

W. S. 673

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
BURO STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21
No. W.S. 673

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 673

Witness

(Michael (Con) Fogarty,
Ballintice,
Dunmore, Co. Galway.

(Late of Crusheen, Co. Clare).

Identity.

Member of I.R.B. Crusheen, Co. Clare, 1904 - ;
Captain Crusheen Coy. Irish Vol's. 1914-1916;
O/C. North Galway Brigade 1920-1921.

Subject.

- (a) National activities, Clare-Galway, 1904-1921;
- (b) Escape of Liam Mellows to America,
September 1916.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil

File No.S. 1841.....

Form B.S.M. 2

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Statement by Michael (Con) Fogarty,

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(Late of Crusheen, Co. Clare)

About 1904 Jack McNamara of Crusheen got in touch with a couple of old Fenians who lived in Kilmaley. As a result he formed a small circle of the I.R.B. A middle aged man named Tom Fitzgibbon, Tom Carroll, Jack McNamara and his two brothers, Seán O'Keefe, myself and a few others became members of the circle. I was sworn in, but I cannot remember who administered the oath. A few meetings were held, but after a short time the circle ceased to meet, and eventually it fizzled out.

Late I think in 1907 a telegraph linesman, James Griffin, known as Séamus Mór, used to visit me at the signal cabin, Crusheen Station, in the course of his work. I was signal man at Crusheen at the time. He was an ardent Gaelic Leaguer, and he held extreme political views. Griffin about this time contacted Paul Hayes of Ennis, who sometime previously had been working in Kerry. Hayes was anxious to start a circle of the I.R.B. Griffin introduced me and Tadhg McNamara to Hayes one Sunday evening at a hurling match in Ennis. Hayes swore us into the I.R.B. and asked us to be on the look out for suitable prospective members. He warned us to be very careful whom we wished to join. After a short time the

circle at Crusheen got going. We had about ten members, including Jack McNamara, who was Centre. Meetings were held occasionally at which ideals and views on the future were expressed. This at the time seemed only a dream as the country only looked to Westminster and Home Rule, a dream which was to come true a few years later.

Through Séamus Mór (Griffin) we had contact with Arthur Griffith who was a traveller at the time. All messages and instructions were by word of mouth. About 1912 a man from Dublin whose name I cannot recall, visited me at my home travelling as an insurance agent. We discussed the organisation which seemed to be coming to real life. Afterwards our principal contact was Patrick O'Growney, a cattle dealer. He was brother of Fr. O'Growney, the noted Gaelic Leaguer.

Shortly after the Volunteers started in Dublin our circle of the I.R.B. started a company in Crusheen. About thirty men joined. I was elected Captain. We used drill with wooden guns, looking forward to getting arms later as money was scarce then. At the time John Redmond promised to supply the Volunteers with rifles at £1 apiece; we had £10 on hands. The rifles were to be bought through the Ennis Company of the Volunteers. We decided to purchase the rifles and lodged £10 with the Ennis Company for that purpose. The rifles arrived in Ennis and a few of us went to Ennis to collect them. We found the rifles were of Italian pattern, and I think the year of manufacture was 1874. There was no ammunition for them. We refused to take the rifles as we realised they would be useless to us. Some time later after a lot of haggling and argument we got back

our £10. As a result we split with the Redmond Volunteers, and the later split caused by Redmond's speech did not affect our Company. With the £10 we bought ten single-shot carbines. Jack McNamara and two others bought Lee Enfield rifles for themselves.

One day when the Athenry - Limerick train arrived at Crusheen, I noticed Patrick O'Growney getting out of the train and leaving a parcel at the waiting shed while an R.I.C. man was standing on the platform. As Crusheen was a check station I proceeded to check the tickets. When I was checking O'Growney's ticket he told me that he had left a parcel containing three Lee Enfield rifles and 300 rounds of ammunition in the waiting shed. I collected the parcel and later I delivered the rifles to Jack McNamara and the other two Volunteers. Some time later we purchased seven single-barrel shot guns and 1,000 cartridges. We ordered the cartridges as buckshot, but on arrival found them to be small shot. We reloaded them with buckshot. The Company drilled openly with rifles and shotguns up to Palm Sunday, 1916. We also carried out rifle practice with .22 rifles and also Lee Enfield practice with an adaptor which fired .30 ammunition.

