

W. S. 1,013

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
BURO STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21
No. W.S. 1013

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

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 1,013

Witness

Patrick Joseph McElligott,
Convent St.,
Listowel,
Co. Kerry.

Identity.

Member of I.R.B., Listowel, Co. Kerry, 1911 - ;
Member of Irish Vol's. do. 1914 - ;
Battalion O/C. later.

Subject.

National activities, Listowel, Co. Kerry,
1911-1921.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil

File No. S. 2527 .. .

1913

1914

1921

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STATEMENT OF PATRICK JOSEPH McELLIGOTT

Convent Rd., Listowel, Co. Kerry.

I was born on 21st March 1896 at Listowel. I went to ^{then} the local national school until I was 15 years of age. I was sent to St. Michael's secondary school, Listowel, for one year. After leaving St. Michael's I was apprenticed to the drapery trade in the business premises of Messrs. Moran's, Market St., Listowel.

While in the secondary school, I became a member of the I.R.B. It was in the year 1911. Michael Griffin, who was a schoolteacher, was the Centre at the time. Tim Walsh, Tom Walsh, a schoolteacher, and a Dan Connell were among the members of the I.R.B. at the time I joined.

There was nothing of any importance doing in Listowel at that time or until up to April 1914, when the Volunteers were formed from among the members of the I.R.B.

On the formation of the Volunteers a man named John L. O'Sullivan - an ex-British soldier, and a man named John Dore, became drill instructors. We drilled with wooden rifles from time to time up to the start of the 1914-18 war. Shortly afterwards about six or seven of the Volunteers who were on the British Army Reserve were called up. The strength of the company at this time was about 60 men.

After John Redmond's speech calling on the Volunteers to join the British army, a special meeting of the Volunteers was called at which the situation was discussed. It was discovered that out of the 60 men approximately in the company only five were in favour of accepting Redmond's proposals and these five men were among the officers.

A short time afterwards, in early 1915, a further meeting was held at which elections for new officers took place. A man named Morgan Sheehy was elected company captain, and a man named

John Tackaberry became 1st Lieut. We drilled and paraded with the wooden guns right up to the end of the year. In about September of this year we obtained delivery of about 35 guns known as Martini Henrys. We drilled and practised with these guns as well as the wooden guns and had practice shooting in the quarry at Gunsboro and in Ballybunion sandhills.

The usual parades and drilling continued in the Spring of 1916. Our company captain mobilised the company for a particular job one night about a week before the Easter Week of 1916. I was one of the few members of the company who was aware that this special mobilisation had been called for the purpose of marching to Tralee to take over the arms about to be landed on the south coast of Kerry. On this particular night we waited all through the night for final instructions which never came. The same position obtained during Easter Week. We received no instructions and were completely in the dark as to what was doing.

After Easter Week we were mobilised again by order of the battalion commandant, Paddy Landers, and instructed to take with us all arms and equipment in our possession. The mobilisation was held at the Market Square in Listowel. Landers order two Volunteers to fall out and collect the guns. Having collected the guns, the two Volunteers were then ordered to break the guns against the wall; this they refused to do. Landers, a blacksmith, a powerfully built man and a great bully, became very annoyed and beat up the two men, knocking them to the ground. He then proceeded to break up the guns himself. In the commotion which followed the beating up of the two men I, with eight other men, managed to slip away with nine rifles. Having broken the guns, Landers sent for the R.I.C. and handed over the stack of broken guns, at the same time informing the R.I.C. of the missing nine rifles. After some pressure, Landers in the course of a couple of weeks succeeded in

recovering six of the nine missing rifles. The other three were never recovered. Subsequently, the Volunteers were more afraid of Landers than the R.I.C. as he was constantly in touch with them.

For the remainder of the year 1916 the Volunteers remained very quiet, particularly on account of Landers's association with the R.I.C. He was very much in their company.

Early in 1917, at a special meeting called for the purpose, elections for new officers for the company took place. James Sugrue became company captain, Jack Tachaberry 1st Lieut. and Michael McElligott 2nd Lieut. At this meeting the men of the company demanded that the newly-elected officers would see to it that the battalion officer commanding, Paddy Landers, be removed from the post of battalion officer commanding.

The strength of the company at this time was 70 men. We drilled and paraded all during the year up to 9th October 1917, when a certain event took place which may be worth recording.

