

W.S. 1,003

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
BUREAU STAIPE MILITARY 1913-21
NO. W.S. 1003

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 1,003.....

Witness

Patrick Ahern,
1 McDonagh Terrace,
Fermoy,
Co. Cork.

Identity.

Second Lieut. Fermoy Coy. Irish Vol's. 1917 - ;
I.O. Fermoy Battalion Cork II Brigade.

Subject.

Irish Volunteers, Fermoy, Co. Cork,
1917-1921.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil

File No. S. 2310.....

Form B.S.M. 2

STATEMENT BY PATRICK AHERN,

McDonagh Terrace, Fermoy.

I was born in Fermoy on February 26th 1899.

My grandparents on both my father's and mother's side were farmers. They were evicted from their holdings on the Buckley and Montgomery Estates by the landlords because they owed one half year's rent. The rent due was actually tendered to the agent but was refused as the whole idea behind the eviction was to banish the small holders and turn the district into one large estate.

There was a company of the Irish Volunteers in Fermoy before Easter Week 1916 but I was not a member. As far as I can remember the pioneer in the organisation of this company was Seán O'Brien who was a native of Fermoy. He was a gardener at the Presentation Convent. Other members were Jimmy Barry, Pad Fleming, Dick Bulman, Bill and Mick O'Connell, Dan Fitzpatrick and Mick Fitzgibbon.

I joined the Volunteers in the Sinn Féin Hall in Chapel Square, Fermoy, about April or May 1917. There were about 60 Volunteers in the company when I joined and the officers as far as I can remember were:

O/C Liam Denn

1st Lt. Liam Lynch

2nd Lt. Lar. Condon

Adjt. Geo. Power

Q/M Mick Fitzgerald.

The only drill carried out in the early stages was simple. Foot-drill, parades and drills were held mainly in the fields in the vicinity of the town and sometimes in the Sinn Féin Hall. Most of the drill instruction was carried out by the officers of the company who took the various sections in turn. At this time it was not too easy to get into the Volunteers. New recruits were usually accepted only on the recommendation of other members and all proposals for membership were usually vetted by the officers.

Shortly after joining the Volunteers I remember taking part with the other members of the Company and members of the public in a torchlight procession to celebrate the success of Joe McGuinness in the Longford Election in May 1917. The parade was in charge of Liam Lynch. It marched up Barrack Hill which at the time was called "Little England". On the way up the parade and procession was subjected to much barracking by the Separation women (British soldiers' wives) but on the way back it was attacked by the women as well as by soldiers who were on the street. It developed into a general free-for-all but Liam Lynch ordered the parade to "stand fast and reform ranks". The company then moved back to the Square where the parade was dismissed. This incident is quoted to give an idea of the outlook and mentality of the majority of the people of Fermoy at this time.

Sometime in October 1917 the Company Captain (Liam Denn) was arrested for illegal drilling. He was sentenced to a term of imprisonment in Cork gaol. His arrest was followed a few weeks later by that of Ear Condon (2nd Lt.)

on a similar charge. He was also sentenced to a term of imprisonment. With a number of other prisoners the two went on hunger-strike and they were released some short time before Xmas 1917. Following the arrest of Lar Condon there was a change of officers. The new officers of the company were:

O/C Liam Lynch
 1st Lt. Mick Fitzgerald
 2nd Lt. John Fanning.

At this time I was despatch rider for the area and my route covered Glanworth (Paddy Barry O/C), Kilworth (Tom Joyce O/C), Araglin (Con Leddy O/C) and Fermoy (Liam Lynch).

Early in 1918 the Fermoy Battalion was formed as the Volunteer organisation was growing in strength in the surrounding area. The Battalion was attached to Cork Brigade which at this time consisted of something like twenty battalions. The battalion was made up of the following companies (10): Fermoy, Glenville, Watergrasshill, Rathcormac, Ballynoe, Bartlemy, Castlelyons, Kilworth, Araglin and Conna.

The officers of the Fermoy Battalion were:

O/C Martin O'Keefe, Ballynoe.
 Vice O/C Lar Condon, Fermoy.
 Adj. Liam Lynch, do.
 Q/M. Mick Fitzgerald, do.

As Liam Lynch and Mick Fitzgerald were now on the Battalion Staff it was necessary to elect a new Company O/C and 2nd Lieut. The Fermoy Company officers now were:

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O/C John Fanning.
1st Lt. "Pa" Gallagher
2nd Lt. Mick Sweeney.

