

ORIGINAL

W. 21.018

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
BURO STAIRE MILEATA 1913-21
No. W.S. 1018

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.
STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 1,018

Witness

Martin Fahy,
Church St.,
Gort,
Co. Galway.

Identity.

Member of Irish Volunteers, Galway University,
1917 - ;
Brigade Engineer South-West Galway, later.

Subject.

Irish Volunteers, University College, Galway,
1917-1921.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil

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STATEMENT BY MARTIN FAHEY,
Church Street, Gort, County Galway.

I was born in Dunnally in the parish of Peterswell, County Galway, on the 20th July, 1898. I went to Peterswell National School and afterwards to Ballinruan National School in the parish of Crusheen, County Clare. My mother was from Ballinruan. I finished my primary education in Ballinruan and then went to St. Mary's College, Galway, where I matriculated after three years. I became a student of University College, Galway, in the year 1917. I studied medicine for two complete years and for most of the third academic year, leaving the College in June, 1920, before my third year examination commenced. My father was prominent in the fight for the land against the landlord class and I heard many stories in my early years of shootings and incidents in the Land League period. I did not make any special study of this period although I was fond of reading Irish History generally.

I joined the University College, Galway Company of the Volunteers in October, 1917, when I became a student there. Peter Fahey, now Dr. Peter Fahey, St. Bricin's Hospital, Dublin, recruited me into the Company. He also swore me into the I.R.B. about the same time. He was 2nd Lieutenant of the Company. Patrick Molloy, a County Mayo student, was Company Captain. I do not know what became of him afterwards. Thomas Derrig, afterwards Minister for Education etc., was 1st Lieutenant of the Company which was about 40 strong. Membership of the Company was confined to students attending the College.

As far as I can remember the members of the I.R.B. centre in the College were Michael Walsh, Quartermaster of the Galway Brigade, Martin Neiland, Adjutant, Galway Brigade, Thomas Derrig, later Minister for Education, Liam Shortis, a native of County Kerry, Peter Fahey now

Dr. Peter Fahey, St. Bricin's Hospital, Dublin, Patrick Mullins, a native of County Mayo who qualified in medicine (now deceased) and myself. It is quite possible that there were no further members. Thomas Derrig was head of the centre. Occasional meetings of the I.R.B. centre members were held but I cannot remember the intervals that elapsed between the meetings. The members were "key" men and considered more reliable than the Volunteer who was not a member of the I.R.B. They took the initiative in recruiting and organising the Company and in supporting other national organisations such as Sinn Féin and Cumann na mBan. In effect, the College Company of the Volunteers was built up with the I.R.B. centre as the hub. I would say that in my time all the Company Officers were members of the I.R.B.

The Company activities included foot drill twice a week in a secluded place in the College grounds. On Sundays the Volunteers went separately or in pairs to an appointed place three or four miles from the College for extended order drill, scouting, signalling etc. The venue varied from Sunday to Sunday. Very often the Company was divided into two numerically equal groups - a Lieutenant in charge of each group. One group would be sent off unknown to the other and would pick the terrain best suited to their purpose. The second group was assigned the job of locating, supervising and capturing the first group with the aid of scouts and signallers. The signallers always used flags and the Morse Code. There was very keen rivalry between the two groups. There were no prizes awarded to the winning group, but the group that took the laurels were always very pleased with themselves.

In the College Club opposite Galway Jail we studied the mechanism of the Lee Enfield rifle and different types of revolvers and automatic pistols. We learned how to fill home-manufactured mines

and to make them ready for use according to the demand for them. I cannot give any idea, even roughly, of the weekly or monthly number of mines made by the Company. I myself took part in the filling of the mines, fitting detonators and attaching fuse.

The mine was made from the box of a horse-cart, that is, the metal portion of the box at the centre of the wheel in which the axle revolves when the cart is set in motion. It was roughly twelve inches long. Inside diameter was about three inches at its wider end and about two inches at the narrower end. A blacksmith fitted a cap over each end. The caps were held in place by means of a bolt going right through the centre of the cylinder with a nut at one end to tighten the caps. Later, the practice of having the bolt running through the centre of the cylinder was discarded in favour of a bolt running along the outside. This made it easier to fill with explosive.

We worked at the filling and the fitting of detonators and fuses in the College Club. The majority of the Company were members of the College Gaelic football and hurling clubs. Under the pretence that we were holding meetings we worked away at filling the mines. Michael Walsh, the Quartermaster of the Galway Brigade who was a student of the College, supplied the explosive. It was always gelignite. About twelve sticks of gelignite were put in each mine. It was packed as tightly as possible. One stick at the centre of the mine was filled with detonator and fuse attached. Michael Walsh was in charge of mines assembly and was always present while we worked at making the mines. He always took them away when finished for distribution to Units outside the College. I have no information as to where they were used or how successful they were. Michael Walsh was from round about Tuam. I think he qualified later as an Engineer and emigrated.

