

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

BURO STAIRÉ MILÉATA 1913

No. W.S. 1111

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21

STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 1,111

Witness

James Daly,
Kilquane,
Barraduff,
Killarney,
Co. Kerry.
Identity.

Captain 'C' Company, 5th Battalion
Kerry No. 2 Brigade.

Subject.

'C' Company, 5th Battalion Kerry No. 2
Brigade, 1916-1921.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

nil

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STATEMENT BY JAMES DALY,

Kilquane, Barraduff,

Co. Kerry.

I joined the Irish Volunteers on the reorganisation following the Rising of 1916.

A Company was formed in my area in 1917. It was known as 'C' (Bealnadeega) Company, 5th Battalion, Kerry No. 2 Brigade.

The first Captain was Thomas O'Leary and 1st Lieutenant Michael P. Dennehy. We commenced training in a small way.

In 1918 the strength of the Company increased and we commenced organising to fight conscription. We organised the signing of the anti-conscription pledge which was signed at the church doors and took a food census in the area.

Arms were very scarce. We had only a few shotguns so we set about having pikes made by the local smith. The members of the company collected ash handles for the pikes. Caps for cartridges were collected from the milesmen on the railway.

In November or December 1918 I went to Waterford with the Company Captain, Thomas O'Leary, on orders from the Battalion Officers. When we got to Waterford we found we were part of a large party of Volunteers drafted into Waterford to protect Sinn Féin meetings and voters who were being attacked by mobs who were being used by the Redmondite party in an effort to cow Sinn Féin supporters.

After the elections we returned to our homes.

During 1919 we continued training and the question of procuring arms was our main concern. We collected any arms available in our area. They consisted of a few shotguns. At the same time we were adopting a defiant attitude to the British authorities by parading within sight of the R.I.C. and marching to local sports meetings.

In July 1919 after a sports' meeting at which British soldiers and R.I.C. were present, feeling ran high and the soldiers and R.I.C. beat up some people. When the British soldiers had left, myself and the Company Captain, Tom Leary, decided to ambush three R.I.C. men (a Sergeant and two constables) who were returning to their barracks at Rathmore. We had no time to get guns so we attacked them with stones, injuring two of them severely and smashing their bicycles. I was told after the attack that the Sergeant had recognised one of the attackers, and knowing who that was I kept out of his way and slept in a barn for some time. Luckily the Sergeant was shifted to another area after a while and I was able to sleep at home.

Early in 1920 Thomas O'Leary, who was Company Captain, found employment in Cork City and left our area. An election for new officers was held. I was elected Company Captain, Michael Doherty 1st Lieutenant, Tim Daly 2nd Lieutenant, Francis O'Donoghue Adjutant and John Murphy Quartermaster.

I should mention here that when the Bealnadeega Company was first formed I was in charge, but I stepped down in favour of Thomas O'Leary who had resigned from the R.I.C.

In May 1920 it was planned to rush Rathmore R.I.C. barracks. There was a garrison of about six constables and a sergeant. It was the practice for the R.I.C. men on duty to sit or stand at the wall in front of the barracks. A mission was on in Rathmore and it was our intention to mingle with the crowd coming from the mission past the barracks. On the evening selected, however, the R.I.C. had gone back into the barracks before the people came out of the church and the job was called off.

In July 1920 word came to our Company regarding a proposed attack on Rathmore R.I.C. barracks. I went to Rathmore for the attack and brought Michael Doherty, 1st Lieutenant, Timothy Daly, 2nd Lieutenant, Francis O'Donoghue, Adjutant, John Murphy, Quartermaster, and Volunteers Con Cahill, Giles Cooper, Michael D. Dennehy, Michael T. O'Sullivan and John Cooper. There was no agreed method of attack. Con O'Leary, who was Brigade Quartermaster Kerry No. 2 Brigade, had got an old gun from Ross Castle, and having loaded it with some explosive his idea was to bring the gun on a railway truck along the railway which ran opposite the front of the barrack and blow in the front of the barracks. Con Morley, who came over from North Cork for the attack, was banking on spraying the barracks with paraffin, using a line of hose and setting the barracks alight with lighted torches.

