

W.S. 1,199

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
BURO STAIRÉ MILÉATA 1913-21
No. W.S. 1199

ROINN  COSANTA.

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

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 1,199.....

Witness

Patrick J. Power,
2 Galtymore Park,
Drimnagh,
Dublin.

Identity.

Battalion Q.M. West Waterford;
Staff Officer, West Waterford Brigade.

Subject.

Ardmore Company Irish Volunteers,
Co. Waterford, 1913 - ;
Stradbally Company do. West
Waterford, 1918-1923.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil

File No. S.2496.....

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21	1199
BURÓ STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21	
No. W.S.	1199

STATEMENT BY PATRICK J. POWER

2, Galtymore Park, Drimnagh, Dublin.

I was born in Glen, Stradbally, Co. Waterford; my people belonged to the farming class.

At an early age I went to live at Glen William, Old Parish Co. Waterford, and when the Volunteers were started in Ardmore, Co. Waterford, about the year 1913, I joined the local company.

We had upwards of 25 men in the company, the captain of which was a man named Micheal Ó Foghludha. All the guns we had were wooden ones. They were used in drilling and general training.

When John Redmond, then the leader of the Irish Party in the British House of Commons, offered the services of the Volunteers to England during the early part of the 1914-18 World War, our company of Volunteers broke up. Some took no further interest in the Volunteer movement and some listened to Redmond's advice and joined the British army. I was one of those who didn't bother any further with the Volunteers.

In 1918, I returned to my place of birth at Glen, Stradbally, Co. Waterford, and about that time, my late brother, Ned, along with Pat Keating of Comeragh, had organised a company of Irish Volunteers in the Stradbally district. Pat Keating was then employed in the Co-operative Creamery at Durrrow, Co. Waterford, a few miles north of Stradbally. Pat was subsequently killed in action fighting against the British at The Burgery, Dungarvan, Co. Waterford, 19th March 1921.

I joined the local company of Volunteers in which my brother Ned was captain, and took part in the usual company activities. We drilled and trained a few nights a week and, as the arms position was bad, we raided many houses of the local gentry and also those known to be unsympathetic to the republican movement.

These raids took place at night. They were usually carried out by four or five of us with Pat Keating, or my brother in charge. Pat used carry a revolver, but there was never any need to use it. Any guns in the houses we visited were usually handed up without much trouble. We got quite a few shotguns and guns of a sporting type in these raids. I recollect getting a Winchester repeating rifle in the house of a man named Flahavan in Kilmacthomas. We also raided the mails and held up a mail train at Carroll's Cross midway between Kilmacthomas and Stradbally. These mails were examined for correspondence going to British forces or R.I.C. men. Such correspondence was passed on to brigade headquarters.

Brown's Pike Ambush.

My first engagement with enemy forces took place in, so far as I can remember, September 1920. The venue was a place called Brown's Pike, which is about three miles west of the town of Dungarvan and on the main road from Cappoquin to Dungarvan. It was late in the afternoon, when about ten of us took up ambush positions overlooking the road and close to a railway level crossing. George Lennon was in charge. Most of us were armed with shotguns and, so far as I can remember, there were three or four rifles in the party.

Earlier that day, we had received word that a lorry of R.I.C. and Black and Tans had passed out that road going in the direction of Cappoquin; the idea was to ambush these on their return journey to Dungarvan.

It would be late in the evening - I remember it was dusk when our scouts reported the approach of the enemy from Cappoquin. The level crossing gates were then closed to prevent the passage of the lorry. When the enemy came within range, we opened up with heavy shotgun and rifle fire and I think that one of our lads chucked a bomb at the lorry. We had hoped to get the driver with out first burst of fire,

but, apparently, we didn't, because the lorry accelerated, crashed through the level crossing gates and made off with all speed towards Dungarvan. The Tans and R.I.C. made an attempt to return our fire but none of our lads was hit.

The British must have suffered casualties in this clash as our position overlooked them and made them quite a good target, but I cannot give any idea as to what casualties we actually did inflict, as the action was over very quickly.

It was late in October 1920 when the active service unit of the West Waterford Brigade was formed with George Lennon as O/C. There were about 15 or 20 men in the column and I joined them when it was formed. Mick Mansfield was Vice O/C. Pat Keating, Jim Prendergast, George Kiely, Bernard McCarthy, Andrew Kirwan and Ned Power (Glen) were amongst the first members. About half of the column was armed with rifles; the remainder had shotguns. There were also about half a dozen revolvers amongst us.

