kept on our knees and his reply was - it looks like it. I was on two consecutive days, compelled to work on knees floor polishing for 5 hours each day. One day I forgot my kneepads and Sgt. Major Heneghan would not let me enter my cell for the pads. The same thing

happened Sonny Breen from Clare so we had to do the polishing without kneepads. As a result, I had pains in my knees for a long time.

The hard labour in Arbour Hill at one period was pure slave driving. I remember one morning this Corporal Pat Hodges or Hodgins ordered me to do a certain amount of work during my breakfast hour and when I refused I was on bread and water for the rest of the day. Another time he pulled myself and Sonny Breen for laughing at him. Then I remember one Sunday morning this Pat Hodges came into my cell and ordered me out to work in the compound. I refused to go down on my knees polishing on Sunday and told him it was unnecessary servile work. I was taken before a court martial two days later. Corporal Pat Hodges was the Plaintiff; Comdt. Barney Dunne was the Judge. I told him I did refuse to work on Sundays as in my opinion it was unnecessary servile work and if I could get out I would expose it. The case was dismissed so I escaped the bread and water.

I remember one night a prisoner named Moran from Galway while down on his knees polishing the wing floor complained of a terrible pain in his stomach from which he screamed and nearly fainted. The Sgt. Major used these words towards him. "Your bloody head will be broken instead of your stomach before you leave this". I remember Christmas night all the prisoners out on their knees polishing the wing floors. Later I was shifted to cell No. 26 near the bathroom and several nights I used to hear a stool falling and I knew the cell was unoccupied. Later I learned it was the cell Wolfe Tone was killed in in 1798. Later I was sent up stairs to cell No. 117 and later back to my old cell No. 5. Arbour Hill was a gruesome old prison and cold.

Sometimes I got a view of Frank Ryan passing to the lavatory when I'd gently push over the spy-hole slide. Several times during the night this spy-hole plate, about 3" aperture, would be pushed over by the night sentry and the flash light shone on my bed. One thing I got to detest was the sound of Church bell chimes, up to 12 at night, they kept me from falling asleep. Also the horns of steamers leaving North Wall. Sundays the prisoners were taken out through a tunnel to the adjoining chapel and the prisoners were kept in a net wire cage. There were sentries with fixed bayonets beside you when you went down to receive. In January and February 1932 after I had eaten my little dinners in the cell I used wet my finger with my tongue and pick up from the floor even the smallest amount of bread that would fall and eat it. The hunger was something terrible and we were starved.

As I have stated before I had no contact with the outside world. No papers, no letters and we were constantly watched and kept separated. You will see addressed envelope is Appendix 3 where Rosie wrote to me to Galway Jail. The letter was sent from Galway to Arbour Hill but was returned to her again and this was Christian Ireland at the time.

I remember one commotion and I think it was on a Sunday, we heard soldiers rushing up the steel stairs in each wing and orders being shouted to them. Then through the little top ventilation of my cell window I heard a chorus of voices singing the "Felons of our land" and the "Men of the West". We heard cheering and shouting but did not know what was going on as we were locked in our cells. Later when we were released I was told it was a group of Cumann Na mBan who marched up Arbour road outside the prison. Hearing those songs was the only thing that raised my heart since I went into Arbour Hill. In fact, it brought tears of joy to my eyes and showed we were not forgotten by our friends outside. The Free State soldiers in Arbour Hill turned all the available hoses on the Cumann Na mBan girls outside on the road and drowned them with water.

A remarkable co-incident, which I wish to note here, is that one night in my cell asleep I had a dream of our mare at home. Funny I still dream of that mare. She was one that my father had and I was very fond of her. I dreamt that she got badly hurt and saw her limping and on my release I found out

that the mare got badly hurt at the same time. Neil Lynchehaun borrowed the horse and cart to take his pigs somewhere and the mare bolted and hurt herself badly in the cart and they were dressing her until I came home.

Freedom

Then the 10th of March 1932 came along and at 6.30am as usual I was awoken by the Military policeman and told to clean my cell and make the bed and proceed to the wash house to empty my pot and take water to scrub my cell. While in the wash house I got the whisper from a prisoner that there was a General Election held but he did not know the result. Frank Aiken came in to Arbour Hill the evening or night last night to see the Gilmores as he knew they were in their bare skin since the 10th of November 1931. The other prisoners of course did not know this. About 8.30am or 9.00am to my surprise two officers opened my cell door with a smile on their faces what I had not seen before and informed me that I was to be released today. The door was left open but I was told to stay in my cell for breakfast as it was coming up. The breakfast arrived which consisted of bacon and eggs. I nearly choked myself eating with joy. When breakfast was over we were told we could leave our cells and associate around through the prison. We rushed out on the wing floors and shouted and embraced one another, chatted and laughed, and getting to know where each prisoner was from. Then I got the first newspaper in 6 months. I was glad to have a talk with Frank Ryan, George and Charlie Gilmore, Sean O'Farrell and Sean Mulgrew, as I knew them well before the Arbour Hill period. Sean Mulgrew and I were the only prisoners from Co. Mayo. When dinner came along it nearly killed us. Soup and sweet things, things we never tasted since we went in, and plenty meat, vegetables, potatoes, tea etc. Then we got sheets of writing paper and each one got the autograph of the other prisoners - see the sheet of autographs is Appendix 4. We got our own clothes back, shaved and dressed up for the passing out parade. Frank Ryan, Editor of An Poblacht, was asked by the prisoners to prepare a statement on behalf of the prisoners to be read publicly outside on our release, which he did. Charlie Gilmore was in a good mood and wanted to create a laugh, when the statement was read out for to be considered, Charlie said it was not correct and Frank Ryan looked at him and said what the hell was wrong with it. It ran something like this - "We the Irish Republican Army are pledged to proceed forward with our aims so and so until Ireland is free. Said Charlie winking at others, the word forward should be left out of it because I never heard proceeding backwards.

We packed our little bags and took souvenirs. I got a prayer book from Fr. Kennedy the prison priest with his autograph on it. Some of the Military police smiled and talked freely to us and said they were glad of this change of Government. The great moment had come and we were lined up. We were let out the front wing and the front door at the appointed time. Outside on the Arbour Hill road there were thousands to greet us. Hundreds of photographers on top of cars and walls and the united cheer that went up from the crowd must have sounded for a long distance around. We were put into a line of cars and taken via Mountjoy Prison where other prisoners joined us. Then to O'Connell Street and we had to go onto a platform which was erected there. There were several prominent speakers Maud Gonne McBride, Mrs Tom Clark, Peadar O'Donnell, Maurice Twomey, Sean McBride and others.

I was anxious to meet Michael Kilroy and he gave me all the good news that Rosie and my mother were well at home. There was a reception for us in Rotunda Winter Gardens in Dublin and after we were detailed to different places and a few of us were sent to a Molly Gleeson's at the top of O'Connell Street, North Dorset Street. She was a Tipperary girl and in Cumann Na mBan. A released prisoner from Belfast T.G McGrath, from Newry, was my bed mate. We talked long into the night.

McGrath had done one year in prison in Belfast. Next day the Prisoners Reception Committee organised a bus tour and took us through all Wicklow and down to Glendalough. With the prisoners on the tour were Maurice Twomey, Sean Russell, Mick Price and others. The night before we left Dublin there was a Ceilí Mór for us in the Teachers Hall, Parnell Square and it was packed out. Please see pictures in Phoblacht at the end of this book.

Then Saturday morning 12th of March at 10.00am a car was sent to Achill with Sean Mulgrew and myself. Accompanying us was Comdt. Gen. Sean Russell a 1916 man and the driver was Mr? Redmond an old I.R.A. man. We pulled up at nearly every town since we left Dublin and spoke as there were crowds awaiting us at every town. A large crowd escorted us from Balla to Castlebar, and outside Castlebar, a band and torchlight procession met us and marched with us into Castlebar where we again spoke to the enormous crowd. All along the road from town to town bonfires blazed. Again at Westport a band met us outside the town and bonfires were everywhere. We spoke in Balla, Castlebar, and Westport. We each spoke from the window of the West Hotel, Westport and in all three places I told how I was savagely treated by the detectives when I was a prisoner with them. We had tea in the West Hotel and then escorted by a procession of cars all sounding their horns. All along the road were bonfires and gatherings to cheer us. At Newport tar barrels blazed and candles were lit in the windows of the houses. The town was packed and we spoke there for a while. Processions in from Glenhest, Srahmore, Cuilmore and Tiernaur side.

We had an escort of lit cars from Newport to Mulranny and bonfires blazed all along the road. When we reached Mulranny it was the same. Tar barrels blazing and the village packed, processions from Achill and Ballycroy were meeting us there. We spoke from the fence outside Josie Moran's and needless to say we felt very tired. After all the hand shaking and greeting we left for the last leg of our journey and the most anxious for me. The line of lit cars was a wonderful sight and all the bonfires along the road. As arranged I had asked that our car would pull up at my house in order to embrace my wife Rosie and my mother. With tears of joy I held Rosie and my mother in my arms for a time, then on to Achill Sound. Where the new cemetery is now at the bend overlooking the Sound we had to come out of the car and from there to the Fairgreen at McLoughlin's, Mulgrew and I were carried on the shoulders of young men all the way through the Sound. The Sound was lit with bonfires, so were all the villagers within sight. A platform was erected on the Fairgreen and both of us spoke. Also Sean Russell and an address of welcome on behalf of the Achill people was read by the Achill Reception Committee. I returned home tired after the day and God how glad I was to be again united with my wife and mother. Sean Russell and Redmond stayed with us for the night.

I'd like to relate a strange incident which coincided with my release. Old Myles Corrigan, Tonragee (father of Catherine across the road from us) was dying for over a week and the friends up with at night expecting his death. He stated to the people watching him that he wanted me to be under his coffin - pall bearer - when he was dead. Each night, for three, before he died he would ask was I released yet and of course they told him no. Then the night he died word had come that I was released and he asked the same question - was I released - and when they told him I was he said thank God my wish has come through. That time the dead were waked three nights in their own homes and taken direct to the cemetery. I was told at home of old Myles request and was there the morning of the 13th March and went under his remains and to Kildownet cemetery where he is buried. Needless to say at the funeral I had handshakes from everyone who attended. Home again and it was day after day visitors and talk. Then letters of congratulation started to come in from Dublin, Belfast, England, U.S.A. Galway etc. Comdt. Michael Mangan, my Brigade O.C. managed to escape arrest and he used to call and stay with us often. He had the I.R.A. organisation in very good

shape at this time. During my time in Gaol I found that things were looked after at home. The neighbours around were good and the local I.R.A. helped at any hard work that had to be done

I settled down to things around home and getting many odds and ends back into shape.

Then on the 13th April 1932 my eldest son Hughie was born, just a month after I was released from Arbour Hill. Rosie's mother Ann Joyce and Catherine Corrigan were with her and it was Dr. R Donnelly delivered him and said to the women in the room upstairs, "Another soldier for Ireland" and strange how his words came true -Hughie was in later years a Captain in the Irish Army.

I got back again as agent for New Ireland Assurance Company and built quite a good Industrial Book and from time to time had various Inspectors and Ordinary Book canvassers I attended Insurance conferences in Galway City and Sligo. My area Superintendent at the time was a Jim Lavin from Leitrim. Comdt. Michael Mangan was off the run at this time and was residing at Devers, in Cloondaff, Glenhest. He continued in the I.R.A. for about a year after and then went to London where he died some years after. I could never find out where he is buried. God rest his soul he was a true Irishman. In April 1932 I was appointed Supervising for the Mayo County Council under Mr T.P. Flanagan an Engineer B.E. Of course it wasn't of a permanent nature as I was off in summer when no work was on road culverts, small bridges and bog roads. Also I had the Insurance Agency. Together with the Insurance which I did all on the bicycle I worked around home and the money was not so flush in those days and hard to get.

