

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21  
BURD STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21  
No. W.S. 1421

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COSANTA.

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21

STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 1421.

Witness

Captain Michael Leahy,  
Ard Mhuire,  
Cobh,  
Co. Cork.

Identity.

Commandant, 4th Battalion, Cork No. I Brigade.

Vice-Brigadier, Cork No. 1 Brigade.

Subject.

Activities of Cobh Company, 4th Battalion,  
Cork No. 1 Brigade, 1915-1921.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil.

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STATEMENT BY CAPTAIN MICHAEL LEAHY

Ard Mhuire, Cobh, Co. Cork.

(Supplemental to Statement W.S.555 of 5th May 1951,  
and W.S.94 of 7th January 1948).

I was released from Frongoch Detention Barracks in July 1916, and returned to Cobh, Co. Cork, where I proceeded to reorganise the local Volunteer company.

I was O/C. of that company which, at first, was about fifteen strong. This number increased later to about 25. I remember that Seumas Fitzgerald was 1st Lieutenant at that time (July-August 1916).

We were particularly fortunate in the matter of arms. In addition to upwards of a dozen, or even more, revolvers of various pattern - .32, .38 and .45 - we also had five rifles which had been left in Cork city during Easter Week 1916, and which were returned to us in Cobh. The revolvers were obtained prior to 1916, some as a result of raids on British naval and military personnel in Cobh, and some by purchase from individual members of the British garrison. These guns were put in safe keeping during the year 1916, until the reorganisation of the Cobh company. In addition to the weapons mentioned, I managed to acquire a .22 B.S.A. rifle which we used for target practice. I had buried the rifle in a field near my home at Cobh, carefully packed of course, and, on my release from Frongoch, my mother who, unknown to me at the time, had seen me hide the gun, pointed out to me the place of concealment. The field had been ploughed in my absence and I was unable to identify the spot in which the rifle was buried.

Before my arrest in 1916, I was serving my apprenticeship

as a Marine Engineer in the British Admiralty Dockyard at Haulbowline. The period of apprenticeship was six years and, when I presented myself at Haulbowline after my release from Frongoch, I was, surprisingly enough, allowed to finish my period which had about nine or ten months to go to completion. I was not, however, allowed to work on British warships, but I was assigned, instead, for duty on American war vessels then in Cobh Harbour.

It was about the month of September 1917, when I finished my apprenticeship and was offered a job by the British naval authorities as engineer on an oil tanker named "Olive Branch". I refused to take the job. This tanker was, a short time later, torpedoed by German submarines and sunk off Cobh.

It was in October 1917, when I was arrested (in company with Jack Stack, another Cobh Company Volunteer) for illegal drilling, and brought to Cork Gaol. We went on hunger strike almost immediately and, after about a week, we were released under an Act, referred to at that time as the "Cat and Mouse Act". One of the conditions of release under that Act was that I should report at regular intervals to the local R.I.C. barracks. I did not do this, on instructions from Brigade Headquarters in Cork city. As a result, I had to leave my home in Cobh and go 'on the run'.

I immediately set about reorganising Volunteer companies in the East Cork area and got companies going in Carrigtwohill, Knockraha, Middleton, Dungourney, Clonmult, Killeagh, Ballymacoda, Ladysbridge and Youghal. The response was good in Middleton, Dungourney and Clonmult, but poor in the other districts mentioned at that particular time.

It was, so far as I can remember, in the last few months

of 1917, when night raids for arms on private houses were commenced in the Cobh area. It can be understood that there was a large pro-British element living in Cobh and vicinity by reason of the strong garrisons maintained in Spike Island and Haulbowline, The so-called 'gentry' type was quite numerous, and it was on the houses of these people that the raids were made. Quite a useful supply of sporting guns and some revolvers were got as a result of these raids.

I might mention a particularly daring raid which was carried out at night on a gunsmith's shop owned by a man named O'Keefe and situated in the Main St., Cobh. The date was April 1918. A few men from the Cobh Company entered the premises at night by a skylight and removed quite a quantity of assorted weapons and ammunition. While the raiders were inside the shop, a British military patrol passed by repeatedly, completely oblivious of what was happening. The guns taken from O'Keefe's were removed that night and stored in a vault in an old graveyard about  $1\frac{1}{2}$  miles from Cobh. From there, they were taken subsequently to a dump near my own home at Ballywilliam ( $1\frac{1}{2}$  miles east of Cobh). The 'dump' was a large wooden box buried in a ploughed field.

In January 1918, I was appointed O/C. of the 4th Battn. East Cork Brigade (later known as Cork No. 1 Brigade). The boundary of this area ran northwards through Leamlaura, Lisgould, Clonmult, Dungourney, Inch, Killeagh, and thence by a line south east to Youghal. The southern and eastern boundaries followed the coast line from Youghal through Ballymacoda, Ballycotton to Roche's Point and back along the coast to Cobh, thence by the north bank of the River Lee to Dunkettle Bridge. The latter is three miles east of Cork city on the main Cork-Waterford road. The western boundary ran in a northerly direction from Glanmire to Knockraha.

The following companies comprised the battalion:- Cobh, Midleton, Carrigtwohill, Knockraha, Dungourney, Mogelly and Castlemartyr, Clonmult, Lisgould, Leamlaura, Ladysbridge, Inch, Killeagh, Cloyne, Aghada, Shanagarry, Ballymacoda, Glounthaun, Churchtown South. The battalion strength at this period was, approximately, 500 men.

In the same month (January 1918) I was sent for by my Union - the Amalgamated Society of Engineers - and told to report to Rushbrooke Docks (near Cobh) for work. When I got there the docks manager told me that I was on the British Government 'black list' and he would not employ me. A few days after this, two non-Union men were taken on, with the result that the Union ordered a strike. The two non-Union men were dismissed following the strike, but the dockyard authorities would not allow me to work there. However, I succeeded in getting a job with the Cork-Blackrock-Passage Railway. I was there about three months when I was arrested by the R.I.C. for drilling Volunteers in Cobh on St. Patrick's Day 1918. Actually, I was not in Cobh at all on that St. Patrick's Day. I was in Aghada with the local Volunteer company. Aghada is about three miles east of Cobh.

I was put on trial in Cork and sentenced to six months imprisonment. After a few days in Cork Gaol I was brought, with other republican prisoners, by train to Belfast, where we were lodged in Crumlin Road Prison. Amongst others in that gaol were Fionan Lynch, Martin Corry (at present a T.D.) and Austin Stack. The latter was prisoners' commandant. It was arranged between us that all communication with the Governor of the gaol should be made on our behalf through Austin Stack.