The column had its base, usually, at Comeragh, which is on the eastern foothills of the Comeragh Mountains. This position was particularly suitable because of the protection afforded by the mountain district into which we could, and did, retire with safety when hard-pressed by much superior enemy forces. The Comeragh area also had the advantage of enabling us to see the military moving down in the lower ground, especially at night, when the light from their lorries could be easily seen.

Piltown Cross Ambush - Kinsalebeg.

It was on the 1st November 1920, when we had our first successful clash with British forces at a crossroads at Piltown about 8 miles south west of Dungarvan on the road to Youghal, Co. Cork. All the men on the column were engaged under George Lennon, the column O/C. In addition, men of the local companies took part in scouting and blocking of roads in the vicinity. A number of these men also took part in the action as shotgun men.

To draw out the military from Youghal, an attack was made on Ardmore R.I.C. Barracks, about 5 miles east of Youghal, and also on the Marine Station at Ardmore. There were about 20 R.I.C. men in Ardmore and, approximately, 30 Marines in the Marine Station. We were in position at Piltown Cross, about 8 p.m. on the night in question, and, at about the same time, a few of our lads who had gone into Ardmore - four miles to the south west - flung a couple of bombs at the R.I.C. Barracks. The local I.R.A. company in Ardmore continued firing at the barracks and commenced sniping the Marine Station with the idea of giving the garrisons the impression that an assault might be made by what would appear to be a large well-armed body of I.R.A.

Leaving the local men to continue the engagement with the barracks and Marine Station, the A.S.U. men returned to Piltown Cross and reported to George Lennon what was happening.

As expected, the British in Ardmore began sending up Verey lights for help and, about 10 o'clock, our scouts reported enemy activity in Youghal.

It would be, maybe, an hour or so later when our scouts reported enemy lorries proceeding in the direction of the ambush position held by us. The night was a dark one and, with a view to halting any British cars approaching Piltown Cross, a trench was cut in the road and a tree felled near it, making a very effective road block right at the spot which suited us best for the attack. We had men lining the hedges at both sides of the road near the road block and also on high ground about 40 yards further away.

It would be somewhere about 11 p.m. when the lights of a British lorry laden with soldiers ran into the road block. Immediately, heavy rifle and shotgun fire was directed at it. The first salvo killed the driver of the lorry and it was obvious from the sounds coming from the soldiers that some had

been wounded. The military tried to get out of the lorry and escape in the darkness. Some of them returned our fire from the lorry, but it was obvious they were in a state of panic. After about ten minutes or so, a lull came in the firing from the British side and it was then that some of our officers - George Lennon, Mick Mansfield and Pat Keating - got out on to the road and called on the soldiers to surrender. They did so, and about 30 of them were lined up on the road-side and disarmed.

So far as I can remember, they lost two killed and a half dozen or so wounded. We rendered first aid to their wounded as best we could and, before we left the scene, George Lennon, our O/C., got a horse and dray to enable the British to take their dead and wounded back to Youghal.

In the Piltown ambush we captured about 30 rifles and a large quantity of ammunition and general equipment.

We moved off after the ambush across country towards Comeragh, about 15 miles to the east, each man carrying some of the captured enemy arms and equipment. En route to Comeragh we met up with the column transport officer, Andy Kirwan of Bonmahon, who had a car. He helped to take a lot of the captured stuff back to Comeragh.

We lay low in the Comeragh district for some time after the Piltown ambush. The enemy were raiding for us in force all over the country; but they failed to locate us.

The principal effect of the successful fight at Piltown was that the column was now entirely armed with rifles and had a fairly good supply of ammunition per man.

Tramore Ambush.

It was on 7th January 1921, that I was informed that we were to proceed to Tramore, Co. Waterford, to help the East Waterford Brigade, under Paddy Paul, the O/C., in an ambush planned to take place near that town. Our column - about

eighteen in all - left the Ballylaneen, Stradbally, district in West Waterford in three cars about 8 p.m. and reached the vicinity of the Metal Bridge, about a mile east of Tramore and on the main Tramore-Waterford road, about an hour or so later. Andy Kirwan of Bonmahon drove one of the cars; 'Nipper' McCarthy of Dungarvan, another. I forget who drove the third one. George Lennon was in charge of our lads; Mick Mansfield was second in charge. Pax Whelan, O/C. West Waterford Brigade, was also there that night and probably he, and not George Lennon, took over command of our party.

