

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21  
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NO. W.S. 274

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS

DOCUMENT NO. W.S....274. ... ..

**Witness**

Mr. Liam McMahon,  
Sweetmount House,  
Dundrum,  
Co. Dublin.

**Identity**

Centre, Manchester Circle I.R.B.;  
Member of Self-Determination League  
of Great Britain 1917.

**Subject**

Work for prisoners in English Jails 1916 -;  
Plans for escape of prisoners from Lincoln  
and Manchester Jails 1918 -.

**Conditions, if any, stipulated by Witness**

Nil

File No. .S1382..... ..

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STATEMENT OF LIAM McMAHON,  
Sweetmount House, Dundrum, Co. Dublin.

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I was born in Kildimo, Co. Limerick, in 1878. As a young man, I went to Liverpool, and joined the clerical staff of Messrs. Dowdall Bros., Butter Merchants. I became a member of the Bootle Branch of the Gaelic League, where I met Piaras Beaslaoi for the first time. I later joined the Gaelic Athletic Association, eventually being picked to play for Lancashire against Kilkenny in the final of the All-Ireland Hurling Championship in Croke Park in 1905. After this match, when returning to Liverpool on the B. and I. boat, I was approached by Paddy Lively. After a short conversation, during which he explained the aims and objects of the I.R.B., he asked me if I had any religious scruples about becoming a member. I said I had not. There and then, he administered the oath, as we stood by the rails looking out to sea. Many members of the team joined the I.R.B. on that occasion. Most of them were from Liverpool. That was my first experience with intense Irish politics. Paddy Lively was the Centre. The late Neil Kerr was also associated with the Circle. I do not remember the name of the Circle.

About 1909, I was appointed to the Manchester office of Messrs. Dowdall Bros., and was transferred from the Liverpool Circle to the Manchester Circle of the I.R.B. Matt Lawless was Centre at the time. I also became associated with the Gaelic League and the G.A.A. in Manchester.

Some time later, we had a visit from Seán MacDermott about what we had to do. This was about five years before the Rising; and, of course, his principal object at that time was getting the necessary war materials, and trying to spread the Circles of the Irish Republican Brotherhood. He did not stop very long. We met at the house of a man, named Ó Ríain, in Seedley. There were about fourteen people present, of whom I can only remember Ó Ríain, his son, Michael, and a Mr. Newman. Of course, we did what we could, as regards what Seán MacDermott wanted. From time to time, we purchased war material - mostly revolvers and ammunition - and sent it across to Dublin.

I was not summoned to take part in the Rising in Easter Week, 1916; but afterwards, the National Aid Society was set up for the purpose of providing the prisoners with food, clothes and whatever they wanted. I was made Honorary Secretary to that Society for England and Wales; and through that, I met Mick Collins. Our association afterwards, up to the signing of the Treaty, was most intimate.

I had a lot to do with the feeding of the prisoners in Knutsford. We had a big Committee working; and every Sunday they took out food. There was one chap there, W.J. Brennan-Whitmore - a newspaper correspondent. I remember his suit got damaged in the cleaning; it got all the colours in the rainbow. I took a fresh suit to him. Afterwards, he sent me an autographed copy of his book, "With The Irish In Frongoch", in which he gave

away many secrets, much to Collins' disgust. I think he should never have written it.

Some time after Mr. De Valera's release from jail in June, 1917, I got a letter from him, through Harry Boland, saying that he thought Sinn Féin in England was rather dangerous. It was proclaimed and all that. He suggested we should form the Irish Self-Determination League. He asked me, as Honorary Secretary of Sinn Féin, to call the officers of the different Irish Societies there, and to start a provisional executive, which I did. We had our first meeting in Manchester, at which Arthur Griffith, Larry Ginnell and Harry Boland spoke. It was such a success that we had the Free Trade Hall and the hall opposite - the Albert Hall - packed, and as many more on a croft. So that De Valera's idea must have been right, because it caught on all right. Art O'Brien was Chairman, Mr. Kelly, Vice-Chairman, Tom Faughman, Treasurer, and I was Honorary Secretary. Following this meeting, an intensive organising campaign was launched. As a result, the League spread very rapidly, and soon we found it necessary to employ a full-time Secretary. Mr. Seán McGrath was appointed to this post. At one time, we had over 400 branches in England and Wales.