I remember that John Darcy and Thomas Derrig were always with me when making the mines. It is difficult to remember others as new students were coming and qualified students leaving after each academic year.

I took an active part in the 1918 election canvassing all the voters I possibly could in the City of Galway for the Sinn Féin candidate, Padraig Ó Máille. The constituency was West Galway which embraced East and West Connemara and Galway City. I remember only two candidates - Padraig Ó Maille, the Sinn Féin candidate, and William O'Malley, the Parliamentary Party candidate. Padraig Ó Máille, the Sinn Féin candidate, was elected. Frank Fahy, afterwards Ceann Comhairle of Dáil Éireann and Dr. Cusack, were also elected as Sinn Fein candidates in County Galway. Some of the College Company, including Peter Fahey, now Dr. Peter Fahey, St. Bricin's Hospital, Dublin, travelled from place to place addressing meetings on behalf of the Sinn Féin candidate - Padraig Ó Máille. The Company was often mobilised in and around Galway City during the election campaign to ensure freedom of speech for Ó Máille.

I was promoted Section Commander shortly after joining and held this rank until I was promoted to 2nd Lieutenant in October, 1918 when the Company was re-formed after the summer holidays. I was promoted to 1st Lieutenant in October, 1919 which rank I held until I left the Company in 1920. It will readily be understood that there were many changes of officers in this Company.

During my period of service with the Galway University College Company I went to Rossmuck accompanied by Michael Walsh, Quartermaster, Galway Brigade, Martin Neiland, Adjutant, Galway Brigade and, I think, Patrick Mullins one time Captain of the College Company. We had verbal orders from Seamus Murphy,

O/C., Galway Brigade, to assist in a proposed attack on Rossmuck R.I.C. Barracks. We went by motor car. We left the car while it was going through the village of Spiddal, making a detour through the fields and re-joined the car after it had passed the village. There was an R.I.C. Barracks in Spiddal and we thought it wiser not to risk a hold up. When we arrived near Rossmuck we met Commandant Michael Thornton after ^{wards} O/C., East Connemara Brigade. He said he was expecting us. He informed us that the planned attack was postponed. I cannot remember whether he gave any reasons for the postponement. I have not even a hazy idea of the date of this abortive journey. I remember the long journey taking about eight hours in all. On the way back to Galway I was desperately hungry. Martin Neiland, knew the owner of a public house in Salthill. We were admitted and I ate a whole loaf of bread and drank a pint of Guinness' porter, the first intoxicating drink I ever had.

I was on two more abortive journeys of this kind. I remember one was to some place in East Galway and I cannot remember what direction we went on the second occasion. I was very disappointed with these useless journeys in the night. I should mention that we were sent from the College Company on these long journeys to assist the local Volunteers by trying to make a breach in the R.I.C. Barrack walls by the use of explosives.

In the spring of 1920 I remember being told by Michael Walsh, Quartermaster, Galway Brigade, to meet a British soldier who was to bring a rifle from Renmore Barracks to Merlinn Park in Galway City. The soldier arrived at the appointed time and handed the rifle over to me. There was a pre-arranged signal by which the soldier would know me. It had some connection with the lighting of a cigarette, but I forget the details. I delivered the rifle to Michael Walsh, Quartermaster, Galway Brigade, at the College Club. I do not know who contacted the soldier in the first instance or how much was paid for the rifle.

As far as I can now remember the next incident in my career in the College Company was an attack on the R.I.C. barracks at Loughgeorge about ten miles from Galway City on the Galway-Tuam road. It was early summer - the end of May or early in June, 1920. It was Martin Neiland, Adjutant, Galway Brigade, who instructed me to go to Loughgeorge. I left Galway City on foot between 11 p.m. and midnight. Martin Neiland, Michael Walsh, Quartermaster, Galway Brigade, and Patrick Mullins and one or two others accompanied me. Martin Neiland was in charge. The explosives we were to use had already been sent on to Loughgeorge. We walked about one and a half miles from the city. We were then picked up by a motor car and arrived at Loughgeorge about 1 a.m. the next morning. We had two rifles which we probably got in Castlegar on the way to Loughgeorge. I cannot remember where we picked up the explosives we were to use. Very likely in Castlegar also.

When we arrived in Loughgeorge everybody in the village had gone to bed. There was no sign of movement anywhere. We had expected an attack on the barrack on a big scale as we understood that a determined effort was to be made to take the post.. We were, therefore, very surprised that no Volunteer met us.

We discussed the situation and decided to try the explosive on the gable of the barrack. I have already stated that at Rossmuck and one or two other places we had been disappointed and had to go back to Galway without getting an opportunity to use explosives. So on this occasion we decided to use them. We knew there was no hope of taking the barrack with only two riflemen. The two rifles were the only ones the College Company possessed. It was, therefore, more in the nature of an experiment than anything else that we tried the explosives.

