

W.S. 1559

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 1559.

Witness

Morgan Portley,  
Kishikirk,  
Caherconlish,  
Co. Limerick.

Identity.

Company Captain, Ballybricken, Co. Limerick.  
Battalion Adjutant.

Subject.

Activities of Ballybricken Company,  
5th Battalion, Mid-Limerick Brigade,  
and Mid-Limerick Flying Column, 1914-1921.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil.

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ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

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No. W.S. 1,559

STATEMENT BY MORGAN PORTLEY

Kishikirk, Caherconlish, Co. Limerick

I was born on 6th December 1897, and until the year 1921 resided at Caherelly, Grange, Co. Limerick. My father was born in the year 1832. He had been associated with the Fenian movement, was a fluent Irish speaker and had a wealth of Irish folklore. From him I first learned of the struggle for Irish freedom carried on during his early years.

In the summer of 1914, Michael Doyle, Ballybricken, who was then employed as clerk by Messrs. Cleeve Bros., Lansdowne, Limerick, and was himself a member of the Irish Volunteers in Limerick city, started a unit of the Irish Volunteers in Ballybricken, Co. Limerick. My brother Tom and I joined the unit on the first day of its formation, as did also my first cousin Patrick Casey (later executed in May 1921). I can remember some of the other members who joined the same day. They are: Michael Hennessy, Willie Hennessy, John O'Shaughnessy Andrew Garvey, Ed. O'Shaughnessy, John Casey and John Fitzgerald.

As the unit was small, approximately 16 members altogether, it was attached to Michael Doyle's own company in Limerick city battalion which, I believe, was C/Company, 1st Battalion. Our little unit continued to train, with weekly parades, until Easter 1916. Patrick Casey, Michael Doyle and myself occasionally attended parades in Limerick city.

On 15th August 1914, I went to Lough <sup>Gunn</sup> ~~...~~ where the Limerick city battalion and the Galtee Battalion were assembled to hear an address by Eoin MacNeill. A guard was posted on the outskirts of the camp and when some members of the R.I.C. tried to enter they were confronted with fixed bayonets. This was the first time I had seen the members of this force openly

defied and it had a refreshing effect, inasmuch as it showed that the Irish Volunteers meant business.

Our unit was ordered to parade with full kit on Easter Sunday 1916. Full kit for us meant very light equipment, for only about half the unit had shotguns and the amount of other equipment available was negligible. Fourteen members reported, and we marched to Killonan where we joined the Limerick Battalion camped in Batt Laffan's field. Towards evening, Rev. Fr. Hennessy, O.S.A., visited the camp and, about an hour later, we were told that we could leave the camp and return home. The Limerick City Battalion did not return to the city until Easter Monday.

During Easter Week the R.I.C. visited my home at Caherelly, Grange, Co. Limerick, and carried out a search for arms. The only gun in the house was hidden behind a partition and was not discovered.

There was little activity then for 12 months, but the members of our unit met regularly. The genuine members of our unit felt proud and took their Volunteer work more seriously after Easter Week, but a few fainthearted members failed to turn up for the Easter Sunday parade and had no further connection with the movement.

Some time during the year 1917, an officer from Headquarters - Commandant Peadar McMahon - (now Secretary, Dept. of Defence) visited our unit. Michael Doyle had by this time been placed in charge of a company in the 2nd Battalion in Limerick city, and I was elected captain to take charge of the unit in Ballybricken, Co. Limerick. Commandant McMahon called on me and informed me that he desired the help of our little unit in organising further units of Volunteers in adjacent parishes. From that time onwards, all my spare time in the evenings and on Sundays was spent in cycling around the area

organising units and drilling. Companies were formed in Fedamore, Caherconlish, Ballyneety, Boher and Croom. Companies already existed prior to Easter Week in Killonan, Castleconnell and Ballybricken.

Early in 1918, the following companies were formed into the 3rd Battalion:- Castleconnell, Murroe, Ballybricken, Caherconlish and Fedamore. The first and second battalions were in Limerick city. A fourth battalion was formed with headquarters in Patrickswell. A further reorganisation took place about September 1918, when the following companies were formed into the 5th Battalion:- Ballybricken, Caherconlish, Fedamore, Killonan, Ballyneety and Croom. Commandant Peadar McMahon from H.Q. convened a meeting of the company O/Cs. to be held at Ballybricken Church on 29.9.1918. Some company officers failed to turn up owing to a misunderstanding regarding time and place of meeting and the election was postponed until the following Friday evening. The following appointments were made at the subsequent meeting:

Richard O'Connell	O/C. Caherconlish Company to be battalion O/C. 5th Battalion, Mid Limerick Brigade.
Thomas O'Brien	1st Lieutenant Fedamore Company to be Vice Commandant .
Morgan Portley	O/C. Ballybricken Company to be adjutant.
Patrick Casey	1st Lieutenant Ballybricken Company to be quartermaster.

Company officers were subsequently elected by the different companies to replace the officers promoted to the battalion staff.

Sean Lynch became O/C. Caherconlish Company.

John Hartigan " O/C. Ballybricken Company.

The remaining company O/Cs. were:-

Sean Clifford	O/C. Fedamore Company
David Hennessy	O/C. Killonan Company
William Toomey	O/C. Ballyneety Company
William Burke	O/C. Croom Company

Responsibility for organisation and training fell to me as battalion adjutant and I visited two companies per week to give instruction in drill. About this time we also had a visit from Mr. Ernest Blythe.

With the threat of conscription the strength of each company was doubled and trebled in some cases. Ballybricken Company<sup>which</sup> was in existence since 1914, increased its strength from 16 to 80 members. During the 1918 election the 80 members of the company marched to a meeting in Kiltteely (which was the stronghold of Mr. T. Lundon, M.P. (Parliamentary Party) to support Dr. Hayes, Sinn Fein candidate. During the election campaign, I heard that Thomas Lundon, M.P., Irish Party candidate, was coming to Caherconlish one evening to hold a meeting. I had no time to organise an opposition party, so I went alone to Caherconlish and arrived just as Thomas Lundon was walking down the village with the local doctor and followed by about 100 men who were apparently supporters. It was just getting dark and I slipped out in front of the crowd and behind Mr. Lundon. I immediately called for cheers for Dr. Hayes and the crowd, thinking I was well supported, began to break up in little groups and, to my surprise, one group after another joined in the cheer for Dr. Hayes. Mr. Lundon and about 20 supporters went into a house in High St. and proceeded to hold their meeting. I went forward and pushed in the door and confronted Mr. Lundon who got very excited. An R.I.C. man with a rifle rushed in after me and, as he was turning around to eject me, I brought him to the ground at Mr. Lundon's feet. This ended Mr. Lundon's meeting and also his support in Caherconlish. In addition, it gave a great fillip to the Volunteer company in Caherconlish, which was not long in existence.

