

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
BURO STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21
No. W.S. 1196

ROINN



COSANTA.

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21
STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 1,196 ..

Witness

Timothy (Tadhg) Looney,
Island, ..
Burnfort,
Mallow, Co. Cork.
Identity.

Adjutant, Mallow Battalion
Cork II Brigade;

Vice-Comd't. do.
Subject.

Burnfort Company, Mallow Battalion,
Co. Cork, 1914-1921.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil

File No S. 2478 ...

Form B.S.M. 2

W.S. 1,196.

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21.
BURO STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21
NO. W. S. 1196

STATEMENT BY TADHG LOONEY

Island, Burnfort, Mallow, Co. Cork

I was born at Island, Burnfort, Mallow, in November 1890. My parents were farmers. I was educated at Burnfort National School where I learned my first lessons from Tomás McCurtain - later murdered by British forces in March 1920 when he was Lord Mayor of Cork. When I was attending Burnfort National School, Tomás McCurtain was acting as monitor there.

I joined the Irish Volunteers at Burnfort early in 1914. The Volunteers were organised by Tomás McCurtain. Burnfort unit was a section of the Volunteer company for the whole parish, Mourne Abbey. The strength of the Burnfort unit was about 20, while the membership of the full company was about 50. As far as I can remember the first officers were: Captain, Liam Jones. 1st Lieut. Paddy McCarthy.

The Volunteers at this time carried out footdrill and we also drilled with wooden guns. Usually on Sundays we would go for a route march into neighbouring areas, meeting the members of other units and helping to organise the Volunteers where they did not exist already. These activities continued up to Easter Week 1916.

All available members of the Mourne Abbey Company took part in a parade in Cork on St. Patrick's Day 1916. Cork City officers were in charge of the parade following which there were several clashes with "separation women" (wives of soldiers serving in British army). All members were armed with shotguns.

On Easter Sunday 1916, all Volunteers in the parish assembled at Analeentha Church after 9.30 a.m. Mass. All - to the number of about 40 - carried shotguns and had, in addition, provided themselves with two days' rations. In addition to the normal supply of cartridges carried by each

member, several additional boxes of cartridges were distributed at this parade before we moved off to Beeing Cross. Here we met several units from the surrounding districts. The combined forces took part in skirmishing exercises which continued for a couple of hours. The parade was then dismissed and the members had some refreshment. I think that the parade at Beeing was in charge of an officer named Lynch from Kinsale. About 4 p.m. the order to "fall in" was given and all units again paraded. At this stage Tomás McCurtain - he was O/C. Cork Brigade, Irish Volunteers - arrived. He was accompanied by two other officers. Tomás McCurtain then addressed the assembled company from the roadside fence. I have no recollection of what he said. On the termination of his address the parade was dismissed and the individual units later reassembled and marched to their home districts.

I recollect that on the homeward journey our unit was reinforced by some members of the Castletownroche Company who marched back to Burnfort with us. Three or four of them remained overnight at Island, Burnfort, as the night was exceptionally wet.

Following our return from Beeing Cross the members of the unit were instructed to hold themselves in readiness in case any fresh orders should arrive, but no further orders were received during the week.

I do not remember whether there were any parades held during the remainder of 1916. Sometime about the end of the year we began to come together again and when the general reorganisation of the Irish Volunteers began early in 1917 our unit was well established. The strength at this time was about 40.

On the anniversary of Easter Week in 1917, the members of the company decided to fly the tricolour from two of the highest points in the parish - a high tree in Analeentha, and the top

battlement of Mourne Abbey Castle. The flags were placed in position on Easter Sunday night. When the R.I.C. saw them next morning they immediately set about removing them. The party who went to remove the flag from the tree in Analeentha were unable to get to the flag, so they decided to cut down the tree. The local sergeant and one of his constables tackled the job and, after some two or three hours hard work, they succeeded in felling the tree. In the meantime, a large crowd of civilians and Volunteers had gathered to watch the R.I.C. at work. When the tree fell the flag was immediately pounced on by some of the Volunteers and taken away despite the efforts of the R.I.C. to prevent its removal.

Following this incident, three or four people were summoned. They were charged with unlawful assembly and obstructing the R.I.C. Amongst those charged was Jeremiah Cronin, a member of the Volunteers. The case was heard at Mallow Petty Sessions Court by Mr. Hardy, Resident Magistrate. All the defendants were "bound to the peace".

On the day of the trial all Volunteers in Mourne Abbey went in to Mallow and paraded through the town. The R.I.C. tried to prevent the parade and made a number of baton charges. Several R.I.C. and Volunteers, as well as a number of onlookers, were injured. Immediately following these incidents there was an increase in interest by the general public in the Volunteers and the membership of our company increased to about sixty.