During the early days of my term in Belfast Gaol, I remember forcing open the windows of the cell with a knife and

fork, sitting up on the window ledge and singing patriotic songs to watching crowds outside on the Falls Road. All of our lads did the same. These demonstrations were, obviously, not to the liking of the Governor of the gaol, who ordered the prison carpenter to fasten the cell windows permanently. This was done; whereupon Stack gave us orders to break all windows. We did this, left the cells and refused to return. The Governor sent for Stack and, after a long parley, Stack came back to us with the news that, if we returned peaceably to our cells, the Governor had given his word of honour that the incident would be overlooked and that no prisoner would be punished.

A short time after this, a Tipperary man named McGrath was forcibly removed from his cell (for what reason I cannot now remember) and brutally assaulted by a prison warder named Finlay. This was the signal for a general wrecking of the gaol by the prisoners on the instructions of Austin Stack. The date was 28th June 1918. Cell doors were barricaded on the inside, windows and everything breakable were smashed; even the cell walls were bored through by using knives and forks, with the result that we could communicate with each other in the adjoining cells.

To counteract this, the Governor ordered the fire hoses to be turned on us through the peep-holes in the cell doors. I was in my cell half dressed and drenched with water, when the door was broken down by warders (from outside) with a sledge hammer. A party of R.I.C. men came in, knocked me down, held me on the floor and kicked and beat me. My teeth were broken and I was bleeding profusely from the face and head. I was handcuffed with my hands behind my back, dragged downstairs to

the underground cells and kicked into one, where I lay unconscious on the floor. When I 'came to' I was lying on my face in a pool of blood.

The following morning, 29th June 1918, the handcuffs were removed and replaced, this time with my hands in front of my body. It being a Catholic holyday, the prison chaplain (Father McRory) got permission from the Governor for us to attend Mass. One of our lads, who had received permission to go to the toilet, managed to steal a bunch of keys. He passed the keys to us during Mass and we succeeded in opening the handcuffs. When Mass was over we refused to leave the chapel. The chaplain appealed to us to leave quietly. We did so. When we got outside the chapel, another attempt was made by warders and R.I.C. men to put the handcuffs on us. A free fight developed, but, eventually, we were overpowered, Handcuffed and thrown into our cells. I remember seeing some military there on this particular occasion, but they took no part in the proceedings.

Following this, each prisoner was brought individually before the Governor for 'trial'. I was sentenced to 14 days solitary confinement on bread and water. The bread and water sentence meant - three days bread and water only, and three days ordinary prison food. This went on until the fourteen days had expired.

An interesting little incident occurred while I was 'in solitary'. The first morning of the bread and water diet the warder brought it in cans. After a while, when the warder had left my cell, I noticed what appeared to be steam arising from the can of water. On examining it, I found the 'water' to be hot soup; the bread consisted of slices of bread and butter; a few cigarettes and matches were included. I got

this diet whenever this particular warder was on duty. I was puzzled to know why I got this treatment until I learned, later, that the friendly warder in question was a man named O'Mahony from Lisgould, near Midleton, Co. Cork.

When we were returned from solitary confinement to our cells, we again commenced singing and creating a general disturbance during the night. This went on for some time until, one day, Austin Stack, accompanied by the Governor, came around to our cells and ordered us to parade in the main hall of the prison. We were there addressed by Max Green who was, I think, John Redmond's brother-in-law. Green told us that the authorities had decided to "forgive us all our offences"; we were to be allowed visits, parcels and other privileges previously held by us. I remember quite well Stack stepping forward and addressing Green, saying: "Ye are giving us nothing but our rights which we beat you into giving us. We are not grateful to you for anything. Anything we have got the men fought for it and got it". We returned to our cells; parcels and letters were given out to us and from that on we were treated as political prisoners.

On 11th July 1918, I was released, with some others, on giving bail of £50. Stack gave instructions, which I believe came from G.H.Q. Dublin, that certain men were to secure their release by giving bail, in view of the threat of conscription which the British Government had threatened to enforce in Ireland and which appeared to be imminent. Captain O'Regan and Jerome O'Reilly of Cobh went bail for me, and, on my release, I returned to my home at Ballywilliam, Cobh.

In the month of July 1918, I went to work in the Midleton Engineering Co., Midleton, Co. Cork. This suited me admirably



as I was right in the middle of my battalion area. Although the proprietor of the firm in which I was employed was not sympathetic to our cause, he was not openly hostile, and quite a few of the men in the job were members of the Midleton Volunteer Company.

#### Capture of rifles from British armed trawler.

Late in the year 1918, we acquired a few badly-needed rifles through the daring of five or six Fianna boys. One night, a couple of these young lads went on board a British armed trawler lying at Cobh. One of them got in through a port-hole where he found a couple of rifles which he handed out to his comrades. The lads got away safely with the arms, but apparently some members of the crew heard a noise and became suspicious, with the result that the young lad - Tommy Hayes - who had entered through the port-hole, was caught. He was put on trial subsequently and sentenced to five years' imprisonment.

#### Attack on British military at Carrignafoy. Cobh.

At a place called Spy Hill, Cobh, there was what was known as the "Admiralty Reservoir" which supplied water to Haulbowline. This reservoir was guarded by a party of armed soldiers, usually about four to six in number, and it was decided to hold up and disarm the party. A short distance from the reservoir was located a military encampment known as Belmont Huts, which had a garrison of up to a thousand men. The guard at the reservoir was relieved at regular intervals and it was decided to carry out the attack on the relief party taking over duty at 3 a.m.

On the morning of the proposed attack, I left Midleton by motor cycle and met about six of our lads who were detailed for the job at Carrignafoy, which, like Spy Hill, is located

in the eastern outskirts of Cobh. Our party was armed with revolvers. At about 3 a.m. we were in position in gateways on opposite sides of the road when the military (four in number) came along. We jumped out and gave the order "Hands up". Three of the soldiers complied instantly, but one of them was a bit slow to do so and was shot and wounded by one of our men. The rifles and belts of ammunition were quickly taken from the military and removed to a safe destination.

I then returned again to Midleton by motor cycle. I believe that the soldier who was shot on this occasion subsequently recovered from his wounds.