It came on to Christmas 1932 and we were getting on nicely and back again on our feet at home. I used to suffer occasionally from my tummy ulcer but not bad. The country was getting peaceful and the outlook more hopeful. Early in the 1933 New Year the I.R.A. HQ decided to re-organise the country and reduce the Brigades to Battalion areas, as many of the volunteers returned to civil life and many joined Fianna Fail. Still the Republican youth of the country felt that the I.R.A. should be kept in existence as they doubted Politicians. West Mayo Brigade was reduced to a Battalion which took in Castlebar, Ballyvary, Westport, Louisburgh, Kilmeena, Newport, Glenisland, Glenhest, Srahmore, Tiernaur, Ballycroy and Achill. As a result of Comdt. Mangan having resigned from the I.R.A. in May 1933 I was appointed Battalion O.C. of the West Mayo Battalion with the rank of Commandant. You will see the official document to this effect from the Adjutant General in the pouch at the end of this book. My task was not an easy one as there was then no money available in the I.R.A. Companies or Battalions. All was voluntary work and genuinely patriotic service. This, together with my home to maintain and starting a young family, was no light undertaking for me. The re-organisation of the depleted ranks, the re-appointment of Companies and Company officers took some time, as I had to do all this on a bicycle and mostly at night. I remember a new Company we got going in Castlebar and I used to cycle once a fortnight from Owenduff to Castlebar and back in order to drill the Company in a field near McHale Park. The Company Captain was a young man named Connolly from New Antrim Street.

The usual procedure was to get lined up, call to attention, then at ease and the roll call by the aid of a flash lamp, then drill for one and a half hours and a lecture by me on their duties. I had to travel to various areas throughout the Battalion with the same procedure. Sometimes a G.H.Q officer used come to the Battalion for General inspection and instructions. Such as Maurice Twomey, Sean Russell, Jim Killeen, Mick Price and Frank Ryan. I remember on a few occasions I met Sean Russell as arranged in Castlebar, but one particular day I met him and he had a HQ car. Previously there was a general instruction to get hold of all the arms dumps in our area which were some under Fianna Fail control. I told Russell that I knew of one; I'd rather ask him for them and get them in a peaceful way. This dump was at Lanmore, Ayle, Westport and known and cared for by a man named Berry. The

guns, nine Lee Enfield rifles, and they belonged to the Westport Active Service Unit. From Castlebar Sean Russell and I travelled to Mr Berry in Lanmore. I introduced Sean to Berry and we discussed our mission. Berry explained that the rifles were not his and that he would seek permission from Ned Moane and others before he could hand them over. Russell could see no justification in Berry's statement and insisted that the guns were ours. I pointed out to Russell that I knew the Berry family and stayed in their house when I was on the run, therefore I could not use force in procuring the arms, but by contact with some of the old I.R.A. comrades concerned I would eventually get the guns handed over to me. Sean was not at all pleased to this.

Before I leave this subject it is only right to tell what happened to this dump. At the end of May 1934 I was dismissed from Oglagh Na h-Eireann because I attended the Congress Convention in Athlone on April 8th 1934. After I left the I.R.A. a new battalion O.C. was appointed in June 1934 and Berry of Lanmore was approached for the guns. He refused and was taken blindfolded to a destination not far from me and kept under constant guard for a fortnight. He eventually succumbed due to his isolation and solitary confinement and the rifles were taken to another dump and as far as I got to know later the guns were let to go rotten with rust.

I personally found Sean Russell a rather domineering type of person, honest and hard worker, but out of touch with the private economic circumstances that effected the individual country volunteer. Sean Russell and I after holding a Battalion Staff meeting came home to Owenduff and he stayed with us for the night. The roads those days were not tarred and rough stones and potholes were prevalent. Sean mentioned we should get the Co. Council to put the roads in order. Things went on as usual until after Christmas and I had a pretty active life between home provisions and the I.R.A. organisation.

In the summer of 1933 I was in Dublin on some organisational work and stayed in Peadar O'Donnell's, Eccles Street. Peadar and Lille O'Donnell asked me if I could find a cottage for them in Achill. I said I had a prospect and after I got home some days later I went down to Pat McHugh, Bullsmouth, where I stayed a few months in 1925 or 1926 driving Professor Nally who was starting a Corrageen Moss industry. Pat and Mrs McHugh agreed to let the house to Peadar O'Donnell. I let Peadar know and he and Lille came down to Pat McHugh's for the summer. I think the book he was writing at the time was "The Edge of the Stream". I have the book at home which Peadar autographed for my mother. I used to spend many a night down with Peadar and Lille and we used to go around a lot. He and Lille used to come to our house very often. Then he used to have a lot of visitors there - Fr. John Fahey P.P. East Galway, George Gilmore Dublin, Ernie O'Malley who was staying in Burrishoole at the time and many others.

I remember something which took place at the time (It was years after I was told by a Garda Detective what happened at the holdup). Peadar and Lille were going back to Dublin in their car and near Castlebar three Detectives held them up. They asked Peadar his name which he gave. This nosy Detective asked Peadar what he was doing in Achill. Peadar said he was writing and said the Detective what are you writing. I am writing a Prayer Book said Peadar. The other Detectives had a good laugh at the answer the nosy Detective got. Peadar, Lille, Gerry Joe O'Donnell and their friends came to Achill for their holidays for a couple of years after. In winter if Peadar was down on any business he stayed with us.

Around the end of July 1933 and August the A.C.A. or "Blue Shirts" were organising. They were comprised of the militant element of Cumann Na Gael and almost every ex British soldier in the country had joined them. They wore blue shirts and black berets. Even the Cumann Na Gael girls wore blue shirts. Throughout the country they were getting aggressive and to G.H.Q. we had to

furnish reports on their organisation and activities. The blue shirts as yet had but little confrontation with the I.R.A. and it was the Fianna Fail Government they wanted to bring down. The blue shirts had no love for the I.R.A. because they knew that sooner or later there would be a confrontation. The Civic Guards who were active and dirty to us during the previous years, had blue shirt tendencies, but owing to their pay they had to keep within Fianna Fail instructions. Some openly showed their blue shirtism now and again.

In 1933 there was a " Boycott British League " and the I.R.A. helped to boycott certain products such as in some places barrels of Bass were taken out of pubs and let flow on the street.

On the 23rd of November 1933 I was again called back as supervising ganger for Mayo Co. Council and as there was no dole or unemployment assistance at the time the number of men looking for work was enormous and it was a tough job to allocate and please them all. I remember being put on the main road from Achill Sound to Cloghmore taking out hills and bends. When I reached Sraheens bridge a crowd of men were there and objected to them going any further. I had a conciliatory conference with the men and it was agreed that the Sraheens East men go off and the Sraheens West and Blenaskill men, go on to Derreens boundary. Then I had to leave off The Sraheens West and Blenaskill men and take on Derreens men and the same with Kildownet and Cloghmore. When the dole or Unemployment Assistance was granted the year after by the Government it changed all this mad rush for work. During winter it was no easy work leaving home at 7am in the morning and having to cycle against storm and often rain to Cloghmore or Ashlearn and be there at 8.30am. Then standing over men after been sweated on the bicycle was no comfortable job and then have tea at mid-day from an old tin can boiled on a turf fire. Your money was hard earned and hard got. Together with this I kept the I.R.A. organisation going and as Commandant of the West Mayo Battalion I had to travel to meetings and parades at night and on Sundays. Then correspondence with G.H.Q. had to be furnished up to date as near as possible.

The winter passed on and then into 1934. I am still with Co. Council, also keeping the Insurance Agency and active with the I.R.A. organisation. Easter was coming up and as usual big preparations were undertaken to make a success of the commemorations to be held all over the country. The sale of Easter Lilies, the venue of the commemoration, the presiding officer, the man to deliver the oration, the officer to marshal the parade of units of I.R.A. Cumann Na mBan, banners and bands allocation. All those organising plans had to be meticulously worked out on paper for circulation to the officers of all units. Transport was also an important item.

On 17.03.1934 I attended a General I.R.A. Convention in Dublin and a majority feeling was growing in the army that a new Republican Political Party based on the economic needs of small farmers and workers be launched and backed up by the I.R.A.

The common sense feeling was growing that under present circumstances the people should have a knowledge of our type of administration when National Freedom was achieved. Some of the leaders in the G.H.Q. at the Convention stated on the debate of economic and political issues that their only concern was to free Ireland from England and let the Irish people chose whatever Government they like after. One G.H.Q. officer at this Convention stated that whenever the rest of the Country (IRA) was ready to take the field G.H.Q. was in full readiness. This statement I personally, as Battalion O.C. wished to draw attention to. After fighting a Civil War and the Tan War Irish people were getting tired and most of the old fighters, for economic and other reasons, wished to take no further part in military action. We had to depend on new recruits, untested and untrained because we could not afford time, funds or guns to prepare them to stand up against a trained army whom we were going to fight now as an army and gain the peoples support in doing so. Therefore, I felt that a Political

Party with an economic policy aided by the I.R.A. for stand-by and organisational purpose was necessary. The Convention was the cause of the formation of the Irish Republican Congress.

Prior to going to Dublin Nancy was born on the 05.03.1934 and it was a great rejoicing having a son and daughter. My mother was good and strong and Annie Joyce, Rosie's mother, was down with us to help for a time.

Then came the Easter Sunday Commemoration to be held in Castlebar for which I was appointed to take charge of. I had a good Commemoration Committee in Castlebar, which helped me well. It was on April 1st 1934 and I engaged a special train from Achill and paid down a deposit of I think £40. Chancing my arm and on the fares I cleared the deposit because the people turned out to support us. We had three bands from Achill, Dooagh, Keel and Bunnacurry. Also we had a pipe band from Balla and Bohola. Also we had other special trains and special buses from all over the County. The procession comprised of I.R.A. Cumann Na mBan, Fianna Eireann Boy Scouts, Castlebar Branch of the Irish Transport and General Workers Union. At the head of the procession was the famous Tiernaur Banner, and several other banners and bands.

The numerical strength of all the I.R.A. Battalions together was over 2000 men. Then the general public marched behind the other formations. In all we had over 7000 in the general parade to the cemetery. I presided and spoke for some time. Then I handed over to Michael McEvilly, whose son was killed by the Black and Tans in the Kilmeena Ambush, to introduce Sean McBride who delivered the oration. This was one of the biggest and well-organised Easter Commemorations ever held before or since held in Castlebar. To confirm this old Mayo News dated 7th April 1934 is Appendix 5

Break with the IRA

Then on April 8th 1934 the famous Athlone Conference was called by George Gilmore, Peadar O'Donnell, Frank Ryan, Mick Price, Nora Connolly- O'Brien and others. From the West Mayo Battalion Ned Murray, Newport - James Ralph, Castlebar - Seamus Burke, Ballinrobe, Sean Mulgrew and myself attended. We had a pretty long run in a car, left in the evening and back again that night. It was a well-supported Conference and the agreed views of most of the I.R.A. you talked to. Some of the I.R.A. G.H.Q. did not agree with the Athlone Conference and so as a result issued a circular letter to all the I.R.A. who attended. The letter dated 26th May 1934 I received is Appendix 6. Some who signed the statement approving of the organisation later signed another statement issued by what was left of G.H.Q. staff to the effect that they were withdrawing support for the Athlone meeting. I for one having weighed up the composition of the leaders in I.R.A. G.H.Q. came to the conclusion that ones who called the Athlone Conference were closer to the country I.R.A. nature of things and feelings. I therefore refused to withdraw my signature - hence my dismissal from the I.R.A.

After my refusal to sign, Sean Russell came down to me and I handed him over papers and the details concerning my Battalion. As far as I remember Sean stayed in my house for the night. Then Jack McNeela, Ballycroy was appointed Battalion O.C. in my place. As a result of the Athlone Conference we got busy organising for the Congress as it was to be held in Rathmines Town Hall on 29th April 1934. Most of the I.R.A. in this area were for the Congress and the new group who favoured Russell, except for a few, were new recruits and very young and proved later to be more a danger than good to the Republican movement.

In Achill we got a very strong Congress movement going with the result we had about 10 delegates from Achill at the Republican Congress in Rathmines, Dublin on 29.09.1934. At the meeting in Rathmines we had 186 delegates from all over Ireland and we heard more down to earth things

talked than at any meeting we were at since the Civil War finished. The true conditions that confronted the people of Ireland were brought to light. Every delegate had a chance to speak on economic and social problems relevant to their own areas and stressed the need for local co-ordinated organisations to expose the conditions. I was asked to speak on behalf of the Achill delegation and my theme was migration and the poor conditions under which people lived. When I had finished I got a great applause. When the whole meeting was over Peadar O'Donnell came to me and congratulated me on the way I was able to detail the position. He told me that Jim Larkin (Jnr) came to him and asked - "I wonder how much that Achill delegate had prepared his speech" - and Peadar told him I hadn't prepared it at all, but just stood in my own door and pictured the conditions I saw around me all my life. At the Rathmines meeting most of the Irish worker's movements were represented and many of the old Republican stock such as Mrs Despard, Mrs Sheehy Skeffington, Nora Connolly- O'Brien and her brother Rory Connolly, others too numerous to mention and a lot I have forgotten.