We decided then that the best plan was to use the League, not openly but surreptitiously, for I.R.B. purposes. All our organisers were I.R.B. men. They were to report likely persons to start a Company of Volunteers. If we got a good man, whom we thought was reliable, we would initiate him into the

Volunteers.

I acted as Intelligence Officer for the Volunteers, and practically all the officers, with the exception of Paddy O'Donoghue, were appointed on my recommendation. Shortly after the Rising, I was I.R.B. Centre, Matt Lawless, Treasurer, and J. O'Sullivan, Secretary.

Regarding the escape from Wetherby, at that particular time they were not in jails; they were in districts, living in private houses, and could travel within a three-mile limit. There was a general decision that all the internees, as you would call them, at the time should break and go back to Ireland. The Wetherby men must have got instructions to come to my place. The principal ones that I can remember included General Michael Brennan, Seán Muirthile, Michael Colivet and McInerney, whose brother was driver of the car which went into the sea at Ballykissane Pier on Good Friday, when going to meet Casement. This was after 1916. We rigged them out with suitcases and a few odds and ends they wanted; and they got back safely to Ireland.

When President Wilson was staying at the Midland Hotel in Manchester, we were very busy trying to get in touch with him, in connection with his Fourteen Points and to say that Ireland was entitled to self-determination. Through that, I got in touch with a Father Kavanagh (since deceased) from the Cathedral in Leeds. He got his Parish Priest - now Bishop Shine of Middlesborough - to draw up the petition;

and we got the Lord Mayor of Manchester, Sir Daniel McCabe, and numerous others, who were not in our favour at all, to sign it. Whilst we did not succeed in contacting Wilson himself, we got to his secretary, and he promised that the petition would be delivered to the President.

I had further association with Father Kavanagh. I had a visit from him, I think in December, 1918. It was then he brought me the famous postcards, which were sent out to him from Lincoln Prison - one showing Seán McGarry (who was a prisoner in Lincoln at the time) holding a key, which he was trying to insert in a keyhole of a door; underneath was written, "Christmas 1917 - He can't get in". On the other card, McGarry was depicted in a prison cell, with a large key in his hand, and underneath was written, "Christmas, 1918 - He can't get out". 'Big' John O'Mahony, who was also a prisoner in Lincoln at that time, told me afterwards, when I was associated with him in Mountjoy, that, as he knew Father Kavanagh and thought he was the best man to contact, he had suggested that the postcards be sent to Father Kavanagh. I don't think Father Kavanagh received any instructions as to what to do with the cards.

When Father Kavanagh brought the postcards, we did not know what to make of them. I had an idea that they were intended to convey some message. Paddy Donoghue was working for me at the time. I asked him to cross to Dublin and deliver them to Mrs. Seán McGarry, which he did. I believe they had the

same difficulty in Dublin in trying to find anything in them. Eventually, I think Collins tumbled to the fact that there was something in them.

Then another communication came. It was in three languages - English, Irish and Latin. I do not know the contents of it, beyond that it gave another clue. Father Kavanagh brought it to me; and that was sent over to Dublin also. After that, there was a further communication. In the meantime, Michael Collins and Harry Boland were evidently getting replies sent in. Of course, I did not know anything about that; it is a matter I would not be sure of. Anyhow, there was a still further communication that should have cleared up everything. I had another visit from Father Kavanagh. Harry Boland was in the house at the time. Father Kavanagh told us he had received another message from Lincoln. He said he was watched all the time since he left his house in Leeds. He suspected something was happening while he was in the train. He said he feigned sleep, and felt someone searching his pockets - which was all rot. He did not bring the message; but said he had given it to a teacher; she was to be in the Midland Hotel and was to bring the correspondence at six o'clock. Miss Talty was Captain of Cumann na mBan at the time; and Father Kavanagh asked her to go to the hotel to contact this lady. Of course, Miss Talty could not contact her, because the lady was not there. She came back and reported it. I never saw Harry Boland in a temper before that.