The strength of the company began to increase steadily about this time and before the conscription scare had reached a strength of about 120 which remained constant to the Truce. Of course during the spring and summer of 1918 while conscription was threatened there was a large influx of new recruits but they all faded away again when the threat of conscription had passed.

Liam Tobin who was on General Headquarters staff arrived in the area during the early part of 1918 and was in constant touch with the Volunteer units in the area. I think that he was acting more or less as organiser. I know that he was also one of the party engaged in an attempt to capture arms by holding up a train at Castletownroche early in May 1918.

As far as I can recollect Liam Lynch received information from a contact of his in the Army Stores at Cobh ((Queenstown then) that a large consignment of rifles and ammunition was being dispatched to Fermoy on a date in early May 1918. Arrangements were made by the Battalion Officers in conjunction with John Fanning (O/C Fermoy Company) to hold up the train with a view to capturing this lot of enemy stores. With a number of other members of the Fermoy Company including Tim Fenton, Jack Herlihy, Jack Fitzgerald and Patk. ("Powder") Moloney, I proceeded to a pre-arranged meeting place at Renny boreen - about 6 miles from Fermoy on the road to Castletownroche where I met the following who had

already arrived by car: Liam Lynch, Liam Tobin, Ear Condon, Jack O'Neill, Mick Fitzgerald, John Fanning (Company O/C), George Power, as well as three railwaymen who were to co-operate (Jerh. Corkery, Tom Egan and Tim Sheehan). In addition to the above named there were also selected members of the local companies who were engaged on scouting and outpost duty as well as standing by at Renny boreen to transfer the captured material to the cars.

Incidentally the cars, which had been hired to go to a funeral, were driven by Tom Cavanagh (later Battalion I/O) and Mick McCarthy. One carload (Tom Egan, Tim Sheehan, Jerh. Corkery, Jack O'Neill and John Fanning) proceeded to the vicinity of Castletownroche Railway Station to await the arrival of the train while two others (Liam Denn and Ted Heskin) were already on the platform. The latter pair were to board the footplate as the engine was about to pull out and to compel the driver to halt the train at Renny boreen where the main party were. The others in the vicinity of the station were to board the train also while the railwaymen (Tom Egan, Jerh. Corkery and Tim Sheehan) were to be prepared to take over the train in an emergency. However, due to an error in timing on the part of the Volunteer who had been delegated to cut the wires the operation did not proceed according to plan. It had been agreed that the wires would not be cut until the train had whistled to show that it was about to leave the station but it was later established that the wires were in fact cut as the train whistled when about to enter the station. As a result the train did not leave the station at all as in the absence of telephone communication with the next station on the line -

Ballyhooley - it was not allowed to proceed. At this stage it was too late to alter the plans and the job was called off. We then returned to our home area, as did all the others mobilised for the job.

Several raids for arms were carried out in the area about this time and the following stock of arms was accumulated by the company: 7/8 rifles, 30 shotguns and about half dozen .22 rifles as well as a quantity of ammunition. In addition to these raids on private houses a considerable quantity of explosives, shotgun cartridges, detonators and fuse was obtained in a raid on Barry's hardware and firearms premises at the Timber Yard, Fermoy. Nearly all the latter material as well as the captured arms were dumped in Clondulane. These operations were carried out under John Fanning O/C and witness (Patk. Ahern), while practically all available members of the company took part.

I should mention that in only one case was there any opposition shown to the surrender of the arms. This was at the house of D.L. O'Gorman, Janeville, Fermoy, where the houseowner fired on the raiding party and drove them off. Subsequently witness (Patk. Ahern) with John Fanning, "Pa" Gallagher and Tim Sheehan raided the house on a Sunday morning when the owner was away at Mass and obtained the guns. In this connection I would like to state that I was well known to Miss O'Gorman, who was present on the occasion of the raid, but apparently she did not disclose the identity of the raiders to her father when he returned home.