When we arrived at Tramore, most of our lads were placed in position on a high road overlooking the Metal Bridge on its western (Tramore) side. The East Waterford men were in positions on high ground overlooking the eastern (Waterford city) side of the bridge. I should state that this bridge carried the railway line over the main Waterford-Tramore road.

About 30 yards on the Tramore side of the Metal Bridge a road block was constructed and I, with Jack Kirwan of Bonmahon, Michael Walsh of Durrow, Co. Waterford, and another man, whose name I forget, was inside a fence right beside the road block. We were facing the Metal Bridge and were about 30 yards from it. First of all, it was arranged to fire a few shots at the R.I.C. in Tramore Barracks. The R.I.C. would then send up Verey lights for help, as was usually done, and probably 'phone to the nearest military barracks - in this case Waterford City - for assistance. The telephone wires were not interfered with that night by our men. When the military came out from Waterford city, their lorries were to be allowed to run up to barricade at the Tramore side of the Metal Bridge without a shot being fired by Paddy Paul's men on the Waterford city side of the bridge. My instructions were to 'get' the driver or drivers of the lorries nearest to the barricade. The rest of our column would also open up on the

enemy and, when that had happened, Paddy Paul's lads would lash into the British from the Waterford city side of the bridge. The main thing was that no shot was to be fired until the British lorries ran up to the barricade and were first engaged by the West Waterford column.

It would be about half past 10, or maybe later, when I could hear explosions coming from the direction of Tramore town where a few of our lads had gone in and thrown a couple of grenades at the R.I.C. barracks. Immediately, we could see the Verey lights going up from the barracks and heard a lot of rifle fire.

Having accomplished their job of scaring the garrison in the R.I.C. Barracks, our men returned to their positions near the Metal Bridge and we awaited the results. It was no time after our lads had returned from Tramore that we heard the noise of lorries approaching from Waterford city. We couldn't see these lorries from our position because the railway bridge obstructed our view and, besides, there was a sharp bend on the road on the Waterford side of the bridge.

The next thing happened was that heavy firing broke out on the far side of the bridge. It was obvious that something had gone wrong. We should have started the shooting when the British lorries ran into the barricade. I was standing up with my rifle pointing towards the road as it came under the bridge on my side. The three men with me, who had shotguns, were lying down pointing their guns in the same direction. We expected to see a lorry load of British soldiers any minute, but nothing happened.

Firing was now going on pretty heavily on Paddy Paul's side, but we still could see nothing to fire at. I remember a Verey light being fired by our lads on the high road near me - (I believe Pax Whelan fired it) - but, even then, I could see

no lorry, or any enemy. There was nothing I could do but to await developments, as I had no orders to leave my position. I knew something had gone wrong with the plan for the ambush, but I held on in the hopes that the British might come along within gunshot of my position. I was a long time in this predicament. All the time occasional bursts of firing could be heard coming from the Waterford city side of the bridge; but, still, nothing happened on our side. No enemy appeared.

To the best of my recollection, I'm sure I was about an hour like this when Comdt. Pat Keating of our column came down to me and told me to get a way as our lads, i.e., the western column, were retiring. I asked Pat what it was all about and he said the plan had gone wrong, that it looked as if the East Waterford lads under Paul's command had engaged the British before the latter had come properly into the ambush position. Pat also said that it was reported that enemy troops were seen on our flank and, in the darkness, it was impossible to tell what really was happening. He said that the western column was retreating to avoid encirclement by the British forces reported as trying to outflank us, and that my party was to do likewise.

I 'pulled out' of the position with my three men and went with Pat Keating in a westerly direction towards the village of Kill, three miles distant. There we secured a horse and car and eventually arrived at my house at Glen, Stradbally. We dumped our guns in a disused farmhouse in the vicinity, hiding them under a quantity of oats. The guns were left there for a week or so, and then, when things seemed to be safe, I brought them (10 rifles in all) by pony and trap to Comeragh where the column had reassembled.

Ring, Roberts Cross (Killongford) Engagement.