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Harry Boland ordered Paddy Donoghue to go back with Father Kavanagh to Leeds, and contact this girl. When they got to Leeds, Father Kavanagh would not take Paddy to the address. He said he would go himself; and when he came back, he said she had accidentally thrown it in the fire. It is my belief that he burned it himself, because he was a nervous little man. This caused further delay, as word had to be sent to the prisoners that their last communication had been destroyed before its contents were noted. Everything went on better after that.

My house was the place where they made most of the arrangements for the Lincoln escape. Mick Collins and Harry Boland were hardly out of the place - Paddy Donoghue, as well. Anyhow, a date was decided on.

One night about a week or so before the actual escape, I had been out somewhere, and I arrived home late. Whom did I find had arrived before me in the house but Michael Staines! He had been to Usk to see about Joe McGrath's escape. We did not want any other escape to take place before ours; and we were rather peeved and worried, as we felt that the authorities would be on their guard. Anyway, Michael said they went down there to arrange for the Usk escape, which was not to take place until after Lincoln. Joe McGrath got out himself, came to Liverpool, and got back to Ireland. I could never remember who was with Michael Staines that night.

We were making all sorts of plans as to how we

should arrange to get the prisoners from Lincoln to Manchester. We even thought of a hearse, but that was ruled out as too obvious and too noticeable. Finally, it was decided that taxis should be got - one from Lincoln to Worksop, the second from Worksop to Sheffield, and the third from Sheffield to Manchester. Frank Kelly was in Lincoln all the time for a fortnight before the escape. He is the husband of Anna Kelly. He was contacting different people, and arranged for the car from Lincoln to Worksop. Meanwhile, cakes containing keys, etc., had been sent in to the prisoners.

The first cake was baked in Ireland by Mrs. McGarry; and the key, according to the scale shown on the postcard, was enclosed, and put on the side of the cake. Fintan Murphy took it over. When he arrived at the jail with it, he said he was a commercial traveller, and that somebody in Manchester had asked him to bring this cake. He was taken inside. The Head Warder was called, who brought a very thin knife, and started prodding the cake. Fintan was in agony over the thing, as to what would happen in the event of the knife touching the key. Anyway, he never contacted the key, and the cake was put in. Of course, that key did not fit.

Then we got instructions from Harry Boland to have two keys made in Manchester. The keys were made and sent in - in a cake brought by Harry Boland - to Lincoln, and handed over there to Frank Kelly to

take in. Those keys did not fit either. That cake, by the way, was baked in our house, under the supervision of my wife, by Mrs. O'Sullivan, who was our housekeeper at the time.

Next we got instructions from the same source to get a blank key, of certain dimensions, to put it in a cake, together with some files necessary for cutting it out. This made the cake rather heavy, of course. My wife baked this cake. It was an oblong fruit cake. There was no icing or plaster of paris covering it, as Frank Kelly has stated in his "Reminiscences of Escapes". As a matter of fact, Frank Kelly never saw this cake, as Kathleen Talty took it from my house and handed it in at the prison.

About this time, Fintan Murphy arrived at my house with a rope ladder. Harry Boland, Mick Collins and Paddy Donoghue were present when he got there. The rope ladder was to be used, in case the keys would not open the outer gate. We discussed the plan in detail. Mick and Harry were to be at the door by which the prisoners were to emerge, and bring them to a spot some distance away where Paddy Donoghue was to be waiting with a taxi, in which the escapees would be conveyed to Worksop. On arrival at Worksop, they were to go to a particular place where Fintan Murphy would be waiting for them. They were to pay off the taxi, and proceed on foot, with Fintan as guide, a few streets away where another taxi would be waiting to take them to Sheffield. Similar arrangements were made for Sheffield where they would be met by O'Connor, who would bring them to where I would be waiting with

a taxi. Paddie Donoghue was to accompany the escapees from Lincoln to Manchester.