Since I joined the Volunteers in 1917 I was actively associated at all times with the political wing

of the movement - Sinn Féin. Practically all Volunteers as well as their families were members of Sinn Féin and helped in every possible way in the organisation of that body. During the by-election in Waterford in March 1918 I travelled to Waterford City with a large party of Volunteers from Fermoy and the surrounding districts. We were engaged in patrolling the streets in an endeavour to protect the Republican supporters from the attacks of the Redmondite and British Army element who were violently opposed to Sinn Féin. The atmosphere in Waterford City about this time was somewhat similar to that in our home area (Fermoy - another garrison town).

It was now January 1919 and on January 6th Cork 11 Brigade was formed. The officers of the new brigade were:

O/C	Liam Lynch	Fermoy
Vice O/C	Dan Hegarty	Mallow
Adj.	Tom Barry	Glanworth
Q/M	Geo. Power	Fermoy.

This led to further changes in Fermoy Battalion Staff which now was:

O/C	Mick Fitzgerald	Fermoy
Vice O/C	Lar. Condon	do.
Adj.	Moss Twomey	do.
Q/M	Con Leddy	Araglin.

Drilling and parades continued as usual about this time but Volunteers were, in general, becoming more military minded. The general subject of conversation when Volunteers met mainly concerned the best method of obtaining arms. Naturally in Fermoy where we were in the centre of a large enemy concentration our minds were

continually concerned with this problem. Consignments of military stores were regularly handled at Fermoy station so it was arranged that Jerh. Corkery and Tom Egan (two shunters employed at the station) would arrange to shunt a wagon containing stores "down the line" one night in the late spring of 1919. The wagon contained some thousands of rounds of .303 rifle ammunition made up in slings in cardboard boxes. The wagon was opened by John Fanning (Company O/C) and witness (Patk. Ahern) and the contents were removed by members of the Clondulane Section of the Fermoy Company to a dump in their own area. This dump was situated in Clondulane Mills. It was made by constructing a false bottom in a large wheat bin which was not in use. This bin was between 50 and 60 feet deep and the bottom was reached by means of a permanent ladder affixed to the inside of the bin. To ascertain whether there was anything in the bin it was necessary to go down the ladder and to take with you an inspection lamp lighted by electricity. As there was always one or two bins in the mill which appeared to be empty at one time or another there was never any suspicion that the bin in question was being used as a dump. This dump which was constructed by Mick Fitzgerald, who later died on hunger-strike in Cork Gaol, was never discovered. The ammunition captured on this occasion supplied the Brigade and Battalion Columns of Cork 11 Brigade during the subsequent period of intense activity during late 1920 and 1921.

Araglin R.I.C. barracks was captured towards the end of April 1919 but as far as I know Mick Fitzgerald (Battalion O/C) was the only participant in this engagement outside of the members of the Araglin Company. It was purely a local job.

The usual drill and activities continued until early September 1919 when the raid on the church party of the Shropshire Light Infantry took place at the Wesleyan Church on Sunday morning September 7th 1919. This was one of a number of small parties of military which used to parade to the churches of the various denominations in the town on each Sunday morning. The strength of the party was usually about twenty and marched to the Wesleyan Church at Walkers Row. The party as well as all the others on church parade always carried rifles.

The Brigade O/C (Liam Lynch) decided to examine the possibility of capturing the rifles carried by the Wesleyan Church party. Several meetings were held at which officers of the Fermoy Company as well as some other companies of the battalion were present. Fermoy Company were made responsible for the preliminary scouting work and regular reports were furnished to the officers who were planning the operation. The final meeting which was held on Friday night (September 5th 1919) was attended by Liam Lynch, Ear Condon, John Fanning (Company O/C), "Moss" Twomey, Paddy Ahern (witness), George Power (all Fermoy), Tom Griffin (Ballynoe) and Con Leddy (Araglin).

The movements of the Wesleyan Church party were kept under observation for about three months. The party usually marched in fours from their barracks via Barrack Hill, the Square and Patrick St. to Walkers Row - the site of the Wesleyan Church. The rifles were carried at the slope until the party were within a short distance of the church when the arms were changed to "the trail".

The Brigade O/C through his contact in Army Stores at Cobh (Paddy Hackett) ascertained that the rifles were probably loaded as instructions had been issued that the Church parties should carry loaded firearms. This change in the normal procedure had, it was stated, been made because of an effort to disarm a soldier in Castletownbere area.

Every possible aspect of the movements of the particular enemy party was covered in the preliminary investigation. It was decided to ascertain whether, when the military party entered the Church, they stacked their rifles inside the door, or took them into the seats with them. This latter investigation was also allocated to me and after spending a few Sundays in the vicinity of the Wesleyan Church I established that the rifles were taken into the seats.