When the threat of conscription died down, the strength of each company in the battalion decreased considerably until,

finally, we had only about 16 men in each company. We had already collected shotguns in 1918 from local farmers, but in 1919 we carried out raids for arms on Unionists and other hostile elements. On one of these raids I secured a very fine miniature rifle operated by a bolt. The bolt, however, had been removed by the owner, Mr. L. Conway, Boherlode, Ballyneety, Co. Limerick, but he subsequently forwarded the bolt to me. This rifle proved of great use to us in giving instruction in the use of firearms.

The O/C. 2nd Battalion, Limerick City, pressed for the election of a brigade staff, and a meeting of all battalion O/Cs. in the 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th and 5th Battalions was convened to be held in the Railwaymen's Club at the corner of O'Connell St. and Hartstonge St. Limerick in 1919. I represented the 5th Battalion at this meeting which was presided over by General R. Mulcahy who, at the outset, appointed Commandant Sean Carroll and myself to conduct the election. There was, at this time, a dispute between the two city battalions and General Mulcahy pointed out that as Commandant Sean Carroll and myself belonged to battalions outside the city and had no connection with the dispute, we were in a neutral position and best suited to act as umpires.

We handed a piece of paper to each battalion representative with instructions to write the name of the candidate of his choice on the paper, which should then be folded. We collected and counted the votes and General Mulcahy announced the result for each vacancy. Commandant Peadar Dunne was elected Brigade O/C., Michael Doyle, Brigade Adjutant, and Martin Barry, Brigade Q.M. The officers of the 1st Battalion, Limerick City, failed to secure any post on the brigade staff and, as a result, took no further part in the movement.

Regular Brigade and Battalion Council meetings were now

held, but the 1st Battalion in Limerick City was not represented. The Brigade O/C., Peadar Dunne, gave considerable attention to the battalions in the county, but was more or less handicapped by the disunity in the city. Dispatches between Cork and Limerick became frequent, apparently as a test of 'communications' in the first instance, and each letter had to be endorsed to show time of receipt.

Early in 1919, an attempt was made by R.I.C. to arrest Commandant Richard O'Connell, O/C. 5th Battalion, after a hurling match at Caherconlish. The brothers Sean, Frank and Stephen Lynch, all of Caherconlish Company, freely used their hurleys on the R.I.C. and prevented the arrest. The following week, Commandant R. O'Connell, Captain Sean Lynch and his two brothers, Frank and Stephen, were arrested and sentenced to six months' imprisonment. On the occasion of their release from prison, contingents of Volunteers from Ballybricken, Caherconlish and Murroe met the released prisoners at Boher Station and escorted them to Caherconlish. I was in charge of the parade and gave clear instructions that they were not to attack the R.I.C. if they met on the way, but that, if the R.I.C. interfered with the parade, we would defend ourselves with every weapon we could lay our hands on. Extra R.I.C. had been drafted into the local barracks, but they did not appear or interfere with us. However, when marching past the R.I.C. barracks, one Volunteer from Murroe disregarded the instructions and threw a stone through one of the windows of the R.I.C. barracks. The R.I.C. did not leave their barracks, but, later that night when the parade had been dismissed, some members of the R.I.C. followed two men who were going home and used their batons on them. A general boycott of the R.I.C. was now carried out and one farmer who was in the habit of giving a lift to the R.I.C. sergeant's family on Sundays, found the

shafts cut from his car.

Caherconlish R.I.C. Barracks, which usually had a force of from six to eight R.I.C., was evacuated early in 1920, and the only occupants left behind were the wife and family of Sergeant Healy.

The Sinn Fein arbitration courts were working well in the battalion area at this time. I usually sat as a member of Ballybricken Court. The other members were James O'Neill, Creamery Manager, chairman, and Matthew Mitchell, farmer. Sittings of this Court were held as and when there were cases to be dealt with. On one occasion we dealt with a dispute between two farmers regarding the ownership of a three years old bullock.

I also sat as a member of the Fedamore Court and as a member of the Caherconlish Court. These three Courts dealt with all the cases that were formerly dealt with by Ballyneety Petty Sessions Court. John Power, Caherelly, Grange, Co. Limerick, a member of Ballybricken Company of Volunteers, acted as Court Clerk.

An order was issued from Headquarters to have all the unoccupied R.I.C. barracks destroyed on Easter Sunday night, 1920. My task was to destroy Caherconlish R.I.C. barracks which was still occupied by Sergeant Healy, his wife and family. I took about 12 men from Ballybricken Company, including Patrick Casey, Michael Hennessy, Tom Portley, Willie Hennessy, John O'Shaughnessy, Willie Doyle, John Hartigan, James O'Neill (creamery manager), Ned Daly, Tom Power, Ned O'Grady and John Fitzgerald. I was joined in Caherconlish by Sean Lynch, Stephen Lynch, Frank Lynch, Richard O'Connell and Mick Fitzgerald.

Members of the local company - Caherconlish - including the Battalion O/C., Richard O'Connell, were wellknown to Sergeant Healy, R.I.C. and, for that reason, were placed outside the building. I detailed two local Volunteers to be ready at the back door with a sledge to break down the door if the Sergeant refused to surrender. I went to the front door accompanied by



Patrick Casey (R.I.P.) and called on the sergeant to surrender. There was no reply, so I went around to the back and ordered the Volunteer with the sledge to break in the door. His efforts with the sledge were very poor and Patrick Casey took the sledge from him and with one mighty swing of the sledge drove the door into the kitchen, immediately jumping in after it. We were confronted by the sergeant's wife, who was in a very nervous state and she informed us that she had a baby only five days old. I told Mrs. Healy that we intended to burn the barracks, but that we would give her every help to get her family out. I also satisfied her that we had no intention of injuring her husband provided he surrendered quietly. Mrs. Healy then called out to her husband to come down and that we would not harm him. I went up the stairs to the upper landing and saw a manhole over my head. I called out to the sergeant to come down and, immediately, I saw a Colt automatic pistol appearing in the manhole. I jumped up and snapped it out of the sergeant's hands and placed it in my pocket without noticing that the hammer was up. The sergeant then came down and was wearing only his shirt and pants. Patrick Casey and I removed the family to the nearby house of Jack Creagh who, at first, did not want to let us in although his sympathies were with the R.I.C. Mrs. Healy told us that she wanted to get some clothes and blankets for the young baby. She told Patrick Casey where to get them, but when we returned to the barracks which was only 20 yards away, the Volunteers had already sprinkled the place with paraffin oil and had set fire to the staircase. Patrick Casey rushed up the blazing stairs and removed the children's clothes and blankets and handed them to Mrs. Healy who expressed her gratitude.

