

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
- BURO STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21
NO. W.S. 659

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 659

Witness

Justin A. McCarthy,
10 Belgrave Square,
Monkstown,
Dublin.

Identity.

Quartermaster, Kilfinane Company, Galtee Batt'n.
O/C. 5th (Kilfinane) Battalion, East Limerick
Brigade.

Subject.

National activities, Co. Limerick,
1914-1921.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil

File No. ...S.1951.....

Form B.S.M. 2

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STATEMENT BY MR. JUSTIN McCARTHY, KILFINANE,
CO. LIMERICK.

I was born in the year 1893 at Kilfinane, Co. Limerick. I went to school at St. Munchin's College, Limerick. In the Spring of 1914 I joined the Irish National Volunteers and became a sub-section leader. At the split between the Irish Volunteers and the original organisation, I joined the former and became leader of the section which became inactive and remained so until reorganised by Ernest Blythe in the Autumn of 1915. The company was about 30 strong and formed part of the Galtee Battalion then under the command of Liam Manahan. We obtained some equipment and a few Smith & Wesson revolvers. We paraded openly with the revolvers and took part with other units at the St. Patrick's Day celebration in Ardpatrick 1916.

Some members of the company answered the call on Thursday morning of Easter Week, but I was not one of them.

I took part in the East Clare election, June 1917 (for a few days) preparatory to which I attended at Bruree to receive Eamon de Valera on his arrival there from Lewes Gaol from which he left next day for East Clare. De Valera said he was making his first public speech which was all about Easter Week and references to compensating Boland's for damage done had the rebellion been successful. His uncle, the "Dane" Coll - as he was called - a local Rural District Councillor, sat on the wagonette and, pulling his nephew's coat tail every now and then, said repeatedly in a loud whisper : "State your policy". The attempts appear to have been unnoticed by de Valera.

On the formation of the local Sinn Fein Club in Kilfinane I became its secretary; the Rev. C. Mangan, C.C., was chairman. I attended various meetings of the East Limerick Comhairle Ceanntair of Sinn Fein usually held in Hospital. A branch of the Gaelic League was formed in Kilfinane in the autumn of 1917 and I became its Secretary.

In 1918 the local company I.R.A. included all able-bodied men due to conscription threat. I rejoined the company and became company quartermaster. I got some pikes made with a view to resisting conscription. When the conscription crisis faded out the local I.R.A. company reduced to half its size. The General Election of 1918 was a very active period. I acted as a sub-director of elections during the period.

The floatation of the first Dail Eireann Loan was a great success in East Limerick, the subscription from which I believe Michael Collins described as the biggest from any constituency. The area around Kilfinane alone realised about £2,000.

I had to account for my movements to the R.I.C. after the Knocklong Train raid. I did outpost duty during the Ballylanders and Kilmallock barrack attacks and joined the East Limerick Brigade Flying Column in July 1920. In October I was appointed O/C. Kilfinane Battalion I.R.A. This area was the base for the Flying Column and remained so up to the Truce in July 1921. Intensive organisation was essential and I was on duty continuously.

By December 1920 the entire manhood of the area was enrolled in the I.R.A. Daily intelligence reports from all company areas became essential. In fact, every person, old and young, acted as intelligence officers and took risks to get information along to the proper quarter. To illustrate this statement, I took six members of the East Limerick Brigade Column into Kilfinane after dark about Nov. 1920, to meet a reprisal party which did not operate. Returning early next morning (which happened to be Sunday morning) we were seen coming across country making for the Garryarthur-Darragh Road. An old couple, going to early Mass to Glenroe, saw us and, thinking we were Black and Tans in disguise, drove as fast as they could for Mrs. Fox's of Darragh to warn any possible column members. We kept across country and arrived at almost the same time. Had we been what we were expected to be

this old couple would have walked right into it, a fact which they must have recognised.

I sat in the circuit court with Judge Davitt and also with the members of the District Court, - I received a fee of £2.2.0. for, I think, each of two sittings of this Court, - in, I suppose, an ex-officio capacity as battalion O/c.