The day decided on for the escape (3rd February, 1919) came. Mick Collins, Harry Boland and Paddy Donoghue left me that morning to go to Lincoln. Up to that time, we had not secured a taxi for the journey from Sheffield to Manchester. At that time, owing to the scarcity of petrol and restrictions regarding its use, it was very difficult to get taxis to do long runs. Before leaving, Collins said if I could not get a taxi during the day, that I was to go to Sheffield by train and contact them there. However, from an English Catholic friend of mine, named Littlewood, who was in the taxi business, I secured one. I told him I had to go to Sheffield to meet some co-operative friends of mine, that I had to bring them back with me, and that it would be rather late when I got back. The schedule of arrival in Manchester was twelve o'clock midnight; and it shows you how well the arrangements were carried out - we arrived at five minutes past twelve. Mr. Littlewood's driver and myself went to Sheffield late that evening. I knew I had a fairly long wait; and I told him he need not worry - he could go and have a meal. I gave him some money to have a meal. We pulled up just outside a publichouse, where I was to contact them. There was a man, named O'Connor, who had to be brought in because Harry Boland told him about what was going to take place; and Harry thought what a grand chap he must have been. We knew, in Manchester, he could not keep his mouth shut; and we thought the best way to

keep his mouth shut was to implicate him in it. His job was to contact the prisoners when they arrived in Sheffield. He knew Sheffield, because he was in the insurance business there at one time. He knew where to pick up the escapees, and was to bring them to where I was waiting for them.

I was often looking at my watch and thinking it was a long, long wait. Eventually, they arrived - De Valera, Seán McGarry and Seán Milroy - with Paddy Donoghue and O'Connor. The four of them got into my taxi. We left O'Connor behind us.. We faced for Manchester, and got there at about 12.5 a.m.

Coming down in the taxi, on the way to Manchester, Seán McGarry started to talk about how they should arrange for getting back to Dublin, making all sorts of propositions. De Valera turned to him and said: "Don't you think the men outside have done very well so far? Why not leave it to them now to do the rest?" I thought that was jolly good.

Victoria Park, where I lived, was a residential area. We pulled the taxi up outside the gates. Paddy Donoghue and De Valera went on a walking tour to where the latter was to be put up - at Father O'Mahony's; he was Chaplain for the Workhouse in Crumpsall. I brought the two Seán's into my house, where Mary Healy was waiting to take them to her house in Fallowfield in Manchester. After they had tea, Kathleen Talty and Mary Healy conveyed them to their destination.

Four or five days afterwards, the Waterloo Cup

was being run. Seán McGarry, dressed as a bookie, with a bag - "Billy Ellsworth" printed on it - went for the Liverpool train and got it. An Englishman lent his bag for the occasion. Seán Milroy was dressed as a strolling musician. He had grey hair, but it was now a beautiful brown, as he had dyed it in my place. He carried a violin case, and was going to the Races also. They got safely to Liverpool. After that, we made no further enquiries as to how they got across to Ireland; but they got across.

We got word from Detective Sergeant Thomas Walsh, Manchester Police, to say that it was dangerous to leave De Valera any longer at the priest's residence, as the police suspected he was staying there. The housekeeper must have spoken about it unwittingly. His presence became known; and he advised us to shift him immediately. We procured a Colonial uniform, and De Valera dressed up in it. After dark, Kathleen Talty escorted him from Crumpsall to Victoria Park; and from there Mary Healy took him on up to her own house. He had no papers to prove his identity as a colonial but, fortunately, nobody bothered, and so he arrived safely at Miss Healy's house.

Then I went to Ireland, and was staying in Kilmacanogue. While I was there, I had a wire from Collins, saying: "Come, and be prepared to travel". On my way from Kilmacanogue to Bray Station, I met Joe Clarke, who was sent to meet me. At Harcourt Street Station, we met Joe Reilly, who conducted me to Vaughan's Hotel, where I met Mick Collins. He asked me: "Can you go across to Manchester tonight?"

I said: "Yes, if necessary". He said that there was a controversy between Cathal Brugha and Arthur Griffith; and the only one who could reconcile the difference would be De Valera. He gave me a letter which I was to deliver to him.

