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**ORIGINAL**

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21  
BURO STAIDE MILITAIR 1913-21  
No. W.S. 1,130

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 1,130.....

**Witness**

Edmond Power,  
52 Slievekeale Road,  
Waterford.

**Identity.**

2nd Battalion Adjutant, West Waterford Brigade;  
Battalion adjutant later.

**Subject.**

West Waterford Brigade, 1917-1923.

**Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.**

Nil

File No. S. 2424.....

# ORIGINAL

STATEMENT OF EDMUND POWER

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
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52 Slievekeale Road, Waterford

I was born in 1896 in the parish of Clonea (Power) in the townland of Killerguile, which is about four miles south of Carrick-on-Suir, and is situated in the County of Waterford.

I was the youngest of a family of thirteen children. My parents belonged to the farming community and my early school-days were spent at Clonea National School.

As a young chap I played hurling with the Clonea Club and I can safely say I always had a strong national outlook. This I attribute mainly to my parents, my father being a very ardent 'Land Leaguer' and my mother a fluent Gaelic speaker, as was many another inhabitant of Clonea at that time.

I left school at 15 years of age and was apprenticed to the grocery and spirit business of Percy Kirwan, the wellknown athlete, in Kilmacthomas, Co. Waterford. In that village I wasn't long until I had a hurling team going.

Although a company of National Volunteers was started in Kilmacthomas, sometime in 1914, I wasn't at all interested in joining up. I had a very poor opinion of these Volunteers if it came to fighting for freedom, and I disapproved strongly of the pro-British influence of John Redmond, the head of the National Volunteers, as he was regarded then.

After the Rising of 1916, a Sinn Féin Club was started in the village and I became a member. This, I would say, was my first real contact with the movement for independence. As a member I helped in the various collections for funds to aid relatives of men imprisoned by the British and assisted in removing British army recruiting posters from walls and gates.

I knew Pat Keating of Comeragh for quite a while. Pat was captain of the Kilrossanty company of Irish Volunteers. Kilrossanty is about four miles west of Kilmacthomas and one

and a half miles south of Comeragh village. The latter is situated on the foothills of the Comeragh mountains in West Waterford, where Pat Keating lived.

In consultation with Pat Keating, it was decided to start a Volunteer company in Kilmacthomas. We failed to get a sufficient number of men to form a company; as a matter of fact, we started with three men only, viz: George Kiely, Mark Kiely and myself. I was regarded as being in charge of what was looked upon as an outpost of the Kilrossanty Company. It was close to the Truce in 1921 before a proper company got going in Kilmacthomas.

The formation of this outpost took place in late 1917, so far as I can remember; our activities were mainly concerned with the usual training routine, drilling and suchlike, with the Kilrossanty Company. We were engaged on intelligence work as a rule, watching movements of R.I.C. patrols and reporting them to Pat Keating. Our numerical strength gradually increased to six or eight men.

I should mention here that the house of the Cullinane family in Kilmacthomas was a famous rendezvous for the local Volunteers and indeed for any Volunteer on the run from another area. The four Cullinan girls were active members of Cumann na mBan, and dispatches passing through the district were dealt with by the Cullinane girls. All through the subsequent fight, Cullinane's was an open house, day or night, for members of the West Waterford flying column whenever they wished to avail of the hospitality of the Cullinane family.

About mid-1918, things began to get a move on in our district, when a raid for mails on the local postman took place. Pat Keating was in charge, with his brother Willie, and myself and three others, whose names I do not now remember. The three mentioned were armed with revolvers and wore handkerchiefs over their faces, as all were wellknown in the area.

The postman was held up a mile or so from Kilmacthomas and the mails taken from him. These were subsequently examined and any letters addressed to members of the R.I.C. or their relatives were opened and read to ascertain if any information concerning Volunteer activities was being passed. Any such letters, when read, were closed up again, marked "examined by I.R.A." and re-posted at Kilmacthomas. I cannot say whether any worthwhile information was obtained as a result of our action. Whilst the incident I have related was of minor importance, it, at least, did mark the opening of active service in the Kilmacthomas district which, I might add, could not, by any stretch of imagination, be regarded as strongly republican; on the contrary, the people generally were apathetic, if not openly hostile to us.

The year 1918 was rather uneventful from the point of view of armed action, with the exception of the period of the General Election held late in that year (December 1918). Needless to say, every effort was made by our small group to help in the success of the nominee of the Sinn Féin Party, the late Cathal Brugha.

I remember quite well our first raid for arms which took place early in 1919, on the house of a man named Flavin in Kilmacthomas.