When all the reports from the various observers had been examined Liam Lynch decided to attempt to overpower the party just as it reached the Wesleyan Church and about the time the order was given to "trail arms".

Arrangements were also made to obtain transport from the Mallow Battalion and from the neighbouring Waterford Brigade as well as from Rathcormac in Fermoy Battalion. The Mallow car, which was a Buick car driven by Leo O'Callaghan, Mallow, carried in addition Dan Hegarty (Brigade Vice O/C), Owen Harold (O/C Mallow Company), Ned Waters and Bryan Kelly. The Rathcormac car was driven by Jack Mulvey but the car from Waterford Brigade which took Geo. Lennon (Bde. Vice O/C) and Mick Mansfield (Q.M.) to the vicinity did not report to the rendezvous. It appears that when the driver learned of the intended job

he refused to proceed to Fermoy. I do not know whether Geo. Lennon and Mick Mansfield took part in the engagement.

The Mallow car and party were picked up at the limekiln on the Castlehyde road by witness (Paddy Ahern) who piloted them to the meeting place at the rear of the Fermoy Hospital. I remember the Brigade Vice O/C (Dan Hegarty) who was in this car saying at the time "If Lynch carries this off I'll take off my hat to him". The Waterford car was to have been met by Mick Fitzgerald while the Rathcormac car did not require a pilot as the driver knew the area well.

Several men from the Ballynoe and Araglin Companies in addition to the Mallow and Fermoy men already mentioned were engaged in various activities in connection with this job. Some were strolling round - reading papers and generally appearing to be killing time - in the vicinity of the route taken by the Church party as they neared the Wesleyan Church. All had instructions to rush the enemy party when the order "hands up" was given by Lar Condon who was in charge of the main attacking party composed of Mick Fitzgerald, Lar Condon, Jack Fitzgerald, John Fanning and witness (Paddy Ahern). The order "hands up" was to be given just following the order to the military party to "trail arms".

Liam Lynch was with the Mallow party in their car, which was parked east of the Wesleyan Church and behind which was the Rathcormac car driven by Jack Mulvey. As the enemy party approached the Wesleyan Church the Mallow car with its passengers, driven by Leo O'Callaghan, moved slowly towards it. It reached the end of the party on Church parade just as the order "hands up" was

given by the O/C main attacking party. The driver swung his car across the road behind the military party thus cutting off their line of retreat while the occupants of his car jumped on the soldiers. The engagement was all over in less than five minutes and the rifles were loaded into the two cars.

The main attacking party, of which I was a member, were ambling along within arms length of the enemy party when the order "hands up" was given. I immediately grabbed the rifle of the soldier nearest to me and with very little effort succeeded in wresting it from him. All members of our party as well as the "hangers on", and the party including Liam Lynch in the Mallow car, were engaged in a short sharp tussle before the enemy party was overpowered. A few shots were fired during the scrap and Private Jones, Shropshire Light Infantry, was shot dead while, I think, three or four were wounded. I learned later that Liam Lynch was the only member of the attacking party injured. He received a slight wound in the shoulder.

When the rifles had been loaded on to the cars which were driven away in the direction of Tallow on the Fermoy-^{Tallow.}~~Lismore~~ road, I made my way across the fields to the Railway Viaduct where I crossed the Blackwater. I then proceeded across country till I reached the main Fermoy-Mitchelstown road at Kilcrumper about $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles from Fermoy. I then walked back to town and on my way met a military search party at the aerodrome. I returned home and after dinner went to the Feis where I met John Fanning and Mick Fitzgerald.

During the evening large parties of military came

into the grounds where the Feis was being held and immediately set about attacking the general public. They did not have things all their way as the people gave as good as they got using every available weapon such as stones, bottles and wooden staves torn from the railings surrounding the grounds. Even the students of St. Colman's College entered the fray and used their hurleys to good effect.

As a number of civilians had seen the raid at the Wesleyan Church and there was a possibility that some of them might decide to give information to the enemy arrangements were made to paint the slogan "Spies and informers beware" in a conspicuous place on all dead walls and even on the footpaths throughout the town. This work was carried out by several members of the Fermoy Company under my direction during the night of September 7th 1919.

