

A.9.

C O N V E R S A T I O N   W I T H :

J O H N   M U R P H Y -

T U L L Y V A L L E N

A N D

E D D I E   B O Y L E

March 3rd., 1966

I arranged with Eddie Boyle to bring this man, John Murphy and they both came here about 8.00. p.m. on March 3rd, 1966.

Eddie's son, Patrick, had brought them here in his car and he returned for them at midnight and we then all left John at his home near Newtownhamilton, Co. Armagh.

John said many years ago Hugh Kelly had found a stone age axe and it was presented to Co. Louth Museum but he does not know where it now is, and he said his father years ago had also found a sort of walking stick in what may have been a Lake Dwelling in ancient times.

Since in the Civil War of 1922, the County Museum was burnt. He would like to find out if these exhibits were still extant and I suggested he get in touch with Father McIvor P.P., Faughart, who is interested in such matters in Co. Louth.

John says there is an Ogharn Stone near his home and we (Eddie and I) said we'd go to see it this coming Summer.

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"Where were you born John?"

"In Tullyvallen. My father's name was Patrick and my mother's name was Rose, her maiden name being Nugent.

I am 73 years of age."

"Have you lived all your life at Tullyvallen?"

"Oh, indeed not. I got the wander lust and went to Wallasey near L'pool, where my work was a

tramcar driver.

In the boarding house in which I lodged there were many sea-faring men and as the War was on - the first World War - I was in danger of being conscripted and these sadlar men said some day I'd go out with the tram uniform on me and I'd come back in the Khaki uniform, so I joined the Merchant Navy and made several trans-Atlantic trips and when in U.S.A. I joined the Pacific Steam Navigation Line, and made several trips to South America. These trips to South America generally took three months calling at different ports. I was about three years with this company."

"Let us wait now John, - your'e going too fast. Remember I have only got your birth. I want to hear about your boyhood days. What school did you go to?"

"Tullyvallen, whose teacher was Mrs. Ryder. Her husband taught in Newtownhamilton school. I think the school was under Protestant patronage, and it was a mixed school.

I think the patron was a local landlord called Reid.

Tullyvallen townland was owned by a landlord called Hamilton. It is the second largest townland in Ireland, and Newtownhamilton is in this townland and is named after the townland's owner."

" Can you remember any School Inspectors of your school days?"

"Yes, there was a man called Murphy who was there all my time there; as when this school closed I went to Newtownhamilton school where I was while Mr. Ryder was there, and then Mr. Gribben came in his place.

I think Mrs. Ryder's maiden name was Brigid Byrne, and she was from Moy, Co. Tyrone.

Mr. Gribben was interested in archaeology and he and Hugh Kelly and I excavated an old burial mound that a landlord Capt. Barker that built a pigeon house on top of.

This mound was locally called Harrymount and when we dug around it we found a burying place of the stone age, but all we found were some bones, a large back tooth and an earthen pot.

Nearby were many bones of animals including Elk bones, and Hugh sent some away to be analysed and they were found to be pre-historic remains.

There was no skeleton in the stone grave however.

When Hugh Kelly and Mr. Gribben died later of T.B. the people said it was because they interfered with this burial place, but thank God I am still alive.

This mound is near my home and is listed in official maps as a Protected Monument."

"Can you remember anything about the 1916 Rising?"

"Yes, my brother and I were going fishing and there was a flood in the river and we were talking to Hugh Kelly when Mr. Devlin, the Cullyhanna teacher came up to where we were and he spoke very scathing-ly of Eeon MacNeill's countermanding order."

"How long did you remain at school?"

"Until I was about 16 as I was going on to be a Monitor but the scheme for Monitors just ended

then.

Louis Trodden and a Miss Hannaway from Newtown were also going on and the ending of the system stopped them also.

Miss Hannaway though became a teacher later. Mrs. Ryder had me so well taught that apart from Louis Trodden and Miss Hannaway I was two years ahead of my class mates when I went to Newtown school, about 1904. "

"Who were the priests in the parish then?"

"Fr. Kerley was P.P. and Frs. Gogarty and Byrne were curates. The latter was a great cyclest. He was from Mullaban."

"Well, Joh, I think I'll go on a bit more in your life story and but for the ending of the Monitor scheme you might have been a teacher. Did you remain on your father's farm after school?"

"Yes, for a few years until I went to England to my first job as a market gardener."

I heard that men were required in the Tramways Dept."

"What pay had you then?"

"Ten pounds a month. In the gardens I could hardly earn 30/- a week no matter how hard I'd work, besides it was largely seasonal work."

I remained with the Tramway Co. until about 1915, when my lodging house owner - Mr. Casey from near Dundalk - who had been at sea all his life, suggested I also go to sea and avoid conscription.

I, with this influence got a job on the "S.S." ORDUNA" - a chartered ship to the Cunard Line from

the Pacific Steam Navigation Company.