As I have previously stated, I was then employed in Percy Kirwan's bar and grocery shop in Kilmacthomas. One evening, this man Flavin, accompanied by a friend whom I knew to have strong Unionist sympathies, came in for a drink. As I served the drinks I overheard the two men talking about the I.R.A. raiding for arms and I heard Flavin say he had a Winchester 'repeating' rifle at home, that he had brought it to the R.I.C. Barracks at Kilmacthomas for safe keeping, but the police sergeant told him he (Flavin) could keep it at home, as it would be safe enough there. Having 'tipped off' Pat Keating,

the latter with his brother, Willie, myself and a few others called to Flavin's a night or two afterwards. When told that this was an I.R.A. raid for arms, Flavin denied he had a gun, saying he had handed up the gun he had to the R.I.C. We told him we knew he had a gun and ordered him to produce it, whereupon he crossed the road with us to a garage and handed up the Winchester fifle, which was in perfect condition.

Shortly afterwards the shop where I worked, i.e., Percy Kirwan's, was raided by Pat Keating and some others of the boys - I had told them about a .22 rifle in the house owned by Kirwan - I answered the door when the boys knocked and let them in. The boss then came downstairs and gave them the .22 rifle. Next day the R.I.C. called to Kirwan's and asked for particulars about the raiders. I told them that the armed men all had Cork accents to put them off the 'scent'. Shortly after this, probably about May 1919, Kilmacthomas R.I.C. barracks was evacuated.

When the R.I.C. left we took over police duties, arresting persons accused of stealing, keeping a check on licensed premises and doing generally what the R.I.C. used do. By now, our members had increased to about a dozen men, with myself in charge as Lieutenant, but we were still regarded as an outpost to Kilrossanty. It was in or about this time - Spring 1919 - that Moses Roche, a member of the Waterford city battalion, came to Kilmacthomas, where he was employed as clerk on the railway. This man was a valuable addition to our strength as subsequent events proved. He was most useful in passing on information re movements of British troops by rail and, in addition, he helped to swell our meagre supply of arms by bringing with him, from Waterford, two revolvers with a quantity of ammunition.

The remainder of the year 1919 was taken up in training, lectures on arms and suchlike. In this we were helped by an

ex-British soldier whose name I cannot now recall.

In the year 1920 things were beginning to move; raids for mails became more frequent and occasional raids for arms on farmhouses - friendly or otherwise - were taking place. Our small unit was fairly well equipped with shotguns and revolvers as a result of these raids. An instance of how we acquired a parabellum revolver might be of interest. We got news that a local butcher had such a revolver but had given it up to an R.I.C. man stationed at Stradbally, Co. Waterford. A threatening letter was sent to the butcher giving him three days to hand the gun to us or else - the letter added that the I.R.A. would call for the weapon to the house of the R.I.C. man's wife, named Liston, who lived in Kilmacthomas. When the three days had expired, George Kiely and myself called to Mrs. Liston's house at night. Kiely was armed. I had my pipecase in my hand, but no gun. We asked if any message had been left for the I.R.A. and there and then Mrs. Liston handed out a parcel which contained the parabellum revolver. Looking back on the incident now, I wonder why the R.I.C. man didn't trap us on that occasion as his wife must have told him about our calling for the revolver which was in his possession.

In the autumn of 1920, the month was, I think, September, I learned from Pat Keating that the East Waterford had asked for assistance from the West Waterford men in an attack planned to take place on Kill R.I.C. Barracks, which is about 5 miles east of Kilmacthomas and in the East Waterford Brigade area. The matter was discussed amongst us and it was decided that I should go to Dungarvan, see Pax Whelan, O/C. of the Western Brigade, and find out what he could give us in the way of arms. I went by train to Dungarvan and met Pax in the Town Hall where we talked the matter over. He procured for me a few Mills bombs and a couple of hundred rounds of rifle ammunition which we put into a cardboard box. Returning to Dungarvan

station with my box of ammunition and bombs, I was on the platform about five minutes before the train for Kilmacthomas was due when I walked a party of British soldiers and took up positions on the two platforms. What they came for I don't know, but I do remember boarding the train on its arrival, without any hindrance, complete with my valuable cardboard box.

Arriving in Kilmacthomas, I dumped the stuff in an outhouse and, a few nights prior to the proposed attack, Pat Keating, John Kent of Kilmacthomas, and myself drove in a pony and trap to Kill to view the barracks and have a general look at the lie of the land. On the appointed night I left Kilmacthomas for Kill accompanied by Pat Keating, Ned Power from the Stradbally Company, and others whose names I cannot remember. I should say that there were about 20 all told in the party. I was armed with a revolver. Keating, Kiely and Bagg carried rifles. Possibly Moses Roche had his revolver too, but, as far as I can recollect now, my impression is that he, with others of the Kilmacthomas, Stradbally companies were engaged felling trees to block the roads to Kill that night. When we reached Kill about 9 p.m. our party occupied the house of an R.I.C. man in close proximity to the barracks and waited until the general attack was opened by order of Paddy Paul, who was O/C. of the East Waterford Brigade at the time and who was in charge of operations that night.