During 1917 all Volunteers were engaged in organising Sinn Fein in the area. I was appointed secretary of the local Sinn Fein Club. Sinn Fein at this time was mainly composed of Volunteers and members of their families.

The usual drilling activities went on throughout 1917. When the Volunteers were instructed to parade in public, I think about September 1917, we held regular parades and route marches on Sundays. I think that it was about this time that the

Company O/C., Liam Jones, was arrested. He was charged with illegal drilling and sentenced to a term of imprisonment which he spent in Belfast Jail.

Early in 1918 a unit of Cumann na mBan was organised in the area. The pioneers were Brigid O'Connell, ... McCarthy and ... Buckley.

The threat of conscription in the Spring of 1918 led to a large increase in the membership of the company. The attendance at parades round this period reached about 120. At this time all arms not held by Volunteers were collected in a number of raids. In every case the guns were surrendered on request. About 10 shotguns were collected in these raids. When the threat of conscription had passed nearly all the new recruits faded away.

The General Election in December 1918 was now approaching and all Volunteers were engaged on political work. The candidates in our area - then called North East Cork constituency - were D.L. O'Gorman (Irish Parliamentary Party) and, I think, Diarmuid Lynch (Sinn Fein). We were engaged during this election on canvassing work, carrying voters to the polling booths and acting as guards on the ballot boxes.

The success of Sinn Fein in the General Election gave a boost to Volunteer activities and I think it was about this time that Cork II Brigade was formed (January 1919). As the strength of the Mourne Abbey Company was increasing, it was decided to divide the company into two - Analeentha and Burnfort. The first officers of the new units were:

<u>Analeentha</u>		<u>Burnfort.</u>	
O/C.	Jerome Buckley	O/C.	Jack Sullivan
1/Lt.	Jack McCarthy	1/Lt.	Mick Looney
2/Lt.	Jack Looney	2/Lt.	Maurice Walsh
) These positions may have been reversed.

When Cork II Brigade was established, the officers were:-

O/C.	Liam Lynch	Fermoy
V/O.C.	Dan Hegarty	Mallow
Adjt.	Tom Barry	Glanworth
Q.M.	George Power	Fermoy

The Mallow Battalion of this brigade to which my company (Burnfort) was now affiliated was composed of the following companies: Mallow, Ballyclough, Twopothouse, Ahadillane, Analeentha, Burnfort and Lombardstown. The officers of the battalion were:- O/C. Liam Jones; V.O/C. Jerh. Buckley; Adj. Paddy McCarthy; Q.M. Mick Nagle.

When the Republican Courts were established I was appointed a member of Mourne Abbey Parish Court. Other members of the Court were:- Mick Sullivan and Pats McCurtain (brother to Tomás McCurtain). We did not have many cases for hearing, but our decisions were accepted in all cases and the rulings of the Court were carried out.

The usual training activities continued amongst the Volunteers. About this time, the training became more advanced. Members were instructed in the use of cover, scouting, and in the care and use of arms. Occasionally, at weekends, when ammunition was available, there would be some target practice with .22 rifles.

The General H.Q. order for the destruction of evacuated enemy R.I.C. posts and the papers of Income Tax offices led to the engagement of all members of the Burnfort Company on the destruction of Blackrock R.I.C. Barracks. With several other members of the company I was engaged on outpost duty on roads in the area.

In May 1920, with a number of members of Burnfort Company and representatives from most of the companies in the battalion (Mallow) I took part in a raid on O'Brien's house at Inchm^Asy. This raid was under the control of Liam Lynch, Brigade O/C., and we were searching for some men who had raided a bank at Millstreet and seized £18,000. The wanted men were Hugh and Dan O'Brien, but they were not at home. These men were eventually captured by the Brigade Column and with some others were tried and deported. While awaiting trial and deportation

they were detained in the Burnfort Company area. Dan O'Brien and Dan Buckley were held in a disused house in Island known as "The Jail", while Hugh O'Brien was detained at John Conway's, Island. Hugh was, I think, deported to Canada, being taken to Cobh by Mick Healy, O/C. Ahadillane Company. Dan Buckley was, I think, deported to Great Britain with five or six others whose names I cannot now remember. I think that Dan O'Brien escaped from custody due to a false alarm to the effect that the military (British) were raiding in the area in which he was being held prisoner.