Evidently some over enthusiastic Volunteers had set fire to the staircase while there were some Volunteers still on the

second floor of the building and, only for our timely arrival back, some undoubtedly would have been caught in the blaze. When the building was fully alight, we withdrew to a field at the back. Before leaving, I called to Creagh's house to find out if Mrs. Healy and family were all right. Mrs. Healy had just fainted and I sent Volunteer Willie Doyle for the priest who arrived shortly afterwards. (I might add here that when I was later captured by R.I.C. about three miles from Caherconlish, Sergeant Healy did not identify me when paraded before him, but quietly notified a friend of mine that I had been arrested, and mentioned the name I had given).

Some time after the burning of Caherconlish Barracks, Commandant R. O'Connell received information that the wife of Constable Lawless, who resided in the village of Caherconlish, was seeking information for transmission to R.I.C. Ballybricken Company were again brought into action and removed the family of Constable Lawless from the house. This unpleasant task also fell to me <sup>Patrick Casey, myself</sup> and ~~Patrick Casey~~. John Hartigan and myself wrecked the roof of the house so that it would not again be occupied for some time.

About this time I also received a request from Jerry Treacy, Nicker - of the East Limerick Brigade - to come to Nicker, Pallasgreen, to deal with the wife of a man named O'Connell who was suspected of giving information to the R.I.C. Mrs. O'Connell was employed by the R.I.C. in the barracks at Pallasgreen, Co. Limerick. Jerry Treacy made arrangements to meet me outside the village of Nicker and Patrick Casey and myself cycled from Ballybricken to Nicker, arriving about 9 p.m. Treacy told me he wanted O'Connell and his wife removed from the house and that he would then get the local Volunteers to cut the thatch off the roof with a hay-knife. O'Connell, I understood, was an ex-British soldier of powerful physique.

The local Volunteers (Kilteely Company) could not come nearer than 100 yards to the house because Mrs. O'Connell knew them and X would not hesitate to swear away their lives. When the house was pointed out to me, Patrick Casey and I approached and knocked at the door. After a few minutes, the door was opened and we both entered the one-roomed building. O'Connell was in bed and I saw him putting his hand to the side of the mattress. I immediately stepped to his side and told him to get up and dress. He came out of the bed and, as he did so, I saw the handle of a dagger at the side of the mattress. I grasped the dagger while O'Connell quietly dressed himself. Mrs. O'Connell apparently knew the reason for being roused and, when informed of the charges against her, she did not reply. Several photos of R.I.C. and Black and Tans were found in the room. We marched Mrs. O'Connell and her husband out and took them about 200 yards to the house of O'Connell's brother. Before leaving, we gave both of them instructions to leave the district within 48 hours which they did.

Early in 1920, Patrick Casey and I were returning from a Brigade Council meeting when we were informed that a cycle patrol of R.I.C. had been drinking at Sheehan's Cross and were firing shots into trees all around the place. We were told that they were gone about half an hour in the direction of Inch St. Laurence on their way back to Pallasgreen. We decided to follow the patrol and pick up a few Volunteers on our way. We picked up my brother, Tom Portley and Michael Hennessy. I sent Tom across the fields to head off the patrol and get the Caherconlish Company into action. Patrick Casey and myself cut across the fields towards O'Grady's house at the foot of Knockroemason Hill. When we were about 100 yards from the road near O'Grady's house, we saw an R.I.C. man walking beside a bicycle. We ran straight towards the R.I.C. man under cover of a fence and, when we got

to the roadside, Patrick Casey was first out and hit the R.I.C. man a punch that put him staggering towards me, after which we both searched him and relieved him of his bicycle. We found some rounds of .303 ammunition, but he had no rifle. One pedal of his bicycle was broken and evidently the other R.I.C. man had taken his rifle. On examination of papers, we found that the policeman's name was Constable Daly and that he was from Longford. Two local Volunteers now came up and we took the constable across the hill to Newtown, Caherconlish. We approached within 300 yards of the village of Caherconlish and then sent out a scout to find out information about the remainder of the cycle patrol. We learned that the patrol had passed through the village before the Caherconlish Company could mobilise and had cycled fast towards Pallasgreen. I decided that there was no use in holding the R.I.C. man any longer and, after relieving him of his tunic and cap, I let him go.

About this time also we received information from Jerry Treacy, Nicker, Pallasgreen, to the effect that District Inspector McGettrick of Pallasgreen R.I.C. usually went to 10 a.m. Mass at Nicker on Sundays and left his Ford motor car outside the church. This was in the east Limerick Brigade area but we of the 5th Battalion, Mid Limerick Brigade decided to act quickly and, on the following Saturday evening, Commandant Richard O'Connell, Patrick Casey, Battalion Q.M., Sean Lynch, O/C. Caherconlish Company, Michael Hennessy, Ballybricken Company and a driver named Martin Quinn from Limerick travelled to Nicker, Pallasgreen, and stayed at the house of Jerry Treacy until Sunday morning. On arrival at the church in Nicker, there were two cars parked outside the church wall. One car belonged to Mr. Considine of Derk, Pallasgreen, and the other belonged to the District Inspector. Martin Quinn immediately

put Considine's car out of order so that the party could not be followed and then started up the D.I's. car and drove off travelling via Herbertstown, Raleighstown to Ballybricken area where I arranged with a local farmer - Mrs. Tierney - to have the car hidden in a remote corner of her farm. The Brigade O/C., East Limerick, insisted that as the car was taken in his area it should be handed over to him. This course was eventually agreed to and, about ten days later, Ned Treacy of Holycross arrived with a driver at my house and I went with them and handed over the car.

This car eventually fell into the hands of the Black and Tans while it was being used by Liam Hayes, East Limerick Brigade.