It was understood that 'mud bombs' were to be thrown on to the barrack roof and petrol pumped into the holes made in the roof when these bombs exploded. This was to open the engagement. A general attack on the barracks would then follow by rifle, revolvers and bombs when the barrack was set afire. What actually happened that night, so far as I am aware, was as follows:- The Kill company of I.R.A. held up and captured one of the local R.I.C. men who was drinking in a

publichouse in the village of Kill. This R.I.C. man became a bit unruly and a revolver shot was fired over his head to frighten him. Immediately the shot rang out, the police garrison in the barracks, numbering 5 or 6 men, were on the alert and commenced sending up Verey lights to summon assistance. Meanwhile our lads were trying to get going the apparatus for pumping the petrol on to the barrack roof, but failed to do so. Our party did not open fire as we had orders to wait for the petrol to be set alight before doing so. Others of our men did open fire on the barracks, but our party did not do so. After about 10 to 15 minutes, during which we were at a loss to know what exactly had gone wrong, word reached us that Paul was withdrawing with his East Waterford men, as British military were reported to be coming up in force on the rear of his position. On learning of this development, Pat Keating gave orders for us and others of the West Waterford men to leave our positions and retire westwards towards Kilmacthomas. I remember well that Keating was very disgusted at the turn of events, as there was no evidence that the British had arrived as stated by Paul. As things turned out, Pat Keating was quite correct in his surmise, because the British did not arrive in Kill for hours after we had left.

An explanation for the hurried withdrawal of Paul and his men might be attributed to a report stated to have been received by him from a member of his unit, that horses galloping in a field near where some of his riflemen were placed were frightened by military advancing through that field. I can state definitely that we saw no military in Kill that night, notwithstanding the fact that, as we left the village we passed close to the field across which British troops were alleged to be advancing. Our party withdrew for a mile or so eastwards where we remained in a hayshed until midday next day. We then returned to the Kilmacthomas in a pony and trap driven



by a man named Hayes in whose haybarn we had slept. We dispersed before reaching the village of Kilmacthomas.

Shortly after the Kill barrack attack the R.I.C. evacuated the barracks there. The garrison was sent to reinforce those at Lemybrien, three miles west of Kilmacthomas, Portlaw and Stradbally, Co. Waterford. Each month the police pay was brought to those barracks by a few R.I.C. men armed and on bicycles and plans were laid to ambush the pay party going from Lemybrien to Portlaw. For two or three days towards the end of the month a party of our men, i.e., from the Kilrossanty-Kilmacthomas Company, used lie in ambush a short distance from Kilmacthomas to attack the R.I.C. on their way to Portlaw. As the police actually passed the ambush point selected in the afternoon, the men in ambush had to be particularly careful in keeping under cover.

After three days' waiting, the ambushing party, which consisted of Pat Keating, then commandant of the 4th Battalion (Kilrossanty), George Kiely, acting battalion adjutant, and James Bagg, Kilrossanty, spotted the two R.I.C. approaching on bicycles. The time was about midday in early September 1920, so far as I can remember, The R.I.C. party consisted of a Sergeant Morgan and a constable whose name I do not know, both were armed with revolvers. The order to halt was given by Pat Keating. Evidently the sergeant made a suspicious move of some sort, because fire was opened on him by the ambushing party and he fell wounded. The other policeman put up his hands. The two revolvers were then taken from the R.I.C. together with what money they were carrying. The money was passed on to the brigade. The uninjured R.I.C. constable was permitted to cycle to Kilmacthomas to secure medical aid for his sergeant. In spite of the medical attention which he received very shortly afterwards the sergeant died of his wounds

About the end of September 1920, plans were laid to attack Lemybrien R.I.C. Barracks which had a garrison of eight or nine R.I.C. men under a sergeant. The building was a stone one with the windows steel-shuttered and slotted and there was very little cover in the immediate vicinity. The planned attack was as follows:- A postman used deliver letters to the barracks about 8 a.m. on a Sunday morning and it was decided to have about 20 armed men on the spot at an early hour, capture the postman when he came along, take off his uniform and get one of our boys of similar build to put it on. The latter would then approach the barracks and when the door was opened the bogus postman, with two others of our men, would rush in and hold up the garrison, keeping the door open to enable more of our lads to enter the building. As some of the R.I.C. were Catholics we knew that those who were would have left to attend Mass at Kilrossanty, two miles distant, thereby reducing the strength of the garrison.

We fixed a certain Sunday for the attack, but, to our disgust, we found that the R.I.C. had evacuated the barracks on the Saturday night previous. We went, as arranged, to Lemybrien and burned the building, but it was small consolation for our disappointment.

