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# ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

BUREAU STAIRE MILEATA 1913-21

NO. W.S. 1,433

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21

STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 1433.

Witness

Michael Fitzpatrick,  
7 Davis Street,  
Tipperary.

Identity.

Quartermaster, 2nd Southern Division.

Member of Flying Column.

Subject.

Activities of A. Company, Tipperary Battalion,  
and Tipperary 3rd Brigade Flying Column,  
1914-1921.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil.

File No .. S.2761.

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STATEMENT BY MICHAEL FITZPATRICK,

7. Davis St.. Tipperary.

I was born in Tipperary Town on September 15th in the year of 1898. My parents were Patrick and Ellen Fitzpatrick (née Ward of Mellon, Kildimo, Co. Limerick). My grandfather, John Fitzpatrick, came to Tipperary from the Hollyford district in the early 1860's, and worked as a gardener. He was a member of the Fenian organisation and brought up his family in a strong national atmosphere. My father, who also followed the occupation of gardener, held extreme national views, and he spent some months in prison during the Plan of Campaign. We, his five children, three sons and two daughters, heard many a story of the Fenian and Land League struggles from participants, including John Barron and Martin Hayes, who were local leaders, and we learned the songs and lore of those stirring times. All five of us took active parts in the subsequent national struggle.

At the age of 14 I was indentured to the printing trade with Mrs. E. McCormack, "The Tipperary People", Davis St., Tipperary, where my brother, Seán, had already been for four years. In the same year I joined Na Fianna Éireann, which had been formed in the town by Frank Drohan, Clonmel, who regularly visited the group and gave them training and instruction. In 1915 I joined the C.J. Kickham Band, and in 1916 the Irish Volunteers, a small group in comparison with the National Volunteers in the town and district.

In 1915 I commenced to attend the Irish classes conducted by Tadhg O'Kelly in the Technical School, others attending these classes being Seán Treacy and Paddy Deere of Curraghpoor. After the Rising of Easter Week many other young men and women joined these classes, and later that year a branch of the Gaelic League - the Padraig MacPiarais Craobh - was formed, with rooms at Jack McCarthy's house in O'Brien St., where classes were conducted by Seán Treacy, Sam Fahy and others. There, in the latter part of 1916, the Irish Volunteers were reorganised, and meetings were held under the cover of Irish classes. A nearby disused butcher's shed, owned by Jerry O'Callaghan (brother of Michael, who in 1916 shot the two peelers in Tipperary), was taken over for dancing and Volunteer purposes and became known as the Volunteer Hall.

The reorganisation of the Volunteers in the town and district went ahead rapidly, and by the beginning of 1917 there were several hundred young men on the rolls. In Tipperary Town two companies were formed. The eastern half of the town was named "A" Company and the first officers were: Seán Duffy, Captain; Seán Allen, 1st Lt.; Willie Donovan, 2nd Lt.; and Seán Fitzpatrick, my brother, Adjutant. "B" Company elected Tom Rodgers, Captain; with Mick Shea and Frank O'Meara as Lieutenants. Sections and squads were formed, with appropriate men in charge, and drilling, training and officers' classes were held practically every evening in conjunction with the Irish classes in McCarthy's and in the Technical School. Seán Treacy was very prominent in these activities, giving special attention to the officers' classes and the formation of the other companies in the district. Parades and drillings were held openly every Sunday, and special N.C.O. classes,

both indoor and outdoor, were held during 1917 and subsequently.

By the summer of 1917 ten companies had been formed, each about fifty or sixty strong, namely, "A" and "B", Tipperary Town; "C", Donohill; "D", Donaskeigh; "E", Solohead; "F", Bansha; "G", Aherlow; "H", Mount Bruis; "I", Lattin; "K", Kilross. These, by and by, were formed into the 1st Battalion, and the officers elected were Seán Duffy, O/C; Con Moloney, Vice O/C; Maurice Crowe, Adj.; and Dinny Lacey, Q/M. At first it was named the Clanwilliam Battalion. After the Brigade was officially formed, numbers were given to the battalions, Clanwilliam being No. 1, but in 1920 there was a regrouping and the Tipperary Battalion was named No. 4.