I later was on the "ORTEGA", "ORRISA", and the "ORONZA", but they were not on the New York run - the ferry service as we called it; only the Orduna was on it.

I remained at sea until early 1918, - maybe December 1917, as I was home for the election - the big Sinn Fein Election."

Well, since we've begun to talk of politics, can you remember any pro-Irish activity in L'pool?"

"I used to go to a home of a man called John Hughes and Irishmen would meet there. He was from Cullyhanna and his home was off Scotland Rd., L'pool.

There was a big shop owned by Murphy's. It was called the Catholic Repositroy and I think it was used as a clearing house and store for arms for Ireland. In this shop they sold all the Irish papers, as it was also a stationery shop as well as a place for selling Catholic pious objects."

"While you were in Wallasey were you in any Irish Society?"

"No, and since I was not in any myself I naturally would not be told of the existence of I.R.B. or I.R.A. It was Hughes who brought me to Murphy's. I do not know if he was in any society or not."

"Well, you came home from England Dec. 1917. Was it about then when the Volunteers were formed around Cullyhanna?"

"They were formed before that but had fallen away, but a man, I think he was from Dublin, came to a meeting in Cullyhanna, and formed a new branch there about Feb. 1918. I don't know his name but

names of that Volunteer Company included: Mick ~~Mc~~McMahon, Jim Quinn, Nicholas O'Hare, Big Tommy Loy, the McCannons, Mick Feehan - Cullyhanna, Packey Macken, who was for a while our Capt. until he was arrested for a seditious speech at Cullyhanna. I remember the Sergeant in Cullyhanna taking notes of the speech he made after we came back from Crossmaglen to where we had been on a route march, and he came in to the hall where we were and said we were all guilty of illegal assembly. I don't remember the Sergeant's name.

John Edmund O'Hanlon was in that Volunteer Company and was O.C. of the Battalion for a while and it's H.W. was for a while at his place at Dorsey, and I thought it a foolish place to have as H.Q. It was such an open place and there were many Protestant houses nearby.

We used to meet in his big barn loft. "

"What arms did you then have?"

"Just one long Lee-Enfield rifle which I had brought from Murphys in L'pool. I had a rifle also that my uncle in Philadelphia had given me when once I visited him there. He was from Cork, a man called Big Jim Casey and he was in the Ice business in Philadelphia. He was married to my aunt, Margaret. He had a lot of sporting guns and he gave me my choice of a .22 Winchester repeater and a bigger gun - I think they called it a 30.30. I fancied the .22 repeater because it broke down and could be more easily smuggled back to England. You see the war was still on and there were many precautions by the Customs against smuggling of arms.

It was even very hard to get stuff aboard on the ship at New York, but there was a Jew who was some sort of agent and you could place your order for goods with him and he'd bring it to the ship

the day before it was due to sail and he would deliver the parcel to the ship's Purser. You would place your order with this Jew and He'd write it down and you'd pay him, but you wouldn't be given what you ordered.

I got to know him when I was wondering how I'd get newspaper "The Gaelic American" and "The Irish World," aboard the ship. I wanted them for Hugh Kelly and where I bought these papers I asked the paper shop man how I would manage these aboard and he told me about this Jew man.

He'd give it to the Purser and two days out at sea the Purser would give out the parcels.

Also I got aboard was a revolver which I had bought from a schoolboy on July 4th, for one dollar. On this feast day I was with an Irish sea pal and we came on a bunch of school boys in a fun fair all firing revolvers at a tin can. I asked one of them to sell me his and he did.

Well, I got the stuff safely ashore at the Alwyn Dock, L'pool and since there was no search at Newry I got them safely to home. I also brought five pounds of tobacco on that occasion - all in 4 oz. cakes - we were legally allowed to take ashore  $\frac{1}{2}$  lb. tobacco.

In case the Excise men might come aboard - they sometimes did when the boat docket - I hid my goods along a girder on which no light shone directly I put on all the lights on this corridor until I found the spot.

You see when the boat docked the second steward would lock up all seamen's rooms and you could not get in even next morning at 10.00.a.m. when you'd go back aboard for your pay.

So I retrieved my stuff at 10.00.a.m. and gave

some of my pals some of the tobacco to take out for me, took the remainder myself and put it on my guns under my coat and got them safely past the dock policemen to the Newry boat.

The long Lee-Enfield I had taken from America on an earlier trip, because while not in any Irish physical force society I always was fascinated by guns.

I remember a Tipperary soldier in the British army that I met in L'pool one time, and he said if I came up to his barrack, up by Aintree he would throw a rifle to me over the wall and though I was tempted I did not go as I didn't trust him."

"Well, to get back to the early days of the Volunteers around Cullyhanna, what drill etc. would you do?"

"I remember we had target practice with a short Lee-Enfield under Edmund O'Hanlon's instruction.

We had it near Cullyhanna, as when the R.I.C. vacated the Barrack there it was burnt.