Shortly afterwards we burned Bunmahon coastguard station. About a dozen men took part under Comdt. Pat Keating. There were four or five coastguards in the station, but they put up no resistance, and there were no difficulties encountered.

It was, I think, in the month of October 1920, that the West Waterford Active Service Unit was formed. At that time I was battalion adjutant to Pat Keating, commandant of the 4th Battalion, West Waterford Brigade. I was still working in Kirwan's of Kilmacthomas and although I was anxious to join the column, Pat Keating insisted that I should 'stay put' for the time being, as I was able to help in preparing billets

for the column when in my district. However, about the end of the year 1920, I decided to leave my job in Kirwan's and go fulltime with the column.

The West Waterford flying column consisted of about 30 men drawn principally from Dungarvan, Ardmore, Kilrossanty, Kilmacthomas and Stradbally. Its personnel were mostly men 'on the run'. The O/C. was George Lennon, who was Vice O/C. of the brigade. At first, intensive training was carried out to enable the men to acquit themselves properly when they went into action. Skirmishing practice was carried out by daytime and general revolver and rifle exercise took place daily. The men were billeted at night in farmhouses within a mile radius, the local company doing scouting duty. These scouts were posted in view of all roads approaching the billeting area and could see military lorries coming up to four miles away. If any lorries were seen coming at night, it was arranged that the chapel bell be tolled once to give warning. The billeting area was invariably at Kilbrien or in the Kilrossanty country, because we had the Comeragh mountains directly behind us into which we could retire if hard pressed by the enemy. The terrain here also offered us splendid opportunities for putting up a really good defence if we were attacked in strength by the British. To illustrate the excellent nature of the cover provided in this area I can remember the military carrying out widespread searches in Kilrossanty one night. They came to within half a mile or less of the position which the column had taken up on being warned, but they failed to discover our whereabouts. They were perhaps lucky that night, because from the vantage points we held we could have raked them with fire if they had come further into the mountains.

Before relating further column activities I should have referred to an action which took place shortly before I joined the column. The month was November 1920.

An attack on Ardmore R.I.C. barracks (10 miles east of Youghal) and the Marine Station there, was staged with the idea of drawing the military out from Youghal and ambushing them at Piltown Cross about 5 miles east of Youghal. A barricade was placed across the road at the latter place and shotgun and riflemen lined the hedges on either side of the barricade. The main body of our men took up their positions at Piltown Cross at about 8 p.m. and, shortly afterwards, some of the column with members of the local company opened fire with rifles and grenades on the Ardmore Marine Station and the R.I.C. barracks. As was usual, the garrisons of these posts sent up Verey lights as well as returning the fire (without causing any I.R.A. casualties).

Meanwhile, it was reported from scouts that there was great activity by the British military in Youghal barracks, which seemed to indicate that they had become aware of the attacks in Ardmore and were hastening to the assistance of the garrisons. This, of course, was what was hoped for. Shortly before midnight, so far as I can remember, two lorries of military approached the ambush position coming from Youghal. They had the lorry lights on, of course, and, as they came within about 50 yards of the barricade at Piltown Cross, two of our riflemen, previously detailed, shot out the lamps on the lorries. Volleys of shots then rang out and our lads jumped on to the road calling on the British to surrender. About 30 or so of them did so, and their arms and ammunition taken. A number of other soldiers escaped in the darkness.

In this encounter, two soldiers were killed and five or six wounded. Our casualties were 'nil'. I might mention here that a horse-drawn car was put at the disposal of the military by the I.R.A. to enable them to remove their wounded to Youghal immediately the fight ended.

George Lennon, the West Waterford Column O/C., was in

charge of operations at Piltown Cross. I would say there were upwards of 30 or 40 I.R.A. men in the action (including Pat Keating of Kilrossanty and George Kiely of Kilmacthomas) and a further 20 on scouting and outpost duty. A few men from the column helped the local companies in the diversionary attacks on Ardmore R.I.C. Barracks and Marine Station that same night.

The night following the ambush at Piltown I went with Andy Kirwan of Bonmahon, the motor driver to the West Waterford Column, to contact a party of our men who had some of the captured military rifles and who had retired northwards to the Cappoquin district. We went by car and were fortunate to meet up with our comrades near Cappoquin. We brought them to Kilrossanty and billeted them there. We went out again to collect other men who had some of the captured arms and equipment, but our car broke down en route. Tom Keating of Comeragh, a brother of Pat, got a horse and trap and again we set out. We passed military posts on the way, but were lucky not to be held up. After failing to find our men we returned to Kilrossanty and learned that the 'boys' had by-passed the road we had taken and had arrived in Kilrossanty before us complete with the captured British weapons.

The guns and ammunition taken at Piltown were taken over by the column which was well armed as a result.