On the evening of 9th October a British soldier named Downey, home on leave, had been ejected from a publichouse as he was drunk and disorderly. As he was being removed by the R.I.C. to the barracks he resisted arrest, whereupon the R.I.C. beat him unmercifully. He was receiving such a beating that the local Volunteers came to his assistance. The R.I.C. blew their whistles and sent for reinforcements. A baton charge by the R.I.C. was replied to by the Volunteers using sticks and stones, the police being forced to withdraw some distance down the street. Further reinforcements of R.I.C. armed with rifles came on the scene. They opened fire over the heads of the Volunteers but this did not prevent the Volunteers attacking. The R.I.C. then opened fire into the Volunteers. The section of Volunteers of which I was in charge had been pushed back into the small square in the centre of the town. It was here

I received a bullet wound in the groin. After the shooting things quietened down. I was removed to a hospital where I was detained for six months. For the first two weeks I was under constant guard by the R. I. C.

While in hospital I was visited by Countess Markievicz who presented me with a gold tiepin with marble tricolour inset and a memorial card of Thomas Ashe on the back of which she had written "To a wounded fellow soldier, Patrick J. McElligott, from Countess Markievicz, I. R. A. 'Q. 12', Listowel, Oct. 21, 1917". I wish to present the card to the Bureau and would be glad of its acceptance (see Appendix A).

It was while I was in hospital in the early part of 1918 the threat of conscription was being resisted by the Volunteers throughout the county of Kerry and Ireland generally. As a result of the conscription threat the membership of the Listowel Company increased to 120 men. After the scare was over all of the new recruits left the company and had no more to do with the Volunteers.

After my release from hospital, which incidentally finished my career as a draper's assistant, I, with other men of the company, took part in a raid on all hardware shops in the town for shotguns, dynamite and ammunition. We succeeded in obtaining approximately 19 shotguns with ammunition for same, some small revolvers and a quantity of dynamite. A man named Jack McKenna, a shopkeeper who owned about 10 or 12 of the seized shotguns as well as the dynamite, when questioned by the R. I. C., would not give an account of the guns seized from him. He was arrested, tried and sentenced to twelve months imprisonment in Belfast Jail. Just after the arrest of McKenna my brother, Robert, and I received from a British ex-soldier a Lee Enfield rifle and 100 rounds of .303 ammunition.

Landers the battalion O/C. had charge of all this stuff. He took it to the forge where he was working and buried it in

the floor of the forge without any protection whatever. The shotguns, ammunition and dynamite were just dumped in a hole in the ground. Years afterwards his boss, Jack McKenna, unearthed it while excavating in the area for the erection of a new premises.

For some time prior to May 1918, negotiations had been taking place between the townspeople and the representatives of Lord Listowel for the possession of two plots of ground totalling about 35 acres known locally as "The Lawn" the property of Lord Listowel. The townspeople wanted this land, which was adjacent to the town, for a cow park and tillage plots. The plots had been let by Lord Listowel on the eleven months system to two men named Keane and Kenny. The negotiations failed, so the local Volunteers decided to assemble with all the horses and ploughs available, totalling 40 teams, for the purpose of ploughing up "The Lawn".

When the Volunteers with the horses and ploughs had assembled at the gates leading to "The Lawn" it was discovered that the military had arrived before them and were posted around the walls and trees within "The Lawn" and that the gates had been locked.

Seeing the situation, Keane and Kenny, the eleven months tenants, surrendered their rights to the Volunteers. Having done so, they approached the officer in charge of the military and explained the situation. When the officer considered the position he decided it was a case for the Courts and withdrew his men from the walls and gates, whereupon the Volunteers entered "The Lawn" and proceeded to plough it up. To this day the people of the town enjoy the facility of "The Lawn" as a cow park and for tillage plots.

It was after this incident that Landers was removed as Battalion O/C. and Jim Sugrue was appointed in his place. Michael McElligott, also known as "Pikie" McElligott, then

became company captain of Listowel while Jack Tackaberry remained 1st Lieutenant, and my brother, Robert McElligott, became 2nd Lieutenant.

Here in Kerry we had no hand in the General Election at the end of the year due to unopposed return of the Sinn Fein candidate - James Crowley - who was then serving a sentence in Belfast Jail. We drilled and paraded all that year.

All through the year 1919 the local Volunteers, apart from drilling in secret, were engaged in organising Sinn Fein Courts and obstruction the R.I.C. in any way possible from carrying out duties such as serving summonses and Court Orders.