Later that same day, my home at Cobh was raided by police and military and my two brothers, Donal and Paddy, were arrested for complicity in the attack. Donal was, in fact, one of the men engaged that morning, but Paddy was not. Again, that day, a party of military accompanied by District Inspector Murphy of the R.I.C., Cobh, called to my place of business in Midleton. I was away at Mass in Carrigtwohill when they called (it was Sunday). My employer assured the callers that I could not possibly have been involved in the raid at Carrignafof, seven miles away, that morning, as I had completed a job for him which took me all night to do (so he thought). He convinced the District Inspector that it was impossible for me to complete the work in time and get to Cobh and back. Apparently my employer's words impressed the District Inspector, because, a few days later, a party of military again surrounded and searched my place of business in Midleton, but did not interfere with me in any way. At the time I was, of course, out on bail from Belfast Jail.

I might mention here that at this time (February 1919) there were working with me in the Midleton Engineering Company Jack O'Connell and Paddy Whelan of Cobh, and Sean Kelliher of Midleton. These were active Volunteers then and subsequently.

Abortive attempts to raid Ballvourke Aerodrome.

At Ballyquirke, a short distance from the village of Killeagh, Co. Cork, an aerodrome was under construction by the British. There was a strong guard of the Wiltshire Regiment quartered there. I paid frequent visits to "spot" the place and decided that, with assistance from the brigade (as we had insufficient arms of our own) a successful attack could be carried out with a view to capturing the rifles and equipment of the garrison. As battalion commandant, I approached the brigade on the matter and was promised the necessary assistance to carry out the job. The date of the proposed raid was 4th July 1919.

I mobilised from 30 to 40 men from the Middleton and Cobh companies for the attack. The men arrived at a pre-arranged position in the vicinity of the aerodrome in twos and threes; some came on bicycles, some on foot. I myself cycled from Middleton, which is about nine miles west of Ballyquirke. On arrival at Ballyquirke, I placed the men in concealed positions around the aerodrome. The night was very dark. The plan was to enter the place from the rear and rush the garrison, which numbered from 20 to 25 soldiers quartered in one large hut. We were all in position about midnight and were awaiting the arrival of the party of Volunteers from Cork city under the charge of Terence McSwiney. These Corkmen were coming by car which, it was intended, would convey the captured arms quickly to a place of safety. The Corkmen were also bringing along some guns for my own party who were armed with no more than half a dozen revolvers. I could not hope to be successful with the few weapons at my disposal, should the British garrison put up a fight.

We waited until almost daybreak but there was no appearance by the Corkmen. At the approach of daylight I had to

call off the affair for the reasons stated in preceding paragraph. The next day I learned that, when en route to Ballyquirke, the Corkmen were wrongly directed (quite unintentionally) when they inquired the way at a house on the route, they went many miles astray; hence their failure to turn up at Ballyquirke at the time appointed.

Later in the year, the date was in fact 11 November 1919, a further attempt was made on Ballyquirke. Again the job was allocated to the Midleton and Cobh companies; the same number of men as on the previous occasion being engaged. To the best of my recollection, the Cobh men were armed with about six rifles and revolvers; the Midleton men had a shotgun or two and the remainder revolvers. The attack was timed for about 9 o'clock that night. An hour or so beforehand, scouts of ours in the vicinity of Killeagh (a mile from Ballyquirke) had captured an unarmed soldier who was returning to Ballyquirke from Killeagh with post for the camp. This soldier was brought to where I was, near the aerodrome. I questioned him about the layout of the garrison and tried to get him to agree to show us through the maze of barbed wire at the camp entrance. He would do nothing to help us. Seeing that persuasion was useless, I ordered the soldier to be held and decided to go ahead with the attack. The time would be about 10 p.m. on 11 November 1919.

I had no sooner made up my mind about the matter when lights went up all over the camp; floodlights flashed on the barbed wire and the place was illuminated generally. I, naturally, came to the conclusion that the enemy had either heard, or seen, us moving and had suspicions that there was something afoot, particularly as their courier, whom we had captured, was long overdue from Killeagh. Very reluctantly, I had no option, in the circumstances, but to abandon the undertaking.

Attack on soldiers at Carrigaloe. Cobh.

Early in October 1919, three armed soldiers were observed entraining at Cork en route to Cobh. The soldiers had got in together into a railway carriage. This information was conveyed by a Volunteer at the railway station, Cork, to the captain of the Cobh company at Cobh, who immediately got together a half dozen Cobh men and proceeded to Carrigaloe railway station, situated about a mile from Cobh. When the train pulled in to Carrigaloe, the Cobh men, armed with revolvers, made a hurried search of the train, spotted the three 'Tommies', entered their carriage and quickly disarmed them. The train then proceeded to Cobh with the soldiers, minus their rifles and equipment. I remember that the men who carried out this neat little job were: Daithi O'Brien Captain, Cobh Company; Jack O'Connell, Lieut. Cobh Company; Tom O'Shea, Jack Stack and Eddie Stack.

The time would be about the month of October 1919, when I put up a proposal at a brigade meeting in Cork that every R.I.C. barracks in the brigade area should be attacked and captured on a certain night, the attacks to be simultaneous. I believed, in fact, I was convinced at the time, that the capture of at least 90% of the R.I.C. barracks in the area would involve nothing more than walking in and taking them. This applied, in particular, to barracks in the country districts where discipline was lax. The policemen, especially on Saturday nights, were usually out and about, or maybe, engaged playing cards in the barracks with local men, some of the latter were quite often members of the local Volunteer company. Entrance to the barracks would be a simple matter and the success of the project would, in my opinion, so far as my command in East Cork was concerned, be practically assured.

The brigade were 'taken with' the idea, but decided to refer the proposal to G.H.Q. Dublin. Tomas McCurtain, the Brigade O/C., was deputed to go to Dublin to put the proposition to G.H.Q. that all R.I.C. Barracks in the country be attacked on one particular night. When McCurtain returned from Dublin, some time later, he said at a brigade meeting that G.H.Q. considered that the remainder of the country was not so well organised as Cork and that, consequently, the proposed attacks should be confined to the area of the Cork No. 1 Brigade. This area 'ran' roughly from Youghal, thence to Cork city by the coast to Gougane Barra in the west, back north-east to Fermoy and down south to Youghal. The brigade agreed to make arrangements for the attacks, and a night was fixed for the operation. It was then the month of December 1919. A few days before the date fixed for the attacks, an order was received by Brigade H.Q. from G.H.Q. Dublin, countermanding the proposed operations.