Mr. Dennehy, who was Adjutant of the 5th Battalion, Kerry No. 2 Brigade at that time, had prepared four hods with long handles in which large bombs had been placed, and his idea was to tip the bombs out of the hods through an opening in the barrack windows between the windows and the shutters.

The group I was with assembled at Hassett's Corner near the barracks and at this time I was not fully aware of the different plans for the attack. While waiting at Hassett's Corner I noticed Mr. Dennehy, Battalion Adjutant, Mr. Daly, Battalion Quartermaster, and Manus Moynihan, Captain of 'E' or Rathmore Company, removing their boots. They had four hods with bombs in them and they seemed disappointed that the man who was to carry the fourth had farked it. I volunteered to take his place, and taking off my boots I carried the hod and bomb near to the gable of the barracks. Mr. Dennehy then said it would be wiser for me not to try to get near the front of the barracks. The others had studied the barrack yard and surroundings and knew the line of the land and I did not. In fact my Company Lieutenant, Mr. Dennehy, who was a carpenter, had helped the Battalion Adjutant in taking measurements of the height of the barrack windows some nights previously. This was for the making of hods.

When I could not carry the hod I was returning to Hassett's Corner as the bombs exploded and the fight was on. The gun which was to fire at the barracks did not get into position because the truck had fouled the crossing points on the line. The fight went on but very few of the attacking party got into action. We were mostly armed with shotguns and the R.I.C. garrison were well armed. We withdrew after some time and the barracks remained occupied by the enemy until after the truce.

In between jobs I was sleeping in a dug-out under a barn and kept my Company active by blocking roads. The Company had also the handling of the mails taken in raids on Headford junction. We had a regular crowd in our Company area censoring mails. With myself, there was

Tim Daly, John Murphy, John O'Connor, Daniel Murphy, Giles Cooper, Freedy O'Sullivan, Battalion O/C, Con Moynihan, Battalion Adjutant, Denis O'Sullivan, Captain B Company, Tim Riordan, Lieutenant B. Company, Peter O'Sullivan and Denis Cronin. Anything of a suspicious nature was taken by the Battalion Adjutant.

We raided the railway tool house for tools for demolition purposes, took caps of telegraph poles for making mines and we also took science apparatus from the local schoolhouse. The apparatus was used to weigh stuff for explosives.

The 1st Lieutenant of my Company resigned; he was Michael Doherty and he was replaced by Ml. D. Dennehy.

During the latter part of 1920 and early 1921 we adopted a plan of digging over the surface of the roads to give the impression to the enemy that mines had been laid. This slowed up enemy movements.

Early in March 1921 I was ordered to proceed to the "Bower" which is on the main road between Barraduff and Rathmore. A large ambush had been prepared for a British lorry convoy. Mines had been laid and there was a Hotchkiss gun manned by Bill Moylan. The job was a joint effort by the North Cork Column under Seán Moylan and the Kerry No. 2 Brigade under Humphrey Murphy. We lay in ambush on the 3rd and 4th March.

The members of my Company at the "Bower" were myself, Ml. D. Dennehy, Tim Daly, Francis O'Donoghue, Ml. P. Dennehy, Ml. Doherty, Con Cahill, Giles Cooper, Maurice Reen, Michael Houlihan and Thomas O'Leary.

On the 4th March, 1921, fearing information might

have reached the British military garrison regarding our position at the "Bower", Seán Moylan and Humphrey Murphy had a conversation with me and it was decided to get in touch with our intelligence officer in Killarney. A despatch was prepared and I sent Mr. Doherty to Killarney with it. When he returned with the reply, which he gave to the Brigade O/C, the information it contained caused the officers such concern that it was decided to abandon the position at the "Bower". I did not see the contents of the reply.

The North Cork Column and some of the Kerry No. 2 officers and men crossed the county border into Cork and took up a new ambush position at Clonbanin. I was not brought to Clonbanin and returned to my own area.

I went into training at Clydagh and at Loo Bridge but I was always available in my own Company area, which was used as a hide-out for prisoners. Military stores which were captured in a raid on Headford junction were also in our keeping.