Early in March 1921, the column, under George Lennon, decided to hold up a train carrying jurors attending Court at Waterford, near Durrrow railway station, and to lie in ambush for the expected British relieving party at a place named Ballyvoile, where the railway runs over a bridge and which is on the coast road from Dungarvan to Waterford. The main roads inland were blocked by fallen trees and barricades of stones to force the military to travel by the coast route and so enter the prepared ambush position. Our first move was to

hold up the train containing the jurors at Millarstown, a short distance outside Durrow railway station, by placing a barricade of stones on the railway line. The jurors were ordered out of the train. This action took place about 8 a.m.

We then moved towards Ballyvoile about a mile distant where some of our men, under the command of George Lennon, O/C. of the column, were awaiting the British. There were, I should say, about 20 men at Ballyvoile, mostly all of the flying column, with a few local men. The majority were armed with rifles, a few had shotguns.

After about two hours waiting, the time would be about 12 noon, a train approached from the west - Dungarvan - towards Durrow. At a signal shot to be fired by George Lennon, general fire was to be opened. When the train was about 40 yards from the tunnel at Ballyvoile Bridge, George Lennon gave the signal and rapid fire was poured into the railway carriages which contained what appeared to be a large number of military. We learned afterwards that a good number of British were at least wounded in this action. This train went on its way and stopped at Durrow station.

While this was going on, word came of a party of military coming on the coast road from Dungarvan towards Durrow in lorries. Some of our men were sent to deal with them. I heard later on that this military party did not travel by the coast road, instead, they removed the road obstructions laid by our men and came in to Durrow by a more direct road than the coast road.

Meanwhile, I and about a dozen of the column, went towards Durrow station where the military ambushed at Ballyvoile had detrained. We opened fire and undoubtedly caused casualties in the enemy ranks, but I regret I cannot now say to what extent. While desultory firing was going on in the vicinity of Durrow station, another train pulled in

coming from Waterford. The time was now about 4 p.m. A short while before this last train arrived, George Lennon had decided to break off the engagement, but as we withdrew we saw the later train with military arriving, and hearing shots, we again returned and engaged the military who had just come from Waterford.

Intense firing on both sides continued for about half an hour. One of the British troops went to mount a machine gun on the station platform, but as he did so, a bullet from one of our boys whipped his helmet clear off him. The Tommy left his machine gun and made for the shelter of the train. The British now were in the majority of about 10 to 1, and spreading out in the immediate neighbourhood of Durrow Station, were obviously trying to encircle our small force, which by this time was running short of ammunition. In addition, it was late evening (about 5 p.m.) by now and we had been on the move since early morning with little food and no rest. In view of these facts, but due mainly to the great superiority in numbers and fire-power of the enemy forces, George Lennon gave orders to break off the action and disperse in small groups for fear of being spotted by British military aeroplanes coming from the Fermoy area. We broke up into small parties and headed, as usual, northwards towards the friendly Comeragh mountains where we billeted in barns in the Kilrossanty district.

We suffered no casualties in the engagements at Ballyvoile or Durrow, but I am certain the British did, although I am not in a position to say positively how many of them were 'knocked out' in the fighting.

A few days after the Durrow episode, about 12 of us in the flying column in charge of Jim Mansfield, vice-commandant of the Dungarvan Battalion, staged a hold-up of the Cork-Rosslare express train which passed through Kilmacthomas about 10 p.m. At, approximately, the same time, Pat Keating (also

of the column) and a small party of men from the column attacked a British military post stationed in the residence of Charles Nugent Humble, about six miles east of Kilmacthomas on the main Dungarvan-Kilmacthomas road. The latter attack was intended to contain the military in Nugent Humble's residence whilst the train hold-up in Kilmacthomas was being carried out.

We took up positions outside the wall of the railway station at Kilmacthomas a short time before the express was due. All were armed with rifles. As this particular train did not usually stop at Kilmacthomas, one or two of our men went to the signal box and had the signals put against her as she approached the station. When the train stopped we went on to the platform and into the carriages where we saw British troops. The latter were ordered out on to the platform where their equipment was taken from them. Unfortunately, they were not carrying weapons. There were about 25 or 30 soldiers on the train. We were disappointed at finding the military without guns so (I suppose it was because of our chagrin) we paraded them up and down the village street in Kilmacthomas headed by a local melodeon-player. The sight, at least, made the Tommies look ludicrous in the eyes of the inhabitants of the village. The soldiers were billeted for the night in the houses of Unionists in the locality.

The following day, a party of upwards of 200 troops, accompanied by bloodhounds, came out from Waterford and occupied Kilmacthomas Workhouse. They then proceeded to search the foothills of the Comeragh Mountains for what they were told was a 'large body of I.R.A.' We had knowledge of all this and were waiting for them to move further into the Comeraghs where we were positioned to give them a very warm reception. Some sixth sense must have warned them not to proceed too far, because, when less than a mile from where we awaited them,



they turned back for Kilmacthomas. A day or so afterwards they returned to Waterford.