We dug a hole two feet deep and two feet in diameter at the gable of the barrack. We put about two stone weight of gelignite tied up in sacking into the hole. We covered the gelignite with the heaviest stones we could get from the wall across the road. We used a fuse about two feet long. I think it was Martin Weiland who applied the match to the fuse. We crossed the road and took cover. We were very pleased with the result of the explosion. It blew a hole four to five feet deep in diameter in the wall. Our two riflemen opened fire on the barracks from across the road and called on the garrison to surrender. There was no reply and fire was not returned from the garrison. We were very puzzled at this. We thought that perhaps the barrack had been evacuated overnight. At the same time our party was not strong enough to take the chance of entering the barrack. We also suspected that the apparent inactivity of the R.I.C. might be a ruse to get us into a trap. We knew the strength of the R.I.C. garrison to be eight - one Sergeant and seven Constables. We had nobody to assist us. We had a poor knowledge of the locality and so we decided that there was nothing further to be accomplished and withdrew.

We had withdrawn only about half a mile when we saw Verey Lights go up from the barrack. We travelled on foot for a further mile along the main Tuam/Galway Road. We then commandeered two side-cars to drive us part of the journey to Galway. The owners of the cars were local farmers. One of them was willing enough to help us but we had to use a little persuasion with the other. We did not take the cars very far, however, because when we had travelled a mile or so we saw lorries of British Military in the distance coming from the Galway direction. We immediately abandoned the cars, left the road and completed our journey on foot across country. The soldiers in the lorries evidently did not see us as no shots were fired by them. I do not know how the two farmers explained their

presence on the road at that hour of the morning. We got a local man to put us across the Claregalway river in his boat. He did this willingly. We left the two rifles at Castlegar on the way in to Galway where we arrived at 6 p.m. that day.

The next day I was having lunch in my lodgings, at 15 Mary Street, when three or four R.I.C. men walked in for a meal. They were on duty at the Galway Assizes. They began to chat with me in a friendly fashion and referred to the attack on Loughgeorge Barrack. I said, "It is an awful state of affairs" or something to that effect. I also expressed concern for their safety and politely enquired if anybody was hurt. They told me that nobody was wounded but that a large hole was blown in the gable of the barrack and that all their rifles were stored in the room adjoining. I learned also from them that they were afraid to go for the rifles in case of another explosion. I enquired if they captured or killed anybody. They said they did not as they had no rifles.

I left University College, Galway, and the College Company a week or two after our journey to Loughgeorge as I got word that there was danger of my being taken prisoner. I came home to Dunnally and was transferred to the local Peterswell Company of the Volunteers in the Gort Battalion. There were then eight Companies in the Gort Battalion or Brigade as it was sometimes called, viz. Kilbecanty, Derrybrien, Beagh, Gort, Peterswell, Ardrahan, Ballinderreen and Kinvara. There were then thirty to forty Volunteers in the Peterswell Company. My brother John Fahey was Company Captain. Thomas Fahey (no relative) was 1st Lieutenant and Michael Fallon was 2nd Lieutenant.

I took part, from the time of my transfer, in the usual parades twice weekly. I commandeered a few shot-guns from farmers in the Company area. I took a shot-gun and some cartridges from Thomas Galbraith, a Justice of the Peace. Holding the position he did, Galbraith was naturally unfriendly. When his gun was being taken he

was cautioned and given warning that his continuing to act as a Justice of the Peace in the Courts set up by the British would be prejudicial to his safety. He was advised that the Sinn Féin Courts were functioning and instructed that legal cases should be brought before them. Father Tom ^{DUNNE} ~~Burke~~, then Parish Priest of *MS* Kilnadeema, diocese of Clonfert now Parish Priest of Kiltullagh, was President of the Sinn Féin District Court which was held in the Workhouse, Gort, until it ceased to function early in 1921, owing to enemy interference.

MS I remember another raid for arms in October, 1920, the night before the Castledaly ambush. Volunteer Martin Dooley, Ardrahan Company, accompanied me. We went to the home of James Madden of Moneen, Ardrahan, which was outside the Company area. I was not known to the occupants of Madden's house. That is why I was sent. Martin Dooley knew the locality. I went into the house by myself and took a double-barreled shot-gun in good condition. It belonged to Madden's brother-in-law, an R.I.C. man from Kerry named John McCarthy, who was stationed in Ardrahan R.I.C. barrack.

I remember the 9th July, 1920, very well, as it was the date of one of the two annual fairs at Peterswell. My brother John, Captain of Peterswell Company, was at the fair that day. He met Peter Howley, Vice-Commandant of the Gort Battalion, at the fair. Peter Howley informed him that two R.I.C. men from Kilchreest Barracks were serving summonses in the Dunnally neighbourhood about one and a half miles from Peterswell. He told my brother John to go home to Dunnally and to collect a few Volunteers to disarm the R.I.C. He came home and spoke to me about the matter. My brother John and I contacted Thomas Fahey, (1st Lieutenant) Michael Fallon, (2nd Lieutenant) Volunteer Patrick O'Donnell and Volunteer Thomas Slattery - all of Peterswell Company. We carried shot-guns which were not in good condition. They had been buried for some time. We had one good double-barreled shot-gun that could be relied on.