I crossed to Manchester that night, and gave my people a bit of a fright when I landed in without telling them I was coming. The following morning, around about nine o'clock, I called on De Valera. I told him the object of my visit, and handed him the letter. He said: "My own idea is that I should be allowed to go to America, where I could come out in the open; but if they want me at home, my own ideas do not matter". He said: "When am I to go?" I said: "To-day". He was brought to my house. Miss Talty, Miss Healy and Paddy Donoghue brought him in a taxi to Mrs. McCarthy's in Liverpool. Neal Kerr and Steve Lanigan would have made the arrangements for him there. Later that day, I had a visit from Harry Boland; and he asked me if I would cross over to Ireland with him that night. He wanted to bring back De Valera's books. I think there were a tin trunk and an attaché case full of books. We crossed that night - the same night as De Valera crossed by Liverpool.

I parted with Harry Boland in Dublin; and we had arranged to meet at Vaughan's about twelve o'clock in the day. He wanted to see De Valera. He took the boxes along to where he was staying in Merrion Square. That is what I inferred from what Harry told me. I met Harry again, and he told me

that everything was okay, that he got back the stuff, and that everything was in order.

Harry Boland was so pleased with the part I had taken in the escape that he presented me with a gold County Championship Medal won by him as a member of Faughs. He also gave me a key; it was not the one they used in getting out, but it was used in trying to bring them out. I presented this key to Mr. De Valera, together with one of the socks he was wearing when he escaped - you could put your head through the hole that was in the heel!

Big John O'Mahony played a prominent part in helping the Lincoln escapees to gain a good start on the road to freedom. This was told to me afterwards by John O'Mahony in Mountjoy, and is, I think, worth recording. Some time after the prisoners got away, the warder came to lock up the cells. John was standing at his own cell door, and got into conversation with the warder. After a while, he asked the warder if he would like a drop of whiskey, as the night was cold. The two entered the cell, and John poured out a good tot of whiskey, repeating the dose later. He delayed the warder nearly half an hour. Later, when the escape was discovered, the same warder, on passing John's cell, said under his breath: "You did me a bloody thick one that time."

An amusing incident regarding the escape occurred when I was in Ireland. I met J.J. Walsh in Dublin. He said: "That was a very clever bit of business in England". I said: "You mean the escape?" He said:

"Now, if you want a boat, we have a boat in Cork to get him away to America or anywhere". I said: "Why are you telling me this?" He said: "I know you had something to do with that". I said: "I had not". He said: "Liam de Roiste knows more about the boat than I do. I will fetch him along". Anyway, they hired a jaunting car. I said: "Would it not be better for you to give this information at No. 6 Harcourt Street? I am going there now. Perhaps you will come and give this information?" The three of us went over. I let the two lads go in, and I hopped it. Harry Boland was in No. 6. They started to tell him about this boat and how they had contacted Liam McMahon of Manchester. Harry said: "Who is he?" He gave them a dog's telling-off. He said that possibly I was a spy, and they were giving away the information. The following Sunday, I was at a football match in Croke Park with Harry and Mick, and who passed me but J.J.! I think he never forgave me.

A few months afterwards, De Valera went to America. I had a letter from Mick Collins to say Mrs. de Valera was to be expected in my house, with Miss O'Connor, and asking me to do the best I could, as regards getting passports, and to see her on the boat. Mrs. de Valera and Miss O'Connor came and stayed with us for three days. On instructions from Collins, I accompanied Mrs. de Valera and Miss O'Connor to Southampton. I was the last to see them off on the boat.

Piarras Beasley, in his book - "Michael Collins

And The Making Of A New Ireland" - stated, regarding the escape from Strangeways Jail, Manchester, in October, 1919, that there was no effort to arrange an escape "until he arrived, and that he started it. In this, Piaras Beasley has made a mistake. As a matter of fact, several communications had passed between Stack, who was a prisoner in Strangeways Jail, and Collins about a possible escape. Eventually, it was decided that nothing would be done until Beasley was transferred there from Birmingham Prison. I was the first to take a note from Collins to Beasley; and his first remark to me was: "I am glad you have been busy here" - which showed there was previous contact.