On the 19th March, 1921, I was sleeping in the dug-out under the barn and some time after midnight I was called by my sister, who informed me that the Kerry No. 2 Brigade Column had arrived at Kilquane bringing two British soldiers as prisoners with them. As the local Company Captain I was made responsible for billeting and protecting the column. I mobilised the local Company, and after billeting the column I placed double sentries on all roads in the area.

On the evening of the 20th March a suspected spy was brought to the column by the O/C of the 5th Battalion

and some members of 'B' (Barraduff) Company. Some interrogation of the spy took place that night. The Column O/C, Dan Allman (R.I.P.), was not happy about the position of the Column at Kilquane. It was too near the main road and he decided to move the Column to Gortdarrig which is near the foot of the Paps mountains. I went with the Column and, having arranged billets, placed fresh sentries. I stayed with the column at Gortdarrig.

On the next day (21st March, 1921) at about noon Con Moynihan, Adjutant 5th Battalion, arrived and informed the Column O/C, Dan Allman, that a party of British troops had travelled from Killarney to Kenmare on the morning train and would, as usual, come back on the evening train due at Headford junction at 3.15 p.m.

The Column O/C, Dan Allman, had a conference with Thomas McEllistrim, his second in command, and they decided to attack the British party at Headford junction. Headford junction is on the main Mallow to Killarney line, the junction being formed by the Headford-Kenmare line which terminates at Headford.

When the decision to attack the British was made the column, which was 30 strong, was divided into four sections as follows: No. 1 Section under Jack Cronin (R.I.P.), No. 2 Section under Denis Sullivan (now in U.S.A.), No. 3 Section under James Coffey, No. 4 Section under John Flynn, Bonane.

I was called aside by Dan Allman and Thomas MacEllistrim and asked to get four men from my Company armed with shotguns to take part in the attack. I sent word at once to Michael Doherty, Lisnagrove, Giles Cooper, Droum, and

Cornelius Cahill, Gortdarrig. They arrived without delay. The O/C of the 5th Battalion, Humphrey (Freezy) Sullivan arrived also. While waiting to move off to Headford Dan Allman told me to get two extra men with shotguns as he expected some close quarter fighting. I sent word at once to my brother, Lieut. Tim Daly, and to my Company Quartermaster, John J. Murphy, to get themselves armed with single barrel shotguns (there was no other type of gun available) and to meet us at Droum on the way to Headford. It was not their fault that they were unable to get to Droum in time to meet us.

Some of our shotguns, which were seldom used, were dumped in a dry cave at the foot of the Signal Fire mountain. When my brother, Tim Daly, went to the Volunteer (Denis D.T. Donoghue) who knew where the guns were, he learned that Donoghue was doing some gardening for the Stationmaster, Jerry Walsh, at Headford. Proceeding to Headford on a bicycle he, Tim Daly, collected Donoghue and returned with him to Signal Fire mountain over a high bad road against a strong wind. Having secured the best of the guns he made off for Headford as quickly as possible accompanied by John Murphy. When approaching the station they heard firing. The fight had started and they were unable to get close enough to take part, but they stood by and after the fight acted as guides to the members of the column returning from Headford.

The column moved off for Headford and before leaving we tied up the suspected spy and the two British Army prisoners and left some of the local Company to guard them. We travelled at a brisk pace. The distance from Gortdarrig to Headford is between 3 and 4 miles. The day was cold.

On reaching Droum the column was halted as it seemed that we would arrive at Headford too soon. There was a danger that word of our presence would reach the British military. This was our greatest worry. We rested at Droum for about ten minutes and halted again briefly just outside Headford station. Dan Allman, Column O/C, and Thomas McEllistrim examined the position and orders were given to shift some wagons so that we would have a clear field of fire on to the platforms.

While the wagons were being shifted a quick order was given to get into position as the train carrying the British military from Kenmare was coming. The train drew into the station. The platform at which the train stopped was between the Kenmare siding and the main Mallow-Killarney line, and in order to reach the Killarney platform it is necessary for passengers to cross the line by an overhead footbridge. The British military should have left the train and assembled on the platform before proceeding across the footbridge. That was the moment for the attack.