The R.I.C. turned towards Kilderry and we decided to hold them up on the way from Kilderry to Kenny's Bridge, as there was a wood affording good cover inside the road. The R.I.C., however, went on towards Dunnally so we then decided to hold them up on the road from Dunnally to Kenny's Bridge on their return journey. We crossed the fields and took up positions mid-way between Dunnally and Kenny's Bridge at the bend on the road. There was a gate on the roadside leading into a field. We were one side of the road only, that is on the right-hand side as you go to Kenny's Bridge from Dunnally. We left the gate partly open to rush out in front of the two R.I.C. When they came almost abreast of our position near the gate we rushed on to the road in front of them and gave them "Hands Up". They both put up their hands but one of the two with his hands up started to move backwards as fast as he could. Volunteer Patrick O'Donnell followed him and ordered him to halt which he did not do. Volunteer O'Donnell then fired a shot over his head and that brought him to a halt. Lieutenant Thomas Fahey then took one long Webley revolver and some ammunition from him. I took a long Webley revolver and about 20 rounds of ammunition from the other. We took all the official documents they had and their two raincoats and told them to go. The R.I.C. man who backed away appeared to be very nervous and afraid of being shot. We all wore face masks which might have frightened him.

Next morning about 11 a.m. about twenty to twenty-five R.I.C. from Loughrea and Kilchreest in charge of an Inspector came to Dunnally. They searched the six houses, including my own, in the townland. They interrogated everybody in the townland including myself. I was out in the barn pumping a bicycle, with the intention of cycling to Gort, when they arrived. I heard them making a good deal of noise in our house. They were breaking open a carpenter's tool box belonging to a brother of mine who had gone

to America a few years before. He had left the box locked when leaving home. The R.I.C. saw me at the barn door and questioned me. They spoke civilly. They asked me my name, who I was etc., and whether I heard about the hold-up. I said I did and that I was surprised as well as everybody else that such a thing should have happened. They asked me if I knew anything about it and I replied that I did not. They brought one of the two R.I.C. men (not the nervous fellow) who had been disarmed to see if he could identify me. He scrutinised me up and down for a long time and then said to the Inspector that he could not identify me as one of the hold-up party. Nobody was arrested in connection with the disarming.

I must now refer back to the time when Peter Howley and my brother John met at the fair. It was, I think, arranged between them that John would collect the Volunteers and meet Howley. The movements of the two R.I.C. men did not, however, give time for this. The result was rather humorous, for Peter Howley with a few Volunteers again held up the two R.I.C. men at Fitzgerald's Forge one and a half miles from Peterswell on the Peterswell/Loughrea road. When held up the second time one of the R.I.C. said, "You're too late, we have already been relieved".

An R.I.C. patrol of about eight to ten was in the habit of coming from Boston, County Clare, to Gort, County Galway, once a week. In September, 1920, I got a dispatch from my brother John, Captain of Peterswell Company, who was at the time with Daniel Ryan in Kilbecanty Company area, to the effect that there was an ambush planned at Kilmacduagh for this patrol. I was ordered to inform the two Company Lieutenants and to take all the armed men of the Peterswell Company to Kilmacduagh. I myself with about four others, including Volunteer Thomas Slattery, perhaps Volunteer Patrick O'Donnell and probably Volunteer Patrick Carew and Michael Fallon, 1st Lieutenant,

proceeded cross-country to Kilmacduagh armed with shot-guns. We were told to go to Volunteer John Neiland of Crawnmore, Ardrahan, and that he would act as guide. The route was very rough and rocky. We arrived at Kilmacduagh three miles from Gort on the Gort/Boston road about 6 a.m. in the morning. We met about twenty-five other Volunteers who had assembled there under the command of Thomas McInerney, O/C., Gort Battalion and Peter Howley, Vice-Commandant of that Battalion. We had tea and a rest in a hay-shed for a short while. We then took up positions on the left-hand side of the road as you go from Gort to Boston. We were about five yards apart. We remained in position for about four hours. It was then past the time that the patrol usually passed, so we were withdrawn.

As we were on our way from Kilmacduagh we heard an aeroplane in the distance. About ten or twelve from Peterswell and Ardrahan were travelling together. We took cover in bushes as quickly as possible. The pilot must have seen us before we got under cover as he continued to hover ^{over} our position for what we thought was a very long time. It might not have been more than half an hour, but to me, at any rate, it seemed like hours. What I feared was that he might be able to communicate our position to the enemy and that we might be surrounded. I felt very much relieved when he took his departure. We took precautions in case of his return by going in extended formation and keeping as close to cover - fences and bushes - as we could.