A large quantity of arms was expected to reach the south coast of Cork about April 1921 and flying columns from North Tipperary, West and Mid Limerick Brigade areas were drafted into the battalion area on the Mitchelstown, Kildorrery area. This detachment was for the purpose of fighting a delaying action in opposition to enemy troops from Limerick and Tipperary and so permit of the distribution of the arms landed. No arms arrived. A skirmish - neither planned beforehand nor controlled during its course (as the I.R.A. party was taken by surprise) - took place in Graherla with enemy troops, resulting in fatal I.R.A. casualties.

In May 1921 the Brigade column was sub-divided into battalion columns due to excessive raids by enemy troops featuring extensive use of military moving across country in battle formation. I was appointed O/C. of this battalion column, fifteen in number only, but containing a number of ex-British army men who had seen service during the 1914-18 war and were experienced in meeting this new mode of attack. We held the field until the Truce in July 1921, positions being taken up at night time and going under ground during the day. A part of the battalion training scheme was to change the officer personal of each company once a month or so thereby providing ready-made substitutes to fill vacancies caused by arrests or casualties. I put this scheme into operation in January 1921. It had the approval of E. O'Malley, Divisional Officer Commanding.

I attach a sketch map of the battalion area showing its subdivisions and unit strengths as they existed just at the date of

the Truce in July 1921.

I also attach an original strength return and roll of officers
The actions listed in the last column are those in which members
of the battalion participated either as members of the Brigade
Column or independently when the action was a local and not a
column or brigade operation. This strength return was made out on
5.12.1921, as dated on top right hand corner, but would also
represent the position correctly as at the date of the Truce
six months earlier. It was originally submitted at the time in
the course of ordinary routine to the Brigade Adjutant. It has
been in his possession since then and it was he (Lt.-Col. J.M.
MacCarthy, Bureau of Military History) who gave it to me on the
occasion of this statement being compiled.

Signed: Justin A. McCarthy
(Justin A. McCarthy).
Date: 21-3-1952
21.3.1952.

Witness: J. M. MacCarthy Lt. Col.
(J.M. MacCarthy)
Lt. Col.

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Map of 5th Batt. East Link. Bdge.

SHEET 22

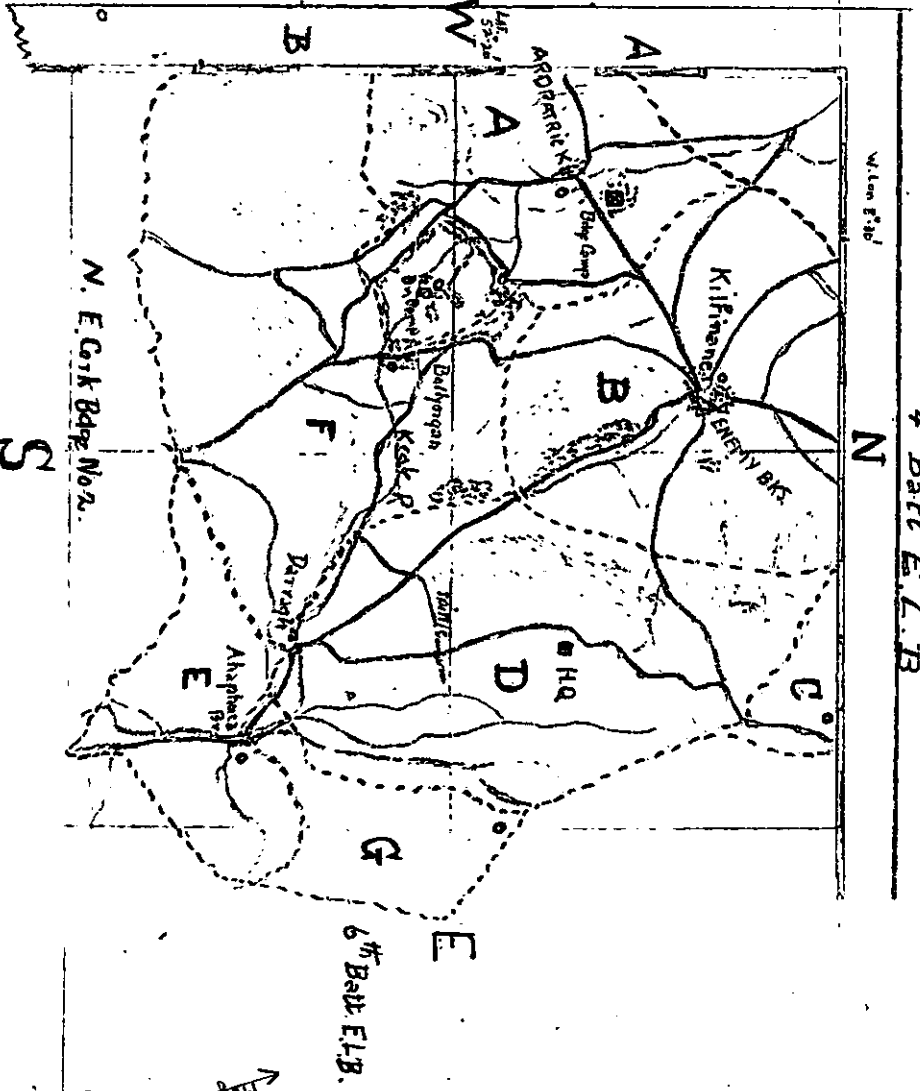
4th Batt. E. L. B.