In the confusion of the shifting of the wagons and the hurry of taking up positions, the Column O/C, Dan Allman, had rushed into a lavatory on the Kenmare platform. A soldier who had jumped off the train went into the lavatory, where he was shot by Dan Allman.

In the meantime and just as the train was arriving, I, with Giles Cooper, under John Cronin, Ballymacelligott Section Leader, took up position at the northern embankment which ran along by the Killarney platform. Charlie Connor, Greeveguilla, (known as Charlie Johnston) was near us. We just picked out the best positions we

could as the dyke or trench outside the embankment was much deeper than it is now. It was a good cover position but difficult for firing purposes. We pulled some grass and moss to make a bed for the guns as the train arrived. We were at a range of about 20 or 25 yards.

We heard the shot Dan Allman fired in shooting the soldier in the lavatory and it puzzled us as the soldiers had not started to move for the Killarney platform as was expected. Nobody waited for further orders and it was proper bedlam for a time. There were civilian passengers on the train, with women screaming, bullets whining, wounded soldiers and civilians groaning. The British military were caught by fire from every direction. Our men had occupied the Stationmaster's house which overlooked the Kenmare platform. Dan Allman and some others were lying on the Kenmare platform firing point blank at the British. A party were firing from the embankment opposite the Kenmare platform. A party were firing from the buffer ramp at the end of the Kenmare line and their fire swept straight along the Kenmare platform.

The British put up a stiff fight. Some of them sought cover but they had no chance. One of the men near me moved closer and told me that one of our men, Jim Bailey, had been killed. Shortly after that I noticed that a couple of our sections had left their positions. I did not hear and I do not believe any orders were given to retreat.

Fire became desultory and after a while some men of our section moved off. Most of the British had been killed or wounded and we expected the survivors to surrender any minute. I was waiting in the hope that we

would take the Vickers gun which the British had to the Paps Mountain. My comrade, Giles Cooper, had still held on with me.

Calls to the British survivors to surrender being of no avail, our Section Leader, Jack Cronin, came to me and giving me his Webley revolver told me he was going to recover Jim Bailey's rifle and ammunition. Having got them he returned to me and we decided to leave. The Column O/C, Dan Allman, had been killed just before this. We had no knowledge of the men on the side of the line opposite our position and Section Leader Jack Cronin was loath to leave. Jack Cronin gave me Jim Bailey's rifle and ammunition. Still loath to leave we moved from our position at the embankment to the gates at the level crossing on the eastern side of the station and took up a fresh position, but not being able to see or contact any of our comrades we decided to retire. After moving off a short distance north east we saw the Mallow-Killarney train approach and pull up short of the station. This train was carrying a party of British troops who had apparently heard the shooting, because an officer left the train and boarded the engine. The train then moved into the station.

My aunt, Mrs. Ignatius O'Leary, lived in a two storey house bordering the road leading south from the station, and she informed me later that one of the column, Dan Patsy Sullivan, had entered her house when the Killarney - Mallow train was approaching and took up a position at an upstairs window. He opened fire on the officer who had boarded the engine. The officer dropped off the engine and Dan Patsy thought he had shot him.

The range was about 100 yards. I cannot vouch for the claim that the officer was hit. Dan Patsy was from Morley's Bridge.

We retired to the south east of Headford and after journeying some distance we turned south in an effort to get to the snelter of the friendly hills. We got to Dan Tom Donoghue's near Token Fire mountain, and nearly all our comrades joined us there before night. We moved on to Gortdarrig and then to Shrone. We were crestfallen and sad. Two of our comrades were dead. Most of our ammunition was gone and there was no likelihood of the British giving us an early chance to replenish our stores by captures.

After a short rest at Shrone, Thomas MacEilistrain, who had taken command on the death of Dan Allman, asked me to get someone with me and go back to Headford station and search for any guns or ammunition which might have been left behind by the British. I got Giles Cooper and we went back to the station, but although we made a wide search we got nothing. The bodies of our dead comrades had been removed by the British and we heard that the British had lost about 20 or 21 either killed or wounded.