The main roads between Limerick and Tipperary and between Limerick and Kilmallock passed through our battalion area and consequently we were called on to block these roads for attacks on R.I.C. barracks at Ballylanders, Kilmallock, and Murroe. The biggest blockade, however, was put up on the Limerick-Kilmallock road on the night of the Kilmallock Barrack attack (27-28/5/'20). I personally took charge of the party of Ballybricken Volunteers who blocked the road from Ballyneety to Friarstown, Grange. Huge oak and beech trees were felled across the road making it completely impassable. About 5 a.m., when we were about to withdraw, William Wall arrived on a cycle from Kilmallock and gave us the information about the result of the attack on Kilmallock Barracks. It took two weeks <sup>completely</sup> ~~completely~~ to clear the road we had blocked.

About this time we received information from the Brigade I.O. that a party of British troops were to travel by train from Cahir to Limerick. The O/C. of our battalion, Richard O'Connell, decided to hold up the train at Boher, Co. Limerick. The plan was that one of our men should go to Dromkeen railway station and watch the passing train after which he was to go to the

stationmaster's quarters and 'phone particulars of the troops to me at Boher station, thereby giving us a chance to get ready for attack. Stephen Lynch, 1st Lieutenant, Caherconlish Company went to Dromkeen and immediately the train had passed, he 'phoned to me at Boher station, stating that there was only a small number of apparently unarmed troops on the train. The battalion O/C. and myself decided to hold up the train and take the mails for censorship. We ordered the stationmaster at Boher station - Mr. Meade - to get on the platform and stop the train. He very reluctantly obeyed us and we boarded the train. We first searched the soldiers on the train and found only a few souvenir revolvers which we handed back to the owners. We then took away the mail bags for censorship. I spent all next day going through the various letters addressed to the police and military and any other person whose loyalty was doubtful. I read a number of filthy letters from girls in England to Black and Tan members of the police force. These letters I burned, but all other letters were marked "censored by I.R.A." and returned to Ballysimon Post Office.

General Lucas, O/C. British forces in Fermoy, was captured in the summer of 1920, and responsibility for his custody was passed on to the different areas in which he was detained. Our battalion (5th Battalion, Mid Limerick Brigade) took over General Lucas from the 3rd Battalion, Castleconnell. Dr. John Corboy, Dispensary Doctor, Caherconlish, was away on holidays and we decided we would keep General Lucas and the officers guarding him in the dispensary residence in Caherconlish. Michael Brennan, O/C. East Clare Brigade, was in charge of General Lucas's guard. The prisoner and his guards were fixed up comfortably and some local people were allowed in to play cards with him. One evening when the General was about a week in Caherconlish, a cycling patrol of R.I.C. called to the

gate of the dispensary residence, and immediately, the guard began to barricade the windows, as it was thought that the R.I.C. had got information about General Lucas's whereabouts. The doctor's workman, Bill Hayes, was in the yard at the time and the sergeant in charge of the patrol called him and asked him if the doctor was home as he had some papers to be signed (the doctor was a magistrate). On being told that the doctor was away on holidays, the patrol withdrew. When the danger had passed, the General was informed of the reason for barricading the house and his luck in escaping a siege.

Some days later, it was decided to transfer the prisoner to McCarthy's house in Cahercorney (East Limerick Brigade area). This house was about five miles from Caherconlish on the Limerick-Herbertstown road about two miles west of Herbertstown. The transport for transfer of the prisoner was a pony and trap and Volunteers were posted at the various road junctions. The route taken was via Caherline, Caherelly and Raleighstown.

McCarthy's house was a one-storey long low building with iron bars set in the window-sills like a prison. It was thought impossible to escape through the windows on account of the iron bars and, for that reason, the guard sat outside General Lucas's bedroom door and not inside as he was accustomed to do. It was not observed, however, that the middle bar was broken on top and about one foot length of it was missing. Evidently General Lucas studied this position during the first few nights of his detention there and, one morning when the guard opened the door, he found that his prisoner had escaped. Michael Brennan called for me and asked me to send out local Volunteers to watch the roads all around the area. The Volunteers were called out and all the roads in the area patrolled, but there was no trace of the escaped prisoner. Evidently he kept to the fields until he cut across to the main

Limerick-Tipperary road and reached Pallas police barracks some time on the morning of 30th July 1920. When travelling to Tipperary on a military lorry which he got on at Pallas he ran into an ambush at Oola and was slightly wounded.

About August 1920, it was decided to carry out an ambush of British forces on the main Kilmallock-Limerick road at Ballinagarde, about six miles south of Limerick city near Lysaght's house. Sean O'Carroll, O/C. 3rd Battalion, and his battalion officers were invited to assist the 5th Battalion in this operation. Preparations were made and field exercises were carried out on the previous Sunday. I received a number of hand grenades with instructions to test one of them. I carried out the test in Ballybricken Castle which is a considerable distance from the road. The bomb exploded with great force. On the night before the ambush, Volunteers from Ballybricken, Fedamore, Ballyneety and Caherconlish assembled at Ballybricken Creamery. Final arrangements were made and we walked about four miles before reaching the site of the ambush position. Commandant Sean O'Carroll took charge of the operation. It was arranged that when the approach of the lorry was signalled by the outlying scouts, a hay cart would be pushed out from Lysaght's gate to block the road. Two men were detailed to push the hay cart when the signal would be received. Commandant O'Carroll was right opposite where the hay car was to be pushed out and I was beside him with bombs ready. Men with shotguns lined the wall for about 50 yards on the Limerick side and west of the road. Scouts were placed on the Kilmallock and Limerick side to signal the enemy approach and also on the Fedamore side to watch for any approach from Fedamore R.I.C. Barracks. A tree was almost cut through and held with ropes ready to let fall to block the road near Ballyneety to prevent enemy reinforcements from approaching from Limerick. The scout on



Kilmallock side (John Power) signalled the approach of a lorry and Commandant Sean O'Carroll put his hand to a branch of a tree and shook it. The two men who had lifted the shafts of the car and were pushing it out immediately dropped the shafts and stopped pushing the car as they thought Commandant O'Carroll was signalling them to stop, whereas he merely intended to hurry them up. The lorry drove past and the ambush arrangements failed.