We had very little ammunition though. The instruction was near Cullyhanna on a place called Hughes' Hill on the farm where that man Hughes, I was talking of, was reared, before he went to L'pool. It was in a hollow between two hills where we had the firing range.

There were 17 of us at that practice, more came in to the company later after 1919, though as the area was predominantly A.O.H. it was not fashionable then to be Sinn Fein. After the Truce of course was another story.

O'Hanlon and Macken got six months in prison about that time for sedition.

Harry McNulty Carragher who had been in the British Army trained us, and another ex-Irish Guard was a good trainer, Harry McNulty. They were in the British Army pre War and had had considerable training ability."

"Did you increase your arms and ammunition by raiding?"

"Yes, we did but the only arms we got were old shot-guns and in a house over the then County border in Monaghan we only got an old steel barreled pin fire shot-gun; but no cartridges, only boxes of empty spent ones. "

"Were any of the Cullyhanna Company engaged for the Camlough Barrack attack?"

"Yes, but only as far as Sturgan to block the road there. Jim Quigley was in charge there."

"What do you know about the shooting of Sgt. Holland at Cullyhanna? "

"That was in June 1920. That was the year Seamus Mackin and I were elected as Sinn Feiners for the Rural Council; largely because of the new system of voting - P.R.

There was a Feis at Cullyhanna - I think on Sun. June 6th, and Sgt. Holland and two constables came to do duty - they came from some barrack near, for Cullyhanna barrack was burnt.

They did not come in to the field but stood in the village street, and a man came to Basney Murphy and me, who was then our Captain when the other two were in jail, and he said there was to be an attack on the police and he asked us would we take part in it.

We were surprised at this request as at that ~~time~~ time locals were not required to do these things in their own area like ambushes etc. - however we said we would but we thought it a suicidal act.

He asked us had we any arms and I said I had a .22 revolver and Barney had another not much bigger. Neither were dependable weapons for such an enterprise, and besides my weapon shot very crooked.

Well, it was agreed that we would loan these weapons to be used by others for the attack and they went off but they returned later and said though they had other men we would have to remain near as a reserve.

We were sent from the field to see where the police were and I came over to the Bridge and Sgt. Holland was standing at a house in the road you'd enter the village from the East, with a policeman on each side of him. It was the evening time and you could hear the band coming from the Feis field.

Mick McManus of Mullaban was one of the men picked and also Mick Donnelly and some more Mullaban boys grouped around in case they did not succeed - there was eight of them I think, and Peter McCreesh that was shot dead that day was one of them.

Well, I heard a call "Hands Up!" and it wasn't long till the shooting started and the three police got separated - Sgt. Holland had a big automatic and he just wheeled round and started firing from under his left arm - just firing wildly and he hit McCreesh - later he fell wounded but continued to fire as did Donnelly who had Murphy's .38 gun, and who was also wounded in the foot.

I could see the dust rising out of the Sgt.'s

uniform as the bullets hit him in the stomach. I heard a small ping of a shot near me and it was Mick McManus who had my wee gun and was about to finish off Const. Rossdale. He had already a wound on his temple and he was appealing to Mick for mercy - now I knew all the attack had been for was for the policemen's arms and no order was to kill them - so I rushed over and grabbed my gun barrel and raised it upwards and shouted to McManus to stop. He did so, reached round and grabbed the Webley revolver from Rossdale's holster.

The Sgt. though wounded ran to shelter in McGeeney's public house firing over his shoulder as he ran and Rossdale lay wounded in the village street but he got up and ran after him for shelter to McGeeney's.

McManus came up by the school wall with my gun in his hand and the Webley in his trouser pocket, mixed in with crowd and got away, and with him my gun which I never again saw.

Constable Rafferty threw his belt and gun off when the shooting began and he went for shelter under Cullyhanna bridge, and as far as we could hear his comrades nearly killed him in the barrack that night.

McManus later gave my gun to Paddy Murphy to give back to me, but I never got it, and Tommy Loy was to get it for me but he also failed to do so.

Later on, some row developed among the Mullaban boys and McManus was put out of the company, but I am not clear about this.

Sgt. Holland died two days later from his wounds, and he said that he saw these men to his right front and suspected their intentions and so was prepared for them.

He was a most courageous man I must say, even he was one of our enemies.

Mick Donnelly was taken away in a horse brake by those who had come in this conveyance to the Feis; he was brought first to Master Devlin's where he got first-aid."

"Well, John, any more Pre-Truce actions?"

"There was the ambush near Cullyhanna, of a postman bringing the old age pension money from Cross, and he was being escorted by police. Kirk was the name of the postman and he was a good bit ahead of his escort. Those in ambush could not let him go on so he was called on to halt but he went on and they had to fire on him which alerted his escort. Kirk was killed by buckshot - there was only about three large pellets in cartridges of this kind - and as regards the escort there were none of them to be seen alive or dead after the affair. The house near there is called to this day - the 'Ambush House' - but it was an empty house at that time and I thought it a bad place for ambush as there was very little cover around for attackness."