I, with other members of the company, at the end of the year, took part in collecting shotguns from farmers and others in the area. My brother, Robert, and I held the majority of these guns and were responsible for their maintenance. In March 1920, the Battalion O/C. and staff decided to attack and, if possible, to take Ballybunion R.I.C. Barracks. Selected men of the Listowel, Ballydonohue, Ballybunion and Asdee companies were ordered to assemble in Ballybunion at a certain point. My brother, a man named Stack, Michael McElligott and myself were selected from the Listowel Company.

The attack had been planned by the battalion staff. I was armed with a rifle. In all, there were fifteen men armed with rifles and ten with either shotguns or revolvers. While we were in Ballybunion, all roads leading to the town were blocked and trenched by the various companies in the neighbourhood.

The attacking party was divided into four sections. Jim Sugrue was in charge. The section to which I belonged occupied a position behind a "dry" wall on the Listowel side of Clarke's publichouse which was directly opposite the barracks. My brother, who was 2nd Lieut. of Listowel Company, was in charge of my section. The second section occupied Clarke's publichouse. Another, or third, section occupied Beazley's House to the left

or east side of the barracks. Sugrue, the man in charge, was with this section, while the fourth section occupied a house immediately adjoining the barracks at the back.

Just as we were all in position one of the R.I.C. came to the door of the barracks, got suspicious and shut the door at once. Immediately the R.I.C. opened fire on our positions to which we replied. Just then some rifle grenades exploded in my section's position. A short time after Sugrue gave the order to retire. The whole encounter did not last ten minutes.

After this incident, on the following day, Sugrue resigned and my brother, Robert, was appointed Battalion O/C. in his place. "Pikie" McElligott remained O/C. Listowel Company; Jack Tackaberry remained 1st Lieutenant, and I was appointed 2nd Lieutenant, in my brother's place.

In the month of May 1920, a number of I.R.A. from Ballydonohue Company lay in ambush for a sergeant and two members of the R.I.C. at Gale Bridge, Listowel, for the purpose of disarming them of their revolvers. They were called on to put their hands up; they refused and attempted to draw their revolvers. The I.R.A. opened fire with the result that the sergeant whose name was McKenna was shot dead while the other two R.I.C. were slightly wounded. The I.R.A. succeeded in taking their revolvers.

After the shooting of Sergeant McKenna at Gale Bridge the R.I.C. became very active in the town and were reinforced by British military who stayed in the R.I.C. Barracks for a time, ^{later} but/took over Dr. Michael O'Connor's house in the Square.

A couple of weeks after the arrival of the military some of the R.I.C. - about five - refused to carry out further duties and later resigned. It was shortly after this that the first Tans arrived in Listowel.

Soon after the arrival of the Tans a large number of the best I.R.A. men in the area were arrested, mostly in their own homes

which showed that the enemy intelligence was first-class. One of the men arrested at this time was our company captain "Pikie" McElligott. When arrested, McElligott had in his possession plans and details for a proposed attack on Listowel R.I.C. Barracks. For this he was sentenced to penal servitude. After a term in Brixton and other prisons, he was eventually sent to Wormwood Scrubbs Prison. After the arrest of "Pikie" McElligott, Stephen Barrett was appointed company captain of Listowel. I became 1st Lieutenant, while a man named Alfie Stack became 2nd Lieutenant.

After this we had to be very careful. Our members were dwindling through arrests. Many of our men had received beatings in the streets by the Tans, the result being that it was not easy to find members to attend meetings. A young student named John Lawlor, home on leave at this time, was beaten to death in the street by the Tans with the butts of their rifles.

About this time the military in their raids through the country started carrying hostages whom they brought out with them for safety. One of the men who was taken as a hostage at the period was a man named Denis Quille. He was not a member of the I.R.A. After being taken as a hostage for the second time, he left his job as a solicitor's clerk in the town and went to live in the country.

In the autumn of this year I with others of the company took part in holding up trains coming in from Limerick on one side and Tralee on the other, in an endeavour to prevent the supply of English bacon and clothing reaching their destination. This action caused a lot of annoyance and bad feeling among the trades people of the town towards the I.R.A. The enemy, of course, took a very serious view of the matter and intensified their raids and searches.

On the 31st October of this year, the Ballyduff Company carried out an attack on Ballyduff R.I.C. Barracks. On the night of this attack I was in charge of an armed party near the crossroads at Scotlee on the principal road leading to Ballyduff. It is about one and a half miles from Listowel. I was armed with a rifle. In all, I had twelve men that night armed with shotguns or revolvers. Another man, apart from myself, had a rifle. Our job was to prevent reinforcements reaching Ballyduff R.I.C. Barracks. Other men of the Listowel Company were engaged this night trenching roads and felling trees to prevent the passage of enemy forces.