After the lorry had passed, the order was given to retreat as there was no doubt that the R.I.C. in the lorry (there were about 12 R.I.C. in the lorry) had seen us. I had already withdrawn the pin from a bomb and had to reinsert it. The man in charge of the partly cut tree (James Portley) had to withdraw the ropes and let the tree fall after the lorry had passed. We had to disperse very quickly and retreated towards Ballybricken. About half an hour later, several lorries of military and police arrived on the scene from Limerick. This was our first attempted ambush and we all felt very disappointed at its failure. That evening, two Volunteers - Michael Tierney and John Power - both of Ballybricken, were cycling to Caherconlish when they were overtaken by a lorry of police about a mile from Caherconlish. Tierney threw his bicycle against the fence and made off across the fields. Power cycled on and was arrested by the R.I.C. who brought him to the village of Caherconlish where they placed him against the wall and lined a firing party in front of him in an effort to frighten him into giving information. Power calmly faced his attackers and asked for time to say a prayer if he was going to be shot. This act enraged the R.I.C. and they beat him with the butts of their rifles, leaving him lying on the ground. When they had gone, Power made his way home and called to me to tell me what had happened.

During the winter of 1919-20, my brother Tom and myself had been sleeping in hay barns within a radius of two miles of home. In the Spring of 1920, I decided to take my own mattress and blankets to an empty farmhouse away in the fields near the old castle in Ballybricken. Michael Hennessy, Patrick Casey, my brother and myself went there every night to sleep. After about two months and, in consultation with the battalion O/C., Richard O'Connell, we decided to form a flying column from the members of the 5th Battalion already on the run. We were joined in our new billet by Commandant Richard O'Connell, Captain Sean Lynch, Caherconlish, Stephen and Frank Lynch, Caherconlish, James and Patrick Purcell, Highpark, Caherconlish, and later by others. At night we were visited by local Volunteers. Barrack life for us commenced in earnest and Commandant O'Connell ordered a dozen tea mugs from a local tinsmith named Mary Sheridan. At first we had our breakfast and tea in the 'Shack' as we called it, and went out to local houses for our dinner.

One evening, James Purcell and Frank Lynch went across the fields to Hennessy's shop. While they were in the shop a lorry of military had come within half a mile of the house and then left the lorry and walked to Hennessy's house. Their approach was not noticed until they were coming in the gate. James Purcell, who was then only a mere youth of about 17 years, had his back turned to the fire and slipped his revolver into a pot of bailing cabbage. Frank Lynch was caught with the revolver in his possession and was taken away in the lorry. At the same time, we heard the buzzing of the lorry and decided to attack it when it would be leaving my house, as we knew they would raid my house when in the locality. We moved up to a bend in the road at Killeen Quarry and as we took up positions James Purcell arrived to tell us that Frank Lynch was arrested and was in the lorry. We heard the officer talking to my

mother and we later watched it pass but could not open fire as we would endanger the life of the prisoner, Frank Lynch. We had not time to put down a road block. Frank Lynch was taken to Pallas police barracks and was later sentenced and sent to Frongoch Detention Camp.

In May 1920, Limerick City Volunteers commandeered an Overland motor car from an enemy supporter. The car was sent on to me at Ballybricken to have it hidden for some time. After about two weeks we brought the car out on the road intending to use it, but unfortunately it would not start and we were obliged to push it for about two miles to a different hiding place. We obtained a Ford car which we used for transferring our mattresses and bedding from our shack in Ballybricken to the shack at Inch St. Laurence, and also to the shack at High Park. During the summer of 1920, we kept on changing our billet between the three shacks, staying about a week in each place in turn and using the Ford car for transport. On one occasion, the Ford car refused to start and Mr. Guerin of the Central Garage, Limerick, came out to the shack and took the engine down. When the job on the car had been completed, we decided to load the mattresses on the car and let it run down the steep hill, as it was thought it would start easily. About 50 yards down the hill, there was a sharp turn in the boreen and, on approaching this bend, I was sitting on top of the mattresses and I saw that the engine had no notion of starting. The car was gathering speed, running freely down hill<sup>x</sup> and no brakes. So I decided to jump off and bring my rifle with me. I jumped right into a well on the side of the road, but fortunately it was not very deep. Almost immediately, the car hit the sharp corner and was turned upside down, pinning the driver (James O'Connor) underneath. I went immediately to his rescue and found that the mattresses had

x. 500 feet over sea level

saved him from being crushed beneath the car.

We were obliged to return to the shack on top of the hill of Knockroe and fix our mattresses and bedding there for the night. The following day was Sunday and some of the column went to neighbouring houses for dinner. I remained at the shack and about 2 p.m. our sentry reported that enemy forces were halted at Pust, about a mile from Caherconlish, and were approaching our position. I immediately placed the few men I had left in positions behind a fence high above the level on which the enemy were approaching. We had a perfect view of the country between us and the enemy and our positions were almost impregnable. We kept the enemy under observation for half an hour, but after travelling about 100 yards up the hill, they suddenly decided to retire to their lorries and drove away. Evidently at the outset they had seen some of our men walking on the side of the hill and decided to attack us, but on second thoughts, realised that they could not approach our positions without incurring serious casualties. In view of the possibility that the enemy would return with reinforcements, we decided to pack up and transfer our bedding to the shack in Highpark.

In October 1920, we received a communication from the O/C. East Limerick Brigade to the effect that it was intended to carry out an ambush of enemy forces on the main Kilmallock-Limerick road at Grange. A meeting of officers was held at the house of Robert Ryan, O/C. Lough Gur Company, East Limerick Brigade, to arrange details of the proposed ambush. I was asked to submit a sketch of the site of ambush at Grange, which I did. On a cold bleak morning, about the first week in November 1920, the members of East and Mid Limerick flying columns took up positions at Grange. Donnchadh O'Hannagain, O/C. East Limerick flying column, took charge of operations. Sentries and outposts were placed at Bruff and Limerick sides of the main body of

Volunteers. I was placed in John O'Neill's yard inside the wall, standing on a table so that I could look out over the high wall. I had eight bombs and had instructions from the O/C. to open the ambush by bombing the first lorry.

The approach of the enemy was signalled by the sentry on Grange Hill (about 1 mile south of the ambush position). When the lorries approached within half a mile of our position, it was discovered that there were from 8 to 10 lorries of British troops. Commandant O'Hannigan approached my position and said: "We will let them pass". A few minutes later, when the first lorry was within 200 yards of my position, Commandant O'Hannigan again approached me and said: "Fire into them; we will make it an unsafe road for them".