" Well, did they take the pension money?"

"No, they did not for my wife got a parcel from Crossmaglen some days after that and it had blood stains on it, and there's a nephew of Kirk's who is in our house nearly every night - he may be one day my son-in-law, but he knows nothing of his uncle's fate nor do I talk about it to him. He wasn't then born as this was I think 1921, about the 7th January."

" When the Specials came, John, where were they stationed?"

"There was a platoon of them in an old Rectory near the ruined church outside Newtownhamilton,

and there were more in an old Rectory over by the Border at the Rev. Tweed's, near the Fane Valley. "

"Between Jan. 1921 and the Truce, July 1921, what activity was there in your area? "

"To keep the police in their barracks we carried out sniping, and I remember three prisoners - I think they might have been 'B' men who were handed over to us for imprisonment. Barney Murphy and I, Jim Quinn and I think Mick McMahon, went down by Whitecross where they were handed over to us to be taken away.

Maybe Eddie, you would know more about this than I, and who they were.

At any rate we took them and brought them to Dorsey to O'Hanlon's. I don't know how long they were kept there until they were removed further, nor do I know why they were prisoners.

Eddie, do you remember any 'B' men being captured?"

"I think those were men we caught making poteen when we raided still houses around Clady."

"They could be, Eddie, for it was Clady men who handed them over to us and said they'd arrested them in their Volunteer area.

Well, the men we caught stilling around Ballymacnab were John McMahon, a man called Sherry and a man known as "Hatter" Kelly. The priest of the parish complained to us Volunteers that Kelly and Sherry were making poteen and that even the children attending Foley School were being given poteen.

So we, the Whitecross Volunteers, raided and alstroyed their stills, and took them prisoners and passed them on, but they came back and I presided at their trial because someone else was to come and preside and did not turn up, and I knew them."

" Did they not know you?"

" They did know me and I did not use any disguise . I found McMahon was innocent and let him off; sent Kelly hom to leave back many things - farm implements, that he had taken from neighbours. He was notorious for this sort of petty crime. Sherry, I also let off, but cautioned all of them to cease poteen making.

McMahon was useful to us in smuggling out stuff for us from the Gough Military Barracks in Armagh, and was even then doing so but I could not tell any of my comrades this.

The next place I met him was when I was interned in Belfast Prison. He had been sentenced by the Crown for making poteen. "

"Well, Joh, that may explain the mystery of the three prisoners. Any other Pre-Truce activity?"

"Well Father, we were engaged in cutting trenches in the roads preparing for ambushes on the Cully-hanna road to Newtownhamilton, along with Nicholas O'Hare and Barney Murphy we got the road cut and next day the Specials came in their Crossley tender and were stopped by this trench so they just ordered neighbours about to fill it in for they feared there was the usual mine triggered in the stuff taken out of the trench, and as it turned out all these impressed into this work were our foes - the "Hibs" for which we were delighted.

However, we were thankful we had not left the

Mills grenade ready to explode on this occasion. We would take the pin out of the grenade, hold down the lever by hand until we got it laid with a stone on the lever and thus the mine was triggered."

"Were these trenches dug to prepare for an ambush?"

"No - they were more to cause alarm and annoyance to the Specials."

"Were there any Sinn Fein Courts in Cullyhanna?"

"Yes, usually dealing with land trouble and trespass, and we held them in Cullyhanna Sinn Fein Hall.

Canon Loughran's brother Tom, in the R.D.C., usually presided. I had to go and make several litigants take their cases out of the British Court's hands and persuade them to have their cases tried in a local Sinn Fein court, and on one or two occasions inspect damage of trespass and report it to the court.

I remember a case Mackin, V Mackin relations from Turnavall which was of a trespass nature and the fine was £20 which I thought very stiff.

We got a land case of Sheeran settled.

The strange thing was that those nearly all clients, were anti Sinn Fein they accepted our Court's rulings, and our Court's fees were much less than British ones if the verdict was a fine and costs.

I remember having to go to Mr. Elliott, Solicitor, Newry to tell him cases had been withdrawn from British legislation and he was very indignant - in fact he still is inforgiving, and no later than January last we met in Newtownhamilton

he reminded me of how I took the case off him.

You see he was using great influence with his client to stay with the Crown Court since they'd lose in their Country's Court, but as it turned out the client got the £20 damages which was far in excess of damage caused.

However, the defendant Mackin, in the case was very well off and could afford to pay the £20 to his less well off plaintiff, also Mackin."

"Did you act in any Capacity at elections?"

"Oh, indeed yes. We were very short of Registers and I had to write out lots of copies for use in Tally Rooms, and I arranged for personators in the 1918 election."

"Well John, I think I'll leave you alone about the period up to the Truce. Did you attend any training Camp during the Truce?"