We took up positions on either side of the road and waited no reinforcements arrived. After about an hour and a half we received word that the attack which had lasted about an hour was over, so we disbanded and went home.

In the attack on Ballyduff R.I.C. Barracks, one R.I.C. was killed and four wounded. The I.R.A. did not succeed in capturing the barracks.

In December of this year the flying column for Kerry No. 1, or North Kerry Brigade, was formed. It was mostly composed of men who were 'on the run' or had to leave home. Tom Kennelly, who was Battalion O/C. of the Lixnaw Battalion, became O/C. of the Column. In all we had 30⁰ men in the Column. At this stage, Denis Quille became a member of the Volunteers and was one of the men taken into the column. He had been living in the country for some time previously and had not taken any active part in the I.R.A. movement up to then. The reason I mention this fact is that Quille, after hostilities were over, claimed that he had been a member of the I.R.A. for some years previous to December 1920, and, in fact, claimed to have been O/C. of the Column when formed.

Early in January an order was received from Brigade H.Q. by the Battalion Staff that an R.I.C. man named

O'Sullivan who had been promoted from the rank of sergeant to that of District Inspector, and who had been transferred from Kilmallock to Listowel, was to be executed. Sullivan had been responsible for the shooting of a Kerry man named Liam Scully in an attack by the I.R.A. on Kilmallock R. I. C. barracks. Scully, who had taken part in the attack on Kilmallock Barracks, was a Gaelic teacher.

The Battalion C/C. - my brother Robert - instructed me to have O'Sullivan shadowed and to observe his movements and general routine. I supplied a detailed account of O'Sullivan's movements to my brother who planned the execution which was carried out by four members of the flying column named Jack Ahern, Con Brosnan, Dan Grady and Jack Sheehan on the 20th January 1921.

My brother, during the attack, was on the opposite side of the street armed with a revolver. He was there to see that the job was done, or to carry out the job himself if for any reason the men appointed for the job failed.

After the execution had been successfully carried out by the men appointed, my brother quietly went into a nearby house passed out through the back and passed his revolver to an I.R.A. man named Phil McElligott who was working in a nearby timber yard or saw mills. My brother was able to proceed home and was not molested by the Tans in their subsequent 'hold-ups' and searching in the town. There was no suspicion whatever of him. Curfew was imposed on the town and surrounding district immediately after O'Sullivan's death.

A couple of days after the incident my brother went into the R. I. C. barracks for a permit for a long distance drive in his hackney car - he was a hackney proprietor. He obtained the permit without any trouble.

The officers of the Listowel or 6th Battalion at this time were Robert McElligott O/C., William Sullivan Vice O/C., Jack Whelan Adjutant, Dick Woulfe Q.M., and Tim Walsh, I.O.

A month or so afterwards my brother attended a brigade meeting at Derrymore. Early the following morning, I subsequently learned, he was returning from the meeting accompanied by three other members of the brigade staff - Paddy Garvey, Tim Kennedy and Mick Fleming on bicycles. They stopped at a crossroads where Garvey and my brother parted with the other two men. Garvey and my brother were proceeding along the road towards their destination when they saw, a very short distance away, a cycle corps of military approaching. The military, it appears, opened fire and my brother fell, having received several bullet wounds. Garvey was not hit but was arrested. My brother was taken by military into Ballymullen Barracks, Tralee. I afterwards heard that he was alive when taken to the barracks. The military notified my mother almost immediately. She contacted me, so I went into the barracks at Ballymullen posing as a relative. When I saw him he was dead. This was on 20th February 1921.

I would not be accepted as a relative as they wanted my mother to call and identify the body. I did not delay very long but got out as soon as I could. I had only just left when the alarm was given and an intensive search started for me in the town of Tralee. I got shelter in the house of a man named Sheehan - a railway inspector who lived in Rock Street, Tralee. Early next morning I succeeded in leaving Tralee and went back to my mother in Listowel where I made arrangements for the funeral. The remains were taken from the barracks to St. John's Parish Church, Tralee, and later were removed by train to Listowel.

At the funeral, which I could not attend, the people attending were rounded up, abused, searched and beaten. The

wreaths, numbering 40, which had been placed on the grave, were taken out on the public road and broken up by the Tans.

The death of my brother Robert had a very bad effect on the morale of the I. R. A. in Listowel and North Kerry generally. They lost heart and it was impossible to get anyone of them, especially in Listowel, to take any further active part in the fight.