Not long after this happened, Pat Keating, commandant of the Kilrossanty Battalion, and myself, had a very narrow escape from capture which might be worth relating:- We had both gone to Mass together in Kilmacthomas this particular Sunday when, after Mass, Pat went to a spot a very short distance outside the village to keep an appointment with Pierce Durand, an I.R.A. man living in Waterford. I, myself, went down to Cullinane's house in the village for a chat. I was carrying a parabellum revolver on the occasion. As I was in Cullinane's (upstairs) a private car containing three men in civilian dress drew up outside the door. I came downstairs to see who these men were, They were strangers to me. When I came to the door I saw two of the men standing on either side of it. At the same time, I saw a man just across the street whom I knew to be a member of the I.R.A. so I passed out through the door by the two strangers and strolled over to my friend. He whispered that he had been held up and searched by these men and that Lieutenant Valentine of the Devonshire Regiment had gone into Cullinane's house searching for Pat Keating. Naturally I made tracks for where I knew Pat should be and met him just as he was turning into the village street. Another two minutes and he would have walked up to Cullinane's, where he knew I had gone, and to certain arrest, if not certain death, as he was a much-wanted man.

I owe my own providential escape to the fact that the two men outside Cullinane's door, when they saw me, thought I had already been searched inside by Valentine and, consequently, they let me through unchallenged.

By way of getting some of our own back, Pat and I decided to have a shot at the party on their return to Waterford. We went up on the railway bridge which crosses the main Kilmacthomas

Waterford road, and in due course saw the British party in their car coming down the village street towards the bridge. We (sighted' our revolvers on them, when, to our amazement and disgust, they switched off to a byroad to Waterford just before they came within revolver range. It was obvious to us from all this that somebody in Kilmacthomas had seen Pat Keating at Mass that Sunday morning and had 'phoned this information to the military in Waterford. We never could definitely find out who the informant was and, although we had our suspicions; but, as I have previously stated, there were quite a number of people in Kilmacthomas who were anything but sympathetic to our cause.

Following the attack on British troops at Durrow railway station, the column remained in Kilrossanty for a few days resting and then crossed the Comeragh Mountains to Kilbrien where we stayed a further short time in billets. We moved westwards from there to Ballymalla, Ardmore, about six miles east of Youghal.

George Plunkett who, I believe, was a G.H.Q. officer had now joined us (mid March 1921) having come down from the South Tipperary Brigade. I remember quite well that he held a brigade council meeting in Ballymalla on St. Patrick's Day, 1921, at which he expressed dissatisfaction with the 'set up' of our brigade staff. He commented, inter alia, on the fact that there was no brigade adjutant appointed to take the place of Phil O'Donnell of Dungarvan, who had been arrested. Following a discussion, I was appointed to fill O'Donnell's place.

On the night of March 18th 1921, information reached us that I.R.A. men of Dungarvan and district proposed to blow up Tarr's bridge situated about a mile north of Dungarvan and on the main Waterford-Dungarvan-Cappoquin road. The column came up from Ardmore that night (about 8 miles distant) to protect

the local men engaged on the job, as it was considered likely that enemy forces would be encountered due to the proximity of the bridge to Dungarvan and to the fact that enemy night patrols were very active in the area at that time.

When we reached Tarr's bridge, local scouts reported that a raiding party consisting of one military lorry and a private car had gone out in the direction of Clonea - two miles east of Dungarvan - so it was decided to call off the blowing up of the bridge in case the alarm would be given and, instead, to lie in ambush for the raiding party and hit them up as they returned to Dungarvan.

Pax Whelan, who was in charge, decided to split the column into two sections. One section of about 15 men was to line the ditch on what is known as the Burgary Road which leads into Dungarvan and about half a mile north east of the town. Approximately the same number, of whom I was one, took up positions on the Cappoquin-Fermoy road about 500 yards west of the Burgary road. Pax Whelan was in charge of our group. George Lennon was in command of the other. All men were in position about 9 p.m. that night and I remember quite well that the moon was up and visibility was good at that time. It was about 11.30 p.m. when we heard the noise of lorries coming along the Waterford-Dungarvan road and approaching the Burgary by Tarr's bridge. One lorry and one private car were expected; instead, there came two lorries and a private car. Our lads at the Burgary opened fire, as arranged, on the first lorry and car. The third lorry pulled up. We then left our positions on the Cappoquin road and approached closer to the actual fighting going on at the Burgary by a byroad leading from the main Cappoquin road to the Burgary. We opened rifle fire at close quarters on the occupants of the third lorry who had not, at the time, run up to the position held by our men at Burgary. These men, as I have said, were

in action with the first lorry and private car.