In August, 1917, there was an aeriocht in the Sportsfield, Tipperary, at which Eamon de Valera and Frank Fahy spoke. The Tipperary Companies and those from the surrounding districts, marched in military formation, some wearing uniform and many carrying hurleys and sporting badges of green, white and orange. Marching through the streets, they broke three British proclamations that day. A few days later Seán Treacy, who had led the parade, was arrested and sentenced to six months. In Mountjoy he was on the hunger-strike in which Tom Ashe died. The strikers were then transferred to Dundalk Prison, from which they were released under the "Cat and Mouse" Act in November, 1917. On his return to Tipperary, he carried on his work of organising the Volunteers in an even more intensive way, and travelled all over the county forming companies and battalions, and by the time he was re-arrested in February, 1918, six battalions had been formed or in course of formation, and a loosely-knit Brigade was formed. Treacy

was looked upon as the leader, but he had no desire for rank as such. Dan Breen was elected O/C of this first Brigade, with Maurice Crowe as Adjutant. Seán Fitzpatrick was appointed Adjutant of the 1st Battalion (Tipperary) at this time, and there were some changes in the company officers locally.

On his re-arrest, Seán Treacy immediately went on hunger-strike again, and in Dundalk was joined by the other prisoners there. After ten days they were released, but in the meantime plans were prepared by the Tipperary Volunteers to take drastic action should Seán Treacy not be released, including the taking of hostages and an attempt to rescue him. In all these activities the Tipperary Town men were prominent, Seán Treacy was released in June, 1918, but meanwhile the two Town Captains had been arrested in March (Tom Rodgers and Seán Duffy), and their trials were the occasions of parades of Volunteers in military formation at the Courthouse, where there were clashes with military and police. Similar parades and clashes occurred at the trials of Tommy Ryan (Adjutant) and Jim O'Connell (Section Commander) during the same year. Arms were raided for and some rifles purchased from friendly Tommies during this early part of 1918, and pikes and grenades were made by some of the companies. About May, 1918, the Battalion H.Q. at Tipperary and Bruis were continuously occupied and guarded day and night by relays of Volunteers for some time, and armed patrols of Volunteers kept watch on enemy posts to ensure they made no sudden sloop. During this conscription period the ranks were swollen with new recruits, but they gradually fell away when the threat was over.

In October, 1918, the Brigade was officially recognised by G.H.Q., with Seumas Robinson, O/C; Seán Treacy, Vice O/C, Dan Breen, Q/M; Maurice Crowe, Adjt. The Brigade comprised six battalions at the time. Two other battalions were subsequently formed in Carrick-on-Suir and Rosegreen, and the subsequent numbers were: Rosegreen, No. 1; Cashel, No. 2; Dundrum, No. 3; Tipperary, No. 4; Clonmel, No. 5; Cahir, No. 6; Drangan, No. 7; and Carrick-on-Suir, No. 8. Although the organisation had been getting into shape, the staffs appointed and working quite efficiently, by this time (end of 1918) the strengths of the units were getting smaller and attendance at drills and parades showed a big dropping off, as very many who had joined during the threat of conscription fell away when that danger was removed by the end of the European War. So much so that Seán Treacy declared it would be necessary to strike at the enemy without further delay. "If we cannot organise the Volunteers and keep them together, we must make the enemy do so for us", he declared after studying the battalion reports in November. Therefore, some of us who knew his mind were not very surprised when the policemen were shot at Soloheadbeg on January 21st 1919.