Work in Achill

After I got back home I continued to work for the Mayo Co. Council and agency for New Ireland Assurance Co. I had to work hard to make ends meet and the winter of 1934 passed on and at home we were very happy enough. Being out of the Army side of the Republican movement gave me more time to devote myself to things at home which required attention. We had good neighbours and came to our assistance when required. There were no Radios then but at night we had always visitors.

During the early part of 1935 I had to travel around a lot to Co. Council jobs around the Island of Achill. I had to lay out bog roads, byroads, main roads widening and culverts etc. Also I had to send in and check pay sheets to Co. Council office, Castlebar. Together with this I kept the Congress Cumann's going as good as possible. Peadar O'Donnell and Lile came down on the summer holidays as usual to Bullsmouth and doing some writing as well. Also Peadar was negotiating with the Scottish Agricultural Workers Union in Scotland and went over to Scotland several times and arranged conferences between Potato Merchants Gaffers and Unions. He travelled from Bothy to Bothy all over Scotland and talked to the workers in every squad and had a first-hand knowledge of all their grievances. Peadar was a good friend of all the working class and was well liked in Achill and helped everyone.

At this time or about we had a Fr. James Campbell P.P. in Achill and he was anti Republican and had no love for such things as Republican activity or worker's organisations. He was carried stories by the usual ones who were ever against the Republican movement and very poisonous and wrong ones too. In fact, the poor man believed we were devils and only out against the catholic church. Mostly all of his church sermons were directed against us and it was painful to listen to him in church on Sundays. I remember one Sunday in Belfarsad old church, down by the sea, the sermon was so bad that I had to get up and walk out of the church. Also James Lynchehaun, Pollranny walked out with me, and Jamie and I decided that the sermon should not be let go without making a protest. So when the people came out I went up on the fence outside the church and to the congregation I explained that the Republican movement and the dead who died for our freedom, nationally and economically could not be forgotten and therefore we resented the altar being used for defaming their noble sacrifice. I pointed out the local migrants who were separated from their families because they could not get a living at home to keep them happy and that this was the state of affairs we were now fighting for which was a matter of concern for all of us. The congregation gave an enthusiastic hearing to what I explained but before I had finished the P.P. came in haste up from the

church and interrupted me. Then we got into a dialogue and I came down from the fence to him to discuss and tell him the true facts of our intention towards organising the people who wished to have their conditions of life improved. Instead of him giving me a chance to explain he hit me with a slap of his hand on my jaw and naturally I told him if he hit me again I could not let it go with him, but he did not. I went back on the fence and finished my say and then had a cheer from the congregation. The P.P. walked away in a rage and said to the people that they were now all devils same as I was.

Sometime later the P.P. organised a public meeting for a Sunday afternoon on the Fairgreen, Achill Sound and he styled it an "Anti-Communist" meeting of Achill Catholics. Big preparations went into the plan. All the big shopkeepers and pro-British element were got into action. Fine Gael and some Fianna Fail supporters were also notified to attend. Cars for transport were engaged to take them up from Dooagh, Keel, Dugort, Valley, Dooniver, etc. Then of course the Religious elements were up, such as Legion of Mary, Knight of St. Columbanus and some teachers. A platform was erected on the Fairgreen, chairs a table and glasses of water. Then Popes Encyclicals and other religious literatures were distributed among the vast crowd before the meeting started. Some they were handed to refused to distribute them and rows started here and there. I had decided that the meeting should be challenged and discussed it with the company of volunteers I had in Owenduff and Tonragee because we knew it was for the purpose of breaking the Republican movement in Achill. I remember we mustered seven or eight of our company and we cycled into the Sound and put on Congress badges on the lapel of our coats. Our presence portended that a challenge was eminent. Some of the big people around the Sound apparently didn't want to get involved and we saw them moving out in their cars for an afternoon elsewhere. We knew the desertion was taking place and that the Republican minded people of Achill would not fall for the bait. Anyhow the meeting started and Anthony Lavelle, Valley who was a Co Councillor at the time was prearranged by Fr. Campbell to act as chairman. We knew Anthony well and at least he was a good type of man and couldn't but be honest nationally thinking. He got up to address the crowd and stated first thing, that his views were that there was no such thing as Communism in Achill. At that statement the P.P. butted in and told him that was not what he told him to say. Also the P.P. had made a rule of his own which was as follows: Any person who challenged the speaker was to be branded a Communist. So it was up to me at this point to break in and ask was the speaker forced to say things which he did not believe in. Then a Civic Guard caught me by the shoulder (I think his name was McLoughlin) and said he was going to arrest me. I told him to get his hands off me damn quick as I had done nothing to break the law by asking a question. The uproar started to take place and word came in that a monk at Bunnacurry was hit by one of the cars coming into the meeting and he wanted spiritual aid. It was a happy relief to the P.P. and he stated I have now to do my 'duty and I'll leave the meeting for ye to carry on with. Anthony, the chairman, started to laugh and said I have nothing more to say and came down from the platform. The boys and other elderly people who were rather puzzled as what it was all about asked me to go on the platform and explain our position which I did. I pointed out that the Civil War fight between Irishmen of the 26 Counties was over and instead of any future arms conflict our priority was the freedom of the ordinary working people from forced emigration and to obtain decent living conditions at home, that every vested interest causing such emigration be exposed by the people coming together and make their needs known to the powers that be.

I pointed out we were not against any religion and this cruel propaganda was always used against Irishmen with progressive views who went outside the status quo. Also I pointed out that this meeting was convened secretly by a few to finish Republicanism in Achill. Then I announced that we were this evening adjourning to the Courthouse and issue a statement to the Mayo News, which we did see Appendix 7.

Johnny McNulty, Dooega, also came on the platform and addressed the crowd. The meeting ended up in a damn fine Republican rally instead of what it was intended for. After the meeting we got a bit of peace but emigration played hell with our ranks - especially the young men who had to migrate. It was a tough fight to stay on and live in Ireland but the ordinary people were good. The low - intensity movement tried to drive us out and jobs we applied for were blocked or tried to be blocked. Of some I could give facts here but I'll try to be charitable to the dead. Some Teachers were decent enough to come to me and tell me they were asked not to do insurance business with me. One was Michael Kemple from Galway.

I applied for a job at Achill Employment Exchange and got in there in December 1935 as temporary Clerk to 27th of June 1936. We were in an old shed or wash house down at the shore at the back of Johnny Kilbane's, rain down on us wet days and smoke hurting our eyes. When I went there first the manager was Pat Callaghan from near Ballina. A very good man for training staff and was efficient. I used cycle there in the morning at 9.00am. Many a wetting I got going in and the wind mostly against me. Jim McCann and I were mostly on the postal section sending out dole application forms, postal orders and queries etc. We had about 9 of a staff. The discipline was strict enough and you had to pay attention to your work all day. The pay was not much - £3 or £4 a week but I kept the spare time insurance going on my time off from the office.

The Unemployment Assistance or Dole, as it was locally called, relieved a lot of peoples want because there was little or no employment and prices for cattle, sheep and pigs were very low. Achill was a seasonal migrating area and in winter large families were finding it hard to live. When July 1936 came on I was with some others laid off because a number of us were employed in the temporary capacity. On 16th September 1936 Brian was born, so that added three to our family. As usual in summertime I cut the turf. We saved it and took it home with the horse and cart. In 1935 or 1936 there was a General Election and I was working in the Employment Exchange, Achill at the time. A dispatch was sent into me by Sean Mulgrew or someone in Mulranny that a band of Blue Shirts were operating all day around the polling booths at Tiernaur, Rosturk and Mulranny and they were intimidating the people at the polling stations as to how they should vote. I was asked to mobilise my Company of I.R.A. Volunteers and take them up to Mulranny to keep law and order as there was a Sgt Murray there who was known to be a Blue Shirt himself and he let the Blue Shirts do as they liked. When my hours were finished in the Achill office I got a lorry and collected about 20 or 30 of the old I.R.A. Company. They armed themselves with batons of stick, some insisted on pieces of iron bars etc. etc. Over at old John Conway's in Cuillaloughaun there was an old broken sidecar and the spokes of the wheels made deadly batons which were all taken out in a short time. We pulled up at Moran's No.9 and I got the parade in formation from the Fairgreen to the smith's forge. We were told that the marching company of Blue Shirts, which comprised of men from Rosturk, Mulranny and Dooghbeg, were marching in formation, two deep, up from Murrevagh to Mulranny. I gave orders to my men not to break ranks and do nothing without my orders. In the Blue Shirts there were about 20 men-carrying batons. We stood Moran's side of the road in formation, one deep. The Blue Shirts were going to O'D's and when they were marching past my file of men they were silent and not very courageous looking. Some of my men with iron bars and the spokes of a sidecar wanted to be let free to have a go but I finally managed to restrain them. If I had given orders to charge, I knew there would be some killed by blows on the heads of the Blue Shirts from iron bars and the hard spokes of the wheels from the sidecar. The Blue Shirts went into O'D's and we waited their return as we meant to get them out of Mulranny. A lorry of Military and a Military Officer and Garda Superintendent arrived and came to us and asked what the position was. I explained that we were sent for by the people of the locality to protect them from the intimidation that was going on all day and that the local Garda Sgt. was partly to blame in not doing his duty. The

Supt. and Military Officer then went to O'D's to the Blue Shirt gang and had a discussion with them. The Military Officer came back to me again and asked me to move my men. I told him we were not moving out of Mulranny until we got out the Blue Shirts and it didn't matter what the consequences were because they were there all day and no action was taken by the Military nor the Garda. I asked him was he going to get them out or was I and my men to do it and I stated this loudly to him in the presence of my parade.

The Military Officer and the Super got a sounding roar from all my men that they were going to do it. Then the Military Officer and the Super had a private talk and went back again to O'D's. Then Pdraic Moran, M.A. and I think a priest came to me and I told them our adamant position. Later the Military Officer and Super came back to me and stated if I would move my men back to the west side of O'Donnell's they would get the Blue Shirts out. I consulted with my men and with much reluctance they decided to move back to opposite O'Donnell's. The Military Officer and the Super got the Blue Shirts out the back door of O'Donnell's. Some went through the fields, others to the seashore and off to their homes scattering individually. The Military came up and stood in front of us to prevent a charge by my men when the retreat of the Blue Shirts began. Seeing how the situation turned out as it did I was glad because the temper of my men was up and blood would inevitably be shed and maybe the destruction of premises. By one or two of my men I was blamed, for not giving the order to charge when the Blue Shirts parade was passing our ranks.

I got all my men back on our lorry and allowed no booze until we left Mulranny. Another lorry load of young Republican men came from Newport but on reaching Murrevagh where they met the Military they were told it was all over and they returned to Newport. Fianna party got into power again after the election and the Civil War in Spain had started. Frank Ryan and other lads from Dublin who were with me in prison had gone out on the Republican side to fight in Spain. Also Tommy Patten, Dooega, Achill who was with me in the I.R.A. had gone out there with the Irish Brigade since December 1936. Early in 1937 I was getting rather guilty in my mind over some of my comrades being out in Spain fighting for the workers cause and me here. I said to Rosie one night I'd like to go to London for a few days and she had a premonition as to what was in my mind. She out with it and told me what my mind was working on because of the feeling I expressed about the men in Spain. We talked it over and I could see her point of view, so I reluctantly threw the idea out of my head. Tommy Patten died fighting in Spain and others from Dublin that I knew. Frank Ryan, who was a major, was in Burgoes prison and sentenced to death. Years later he got to Germany during World War two. On the German submarine with Sean Russell when he died. Frank Ryan was taken back again to Germany and is buried in Dresden.

The Republican Congress H.O. had no source of Finance with the result publicity and organisational efforts were getting hampered. In this area we had the migratory workers to help and trying to get them in or linked up with the Scottish Agricultural Workers Unions.

In 1937 free meals were given by the Government or Local Government to all the schools in Achill. Free bread, butter, cocoa and milk. The teachers and the Parish Priest thought it was too socialistic and at a meeting of their own they decided to refuse to implement it which implementations they badly carried out up to this. The children were not allowed to heat the milk or cocoa, cut bread or butter it and the food was left to rot in the schools. Also the hampers of bread, butter, milk and cocoa were thrown out of the schools and I have pictures to prove this in my photo album. A parents and school meals committee was formed in Achill. It was decided that women on their turns go each day to the schools and serve hot meals outside to their children. As a matter of fact, my wife Rosie went on her turn with others and served the meals. Dogs came out at night sometimes and

tore the hampers and ate the bread and butter. Even the drinking utensils were not allowed into the schools and the dogs and cats were licking them all night and day.