The brigade were at a loss to understand the reason for this decision by G.H.Q. and promptly sent Tomas McCurtain to Dublin again to find out what had gone wrong. When McCurtain returned to Cork, he told us that Mick Collins had said that an attempt was to be made in Dublin to shoot Lord French, then Lord Lieutenant, and that the success of this job was more important, from the publicity angle, than the proposed barracks attack. McCurtain was given an automatic revolver while in Dublin, to take part in the attack on Lord French, which did not, however, materialise at that particular time. I have a clear recollection of McCurtain showing us the gun on his return to Cork and referring to the abortive attempt on French's life, saying: "that was what I got out of it". It was however, agreed by G.H.Q. that three R.I.C. barracks be attacked in the three different brigade areas of Cork, the barracks to

be selected by the respect Brigade O/C. The Brigade Council then decided that one of the barracks in my area should be attacked and I selected Carrigtwohill as one offering the best chance of success. My main reason for selecting Carrigtwohill was that I had three active companies in the district within a radius of six miles and the nearest British garrison was at Cobh, six miles to the south.

At this particular time - early January 1920 - it was observed that all R.I.C. barracks were being fortified against attack by having steel shutters put on the windows with loop-holes for firing. It is my opinion that some word may have reached the British authorities of our intention to stage a general attack on barracks a few months previously, hence the precautions now being <sup>taken</sup> As I have mentioned, we had the date fixed for these general attacks which were called off by G.H.Q. only about two nights before they were to come off. Many men of the various companies in the Brigade were aware of the forthcoming operations. It is possible that somebody talked and the news got to the ears of the British.

#### Attack on Carrigtwohill R.I.C. Barracks.

Carrigtwohill is a village situated on the main Cork-Waterford road, about ten miles east of Cork. The R.I.C. barracks was in the main street, one of a row of houses. It was a stone-built building with a slated roof. The windows were steel-shuttered back and front and the garrison consisted of ten men under a sergeant.

My plan was to open the attack on the front and rear of the building with rifles and grenades. When the attack was on for some time, I proposed to call on the garrison to surrender and, if they refused, I would then blow a hole in the gable

end of the barracks and take the place by assault. I fixed Saturday night, 2nd January 1920, for the job, and decided to use the Cobh, Midleton and Knockraha companies to carry out the operation, as they were the best armed companies in the battalion.

I instructed Diarmuid Hurley, captain of the Midleton company, to have all available men assembled at 10 p.m. in Carrigtwohill schoolhouse, situated on a by-road on the south side of the village. I contacted Martin Corry (now a member of the Dáil), captain of the Knockraha company, and arranged that he should parade his company (about 35 in number) at Knockraha at about 9 p.m. - (Knockraha is six miles north west of Carrigtwohill) - when he would get further instructions from me. On that same Saturday afternoon, I called the officers of the Cobh company to a meeting at my home in Ballywilliam, Cobh. The officers were:- Captain Ned Stack, Lieutenants Daithi O'Brien and Jack O'Connell and Jack Stack. We arranged that about 40 Cobh men would take part in the night's operation. I also selected, as a dispatch carrier, a man named Jack Higgins of Cobh.

It was arranged that the Cobh officers would commandeer a motor and bring it to Carrigtwohill that night conveying some rifles and grenades, which I had obtained on loan from the brigade for the proposed attack.

I left Cobh by bicycle for Carrigtwohill about 9 p.m. on 2nd January 1920. En route, I met up with about 30 of the Cobh Volunteers cutting trees to block the road from Cobh to Carrigtwohill. Arriving in Carrigtwohill about 10 p.m. I went to the schoolhouse where Diarmuid Hurley had his Midleton men (numbering about 35) and gave instructions for the blocking of the Cork-Carrigtwohill-Midleton road by



knocking trees and erecting stone barricades. About 20 men were detailed for this work.

The Knockraha men under Martin Corry then received instructions to block the Knockraha-Cork-Carrigtwohill road. These blocking operations completely isolated Carrigtwohill. I should, of course, add that telephone and telegraph wires leading to and from the village were also cut.

For the actual attack I placed four or five men with rifles in houses across the street from the barracks. I, myself took up a position with six riflemen, some with grenades, at the rear of the barracks. Two or three of these men were in a hayshed with me and about three others behind a wall about ten feet from the gable end of the barrack building. Before the attack actually commenced, Diarmuid Hurley, Joseph Aherne and about four others from the Midleton company, armed with rifles and revolvers, came around to my position in the hayshed (about five yards from the barracks). About 11 p.m., when I had satisfied myself that every man was in his allotted position, I gave orders to open the attack. Fire was begun by our riflemen in front and from those of us in the rear. Grenades were flung at the barrack windows, but, because of the steel shutters on the windows, did no damage. The R.I.C. replied with rifle fire and grenades. Verrey lights were sent up by the garrison. This continued for about quarter of an hour when I concluded that our fire was ineffective and had no chance of forcing a surrender of the R.I.C. I, therefore, ordered that the gable end of the barrack wall be dynamited with a view to obtaining entrance and taking the place by assault.

John Moore from Cobh, a quarry man, well versed in the art of dynamiting, was deputed for the job. A few men bored

about five holes in the barrack wall while John inserted the sticks of gelignite. Constant fire was kept up on the R.I.C. to cover the men engaged in this operation. About an hour elapsed before this was completed; meanwhile the garrison in the barracks kept up a continuous fire with rifles and grenades. Our men replied sporadically.

When the dynamite exploded, a large hole was blown in the gable end of the barracks sufficient to admit two men at a time into what was the barrack dayroom. Bundles of hay soaked with petrol were placed in the breach. It was my intention to 'burn out' the garrison. At the last minute I decided against doing so as I learned that three of our lads had been taken prisoner earlier in the night in the village by the R.I.C. and were now in the barracks. I, therefore, decided to enter the barracks by the breach in the wall and call on the garrison to surrender.

About four of us, including Joseph Aherne and Diarmuid Hurley, got through the hole into the dayroom and found that the R.I.C. had taken to the rooms upstairs. We fired a few shots through the ceiling. Before entering, I had sent word to all my men in firing positions to cease firing at a whistle blast to be given by me. I blew the whistle when we were in the dayroom; our lads ceased fire and I shouted to the police that we were inside the barracks and that they should surrender. At the top of the stairs I saw Mrs. Casey, wife of the R.I.C. sergeant, with a baby in her arms. The sergeant was behind her. I told the woman to come on down, that nothing would happen to her and ordered the sergeant to stay where he was and keep his hands up. He did this. Mrs. Casey and her baby were then taken by one of our lads to friends of hers in the village.

I again called on the garrison to surrender. They did so, coming downstairs with their hands up.