At this time, Fionán Lynch, who was a prisoner also, was released; and he brought out a map showing the location of where a possible attempt at escape could be effected. Fionán was in close touch with Paddy Donoghue and myself; and we, of course, were working in close touch with Michael Collins.

At that time, of course, we had no friendly warders. All communications with the Manchester prisoners were mostly delivered by visitors. They were shown in to a room there. In shaking hands, they could transfer anything, or, as very often happened, in pots of jam and parcels of butter taken in by Mrs. Donoghue. The plan of the outside of the wall was sent in on a map, packed in a cake again. This was done in Paddy Donoghue's house.

Rory O'Connor came to Manchester to examine the plans of the proposed escape. The code which was

used was that Collins was "Angela", and Paddy Donoghue was "Maud". The six prisoners in Manchester at the time were Austin Stack, Piaras Beasley, D.P. Walsh, Seán Doran, Con Connolly and Paddy McCarthy, who was afterwards killed in an ambush. The plan was to hold up the warder during exercise; and we had got handcuffs, in case they were necessary, from Inspector Carroll of the Salford Dock Police, with, of course, the numbers rubbed out so that they could not be traced.

The day of the proposed escape arrived, and it was found that the Volunteers from Dublin, under Rory O'Connor, missed some connection. The escape had to be arranged for a later date.

The morning of the actual escape arrived. Miss Talty took in a watch to the prison. This watch had been sent out for repairs, but actually it was brought in to have the correct time recorded, so that there should be no hitch. The time would have to synchronise with that recorded on the watches outside - five o'clock.

As Beasley has pointed out in his book, I was unable to be present, because I was, at the time, laid up with an attack of the 'flu. The street at the back of the prison led on to a croft; and this was manned by a number of Volunteers from Dublin, Liverpool and Manchester, holding up all traffic and all pedestrians, including military. At the specified time, a stone was thrown over the wall from inside. This was the zero hour then, and a rope, leaded, was thrown over the wall from the outside. It only went a couple of

feet over the wall; and it had to be hauled back again. The same thing happened the second time. Eventually, Matt Lawless, a member of the Volunteers, walked up with an extension ladder and calmly put it up against the wall. Peadar Clancy mounted it, released the weight and threw over the ladder. The first man up was Stack. The second was Beasley himself; and when he had got to the top, two more had got to the bottom of the ladder; his hands got stuck; they were scraped and grazed; eventually he succeeded in landing on the ground. All six prisoners got out.

Beasley and Stack were taken to a waiting motor car by Donoghue, and driven to the house of a man, named George Lodge, Bachelor of Science, and employed by the I.C.I. at the time.

Two of the prisoners, Seán Doran and Paddy McCarthy, were given bicycles, and in the excitement they missed their guide. They set off, one following the other - one thinking that the other was the guide - until they found themselves out in the suburbs. They did not know Manchester, and had no idea what to do. They went in to the F.C.J. (Faithful Companions of Jesus) Convent there. There was a conference of old members in progress. They told their tale. One of the ladies present was a Miss Josie O'Donnell from Rochdale; and she was advised to go and see the Parish Priest, Father Corkery. She told him her tale of woe - that she had the two prisoners, and did not know what she was to do with them. Where did he suggest that she could go, but the place where we had

Stack and Beasley staying - George Lodge's. She brought the two lads - Doran and Paddy McCarthy - and left them waiting some distance away. She knocked at the door. It was an hour after the arrival of Stack and Beasley. When the door was opened, she said: "Are you Irish?" He said: "Yes". She said: "Are you a Catholic?" He said: "Yes". She said: "Are you a Sinn Féiner?" He said: "No, no, not at all" - thinking of the men he had from Strangeways. So she said: "Do you know anybody in the Sinn Féin movement?" And eventually she asked him if he knew me. He said: "No, I never met him. Wait - I think his name was in the Catholic Herald at a meeting". He was not long gone when he came back, and gave her my name and address. George thought it was all lost and the plot was found out.