As weeks went on it started to develop into a dangerous situation for the School Manager, Parish Priest and the Teachers. Civic Guards were posted at each school all over the parish of Achill. Down the Island there were some scuffles and the people had great patience due to provocation by some Guards and some Teachers. One place, Ashleam a Guard got in wrong with the people and he drew his baton on a girl, Bridgie Duggan. She caught the Guard and took the baton off him, tore his tunic, flattened his cap and threw him in a ditch. It had reached a climax so the Authorities, and I believe the Bishop, had to step in and make an order that the meals be served in the schools again and the senior girls, as before, allowed to serve the meals'.

The Branch Railway line from Achill to Westport was closed to passenger traffic in December 1934 but it remained for transport of goods through 1935 into 1936. It was reopened to passenger traffic in April 1936 because of the bad condition of link roads. Mayo County Council requested the Government to re-establish the service temporarily, and this was done. Fairly early in 1937 passenger service again closed.

Then came the Kirkintilloch disaster. Here, in a locked barn, ten Achill youths that had gone to pick potatoes were burned to death on September 16th 1937. This tragedy caused a terrible sadness all over Achill. Personally I knew all the dead. Some worked for me on the roads when I was Ganger and supervising. The train of the dead came into Achill Sound Railway Station on Sunday. I was on the platform when the train arrived, the picture in Irish Press 2th September 1937 is Appendix 8. Everyone was sad and it was terribly lonely meeting the relatives. The whole Parish was shocked. into a state of gloom. The ten coffins were carried to the Sound chapel for the night and later to Kildownet Cemetery on the tops of motor cars and are buried in one plot there (see my snap of funeral in photo album taken at Achill Sound). In 1864 a prophecy by Brian Rua O' Carrabine, he predicted that the first train to Achill Sound would be a trainload of dead and also the last train would be a load of dead. He meant the trains would be special. The special train from Dublin to Achill on Sunday 19th had also on board relatives and other passengers including P.J. Rutledge, Minister for Justice, Frank Aiken, Minister for Defence and Gerry Boland, Minister for Lands. The special train went back to Dublin the night of the 19th September. Then the day after Achill Railway Station completely closed down and an engine there took two empty carriages and six empty wagons away to Westport. See picture of last train, which I took with my Kodak 616 by the "clean river" in my photo album. The rails were sold to Hammond Lane Foundry, Dublin and were later taken away. See snap in my photo album when they were lifting the rails.

On the 26.10.1937 I was called back to Achill Employment Exchange and had to cycle there to and from. Many mornings I got very wet.

Also I kept the New Ireland Assurance Agency going. I used to cut a good supply of turf for the home and this summer took home 49 good cartloads and had approx. 3 carts of old turf since last year at home.

This year I had an alteration carried out on our dwelling house, two centre walls built from ground floor to top and the fireplaces closed in outer gables and put in the two centre walls. Pat Tom Corrigan, his son John and Michael Toolis did the job. The house was in a mess during the construction and we had to live in it during the work. I got a loan of £55 from Irish Land Commission for the alteration. Also Pat Tom Corrigan, his son John, Michael Toolis and Sean Master Masterson started to build Thomas Toms new house. I used to help at home as best I could. Also drove the

lorry for Achill Co-op at weekends and used deliver bread with John Scanlon, manager of the Co-op, to all the schools in Achill, Currane and Ballycroy. The Co-op had the contract of school meals supplies.

The Tatie Hoker's strike

I remember 1st January 1938 Peadar O'Donnell calling to us on his way to Achill about Migratory Workers Organisation. I was with him down the Island and on our return Peadar stayed with us for the night. Usual office work at Achill Employment Office and work around home.

About mid-January Hughie and Nancy (our children) got the measles and are sick enough from same. Then the end of the month Brian Óg got the measles and he was very bad for several days and very weak. We had to stay up some nights to care and watch over him and afraid we were going to lose him. But thank God he got out of it fairly well. Coming up to June we had the Tatie Hokers Organisation fairly organised and Peadar O'Donnell went to Scotland and contacted a Joseph Durkin, who was Secretary of the Scottish Farm Servants Union. The aim was to link up the Irish seasonal workers with the Scottish Union for to keep improving their housing and wage conditions. No agreement could be reached with the Farmers and Potato Merchants and a strike was called to hold the workers in Ireland until an agreement was reached. We had a committee in Achill and another one in Donegal. I was President of the Achill Committee and John Scanlon was our Secretary. Michael Mc Hugh was Treasurer. Then came the crucial time when the squads were called to go by the Potato Merchants. Michael Mc Hugh and I were working in the Labour Exchange at the time and between telegrams from Scotland and the phone I had an exciting time as most of the critical and urgent work fell over on me. Then one evening I got word that most of the Achill gaffers were going to break the strike and take their squads off the following morning. When I finished work in the office at 5pm I got Rick Joyce, who was home in Westport from U.S.A. and was with us for the day (an old I.R.A. man). I asked him to run me down the Island as I wanted to know the position for myself. I met 3 or 4 Gaffers between Dugort, Keel, Pollagh and Dooagh. They all had their squads in readiness for the following morning, and as a result of the information my heart went down in my boots. I had to think quickly all on my own. I pleaded and pleaded telling them of the terrible thing they were doing and they would go down in history as so and so's. Then I decided I would run around and collect them to an urgent meeting of Gaffers, which I did. At the meeting I appealed to them with all the fervour I could command. I pointed out that the Scottish Union and Peadar O'Donnell were at the moment fighting for increase in pay and better conditions and it would be a pity if they let them down. Some of the men were adamant on going. Then after a time they asked me to leave the room in order that they, the Gaffers, have a discussion on their own and they would invite me in again and advise me on their decision. I went out and was later sent for. I was expecting the worst when I returned.

Then a Gaffer named Vesey, on behalf of the Gaffers, told me that they had a fleet of buses ordered for 5.00am in the morning, also lorries for to take their trunks and boxes and if the buses and lorries could be cancelled they would postpone their departure. I deeply thanked them and gave them an assurance that I would get the buses cancelled. Luckily enough I thought one thing which afterwards saved me. I hurriedly wrote out a statement which ran "We the undersigned Gaffers have agreed to postpone our travel per C.I.E. buses tomorrow which we ordered to carry our squads to Westport Railway Station. I got the Gaffers signatures to the statement of cancellation and out I went in a hurry to Rick Joyce who was impatiently waiting for me. It was getting late at night then and Joyce could bring me only to Mulranny. I had nothing to eat since 1.00pm in the office and was starved and could only get some biscuits. When I reached Mulranny I begged Sonny Ginty to run me urgently to

Westport to see Tom Doyle, Bus Inspector. Sonny Ginty took out his old car and we got as far as Burrishoole when the car broke down. It was then dark and going on for 12 midnight. We worked on the engine but could not get it going. I should have mentioned above at the Gaffers decision - that if the buses could not be cancelled and came as arranged they would go with their squads. At Burrishoole looking at the damn situation I felt down and out. Then as God would send it we saw the glow in the sky of a light coming from Mulranny direction. I stood in the middle of the road and held up the car. I asked the driver if he was by any chance going to Westport. The driver alone happened to be a priest. I explained to him all my very urgent mission and the predicament I was in regarding worker strike in Scotland and the position re the cancellation of the buses. He said he was going to Castlebar but would run me to Westport because he had all the sympathy in the world for the work I was on.

God bless him I was ready to kiss him for his kindness. Off we went and he drove fast and it was about 1.00am when he left me in Westport.

I enquired for Tom Doyle's digs and was told he resided down at the Quay. The priest ran me down and I awoke Tom Doyle and told him my story. I felt bad about getting Tom out of bed but it had to be done. Tom asked to be taken over to the Garda Barracks as it was only through the Garda Barracks he could make contact with Bus Headquarters in Ballina. At the Garda Barracks I thanked the priest and he went off to Castlebar. When Tom Doyle and myself were about to enter the barracks, who landed up with his car but Sonny Ginty. He got the car repaired by someone who came along. Then Tom Doyle and I knocked at the Barracks door and told the officer in charge that he had an urgent call to get through to his head office in Ballina. When we entered the dayroom it was packed with Guards lying on mattresses on the floor, also some more were upstairs. Later on I learned from Tom Doyle that the extra Guards drafted in were for escort purpose in the early morning to escort the Achill migratory workers to Westport Railway Station.

One of the Guards had to phone the Garda Barracks in Ballina and then the phone was handed over to Tom Doyle. The Ballina Garda at the Ballina end told Doyle he would have to go out and awaken Marshal or March who was Chief over the Western Bus Dept. We had to wait until the Ballina Bus Manager was taken into Ballina Barracks. Then he got on to Tom Doyle who explained the position and the conversation was long and questioning. The Ballina Bus Manager asked that he be put on the phone with me. He asked me could I give him an assurance that the Bus Company would not be held liable for compensation if sued for failure of contract. I explained that there was no danger of that arising as the Gaffers had agreed to the postponement. Then like a bolt from the blue he asked me had I any written statement to the effect and I said I had. He asked me to read it for him. I put my hand in my pocket and found it and read it for him and the signatures given there under. Then he said please hand it over to Mr Doyle, which I did. Then he asked me to put Tom Doyle on the phone. I was still in a sweat until Tom Doyle left down the phone and turned around and took my hand with a smile. He then turned to the Guards, as most of them were then awake, and said you can now go back to your Stations men. Incidentally I knew Tom Doyle years ago as he was an old I.R.A. man and I also knew he was good at heart. We went out into the street and Sonny Ginty was still there waiting for me. I knew I'd have to circle the Island again by daylight and I knew that Sonny Ginty was a man to be depended on and would not let me down. We set off for Achill. At Bunnacurry and other crossroads there were trunks and boxes stacked awaiting pick up by C.I.E. lorries. I went first to Dugort then to Keel. Pollagh and Dooagh and told the Gaffers that the buses and lorries are officially cancelled until the strike is settled. Then there were two or three other Gaffers I could not possibly take to the Gaffers meeting the evening before. When I had finished in Dooagh it was well into daylight. From Dooagh I went to River and then onto Dooega where the Gaffer and squad were

ready for going. I told them the position of the cancellation and then went to Harry McLoughlin, a Gaffer, Sraheens. Harry and his family were finishing their breakfast and their trunks at the road awaiting pick up. When I walked in Harry asked what's new and I told him. Harry was a decent type and was glad that a stand had been made. O God though very tired, sleepy and hungry I was glad to have saved the name of Achill regarding the strike. I got home and gave Sonny Ginty £5 or £6 out of my own pocket as the committee had no money. Poor Sonny Ginty was paid only a fraction of what he deserved. He was a good man.

I had to be in the office in Achill Sound at 9.00am so I hurriedly ate my breakfast and cycled to the Sound. I put in a rather hard and thoughtful time but was glad I had achieved something last night. After 5.00pm I was glad to get home and have a good sleep. Then things went on for a week or so and communications, telegrams, and phone calls between Achill Sound Post Office and Scotland were daily. Peadar O'Donnell in Scotland was a hard bargainer over there with Merchants, Farmers and Union. Some of the migratory workers here were getting itchy trying to go and once or twice threatened us for holding them up. Some everyday called to the Employment Exchange office to see me and complain about the delay. We decided to show no weakness and impressed them that we were determined to win the strike. No doubt the position was getting rather dangerous and something must happen soon one way or the other. Then one evening the Telegram came from Peadar O'Donnell that the strike was over. Increase in pay, better conditions and housing. We sent Telegrams and phone calls to the Gaffers all over Achill Island and the joyful thing about it I cannot forget. The ones who were threatening us during the last few days were now ready to carry us shoulders high.

Another incident I remember the evening the good news came. Harry McLoughlin (Gaffer) asked me to come up with him to the Post Office. Harry's squad are mostly from Donegal and he contacted them by phone. Apparently Donegal was not contacted from Scotland as fully as Achill was. The Donegal Committee speaker to Harry would not consent to Harry's Donegal squad moving until he had verification from one of the Achill Strike Committee. Harry re-phoned Dungloe and told the man he was speaking to an hour or so before that I was now present to talk to him. I spoke to our man in Dungloe and assured him that Harry's information to him was genuine and that his squad there was at liberty to go. Then Harry phoned his representative there to proceed to Scotland with his squad.