"Yes, at a Camp at Charlie Finegan's house, in October, 1921, where a Dublin man conducted the training - at least I think he was a Southerner as he had a brogue. He trained the whole Battalion. The officers of the Battalion went to a camp at Killeavy for Barney Murphy went there. He now lives in Carlow. He resigned there on pension from the Civic Guards.

In May, 1922, a neighbour of mine, a Protestant, Willie Conn who had a son in the 'B' Specials sent word to me to get away from home as I was on a list to be arrested - I did not know what to do - I was putting in potatoes in a field near my home - I had a lot of them in and ready for covering, so as soon as daylight dawned I got out the horses and the drill plough and I wasn't long in the field till Conn appeared and says:-

"In the name of Heaven are ye not away - the Specials will be here for you any minute," so I had to get a neighbour of mine called O'Hare to finish the work and off I headed in the direction of the Border. On the road I met John Moley and says he "The road is Black with Police - you'll never make it". But I headed on towards the Monaghan border. I called in a friendly house and got something to eat and they suggested I wait till dark. I agreed and started off at dark and was marching on courageous and well when in the dark I fell over a bullock lying on the roadside field. It rose with a great noise and this frightened me; but it was just as well as I was too incautious and when going more cautiously I noticed a slight glow which as I carefully got nearer was a cigarette in a Special's mouth. Several of them were near talking to a girl called Burns."

"How could you recognise her and it so dark?"

"Oh, it wasn't so dark as that. You see it was about the month of May and it is not very dark then even at midnight. I recognised this girl called Burns - her brother was in the Specials, so I lay down and had to wait two hours till the patrol set off towards the Monaghan Border by Sheridan's Cross Roads. I headed West from Cullyhanna and eventually got in to Co. Monaghan by jumping over the small river that divides the counties near Mulladuff. In my jump I made a noise and some Specials at a bridge shouted "Halt!" and fired, but I got safely on my way to Mrs. Sheridan's where I knew I'd be welcome and safe.

Soon after this there were others came from South Armagh to Co. Monaghan, and about the last Saturday in May near Mulladuff on the border there was a regular battle between us South Armagh ones in Monaghan and Specials.

We inflicted several fatal casualties on the

Specials but they never officially admitted any losses.

I remember it was the big fair day in Newtown when this fight began."

"You had no arms with you when you went to Monaghan so I suppose you were loaned a rifle over there?"

"Oh, there were plenty of arms for us there. My own rifle I had hidden at home in a hallowed out old tree trunk used as a gate post. It was aged and rotten and I hallowed it out about four feet from the bottom, put it resting on a flat stone, pushed up my short rifle and put the post back in place. The top of the post was old but I did not hollow out two feet from the top. Any time I wanted my rifle all I had to do was push over a little the post and take it out. The butt of the rifle rested on the stone.

The guns we had in that fight had come from the Dundalk area earlier and had been brought to South Armagh (some were captured at Mrs. McLogans) and now we had to smuggle them back South to Sheridan's barn. This was done.

The battle commenced on Lockhart's Hill in the heart of Mulladuff and early on Sunday morning we riddled Blackwood's house as specials had used it to fire at us.

I had to leave on Saturday morning to go to where Charlie McGleenan's and B'macnab men were in Camps near Keady, Castleshane, I think was the place, but I was back in the evening. Firing went on spasmodically Sunday and Monday and on Tuesday when further specials came to relieve a guard they had left near Mulladuff School, we opened fire on them with rifles and a Thompson gun and inflicted

many casualties.

A girl who worked in Kellylea and who was from Cullyhanna said she heard that two Specials from Killylea had been killed at Mulladuff. I think it was Felix Govan who manned the Thompson machine gun.

The Specials had a Lewis gun and they fired it from beneath their lorry through the wheel."

"Well, after this action when did you go to the Camp at Bridge-a-Chrin?"

"It was after that that the man come out of 'Blaney."

"It was Lieut. Woods."

"Ay, and Woods wouldn't let us stay around there any longer."

"That's right - we were on Dan Hogan's area and him and Aikens - it was like fire and Tow - you see they were always a wee bit jealous of each other and Hogan ordered Aikens to get his men into his own area."

"I see, he was in Fifth Northern Division area. I see, and he knew these were of Aikens area."

"Yes."

"You didn't go immediately, Eddie I'm sure, did you?"

"Well, we were in an old manse - that's where the ghost was."

"Well what about the ghost John? (laugh) There wasn't any ghost, of course, was there?"

"Well, it was very mysterious - it was very mysterious.

Eh, this night they had to go out on a raid to the border and Harry Carragher and I were very keen on these raids. We went away - there was men left behind, of course; the guard was there. Some men who didn't go out at all, and they went away but they saw something like a flash signal of some kind - little spurts of fire. Harry was telling me afterwards; but they couldn't make out what it was; and while they were away - the men that were on guard - there was three out-posts. There was one away up the road, do you remember Eddie, away up by the pub. There was one at the Gate and there was another at the top of the hill. It was a very dangerous place, very dangerous."

"In what respect dangerous?"