After the death of my brother I was appointed Battalion O/C. in his place. In the Listowel area the company captain, Stephen Barratt, was on sick leave. The 2nd Lieut. - Stack - was useless and ceased to take any further active part. The result was that I had to carry the entire responsibility for the Listowel area as well as carrying out the duties of Battalion O/C. When I was appointed Battalion O/C. William Sullivan was the Vice O/C., John Linnane was adjutant, Dick Woulfe was Q.M. and Tim Walsh was I. O.

I first of all appointed a man named Patrick Enright as acting captain in Listowel. A day or two afterwards Enright's sister, Margaret, called on my mother, abused and threatened her that she (Margaret) would tell the Tans of my activities and would get the house burned down if I did not let her brother Patrick leave the Volunteers. I could do nothing but drop Enright at once as my house had been wrecked by continuous raids by this time. This threw the responsibility back on me again so I had to carry on as best I could.

I next called company meetings for each area in the battalion which numbered eleven. The company areas were Tarbert, Behins, Bedford, Finuge, Newtownsandes, Listowel, Knockanure, Beale, Duagh, Ballylongford and Asdee. I could find no active men in the Tarbert area and on the night of the supposed meeting nobody turned up. In the other company areas all the arms they possessed were a few shotguns in each.

In each area I ordered the intensive blocking and trenching of roads in pothole style so as to keep up the morale of the men which was very low at this time. This action restored confidence in nearly all the areas.

Shortly after this, about the end of March or early April, an order was received from the Brigade O/C., Paddy Cahill, that each battalion area was to form its own flying column with a strength of 15 men to each column. The battalion O/C. to be O/C. of column in each case. I automatically became O/C. of the Listowel or 6th Battalion column. Tom Kennelly remained O/C. of the Lixnaw or 3rd Battalion column.

The men in my column were Tom Carmody, Mick McNamara, Brian Grady and Con Dee of Ballylongford; Jack Ahern, Con Brosnan, Dannie Grady and Jack Sheehan of Newtownsandess; Denis Quille, Martin Quille, Patrick Dalton and Jack Linnane of Listowel; Patrick Murphy of Ennismore; Gerry Lyons and Christy Broderick of Duagh.

On 6th April 1921, from Newtownsandess I took three men of my column into Tarbert for the purpose of finding out the position there. I could not meet any one of the Tarbert Company. As we arrived at the corner of the village street we saw a Tan leaving a publichouse and racing for the barracks. He had obviously been informed of our presence in the village. We fired about two rounds each at the Tan. He was wounded but succeeded in reaching the barracks. We were armed with rifles. When the Tan got inside, fire was opened from the barracks. We then heard machine gun fire on our left and assumed that the Marines on nearby Tarbert Island were joining in the fight. Although this place is called the Island, it is not an island in the proper sense. It is about a couple of acres in extent situated in the River Shannon and connected to the mainland on the Kerry side by a public road. We thought it best to get out and were lucky to get away that night as

the people of Tarbert were in the main opposed to us. Tarbert always had been the home of retired army colonels and loyalists generally.

When we had left Newtownsandee for Tarbert, the remainder of the column left there for Duagh. On their way, via Kilmorna, they received information that a British army patrol was on its way to Listowel from Sir Arthur Vickers's house in Kilmorna. Military parties were frequent visitors there and were entertained by Vickers on many occasions. With the column on this occasion was a man named Michael Galwin, who belonged to the Lixnaw or No. 3 Battalion.

The column, on the spur of the moment, decided to attack this patrol. They took up positions on one side of the road which the patrol would have to pass. The road at the point where they took up positions was below the level of the adjoining ground on one side, but was level with the ground on the opposite side. The column had just occupied positions on the higher side when two leading advance guard soldiers appeared on bicycles. The I.R.A. opened fire, wounding both, and had succeeded in capturing one of the rifles when the main body of the patrol appeared and at the same time opened fire on the ambush position. Michael Galwin was killed and fell back into a drain. The column was compelled to retreat under heavy fire. One of the British officers - a Captain Smyth - was slightly wounded in the engagement.

Curfew was still in force in the town of Listowel and surrounding districts at this time. On the night of 9th April 1921, an ex-British soldier named Lyons appeared in the street after curfew hours. I was informed that he was under the influence of drink. A Tan patrol shot him dead on the spot and afterwards discovered that he was one of their own.

Shortly after the shooting of Lyons I received information that Sir Arthur Vickers was a spy and that his house - Kilmorna

House - known locally as the 'Great House' was being taken over by the military as a 'Block House'. If this happened Abbeyfeale and the surrounding areas of Duagh, Knockanure and Newtownsandes would have been in danger.