We had, by this time, opened the front door of the barracks through which a number of our men entered and proceeded to search the place for arms and equipment. The police were lined up, searched for papers and handcuffed. We marched them out on to the village street. All the police carbines, a quantity of revolvers and some shotguns (taken by the R.I.C. inraids) were captured together with a large quantity of ammunition and some grenades. The 'stuff' was put into a motor car, commandeered earlier by our lads, and taken by Joseph Aherne (who drove the car) and Tadhg Manly (now a Dail member) to Manly's place at Tubbereenmire, about four miles distant. I formed all our lads up in the village street, congratulated them on the success of the job and, when they had sung a verse of the Soldier's Song, dismissed them.

The attack on Carrigtwohill barracks lasted in all about  $2\frac{1}{2}$  hours from the time we opened fire until the capture was completed. No British relieving force arrived on the scene until the forenoon of January 3rd. Our men suffered no casualties; neither did the R.I.C. garrison.

#### Capture of Castlemartyr Barracks.

The capture of Castlemartyr R.I.C. barracks, which took place on 9th February 1920, was not an engagement in which I personally took a part. As battalion commandant, I received a report from the officer in charge of the operation, viz: Diarmuid Hurley, captain of the Middleton Company, and I have a clear recollection of what happened on the occasion.

Castlemartyr is a village in East Cork about five miles east of Middleton on the main Cork-Middleton-Youghal road. The barracks was occupied by, approximately, six R.I.C. It was a two-storied stone and slated building situated in a row of houses on the main street of the village. It had the usual

steel-shuttered windows. The proposed attack on this particular barracks was not discussed with me beforehand, but was really decided on by the Midleton company captain, Diarmuid Hurley, in the following circumstances:-

The 9th February 1920, was a fair day in Midleton. It was the custom at the time for R.I.C. men from barracks in the neighbourhood to be drafted into Midleton on fair days to augment the garrison in that town. A Volunteer noticed that two R.I.C. men from Castlemartyr had come into Midleton for duty that day. He reported this to Diarmuid Hurley, who considered it an excellent opportunity to surprise the remaining R.I.C. in Castlemartyr and capture the arms in the barracks. Arrangements were made to waylay and capture the two policemen when returning that evening from Midleton to Castlemartyr. This was done. They were then taken close to the village of Castlemartyr where Hurley had about a dozen of his Midleton men assembled. Hurley asked the R.I.C. if they would approach the barrack door with himself and another Volunteer and ask to be admitted, the idea being that the Volunteers would rush into the barracks when the door was opened. The two R.I.C. men flatly refused to comply with the request, saying they would not 'let down' their comrades in such a fashion. Threats were of no avail; so Hurley decided to go ahead himself.

With another Volunteer, he approached the barrack door and knocked. A voice inside inquired who was there. Hurley gave the captured sergeant's name, whereupon the door was partly opened, but still held by a chain inside. Putting his foot in the opening, Hurley and his companion tried to push the door in, but the chain held fast. The R.I.C. man inside fired through the opening as did Hurley; but, due to their positions, neither could hit the other. Hurley in desperation then commenced smashing at the chain with the butt of his revolver. He succeeded in breaking the chain and forcing

his way inside with his companion. A fight ensued between the latter and Hurley, with the result that the R.I.C. man, a Constable Lee, received a bad eye injury. He was then overpowered and made prisoner by Volunteers who had, by this time, entered the barracks.

Hurley and a few others rushed upstairs and called on the R.I.C., who were locked in a room, to come out and surrender. They did so. The barracks was then searched and about six police carbines and revolvers, together with a large quantity of ammunition, were captured.

Hurley and his men got safely away with their booty.

Following the successful attack on Carrigtwohill, I put to the brigade a proposal that we of the 4th Battalion would attack the R.I.C. barracks at Riverstown, which adjoined my battalion area on its western side, as I considered it an easy job. Riverstown, however, was in the 5th Battalion area, and the brigade were not in favour of bringing men from the 4th Battalion into another battalion's district, so I sought and obtained approval to attack Cloyne Barracks instead.

#### Attack on Cloyne R.I.C. Barracks.

Cloyne is a village in East Cork situated about five miles south of Middleton and about 16 miles from Cork. The nearest military garrisons were at Youghal - 16 miles east, Fort Carlisle - 8 miles south, and Cork to the west. It was situated almost in the middle of the battalion area and appeared to me, therefore, as most suitable for a successful attack. The barracks itself was a three-storied one, stone built and slated. It stood in the main street of the village and was flanked by two publichouses. There was a garrison of about ten men and a sergeant.

I obtained some additional rifles and grenades from

Brigade H.Q. in Cork for this operation. The date was 8th May 1920. The day was Saturday.

For some time past I had the idea of getting the whole battalion into action in order to give the men the feeling that they were actually taking part in the fight for independence ; so, for the Cloyne attack I mobilised the entire battalion comprising upwards of four hundred and fifty men. Again, I selected my attacking force from the Cobh-Midleton companies to about 40 in number. These men were armed with rifles to the number of about 20. The remainder carried revolvers. I timed the attack for, so far as I can now remember, 11 p.m. By then, the village people would be indoors; all would be quiet.

From about 8 p.m. onwards, parties of men from various companies were engaged blocking roads and cutting telegraph and telephone wires, thereby completely isolating the village of Cloyne. Men from the Cobh company, who were not actually assigned to the barracks attack, crossed the harbour at East Ferry to the mainland about four miles from Cloyne, and stood guard armed with rifles and revolvers at East Ferry, to prevent British reinforcements from Cobh crossing to Cloyne by that route. Men from Aghada blocked the roads leading to Cloyne from Carlisle Fort and the coastguard station at Rochestown Point. The Youghal-Cloyne, Ballycotton-Cloyne and Midleton-Cloyne roads were also blocked. Obstructions in the nature of felled trees and heaps of boulders were used to make the roads impassable.

In view of my experience at Carrigtwohill barracks attack I decided to adopt more direct tactics at Cloyne. Instead of a preliminary opening by rifle and shotgun fire, which, in view of the steel shutters on the windows, proved ineffective

at Carrigtwohill, and was more or less waste of valuable ammunition on our part, I decided, in the case of Cloyne, to commence the attack by using gelignite to blow in the side walls of the barracks from inside the two publichouses adjoining the barrack building. My intention then was to throw in petrol through the breaches, set the place on fire and compel the garrison to surrender. Things did not, however, work out as I anticipated.

