

W.S. 1,160

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
BURO STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21
No. W.S. 1,160

ROINN  COSANTA.

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 1,160.....

Witness

Patrick Carton,
Ballinclare,
Leskinfere,
Gorey,
Co. Wexford.
Identity.

Member of
North Wexford Flying Column.

Subject.

Irish Volunteers Camolin, North Wexford,
1914-1923.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil

File No. S. 2467.....

Form B.S.M. 2

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STATEMENT BY PATRICK CARTON,

Ballinclare, Leskinfere, Gorey, Co. Wexford.

I joined the Camolin Company of the Irish Volunteers when it was started early in 1914. There were about 80 men in the company. James Quinn was in charge and we were drilled by Michael Byrne who was formerly in the British Army. He gave his services free. When the split took place in the Volunteer movement towards the end of 1914, all the members of our company remained loyal to the original executive. Later another ex-British soldier, Major Donoghue of Ballyoughter, helped to train us. The company dwindled away and at the end of 1915 there were only about seven left. James Quinn was still in charge. W.J. Brennan-Whitmore, another ex-British soldier, also helped to train us. He taught us the morse code.

During Holy Week 1916 we were instructed to parade at Camolin at 12 o'clock noon on Easter Sunday. On Holy Saturday James Quinn went to Ferns where he was to be given final instructions in connection with the mobilisation for Easter Sunday. He did not return to Camolin and we did not get any further mobilisation order for Easter Week.

In 1917 the company was reorganised. During the conscription scare in 1918 large numbers joined the company and at this period we had about 110 members. However, when the threat of conscription passed the men fell away until we had only 18 or 19 left. We took an active part in the 1918 general election on behalf of the Sinn Féin candidate. We canvassed the electors and acted as police

on election day. We marched to election meetings. When returning with the Camolin Band from a meeting in Gorey the District Inspector of the R.I.C., Captain Lee Wilson, had a cordon of armed R.I.C. drawn across the street near Gorey R.I.C. barrack. Rev. Fr. Sweetman, O.S.B., of Mount St. Benedict's School, who was with us, went to Captain Lee Wilson and said to him: "Take your men off the street and let my men pass". Wilson immediately gave the order to the R.I.C. to withdraw.

During 1919 I spent a lot of time with other men of the company making buckshot ammunition. About September of that year we carried out a number of raids for arms. T.D. Synott, who during this period was Brigade O/C, visited the company several times and, as well as drilling us, gave us lectures on the duties of Volunteers and on other military subjects. During the whole of this period I had charge of the company guns and ammunition in the dump at Finn's outfarm at Boley. It was here we made the buckshot.

In the autumn of 1920 we seized the rate books for the Camolin and Clologue districts. In August 1920, following a brigade order for a general raid for arms in the brigade area, we carried out a general raid in our area and got a number of shotguns. Just before the formation of the North Wexford Brigade Flying Column with a few others I transferred arms and ammunition from Cl^{LO}ogue to Ballindaggin by horse and cart through Ferns which was then occupied by Black and Tans.

Early in 1921 Willie O'Leary, the Brigade Adjutant, was arrested. On him was found a list of names

of Volunteers. John Lawless, Mattie Brennan and I were told our names were on the list. Mattie Brennan did not believe this. John Lawless and I did not wish to take any chance and decided to join the Flying Column which had just been started. Mattie Brennan was subsequently arrested. We went to Murphy's, "The Bleach", where the column was established. At that time Mylie Breen was Column O/C. Later Paddy Kenny, Ballycarney, became O/C. Other members of the column when John Lawless and I joined it were:

Jim O'Toole, Ballyduff, now Gorey.
 Jimmie Kenny, Ballycale, Gorey.
 Thos. F. Meagher, Enniscorthy.
 Frank Gibbons, "
 Maurice Spillane, who was killed with Paddy O'Brien at the outbreak of the Civil War.
 Markie Kirwan, Enniscorthy.
 Thos. Roche, "
 Michael Maguire, "
 John Dundon, "
 James Whelan) Brothers, Enniscorthy.
 Mike Whelan)
 Tom Doyle, Coolree.
 James Lawless, Ballydaniel.
 Peter Hughes, "
 Edward Murphy) Brothers, Cromogue.
 Mogue Murphy)
 Luke Byrne, "
 Pat Furlong, "
 Jim Kelly) Brothers, Clonee, Ferns.
 John Kelly)
 Pat. Fitzpatrick, Kilttealy.
 Jim Mythem, Ballybeg.
 Patrick Murphy.

I was armed with a double-barrel shotgun and 70 rounds of buckshot. Seven or eight had rifles and the remainder had shotguns.

We moved to Coady's, Corrigeen, where a training camp had been established. Joe Cummings was Camp O/C. Nic Murphy was Vice O/C. An officer from G.H.Q. named Thos. Lawless was O/C Training. He was a native of

Blueball, Tullamore. We underwent a week's training which included arms drill, rifle instruction, throwing hand grenades, field exercises etc. etc. We remained another week at the camp on guard duty while a number of officers from the brigade were doing a similar course to the one we had completed.