I issued an order to Jim Costello, company captain of Duagh, in whose area the 'Great House' was located, for the execution of Vickers and the burning down of the 'Great House'. The order was duly carried out by men of the Duagh Company under Jim Costello. The two men who actually carried out the execution of Vickers were named Michael Langan and Michael Sheehy. None of the men in the column took part in this operation.

Around the same time I received information that the Listowel Library and a mansion in Taunaculla, which was known as Cook's, were being taken over by the military. I issued orders for their destruction by burning. This order was carried out by the Listowel members of the column.

I reported each of the above three burnings and the execution of Sir Arthur Vickers to the Brigade O/C. after they had been carried out.

Early in May I was instructed by the Brigade O/C. to disband the column. I issued instructions to the men that they were to proceed to their own company areas in twos and to keep off all public roads and away from towns and villages and not to show themselves in public. About the same time that I was instructed to disband the column, I received another message to attend a Brigade meeting at Derrymore, Tralee. One of the men of the column named Paddy Walsh accompanied me part of the way. At E. Walshe's of Drumferris, Ballybunion, we had a narrow escape having just left the main road as four lorry loads of Tans passed by on their way from Ballybunion. Paddy Walsh left me here and went to Athea with the object, I presume, of meeting Paddy Dalton of the

column who belonged to the Athea area. I procured a boat and crossed the Cashin River to Ballyduff, proceeded via Ballyheigue to Kilfenora across Tralee Bay by boat, accompanied by Michael Moriarty of Banna Strand, who was the boatman, and eventually contacted the Brigade staff at Derrymore.

The meeting had been called for the 9th or 10th May. Cahill, in the meantime, had received information that the military were to travel from Dingle to Tralee and a decision had been taken to ambush the train at Camp railway station. We took up positions around the station and in the station itself. When the train had come to a standstill in the station we discovered that the military had not travelled as expected. I inquired from a traveller in the train - a man named McAuley from Listowel - if he had seen any military on the train. He informed me that the military had come to Dingle railway station all right, but that for some reason or other they did not board the train.

After this we had to disperse and lie low for a few days as we were afraid our presence in the area was known to the enemy. Some days afterwards, however, the Brigade meeting was held in the mountains above Derrymore in the Castlegregory direction.

When the meeting was over Cahill told me that Jim Sugrue, our one time battalion commandant, was in his home town of Cahirciveen. Sugrue had been in Cahirciveen for some time subsequent to his resignation as Battalion O/C. Cahill asked me to take him back to Listowel. I agreed and asked Cahill to have him at the next brigade meeting which had been called for a fortnight later.

After leaving me and going to Athea, Paddy Walsh met Paddy Dalton. They both attended a mission in the local Parish Church that night. The following day they left

together for Paddy Walsh's area, Gunsboro. When they reached Gurtaglanna Bridge on their way to Gunsboro, they met two other members of the Column - Con Dee and Jerry Lyons. The four men sat on the bridge chatting. This bridge is down in a valley on the public road. While the four men were engaged in conversation a convoy of Tans in four or five lorries approached from Listowel, Gurtaglanna Bridge being on the main road from Listowel to Athea. The four I.R.A. were surrounded immediately. They were dressed in the breeches and leggings worn at the time by men in our column. They were taken into a field, searched and questioned. When Dee was searched his British army discharge papers were found on him. Walsh, Dalton and Lyons were then stripped and practically beaten to death. The four men were then taken out of the field and thrown into separate lorries and taken about a mile along the road towards Listowel. The lorries were then stopped, the prisoners taken out and placed inside a ditch. Four Tans lay on the ditch with rifles pointed directly at the four prisoners. The field to the back of the prisoners covered an area of ten to fifteen acres. The Tans fired point blank. Walsh, Dalton and Lyons fell dead. Dee turned and ran through the open field and escaped all injury except for a slight flesh wound. He did not rejoin the column after this. The murder of the three prisoners - Walsh, Dalton and Lyons, took place on 11th May 1921.

A fortnight later I attended another Brigade meeting at Derrymore, Tralee. Cahill, after the meeting, handed over to me James Sugrue. I took him back to Listowel and into the column. At this time Walsh, Dalton and Lyons had been murdered. Jack Ahern and Con Brosnan were on the sick list and Patrick Murphy had not returned to the column which by now had reassembled.