The attacking party assembled in the Cloyne Technical School shortly before 10 p.m. that night and at about 10 p.m. I placed a party of 15 men with rifles and shotguns on houses opposite the barracks and about half a dozen in positions at the rear of the barracks. Just before 10 p.m. I sent a couple of men into each of the publichouses on either side of the barracks to hold the doors open for us when the pubs closed at 10 p.m. The remainder of the attacking party, numbering about 20, came in twos and threes up the village street about a few minutes after 10 o'clock to enter the publichouses as arranged. We found that the pub door on the Ballycotton (east) side of the barracks was still closed. The pub door on the Midleton (west) side was open all right. Some of our lads entered the pub on the west side and we proceeded to smash with an axe the panel of the pub door on the east side. Seeing this wasn't successful, I grabbed an iron bar off the window shutters, broke the shutters and the window and got into the pub with about eight others. While we were doing this, Diarmuid Hurley of Midleton fired with a revolver through a loophole in the steel shutters of the barracks and then dashed into the pub on the west side of the barracks with his party. The R.I.C. were, of course, now alive to what was happening. They fired here, there and everywhere through the barrack windows, chucked out grenades and sent up Verey lights.

Our lads from the houses across the road opened up on the barracks with rifles.

The party with which I was now proceeded to get the occupants of the pub out. Beds were dismantled and bedsteads and mattresses placed up against the wall to protect the men (those boring holes and setting fuses) from grenades. I got out on to the roof of the publichouse with the intention of throwing a bomb down through the skylight of the barracks, but I was fired on by our men across the road who mistook me for one of the R.I.C., and I had to beat a hasty retreat.

Holes were drilled in the party wall from the publichouse in which we were and gelignite inserted. When we found we had blown a hole through which we could see four of the rooms on the ground floor of the barracks, none of the holes were big enough to allow us through, so further charges of gelignite were inserted and exploded.

Meanwhile, Hurley - from the pub he occupied on the other side of the barracks - was also trying to blast his way into the barracks. He blew a small hole insufficiently large to give entrance, so he decided to throw some petrol into the breach he had made and start a fire. He did this just as our second explosion went off, with the result that we, on our side, could not for the time being enter the lower rooms of the barracks because of the flames from the blaze started by Hurley. All this time the garrison was 'flaking' away with rifles and grenades. Our lads from the front and rear were replying. We fired from revolvers into the barracks through the breach in the wall on our side. Hurley did the same on his side, when I decided it was time to have a showdown. I shouted to the R.I.C. that the place was on fire, that we were coming in and that they should surrender. There was no reply for a while and



then I was told by one of our lads outside that a white cloth was put out by the R.I.C. from one of the top windows. I rushed into the lower rooms (two of which were actually on fire) through volumes of smoke followed by our lads and shouted to the garrison to come down with their hands up. They came down and were marched out on to the street under an armed guard. We rushed up into the barracks through a room which had not caught fire. As we went upstairs we were met with explosions from ammunition which the flames had now reached. We searched desperately through the smoke and flames and collected all the guns we could lay hands on. I had brought the R.I.C. sergeant back into the burning barracks with me to help in locating the arms and ammunition. In the corner of one room I saw a box actually on fire. I rushed to get hold of it as I suspected it contained ammunition. The sergeant shouted to me not to touch it as it contained grenades. Needless to remark, I left it severely alone.

When all of the guns and ammunition which could be 'rescued' were got, I left the barracks with the sergeant and came out on to the village street. There I found that Diarmuid Hurley had been wounded in the right arm from a bullet, fired by himself, which had ricocheted off a stone. He was also burned on the arm setting fire to petrol. The wound was not serious. It was dressed that night by Dr. Power of Cloyne. One R.I.C. man (who, I well remember, had a strong Cockney accent) had been wounded in the head. His sergeant asked to have a doctor for him and I told our lads to take the policeman to Dr. Power for immediate treatment. The man got fixed up all right. Before we left the village that night he sent for me and thanked me, saying: "You are a christian; only for you I would have bled to death". I well remember his words. He told me he was resigning from the R.I.C.

After the engagement I 'fell in' the men in the street and dismissed them with instructions how to proceed to their various districts. Messages were sent to all our men on scout and road-blocking work that the job was finished.

The attack on Cloyne Barracks lasted about three hours. I cannot say with any accuracy the number of arms, or the quantity of ammunition we captured; but, definitely, some police carbines and revolvers were taken. These were taken away by car to a safe destination. The R.I.C. garrison were marched under guard to a place about four miles from Cloyne, where they were left to make their way back as they pleased.

Attack on District Inspector Mordaunt at Cobh.

It was noticed by some of the Cobh Company that the local District Inspector of police, named Mordaunt, used leave the R.I.C. barracks in Cobh occasionally to visit his home in Upper Park, Cobh, which was about 300 yards from the barracks. On a date in June 1920, my brother Donal, Daithi O'Brien and Jerome Greally, all of Cobh, decided to ambush Mordaunt. O'Brien was captain of the Cobh Company at the time. Donal used drive a van for Messrs. Delaney, Cobh, and it was in this van that the three men, armed with revolvers, waited near Mordaunt's house at midday. The D.I. came along, as expected, and, when about to enter the gate of his home, he was fired on and wounded. He did not die from his wounds, but he never again appeared in Cobh. I think he resigned from the R.I.C. Mordaunt was shot because he was what was known as a 'bad egg' - meaning he was over-zealous in hunting down men with republican sympathies.

Milebush ambush - Midleton.

This successful attack on British troops is also referred to as the "Bowling Match Ambush". It occurred on 5th June 1920

on the main ~~street~~<sup>road</sup> between Midleton and Carrigtwohill about half a mile west of Midleton, Co. Cork.

Prior to June 5th 1920, there was no military party stationed in Midleton. There was, however, a strong R.I.C. garrison in the town. On the day referred to, a battalion of Cameron Highlanders arrived that morning in Midleton and took up quarters in a disused factory building on the Mill Road Midleton, and within about 300 yards distance of the R.I.C. barracks. For the following day - which was Sunday - I had practically all arrangements made to attack Ballycotton R.I.C. barracks. Jack O'Connell and I cycled from Midleton to Cobh that Saturday afternoon to make final arrangements with the Cobh men in connection with the attack. We were returning by bike to Midleton about 7 p.m. when we heard a few shots just after we passed through Carrigtwohill. We put on speed and were just in time to see a party of our lads from Midleton, under Diarmuid Hurley, capture a cycling patrol of the Cameron Highlanders.

It appears that the Camerons had gone out that afternoon on a sort of tour of the district, to get the layout as it were. They had, as guide, an R.I.C. man from Midleton named Jerry O'Connor. The soldiers numbered a dozen, so far as I can remember. The military patrol was spotted leaving Midleton earlier in the afternoon, and Diarmuid Hurley hurriedly got together eight or nine local I.R.A. men to prepare an ambush. The majority were armed with revolvers. A few were unarmed.