I recall the occasion of the big parade in Tipperary on 23rd November, 1918, when police and military tried to break up the parade at the Manchester Martyrs' Monument. Police had pulled Liam Gogan from the plinth of the monument as he was leading the Rosary in Irish. Without hesitation, being in the foremost rank of the parade, I stepped up and took his place and continued the Rosary. My comrades grew tense and we fully expected a serious fight to begin. Over the heads of the crowd from my position I saw Seán Treacy, Dan Breen and some others taking up

vantage points nearby, with their hands inside their coats, indicating that they were armed and ready to fire if the R.I.C. or military again interfered. However, they did not molest me, and when the Rosary was concluded the order was given to the parade by Seán Duffy, Battalion O/C, to move off in column of route, which we did, and later dismissed without further incident. The fight that started at Soloheadbeg two months later could as easily have begun then.

Those of us who were intimate with Treacy knew his mind was set on renewing the fight, but many were taken by surprise and took some time to recover from the shock of the shooting, deliberately, of the police at Soloheadbeg. But Treacy was a true prophet: enemy raids and general harassing of the known Volunteers which ensued served to raise the morale of the officers and men generally and knit them closer together. And when in the following May the spectacular fight was definitely on, even those who had been shocked and alarmed after Soloheadbeg became active in the movement again. Soon the jails were being filled with Volunteers arrested for drilling and other Volunteer activities, and the Tipperary men were to the fore again. In the jails they organised strikes, Maurice Crowe, the Brigade Adjutant, being prominent as the leader. I took part in all these activities and was on hunger-strike in Cork and Mountjoy in 1919.

In March, 1920, I was transferred to Mallow, where I was appointed Battalion Lieutenant. I had previously been Lieutenant of "A" Company, Tipperary Battalion. While in Mallow I planned with local officers the raid on the military post there, which was occupied by the Lancers. With Capt. Jack Cunningham, Tadhg Byrnes, Dick Willis, Jack Bolster and others, we had the barracks under constant

observation and knew the routine of the garrison perfectly. It was noted that the officer and most of the troops took out all the horses for exercise every morning, leaving a small fatigue party under a sergeant to clean up the stables. The main party would be away for a couple of hours. Willis was a painter, and Bolster a carpenter, employed at the time at work in the barracks. We attended a meeting of Cork No. 2 Brigade Council at which Liam Lynch and Ernie O'Malley were present, and put our plan before them. It was approved, and the Brigade officers then made arrangements to carry out the raid.

The I.R.A. party quietly occupied the Town Hall one night in August, 1920. The R.I.C. barracks was covered and we waited patiently until it was reported that the military party had left for the usual exercise. The I.R.A. then moved quietly under cover of the Town Park wall to the corner near the barrack gate, O'Malley leading. Willis and Bolster had revolvers in their pockets while going about their work inside, and on that morning they occupied themselves near the guardroom. O'Malley knocked at the gate. The sentry opened the wicket-door and O'Malley handed him an envelope for the officer. When the sentry was taking the envelope, O'Malley grasped the rifle and pulled it from him, striking him with his fist, and then, followed by the other Volunteers, rushed into the barracks and covered the surprised soldiers in the guardroom. The only resistance was from Sergeant Gibbs, who rushed to the guard-room for a gun and ignored repeated calls to halt. He was fired on and killed. Meanwhile, the Volunteers collected all the arms in the barracks, which included two Hotchkiss machine-guns about fifty rifles and lances and other equipment. Two motor-cars were then driven in and loaded and despatched



to the place selected to store them. An attempt was then made to burn the barracks, but this was only partly successful. The I.R.A. then marched away across the park and into the hills. Telephone and telegraph wires were cut and the covering party withdrawn from the Town Hall.

Anticipating reprisals, it had been arranged that an armed party of Volunteers would occupy positions in the town that night to deal with the burners and looters, but for some reason they did not come and the British came from the nearby posts of Buttevant, Fermoy and Ballyvonare and looted and burned several shops, the Town Hall and the creamery as a reprisal.

I had met Jerry Kiely of Tipperary, who had come to Mallow with O'Malley and who was with us in the Town Hall that morning waiting to go into the barracks, and he told me the Tipperary Flying Column had just been formed and that he and myself had been nominated from "A" Company. He was on his way back and we arranged that he would report that I would return in a short time and join the column. Some days later, Capt. Cunningham and I arranged with the driver of a goods train who was a Volunteer, to board his train at Two-pot-house, and we dropped off near Limerick Junction, from where we crossed country and linked up with Dinny Lacy and the rest of the column at Donaskeigh. Cunningham returned to Mallow in a short time.