A few days after our journey to Kilmacduagh and back we got a dispatch from Daniel Ryan, Lieutenant, Kilbecanty Company. He stated specifically in the dispatch that a lorry-load of the British Forces was to be attacked on the Gort/Ennis road at Lough Cutra and that the assistance of the Peterswell Company was needed.

We were to be met by Lieutenant Daniel Ryan and given further instructions. About seven or eight members of our Company, including my brother Company Captain John Fahey, went as requested to the appointed place, Kilifin Bridge. We waited there until the appointed time, 6 a.m., but nobody contacted us. We then went to the house of Daniel Ryan to see if we could learn anything further. He was at home and he informed us that the proposed attack was postponed. He said he thought we had received word about the postponement.

MF On the same night that I took the shot-gun from Madden of Moneen, Ardrahan, I went to Capard House with Volunteer Martin Dooley. I had been told a few days before by my brother John, Captain of Peterswell Company, that an R.I.C. cycling patrol which was in the habit of going from Kilchreest to Peterswell was to be attacked and disarmed. Capard House, which was unoccupied, was the assembly point for the attacking party of Volunteers. The date, as far as I can now remember, was the 30th October. The next day, that is the day of the ambush, was a Holiday of Obligation or, if not, it was Sunday the 31st October, 1920. There were some Volunteers at Capard House when Dooley and I arrived between 11 p.m. and midnight. Others arrived in parties of two or three at various times up to 3 a.m.. Thomas McInerney, O.C., Gort Battalion, was in charge. He told us where we were going and what was to be done.

We left Capard House and proceeded to a wood about two hundred yards from Castledaly Parish Church mid-way between Loughrea and Gort. We arrived in the wood about 6 a.m. We lay concealed there until it was ascertained by Scout Martin Dooley that the R.I.C. patrol had actually left Kilchreest and had proceeded by way of the Fishpond to Roxborough and on to Peterswell. We could not be moved into any attacking position until there was definite information as to which route they took. Sometimes they went from

Kilchreest to Peterswell by the direct main Loughrea/Gort road. Sometimes they branched off the main road at the Fishpond and arrived at Peterswell via Roxborough. On all previous occasions they never returned the same way as they went. On receipt of the scout's information we took up positions along the main road at Castledaly opposite the Castledaly Parish Church. The Church would be about the centre of our position which stretched from the gate lodge of Castledaly House to Castledaly Cross - a little to the Loughrea side of the Church. The distance from the Gate Lodge to Castledaly Cross was about 150 yards. We were placed at about five yards apart inside the wall of the road opposite the Church. Daniel Ryan, 1st Lieutenant, Kilbecanty Company, was on my right and Volunteer Michael Callanan, Ardrahan Company, on my left - about five yards away from me. The O.C., Gort Battalion, Thomas McInerney and Peter Howley, Vice-Commandant, were on the opposite side of the road at Castledaly Cross. There was a high wall at the spot with a hole in it through which a man could pass by stooping. I remember McInerney and Howley came through this hole before the firing ceased.

The R.I.C. came into the ambush riding their bicycles. They were cycling rather slowly and were about fifteen to twenty yards apart. We knew the exact number of R.I.C. men that left Kilchreest to be five and expected the same number on the return journey. The five men returned as expected. When the last of the five came within our position the Volunteer nearest the gate lodge was to open fire on him. This was the signal for the commencement of the attack. The R.I.C. man who was opposite to Daniel Ryan and myself when firing opened was hit quickly. He fell off his bicycle but crawled over the low wall on the Parish Church side and lay there. He would probably have been the third man of the patrol as I was,

roughly, in the centre of the ambush position. I saw one R.I.C. man going across the fence on the Church side of the road. He could have been the second man facing Kilchreest. He was followed by Volunteer Martin Dooley and others but he was not captured. None of the remaining R.I.C. men was badly hit as all were able to get away. I think that only one of the R.I.C. men brought his rifle with him. I can't be sure whether it was three or four rifles we captured but I would be sure we got three.

The R.I.C. put up very little resistance. Their chief aim seemed to be to escape alive leaving their rifles and bicycles behind except one man who definitely brought his rifle with him. The men from Kilbecanty Company took charge of the three or four captured rifles and the five abandoned bicycles. I and the men from Peterswell Company accompanied them part of the way across the mountain to their own area. The R.I.C. carried out reprisals by burning the home of Peter Howley and two or three other houses near Kilchreest.

On the day following the Castledaly ambush, that is the 1st November, 1920, the Black & Tans made their first appearance in Peterswell. Twelve to fifteen of them came to the village. They were not drunk but were in a playful humour. They went into Hayes's public house where some men were having a drink after attending 11 o'clock Mass. The Tans searched them and took all the money they had. They found one or two men who had no money and to these they gave some of the money they had taken from the others. Two of the men in the bar left but the Tans followed them and made them roll in a pool of liquid manure in their best suits. The Black & Tans also took a man called Healy to a well about twenty yards from the public house. They made him stand in the well up to his waist in water for a few minutes. When they left him out they asked him if he would box one of their men. He said he would.