Some time early in February 1921, the column was in the neighbourhood of Dungarvan, Co. Waterford, when it was decided to try and entice the military out of Dungarvan and lie in

ambush for them at a place called Killongford, about five miles west of Dungarvan on the Ring Peninsula. The country there is hilly and rocky and was an excellent ambush position,

To get the British out of Dungarvan, a message was sent to the military barracks stating that Cathal Brugha was in hiding at Ring Irish College. It was hoped that the enemy, on hearing this news, would rush a few lorries of soldiers to Ring, passing our position on the way. We had visions of another 'Piltown Cross' as we were all now fairly well-armed. In addition, we had the help of the Old Parish Company who would be fighting on their own ground, and about a mile or so further up the road at Roberts Cross the Ring Company were to be in position to hit up any of the enemy we might miss.

I cannot say what time of night it was, but I know it was dark when the column was marching in file along the road to take up positions at Killongford. The Old Parish men were also proceeding to their positions. I should say, at this stage, that the road between us and Dungarvan is very twisty, there are a few very sharp bends.

The message to the military had been delivered some time earlier and we were anticipating their arrival in an hour or so when, suddenly, around a sharp bend in the road came the lorries with lights on, approaching from Dungarvan. We were taken completely by surprise. It was not expected that the British would turn out so soon after receiving our decoy message and we were almost within the glare of the lorry lights before we realised it. There was nothing we could do but dive for cover over the roadside fence. The British drove on towards Roberts Cross without spotting us and we had not a chance in the world of having a crack at them. The ambush was a flop.

The Old Parish men also found themselves taken by surprise. Luckily for them, they too had barely time to take cover before being picked out by the headlights of the military lorries and, like ourselves, had no chance of a shot at the enemy.

The lorries proceeded towards Ring College and, when they reached Roberts Cross, were fired on by the Ring I.R.A. The latter, however, could not keep up the attack. They had very little ammunition for one thing and, besides, they, too, were surprised at the sudden appearance of the strong British force which had not been engaged by us; something that the Ring men hadn't foreseen. I heard afterwards that a Ring I.R.A. man was wounded in that affair. I did not hear that the British suffered any casualties.

As the military lorries proceeded to Ring to search for Cathal Brugha who, of course, wasn't there, George Lennon decided to place the column in position to ambush the enemy on the return journey to Dungarvan. We waited an hour or two for them, but, so far as my memory can recall, Lennon decided to pull out and not attack because he thought that it was likely that the military would pick up a few civilian prisoners at Ring (when they discovered Cathal Brugha wasn't there) and that those civilians' lives would be endangered if the lorries in which they would be travelling were attacked by us.

Durrow Engagement.

Some time early in the month of March 1921, the column was in action against the British at Durrow, Co. Waterford. Durrow is about six miles east of Dungarvan. There is a railway station there. The local Co-operative Stores immediately adjoins the station.

Earlier on the day of the attack I helped to hold up a train at Millarstown about $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles south west of Durrow which was proceeding from Dungarvan via Millarstown, Ballyvoile and Durrow to Waterford city and carried jurors attending Courts at Waterford. We stopped the train at Millarstown by placing a red flag on the railway line. When the train pulled up, we ordered the jurors out and placed them in a local farmhouse under guard.

Meanwhile, others of the column under George Lennon, Mick Mansfield and Pat Keating, took up ambush positions alongside the railway line at Ballyvoile, which is about midway between Millarstown and Durrow. This all happened about 8 or 9 o'clock in the morning. It was hoped that the military would come out from Dungarvan when news of the train hold-up reached Dungarvan from the railwaymen in signal cabins further east, who would report the non-arrival of the train which was due to pass them at a certain time. If, as was anticipated, the military came by the coast road running east from Dungarvan, they would be ambushed at Ballyvoile.

My recollection of the affair now is that, after waiting at Ballyvoile for about an hour, word was received from scouts that a train conveying military had arrived in Durrow station from Waterford city.

George Lennon, the Column O/C., decided to split up the column into two groups. I went with him, Mick Shalloe, Jim Prendergast and about 4 or 5 others direct to Durrow and, when we got there, we discovered no British troops. They had, it appears, gone down the railway line towards Millarstown to release the jurors.