She came to our house with the two lads. They planked their bicycles some distance away. She knocked at the door. My wife answered the door and, although they went to college together, they did not recognise one another; they had not seen each other for a long time. The same questions were put again - "Are you a Catholic?" "Are you Sinn Féin?" My wife said: "We belong to the Self-Determination League". So Miss Talty went out, and knew Josie very well. She told us what had happened, and that the two lads were outside. I had a brother-in-law, who was visiting me then because I had the flu, and I told him to take them up to his place until we arranged about them. They were taken to 64 Alexander Road - Seamus Talty's place.

Another prisoner lost his guide also. He was brought into St. Patrick's; and the priest there - Father O'Sullivan - got him 'digs'. Eventually they were all sent to their respective quarters.

Four or five days afterwards, I had a visit from Mick Collins; and he asked me was I well enough to see George Lodge with him and the other lads. I said: "We can get a taxi and go" - and we did. That was the first time Stack and Beasley learned of the other two prisoner who were brought to their door. Arrangements were made for them to be transferred to Liverpool.

One evening, Stack, Beasley, D.P. Walsh, George Lodge, Paddy Donoghue and myself walked into Salford Station - about two hundred yards from where they escaped - took tickets to Liverpool, and started playing cards in the compartment. We got out of the train at Edgehill, Liverpool, where we were met by Neal Kerr and Steve Lanigan.

Four days after the escape from Manchester, I had a visit from Inspector Carroll at my office. He laid a very official document on my desk, saying at the same time: "I think this is a likely place to get information on this matter". I picked up the document, and saw it had a full description of the six escapees, how they were dressed, and all about their general appearance. After I had carefully studied it, I handed the form back, remarking: "I have no idea how they got out or where they are". Of course,

Inspector Dan (who had already procured handcuffs for us) only wished that I should see the official description. Dan is now on pension. He is a Kerry man.

We had a mock funeral in Manchester for Terence MacSwiney when he died. We made arrangements for people from all over Lancashire and Yorkshire to attend. The coffin was draped with the tricolour. Even some of our own people thought Terence MacSwiney's body was in the coffin. From where the cortege started, it was four miles to the cemetery; and the last part of the procession had not left the starting point when the first part arrived at the cemetery, marching four-deep. The Chief Constable on horseback, with other policemen on horseback as well, kept the space cleared for the mock funeral. At one point, in Harporhey, an Orange mob tried to break up the procession, but were driven back by the mounted police. Father Lenihan, now Parish Priest of St. Mary's, Blackburn, delivered the oration.

Before the burnings in Manchester in April, 1921, Rory O'Connor asked me to go to Newcastle to form a Company of Volunteers there, which we successfully did. Whilst we were waiting for a meeting to take place in Newcastle, we went into the cinema; and the first thing we saw was the burning of the docks in Liverpool; and Rory was delighted: "Well", he said, "that is something; I hope Manchester will do as well".

After the burnings, Paddy Donoghue was in jail.

He had shot a policeman at the Manchester burnings; and he was in danger of death. A week after he was in jail, I had a letter, through his wife, asking me to go in and see him. No one was being allowed in to see him at the time. I had to ask the Chief Constable for a permit. When I got to the Town Hall, I had to wait a considerable time. Eventually, I was shown in to the Chief. I found, on my arrival there, about twelve detectives ranging along - I suppose expecting that some of them would recognise me as being one of the persons who had engaged in the burnings. The Chief asked me what I wanted to see the prisoner about; and I told him he owed me £250 - which he did at the time - and I wanted to know how I was going to get it. This served as an excuse for me to visit him. His clerk reminded him that Donoghue's wife and solicitor were in the day before. The Chief asked me did I know that. I said no, but if they were, that they would hardly ask, or make enquiries about my affairs. Eventually, I got his permission - written permission. I went down to the jail. The warder asked me my business, and I told him. He said: "You can't see him". I said: "I can. I have permission from the Chief Constable". He left me inside the compound, and went for the Chief Warder, The Chief Warder had to take the communication to the Governor. Eventually, I was let through, on the understanding that I did not speak in Irish, or attempt to receive or transfer any written material. I said I was not interested in that; all I wanted to know was how I was going to get my £250. Paddy Donoghue was brought to one side