I got instructions to attend a Volunteer Convention in Limerick on Palm Sunday, 1916. I cannot remember who instructed me to do so. A hurling match had been arranged to be held in Limerick the same day, so there was nothing unusual about travelling to Limerick that day. I went to the convention which was held at Irishtown. There were representatives present from Limerick, Galway and Tipperary. I was the only representative from Clare. The usual business of a

convention took place. In addition someone gave a long lecture on tactics and training generally. At the conclusion of the meeting Mr. Colivet came on the stage and asked for Fogarty of Clare and the Galway delegates to remain behind. When the hall was cleared Colivet brought Fr. Feeney, Eamon Corbett, Miss Walsh and me into a room. There were already some others in the room. I did not know any of them. There was a map spread out on a table. I do not know if it were a map of all Ireland or the south-west portion. There were various positions marked on the map. Colivet told Fr. Feeney, Eamon Corbett and I that the rising was to take place on Easter Sunday. He did not mention the time it was to start, as he said we would get final instructions from Mellows who was in Athenry. He told me that the Crusheen Company was to attack and capture Crusheen R.I.C. Barracks and then to move out on the railway line and protect it as we might require it for the transport of arms. He also said that arms for Clare and Galway were to be landed at Carrigaholt. Paddy Brennan (later Colonel) was to be in charge of this operation.

The Galway representatives also got their instructions, but I was so intent on remembering mine that I am afraid I paid very little attention to what they were told. The meeting finished and I returned to Crusheen.

On Holy Thursday, Eamon Corbett and Miss Morrissy arrived at Crusheen Station and told me that the rising was to take place at 7 p.m. on Easter Sunday. During Holy Week, Wednesday or Thursday, Paddy Brennan arrived at Jack McNamara's, Crusheen, and remained there

until Good Friday morning when he left for Carraigaholt. I called to Jack McNamara's on Holy Thursday night and in conversation with Brennan he told me he was going to Carraigaholt to take arms and material from a ship for Clare and Galway in two fishing sloops, and send them on the West Clare Railway to Corofin or Ennis if possible. He asked me to keep the Athenry - Ennis line open as he might require it to send the Galway arms to Athenry.

On Good Friday I advised all Volunteers to go to confession and to receive Holy Communion on Easter Sunday. I also issued orders for the Company to parade at the drill field with arms and ammunition at 7 p.m. on Easter Sunday.

On Easter Saturday I got instructions - I don't remember from whom - to notify Most Rev. Dr. Fogarty, Bishop of Killaloe, that the rising was to take place at 7 p.m. on Easter Sunday. I sent Seán O'Keefe to tell the Bishop, which he did. Saturday night all was quiet, but all our movements were watched as usual by the R. I. C.

A man named Michael Brennan, an I. R. B. man from Limerick, arrived at Seán McNamara's house in the early hours of Easter Sunday morning with the countermanding order. Seán McNamara sent Seán O'Keefe to notify me and to proceed to Gort and deliver the same message there. I sent out orders cancelling the Company mobilisation for that evening.

On Easter Sunday, Seán McNamara, Seán O'Keefe and I collected the arms from the Volunteers who had them in their own houses, and brought them to a place of safety.

We did not hear about the rising for some days. When the searching of the countryside started, the houses of all Volunteers in the area were raided and searched by the R. I. C. and military. No arms were found and nobody arrested, while lots of others who were less active were arrested and sent to Frongoch.

After the disbandment of the Volunteers in Galway, Liam Mellows, Alf Monahan and Frank Hynes made their way across the Derrybrien Mountains to Knockjames where they were met by Michael Maloney who put them up in an old disused house in a mountainy bog.