We were on the roadway near Durrow some time later when we saw about 100 military approaching from Durrow railway station. They may have come off another train, but I do not remember now. Anyhow, we emptied our guns into them. The soldiers replied to our fire and retreated back to the railway station whilst we took up attacking positions about 150 yards or so away.

In the meantime, about a dozen of our lads, with whom were Mick Mansfield and Pat Keating, came up on the left (east) side of Durrow station (we were on the right-hand (west) side) and engaged the military with rifle fire. After over two hours of intermittent firing, the British retreated

gradually from the vicinity of the railway station in to the Co-operative Stores, which was a good stone building and very suited for defence.

We contained the British forces in the Co-operative Stores until late in the evening - somewhere about 4 p.m. - firing at irregular intervals. By this time, our supply of ammunition was beginning to run low. The officers of the column had discussed the possibility of a direct assault on the Co-operative Stores, but it was decided, due to the nature of the terrain which offered little cover and the fact that our ammunition was by now very nearly exhausted, that it wasn't possible to push home the attack. The column, therefore, was ordered by George Lennon to break off the engagement and retire north west to Comeragh. We did this and reached Comeragh without contacting any enemy troops, which was lucky for us, as we had little stuff left after the Durrow affair.

I do not know what casualties the British suffered on this occasion. Out of our twenty men or so engaged at Durrow only one was wounded; he was Andy Kirwan of Bonmahon, the column transport officer. Andy was hit in the leg by a machine gun bullet. He was attended by Dr. Walsh, the medical officer in Bonmahon at that time. Incidentally, the doctor was with us that day in Durrow to attend to any of us who might be wounded.

The Burgery Ambush.

On the night of March 18th, 1921, five of us from the column were sent in to the town of Dungarvan to have a shot at any police or military we might find on the streets. The intention was to get the British out into the country after us, when they would be ambushed by the main body of the column who were about a mile or so outside Dungarvan.

We went into Dungarvan armed with revolvers, about 8 or 9

p.m. and met a military patrol coming along in extended formation. We fired at them and then made out of the town towards Ballycoe, about a mile to the north west where we knew our lads were waiting. When we got back to Ballycoe, we contacted the remainder of the column under George Lennon. The local company of I.R.A. was also there equipped with pickaxes, shovels and gelignite to demolish a bridge called Tarr's Bridge on the main road to Cappoquin. About a quarter of a mile to the east of Tarr's Bridge was Cloncoskerine, the residence of Charles Nugent Humble, where the British had a party of soldiers stationed. When Tarr's Bridge was blown up it was expected that the military from Cloncoskerine would come out to investigate and we would ambush them from our position near the bridge.

While we were waiting developments, word reached us that a military lorry containing soldiers had left Dungarvan and had gone on towards Cloncoskerine. It was then decided not to proceed with the demolition of Tarr's Bridge, but instead to ambush the two cars on their return to Dungarvan. These cars could return to Dungarvan by two routes either via the Ballycoe road where we were, or by the Cloncoskerine-Burgery road. George Lennon, therefore, decided to split the column in two. He took about 8 or 10 men down to the Burgery road a half mile south east of Ballycoe, whilst George Plunkett (from G.H.Q. Dublin, who was with us at the time) and Pat Keating held the Ballycoe position with a similar number of men.

I was with George Lennon's party at the Burgery. The latter is a townland about half a mile east from Abbeyside, Dungarvan, and is on the main Dungarvan-Waterford road. We took up positions behind the hedge on the Burgery road. All of us were armed with rifles and revolvers and we had also a few Mills bombs. It would be about 10 or 11 o'clock and I remember the night being very dark when we spotted what we thought was

the military lorry coming along the Burgery road from the direction of Cloncoskerine. We opened fire with rifles and a couple of grenades. It was then we noticed that our target was a private motor car containing military, but not, as we expected, a lorry. We had no information that this private car had gone out earlier with the lorry. Anyhow, the car ran on towards Dungarvan and the military in the lorry, which had stopped about 100 yards further back the road, was engaged by our lads near them.

The soldiers tumbled out of the lorry and ran in panic through the fields back east to Cloncoskerine. Some of them threw away their guns and these were collected by us as best we could in the darkness. The military lorry was then burned.