One of the Tans handed his rifle and overcoat to one of his party. Healy took off his jacket and the fight commenced. Healy got the better of the contest, the Tan refusing to continue after ten minutes or so continuous boxing. I forgot to mention that when the Tans first entered Hayes's some of the men there ran out the back door through the fields. The Tans fired on them but hit nobody. I met one of the men that were fired on. He told me he ran across the fields and stopped in the wood near Capard House. He took off his coat and shirt in the wood. I asked him the reason for this and he replied that he had often heard that a man could be wounded and not know it. This man was not a Volunteer.

I went "on the run" after the Castledaly ambush. I and the others from Peterswell Company who took part in that ambush did not sleep at home afterwards but the regular routine of the Company was not upset. Parades were held, dispatches came and went as usual. Officers attended meetings etc.

I slept for a few weeks in the only room left standing in an unoccupied and dilapidated dwelling house not far from my own home in Dunnally. After that my brother John, Captain of the Company, Volunteer Joseph Madden and I got the idea of building a hide-out in a cock of hay which was about a mile from my home. The cock of hay which was built up the previous September was sixteen to eighteen feet at its widest point. We stripped it to that level. We cut a six-foot square hole with a hay-knife in the centre to within one foot of the ground. We put planks of timber and corrugated iron over the hole. We re-built the cock and re-thatched it. We made a hole in the side of the cock about one and a half feet in diameter for a doorway. We tied enough hay to fit exactly into the hole with a rope and when we entered we closed the door by pulling the rope until the hay attached to it fitted in the doorway.

There was then no opening to be seen from the outside. We had a mattress and blankets. It was warm and comfortable. The greatest number of Volunteers who slept in the cock of hay at any one time was five. We slept there from about the middle of November, 1920 to the end of January, 1921.

There was lively enemy activity about this time. One morning about a week before Christmas, 1920, Volunteer Patrick O'Donnell came to us at the cock of hay about 4 a.m. My brothers John and Thomas were with me. O'Donnell told us that our village of Dunnally had just been raided by the Black & Tans and that his brother John and my brother Laurence were missing. He said he was afraid they were killed as the Black & Tans had fired at them. We got out of the hay taking two rifles and two shot guns we had with us. We approached our house cautiously only to find that the raiding party had left after attempting to set fire to the house. My brother Laurence had returned and put out the fire with whatever assistance another brother Michael could give him. Michael had been severely beaten by the Tans before they left. We found my father and mother in the barn. The Tans had moved them and my sister Katie out of the house prior to pouring petrol on chairs and stairs and setting them alight. My mother was taken from the house on a mattress as she was old and feeble. We then went in search of John O'Donnell who had left his own house clad only in a shirt. We did not find him but he returned home at daybreak after getting clothes from cousins of his who lived two miles away. I cannot recall why we had the two rifles and shot guns with us that night. Probably because we had just come from some abortive ambush which I can't remember or because there was something planned to take place the next day. It was not usual for us to keep arms with us in the hay-cock.

At the end of January, 1921, we decided to abandon the hay-cock. It was too near our home which was raided two or three times a week. We selected another place nearer to the mountain about one and a half miles away as the crow flies. Here we constructed a somewhat/similar structure for sleeping accommodation.

This time we built with hay over four upright poles giving the finished building the appearance of a rick of hay oblong in shape. My brother John and Volunteer Joseph Madden usually slept there with me. It was near William Blanche's house where Liam Mellows stayed for some time after the Rising of 1916 until his departure for America. One morning shortly after building this hide-out the three of us got up and went as usual for breakfast to the houses of neighbouring farmers where we were always welcomed for meals. My brother John and Volunteer Madden went to the house of Michael Madden and I went towards Blanche's house. I saw Mat Quinn working near the house. He told me the R.I.C. were in the neighbourhood and advised me not to go into the house, saying he would bring me out my breakfast. He brought tea, bread and butter and a boiled egg.

I had just begun to eat and had taken the egg in my hand when I heard men talking in a foreign accent. I moved through furze bushes nearer the mountain. The R.I.C. were within 50 yards of me when I heard them first. I kept going until I came to Calfhill where I considered myself safe. Unconsciously I had taken the egg and spoon in my hand which surprised me when I discovered it. I sat down and ate the egg. I then crossed to Keanspound, a townland higher up the mountain and from there to Capard Mountain. I went to the highest point and had a good view of the surrounding locality as far as Peterswell. After a little while a party of about twenty Tans and R.I.C. came from Keanspound along the road

and went in the direction of Dunnally and Peterswell. I was half a mile away from them. When they were about an hour gone in the Dunnally direction I crossed the mountain towards home. I got to a high point where I could see Dunnally without being seen. There was no trace of the enemy who were on foot. I learned from neighbours that they had searched the village and had gone away. The enemy forces searched the village of Dunnally concentrating mostly on my own home about three times a week.