To lure the military into the trap, Hurley staged a bowling match along a stretch of road about a mile west of Midleton town. This game of bowls is very popular in Co. Cork. It is played with 28-oz. metal balls; the two players taking part throw this ball along the road for a specified distance,

usually two or three miles. The player covering the distance in the least number of throws being the winner. As the 'bowls' are small and may be lost in the long grass on the roadside, a number of men are sent out in front of the throwers to act as markers. This, briefly, is a description of bowl playing.

Two men of the Midleton Company were throwing and the others spread out as markers, when the Camerons came cycling along at a place known as the Mile Bush, about a mile west of Midleton. When the soldiers were well into the trap, one of our lads drew his revolver and fired in the air. This was the pre-arranged signal for attack. The Camerons were set on, hurled off their bikes and held up with revolvers. Taken completely by surprise, they put up no resistance. They were quickly disarmed and relieved of their equipment. One of the Camerons, who had delayed behind the party, came along as the surrender was taking place. He dismounted from his bike, grabbed his rifle and fired. Our lads returned the fire; he discarded his rifle and ran.

The captured soldiers were taken off the main road where the ambush took place and up a boreen. Our lads wanted to shoot the R.I.C. man, O'Connor, but I stopped them. This man, O'Connor, knew me well and said so. He told me that if his life was spared, he would help us in any way he could. I told him I would take a chance on it; that I would go to my work in Midleton, and that if I was taken prisoner there he would be got and shot.

For months afterwards O'Connor proved a very useful ally of ours. He was, at the time, acting as secretary to the District Inspector of R.I.C. in Midleton. When the Cameron Highlanders were preparing to go on a raid, they invariably 'phoned the R.I.C. barracks in Midleton for a guide to take

them to the particular area they intended to raid. O'Connor, as D.I.'s. secretary, usually took the message which he then conveyed to me. As a result, I had invariably advance information of these raids and could warn the men accordingly.

As an aftermath to the Mile Bush ambush, the Camerons 'shot up' the town of Middleton that night of 5th June 1920, smashing windows of houses and suchlike, by way of reprisals.

The following Sunday morning - Sunday 6th June 1920 - on which I had arranged to attack Ballycotton R.I.C. barracks, I had about 20 men some distance from the village, all armed with rifles. There was, in the village, a man named Coleman, who had occasion to visit the barracks often on business. I saw this man and arranged with him that he should call to the barracks. He would be admitted, as he was wellknown to the police. When the door was opened, a few of us who would follow him would rush in, keep the door open for the rest of our lads, and capture the garrison. When we arrived in the village, we found that the barracks was occupied by the Cameron Highlanders who had posted sentries around it. This, very likely, came about because of the Mile Bush ambush the previous evening. I decided that, in the circumstances, the attack should be called off.

Attack on military at Quarry. Cobh.

On 25th August 1920, the Cobh Company, in charge of Michael Burke, Cobh, brought off a coup at a place known as "The Quarry" on the eastern outskirts of Cobh. There was a large hut on a piece of waste land near which was a disused quarry. The hut was used by ex-British servicemen and was being dismantled by a military party of about a dozen soldiers. Some Cobh Volunteers noticed what was happening and decided

to attack and disarm the soldiers.

In the afternoon of the day in question, Mick Burke got six or eight men together, armed with revolvers. They approached the quarry. A few, including Burke, went into the waste patch and entered a forge which was there. Others took up a position on the side opposite the forge outside the quarry ground. Burke and his men suddenly emerged from the forge and ordered the soldiers nearest them to put up their hands. The Volunteers on the opposite side also came out and did likewise with the soldiers nearest to them. A few of the Tommies were inclined to resist. These were fired on and wounded. The guns were quickly collected and taken to a car waiting nearby. They were taken to a dump a few miles away and carefully put away.

All the Cobh men got back to their homes without harm and none were arrested following the incident. A tragic feature of the matter was that, about a year following the event, the owner of the forge in the quarry - a man named O'Connell - well over 60 years of age, was walking along the seafront at Cobh when a patrol of the Cameron Highlanders came along. Gordon Duff, the captain, saw O'Connell and recognised him as being the owner of the forge. The officer drew his revolver and shot dead poor O'Connell. The man (O'Connell) had no part at all in the attack on the Camerons at the quarry. The savage action of the British officer was, obviously, done by way of getting his own back for the shame brought on his regiment by the coup brought off by the Cobh Volunteers a year previously.

Abortive attempt to ambush Sir John French.

In the month of August 1920, the Cobh company got word of the arrival of the then Lord Lieutenant - Field <sup>Mar</sup> Marshal Sir John French. He came into Cobh Harbour on a destroyer,

landed by launch at the Naval Pier, Cobh - the official landing place . There he was picked up by car and driven, with a large military escort, to the Admiralty House, which is situated at the rear of the Cathedral, Cobh. Immediately, about 20 men of the Cobh Company were mobilised and took up concealed positions adjacent to the convent opposite the Admiralty House and overlooking the road on which it was anticipated French would travel back to the pier. The Cobh men were armed with a few rifles, revolvers and a couple of grenades. I was in charge of the attacking party.

From our positions in the back gardens of houses we could see the front door of the Admiralty House, with French's motor car and the sentries on duty. We remained there until very late in the evening, when word reached us that French had left on foot by a back exit where another car awaited him. He was then hurried along a by-road lined with Marines and soldiers to a small private dock at a place called Cushkinny, about a mile east of Cobh, where he embarked on a motor boat and was taken to his destroyer out in the harbour. We were all disgusted with the turn of events, but we were misled by the fact that the car, which brought French to the Admiralty House in the first instance, was still there when we got word that the 'bird had flown' in the direction we least expected.

Arrest of Terence McSwiney and other I.R.A. officers.

In the month of August 1920, I received a dispatch from Florrie O'Donoghue, Brigade Intelligence officer, instructing me to shoot an R.I.C. sergeant in Cobh, whose name I cannot now remember. I do recollect that he was from Cooraclare, Co. Clare. I came to Cobh, made the necessary inquiries, but found there was no R.I.C. sergeant of the name given me in the town. I, therefore, decided to go in to Cork, see Florrie and get a description of the wanted man who might be in Cobh but under another name.