On the night of the raid and before we had taken the action outlined in the previous paragraph the British Forces stationed in the town ran riot. They smashed up windows and looted anything worth while in the shops. This rioting went on for about two to three hours when the enemy troops returned to barracks. When the rioting had ceased I left home and went for a walk around the town to view the damage.

There was a further outbreak of rioting by enemy troops on the following night when Lar Condon, John Fanning and his brother Jimmie, Mick Fitzgerald and John Swaine were prisoners in the R.I.C. barracks. They had been arrested on the morning of September 8th 1919.

There was naturally much excitement even amongst some of our own members following this operation. A company parade was held in Rice's field on Wednesday night (September 10th). "Pa" Gallagher was in charge of this parade which was held mainly to issue an instruction to all members to keep their ears open and their mouths shut.

Following the Wesleyan raid there were numerous arrests in addition to those referred to previously. Jack Mulvey, Rathcormac, (the driver of the car) as well as a number from Ballynoe including Tom Griffin and John J. Hogan were also arrested and after being placed on identification parades were committed to Cork Gaol. The members of the Fermoy Company carried on as previously. Parades and drills were held regularly. The Company Officers were: -

O/C John Fanning (In gaol. He was released after about 6 weeks).

1st Lt. "Pa" Gallagher.

2nd Lt. Paddy Ahern.

There was no change in the general position during the remainder of 1919 and into early 1920. About the end of January 1920 arrangements were made to attack Aghern R.I.C. barracks. For this purpose Volunteers from Fermoy, Araglin, Watergrasshill, Bartlemy and Castlelyons were alerted for the job but owing to intense enemy activity in the area the job had to be called off. I think this took place on February 1st 1920. This operation was to have taken place under "Moss" Twomey (Battalion Adjnt.) and Geo. Power (Brigade Adjnt.). However, on February 16th our forces were again assembled for the attack and we proceeded to take up pre-arranged

positions around the barrack. With Lar Condon in charge I was one of a party of six riflemen who took up a position at the rere of the barrack. The other members of this party were: Tom Barry, Jimmie Barry, Tom Egan, Lar Condon, Jimmie Brennock. There were other parties covering the front of the barrack as well as a mining party who were to lay a charge of explosives at the gable end of the barrack. This latter (gable end) was covered with ivy.

When the signal was given by Geo. Power, who was in charge of our party as well as the other covering party, we opened fire which we continued intermittently for about an hour. In the meantime the party at the gable end had been endeavouring to set their explosive charge but they suddenly found themselves in trouble as the R.I.C. dropped some Mills bombs on them through holes which they (R.I.C.) had already made in the wall and which were obscured by the thick covering of ivy already referred to. One member of this party - Michael Condon - was seriously wounded and he was captured. As there was no hope of breaching the gable end wall the attack was called off.

There was no activity of any importance in the period to June 1920 when General Lucas was captured. On this occasion I was on scouting duty on the Clondulane road but there was nothing to report. About this time also the members of the Company carried out a number of raids for shotguns as well as a few raids on the mails. No information of military importance was obtained in the raids on the mails.

About this time I was appointed Battalion Intelligence Officer. I was supplied with a copy of the enemy code

by the Brigade Adjutant ("Moss" Twomey). I arranged that all enemy messages which passed through Fermoy Post Office should be intercepted by a member of the Post Office staff - Paddy Brennan. The messages were usually conveyed to me by Messenger Farrell. The messages, when decoded, were passed to the appropriate destination (Brigade, Company, Battalion O/C or G.H.Q.) All messages before despatch were checked each night by "Moss" Twomey who, in addition to acting as Brigade Adjutant, was also assisting in Intelligence work. The Brigade I.O. at this time was David Barry, Glanworth, to whom a weekly Intelligence report had to be furnished. Similarly I, as Battalion I/O, received weekly reports from the Company I.O.s in the area.

I daresay that my appointment as Intelligence Officer arose from the fact that, at the time, I was employed as an apprentice to Mr. M.J. Maye, Grocer. In the course of my duties I visited the military barracks every day in connection with orders for grocery goods. I had free access to all messes and to the Colonel's house and was so well known that I did not require a "pass". Since my appointment as Intelligence Officer I did not associate too much in public with Volunteer activities.