I waited until the first lorry, which appeared to be a four-ton Leyland with high sides, was right opposite me. After releasing the spring, I dropped the bomb in the middle of the lorry. There were between 30 and 35 men in the lorry and they were all standing up. Immediately the soldiers saw the bomb they started throwing themselves out at both sides. The bomb exploded with terrific force. When I looked over the wall again the officer in the second lorry was standing in the middle of the road, about 30 yards away, shouting orders to his men. The men in the second lorry, who were lucky enough to get clear, were taking up positions at both sides of the road. I pulled the pin out of a second bomb and threw it as far back towards the officer's position as I could. There was another explosion and, almost immediately, the enemy started firing from their positions at the side of the road. Splinters of stones from the top of the wall were now hitting me in the face and, as I was out of range with bombs, I did not throw any more. I peeped over the wall again and the British officer was moving across the road shouting orders to his men. He certainly gave great

encouragement to his men and showed complete disregard for his own safety.

The East Limerick flying column on the west side of the road opened rifle fire after the explosion of the first bomb. This rifle fire had little effect on the enemy owing to the promptness with which the British officer got his men down to the prone position at both sides of the road and the fact that only one lorry of troops came right into the ambushade. Another factor which made the rifle and shotgun fire of our men ineffective was that our men were behind stone walls and they could not, without unduly exposing themselves, direct their fire low enough to hit a man in the prone position, while the enemy kept up a continuous fire, raking the tops of the walls at both sides of the road. After the first burst of fire all the Volunteers on the north side of O'Neill's house (Limerick side), including East and Mid Limerick flying columns, found themselves in useless positions. Those of us who occupied O'Neill's yard and a few men in nearby houses were the only ones in contact with the enemy. After about ten minutes, the enemy brought an armoured car on to the bridge over the Comogue river and from there poured heavy machine gunfire into our positions. The bullets were ricocheting off the walls of O'Neill's house and, before I stepped down off the table, I saw that our men were retreating across the fields on the eastern side of the road. Evidently Commandant O'Hannigan, realising that he could not inflict any further damage on the enemy, had given the signal for retreat. I heard a blast of a whistle previously, but did not know that it was the signal for retreat. There was a high wooden gate leading from O'Neill's yard to the road and I saw one Volunteer officer open this and fire out into the road with a shotgun. I thought it a brave act to stand in the open gateway to fire out at the enemy, but at the same

time, very foolish, and I shouted at him to close the gate. I had hardly the words out of my mouth when a British officer fired point blank at me through the open gateway but, fortunately, missed me. I had six bombs left in my haversack and if he chanced to hit one of them I and everybody near me would be blown to pieces. However, as he turned around he was apparently wounded by a shot from one of our riflemen and fell to the ground. All were now retreating. I went to the rear of the yard where I stayed for a few minutes watching the open gate. No further attempt was made to follow us up, so I retreated across the fields to find my companions lined up about 800 yards away. On my way back I found a bag containing 160 rounds of .303 ammunition belonging to the East Limerick flying column which I brought back with me. I saw the lorry I had bombed before I retreated and could see that large pieces of wood were blown out of the side next me. I am sure there must have been a number of casualties as the soldiers appeared to be packed tightly in a standing position in the first lorry.

Two Volunteers who occupied Bulfin's house received slight wounds and were conveyed to safety by members of the local Grange Company. Before the ambush commenced, I secured a table which I placed against the high wall to enable me to see over the wall. I was, therefore, the only member of our party in O'Neill's yard who could actually see the target before throwing the bombs. The other men near me stood on the ground and had to throw their bombs over the high wall without seeing the target or the result.

The ambush was planned for lorries coming from the Limerick side and, when outposts reported lorries coming from the opposite direction, Commandant O'Hannigan decided to attack them only at the last moment. As they approached our position, he at first decided to let them pass, but subsequently changed his mind when he considered that it was after midday and that it would be unsafe to remain in the position any longer waiting for lorries from the Limerick side. He decided to make a sharp

quick attack in order to make the Kilmallock-Limerick road unsafe for enemy movements.

The East and Mid Limerick flying columns retreated until they reached Coole Cross about one mile east of the ambush position. There we all sat on the fence and talked about our experiences. It was generally agreed that our positions were not good enough to meet the large enemy forces encountered particularly when we were prepared to meet them coming from the opposite direction. We undoubtedly had inflicted a number of casualties and there was general satisfaction in our organised retreat.

The East Limerick flying column retreated to Lough <sup>Garry</sup> ~~gan~~, and the Mid-Limerick flying column retreated to Ballybricken. The following morning, Patrick Casey, John Hartigan and Michael Tierney were having breakfast at Casey's house in Ballybricken when two lorries of British soldiers came within 100 yards of the house. The three men ran across the open field at back of Casey's house. Immediately, fire was opened on them by the British soldiers from a stack of oats at the back of my mother's house. Half a mile east I was with the flying column billeted at McCarthy's farmhouse and heard the firing. I went out to investigate the firing and came to high ground about 400 yards from my own house from which the enemy were firing. I saw Casey, Hartigan and Tierney run for 200 yards under fire and all three escaped unhurt and reached me safely. The firing then ceased. The lorries swung round and approached our position by a road leading to Ballyhudane. I immediately returned to the flying column and led them safely on to Martin Lynch's house on the hill of Knockroemason. The three men who were fired on had been detailed with other Volunteers to <sup>load</sup> ~~blow~~ up a train at Boher on which members of the murder gang were supposed to be travelling. They did, in fact, board the train, but did not



find the enemy they were seeking. This was the second time in which the train at Boher was held up as a result of incorrect information furnished by Brigade H.Q. in Limerick city. Evidently the source of the information was not reliable.

We received instructions from Brigade H.Q. to commandeer railway tools stored at Dromkeen and Boher railway stations. Evidently it was the intention to tear up the railway line between Limerick and Limerick Junction if the line was used for transport by the enemy. We met local Volunteers from Ballybricken and Caherconlish at Grange about one mile east of Boher. Commandant O'Connell took half the party to Boher and I took the others to Dromkeen. We brought away all the railway tools and hid them on local farms, but we were never called on to use them.

We decided about this time (November 1920) to carry out an ambush at Cloughnadromin near the house of William Walters, where there was a thick hedge at one side of the road and high beech and oak trees at the other side. The O/C. Killonan Company objected to the proposed site of the ambush, because the local creamery (Killonan) had been burned by enemy forces and had just been rebuilt. He held that the creamery would again be burned down and that it would cause considerable inconvenience and expense to local farmers who had given the movement generous support. He was probably right in his contention, but an order was received from headquarters suspending him. The ambush was not then proceeded with as no support could be expected from the local company.