On 25th May 1921, I took the column once again into

Tarbert to attack a Tan patrol there. Immediately we had taken up positions in the village our presence was known to the Tans. They, from the barracks, opened fire with machine guns, to which we replied. We all had rifles and fired only a few shots each. At the same time the Marines came on the scene and opened fire. We retreated immediately and made for the Ballylongford area.

About a week later we decided to attack a Tan patrol in the village of Ballylongford. We were all armed with rifles and had taken up positions in laneways and side streets in the village awaiting the usual Tan patrol to emerge from the barracks. The patrol usually left the barracks at about 8 p.m. and paraded the streets for a couple of hours. We remained in our positions for over two hours but no patrol appeared in the village that night. We then moved up towards the barracks. We knew it could not be taken, but we opened fire at random on it for about half an hour to which the Tans replied with machine gun and rifle fire. We then withdrew and moved to Inchamore, Newtownsandee. This was always a safe area and was generally free from enemy surprise.

One of our men, Jack Sheehan, as soon as we got to Inchamore, asked me for permission to visit his mother at home in Coilbwee. This place is only about $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles from where we were staying. I gave him permission with the usual caution to keep off public roads. After seeing his mother, his brother conveyed him part of the way along the public road; they had been in conversation a short time at a bridge when they saw a convoy of lorry loads of Tans and military approach. Sheehan jumped behind a low fence and ran for a nearby bog, while his brother slipped behind a ditch on the other side and escaped. When the Tans saw Sheehan running they opened fire and he fell dead. Sheehan was killed on 26th May 1921.

The death of Sheehan now left us seven men short in the column. Apart from this our ammunition was very low. Listowel at this time became a great worry, nobody in the company had either the energy or the inclination to accept responsibility as Company Captain. I approached two men - Ned Browne and John Whelan - to take on the job. Both appeared to be very nervous and refused to accept responsibility. I then got into contact with a woman who used to work in the R.I.C. barracks as a cleaner. I had previously got from her some ammunition. I urged her to make a special effort to supply some more ammunition. On the following evening she handed me 50 rounds of .303 rifle ammunition. This would be about the end of May or early June.

Just then the column decided to travel through the battalion area staying a night or two in each company area for the purpose of encouraging the morale of the local Volunteers. About this time I received information from the battalion I.O. - Tim Walsh - that an ex-sergeant of the R.I.C. named Keane, who was living in the Square, Listowel, was a spy. He had been going to people in the town and to country people making inquiries as to the movements of the flying column. Keane was an Inspector of Fisheries at this time, but at this period he never travelled far from the town.

We had his movements watched. He was under observation for a week when, one day, he went to the salmon weir on the River Flale, which was situated to the south side of Listowel. Two Volunteers, who were waiting for him, arrested him, took him down the bank of the river to Finue about three miles distant and handed him over to the Finue company. The Finue company brought him to the flying column who executed him on 14th June 1921. This man had been previously courtmartialled and sentenced to death for being a spy. At the time, the Brigade O/C. did not consider there was sufficient evidence

to justify his execution. I again reported the matter to Cahill, who subsequently sanctioned the execution.

A short time after the execution of Keane, I accepted on the column Donald Bill O'Sullivan of Derry, Listowel, and later took on Dan Enright and Tim O'Sullivan from the town of Listowel.

From this to the eve of the Truce there was very little activity in the area. On the day before the eve of the Truce I received a dispatch to report to Brigade H.Q. at Camp, Tralee, on 10th July, with full kit. Camp, Tralee, was at least 25 miles from the place where I was billeted when I received the dispatch.

When I reached Brigade H.Q. I was an hour late, but there was a horse and trap waiting there to take me to Castleisland where an ambush of a Tan patrol had been suddenly planned by the Brigade staff. When I arrived at Castleisland, I was informed that the Brigade staff had already taken up ambush positions and that the attack was actually in progress. I could not join my comrades in the circumstances so I retreated to a farmer's house where I remained for some days to attend the funerals of four of our men who were killed in the ambush that night.

Before I had left for Brigade H.Q. at Camp, I left instructions to Johnny Linnane to take in a few of the column to Tarbert on the eve of the Truce to ambush a Tan patrol there.

Linnane took a few men with him to Tarbert, who took up positions in the town near a publichouse frequented by the Tans. As the Tans - about four or five in number - were leaving the pub, our men opened fire. The Tans did not reply but ran for the barracks. Two of the Tans were wounded, but they succeeded in reaching the barracks. Fire was then opened from the barracks and our men then retreated.