The column lay in ambush at several places, including Ballyduff Road, Ferns, Tinahely and Bunclody, but the enemy did not come. The first actual engagement we had was at Inch. We took up positions early in the morning on the main road on the Gorey side of Inch. We were expecting four lorries of enemy forces to come that way. The position selected for the attack contained a number of sharp bends and, therefore, the lorries would be compelled to go slowly. The ground was higher than the road and was lined with trees. The column, which consisted of about 25 men, took up position on the west side of the road, i.e. the right-hand side as one travels from Inch to Gorey. We were spaced from five to ten yards apart. I was about the middle of the position. Instead of the expected lorries, a cycle patrol of police came from the direction of Inch. They were cycling in pairs, with an interval of about 50 yards between each pair. When the leading pair reached the end of the position we opened fire. The second pair fell off their bikes and made no attempt to return the fire. The first and third pairs jumped off their bikes and took cover under rocks on the opposite side of the road. The fourth pair had not reached the ambush position and they returned in the direction of Inch. Firing continued for some time. As some cattle

which were coming from the Gorey fair now appeared on the scene and created some confusion, we were ordered to retire. We learned later that one R.I.C. man named Duprez was killed and two others were wounded. We suffered no casualty. Mylie Breen was in charge of this operation.

Our next actual engagement was on the road leading from Clonroche to Chapel railway station. On this occasion we were expecting a patrol of eight R.I.C. but only two came. As usual we had taken up positions at intervals behind the hedge on one side of the road. Two R.I.C. men came cycling from Clonroche in the direction of Chapel station. Thinking they were only an advance party we held our fire waiting for the other six. When it was realised that there were no more coming, the two R.I.C. had actually passed through the position. However, we opened fire on them. They dismounted and escaped through the fields. We believed they got away without being wounded.

On other occasions we lay in ambush at Scarawalsh Bridge, The Glen Lane at Ferns and other places, but, unfortunately, nothing came. Patrick Kenny, James Kelly, Richard Tyrrell and myself lay in wait at Gorey Hall on the Craanford road for four Black and Tans who usually went out that way with women. We waited for four days but they did not come.

On the 8th July, 1921, the column was resting at Kinsella's, Ballinamona. The Column O/C, Paddy Kenny, sent me to Camolin to get cigarettes and tobacco for the column. I was armed with a .38 revolver with three rounds of ammunition

and a Mills hand grenade. I proceeded along the Ballyshane road. When I reached Camolin village I went into the house of Andrew O'Brien. I was given some tea and Andy kept a look out so as to warn me of the approach of enemy forces. While I was drinking the tea Andy told me that two R.I.C. and six Black and Tans were cycling up the street and were about 30 yards from the house. He asked me what I would do. I told him and his wife to go out the back and if the R.I.C. and Tans came to the house I would fight it out with them. Andy and his wife went out and the patrol passed the house and went on to the crossroads about 30 yards above the house. They remained there about five minutes and came back again and passed O'Brien's house where I was and went into Gahan's house. I heard afterwards they were looking for a shotgun which they did not get. After a short time they came out and two of them went into the house of an R.I.C. pensioner who lived some distance further on. I left O'Brien's house, crossed the street and got over the wall into the field. I proceeded behind the wall in the direction the police had gone. When I came to a spot opposite to Valentia House I got up on the wall and saw that two of the patrol had passed by, and about 50 yards behind them were four more rather close together, two cycling abreast four or five feet apart, the other two covering them off four or five feet behind, forming more or less a square. Bringing up the rear were the remaining two about another fifty yards behind them. When the four came almost opposite where I was one of them saw me and shouted "look out". With that I threw the Mills grenade among them. I went back and took cover behind a six.

foot high stump of a tree and waited. The grenade exploded. It was admitted officially that four were wounded. Next I saw a Black and Tan with a revolver in his hand climbing over the wall. He fired at me and I fired at him. He dropped down again and I ran back in the direction in which I had come and continued on until I came to Ballydaniel Bridge where I crossed the road. I returned to the column and told the O/C what had happened. He decided to move the column back to "The Bleach". We were there a couple of days when we were informed that a truce had been arranged for the 11th July.

During the truce training was intensified, and I attended the Battalion training camp at Ballybeg.

I joined the Free State Army early in 1922 and served in Portobello Barracks. I was later transferred to Kilkenny. As I was not satisfied with the way things were going I left Kilkenny in April, 1922, and bringing ten rifles and some ammunition with me I returned to the Republican Forces in Enniscorthy. I was sent to take charge of the Carnew district and while there carried out raids for arms. On the outbreak of the Civil War I took part in the attack and capture of Ferns Barracks which had been held by Free State troops. I was later captured in Ferns by a large convoy of Free State troops which had come from Dublin. I was brought to Enniscorthy and then to Wexford, later to Dublin and finally to Maryborough prison, where I did 28 days hunger strike. I was released in November 1923.

Signed:

Patrick Carton
(Patrick Carton)

Date:

16 April 1955.

Witness:

Sean Brennan Lieut. Col.

(Investigator)

(Sean Brennan) Lieut. - Col.

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