In the meantime, the section of the column under Plunkett, hearing the firing at the Burgery, had come down from the Ballycoe road and had come up with the private car which we had fired on shortly before. It contained a Captain Thomas, belonging to a unit of a British regiment known as "The Buffs", stationed in Dungarvan; two soldiers and a sergeant of the R.I.C. named Hickey. These were captured, disarmed, and Captain Thomas and Sergeant Hickey taken prisoner.

When the action was over, George Lennon told me to take some of the lads back to Kilbrien, about 9 miles to the west. I did this. The remainder of the column under Lennon and Plunkett followed in the same direction, but more towards Kilgobnet which is about three miles east of Kilbrien. We didn't contact these lads again until later on the morning of the following day, March 19th, 1921. We then learned that Plunkett had taken about half a dozen of the column back to the Burgery, about 7 o'clock that morning, to search for arms thought to have been thrown away by the military in their flight the previous night. This party ran into a strong

British force and, in the exchange of shots, Pat Keating, commandant of the Kilrossanty Battalion and one of the best men on the column, was mortally wounded, and Sean Fitzgerald of the column was killed. Plunkett and the other four men made a fighting retreat and eventually joined up with ourselves and the main body of the column at Kilgobnet.

In the Burgery ambush (as it is called) we captured a few rifles from the British, a few hundred rounds of ammunition and a small quantity of Mills bombs.

During the fighting at the Burgery on the night of 18th March and the morning of 19th March 1921, the British were reported to have lost two or three killed and about half a dozen wounded.

As regards the two British prisoners taken by our lads, Captain Thomas was released. Officers of the column held a courtmartial on Sergeant Hickey of the R.I.C. He was sentenced to be shot and the sentence was carried out on 19th March 1921, after the sergeant had been spiritually attended to by a local priest. The R.I.C. man in question had been particularly active in identifying I.R.A. men and their sympathisers. He used to act as 'spotter' for the British in their raids for wanted men and it was because of those activities that sentence of death was passed on him and carried out.

Train attack at Ballylinch and Ballyvoile.

It would, I think, be early in the month of April 1921, when I left the column for a couple of weeks to help at home on the farm at Glen, Stradbally.

One day, about mid-April, George Lennon and Mickey Morrissey from the column called to the house. George said he had word of a troop train from Dungarvan and suggested we should have a crack at it at Ballyvoile, about 5 miles east of Dungarvan and two miles south of my home at Glen. Some of

the local I.R.A. were mobilised to act as scouts and three or four of them brought shotguns and came with Lennon, Morrissey and myself.

A train came along all right at Ballyvoile. We fired a few shots at it and then waited to see if the military would come out from Dungarvan; when news of the attack on the train reached them. We waited over an hour but nothing happened, so Lennon decided to push inland north east to Ballylinch, a station midway between Kilmacthomas and Durrow, Co. Waterford. There is a level crossing gate just beyond the signal cabin at Ballylinch.

There were just about six of us - three rifles and three shotguns - spread out behind a hedge at the station when a train was signalled. We closed over the level crossing gates and when the train pulled in and stopped we saw she was laden with military. We opened up at them and they replied with heavy rifle and machine gunfire. From the fire-box of the engine two soldiers were using a Lewis gun and raking our position. Turning my head sideways to get in a shot at them I received a bullet in the side of the neck. I continued to fire, but after some time, sent word to George Lennon, who was some distance from me, that I was wounded. Lennon crawled up to me and, seeing my condition, gave orders to retreat. In any case, our ammunition was practically spent and we couldn't keep up the fight any longer.

We withdrew successfully, still under fire from the British, who, strangely enough, showed no inclination to come out into the open. They probably thought that we were much stronger numerically than we really were.

We retired southwards and I was brought to the house of a man named Queally of Carrickbarrahan between Glen (where I lived) and Stradbally. Dr. Walsh came out from Bonmahon and dressed my wound. A few days later I went up to Kilmacthomas

where Dr. Tobin attended me. Whilst in Kilmacthomas I was looked after by Mrs. Kent, then Miss Cullinane of Kilmacthomas.

The Cullinane family were the greatest help to all I.R.A. during the fight from 1916 to 1924. They kept an open house for the men on the column, and their house was the centre for dispatch work in the area. The four Cullinane girls were all active members of Cumann na mBan.