The Tipperary Flying Column (Tipperary 3rd Brigade) was formed in September, 1920, and the following were the initial personnel - Denis Lacey and Seán Hogan (Battalion Officers), M. Fitzpatrick and Jerry Kiely of "A" Company, Tom Bellew and Martin "Sparky" Breen of "B" Company, Brian Shanahan and Pake Ryan of "D" Company, Tim Crowe and

Mick Ryan ("Boleen") of "E" Company, Matt Barlow and Pake Dalton of "H" Company, John Joe O'Brien, Seán Lynch and Liam Fraher of the Galtee Battalion (Galbally), and Paddy Moloney of "B" Company. In addition to the foregoing members of the Tipperary Battalion (4th), the following from the 3rd (Dundrum) Battalion were attached up to the end of October, 1920, when they formed a separate unit: Ned Reilly, Jack Ryan ("Master"), Tim Ryan (Dalton), Paddy Dwyer, Rody Hanley, Con Keefe, Jim Gorman and Paddy English. Most were armed with Lee Enfield rifles and revolvers, but there were one or two Winchesters, a Ross Enfield and shotguns. These represented the greater part of the "War-like Stores" of the two battalions at that time, apart from a few shotguns and revolvers of various makes and calibres. It was meagre equipment for a whole-time unit to tackle the powerful military and police forces ranged against us in the area. Fifty rounds .303 and 12 rounds .45 ammunition were issued to each gun and there was scarcely any reserve ammunition. In the course of the months, other men were taken into the column who brought their own weapons, and a second column, under Seán Hogan, was formed, drawn largely from the 2nd, 5th, 6th and 8th Battalions. They operated mostly in the southern part of the Brigade area.

Column activities for the first few weeks consisted of training and examining likely ambush positions. Positions were occupied at various times but no action resulted. The first ambush took place at Thomastown, about halfway between Tipperary Town and Cashel, on the 28th October, two weeks after Seán Treacy's death in Dublin. The plan was to ambush the Tans from Golden who travelled this road regularly every Thursday in a Crossley tender, about twelve of them. This information was conveyed to the

column, then billeted in Donaskeigh area, by Pake Horan, I.O. Accompanied by some local shotgun men, the column prepared a position along the demesne wall at Thomastown about nine in the morning. The road was to be blocked by a cart drawn across the road by a wire from the opposite side when the lorry had entered the position, and another cart would then be drawn out from a passage leading to a quarry behind the lorry.

The wall was being loop-holed and the column men were still working on the position when a scout came racing on a bicycle, giving the arranged signal that the enemy were coming. The Volunteers rushed to take cover, but the enemy lorry came so quickly on the heels of the scout that positions were taken hap-hazard. Before the lorry had entered the desired position, the man in charge of pulling out the cart drew it partly out, thus attracting the attention of the enemy, who slowed down to a crawl and were keeping a sharp watch to learn the cause of partly blocked road. They were a detachment of the Northhamptons from Templemore going to Tipperary Range for practice, in a caged lorry, about twenty of them. While our party were getting into position under cover of the partly broken-down demesne wall, the lorry stopped still a bit to the right of our position. The element of surprise was now with the enemy. They were on the alert to shoot at anything showing near them. For some minutes as we crawled behind the wall to get nearer the lorry, nothing was to be heard but the ticking-over of the engine and the orders of the military officer to his men to get out and take cover. When opposite the lorry, Dinny Lacey shouted "Hands up" and fired a shot over the wall ~~at~~ the lorry. Those of us near him did likewise. When I popped up my head I was about ten