At the end of June 1920 British forces dressed up as civilians and clergymen raided Rice's, Strawhall, where we used to hold meetings. They turned the family out and having set fire to the house went away. The fire was extinguished by neighbours and portion of the house saved. After this incident an armed guard was placed in the vicinity of the house for some weeks but the raiders did not return.

Following this raid I set enquiries on foot.

to endeavour to establish the identity of the raiders and their whereabouts. Arising out of these investigations it was established that the enemy party were military personnel from Fermoy. It was further discovered that the disguise in the shape of civilian and clerical clothes had been supplied by an Englishman named Longhurst who kept a fish and chip shop in Barrack Hill, Fermoy. At the time he was kept under guard by the British and seldom left his home. However, as constant dripping wears the stone, he eventually decided to move out to a club which he used to frequent before the raid on Rice's. He arrived at the club one Sunday evening after lunch. He had only arrived there when information was conveyed to me by the Company Intelligence Staff. I immediately contacted the Company O/C (John Fanning) and he made arrangements to take Longhurst prisoner. With the assistance of Paddy ("Powder") Moloney and Bill Twomey he arrested Longhurst and transferred him to Castlelyons area where the prisoner was handed over to the Company O/C - Wm. Buckley ("Bronee"). The prisoner was later taken to Brigade Headquarters where he was tried by the Brigade Staff. He was defended by Paddy O'Brien (Brigade Q/M). I was responsible for getting the necessary witnesses in this case. They were Matt Flood - an ex-member of the British Army who remained on with the column after the trial as a machine-gunner and David Bratchford. Longhurst was found guilty of co-operating with the enemy and was sentenced to deportation. He was deported through Rosslare and never returned to Fermoy.

At this time our Battalion O/C (Mick Fitzgerald) was dying on hunger-strike in Cork Gaol and the majority of Volunteers in the area were feeling the strain and were

in no humour for levity. It was reported that a regular "sing song" was being held in a house in Barrack Hill where some Volunteers were staying. I visited the house one night in early October and protested to the people concerned amongst them a Volunteer named McEville, who took up a rather defiant attitude. However, I had only left the house when a party of military arrived. They were accompanied by three masked officers, who proceeded to search all present including McEville. When the latter had been searched he moved towards me and asked if I had anything on me. At the time I was wondering how to get rid of a despatch, which had been handed to me as I was on my way to the house in Barrack Hill. I slipped the despatch to McEville who had already been searched and so escaped probable arrest. The Volunteer spirit was stronger than the rancour raised by my protest of a short time before.

On the night of October 16th 1920 I was instructed by "Moss" Twomey and Lar Condon to proceed to Cork that night, go to Cork Gaol and to pose as Mick Fitzgerald's brother. They had been to see Mick and were anxious to ensure that, should he regain consciousness, there would be somebody present to whom he could give any message he might wish to send. I was unable to go that night as I could not reach Cork before curfew but I proceeded to Cork next morning (Sunday). I was met at the gaol gate by Miss Ciss Condon (Lar's sister) and Nora O'Brien (now Mrs. Martin). They had got a "pass" to enable me to stay that night in the prison. Before entering the prison I had some refreshments and then passed through the gate as Patrick Fitzgerald (brother to Mick). I was taken to the hospital wing where I entered Mick's cell to find him still unconscious.

About 6 p.m. the head warder on duty in the wing arrived in the cell and asked me for my night "pass". I told him that it had been taken up at the gate when I was coming in. The warder then went on to see his Chief, who arrived a little later, and told me I had only 15 minutes left and that I should go at the end of that time. I told him that I would not leave my dying "brother" and in the heat of the moment told him that he should have been shot in the County Club with Commissioner Smyth. (He was in the County Club when Smyth was shot). The name of the warder on duty at the time was Fitzpatrick. I think he was a Kilkenny man and he was very sympathetic towards the prisoners. I remember that when going off duty he went into Mick's cell, knelt down and said a prayer. I could see the tears streaming down his cheeks as he left the cell.

I remained on in the cell with my dying comrade until about 8.30 p.m. when three nuns and Fr. O'Flynn (I think) came along. They began to say The Rosary and were accompanied in the responses by the relatives of the other prisoners. At the same time I could hear the crowd outside the prison ^{who} were also saying The Rosary. Just before the end of the fifth decade one of the nuns turned to me and said "he's gone". It was then about 9 p.m. A few moments later the Cork Volunteer Pipers' Band which was outside the prison began to play "Wrap the green flag round me".