It was, I think, on the night of 4th May 1921, when the body of our comrade, Pat Keating (killed at The Burgery in March), was disinterred for burial in his family burial place at Kilrossanty. All the men of the column were present. When the burial was over, we got word that an I.R.A. man in Kilmacthomas had been accidentally wounded and had been brought to the hospital there. George Lennon, Mick Mansfield and I decided to go into Kilmacthomas and take this man out of hospital in case he was picked up by the military.

It was about 2 or 3 o'clock in the morning of 5th May 1921 when we set out for Kilmacthomas. Lennon and Mansfield were in a pony trap with one of the Misses Cullinane from Kilmacthomas. I rode on a bike close behind the trap. We were armed with rifles and revolvers and, as a precaution, sent out four scouts (unarmed) a few hundred yards ahead of us on bicycles. We had reached a point about two miles from Kilmacthomas when we ran slap into a large party of military advancing in file. We were taken completely by surprise. The military shouted 'halt'. Mansfield and Lennon got out of the pony trap and made over a hedge. I got off my bike, threw it at a soldier close to me and dived over a ditch in the direction opposite to that taken by my two comrades. Unfortunately, I didn't notice a few strands of barbed wire on top of the ditch and, as I threw myself over, my clothes got caught in the wire, but I eventually landed head foremost into a drain half full of water. The ground here is boggy and marshy.

I was stunned as result of the tumble and powerless to defend myself. I was still suffering from the effects of the wound in the neck which I received a few weeks earlier and, although I made an effort, I couldn't draw my revolver.

Meanwhile, the military were in a sort of panic shouting and firing, until an officer came over to the ditch to look for me. He hadn't far to go, because I was completely bogged down. He, too, soon found himself up to his waist in water. He shouted to put over a plank to get me out. After some time this was done and I was eventually dragged on to the road.

The British officer was wild with rage and proceeded to kick me, aiming kicks at my stomach. After a lot of this sort of stuff, I was thrown into a lorry and brought into the military barracks in Waterford.

Before saying any more, I am glad to relate that my comrades, George Lennon and Mick Mansfield, got clear away that night. Miss Cullinane was, however, arrested and was sentenced to six months imprisonment.

I was detained for a few days in the military barracks in Waterford and was then transferred to the gaol in Barrack St. Waterford. During my term in this gaol, I was from time to time put into an open lorry with soldiers and driven through the streets as a hostage.

When I was about to be courtmartialled, I developed diphtheria and was recommended for removal to the prison hospital by the prison doctor. The military authorities refused to believe the doctor's diagnosis and a sample of my spittle was sent to Dublin. It was then established that I really did have diphtheria, much to the disgust of the military who were baulked of their prey for at least another six weeks, which is the period required for a diphtheria cure. I was very well treated in the prison hospital, where two nuns of the St. John of God Order from Waterford gave me every attention and, by the time my six weeks cure was up, the Truce

of July 1921, was signed and saved me from certain execution.

For the few weeks I was in Waterford Gaol (before I got sick) I believe an attempt to rescue me was planned from outside by some of the local I.R.A. men. I do not remember much about this, but I do know that the attempt failed, for what reason I cannot say. I would also like to put on record that Rev. Father Delahunty, C.C., a native of Mooncoin, Co. Kilkenny, was a fellow-prisoner of mine in Waterford Gaol.

I was kept in gaol until January 1922, when I was released. I reported at once to my brigade headquarters and was one of the maintenance party in Dungarvan when we took it over from the British. I later went into Waterford Barracks and was in charge of the magazine there.

Civil War.

During the civil war I fought on the republican side. When the fighting broke out I was in charge of a party in the gaol buildings, Ballybricken, Waterford.

When the Free State troops crossed the River Suir and attacked Waterford city in force, I defended my post for several days until compelled by superior numbers and equipment to retreat westwards towards Butlerstown where another stand was made. Again we were compelled to retreat further west where I linked up with the flying column in the Comeragh district.

Guerilla warfare against the Free State troops was carried on for several months afterwards until I was captured in November 1922. I was sent as prisoner again back to Waterford, where I was detained until about June or July 1923. I was released about that time and returned to my home at Glen, Stradbally, Co. Waterford.

Signed: Patrick Joseph Power

Date: 26 - 6 - 33

(Patrick Joseph Power)

Witness: T. O'Gorman

(T. O'Gorman)

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
BURO STAIRE MILEATA 1913-21
NO. W.S. 1199