feet from the lorry, and as I fired my rifle several shots were fired at us. As it was too slow to work the rifle, I then drew my Webley revolver and fired three or four shots rapidly at the soldiers still in the lorry, who were firing at point-blank range at us. Most of our men were still too far down the wall to be effective, and Lacey and myself signalled them by hand movements to come up. The British officer at this time was firing with a revolver from the cover of the bonnet of the lorry at anything that appeared over the wall. As I popped up my head to fire again, I got struck on the side of the head either by a bullet or a splinter of stone from the wall, which knocked me to the ground, dazed for a minute. As I crept over to the wall again, I noticed some others of our party, including Jim Gorman, had come up nearby. Gorman had the only grenade in our party, a small "egg" which had been captured in one of the barrack attacks. Lacey ordered him to throw it. I distinctly remember Gorman pulling the pin out of the grenade with the little finger of his left hand and throwing the grenade in a lobbing motion over the wall exactly where the lorry was. We all crouched down lower, waiting for the explosion. Ten, twenty or more seconds passed, but no explosion. The grenade must have been a dud. We again fired over the wall at the lorry with rifles and revolvers. The enemy replied and the shooting was intense and, at such close range, deafening. In my second effort at the wall, I was sheltering close to a gap and must have been partly exposed, as another bullet got me in the thigh, and shortly after another grazed my ribs. Strangely, I felt no pain, only a numbness in my right leg and a dizziness in the head.

Lacy noticed I was hit, and ordered me to get back down our line and get some of our fellows to cross the road and occupy the fence behind the quarry there. Jim Gorman, Paddy Dwyer, Jim Ryan (Dalton) and Jack Ryan (Master) got out on the road and opened rapid fire at the enemy while the others crossed and took up the quarry position, from which vantage point they had better scope for their rifles. Gradually, under the cover of this fire, the remainder of the column crossed the road to the Grantstown side, except Rody Hanly and Jim Bishop, who helped me away under cover of the wall towards Jerry Dwyer's farmhouse, a couple of hundred yards away. The firing was now dying down to an odd shot and we could hear from the Kilfeacle side, less than a mile away, the sound of other lorries coming from Tipperary. Hanly, Bishop and myself then went in through a passage and got to Devereux's of Ballymacady, about a mile away, where they dressed my wounds and put me to bed. They then left me as they had to join the main party, and I was alone with my thoughts, which were anything but cheerful.

I was within a mile of the ambush position, and it was a certainty that the whole district would in a short time be the object of intense enemy raids and searches. After an hour or so I heard the noise of a pony and trap in the yard. In a moment Jerry Dwyer came into the room and told me to get dressed, as they were taking me away in the car to a safer place. With Jerry was one of the Quinlan's of Abbey Golden, a member of the local company, and they drove me to Barron's of Kilmoyler, about five miles away, mostly by by-roads and at times across fields. Chris. Barron and Mrs. Barron made me as comfortable as possible, and brought Dr. Russell of Bansha to me. The doctor did his best, but

after a lot of probing for the bullet in my leg he told me he could not get it out and the only hope was an operation after X-ray. Word of my whereabouts was sent to Brigade H.Q., and after a week or so my brother Seán, Seán Allen and Paddy Deere arrived with a motor-car to bring me to Dr. Roberts in Limerick, who was friendly to the Volunteers and who had agreed to operate on me. We thanked Mr. and Mrs. Barron for their care and attention, and drove by unfrequented ways, avoiding enemy posts, until we came out on the Limerick road at Monard. From there on we drove along the main road towards Limerick, as we didn't know the by-roads and had to take a chance. The driver was an ex-serviceman of the British Army and had a large badge in his lapel indicating that he was a Comrade of the Great War.

As we entered Pallasgreen we were halted by a road-block in front of the barracks. There was a sentry on guard and he called for the sergeant to come out and search the car. Our driver got out, and as it had started raining he proceeded to meet the sergeant at the barrack porch. Producing his licence and permit, he allowed the sergeant to see his discharge papers and they exchanged some army gossip. Satisfied with the driver's replies as to who was in the car (we were cattle men going to a fair in Limerick), the sergeant told the sentry to open the gate and let us through. It was lucky for us the car had not been examined, as the blood was running down my face through the bandage which I had concealed under a scarf.