Then the Achill Committee and the Scottish Union decided to send an Achill man over to Scotland for the season as a go-between the various squads to organise and collect the weekly membership, which was as far as I can remember was 6d a week membership fee. Michael McHugh, Bulls-mouth was the man sent over and as far as I heard he had a tough job to get the 6d Union membership fee.

I was employed at Achill Employment Exchange up to 12.07.38 and did the usual work around home and kept my Insurance Agency with New Ireland going. My sister Annie came home from Cleveland, Ohio on a visit. Then our daughter Rose Marie was born on 06.07.38 and my sister Annie was Godmother for her. So we have 4 children now to look after and provide for. My sister Annie went back to U.S.A. some weeks after. Summer, saved the hay, got home the turf and the usual around home. It was in July this year that Douglas Corrigan flew across the Atlantic to Dublin. I wrote to him a letter of congratulation Appendix 9.

I was called back to the Employment Office again on 27.10.38 and I remember an incident which stays in my mind very much. As far as my mind serves it was in this period of work at the office it happened. The manager was Jim McLoughlin and one evening when the staff were about to sign off at 5.00pm he told me to stay on as he had to speak privately to me. I felt rather embarrassed as the staff were listening and I didn't know what charge was against me. There was only the two of us in

the office and he started off with his story which is as follows. He (McLoughlin) was staying in Mick McLoughlin's at Fairgreen and he was shaving before breakfast when Margaret or Cathy McLoughlin went up to his room and told him that Fr. Campbell P.P. was below and wanted to speak to him. He told the girl to tell the P.P. he would be down when his toilet was finished. A second time the message went up to him so Jim came down and the P.P. asked him back the road for a walk. Jim told him he had to take his breakfast and get down in time to the office and he would like him to tell him what he wanted. The P.P. said you have a man, Brian Corrigan, working down there in your office and I want you to get rid of him. Jim McLoughlin asked why. The P.P. said I was an Atheist, a Communist and a danger to the Catholic Religion in Achill, therefore I must be sacked. Jim McLoughlin told him he could do no such thing as he had no authority and if he sacked me he would have to give a full written statement of his action to Headquarters. Also it would have to be on Corrigan's office work, if deficient, he would have to base his charge and such thing he could not do because Corrigan is an efficient Clerk. On inefficiency as Manager he could report and same would be returned to Corrigan to defend the charge made. I don't think he, the P.P., spoke to Jim again until he left Achill. Some of the staff asked me the following morning what the court martial was about. I never told them.

I am off this Memoir since the winter of 1973 due to periods in hospital and two operations in 1974 and then my continued work with the department of Social Welfare which gave me but little leisure time until I got retired on the 24.07.75. Now in January 1976 and at the age of 75 1/2 years of age I'll try and memorise again.

Things went on as usual and I cycled to Achill Sound Employment Office and had to be there at 9.30am. Office accommodation was bad down in an old washhouse at the shore at the back of Johnny Kilbane's. The winter was bad and I was glad when Christmas was over and into 1939. One incident happened in this part of my life which I am sorry to say must be mentioned as truth is true. There was a Fr. O'Malley C.C. with Fr. Campbell P.P. at Achill Sound and he was a relation of the P.P. This Fr. O'Malley C.C. was in Mulranny for a time and he called to my mother in law Mrs Anne Joyce, Raigh and told her she should take her daughter Rose away from me because I was a Communist, an Atheist and therefore not fit to live with. Of course Mrs. Joyce told him to get off and that she would do no such thing. At the moment of writing Mrs. Joyce's brother, Larry, is still living who can verify this. Rosie and I were told of it and we naturally felt there was no Christianity in those who professed it, and it was God alone could divide us, not them. To add to this, I was never a member of the Communist Party in my life and I had no hatred or interest in them because Irish freedom for the ordinary people was my first ambition.

My mother was ill and we sent for Dr. R Donnelly and he told us she had pneumonia. There was a Mission in Achill Parish at the time and priests were occupied with same and it was this Fr. O'Malley who was sent to anoint her. I did not know of his approach to Mrs. Joyce at the time. My mother died on 20.02.1939 and she was buried with my father in Kildownet Cemetery. I worked on at Achill Employment Office until 21.03.1939 and only the permanent staff was kept on. During the spring and summer with New Ireland Assurance Co. and did sowing, turf etc. at home. The end of July my brother Hughie came home from Cleveland, Ohio. He is a bus driver there. By the end of August, he made arrangements for a trip to London, Preston and up to Scotland over to Belfast and back to Achill. In the meantime, he had ordered a headstone from Coffey, Westport to be erected over my Father and Mother in Kildownet Cemetery. In September he went off for London and was there only a week or so when the 2nd World War broke out. Train and boatloads of Irish were returning home to Ireland and the blackouts of cities and towns and the issue of gas masks to all. Hughie knew he

could not continue his intended route so he returned in the packed trains and boats with the rest of the Irish. He was only home a few days when he received a cablegram from the American Government to return at once to the U.S.A. The day before his departure Coffey had foundation around our parent's grave out for concrete base. Hughie and I went up to the Cemetery in the afternoon and we saw ends of both coffins exposed. Hughie was leaving early on the morrow. Hughie had to go via London and crossed to New York on the Queen Mary. Not long after he was in the American Army and over with Gen. Mark Clarke in North Africa.

I was called back to the Labour Exchange again on 01.11.1939 and cycled morning and evening as usual. The War is now on and things are more exciting and many more people at home. At Easter had our commemorations as usual. The commemoration was selected over the grave of Michael Moran I.R.A. in Slievemore Cemetery and I was selected to deliver the oration. We had about 1000 persons and two bands, Keel and Dooagh. It was generally considered I made a good job of the oration. It was my last such oration though I was not in the I.R.A. at the time. The report in the Mayo News March 1940 is Appendix 10. I finished in the Labour exchange on 21.03.1940 and went to work on 15.04.1940 for the Co-op at Achill Sound, which comprised of driving the lorry, supplying schools with bread, butter and cocoa.

Also I did grocery sales up the road to Kildownet and take lorry loads of bread from Castlebar. During this time and before my imprisonment I used to have bad tummy attacks and resorted to the use of baking soda as a result. It then went on to the end of April while taking a load of bread from Castlebar I heard that Jack McNeela and Tony Darcy died today 26.04.1940 on hunger strike in Dublin. The day Jack McNeela was taken from Dublin to Ballycroy church, all the old I.R.A. Tonragee Coy. crossed in boats at the ferry Tonragee and marched down to meet the funeral at Berry's crossroads. We waited there a long time and it was late at night when it arrived and the funeral of cars was miles long. We marched with it down to the church. When coming home we were tired and hungry. I knew there was bread and butter in Drumgallagh School, which I left in the supply the day before. We had a small boy with us which he got in a window and he gave us out two loaves and half lb. of butter and that helped us to the boats we had left at the ferry.

Next day we crossed again and marched down to Ballycroy Church and after the Mass the Ballycroy I.R.A. came to me and asked me if I'd take charge of the Guard of Honour to enable them to fire volleys over the coffin from the trees outside the church. This I did and the Military were watching me and the Guard of Honour, which gave the firing party the chance of hiding their arms and not getting arrested. The whole area was a mass of people, Military and Guards. We then marched to Claggan Cemetery and the grave was ringed with Military and Guards with fixed bayonets and full war kits. A priest officiated and I was asked by the Ballycroy I.R.A. Company to preside from the platform and introduce Brian O'Higgins, who delivered the oration. This I did and I spoke for a short period of Jack's time with me in the I.R.A. It was I who gave the I.R.A. declaration of Allegiance to Jack and Joe Moran the night of their initiation into the I.R.A. at a Company parade beside the old burned R.I.C. Barracks in Ballycroy. There was no incident at the burial and all things passed off quietly.

I went back to work in the Co-op. One day I was taking down a lorry load of bread and bought a slip or bonham (A young pig) and put him in a bag in front with me. He tore it and got loose, threw himself over my feet and I could not use the clutch or brake. It was at a bend in the road near Castlebar. All I could do as my feet were pinned down by the heavy pig was to switch off the engine and steer as much as possible to my left and chance nothing before me. Had to let the heavy Commercial truck run until it came to a standstill on its own. Then I had to pull my feet out from under the pig. On Saturday 04.05.40 I was sent to Castlebar for a lorry load of bread and on my

return Rosie had my dinner ready and took some soup which I should not take. Then went to Co-op and got the bread off and loaded the lorry with groceries to do the usual deliveries up the road to Kildownet.

Hospital

Not feeling good John Scanlon, Manager, said he would go with me. As I proceeded up the road I was feeling bad and at Cloghmore P.O. I said I was feeling unfit to go further. Scanlon was able to steer but had small practice in changing gear. I showed him what to do and I went into Mrs Kilbane's P.O. and had to go to bed. Mrs Kilbane put a hot water bottle to my side and feet and sweat poured out and vomit. When Scanlon returned after finishing the sales or deliveries I got out of bed and drove the lorry to the Sound Co-op. Then I went up to Dr. R Donnelly for examination and he said I had Gallstones, as my eyes were very jaundiced. He said he would have to send me to Castlebar Hospital for an operation and told me to come in again on Monday 06.05.1940 for further examination and instructions. I took a car home and went to bed with great pain. I bed all day Sunday 05.05.1940 then on Monday morning I went into the Sound and phoned Dr. J.A. Madden, 20 Lower Baggot Street, Dublin. Dr. Madden and I were in the Column and on the run together during the Civil War. It was his wife who came on the phone. I told her to tell Dr. Madden to get a hospital for me in Dublin. She told me that he gladly would. Then I went up to Dr. Donnelly and he re-examined me and again confirmed Gallstones. He was giving me a letter for Castlebar and I told him I would not go there as I knew four young men recently who died there as a result of stomach operations. He asked me if I could get a hospital in Dublin and I said that I was hopeful. Dr. Donnelly said that he could not send me to Dublin as they were doing such operations in Castlebar. Then he told me he was personally glad that I was going to Dublin.

No word so far from Dr. Madden and I am feeling bad at night. Tuesday 07.05.1940 up for the 7am bus with my little case, pyjamas, socks etc. and bid good-bye to Rosie and she is near confinement. Train for Westport to Dublin. At Athlone I sent a telegram to Dr. Madden from the railway station that I was on my way to Dublin. When I arrived in Dublin I went to Baggot Street and Dr. Madden had written to me the evening before. After tea he sent me over to Surgeon J.H. Coolican, 3 Fitzwilliam Place, Dublin. Mr Coolican (a Mayo man from Ballina) put me on a couch and gave me a sounding. He gave me a letter for Mercers Hospital and to go in the forenoon Wednesday 8th of May 1940. I stayed in Dr. Maddens at night and his opinion was that Gallstones were not the cause of my trouble. On the morning of the 08.05.1940 I walked over to Mercers Hospital. Mr. Coolican is the Surgeon there. I was put into a surgical ward and I was in that same surgical ward until I left on the 22.07.1940. I had to go back again for a week or two in September following. The day of arrival, tests, case history, blood extractions etc. Days following x-rays, Barium meals and so and so. On the evening of the 13.05.1940 I was told that I was going down to theatre for my operation tomorrow. A priest came to me in a brown habit. I think he was a Redemptorist. He told me of my operation and it was usual to have confessions. I told him that I was rather indifferent, as I had not been to a priest for a couple of years back. He asked me was I one of the boys - meaning the I.R.A. I said I was and that it was all due to a P.P. in my home place. He, the priest laughed, and said do you know me. I said I did not know him, and then he asked me did I know Jack McNeela, and I said I did. Well, the priest said he was with Jack McNeela when he was dying and at the inquest after. Then I remembered and I asked him if he was Fr. O'Haire. He again laughed and said don't heed that old foolish P.P. We had a friendly chat and he heard my confession. He anointed me again on my second operation and called constantly to see me when I was very sick.

On the morning of the 14.05.1940 I was taken down to the theatre at 10.00am. The Surgeon was Mr. Coolican, Dr. O'Mahony and Dr. Deasy and 3 or 4 Nurses. Sister Conn was the Matron. It was late in the evening when I came out of the gas or ether and was told by the Nurses that my operation took hours - Feeling very sick.