Following a sharp exchange of fire, the military got out of the third lorry and retreated in disorder westwards towards the residence of Charles Nugent Humble, about a mile distant, where military were quartered. Unfortunately, the moon, which had been quite bright about three hours previously, had now 'gone in' and, consequently, we had great difficulty in locating the retreating British in the darkness, or picking up any weapons which we later learned they had thrown away in their efforts to escape.

Meanwhile, our comrades further down the Burgary road (i.e., nearer Dungarvan) had fired on and put to flight the first lorry load of military and the occupants of the private car. They had captured a few rifles, a couple of revolvers, a quantity of Mills bombs and other ammunition. They also took prisoner Captain Thomas, O/C. of the British forces in Dungarvan, who was in the party ambushed, and also a sergeant of the R.I.C. named Hickey who had been acting as 'spotter' for the raiding military party that night and who was known as a very active anti-I.R.A. man.

So far as I can recollect, the fight known as "The Burgary Ambush" lasted from 20 minutes to half an hour. We suffered no casualties and I cannot say whether the British had any. Some of them must have been wounded but I cannot be definite about this.

The action was broken off by our officers who feared encirclement by British troops stationed at Dungarvan, Ballinacourty Coastguard Station, and at Nugent Humble's, all of which were no more than two miles at the most from The Burgary. Actually the first two garrison posts were approximately only a mile away from the scene of the ambush.

Prior to the engagement it was arranged that the whole column should fall back on Kilgobnet (about 4 miles north west

of Dungarvan) when the attack was over. Our party under Pax Whelan reached this rendezvous first. Shortly afterwards, about 1 a.m., the remainder of the column under George Lennon arrived, bringing the captured rifles, revolvers, bombs and ammunition and also their prisoners, Captain Thomas and Sergt. Hickey, R.I.C.

Captain Thomas, who belonged to the British regiment known as "The Buffs", had been disarmed and now had all his papers taken from him by George Lennon. The papers were handed to me. Captain Thomas was then released.

A 'Council of War' was then held on Sergeant Hickey. It was decided that he should be shot. When told of the decision to execute him the Sergeant promised to leave the country forthwith if his life was spared, but he was informed that no reprieve would be granted. A message was sent to the late Rev. Fr. Rea, the Catholic Curate in Kilgobnet at the time, and Father Rea came along and heard the sergeant's confession. The column was then lined up and six men selected for the firing squad. I was not one of the men selected. The sergeant was brought away some distance from the general body of men and duly executed. The time was about 7 a.m. on March 19th, 1921.

Following the execution of Sergeant Hickey, a consultation was held between the officers of the column and, as a result, it was decided to send some of the men back to the scene of the previous night's ambush to collect weapons which it was believed had been thrown away by the British in their flight. The man mainly responsible for this decision was, I believe, George Plunkett, whose idea it was and who insisted that it should be carried out. Many of the officers and men thought the proposal a foolhardy one, knowing that British reinforcements would be rushed to the scene from Fermoy, Dungarvan and elsewhere, where the first Verey lights which were sent up by

the Dungarvan garrison were seen. It was considered most probable that strong military forces would by now be in the vicinity of The Burgary, raiding and suchlike. However, Plunkett had his way and called for volunteers to undertake the job. Pax Whelan of Dungarvan, the column O/C., Pat Keating, commandant of the Kilrossanty battalion, Sean Fitzgerald of Kilrossanty (who had returned from England to take part in the fight), Paddy Joe Power of Glen, Fox Graney, Dungarvan, Jim Mansfield, Dungarvan, and myself with five others whose names I cannot now recall, volunteered to go.

It was about 8 a.m. on the morning of 19th March 1921, when we approached the scene of the previous night's ambush at The Burgary. Plunkett split the party into two groups of six. He took charge of one group and Pax Whelan the other. I was with the latter group, which was ordered to take up a position about 200 yards west of The Burgary as covering for Plunkett's party who proceeded directly towards the scene of the ambush. Very shortly afterwards heavy firing broke out and it appeared to us as if Plunkett's men had walked into a trap of some sort, because after about 15 minutes or so we saw some of them retreating. As our instructions were to hold our position to ward off any surprise attack from that side, we did not move towards the firing but waited until we were satisfied that Plunkett's men had got away. The order was then given by Pax Whelan to withdraw. We did not come under British fire on that occasion.

As we retired towards Kilgobnet, we learned the details of the morning's fiasco. We had lost John Fitzgerald and Pat Keating and had not been able to obtain any of the arms which had been the prime object of the ill-fated venture.

It would appear that Plunkett and his men must have been seen approaching The Burgary position by British troops, who were, as we all anticipated, searching and patrolling the area.

The British fired on our men who were taken unawares, and a Black and Tan named Redmond, from a gateway on The Burgary road, fired on and killed John Fitzgerald. The same Tan shot and wounded Pat Keating and was then himself shot dead by George Plunkett. The latter, after a further discharge of shots with the enemy, withdrew the remainder of his men. The British did not follow up, fearing a trap.