"The Specials were very near the border that time in the big Rectory near Newtown and that was the Red Tweed 's manse."

"And you were in a manse on the other side?"

"And we were in the manse on the other side."

"I see, yes."

"So the guards on the road saw something coming and one of them still maintained that it was more like a big animal, and it was on its hands and feet. He said if it was a man he must have been walking on his hands and feet but that he had something on him like a trench coat; and saw him coming down past the side of the house. It didn't go out on to the road where they were but they challenged him then and shouted "Halt!" and as they challenged him he made two springs like a hare and he disappeared into the shrubbery and they fired at the object, but that was the last that was seen of it, but eh, you couldn't convince the men but that they saw it; and there was

moonlight but as it was in the month of May it was clear."

"So that was the ghost anyway; but as you say there, probably the Specials were near Fane Valley and all like that, at that time. It was a dangerous area."

"Aw yes, it took a lot of men - that was the objection there was really. They would have had to leave that place anyhow. It was very hard to guard it. There was only about 18 men of us in every 24 hours, to do duty in the area."

"Well of course then Joh, the Specials wouldn't necessarily have been prevented in any way - they would have gone over the Border if they had wanted to at that time. - They could have fired at you anyhow, then if they wanted - could they?"

"No, no they couldn't see. Aw no, we were 'a back' of the hill on the Castleblaney western side of that hill."

"Oh, I see; well how then was 'it dangerous?"

"Well you see they could have come over if they wanted to attack."

"Oh, of course they could have crossed the frontier."

"Very very easily."

"The frontier in that part - would it not have prevented them crossing?"

"No, it wouldn't."

"They could have got in lorries and come over the broad road if they wanted, if they had to

have the courage to rush it."

"Ah, but they wouldn't."

"Oh no, aw they wouldn't."

"Especially after the carnage of Mulladuff School, they weren't going to do, were they?"

"Aw now, they had learnt their lesson from our 4th Batallion to be cautious."

"They called you the 4th Batallion?"

"That's what we were."

"Oh, you were a 4th Batallion of the 4th Northern Division?"

"Yes, the 4th Battalion of the first Brigade."

"I didn't know you were 4th Battalion Eddie?"

"Fourth, yes, and more than fourth."

"Of the first Brigade?"

"First Brigade."

"The 4th Battalion of the 4th Northern Div."

"First, or Dundalk Brigade."

"You were then under the Dundalk Brigade?"

"We were in that area. In fact there was two Brigades at Dundalk. We were in the first. - It extended down as far as Crossmaglen and Cullyhanna!"

"But previous to the Truce what would you have called yourselves? You didn't call yourself the

4th Battalion, that time?"

"Aw yes. Well, before that last organisation - now I'm not sure whether - I don't think now that there was a number on it at all."

"Probably go by an area - it might be Cullyhanna."

"It was Newtownhamilton."

"Oh, by the way John, I forgot to ask you if you were in the attack on Newtown barracks, were you?"

"No, I was only at the out-post."

"Aw, I see, ay. Well you come on now and you were now in Dan Hogan's area, and you were hunted out of it because of the jealousy between the two. Well then, you went to Bridge-a-Chrin, did you?"

"Yes."

"And eh, this is where Harry Carragher and you were operating in North Louth. And the time that Harry Carragher and you laid the phoney mine at Bell's. (laugh) There was no mine at all John!!!!"

"We let on we were laying a 'mine' at Bell's lane. Well then, eh, Eddie was almost captured at Bridge-a-Chrin."

"You had a bad knee then."

"That's right."

"He had a very bad knee - crippled altogether."

"Were you wounded?"

"Aw I was. Ah, you see they near murdered me that night on the Mile Hill. Do you see my nose, Father?"

"I noticed that little cut there, yes."

"Do you know what done that - the butt of a revolver! It was cut right through."

"On the Mile Hill here between Newtown and Beleeks?"

"Ay. You see, I was ordered down by Charlie Cunningham - down to help fo fill mines. You see the big push was coming off in the Six Counties, and I was ordered down; it was down in Charlie Finnegan's that we were."

"In Ballymoyer?"

"Yes. We were filling mines - the Buffers, do you mind?"

"Yes. The Railway Buffers."

"And we were putting this Irish cheddar and War Flour in them and - eh - I went home and I knew I mightn't come up through Newtown when I was coming home, and I come up the Whiterock Road to come out on the Mile Hill - on the Newry side of Newtownhamilton - and then to go away round to search our road towards home, - that we wouldn't be noticed."

"I know."

"And after I come out on the Mile Hill I was coming walking along - I heard the feet coming and the first thing - "Hands up!" There was three men just walked down.

It waasn't quite dark - it was about 3.00.a.m. - nor was it day light - and they had three revolvers. They didn't ask my name - they knew me. I knew that they must have known me for they didn't ask my name, but they said:-

"Where are you coming from?"

"Aw", says I, "I was away out visiting a sick friend."