I telephoned the sad news to Fermoy (Maurice Cleary on telephone duty in Post Office with instructions to send word to "Moss" Twomey) that night and remained on in the cell until morning to ensure that the rats, which were rather plentiful in this wing of the prison, would

not interfere with the body of my dead comrade. The other prisoners did not know that Mick was dead until they were visited by Fr. Fitzgerald next morning. They could then be heard crying throughout the wing "our leader is gone". When the prison chaplain (Fr. Fitzgerald) arrived next morning he ordered me to get out of the prison immediately and not to return as the authorities were aware that I was not Mick Fitzgerald's brother. I left without delay.

Outside the prison I met Nora O'Brien (Mrs. Martin now) and after I had partaken of some food she took me to see O/C Cork 1 Brigade (Seán Hegarty), Florrie O'Donoghue (Brigade Adjt.) and Mick Murphy O/C one of the Cork City Battalions. They informed me that they would make arrangements for the funeral but that the remains could not be placed in the City Hall as they were expecting word of Terry MacSwiney's death at any moment and would require the City Hall for the lying-in-state. At this stage "Moss" Twomey, Ear Condon, John Fanning and the others from Fermoy arrived and took charge. It was finally agreed that the arrangements in the City area would be carried out by Cork 1 Brigade while Cork 11 would take over outside the City boundary.

The funeral took place from the prison to St. Peter and Paul's Church on the evening of the 18th October, 1920. The Battalion O/Cs of Cork 1 Brigade acted as bodyguards while huge crowds of the general public as well as the Cork 1 Battalions of the I.R.A. made up the funeral procession. Towards the end of the Requiem Mass which was being offered up next morning a large party of military in full war kit invaded the

church. They were in charge of an officer with drawn revolver and walked on the seats from the end of the church to the altar rails where the officer in charge served notice on the officiating priest, informing him that only 100 people would be allowed at the funeral.

From the church the cortege was escorted to the City boundary by a strong force of military and several armoured cars. On the outskirts of Fermoy, where it arrived about 6 p.m., the funeral was met by a huge crowd. High Mass was held next morning in the crowded church where the coffin covered by the tricolour was surrounded by an I.R.A. bodyguard. During the night Liam Lynch visited the church and arranged to have the coffin opened so that he could see his old comrade for the last time. As the remains were being removed from the church word was received that a force of British military were guarding the bridge over the Blackwater on the funeral route to Kilcrumper. The Volunteers detailed as "Firing Party" then dumped arms for the time being and the funeral proceeded towards the bridge where there was a general hold-up and only a small number of people were allowed to pass the cordon. However, large numbers reached Kilcrumper via the Viaduct as I had done on the day of the Wesleyan raid and there was quite a good gathering at the burial in Kilcrumper where the graveyard was also surrounded by a strong force of military. After the burial the crowd dispersed and the military returned to barracks. Immediately following the withdrawal a firing party composed of John Fanning, Daithi Barry and witness (Paddy Ahern), who were armed with revolvers, proceeded to Kilcrumper and fired three volleys over the grave of their late Battalion O/C. They then

They then dumped their guns and returned home. This closed the activities for October 20th 1920.

Following the burial of Mick Fitzgerald I resumed my normal activities as Battalion Intelligence Officer and 2nd Lieut. Fermoy Company. In company with "Pa" Gallagher, John Fanning and other members of the company, I took part in a few raids for arms in early November about which time I was invited by George Power to join the Brigade Column. The Battalion O/C (Lar Condon) refused to release me so I was fated to carry on my normal activities within the company. I was, of course, sleeping away from home but on November 26th 1920 was arrested in the house of a friend during the course of a widespread raid by the enemy forces. I was detained for a few days in Fermoy and Kilworth Camp before finally being interned in Ballykinlar where I remained until the general release of internees, following the signing of the Treaty, on December 8th 1921.

My rank at the Truce was Battalion I.O. Fermoy Battalion while at the same time I acted as 2nd Lieut. Fermoy Company. The strength of the Company including prisoners and internees was about 120.

Signed: Patrick Aheron
Date: 3rd September 1954

Patrick Aheron

3rd Sept. 1954.

Witness: Phil O'Donnell.

Phil O'Donnell.

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
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