We got to Dr. Roberts's house in Mallow St. and there they left me, as they had to get away as quickly as possible back to Tipperary. Dr. Roberts X-rayed my leg and located the bullet. He drove me to St. John's

Hospital, where he would operate in the morning. On our way to the hospital we were held up by police and Black and Tans, but when they recognised the doctor, who was the police surgeon in Limerick, they waved us on. In the hospital I was given a private room and a chart with my assumed name and address (Martin Fitzgerald of Newcastlewest) and which described me as having "osteomilitis" or bone disease.

The first operation was unsuccessful in removing the bullet and I had to be put back for a further operation. For some weeks I was very ill with septic poisoning, and when the bullet was removed after another operation it was feared my leg would have to be amputated. This I would not allow. As month followed month my condition deteriorated and it looked as if nothing could save me. The Blue Nuns and the nurses, as well as the doctor, did all in their power for me but considered my case hopeless. During this time one of the nuns, Sister Domitilla, had been telling me of a saintly priest, Fr. Bonaventure, O.F.M., who sometimes visited the hospital and had effected some remarkable cures. She promised she would bring him to me, and one Sunday after I had been four or five months there she came into my room in great excitement, telling me Fr. Bonaventure had arrived and would cure me.

I was prepared to see a very ascetic, saintly-looking priest, but when he came into the room I nearly laughed when I beheld a smallish, rosy-cheeked, bald-headed Franciscan, whose jolly smile and joking manner was the very opposite to what I had been expecting. When the nun had left us alone, his expression became serious and he told me he would cure me if I had faith for a few minutes. Impressed by this, I repeated some prayers while he read

over me, holding in his hand a small, glass-covered box something like a watch, which, he said, contained a holy relic. After some encouraging talk, he went away and I have not seen him since then. In three days I was able to get out of bed and walk around the room without assistance, and in a short time was able to leave the hospital and eventually arrived back in my own area, where I reported to Brigade H.Q. I firmly believe that this was a miraculous cure, and I have never had any trouble or pain in my leg, which, apart from the many scars of the operations, is as good as ever it was, Thank God.

I cannot speak too highly of the kindness and friendliness of all the hospital staff - Dr. Jim Roberts, Rev. Mother Ambrose, Sr. Domitilla, Sr. Assunta, Nurse Reidy and Nurse Clancy. They did not know who I was and they were receiving no payment for treating and nursing me. All they knew was that I was a wounded Volunteer, and if I had been the Pope they could not do more for me. In fact, for some time the Bishop of Killaloe was my near neighbour in an adjoining private room, and the nuns and staff treated us as equals. I had several visits from the then Bishop of Limerick, Most Rev. Dr. Hallinan, who loved to chat with me in Irish, as he said, to keep in practice, but he sometimes broke into Italian. All in all, I had a very interesting few months in St. John's.

There were some other Volunteers there. One was Sniper Bentley of East Clare Brigade, who was reputed to have shot down an enemy aeroplane with a rifle. He had been wounded through the hand, and one day while Dr. Roberts was in the hospital an alarm was given that police and military were raiding the hospital for wounded men. At once Dr. Roberts hastened to Bentley, took off the dressings



from his hand and made an incision around the hand to give it the appearance of a tear of wire, which was supposed to have caused his wound, in case the raiders examined Bentley's hand. This is what actually did happen, and the doctor's timely action saved Bentley's life. The impromptu operation was performed without any anaesthetic, a tribute to Bentley's courage and stoicism. During the same raid I was quizzed very closely by a sergeant of the R.I.C., who appeared doubtful of my story of having fallen off a ladder and got some bone disease. He told me he would have an independent doctor sent in to examine my leg. I do not know if he did so, as when I told Rev. Mother Ambrose of this she phoned for a closed car and, giving me a pound note, told the driver to bring me to the railway station, from whence I took a train to Limerick Junction. Getting off the train when it stopped before backing into the platform, I made my way across country to a friendly house. Next morning, apart from being a bit stiff and tired, I was able to move about quite well and so joined up once more with my comrades of the 3rd Tipperary Brigade.