One day during the month of May, Michael Maloney arrived at Crusheen station. He told me of the whereabouts of Mellows and his comrades, and said he was going to Athenry with between £4 and £5 for Mrs. Hynes, wife of Frank Hynes. This was all the money that Mellows and his comrades had.

I told Seán McNamara of the position of Mellows and his comrades. In a conversation between the McNamara family, Seán O'Keefe and myself as to how we could help them, it was agreed that Seán McNamara should interview Fr. McNamara, C. C., Crusheen, and inform him of the position and suggest to him that as a Confirmation Ceremony was to be held in Crusheen parish during the week, he should make a collection at the priests' dinner which follows the ceremony. Fr. McNamara agreed to do so, and at the dinners at Crusheen and Tubber collected between £9 and £10, which he handed over to Seán McNamara.

During that week when the 7 a.m. Limerick - Sligo train stopped at Crusheen Station, Mr. Colivet put his head out and told me to send a messenger that day to the Misses Daly of Limerick. I sent word to Seán McNamara

and he proceeded on the next train to Limerick. On his return that evening he had £120 which Miss Daly had given him for Mellows. Miss Daly told him it had been left to Liam by her brother Ned Daly who had been executed in Dublin for his part in the rising. This money and the money collected by Fr. McNamara was given to Mellows by Seán McNamara. Mellows, Monahan and Hynes remained at Knockjames during the summer.

Some time about July a message came from Dublin that there was a place arranged in a boat for two men to escape to America, and suggesting that Mellows should go, which he definitely refused to do. It was then arranged that Éamon Corbett and Pat Callanan (the hare) who were in hiding in the Kilkeady district, should be offered the place in the boat. We interviewed them and they agreed to go. On the day arranged for them to leave I met them at Brewes Castle and took them across country to Bunahow where we were met by a post car belonging to John Hardiman, Gort. Corbett and Callanan were driven in the post car to a house in Feacle. They eventually succeeded in getting to America.

Seán O'Keefe and I kept in constant touch with Mellows and visited him on several occasions. About the first week in September a definite order arrived from Dublin instructing Mellows to proceed to America, which he prepared to do. Mellows asked me to go to Fr. Meehan, Kinvara, and to make arrangements with him for Mellows to go to America. Word had previously been sent to Fr. Meehan to expect me. I cycled to Kinvara at night and called at Fr. Meehan's. The maid told me he was at Miss Johnson's. I went there and met Fr. Meehan. The arrangement come to was that Mellows would leave

Knockjames on 22nd September and cycle to Kearneys of the Castle where Seán McNamara and I would meet him and cycle with him to Fr. Crowe's, Rosslevin, where he would stay for the night. These arrangements were carried out and we brought him safely to Fr. Crowe's. Next morning Mellows dressed as a nun; Miss Barry of Gort also dressed as a nun, Fr. Tom Burke and a lady from Roscrea, whose name I forget, proceeded to Cork by motor owned and driven by a man named Brody from Ennis. The arrangements made by Fr. Meehan for Mellows' escape to America cost £60. Mellows left the remainder of the money he had to his two comrades.

Early in 1918 I was transferred to Ballyglunin as signalman and remained there until December of the same year when I returned to Crusheen.

In July, 1919, I was transferred permanently to Tuam, Co. Galway, losing touch with Clare altogether. Later that year I got word from Clare to look up Martin McDevitt from Ennistymon area who had been wounded in an ambush near Ennistymon and who was then convalescing at Joe Hughes near Barnadearg. It was through McDevitt that I got in touch with the Volunteers in this area and I became a member. I found the Volunteers in this area highly organised but very poorly armed. In conversation with the officers, Michael Moran, T. Dunleavy and P. Conway, I said that arms could be got from Dublin if there was any money on hand. They decided to make a collection in the Tuam and Glanamaddy areas and proceeded to do so immediately. In a short time they had collected £650.