Pat Keating, commandant of the Kilrossanty battalion, and one of the finest men in the Waterford Brigade, died later that night from his wounds. The doctor who attended him said he had been hit in the groin by an explosive bullet and consequently there was no hope of saving his life. He was buried in Newtown and subsequently interred in an open field at his native Kilrossanty, as the military were searching graveyards for signs of recent burials. After a few weeks, his remains were taken up and reinterred in the republican plot in Killrossanty.

We retired to the Kilgobnet, Kilbrien area and rested up in billets following The Burgary ambush. Our officers and men were very sore over the loss of Pat Keating and John Fitzgerald whose lives they considered were needlessly sacrificed. We remained in the Kilbrien for a week or two during which time George Plunkett left us and moved elsewhere.

During the retreat from The Burgary I hurt my foot which turned septic, and George Lennon, the column commander at the time, advised me to go on leave and have the foot treated by a doctor. Another column man, Jim Kirwan, who had a bad heart, was given leave of absence at the same time. We had instructions to dump our arms in Comeragh before going to Kilmacthomas. I had my foot looked after by one of <sup>the</sup> Miss Cullinane's in Kilmacthomas, who was a nurse, and after about two weeks I felt well enough to return to the column.

Early on the morning on which I was to leave Cullinane's (April 1921), the village of Kilmacthomas was surrounded by troops and I was arrested. I was taken to Dungarvan Barracks

with a man named Shanahan (not an I.R.A. man) under a heavy escort of the "Buffs" regiment with Captain Thomas (who was captured at The Burgary on March 18th, 1921) in charge. The captain did not recognise me as being one of his captors a short time previously. When travelling in the military lorry from Kilmacthomas to Dungarvan, it was obvious that the military were very nervous of being ambushed en route; in fact, the officer warned me that I would be 'the first to go' if he was ambushed, to which I replied: "I'll have plenty of company if I do go".

I was lodged in a cell in Dungarvan barracks and the first evening an old fellow was put in with me. He was, supposedly, a tramp, but I had no doubts from his conversation that he was a spy. Then followed a hammering at the cell door and in came two Black and Tans both of whom were drunk. They proceeded to hit me and said I was to be shot next day. They were restrained from further assaulting me by a regular member of the R.I.C.

After about two weeks in Dungarvan jail I was transferred by train under a large armed guard of the "Buffs" regiment to Fermoy where I was put in a cell with an I.R.A. man from Cork whose name I do not remember. The cell in Fermoy was filthy with lice. At nighttime I used be taken from my cell and interrogated by (I presume) a British intelligence officer about I.R.A. personnel and suchlike matters. I need scarcely say I gave him no information.

I was then tried by military courtmartial and 'accused' of being a member of the I.R.A. and having participated in raids and ambushes. I was also charged with being one of the Waterford flying column, a small book with my name as a member of the column having been found in a haybarn near Cullinane's the day of my arrest. I was asked if I wanted legal help but declined and said I would defend myself. I was sentenced to two months hard labour in Cork gaol and recommended for internment.



I did my two months in Cork Jail and when the time had expired I received the sum of 8d, apparently being paid at a penny a week for the work I had done in jail. I was then sent to Spike Island for internment. Before being lodged in Cork Jail I had a fellow prisoner with me en route from Fermoy to Victoria Barracks, Cork, by the name of Tom Barry from Glanworth, Co. Cork, and our escort consisted of eleven lorries fully manned with troops and two armoured cars. This Tom Barry was a battalion commandant in his area but was not the well-known Tom Barry of Kilmichael and Crossbarry fame. Judging from the escort we had it looked as if the British thought they had captured the famous Tom Barry.

While in Spike Island I had as fellow prisoners, amongst others, Bill Quirke (now a Senator), Dick Barrett, 'Moss' Twomey, Sean Moylan (now a T.D.) and M.P. Colivet, a T.D. for Limerick.

In a jail break from Spike Island while I was there, Dick Barrett and Bill Quirke were amongst those who made their escape. I helped in making the escape tunnel and in the subsequent smashing up of the gaol. Following the escape I was transferred to Maryboro Jail where I again helped in excavating a tunnel for releasing prisoners. I was released from Maryboro Jail on 6th December 1921. On my release I rejoined the 2nd Battalion, West Waterford Brigade, which at the time garrisoned Kilmacthomas Workhouse on its evacuation by the British. I served with the republican forces in Waterford County until the conclusion of the civil war, i.e., until the cease fire order was given in April 1923.

Signed: Edmond Power

(Edmond Power)

Date: 18. 8. 55.

18.3.55

Witness: T. O'Gorman

(T. O'Gorman)

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