While billeted at the shack in Shrahane, we had occasional visits from members of the East Clare flying column including Michael Brennan, Austin Brennan, Patrick Brennan, Michael Hehir, Bill McNamara and Jack McCormack. One night, our sentry (Ned O'Dwyer, Limerick city) saw a car approaching the shack about

fifty yards away. He shouted "Halt" but evidently was not heard by the driver, who kept the car moving. O'Dwyer then fired straight at the car putting a bullet through the wind-screen. Michael Brennan was in the car and had a narrow escape.

On New Year's morning (1st January 1921), a party of Auxiliaries known as the 'murder gang' raided the house of Mr. Michael Hannon, Ballybrood, and ordered out Richard Leonard, who was a brother in law of Mr. Hannon, and a first cousin to Commandant Richard O'Connell. They shot Richard Leonard a few yards from his sister's home. The flying column was billeted at the time at the shack in Inch St. Laurence. The evening after the murder, we received a report that a lorry of Tans were raiding O'Connell's house in Caherconlish. We had a motor car and decided to have a running fight with the Tans. The plan was to drive into the village at full speed and fire hand grenades and revolver shots at the Tans as we passed. When we arrived in the village, we were informed that the Tans had just left and we decided to follow them to Caherline Chapel where the corpse of Richard Leonard lay. Patrick Cregan was the driver of our car and, while travelling at a fast pace up the Greenane Road, we struck an ass, but this did not halt us and we drove on, but we were not able to catch up on the Crossley tender. We returned to Caherline Church where we said a prayer for the soul of Volunteer Richard Leonard. The following day we met the funeral at Dunvullen and halted it while we fired three volleys over the hearse and coffin.

Commandant Richard O'Connell, Captain Sean Lynch and myself decided to ambush the Tans who usually travelled in two lorries between Pallasgreen and Fedamore and carried out raids in Fedamore, Ballybricken and Caherconlish. Commandant O'Connell suggested that we would carry out the ambush at Fust, about half a mile east of Caherconlish. The following day, we went

to Pust to inspect the site of the ambush. The site was regarded as not very suitable, but we nevertheless decided that it was the best available in that district. Before we left Pust, Lieutenant Stephen Lynch of Caherconlish Company arrived and reported that policemen (including R.I.C. & Tans) usually travelled between Pallasgreen and Fedamore on the first Thursday of each month and that they never returned the same road as they went. It was decided, therefore, that either going or coming the lorries would pass between Caherline and Dromkeen and that there was an ideal position for an ambush at the junction of two byroads one mile west of Dromkeen Cross. The date of ambush was fixed for the first Thursday in February 1921, and it was decided to ask for the co-operation of the East Limerick flying column.

The winter of 1920/21 was very severe and the fields were flooded in many places, with the result that those of us who were on full-time active service with the flying column suffered considerably from wettings. I got a severe attack of sciatica and, towards the end of January 1921, I was unable to move my right leg except with the greatest pain. The column O/C decided that I should go to hospital under an assumed name and receive treatment. I was taken to Limerick County Infirmary on 31.1.1921. The House Doctor was Dr. Moloney, and her brother, Con Moloney, was operating with the South Tipperary flying column. The Matron was Miss Quinn, who was an outstanding supporter of Sinn Fein and the I.R.A. I entered the hospital under the name of Michael Crehan, but my correct name was known to the Matron and doctor. They kept me informed of happenings outside. I was only three or four days in hospital when William Wall (brother of Brigadier Sean Wall) called to see me and informed me of the result of the ambush at Dromkeen where eleven policemen had been wiped out.

A day or two afterwards, I was informed that my home had been burned by British military as an official reprisal for Dromkeen ambush. My aunt's house was also destroyed as an official reprisal, as was also the homes of my companions, Michael Hennessy, Ballybricken, and Sean Lynch of Caherconlish. An attempt to burn the home and business premises of Richard O'Connell's father at Caherconlish was not successful.

After a few weeks in hospital I was considerably improved, but the doctor said I could not leave for a few weeks more. One Sunday morning, Timothy Murphy and Ned Punch of Limerick City called to me at the hospital and asked me to remain inside the hall door of the hospital until they would return and to be ready to open the door quickly, as they were likely to be followed. They were engaging in an attempt to rescue Commandant Peadar Dunne, Michael Colivet and others who were held prisoners in the nearby Ordnance Barracks. Shaw's Bacon Factory adjoined the barracks and a hole was to be bored through the barrack wall from Shaw's factory. During the operation an armoured car and some Crossley tenders loaded with troops arrived in the barracks and the rescue was abandoned when the breach in the wall had almost been completed.

A few weeks later, I decided against the doctor's instructions that I was well enough to leave hospital and I made my way to Hennessy's house at Ahabeg, Killonan, where I hoped to learn of the whereabouts of the flying column. I was informed that the column had gone to the North Cork area (near Kildorrery) and had left word for me to await their return, as they were expected back in a few days. One member of the column, Michael Hennessy, who was ill when the column moved off, was left behind to await the return of the column. Michael Hennessy stayed at David Hennessy's house in Ahabeg, Killonan, and I stayed at the house of Miss Margaret Hennessy, Ahabeg, Killonan, Caherconlish.

At this time (April 1921), householders were obliged to have a list of the occupants of the house on the back of the kitchen door. I scanned this list the first night I spent at Miss Hennessy's house and noticed the name Martin Madden on the list. Miss Hennessy informed me that Martin Barry, Brigade Q.M., Limerick City, had stayed there under the name of Martin Madden. I decided, therefore, in case of a raid, to give the name Martin Madden as an employee of Miss Hennessy. The only other people in the house were Miss Hennessy's sister (now Mrs. E.D. O'Farrell), her mother and her uncle (Dan Crowe). All agreed to give my name as Martin Madden in case of a raid.