of a cage, and I was at the other side of it. He succeeded in passing a note, even though there was a warder at his back, and another at mine. We kept close, of course, to the barriers, and they did not see it. In this note, he asked me to convey to Mick Collins that he would prefer to be killed trying to escape rather than be hanged, if the policeman should die. I conveyed this information to Collins, who asked me to arrange for some of the Volunteers to find out how well guarded the jail was. We already knew the lay-out of the jail, of course. The report I got was to the effect that the jail was so strongly guarded that it would cost too many lives to attempt a rescue; and this I transmitted to Collins also. There was nothing more done.

Some time after my visit to Paddy Donoghue in jail, there was a general round-up. They were all brought over to Ireland, and interned in Ballykinlar and in the Curragh. About two days before the round-up, I had word from Liam Mellows - by two messengers - to leave Manchester immediately, as I was to be one of the internees. Evidently he must have got information fairly quickly. Liam Mellows was O/C Britain at the time. I went to London, and stayed at Gerry McVeagh's, who was an M.P. at the time. While there, I was to get in touch with Sam Maguire and Reggie Dunne, who was O/C of London at the time. I had rather a nasty note from Collins to say I should not have left Manchester, as there was nobody to take charge. I wrote, through Art

O'Brien who had conducted all the correspondence, to tell him that I had left Manchester on instructions from Liam Mellows and, if he thought I should get back to Manchester, I would do so, regardless of the consequences. I had a further letter to say: "Stay in London".

The day after the signing of the Treaty, I happened to be in Michael Collins' room in Han's Place, London. With me was a Manchester City Councillor, Hughie Lee, later Lord Mayor; and I knew he would support the Treaty if there was any possible chance; and I asked Michael Collins if we could keep the Republican movement intact in Britain; and his answer was: "No, it would be a hindrance". Later, I was asked by Michael Collins as to how I was fixed financially. I said I was alright. Later still, I was asked by him to take up a position, and I refused; although later on, when my position was not very hopeful, I did apply without success - Collins was dead then.

An episode occurred in connection with the Cork Volunteers. General Strickland's secretary - a young Cork woman, married to a soldier from Wales - was very useful to the Cork Volunteers by passing on useful information. Her husband was killed in the war, and he willed that their son - five or six years of age - should be brought up by his grand-parents. The mother was very upset. The Volunteers, in recognition of her services, decided to kidnap the boy. Florrie O'Donoghue, John Phelan and another Volunteer arrived at my house with the boy. Hugh

Lee, late Lord Mayor of Manchester, kept the boy until he was taken back to his mother. I heard later that Florrie O'Donoghue married the widow.

Visitors to my home in Manchester that I can remember were:-

Eamon de Valera	-	Once.	
Michael Collins	-	Often.	
Harry Boland	-	Often.	
Cathal Brugha	-	Once.	
Liam Mellows	-	Twice.	
Rory O'Connor	-	Three times.	
Arthur Griffith	}	Once.	They came to see me when I was ill.
John O'Mahony			
Michael Brennan	-	Once.	
Seán Muirthile	-	Often.	
Seán McGarry	-	Three times.	
M. Colivet	-	Once.	
Mrs. de Valera	-	Once	
Miss O'Connor	-	Once.	
M. Staines	-	Once	
Seán McEntee	-	Once.	
Seán Milroy	-	Twice.	

I was a delegate to the Irish Race Convention in Paris. The split, which was then apparent, spoiled what would otherwise have been an outstanding event in Irish history.

After the signing of the Treaty, Steve Lanigan was sent to Liverpool and Manchester by the Supreme Council of the I.R.B. to collect all funds in the

hands of local circles. Manchester refused until the position was clarified.

A high-ranking officer of the Volunteers was also sent to try and get Volunteers in England on the Treaty side. Manchester again refused, on the plea that G.H.Q. had not then made up its mind which side to take.

SIGNED: Liam M. Chahon

DATE: 7/7/49

WITNESS: Sean Brennan Comdt.