I mention the foregoing incidents to show how seriously the enemy were concentrating on our capture and our difficulties in avoiding it. The enemy was so far superior in equipment and numbers that offensive action was out of the question. I and the Company Officers never left our area. The enemy knew this and so we kept them busy searching for us. It is not quite correct to say we never left our own Company area. Now and then we were instructed to go to other Company areas.

For example my brother John and I went to Tullyra Cross to meet some of the Ardrahan Company. We were informed in a dispatch - I can't remember who sent it - that there was to be an attack on the Auxiliaries stationed at Drimhasnagh House. When we arrived at Tullyra we were told that the proposed attack was cancelled. I cannot make any attempt to pin this down to a date. It would be the spring of 1921. There were definitely several abortive journeys like this but I cannot remember details of them except the occasion I met Michael Brennan's Co. Clare Flying Column at Derrybrien. That would be about the end of April, 1921. My brothers John and Thomas were with me and also Volunteer William Howley. Brennan had over thirty men in his Flying Column at Derrybrien, all armed with rifles. Many of them had also revolvers or automatics. Brennan's Flying Column and a number of Volunteers

from the Gort Battalion proceeded from Derrybrien to Dalystown where I understood we were to ambush an enemy force expected to come out from Loughrea as a result of a raid on the mails in the early morning. Dalystown is only a few miles from Loughrea. We all went into ambush position at Dalystown early in the morning and remained in position until about noon when we left. Soon after we had left our positions the enemy came from Loughrea. We again took cover and prepared to attack them but they did not come close enough. There would have been up to forty in the enemy force. I and my companions returned home to Peterswell by Derrybrien.

Shortly after this General Michael Brennan again visited the Gort Battalion area. He came to Healy's of Rathealy in the parish of Peterswell and held a meeting there. I was at the meeting place but was not actually present at the meeting. I was on sentry duty with several others while the meeting was in progress. I was appointed Brigade Engineer, Galway South West Brigade, by General Brennan, at this meeting. My brother John was appointed O.C., Gort Battalion and my brother Thomas was appointed Quartermaster of the Battalion. The new South West Galway Brigade consisted of three Battalions - 1st (Gort) Battalion; 2nd (Ardrahan) Battalion and 3rd (Athenry) Battalion.

General Brennan and his brother Patrick slept at my house that night with armed Volunteers on guard. I slept in a neighbour's house as I knew I would be called after a few hours to do guard. I did my guard duty and was to be relieved about noon. A short time before noon I saw two lorry loads of R.I.C. coming towards Dunnally from the direction of Peterswell. I ran with all haste to the house and when I got there I found that the two Brennan brothers had left the house escorted across the fields to a safe distance by my sister. She also had heard the lorries after the visitors had breakfasted

and took prompt action to get them to a safe place. An extraordinary thing about the movement of the R.I.C. that morning was that they did not come as far as Durnally. They had never passed without paying their respects but that morning they turned to the right at McInerneys Cross and continued on the road to Kilbecanty.

As Brigade Engineer the greater portion of my time from now to the Truce was given to considering the suitability of the men whose names were proposed to me by Battalion O/Cs. and Company Captains to fill the vacancies as Battalion and Company Engineers. It left me very little time for actual instruction in the use of explosives. The enemy forces were especially active after the Ballyturn ambush and their activity continued to increase in intensity up to the Truce. They were actually in my house in Durnally at 12 noon on the 11th July, 1921.

I can now recall two incidents to show how close was the attention paid by enemy forces to my native townland. One day after the Ballyturn ambush a few lorry loads of R.I.C. and Tans had a round-up of the townland. I was coming home for a meal when I met my sister Kate. She had come to warn me that the enemy force was about to enter the townland. I was no more than one hundred yards from my own house. I made for a stream close by as I thought it would afford the best cover from view. I waded along the stream keeping as low as possible. I heard the voices of the R.I.C. so I went under water beside a cut-away bank with only my head above water. I had to remain in that position for what I thought was hours. It could easily have been an hour in reality. When I heard no more noise or voices I left the stream and entered a wheat field. I peeped around me and could see no trace of the enemy. A young girl who was passing told me they were gone. I cautiously approached my own house and had a change of clothing and a good meal.

In the second incident my brother John was with me. We were approaching home. We kept a good look-out and we could not be seen from the townland as the path by which we came was sheltered by high hedges on both sides. When we were about one hundred and fifty yards from our own house we came to a boreen leading to the house. The moment we entered the boreen and turned the corner we saw a party of R.I.C. and Tans searching a house about twenty yards from us. One Black & Tan was only ten yards from us. He was bent down with his head and shoulders in a barrel which he was searching. We retreated post haste and got safely away.