During the time I had been away many of my comrades had been killed, wounded or captured. Comdt. Paddy Hogan, O/C 2nd Battalion, Comdt. Seán Duffy and Capt. Paddy Moloney of the 4th Battalion, and Comdt. Tom Donovan, O/C 7th Battalion had been killed in action, also Volunteers Hayes and Looby of Mount Bruis Company, at Ballynamorsough. Capt. Jim Hickey, O/C "B" Company, and Volunteer W. O'Brien of "C" Company, had been killed while prisoners in Tipperary Military Barracks, as well as some others from the 2nd and 3rd Battalion. Many officers had been captured and jailed, and their places were taken by others. The number now in the two Flying Columns was over sixty and they were getting unwieldy.

About this time (May, 1921) the Divisions were formed, the 2nd Southern comprising South and Mid Tipperary, East and Mid Limerick and Kilkenny Brigades. Ernie O'Malley was appointed Divisional O/C, Con Moloney, Divisional Adjt., and Dan Breen, Divisional Q/M. I was appointed Assistant Divisional Q/M. Dinny Lacey replaced Con Moloney as Vice O/C, and Mick Sheehan replaced Dan Breen as Q/M of the South Tipperary Brigade. My brother, Seán, had been for some time Adjutant of the Brigade with H.Q. at Rosegreen.

Dan Breen was married around this time, his bride being Brid Malone of Dublin, sister of Lieut. Michael Malone who had bravely died at Mount St. Bridge in Easter Week, 1916. After the wedding, Dan and his wife and myself left Looby's of Miltown and, in a pony and trap, drove to Jack Quirke's of Ballinvassa, Donohill, which we were to use as Div. H.Q. The other officers arrived shortly and further staff was appointed, amongst them being R.W. de Courcy, Div. Engineer; Michael Doyle, Div. I/O; Maurice McGrath, Asst. Adjutant; Jim Doherty, O/C of Div. Company; Jim O'Donnell, Munitions Officer; Paddy Keogh, Armourer.

The Divisional stores were very scanty, consisting of some few revolvers and ammunition and grenades got from G.H.Q. The arrival of a couple of Thompson sub-machine guns was a red-letter day, and all the staff vied with one another to possess them. The Divisional Company, formed of sections of four adjoining companies, was then engaged in building a large dug-out in a remote part of the fields of Henry Quinlan of Bohernagibbons, about a mile north of the Cross of Donohill. This dug-out was to be a most elaborate affair when completed, but, in fact, it was only partly made when the Truce came and it was left unfinished. There were some occasions when the Divisional staff had to make hurried departures from the area owing to raids by the enemy.

But no one was captured and the routine work of the organisation went on, with a constant stream of messengers and couriers coming and going. The O/C of East Limerick Brigade, Seán Wall, was killed in the near vicinity of the Div. H.Q. when fired on by police when on his way to a conference. He was unarmed at the time and the enemy were unaware of his identity.

We had some motor-cars and motor-cycles at Div. H.Q. and it was highly entertaining to observe the tests and trials of the aspiring drivers before being allowed to take the machines out on the country roads. In one of the fields there was a big hollow. The pupil-driver, having been instructed briefly in the uses of the various levers or pedals, clutch and brake, had to start up his vehicle and drive out of the farmyard, down the steep slope of the hollow, up the other side and back into the yard. When he had succeeded in doing this feat he was passed as competent. In practice, however, the aspiring drivers got very few chances to show their skill on the roads until after the truce.