A few nights later, Tim Murphy and Ned Punch, both of Limerick City, called and decided to stay that night. Murphy and Punch had been operating in Limerick City and were much sought after by Black and Tans. They had taken part in a bomb attack on Black and Tans at Carey's Road, Limerick, that evening. Murphy, Punch and myself slept in the same bed that night. About 5 a.m. next morning, I heard the rattle of milk tankards in the farmyard and immediately jumped out of bed and looked out the window. The yard was full of Tans. I roused Murphy and Punch, but before we were fully dressed, we heard the Tans coming up the stairs. Murphy went up a manhole in the ceiling and handed his revolver to Miss Mary Anne Hennessy before doing so. Punch and I had no time to hide any place. There was no possibility of escape as the house was surrounded on all sides. The Tans, led by Sergeant Horan, R.I.C., were carrying ash plants as well as rifles. The Tans had already arrested Michael Hennessy at the adjoining farmhouse and pushed him into the room where Punch and I were dressing. They then started using the ashplants and the butts of rifles on us. They recognised Punch and found his revolver in the room. They started questioning Punch who, by this time, thought he had no chance and did not

pretend to hear them. One R.I.C. man asked Funch was he deaf and, immediately, at the top of his voice, Funch replied "I am". Then the beatings started all over again and the walls of the room were spattered with our blood.

One Tan spotted the manhole in the ceiling and climbed up to find Tim Murphy standing in front of him. He shouted to Murphy to get down and made a kick at Murphy's head as he went down.

The four of us were taken across the fields to the shack at Shrahane, about a mile away, and we were beaten with the ashplants all the way. When crossing the River Groody, a Tan tried to knock me into the river, but I succeeded in jumping clear. Particular attention was given to Tim Murphy who had served in the British army during the first world war and was now an outstanding fighter in the ranks of the I.R.A. Michael Hennessy and myself were not identified as we did not belong to the city. Hennessy gave his name as Michael McDonnell of Killonan.

As we moved on, we found that the round-up had covered the entire Killonan, Bohermore, Inch St. Laurence and Caherconlish districts. All enemy forces finally met at Bohermore Cross, about three miles west of Caherconlish. The prisoners were brought before the former police sergeants of the area for identification. I gave my address as Caherline, Caherconlish, and was brought before Sergeant Healy, R.I.C. whom I had captured and burned his barracks at Caherconlish, 12 months previously. Sergeant Healy knew me well, but was evidently grateful to me for treating himself and his wife and family well when he was captured. He did not disclose my name, but, later in the day, he informed a friend of mine that I had been captured.

We were subsequently taken to William St. R.I.C. Barracks where we were made wash our faces in a tub of water at the end

of the yard. When we stooped down our heads were pushed into the tub of water with the butt of a rifle. We were then quickly turned around and with the water dripping from our faces, we were photographed, evidently for the purpose of making us look like criminals for propaganda purposes.

We were kept in the cell in William St. Barracks without removing our clothes for 13 days and nights. Every day we were visited by Sergeant Horan and members of the Black and Tan force and kicked and beaten. They were constantly bringing people to the spyhole in the cell door to peep at us, apparently in an effort to identify Hennessy and myself. One day the door of the cell was thrown open and about twelve R.I.C. men and Tans came into the cell. One low-sized man dressed in R.I.C. uniform, pointed at me and said: "There is Portley". Sergeant Horan, R.I.C., then approached Michael Hennessy (who had given his name as McDonnell) and asked him to state his correct name, which he did. One R.I.C. officer referred to us as the "Dromkeen murderers". Sergeant Horan and the Black and Tans started kicking us around the cell. I was ordered to remove all my clothes, as they said I was wounded. Apparently an enemy patrol had a running fight with Patrick Casey and John O'Shaughnessy of the Mid Limerick flying column at Ballybricken a short time previously and the patrol reported that I had been there and that I was wounded. We were visited in the cell at William St. Barracks by some notorious R.I.C. officers including District Inspector Sullivan, who kept on cursing and threatening us.

The following day, we were taken in armoured cars to Limerick Prison and on arrival there I was told that my first cousin, Patrick Casey, had been executed in Cork, by order of a drumhead courtmartial, and that three other members of the Mid Limerick flying column - James Horan, Tim Hennessy and

P. Starr had been killed in action at Shraharla on the Cork-Limerick border.

About a week later, Michael Hennessy and myself were taken from the prison in Limerick and placed in an armoured car. We were brought to the military barracks to be tried by court-martial. I was charged with "waging war against His Majesty the King" and with wilfully misleading a police officer in the discharge of his duty.

Sergeant Horan and Sergeant Leech, R.I.C., gave evidence. When asked whether I had anything to say, I gave a little speech which I had been rehearsing in my cell some days previously, the substance of which was: "As this Court represents a Government that has maintained its authority here by brute force against the will of the Irish people, I do not recognise it". This was taken as a plea of "not guilty".

While waiting in the room before the trial began, Michael Hennessy and myself were sitting on a bench opposite the door. Sergeant Horan, R.I.C. and Sergeant Leech, R.I.C., came to the door and I heard Sergeant Horan saying to Sergeant Leech: "Portley is in the corner and Hennessy is on the outside". The object of this was that Leech, who was not engaged in the 'round up' in which we were captured was to take the place of another policeman to give evidence regarding the finding of an old Martini rifle in a haystack at the farmhouse where Mick Hennessy had been captured. The policeman who actually found the rifle was giving evidence against Timothy Murphy and Ned Punch and identifying them as the men who threw the bombs at a patrol in Carey's road. He had sworn that he was not engaged in the 'round up' and that he picked out Murphy and Punch in an identify<sup>ication</sup> parade at William St. Barracks, Limerick. This was, indeed, perjury, for that policeman had been present at the capture of Murphy and Punch and he had sworn that he had not



seen them since the night of the bomb attack in Carey's Road, Limerick, until he picked them out at the identity parade. Murphy and Funch were condemned to death and Hennessy and myself were sentenced to two years with hard labour.

The day before the date fixed for execution, I met Murphy and Funch at Mass in the prison chapel. When leaving the prison chapel, Murphy turned to me and said: "If I am executed in the morning, send out word that the fight is to be intensified in Limerick city and that every man serving the British Government in any capacity must be made feel that he is helping the enemy and subject to punishment accordingly." At this point, Funch turned to Murphy and said: "Hold your tongue, man, you are going before your God in the morning".

At the last moment, through representations made to the Lord Lieutenant in Dublin, Funch and Murphy were reprieved. The most remarkable fact about Murphy and Funch was that right up to the day fixed for execution, they showed no sign of strain or fear and maintained their usual good humour.

About this time I also met in prison Thomas Keane, who was executed on 4th June 1921.

The Truce came on shortly afterwards, but we had to remain in prison until December 1921.

Signed: Morgan Pontley

Date: 14.1.57

Witness: John J. Daly