STRENGTH OF BATT

A	Coy.	= 40 men.
B	"	= 60 "
C	"	= 45 "
D	"	= 48 "
E	"	= 47 "
F	"	= 45 "
G	"	= 27 "
Total		= 312 "

Conventional Signs
 Roads
 Woods
 Second Class Rds
 Bridges
 Rivers

Camp
 Batt. Hq
 Batt. Boundary
 Company Hq.
 Company Boundary



Scale $\frac{1}{25000}$ to 1 mile RF = 12570



Sean O'Connell Bn. 4

Ref No. 511.5.

FIFTH BATTALION.

5-11-21

Bn. Officers Name.	Rank	Coy. Officers Name.	Rank.	No. on Rolls.	Regular	Reliable	List of Actions
Justin McCarthy,	Comdt.	Mce, Barrett.	O.C. A.Coy.	A.Coy 37	30	30	1. Ballylanders Police Bk.
Thos. Barry,	V. Comdt.	Ml. Conway.	1st Lt. A. Coy.				2. Bellina-hinch Amb.
Sean Cagney, Adj.		P. Ryan O.C. B. Coy		B. Coy 70	61	53	3. Kilmallock Police Bk.
		P. Hayes 1st. Lt. "					4. Kildorrery Amb.
Ed. Keane. Q.M.		J. Lyons O.C. D. Coy		D. Coy. 60	50	38	5. Bruree Amb
		M. Lee 1st. Lt. "					6. Emly AMB.
		M. Walsh O.C. E. Coy		E. Coy. 42	35	30	7. Limerick Street AMB
		J. Casey 1st. Lt					8. Grange Amb.
		D. Numan O.C. F. Coy.		F. Coy. 30	30	25	9. Garryspillane Amb.
		_ODea. 1st. Lt					10. Glenna-crane Amb.
		J. O'Callaghan	O.C. G. Coy.	G. Coy. 31	24	26	11. Drunken Amb.
		M. Lee 1st. Lt. G. Coy.					12. Läckelly Amb.
				Total 270	230	202	13. Kilmallock Str. Amb.

- 1. Ballylanders
- 2. Bellina-hinch Amb.
- 3. Kilmallock Police Bk.
- 4. Kildorrery Amb.
- 5. Bruree Amb
- 6. Emly AMB.
- 7. Limerick Street AMB
- 8. Grange Amb.
- 9. Garryspillane Amb.
- 10. Glenna-crane Amb.
- 11. Drunken Amb.
- 12. Läckelly Amb.
- 13. Kilmallock Str. Amb.

Ben Casey