As I have already stated I record the two foregoing incidents to give some idea of the intense enemy activity in our area culminating in a large-scale round up about a fortnight before the Truce. The round up took place in the area from Loughrea beyond Lough Cutra to the Clare border eastwards to and including Killafeen, Derrykeel, Derrybrien, Marble Hill to Dalystown and on back to Loughrea. The British Forces combed the area with infantry and cavalry and made use of at least one aeroplane. They took with them every able-bodied man they found and brought them for identification by the R.I.C. to Ballinakill, a small village between Derrybrien and Marble Hill. When the scrutiny of the R.I.C. was completed all the men were released. They were ordered to run and when they did so fire was opened by the British Forces but nobody was hit.

The first intimation I had of the round-up was at 4 a.m. when I was awakened by the sound of an aeroplane. My brother John, Volunteer William Howley, Ardahan Company and Captain Thomas Fahy, Peterswell Company, were with me. We were in a cave in a solid rock on the Capard Mountain two miles as the crow flies from Capard House and about two miles from my own home in Dunnally.

Soon after hearing the noise of the aeroplane we heard the voices of the British Forces as they came towards our hiding place. We could not distinguish anything they said. My brother John looked out through the heather door of the cave and said "The mountain is swarming with soldiers". We lay there and waited. The voices died away but we did not venture out. About 9 a.m. we heard a girl's voice saying "Are ye there lads?" or something to that effect. We recognised her as Catherine Fahy a sister of Captain Thomas Fahy. We inquired if the military had cleared away. She said they had not and that lorry loads of them and horse-soldiers were on the road near Kilderry. She told us that they had all the men in Kilderry taken with them. She advised us to remain as we were and that she would come back with food. *M.F.* She ~~back~~ ^{came} back as promised and brought us breakfast. We learned afterwards that on both her visits to us she drove a cow before her to avert suspicion.

We stayed in the cave until 6 p.m. that evening when I crept out and scouted around. I saw cavalry moving from the mountain in the direction of Castledaly. I was ~~able~~ ^{able} to see *M.F.* them clearly as they passed from Pollboy on towards Scalp School to Castledaly on the Loughrea road. I told the others that I would try and find out how things were and if I did not return to take it for granted that everything was alright and to follow me home. When I arrived home my own father and mother and the other elderly persons and the children were the only people left in the village. They were in a group together discussing the happenings of the day with great anxiety as to the safety of the men and boys who had been taken prisoners. They were delighted to see me and were very relieved to hear that we were not found in our hiding place on the mountain. At about midnight the men and boys who had been taken from the townland returned safely and told us their story which I have already related.

On Sunday the 10th July, 1921, Lawrence Kelly, O.C., Galway South East Brigade, came to my home in Dunnally. He said he wanted me and my two brothers John and Thomas to accompany him back to Loughrea to attack an enemy patrol at Coorheen Cross the next morning. Coorheen Cross is about one mile from Loughrea on the Loughrea-Gort road. We told Brigadier Kelly that we were under orders to go to Blackwater just outside Gort on the Ennis road to attack the enemy there on Monday morning if they came that way as expected. After a discussion it was decided that I would accompany Brigadier Kelly and that my two brothers would go to Blackwater. I went with him by way of Derrybrien and stayed at Kelly's house that night. We did not retire. There were about thirty to forty Volunteers assembled at Kelly's. Some of General Brennan's Flying Column were there, with I think, Thomas McGrath in charge. The next morning the day of the Truce we took up ambush positions at Coorheen Cross but the enemy did not come our way.

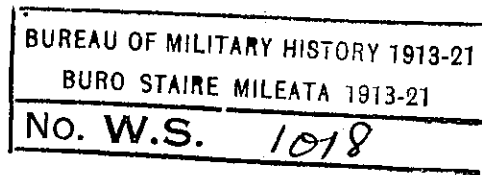
In concluding this statement I would like to pay a well deserved tribute to the families we had occasion to visit for meals, changes of clothes etc. Their warm-hearted hospitality was a great source of encouragement to the I.R.A. to continue the struggle to a successful conclusion. I must refer especially to Cumann na mBan who helped in numerous ways. They took dispatches in circumstances where it would not be advisable for Volunteers to do so. They acted as Intelligence Officers and as scouts in addition to cooking, washing, knitting, darning etc. Perhaps Katie Fahey

now Mrs. McGuane of Bunnahow, Tubber, Co. Clare, and Kate Fahy now Mrs. Keeley of Castleboy, Roxborough, Ardahan, will give their own statements. Mrs. McGuane is my sister and Mrs. Keeley is the sister of Thomas Fahy, O/C., Peterswell Company. Her husband Thomas Keeley was Battalion Engineer, Gort Battalion, and was an active Volunteer and Officer right through the period from 1917 to 1921.

Signed: Martin Fahy.
(Martin Fahy)

Date: 5th October, 1954

5th October, 1954.



Witness: Con Moynihan.
(Con Moynihan)