"Where?"

"Down at "Eleven Lane Ends," says I.

"Aw, a good ground", says one of them.

I choose to say this as it was a good orange area, but anyway he says:- "Have you any arms?"

"I have", says I, "Two!!!"

But one of them says "Search him!!!" and he found the beads in my pocket - and now he come out with very lurid language. But right enough he put them back. I found that out afterwards that the beads were put back and the first thing I found a blow on the face. I was standing with the bicycle resting against my leg. This one fellow stood in front of me with the revolver and the other two started to me with their fists, and they pounding the face off me, but they didn't put me off my feet, and says I to them:-

"What's this, what is this? What have you against me?"

"Oh, you so-and-so ye," the fellow with the revolver says, and he come rushing over, and that was the first blow that put me down. He struck me there with the revolver, on the nose.

I staggered and I kept hold of the bicycle and I fell against a wee ditch at the side of the road - and I was half over the bike - just like this - more reclining than standing. But eh, two of them lit on me again, one on every side of me and they were just like this at me, and I knew - it come in my head - they were going to do like a cat with a mouse. They wouldn't let me away alive for to tell who done it."

"I know, yes I know."

"And I made a bad mistake you see, I mentioned one of the names, I says "What's up with you - what have you against me, Bradshaw?" Bradshaw was one of them. There was one Hawthorne from Newtownhamilton and Big Joe Copeland. So eh, this fellow with the revolver came running over and he says "Will I finish the so-and-so, will I finish him?" And he stook the revolver into my mouth."

"Dear oh."

"Well I was sure - I thought it was just reached up like that, and I caught hold of the revolver and I give it a ring and I took him clean across my legs - just like that, and I took him clean over my knees, and eh - toes of his boots like that, and eh, held on to the revolver and I held on to it ~~andixjustx~~ but as he fell he put his hands under me and he let go of it and I just held it by the muzzle. Well, I would have used it only for one thing - I thought that the three men - they used to go in patrols that time, you know, scattered out, three here and three there, so as that you couldn't ever get them with the one bullet in the machine gun. So I thought that's what - that the rest of the patrol was coming down, and I took the revolver like that and I slung it down the road, and I knew I'd have to go then and I

jumped up - there was one fellow standing at the front of me and I just got at him with my shoulder and I spun him round, and with the other I caught him by the head and threw him across the road and into a marshy place just near Watt's field and I jumped up quick and made for the road on the Watt's side of the road where I imagined there'd be more shelter for me as there were some bushes there.

They started to fire at me then - but one of them was a bad shot - I could sense that by the sound of bullets as they hit near me, but one bullet just missed me by the merest fraction of an inch.

I zig-zagged my way up that ditch on the roadside hedge and thank God got away leaving my hat and bicycle, and there was a Ceilidhe that night in Ballymoyer and boys told me that coming from it they saw men jumping in rage on my bike and throwing it into the boggy area near Watts.

However, it was too dark for me to attempt to cross over the boggy area near where now is the Rural District Council Dump so after I got clear of their fire I took to the broad round and headed for the Cavanakill road, at Hughes' Cross Roads which would eventually get me to my home."

"You were a strong man John to even attempt this after such a savage attack."

"Well Father, after sea-going activities I was prepared and physically strong for such attacks and one gets used to such."

"Well at least, John, when you did capture the revolver from your assailants you were well advised not to shoot it off - you could only have it and probably killed one of them and the other two would have made it impossible for me to hear

your story tonight!"

"Well, as I said, I feared the remainder of the "B" Special patrol coming from some other near area.

Well Father, I had arranged before this to go to put in corn on Monday in Camleyball, and her nephew was to come to sow the corn and that was on the road from Cavanakill to Cullyhanna, and my intentions were to go that direction home when I'd come from Ballymoyer district and tell him to have the horses ready to sow the corn for his aunt. I did this instead of going to my home by Newtown, and in spite of all this attack on me I made for the nephew's house and when I came to her nephew's house I saw a light and I knocked at the dwelling house door and got no answer.- I knocked again and could hear a sleepy voice saying "Who's that?" and I says "Come on out here" and a very sleepy young man appeared with a hurricane lamp.

I heard a cow roaring in an adjoining byre and says I "Is there anything wrong?" and says he "Oh Lord save us, yes. I was sitting up waiting for that cow to calve and went asleep."

So we both ran to the byre and helped to deliver the calf, and when that was successfully done, he told me to go and wash my hands and tidy myself, and when I went to the door his sister says "Oh the Lord save us entirely - you're all bloody and messed up with the calving" but I told her what I'd come through on the Mile Hill, and after I'd been tidied up and my nose wound dressed I asked them to try and get my bicycle, but I heard after they were afraid to become involved and they did not go for my bicycle and eventually I had to get it myself later. In fact no one Protestant or Catholic would go next or near that bicycle as they feared involvement."

"Where eventually, John, did you get your wounded nose dressed?"