During the days following Dr. Madden, Comdt. Gen. Michael Kilroy, Peadar O'Donnell his wife Lile and her sisters Gerry and Josephine also Fr. Frank Sweeney and Joe his brother, Achill Sound came to visit me. There were really bad cases in my ward and some deaths almost every day. I felt happy to be over the operation and got up once or twice to the bathroom lavatory on my own. The photo of stitches or clips were taken out of my tummy, are Appendix 11 One day a black board was put up at the end of my bed and Surgeon Coolican arrived with a number of young Doctors for a patient lecture on me. All had note books and stethoscopes etc. They were all around my bed. I was listening to the Surgeon and saw the diagrams on the black board. The Surgeon explained my case history and told the students I was sent in for Gallstones. When he opened on me for such he ran through ureter and urethra ducts but felt no Gallstones. Then he opened my tummy and found a perforated gastric ulcer and was surprised it hadn't poisoned me it was so bad. The ulcer had been there, he said, for a long time. He had to take half my stomach away and re-enter my intestines accordingly. At the lecture there were black Doctors, Chinese, Japs and other foreigners.

I had a letter from Rosie to say Kathleen was born on 20.05.1940 at home and that things were well. Some days after I started to get weaknesses and internal pain and I knew there was something wrong and the operation must be a failure.

Then on the 27.05.1940 in the evening Fr. O'Haire came to me again and said I was going down to the theatre tonight for an urgent operation. He said I had an abscess beneath the diaphragm - inside the back left ribs. I had confession H/C and was anointed again. I was taken down at 12.00 midnight and Surgeon Coolican asked me would I prefer the ether again and I said anything but the ether. Mr. Coolican said he'd freeze the part for the operation. I remember on the table looking up at the big light. Then I was turned over, face on the pillow, and Mr. Collican started to inject the needle all around my back. Present, the Surgeon, Dr. Deasey, Dr. Mahoney and two Nurses. After a time, I could feel the blood coming down under my belly and with my left eye could see the Nurse throwing the blood soaked swabs in a tray on the floor. I had no pain when cutting the flesh. Then the Surgeon started to cut away one of my ribs and I went off in a faint and cold sweat running from my face into the pillow. When I became conscious Mr. Coolican came up and said into my ear that he would soon be finished. The stitches or clips were put in and I was turned face upwards. I vaguely saw Dr. Mahoney coming and putting the stethoscope on my heart. Then he gave it to Dr. Deasey and he in turn gave it to Mr. Coolican who kept it on my heart for a time. I vaguely saw the Surgeon going over to the two Doctors and shaking his head. I went off again unconscious and at daylight I was back in my ward and a glassless specul on my face and two tubes up my nostrils and a cylinder of oxygen outside my bed. The bed was screened off. Surgeon Coolican came in at 10.00am and asked Sister Conn if I was still living. Then I was handed over to Dr. Pringle, Heart Specialist, who started to take fluid from my chest. They were expecting my death for days. I raved and had much pain and went down to about 6 stones. My tongue started to stick to the roof of my mouth and had to be oiled. My lips were broken out and raw. They sent a telegram home to Rosie to expect the worst from day to day, and they were writing. The Hospital letter and telegram is Appendix 13. Also Mr Coolican wrote to Dr. Donnelly stating that lung complications had set in and there was no hope. Dr. Donnelly came out and told Rosie. The taking of fluid from my back and the straw sucking a little brandy was a painful affair every day.

Michael Kilroy and Dr. Madden came in one day and Madden said to Sister Conn when he looked at me - another funeral for me to the West. Sister Conn said back to him - no he is but making slow progress but a good fighter for life. Then after 10 days the stitches or clips were taken from the wound in my back by Sister Conn and taking out the last two the whole wound burst open again and yellow fluid started to gush out - filled the bed to over flowing and onto the floor. Sister Conn phoned down for Surgeon Coolican and he came rushing up and consulted with the Sister. Surgeon Coolican said I am glad it might save his life. Then sheets of cotton wool were put under me, and new linen. I was very sick those days and raving at night and a special Nurse was put all night at my bedside. During the last few days I am constantly on the drip. Then one morning Surgeon Coolican came to my bed and said I would not be a full Mayo man anymore because he was going to give me blood transfusions. Then Doctor Deasey and a Nurse came to my bedside and erected a blood container and put a tube into my left arm vein. They cracked jokes etc. to keep me amused and stayed there until the container was empty. The Dr. asked me if I was getting a shiver. I said no. During the afternoon I felt a little better. Next day I got another blood transfusion and when Dr. Coolican came to my bed at about 11.00am I put out my hand from under the bed clothes and caught his hand and shook it. I said in a broken voice - you have saved my life. The Surgeon sat down on the side of my bed and asked did I feel that way and I said yes. Then he brightened up and smiled and said- good man you have saved it yourself - and I could see joy in his face. My back wound was discharging and sheets of cotton wool were absorbing the fluid.

Gradually I started to improve and take food. Michael Kilroy called every week as he was on some commission in Dublin. Also Peadar O'Donnell and Lile used call. My come back was very slow but thank God I survived. The month of June was very hot and in the surgical ward it was uncomfortable and the flies were a pest. The War was on and the Germans were in France and were expected to be in England soon. A rumour was in the Hospital that we might be transferred to a Western Hospital. I gradually improved and on the 22.07.1940 I am to be discharged. The Nurses took some time to teach me to walk. Fr. Frank Sweeney came in the day before the 22nd and told me he would pick me up outside the Hospital at the hour or time arranged. Also Peadar O'Donnell and Lile had asked me to go to their house, 176 Upper Drumcondra, for a few days before going home. On the 22.07.1940 I bid goodbye to all the Hospital ward, patients, Nurses, Doctors and Staff. A Taxi was paid for to take me to the Railway Station and I was told to go home from the Hospital. When I got outside I told the Taxi man to say he left me at the Railway Station. I met Fr. Frank Sweeney outside and he took me for a meal and to a matinee after. Then he left me up at Peadar O'Donnell's. I stayed there for two days and the morning I left Gerry O'Donnell got a Taxi and went with me to the Railway Station and paid a first class ticket for me to Westport Railway Station. God may rest Gerry O'Donnell, she was a kind and good-hearted woman. I was feeling very weak and can hardly lift my feet six inches high. From Westport I arrived home on the evening bus. How glad I am to be home again. Also Rosie and the children are happy- Hughie, Nancy, Brian, Rose Marie, and my young Kathleen I have met for the first time.

My back wound is still discharging and you could put your three fingers in the hole into my back where the rib was taken out. Dr. Donnelly came to clean and dress it every day and finally he showed Rosie how to do the dressing and it saved him from coming out. I had to go back to Mercers Hospital in Dublin again for two weeks in September and then the wound was almost closed except for a small dribble. The Nurses all called to see me, also Sister Conn, the Surgeon and the Doctors. I stayed in Peadar O'Donnell's for a night or two before I returned home.

During the period I was ill all Rosie was getting on my NIH Insurance was 15/- per week. Imagine 15/- per week for myself, wife and five children. Then in October I was cut down to 7/6 per week. At the

end of October, I was called back to the Employment Exchange as Temporary Clerk and I went to the Dispensary and asked Dr. Donnelly to give me a Final Medical Certificate. He said he could not as I was unfit for work. I told him that I knew that, but it was a case of having to go to work as we could not live on 7/6 a week. I told the Dr. that I would try and get in on the Mail car to Achill Sound in the mornings and chance a lift home in the evenings. He said in that case he had no option but to give me the Final Certificate.

The War years

I went in on the Mail car and started again to work at Achill Employment Exchange. on the 31.10.1940. The winter was hard on me but I enjoyed it and started to pick up well. My back wound completely cured in November and no drips. The people around were good and helped Rosie with things around home.

The New Year 1941 came along and many things were getting scarce due to the War. The L.D.F. (Local Defence Force) was going into full training. For the Emergency many young men joined the Army and there was about 500 interned for I.R.A. activity. The country was in an unsettled state and rumours of invasion were prevalent.

On the 24.02.1941 I formed a Company of L.D.F. Owenduff, Tonragee and had 27 young men. We got Maggie Mór Corrigan's old vacated house for training and lectures. I used to drill the men about once a week.

I was knocked off at the Labour Exchange on 21.03.1941 and helped to do the spring work, turf etc. During the summer also I had the spare time Insurance with New Ireland Co. Attended parades and manoeuvres with the L.D.F. Then on the 29.10.1941 I was called back again to Achill Labour Exchange. Mornings I used to go in on the Mail car when it was wet and wild. Fine mornings I cycled to L.D.F activity and parades. Made the sowing, turf etc. and started the haymaking. Then on the 01.07.1942 my services at Achill Employment Exchange was terminated. Then on the 07.07.1942 Seamus was born, so now we have six in the family and our hands are full.

I had applied to Mr C Ryland, Representative for the War Agricultural Committees for England and Wales, when I got laid off at the Achill Employment Exchange. On Friday 8th Aug 1942 had the interview with John B Nicol, Representative for and on behalf of Scottish National Farmers Union. Interview at 10.00am and he appointed me to act as their Representative in Connaught. After dinner I met Kathleen Ryan in Peadar O'Donnell's and she took me to Mount St. Crescent where Rev. Fr. O'Flanagan was lying in state. This was the famous Republican priest we all knew. I had the honour of touching his face in the coffin.

He died the day before at Miss Shaleys Nursing Home, (*Mount St. Crescent Dublin*). Kathleen Nelson was the priest's Secretary/ Housekeeper: At 4.00pm I went to Cooks Travel Office and received instructions, passports and letter of Authority. Stayed in O'Brien's at night. Jim Grady, Newport, was up in Dublin with Newport P.P. and he left me over at Westland Row Station at 10.00am.

In mid-July 1942 one of my Company got drowned from a Currach back at the ferry. His name was Michael O'Malley (H). He was fishing with Neil Lynchehaun when the currach capsized. Neil a rather old man had a crucial and suffering escape before he was picked up. Michael's body was found about a fortnight after. We waked him in the L.D.F. Hall - Maggie Mor's (Corrigan).

Also in May 1942 whilst working in Achill Labour Exchange Office Jack Glynn B.E. of the Irish Land Commission appointed me to recruit men for the Government Turf Schemes in Kildare and Wicklow. In May or the first week in June I had about 30 men. I got a special bus to Westport and were joined

by other batches at Westport, Castlebar, Balla and Claremorris and a batch from Swinford also came at Claremorris. There was a huge special train from Westport to Dublin. Got several special buses in Dublin and took the turf cutters down to Glencree. We all stayed in Glencree at night. I was in charge of the batch from Achill, Ballycroy and Newport. Pat McGuire for Westport and Gallagher for Swinford and a Mr. Creighton for Claremorris batch.

Left home on the 7.00am bus. Train Westport 07.08.1942 and arrived Westland Row at 5.00pm. That night slept at O'Brien's, 39 Blessington Street, Dublin. Friday 08.08.1942 - see above.

The War Agricultural Committees of England and Wales.

Monday following, I started on my new job and sent two travel permits to HQ, Dublin - two from Saulia. Then during the week, I cycled to Bangor Erris, Doohoma, Gweesalia, Shraigh, Pollathomas, Barnatra, Ballinaboy, and back to Belmullet at night. I used stay in Katie Murphy's at night. Day's I did up to 50 miles. I made a good impression on HQ for my first days on the road. It was tough cycling against rain and storm. During that week I purchased a new Raleigh bicycle from John O'Doherty, Belmullet- trade in for my old one £10. Then days I saw the Yankee Clipper coming in to Elly Bay and taking off again. The 15th of each month was Fair Day in Belmullet and on such days I made good and many contacts. I remember leaving Belmullet late in the evening and cycling home against rain and storm and arriving home at 2 o'clock in the morning.

Please see other Diaries for more details.

I haven't kept full diaries due to not keeping them up and some lost.

Left home on the 7.00am bus and took bicycle on top in response to a telegram which arrived on September the 15th 1942 from Mr. C Ryland.

Sean Mulgrew and his wife were in our house the night before and they also were on the bus home to Murrevagh. When the bus arrived in Westport it had 65 passengers, 10 bicycles and a load of suitcases on top. I got a bus at 10.00am to Castlebar and cycled from there to Swinford - 19 miles. After at O'Connor's Hotel I went to see Annie O'Hara (Corrigan), Carrowbeg. Later I returned to O'Connor's Hotel and met Mr. Ryland. Stayed that night in O'Hara's.