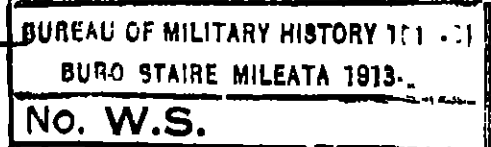
Subsequently I joined the National Army and helped organise it. I formed a company in Listowel and occupied the old Workhouse. I held my rank as Battalion Commandant in the army and resigned in September 1923.

Signed: Patrick J. McElligott
(Patrick J. McElligott)

Date: 24.9.54

24. 9. '54.

Witness: John J. Daly
(John J. Daly)



SUPPLEMENTARY STATEMENT OF PATRICK JOSEPH McELLIOTT,
Convent St., Listowel, Co. Kerry.

(a) Sir Arthur Vicars was a step-brother of Pierce Mahony of Co. Wicklow, one-time Member of Parliament, who represented a constituency in Ireland in the House of Commons. He (Vicars) was Keeper of the Crown Jewels at Dublin Castle some time previous to 1914 and, at the same time, was Ulster King-at-Arms. He was a large landowner in North Kerry.

(b) Vicars usually made enquiries from his land stewards and tenants of the estate in regard to the movements of the Flying Column. British military officers were constantly being entertained by Vicars at Kilmorna House. During these period of entertainment, a guard of soldiers or patrol usually surrounded the house. The patrol went round the locality in large groups and usually took up look-out positions at different points on the estate. Kilmorna estate, being on a hill, commanded a full view of the countryside. It was after the death of a member of the Flying Column, whose name was Michael Galvin, during an attack by the Column on one of those military parties, that the Column came to the conclusion that Vicars had informed this particular military party of the presence of a section of the Column in Kilmorna. Kilmorna was the principal run for the Column between Knockanure and Duagh areas.

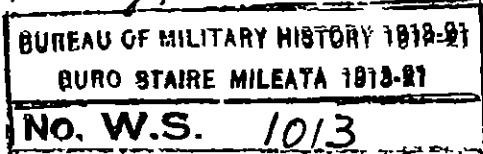
In addition to the foregoing, I received

information that Kilmorna House, which contained approximately ninety rooms, was being handed over as a block-house to the military.

(c) The authority of G.H.Q. was not sought or given for the execution, the reason being that there was no time to consult Brigade Headquarters or General Headquarters. I was compelled to take immediate action to have the house destroyed, in view of the information which I had received that the house was being occupied by the military. Our intention was to arrest Vicars and have him tried. He refused to come out, and was running from room to room, armed with a revolver. The house was then set on fire; he rushed out through a side window.

(d) As he rushed out on to the lawn, he was shot dead by two of our men. He was not taken prisoner. There was no form of trial in the circumstances.

SIGNED: Patrick J. McGilgott
DATE: 8th February, 1955



WITNESS: John J. Saly

Appendix 'A'

THE IRISH VOLUNTEERS.



In Loving Memory

—OF—

THOMAS ASHE,

WHO DIED FOR IRELAND,

During his term of imprisonment in Mountjoy Prison,

ON SEPTEMBER 23, 1917.

R. I. P.

Compassionate Lord Jesus, grant him eternal rest.
Our Lady of Perpetual Succour pray for him.

Let me Carry Your Cross for Ireland, Lord!

Let me carry your Cross for Ireland, Lord!
The hours of my trial draw a near
And the pangs and the pain of the sacrifice
May be borne by comrades dear
But, Lord, take me from the offering through
There are many far less prepared
Though anxious and all as they are to die
That Ireland may be spared.

Let me carry your Cross for Ireland, Lord!
My cares in this world are few
And few are the tears will fall for me
When I go on my way to you
Spare, Oh spare to their loved ones dear
The brother and son and sire
That the cause that we love may never die
In the land of our heart's desire.

Let me carry your Cross for Ireland, Lord
Let me carry the pain and shame
I bow my head to the Frank and Brit
And I take on myself the blame
Let them do with my body what as they will
My spirit I offer to you
That the faithful we hold and her call
May be spared to remain here.

Let me carry your Cross for Ireland, Lord!
For Ireland weak with tears,
For the aged man of the clouded brow,
And the child of tender years,
For the empty homes of the sudden plagues,
For the hopes of her future years,
Let me carry your Cross for Ireland, Lord!
For the cause of Erin dear.

THOMAS ASHE,
MOUNTJOY PRISON.

To a wounded fellow soldier
Patrick W. Elligott from
~~Company~~ de Markham, I.R.A.

"G. R." Lintowl Oct 21 1917.