A short time after the collection was finished, I took £600 to Dublin to get arms. I handed over the

money to Seán McMahon, Q.M.G., whom I met in a Sweet and Tobacconist Shop, situated on the Quay between O'Connell Bridge and Capel Street Bridge. He gave me a receipt for the amount. I arranged with him to send the arms to a covering address - Patrick McTigue, Hardware Merchant, Tuam. All we got for our £600 was six Lee Enfield rifles and 300 rounds of .303 ammunition. The area at that time was under the Galway Brigade of which Seumas Murphy was O/C.

Some time later the Brigade was re-organised and several new Brigades formed. Tuam and Glenamaddy areas was formed into a separate Brigade, known as the North Galway Brigade, of which I was appointed O/C. Michael Moran was Vice O/C.; Joe Cooney was Adjutant; Paddy Conway was Q.M. There were two Battalions in the Brigade - Tuam Battalion of which Tom Dunleavy was O/C., and Glenamaddy Battalion of which James Maloney was O/C.

In July, 1920, I decided to attack the R.I.C. on the first suitable occasion. On the morning of the 19th July I saw the R.I.C. transport van from Dunmore with about four R.I.C. men in it, proceeding in the direction of Galway, presumably for the purpose of attending the Galway Assizes. I knew that the van would be returning to Dunmore that evening. I decided to attack it on the return journey. I immediately mobilised some Volunteers. I intended to carry out the ambush at the top of Gallagher Hill on the Dunmore-Tuam road. At this spot there is high ground on either side of the road which was bounded by stone walls which would afford us good cover. My plan was to block the road with a tree trunk. Twenty men turned up for the job; three or four had rifles, a few with revolvers, and the remainder had shotguns. We proceeded in the direction

of Gallagher hill and when we were about 100 yards from the spot selected for the ambush I saw the police van about 200 yards away. I called on the four men who were carrying the tree trunk along the road to drop it and take cover. The remainder of the men were fairly scattered and were not in position. I called on them to take cover also. When the police van reached the road block it stopped. I called on the police to surrender. They jumped out and opened fire at once. One of them got over the wall on the opposite side of the road and three got under the van. We opened fire on them and firing continued for some minutes. Tommy O'Grady threw a Mills grenade under the van but it did not explode. One of the R.I.C. men put up a white handkerchief. I called on my men to cease fire and to keep under cover. I called on the R.I.C. Sergeant who was behind the wall on the opposite side, to come out with his hands up, which he did. I then called my men out on the road. We moved the van and found two R.I.C. men dead underneath it. Some of our men said Acts of Contrition in their ears. We collected three Lee Enfield carbines and one .45 revolver. We set fire to the van, fell in and marched away across country. Amongst those who took part in the attack were, Joe Cooney, Tom Dunleavy, Michael Moran, Peter Barrett, .. Kelly, Mark Ryan, Jimmie Courtney and Tommy O'Grady.

That night we lay in waiting at Michael Moran's house at Carremonan expecting the R.I.C. would raid his house. They did not turn up but burned Tuam instead. Following this attack we planned several other ambushes and took up positions waiting for the enemy to come along but they did not oblige.

I was arrested in February 1921. I was taken to Tuam Workhouse and tried by General Courtmartial on the charge of taking part in the Gallagher ambush. Part of the evidence against me was a Trades Union medal (National Union of Railwaymen) which had been found at the scene of the attack, but the medal was not mine. I was interrogated by two Black and Tans named Pinkie and Anderson about the ambush. I was told I was to be shot. I was handed a rosary beads and a lighted candle. I was beaten about the head and again questioned, but I refused to talk. I was given half an hour to consider whether I would die or give information. I was taken out again and put against a wall, and shots fired. I was again beaten and questioned, still I refused to talk. One of the officers said my life had been saved but that I would be in jail for a long time. Shortly afterwards I was transferred to the Town Hall, Galway. A month or so later I was sent to the Curragh Internment Camp and detained there until December 1921, when I was released.

SIGNED

Michael Fogarty

(Michael Fogarty)

DATE

20 April 1952

20th April 1952.

WITNESS

Sean Brennan Comdt.

(Sean Brennan), Comd't.

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