The following day I went to the Labour Exchange, Swinford and met Mr. Ryland there interviewing men. Had lunch with Mr Ryland at O'Connor's Hotel. Mr. Ryland's purpose was to train me in on the interview business. The position regarding same is this - applicants for employment in Great Britain must register at their local Labour Exchange for the desired work. The application forms are sent by the respective Labour Exchanges to the Irish Department of Industry and Commerce, Dublin. Then if the applicants are released for employment in Great Britain, they are listed by the Department in Dublin and a copy is sent to the British Liaison Officer for Labour, Mount Street, Dublin, and another copy sent to the respective Labour Exchanges and a copy of the list is forwarded to the Interviewing Officer or Representative covering the labour Exchange area. Then the Interviewing Officer notify the Labour Exchange of the date and time he will be there and as a result the labour Exchange calls in the applicant for the interview. At the interview applicants are in a queue and interviewed individually regarding their potential ability for the work sought. If they have a valid travelling card the Representative Interviewing Officer takes it.

Those who have no Travel Permit are handed the stamped offer of work which they take to the Garda together with their Birth Cert., a photo and 5/- Postal Order. When the Travel permits are completed by the Department of Justice they are sent over to the U.K. Labour Office, Permit offices, 30 Merrion Square, Dublin for Visa. The Interviewing Officer marks his list of those accepted and

refused as the case may be, also the copy at or held by the Labour Exchange. Later the applicant is called and a travel voucher is sent to him for a date from nearest bus or train.

All accepted applicants were medically examined locally by an appointed Doctor. Also the applicant was again medically examined day of departure from Dublin. Interviewing Officers at this period which were many, interviewed for the various industries in Great Britain, such as Agriculture, Building Airports, Railways, Coal Miners, Metal Works, Carpentry Factories - Girls for Factories, Restaurants, Clerical Work and Nursing.

At the interviews with Mr. C. Ryland, Representative for the War Agricultural Committee, England and Wales, he appointed me as Interviewing Officer for Connaught, engaging men for England and Wales as well as Scotland. A peculiar thing happened at the end of the interview - A Civic Guard from Swinford Barracks came in to O'Connor's Hotel and said there was a phone call to the barracks from Achill Labour Exchange and the manager there wanted to speak to me. I went down to the Barracks and Mr. Deane, Manager of Achill Labour Exchange was on the phone. He said he had a phone call from his HQ, Dublin asking me to come back again as Temporary Clerk there. I told him I would re-phone him within the hour. I went back to Mr. Ryland and told him the position. Mr. Ryland said to me to consider what was best for me. I thought it over and the money with Mr. Ryland was better and I had six children to rear. I phoned Mr. Deane in Achill and told him I was staying on in the Interviewing Officers job I had. Then he said he would re-call John McNulty in my place. That evening I left Swinford at 3.00pm and cycled to Castlebar and then from there against storm and rain to Raigh Tiernaur and stayed with my parents-in-law there for the night.

I cycled home the next day. I kept on the Insurance with New Ireland going and got some new ordinary branch policies. I had a lot of writing at night. For some periods I did not keep pocket diaries but the run down to Christmas 1942. I used the bicycle a lot and looked after it well mechanically and on this I had a good knowledge. Days I used to cycle 60 miles' other days a few. Then I used the bus on routes where it was suitable plying. The correspondence to my home was increasing week by week and Rosie too was getting well trained in on work and she lightened my load on the correspondence side. To Erris and Belmullet, also Ballina, Swinford, Castlerea, Claremorris, Tuam, Galway, Clifden, Oughterard, Tubbercurry, Ballinrobe, Westport and Achill areas I had to go often. Weekends I posted all Travel Permits and lists to Mr. C. Rylands, Prince of Wales Hotel, which was his headquarters. His Secretary was a Miss Norton.

I come now down to Tuesday 29th of December 1942 when I left on the 7.00am bus to Westport, train to Castlerea and had my bicycle with me. Cycled from Castlerea through Ballinagare, Elphin to Carrick-on-Shannon for an interview at the Labour Exchange there. The Distance from Castlerea to Carrick-on-Shannon was 27 miles. I stayed with P. Callaghan, Manager of the Labour Exchange, who I worked with in Achill. Next day Wednesday 30th and after the interview of men at the Labour Exchange and dinner with Mr. Callaghan I cycled through French Park and there called to see a patient Mr. Cooney, who was with me in Mercers Hospital 1940, and had tea with him. Then I set off for Ballaghaderreen. It started to rain very heavy and I went astray and landed down in Lisacul. In the rain I had to circuit up to Ballaghaderreen and when I got to the Hotel there I had to go out and buy a shirt. Then had a meal and handed all my clothes to the Hotel Manager's wife to get them dried in the kitchen. Put on the new shirt and went to bed. God Bless the good woman she had all my clothes dry next morning. In all I must have cycled over 30 miles that day. Thursday 31st of December 1942 I cycled from Ballaghaderreen through Charlestown to Swinford a distance of 16 miles. Interview arranged for tomorrow at Swinford Labour Exchange.

Friday 1st of January 1943 held interviews at Swinford Labour Exchange and at night travelled on the bus back to Ballina. Stayed in O'Hara's, Hill Street. Saturday 2nd of January 1943 interviews at Ballina Employment Exchange and posted 16 travel permits to Mr. Ryland and stayed at Mrs. O'Hara's Connolly Street at night.

Sunday 3rd January 1943 left Ballina at 2.30pm and cycled via Lough Conn lake, Pontoon to Castlebar and on home to Owenduff a distance of 54 miles. Monday 4th January 1943 wrote to Tuam Employment Exchange Manager arranging an interview for 12.01.43 and to Galway Employment Exchange Manager for interview for 13.01.43. Early notification gives them time to call applicants far away out of their area. Made up my Assurance a/c and posted same to New Ireland also sent travel permits on hand to Mr. Ryland. We were on rations of food at the time i.e. sugar, tea, bacon, butter etc. So weekly we have to draw our rations from the shop we are registered with for same. Letter from Tuam that the interview is cancelled. Letter from Galway that the interview is arranged. Some prices at the time - 5 stone of flour 19/2, 1/2 stone of oatmeal 2/6, 1 stone of salt 2/3, 1 gallon of paraffin oil 1/8 halfpenny, 4 pairs of whangs (leather) 2/- Whangs are leather laces, and bus fare return Owenduff to Achill Sound 1/2 January 1943.

I am on the Committee of Fr. Manus Sweeney, hanged in Newport in 1978, so I went to a Committee meeting in Keel and handed up to the Committee Treasurer £2. 12/6. Did an insurance policy in Keel. Cycled and in the terrible rain I had to stay at night in Pat Patten's, Bunnacurry.

12th January 1943 up at 5.30am and went on the 7.00am bus to Westport. Arrived Galway at 2.15pm. Met Jimmy Corrigan, Stone Cutter, who resided in Galway.

13th January 1943 interview at Galway Employment Exchange and 11 men I accepted.

14th January 1943 left by train 10.00am Galway via Athenry, Claremorris to Westport. Arrived home per bus at 9.15pm from Westport. Following day writing and correspondence heavy.

Sunday 17th January 1943 all day writing and notified 17 or 18 old I.R.A. men for a meeting in Mulranny on 24.01.43.

19th January 1943 had a letter from Mr. Ryland about 10 men for drainage in Wales. Men from Portacloy, Carratigue, and Inver. To Belmullet tomorrow.

20th January 1943 Pat Patten, Bunnacurry called with his car and we put my bicycle on the car. I went with him to Bangor and it was a fair day. At night while I was waiting for Pat Patten on the street outside McAndrew's I was mobbed by a Jack Daly, Ballycroy, and his cousin Michael O' Boyle, Bangor. Also one or two more came on and I had to slip a heavy leather case I was carrying on my shoulder and a heavy coat I had on. I knocked one with a punch and hit two or three more. I kept on my feet and then a Jim Cosgrove, Ballycroy Road came to my assistance and one or two more and Cosgrove took me to a house and I had only a few marks on my face. I got washed and had a cup of tea. Then Michael McIntyre arrived and if he and Patten had arrived earlier it would be bad for those who attacked me. I went with Michael McIntyre in his car that night to Dooyork. I used help Jack McAndrew to collect wool in Achill and he gave me £5 commission. Also got a free tyre from him for my bike. 22.01.43 went to Bangor and met the men I had an appointment with and collected their Travel Permits and sent a telegram to Mr. Ryland. Started for home at 7.30pm. Rain and had to go into shelter. Home at 12 mid-night. Cycled 35 miles that day.

Sunday 24.01.43 Attended old I.R.A. meeting in Mulranny and we had a good number. Johnny Duggan, Blenaskill and I cycled up.

Thursday 28.01.43 had interview at Achill Employment Exchange and accepted a few men. Up to present from 29.12.42 I had cycled 286 miles. Writing mostly all last week and weather very bad.

Monday 01.02.43 left home 1.00pm for Swinford. Cycled to Castlebar and from there on the bus to Foxford and cycled from Foxford to Swinford arriving there at 9.30pm - cycled 35 miles.

02.02.43 interview at Swinford labour Exchange. Accepted about 20 men. Stayed at Mrs. T. O'Hara's, near Railway Station.

03.02.43 fair day in Swinford and met many men to whom I gave offers of work for renewal of Travel Permits. Got on a lorry to Ballina in the evening and stayed at night with Mrs. O'Hara, Hill Street.

04.02.43 stayed in O'Hara's and gave out offers for renewal of Travel Permits. Went to Dentist, Mr. Dobbin, and had a tooth filled. Funny how events happen in life. This Mr. Dobbin when he was filling my tooth little did he know that I was the man who was accidentally the cause of him spending a few months in Hospital as a result of a car crash outside Ballina Post Office on the 29th of June 1922. This is already on page 30 in this book.

05.02.43 spent the day writing in O'Hara's and posted all my Travel Permits and returns to Mr. Ryland. Got the 4.00pm bus Ballina to Westport and caught the Achill bus there to Achill - home at 8.30pm. Writing at home and did some Insurance etc. for a few days.

10.02.43 left home 11.30am and cycled to Castlebar and had dinner there and cycled to Swinford and got there 4.00pm. Got the train 6.00pm Swinford to Tubbercurry - arrived Tubber 6.45pm. Met Hughie Nealon, manager Employment Exchange. He got digs for me at Mrs. McGilligan's.

11.02.43 had a good breakfast in McGilligan's and went to the Employment Exchange for an interview. A terrible rush of men 60 or 70 came in and I gave them stamped offers of work and explained the conditions and instructed them individually. It was 9.00pm at night when I left the Employment Exchange.

12.02.43 Cycled from Tubbercurry to Boyle across the Curlew Mountains. Called to see Dr. Paddy Kilcoyne in Gorteen on my way. Got into Boyle at 1.00pm. Had dinner at Cawley's Hotel. At 2.30pm I had to interview men at the Employment Exchange and after cycled down to French Park and took the bus to Swinford via Ballaghaderreen.

13.02.43 at Swinford Employment Exchange I interviewed 39 men. Left Swinford 8.15pm and cycled back to Castlebar. There was a strong gale against me but the night was bright. I stayed in Mrs. Byrne, 101McHale Road, Castlebar. Since Friday the 12th I cycled 121 miles.

14.02.43 Mass in Castlebar. Had dinner with Mrs. Byrne. Against rain and storm cycled home.

15.02.43 Feeling pretty sick these days but doing my work.

16.02.43 with Pat Patten in car to Bangor. Cycled from there to Belmullet. Stayed in Katie Murphy's.

17.02.43 held interview at Belmullet Employment Exchange and accepted 19 men. First time I met Pat Conroy, Manager. Stayed at Katie Murphy's.

18.02.43 cycled from Belmullet to home - had dinner at Mrs. McManamon's, Bangor. After did a few days' work around home and writing.

28.02.43 Peadar O'Donnell arrived for a migratory works meeting in Cashel. He stayed with me until 02.03.43 and I went with him in his car to Westport Employment Exchange where I had interviews. Peadar returned to Dublin. I cycled to Ballinrobe and stayed in Mrs. Power's.

03.03.43 interview at Ballinrobe Employment Exchange and decided to wait on until tomorrow.

04.03.43 fair day and made contacts. After dinner paid my digs 12/- and cycled to Claremorris. Had a drink with Michael Murray who was with me on New Ireland Insurance. Then I cycled onto Kiltimagh and called to see Paddy Curran, formerly the Curran's of Raigh, Rockfleet. Then cycled to Swinford. Cycled 35 miles for the day.

05.03.43 held interview at Swinford Employment Exchange and accepted 12 men. Stayed at Mrs. T. O'Hara's (Corrigan). Left Swinford 6pm for home. Called at Castlebar and Newport. Home 12.30am. Cycled 45 miles.