The main idea behind the formation of the Divisions was to direct and co-ordinate the activities of the Brigades in its area. Up to this time (May, 1921), each Brigade was independent except for a rather nebulous contact with G.H.Q. in Dublin. With the Divisional grouping it was hoped to so organise activities that enemy pressure could be diverted from the hitherto active areas to those which had been more or less peaceful. Divisional command could arrange for large-scale grouping of active service units from adjacent Brigades against enemy posts or movements which hitherto had not been attempted or considered feasible. Inter-Divisional groupings would also be possible

for an extension of major guerilla warfare. The advent of the Truce on 11th July meant that these plans were not put into practice.

Immediately the Truce was proclaimed, a Divisional Training Camp was set up at Galtee Castle on the southern slopes of the Galtees, and officers of Brigade and battalion rank from the five Brigades were put through an intensive training programme. These officers then in turn set up Brigade and Battalion Training Camps in their respective areas during the autumn of 1921, and hundreds of officers received specialised training and instruction in all branches. At the end of 1921 the I.R.A. organisation was working efficiently throughout the Divisional area, and as enemy posts were evacuated they were taken over by the appropriate I.R.A. unit. This worked smoothly enough in most areas, but in the case of Limerick City a crux arose owing to lack of sufficient Volunteers to man the several enemy barracks in the city.

Early in March, 1922, the situation was jeopardised by the action of Liaison Officer O'Shaughnessy of Limerick in inviting the East Clare Brigade under Michael Brennan to occupy some of the Limerick posts. Brennan and most of his unit had taken the treaty side, while Liam Forde and most of his unit took the anti-treaty side. When the Clare men occupied one of the military barracks, the Mid Limerick officers called on the Division to eject them. The 2nd Southern Division in turn called on other Republican Divisions to lend assistance, and in a few days there was an influx of armed contingents from several Brigades and Divisions into Limerick, where they occupied several hotels and public buildings, with a G.H.Q. in the Glentworth Hotel. Matters

looked ugly and serious fighting might have ensued. The matter was complicated by the fact that the British military were still in occupation of the other two military barracks. Eventually a settlement was arrived at, whereby the Clare party evacuated the barracks they had occupied and the Mid Limerick men took over. All groups then returned to their own areas.

In April a party of pro-Treaty troops under Comdt. Tom Carew, who had been I/O of the 3rd Tipperary Brigade, took over Annacarty Police Barracks. Comdt. Dinny Lacey, who was now O/C of the Brigade (and anti-Treaty), laid siege to the post, and after some days the post was captured by the Republicans, Tom Carew and one of his men having been wounded. About this time also the anti-Treaty Volunteers of Kilkenny, who had returned from the invasion of Limerick, found their Kilkenny barracks occupied by pro-Treaty forces under Col. Prout. Under Dick Brennan, the Republicans occupied the Castle, and hostilities again broke out. The 3rd Tipperary Brigade columns moved in to the assistance of their party who were being attacked in the Castle, and civil war was imminent again. Representatives of the G.H.Q.s of both sides met and arranged a truce, and a settlement of the local dispute was arrived at.

The unity and good relations which had existed between former comrades who had differed on the merits or otherwise of the Treaty was now at an end, and a definite cleavage between the pro and anti-Treaty forces made itself evident. While Tipperary 3rd and Mid Limerick Brigades were almost solidly anti-Treaty, East Limerick, Kilkenny and Mid Tipperary Brigades were split completely on the issue. Comdt. Ernie O'Malley had now gone to G.H.Q. and Comdt. Seumas Robinson replaced him as Div. O/C.

Con Moloney was Vice O/C, Seán Fitzpatrick, Div. Adjt., and I was Div. Q/M - as I had been since the Truce when Dan Breen left the area. The other members of the Divisional staff were likewise anti-Treaty, but the organisation in some of the Brigades had broken down and the rival officers and their followers gave very little co-operation and, in some cases, threw off their allegiance to the Division.

As the Bureau of Military History is concerned only with the events and national organisations of the period 1915 to 1921, I do not propose to deal further in this statement with the events which led up to or occurred during the Civil War, in which I took the Republican or anti-Treaty side.

Signed: *Seán Fitzpatrick*

Date: *14<sup>th</sup> June 1956*

Witness:

*Knace*  
(Investigator).

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