The following morning I went by boat across the harbour to Passage West and thence by rail to Cork. I inquired the whereabouts of Florrie O'Donoghue and found he was in the City Hall, Cork, with Terry McSwiney, then Lord Mayor of Cork. I went to the City Hall, saw Florrie and got the description of the R.I.C. man. It was then my intention to return to Cobh to carry out the shooting, when Terence McSwiney told me that there was to be a meeting of the senior officers of the Cork brigades that night in the City Hall, about 8 p.m. Although I only ranked as a battalion commandant at the time, Terry ordered me to stay and attend the meeting. I attended the meeting at the time appointed. In the main hall of the City Hall a republican Court was in progress while our meeting was on.

We were not very long in session when word was brought that the military had surrounded the building and had begun searching it. We left the room and made for a concealed exit to a hiding place somewhere between the ceiling and the roof. I remember a key to this hideout being missing and Terry McSwiney sending someone to another room to get it. The soldiers, meantime, were getting closer to where we were, so it was decided to get out into the back yard and the workshops at the rear of the City Hall, in the hope of getting away in that direction. I went to climb a gate out of the yard when a bullet, fired by a soldier in the laneway outside, whizzed by my head. I jumped back into the yard. We now realised that escape was impossible, so we got into one of the carpenter's workshops where we were captured by the military.

I cannot remember the names of all those taken prisoner that night, but I do remember the following:- Terence McSwiney, Lord Mayor and O/C. Cork No. 1 Brigade; Sean Hegarty,



Vice O/C., Florrie O'Donoghue, Brigade I.O., Dom Sullivan, Brigade Adjutant; Liam Deasy, O/C. Cork No. 3; 'Sando' Donovan, O/C., City Battalion, and Mick Murphy, O/C. 2nd Battalion, Cork City. There were about 12 of us in all.

The military officer in charge posted sentries at either end of the workshop with orders to shoot if we attempted to escape. I was in a pretty awkward predicament, as I had in my pocket the dispatch from Florrie O'Donoghue, instructing me to shoot the R.I.C. man in Cobh. Terry McSwiney, too, had notes taken at our meeting. We collected in a group and Terry and I tore up our papers into small pieces and threw them into the wood shavings on the floor of the workshop. The "Tommy" spotted us and shouted not to destroy papers. I said 'O.K.' and threw some pieces to him; they, too, dropped into the shavings. The boys then 'milled around' so that it would be impossible for anybody to put the pieces of notes together again.

When the British officer arrived back to where we were the sentry reported about us destroying papers. Terry McSwiney and I were questioned. I said I had torn up a letter from a girl friend. Terry adopted a different attitude, saying that what had been destroyed were papers appertaining to his office as Lord Mayor. He also protested strongly of the insult to his office as chief citizen of the city. Terry was very dignified in his dealings then and subsequently with the British authorities.

Shortly before midnight we were marched under a strong military escort to Cork Barracks. On our way out of the yard of the City Hall, I managed to dump a razor (with my name on the case), extra socks and toothpaste behind a radiator. Terry McSwiney and I changed hats.

The British commandant of the detention barracks lined us up and told us that, owing to the late hour, he didn't propose, then, to have each man searched; instead, we were each given a canvas bag with a number on it and told to put everything in our possession into these bags. The Commandant assured us, on his word of honour, that each bag would be returned intact to us the following morning when the bags would be opened in our presence and the contents examined. As I emptied my pockets, I discovered to my surprise, three .45 revolver bullets in the lining of one of my waistcoat pockets. I dumped them quickly into my 'property bag', hoping for the best next morning,

The following morning we were brought into an office and told to turn out the contents of our 'property bags'. I put my hand into my bag, pulled up a Rosary beads and the three bullets, held up the beads and said: "Surely I am entitled to keep this". The officer present agreed, so I put the beads and the bullets into my pocket. When I got back into a cell a little later, I put the ammunition into the ventilator high up in the wall of the cell, where it was safe from discovery as things turned out.

All of us gave false names when questioned, with the exception of Terry McSwiney, who gave his correct name and title of "Lord Mayor of Cork". We were kept in Cork detention barracks for a day, when we went on hungerstrike. We were then transferred to the military barracks, where we were again interrogated by military intelligence officers. Needless to say, we denied having any connection with the I.R.A. or Sinn Fein. After five days in the barracks, we were astounded to learn that we were to be released; that is, all of us with the exception of Terry McSwiney. We could scarcely credit our good fortune on being released and we

lost no time in getting out of the city. It was lucky we did so, because, not two hours after we had left the barracks, a most intensive round-up took place in the city. Thousands of soldiers were engaged searching every conceivable building. It is my firm belief that the British military intelligence was so poor at the time that, with the exception of Terry McSwiney, who was a wellknown public man, they (the British) had no idea when they held us prisoners as to who we really were; but that, shortly after our being released, they realised, for what reason I cannot say, that they had, in fact, made a most important capture which they had let slip through their fingers.

Our comrade, Terry McSwiney, was not so fortunate as we were. He was transferred to Brixton Prison in England where he died after a prolonged hunger-strike on 25th October 1920.

Following my release and the continued imprisonment of Terry McSwiney, I was appointed Vice O/C. of Cork No. 1 Brigade. I was officially appointed to this post by the Brigade on McSwiney's death. This appointment, naturally enough, meant that I could spend little time with my own 4th Battalion in East Cork, as my Cork No. 1 Brigade area extended as far as Gougane Barra in West Cork. Diarmuid Hurley, captain of the Midleton Company, was appointed commandant of the 4th Battalion in my place, and Joseph Aherne, Midleton, Vice Commandant.

Early in the month of October 1920, Sean Hegarty and Florrie O'Donoghue of the Brigade staff went to Dublin to see Mick Collins in connection with a proposal to purchase arms in Italy, and I was told to have my passport picture ready to send up to Collins, as I was deputed to go to Italy and arrange for the purchase and shipment to Ireland of a cargo of arms and ammunition. The two brigade officers duly returned from Dublin with instructions for me to proceed to G.H.Q., Dublin,

for directions. I left Cork for Dublin on 2nd January 1921.

Details of the Italian arms venture have already been supplied to the Bureau of Military History under reference W.S.555.

I returned from Italy via Dublin and arrived back in Cork about the end of June 1921, and got in touch at once with Florrie O'Donoghue, the Brigade I.O. Together, we went on bikes to West Cork, where we made contact with the Brigade Flying Column, in the vicinity of Ballyvourney. We were in that district when the Truce came on 11th July 1921.

Signed: *M. Leary*  
 Date: *May 17<sup>th</sup> 56.*

Witness: *[Signature]*

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21 BURO STAIRE MILEATA 1913-21 No. W.S. 1,421
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