08.03.43 cycled into Sound. Posted Insurance etc. Home and after dinner set off on the bike for Belmullet- through Ballycroy and Bangor. Cycled 35 miles. Stayed in Katie Murphy's.

09.03.43 held interview at Belmullet Employment Exchange. Accepted 18 men. Writing until late at night. Slept with Michael Clarke - bus driver.

10.03.43 on early bus from Belmullet to Ballina. Tom Doyle, Inspector, with me on the bus. Held interviews at Ballina Employment Exchange and accepted 19 men. At night stayed at O'Hara's, Hill Street.

11.03.43 travelled per bus - Ballina to Swinford and had interview at Swinford Employment Exchange and accepted about 10 men. That night by train to Tubbercurry. With Hughie Nealon until late at night and stayed at Mrs. Gilligan's.

12.03.43 held interviews at Tubbercurry Employment Exchange and accepted about 10 men.

13.03.43 up early for 7.50am train. Thick frost and ice on the streets and Railway platform. Arrived Claremorris Railway Station 9.30am. Held interviews at Claremorris Employment Exchange. Accepted a number of men. Bought a good pair of shoes in Michael Murray's £1.5.0. On the train with Scotties coming home. Got home on the bus from Westport 10.30pm. Today had a letter from my Brother Hughie who is in the American Army in North Africa.

15.03.43 interview at Achill Employment exchange. Accepted 8 men.

17.03.43 Saint Patricks Day. Wrote to Hughie in North Africa. A Ball in Thomas Toms at night. half barrel of stout. Twenty-two of the boys paid for it and it cost 3/9 each and they had a good night.

18.03.43 went to Stations in Tonragee N.S. Hughie, Nancy and myself went to Stations. Cleared up all my writing and gave an overhaul to my bicycle.

19.03.43 went to the post and started off on my bike for Westport. I had a strong easterly gale against me and it took me three hours to get to Westport. Had an interview at Westport Employment Exchange. Accepted three men. On my return I called to see my sister, Mary, as she was ill. Also called to Raigh and got home at 1.00am.

22.03.43 with Pat Patten in his car to Westport. Over on oil van to Castlebar and had tea with Nurse Byrne, McHale Road. Took bus in the evening to Ballina and stayed in Mrs O'Hara's, Hill Street.

23.03.43 Interview at Ballina Employment Exchange. Accepted 11 men. Feeling bad from a cold and had to go to bed early.

24.03.43 slept to 10.00am and felt rather bad from flu or cold. In O'Hara's and at 2.30am a girl who was mentally deranged came into our room and put on the lights, looked at each bed and went out again silently closing the door and putting off the lights. I was the only one in the room of five who was awake and I was very puzzled until I got the true story from Mrs O'Hara the next afternoon. The poor girl was in her nightdress. The war was on and the silent girl in her white night dress who silently opened the bedroom door and felt for the light switch and looked at each sleeping man's face and finally at me then backed out watching me while switching off the light and silently closing the door. Until I heard the truth I thought she was a spy looking for someone.

25.03.43 left Ballina 1.30am for Swinford. Interviewed in the Employment Exchange and accepted 6 men. Jimmy Groarke, Manager, went with me to the Railway Station and I went by train to

Tubbercurry. Stayed at night with Mrs. Gilligan's.

26.03.43 3 interview at Tubbercurry Employment Exchange and accepted 9 men. Paddy Feeney, Swinford, who was Representative for the Federation, was also there for his interview. I got a lift in Dockery bread van via Aclare, Kilmactigue to Swinford. There on Lavelle's bread van to Castlebar. Stayed at Nurse Byrne's.

27.03.43 left Castlebar on Lavelle's bread van and got home.

29.03.43 interview Achill Employment Exchange and accepted 9 men. The day was wet so I went in on the bus and had to walk back home.

30.03.43 bus 7.00am to Westport. Train to Claremorris. Held interviews at Claremorris Employment Exchange. In the evening took the train to Tubbercurry and stayed at Mrs Gilligan's.

31.03.43 held interviews Tubbercurry Employment Exchange and accepted 10 men. Hughie Nealon's house at night was a happy night to spend with crack and fun. Hughie Nealon was an old I.R.A. man and his sister Mary was in Cumann Na mBan. Mary was out with the lads in the Column and dressed wounded men in action.

01.04.43 left Tubbercurry on 7.50am train. Arrived Swinford 9am. Held interviews at Swinford Labour Exchange. Went back on the 7pm bus to Ballina and stayed in Mrs O'Hara's, Hill Street.

02.04.43 In Ballina and did my writing. Left Ballina on bus at 4pm to Westport and stayed at West Hotel.

03.04.43 held interviews at Westport Employment Exchange and got a few Travel Permits. Dinner at West Hotel. Home on the bus and met Ryland on the bus. Ryland was going to Achill to collect a bundle of Travel Permits. As far as I know he collected 60 or 70 Travel Permits. To date from 29.12.42 I have cycled 956 miles.

04.04.43 a big number called to our house and left their travel Permits.

05.04.43 Mr. Ryland staying at the Sound walked out to our house for dinner. I gave him the Travel Permits I had and more men called. Mr. Ryland went off on the 3.30pm bus.

06.04.43 I left on the 3.30pm bus to Ballina. Achill men were on the bus heading for England. Tom Doyle, Inspector C.I.E. on bus Westport to Ballina.

07.04.43 held interviews at Ballina Employment Exchange and accepted 34. Went back on bus to Belmullet that night.

08.04.43 in Katie Murphy's and writing all day.

09.04.43 interview at Belmullet Employment Exchange and accepted 23 men. Writing in the afternoon and got all Travel Permits and returns away on the post. Stayed in Katie Murphy's at night, Left Belmullet 12 noon and cycled to Bangor and called for dinner to Margaret McManamon. Called to Castlehill and got home 1am on Sunday morning.

11.04.43 several men called with Travel Permits and all day writing until very late at night. Rosie was run off her feet making tea for most of the callers.

12.04.43 on bus to Achill. 29 interviewed at Employment Exchange and accepted 11 men. Had to walk out home.

13.04.43 up at 6.00am and cycled to Westport Employment Exchange. Accepted 8 men and cycled home.

14.04.43 writing all day at home and the day is bad.

15.04.43 went to the funeral of Michael Corrigan, Achill Beg who broke his leg in a football field at Achill Sound on Sunday 11th inst. Cycled from Kildownet to Keel to get an Insurance premium from A. Cafferkey N.T. (first Premium).

16.04.43 Eddie and Jas Corrigan at us setting potatoes. I am writing and notifying for interviews Swinford, Ballinasloe, Galway, Oughterard and Clifden.

17.04.43 With Pat Patton in his car to Newport. Cycled to Westport. Counted 15 American bombers passing over towards the North of Ireland. Interview at Westport Employment Exchange and got only 1 man. The reason - Irish Department putting a ban on to keep them here for turf cutting.

Sunday 18.04.43 day raining and some called to our house with Travel Permits.

19.04.43 spent day writing and got my stuff off in post.

20.04.43 on 3.30pm bus to Ballina. Arrived in Ballina late at night and stayed at Mrs Margaret O'Hara's, Hill Street.

21.04.43 held interviews at Ballina Employment Exchange and got 6 men out of 18 called (Turf Ban). Went back at 6.00pm to Belmullet.

22.04.43 held interviews at Belmullet Employment Exchange and got 15 men out of 21 called. Went to devotions in chapel and to bed early in K. Murphy's as I am feeling bad from my stomach.

23.04.43 left Belmullet 8.00am per bus and got the 4.00pm Ballina to home.

24.04.43 writing and sent reg. letters with Kathleen Robins, Achill P.O. who came out with a Telegram re insurers of T. Maloney Rep. Got another Telegram from Mr. Maloney and sent a reply. Day very bad. Mr. Maloney's area and mine a mix up. Telegrams galore.

25.04.43 Easter Sunday - at home. Day very bad. Storm, thunder and hail. Spent evening writing. Slate taken off our house.

26.04.43 up at 6.00am and on bus to Westport- train via Claremorris to Swinford. Hughie Nealon on train with me to Swinford. Stayed in T. O'Hara's.

27.04.43 had a very heavy day's work at Swinford Employment Exchange. Interview of 67 men. Accepted 59 men and gave 20 offers for Reg. at Employment Exchange. Rushed for train at night to get to Tubbercurry. Had a Telegram from Ballinrobe confirming interview arranged there.

28.04.43 In Mrs Gilligan's writing all day and Registered off all Travel Permits and Nominal Roles to Athlone. At night in Hughie Nealon's listening to radio and passed an enjoyable night.

29.04.43 interview at Tubbercurry Employment Exchange. Accepted 5 men. All day at Employment Exchange and Hughie Nealon's at night. Stayed in Mrs Gilligan's.

30.04.43 left Tubbercurry by 7.45am train. Arrived Claremorris

10.00am. Then went by Mail car to Ballinrobe Employment Exchange. Held interviews there at 2.00pm. Accepted 15 men. Stayed at Powers at night.

01.05.43 again held interviews at Ballinrobe Employment Exchange and accepted 16 men. After dinner went out to Jack Connolly for a while. Then on bus via Westport to Castlebar and stayed in Nurse Byrne's at night for an old I.R.A. meeting tomorrow. News has come that the petrol shortage is going to make further cuts in the bus service next week.

02.05.43 in Castlebar and went to Mass 11.30am. Had dinner at Nurse Byrne's, 101 McHale Road. Old I.R.A. Conference at Courthouse and left for home with Peter Kilroy, Newport. Arrived home per bicycle at 12 mid-night.

03.05.43 writing in the morning and cycled to Achill Employment Exchange and accepted 9 men. Then cycled to home and to Currane to Willie Maddens wake. Left the wake house alone at 3.00am and cycled home arriving at 4.30am.

04.05.43 writing and went to Mulranny and registered off all Travel Permits and returns to Mr. Ryland in Athlone. Called to Sonny Ginty. He is going to England tomorrow.

05.05.43 morning and wrote 17 letters. At 4.30pm left home and cycled to Castlebar and no bus available had to cycle on to Ballina arriving there at 10.00pm and stayed at Mrs O'Hara's.

06.05.43 interview at Ballina Employment Exchange. Accepted 11 men. Posted Travel Permits and Nominal Role to Mr. Ryland. Then cycled from Ballina to Swinford (17 miles) through Carrowkeribly (a lovely Country). Left Ballina at 6.00pm and arrived Swinford 8.00pm.

07.05.43 held interviews at Swinford Employment Exchange. Accepted 18 men. At night went with Jimmy Groarke, Manager to the Picture House. Waited with Jimmy in his house until 2.30am.

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Return to Sender whose
address is at back

Wm. H. H. H. H.

Wm. H. H. H.

Wm. H. H.



* Brian Corrigan

Arbor Hill Prison

Brundage, Oct 10 1932

* George Mooney 15 1/2 feet St. Dublin 10/3/32 Arbor Hill

* J. J. Ryan Kilrush Co. Clare.

* Sean Mulgan. Mallaranny. Co. Mayo.

* Sean O'Searghail Drumard Droghda Co. Louth

Arbor Hill Has Dublin 10/3/32 Arr. 12/12/1931

* Jack Shahan Fossa Tullamore

* Sean Da Siogda Snaidhead Carraig Daidhin' Cappadoc

* Parnell O'Rourke An Rohlacht. 10/3/32

* Richard MacBriain 2 R. C. P. St. Clare

* Richard P. Stephens. Arbor Hill 10/3/32

* Claude O'Loughlin B. Susanville Rd. Dublin

* Thomas Dineen Ballynagbouseway Co. Kerry

* Sean M. O'Connor Glenamoy Ballynagbouseway Co. Kerry

* James Hammon & Jordan Glen Duff

* Dominic Brown ("Lunny") Derryshane. Ballynagbouseway Co. Clare.

* Seamus O. Jolla Murre

* Michael Sherry Loughrea Co. Galway

* Aidan Mac Gola Murre, Kilakee, Co. Dublin 10/3/32 (Arbor Hill)

* Sean McQuinn, Kiltbeggan Co. Westmeath

* Sean Hogan Tullassah, Limerick, Co. Clare.

* T. J. O'Grath. Mount Avenue Clarry.

Signatures of prisoners released from Arbor Hill Prison

10/3/1932

Sean McQuinn released from Mountjoy Jail

Sean Hogan released from Mountjoy Jail