We arrived back at Shrone late that night. I would have slept on hackles as I had hardly any sleep the two previous nights. The next day I got some men from my own Company and we carried mines and equipment to the Clydagh Valley.

Thomas O'Leary, who had previously gone to Cork, returned to our Company area and I went with him to tap telegraph wires. While doing this we narrowly avoided

capture when the British came on us, but luckily we escaped.

After the Headford attack plans were made to attack a train on which four British officers were reported to be travelling. The attack was planned to take place at Quagmire railway bridge, and we had a line of signallers from Headford junction to the bridge to warn us if the officers were on the train. Jerry Kennedy, the Battalion Vice O/C, was in charge, but nothing happened as the officers were not reported as travelling.

We were mobilised at Barraduff (I am not sure of the date) in the late spring of 1921 for an attack on some enemy lorries, but nothing showed up. The attack was planned for Carraglen or Bullagh. The road between Killarney and Barraduff was trenched repeatedly and bridges on the main Killarney - Mallow road were knocked down.

About April or May I did a forced march at night to Loo Bridge along with men of the Glenflesk ('D') Company with the object of attacking British military travelling by train, but the job fell through.

We then laid an ambush at the "Bower" for a cycle patrol. We spent the night in position without result.

Following the disbandment of the Brigade Column training camps for a Battalion Column for our battalion area, 5th Battalion, Kerry No. 2 Brigade, were set up at Loo Bridge and Clydagn. After training the Battalion Column was formed. Men were drawn from different Companies. The following men were drawn from my Company (Beelnadeega): myself, Ml. D. Dennehy, 1st Lt.; Timothy Daly, 2nd Lt.;

Thomas O'Leary and Francis Donoghue. After several attempts at prepared ambushes we sniped Rathmore R.I.C. barracks. The next job I remember was in the village of Rathmore when we rushed a public-house and captured a British soldier.

The Battalion Column was disbanded about the beginning of June 1921 and all the men were sent back to their own areas. The Column men were recalled in a couple of days. The British military had commenced preparations for a big round-up of the Kerry hills. The British Forces started closing in over a wide area. Troops were drawn from Limerick, Tralee, Killarney and Millstreet. We got word of the British preparations and were preparing to evade the British net. The information came to us from Brigade headquarters.

Two British soldiers named Stay and Motley had been held prisoners in our battalion area for some time. They had been passed around between the different companies and had got to know the area very well. I was informed by my Battalion O/C that he had received instructions from the Brigade O/C that the two British Army men were to be shot. None of our men was anxious to do the shooting; we had got to know the prisoners and although they had many chances they had never made an attempt to escape.

The night before the British started the round-up (4th June, 1921) a crisis arose regarding the deserters. There was a danger that the deserters would fall into the hands of their own people and they could make things very difficult for us with all the knowledge they had gained. At this time the prisoners were being held in Anabla Company area and on the night of the 4th June, 1921, they were

shot in the cow-house adjoining the house of Michael Moynihan, Lyrataug, Kilcummin, Killarney. I was not present at the snooting.

All our men evaded the British round-up, but on the first morning as the British approached Snrone mountain two civilians, fearing arrest, attempted to get away to the hills, but the British soldiers saw them and opened fire, killing the two civilians. The two civilians were John Dennehy, Redrinagh, Headford, and Con Moynihan, Shronmore, Rathmore.

During the round-up the Battalion Column had dispersed, but when the round-up finished and the British moved off we got together again and the Brigade O/C, Humphrey Murphy, organised two ambush positions, one at Knockeenahone and another at Loughfouder. No conflict took place.

In the case of the prepared ambush at Loughfouder the Brigade officers had received information that enemy forces would travel by Knocknagoshel to Brosna to pay the garrison there, but whatever happened when the enemy in two or three lorries got to Knocknagoshel they turned and made back to Castleisland post-haste.

After the truce we concentrated on training as our senior officers seemed to expect a renewal of the fight in a short time.

Signed: James Daly
(James Daly)
Date: 8th March 1955

Witness: James J. O'Connor (James J. O'Connor)
(Investigator)

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