"Well Father, I just had to let Nature heal it as I could not, in fear, go to any local doctor. It was cut right through the bridge of the nose, and it bled for over a week inside my nose, but the Specials must have been informed of the attack for a week after it I was putting in potatoes for a brother-in-law of mine and there came a patrol of Specials on foot and they called me over and began to examine my face; and this made me put two and two together, and conclude that my three Newtown attackers had reported their attack and that their victim had escaped and that I was a "marked" man for annihilation. "

"But John, you said you knew one of your assailants and presumably he knew you?!"

"He did surely, but I did not know if any of these Specials, men largely from Belfast, knew me; at any rate the Sergeant in charge of them was noted as a very cruel man, even to his own men, he was known to be very cruel, and he told one of his men to search me; he then asked me my name and I truthfully told him it; and I could hardly reply to his questions as he had his revolver in my mouth.

He said "If you don't answer quickly you'll get a bullet in your throat."

I was there standing with my hands up and his revolver in my mouth and when the Special who was searching me said "Sergeant, there is nothing on him" he, the Sergeant, just reached at my hat and pulled it down over my nose with all his might and the pain was so intense I nearly fainted - it reopened the nose wound - and it took me all my time to take my hands down, for I felt he only wanted an excuse to shoot me.

I had an old raincoat on me and it was fastened at the top by a safety pin and the Special who had searched me kindly gave it back to me, and in a kind voice said "Sorry friend, orders are orders, I had this to do" and helped me put back the safety pin and I waited there with my dog by my side to see what next.

The Sergeant then said "Clear off!" and I did so with fear as knowing how many men of the I.R.A. had been shot in the back and later at an Inquest the Verdict was "Shot while trying to escape," that I just stayed for a long time with the dog where I had been."

"John, what happened to all the rifles, mines etc. that had been in possession of the I.R.A, about 1922. Someone told me they were eventually dumped in Carrowmannon Bog?"

"There may have been Father, but Pat McCreesh who lived in Newtown, told me that a lot of explosives were in his yard and one Fair evening when word was sent that there was going to be a special's raid and it was arranged to take this stuff to Cooney's Bog, and he tried but in vain to get it removed: Hugh McKee who used to run the Mail Car, however had a spring cart and arranged with Joe McVeigh, God rest him, to remove it, which he manfully did.

Jamie Callaghan was the blacksmith, but he said he had four or five horses to shoe as it was the Fair evening.

Petey Carty was the carpenter, but he said he was very, very busy.

Mickey McBennett said he could not get away from the bar; so like the Scripture says they were all too busy and it was left to Poor Joe McVeigh to do the needy, and he got the rifles and stuff

and covered them with straw and brought them out of Newtown to Paddy Cooney's, out the Whiterock Road.

Paddy had a brother who was a T.D. in the Dublin Dail, and I do not know for how long they stayed there."

"Well that was before you went to Co. Monaghan, John. How long did you stay there?"

"I stayed until we Co. Armagh got broken up by Free State attacks there. Eddie went to South Louth and I went on the run in North Monaghan. Harry Carragher got caught and John McNulty also got caught unluckily with arms in his possession, and was executed by a firing squad in Dundalk Jail by the Staters, R.I.P.

Harry and Charlie McKeown came to me in Co. Monaghan and I got them a place to hide up. - There was a Ceilidhe in Oram the night they came to me and there was a fellow there in deep talk with Harry at the Ceilidhe - this fellow was from Charlie McGleenan 's followers and they were talking of their exploits and I noticed a man listening to the their talk and I didn't like or trust him, and I went over to Harry and told him to not talk any more as I thought this fellow was listening in with a view to betraying him.

As it turned out I was right because as I learnt afterwards he went in to Blayney and told all he had heard to Lieut. Woods and early next morning Woods and a lorry load of Staters arrived out in the Oram area, and only I had got Harry and his friend in to a disused shed they'd have been caught immediately.

I was in hiding in O'Neill's near there at the time - it was very wintry weather and Mrs. O'Neill boiled some eggs and made tea and I

brought these to them - she was in charge of the local Post Office in Drumachrin - and as I approached their hide out I noticed a lot of smoke all around this disused shed - they had lit straw to warm themselves, and as the area was largely Protestant and Free State when they left the place next day, they were captured but luckily had left their arms hidden and when arrested had none.

Not like poor John McNulty, God rest him, or Christy Markey.

I remained in hiding in Co. Monaghan but I was always in danger. I was befriended by a Civic Guard Sergeant called O'Brien who was in 'Blayney and he tipped me off several times with the result I was never caught, and a Phil McMahon there who had a newspaper shop befriended me even as an old I.R.A. man he had turned Free State.

I stayed in O'Neill's for a while and then for safety I moved to a farmhouse owned by people called Fox, where incidentally I discovered the Ogham Stone; but I also stole journeys by night to my home in Murphy's town, Tullyvallen.

Eventually all the wars ended and I got back home and here I still am."

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