It was about this time that I was elected a member of Mallow Rural District Council and Board of Guardians. I remember that I received instructions from the I.R.A. - this was a general order throughout the whole country - to propose a resolution that "the Council break all connection with the British Department of Local Government". This resolution was passed without a dissentient. I cannot remember who seconded the proposal.

Early in August 1920, I received a dispatch from the Battalion O/C. (now Paddy McCarthy). I was at this time Battalion Adjutant. The dispatch instructed me to be at Ballinamona on the main Mallow-Cork Road at 3 p.m. next day. When I had made all the necessary arrangements, a further dispatch arrived which cancelled the order. I later learned that it was the intention to attack a motor-cycle patrol on the way from Killarney to Cork. At this time the following appointments to the battalion staff were made by Liam Lynch (Brigade O/C.): - O/C. Paddy McCarthy; Vice O/C. Owen Harold; Adjutant, Tadhg Looney; Q.M. Mick Nagle.

When the brigade column was assembled in early September 1920, it was billeted in the Burnfort Company area at Looney's Dorgan's, Mahoney's, Conway's, O'Connell's (Island) and at Mulcahy's (Toureen). The members of this column, as far as

I can recollect, were: Liam Lynch, O/C.; Ernie O'Malley, Training Officer; George Power, Dan Brown, Dan Vaughan, Dan Shinnick, Jerry Kiely, Jim O'Neill, Mick Halloran, Dan Daly, Paddy Daly, Paddy Healy, Mick Sullivan, Jim Brislane, Sean Healy, Paddy McCarthy, Paddy O'Brien, Lar Condon.

The column trained in the fields close to my home.

Before the arrival of Ernie O'Malley I recollect that I got instructions from Liam Lynch to proceed to Mourne Abbey railway station to collect a passenger. I had just tackled the pony to the trap when a man walked into the yard and said: "Is the commandant here?" It was Ernie O'Malley and I do not know how he managed to reach my home.

The column's first engagement was the successful attack on Mallow military barracks on 28th September 1920. At this time Ernie O'Malley and Liam Lynch were billeted at my home. I recollect that on 27th September 1920, "runners" were coming and going all day. Lynch and O'Malley were in a room on their own. When Dick Willis arrived about nightfall, he joined them. Later on, the column collected into the kitchen and all present said the Rosary. In the meantime, most of the members of the Burnfort Company had assembled.

At this stage Liam Lynch came into the kitchen and ordered everybody into the yard. The whole company (column and locals) paraded in the yard. I was called from the parade by Liam Lynch and instructed to get another man as he had a special job to do. I selected Tim Dorgan and Liam Lynch took the two of us to the house where the column's stock of grenades and a few rifles were kept. He told us to remain on guard there until he came back. It was now about 11 p.m. We did as instructed and he returned about 10.30 a.m. on September 28th as did the members of the column together with Dick Willis and Jackie Bolster. All then scattered to their billets and had some food.

When they had reassembled, Liam Lynch asked me in the presence of Jackie Bolster who was a young lad (still wearing his white painter's coat) if I knew of any safe place to put him (Bolster) for a few days. I said that I had, but Bolster then said that he would go with the boys, so Liam Lynch then said: "That's all right". The column and party then moved away across the fields to do their usual training, and some time that evening, approaching nightfall, Liam Lynch ordered me to get some transport. I got four or five horses and traps and the whole party were just about to move off when word was received that the military were coming. The whole party left the yard immediately and lined the roadside fence, but it was a false alarm and no enemy appeared. After some time they moved away in the cars to, I think, Ahadillane area.

With all available members of the Burnfort Company I was on guard outside my home until 5 a.m. on the morning of 29th September. I recollect that, on this night, several locals who had not previously been members of the Volunteers came along and offered their services. No enemy forces appeared in the area following the raid. On the night of September 29th members of the Analeentha and Burnfort companies together with the members of the brigade column were in ambush at Mourne Abbey Creamery (under Ernie O'Malley) and quite close to Mourne Abbey railway station (under Liam Lynch), as it was expected that the enemy forces would attempt to burn the Creamery as a reprisal. There was no attempt at reprisals in Mourne Abbey area.

When Paddy McCarthy - the Battalion O/C - was arrested towards the end of October 1920, the battalion staff became: O/C. Tadhg Byrne; Vice O/C. Tadhg Looney (witness); Adjutant, Jerry Hanlon; Q.M. Mick Nagle.

The usual training went on throughout the battalion and the Intelligence service became a very important aspect of

the work. All movements of enemy forces in the area were reported through the company and battalion Intelligence officers to Brigade H.Q. There was no change until the battalion column was formed in January 1921.

The original members of this column were: Jack Cunningham (O/C.), Joe Morgan, Leo O'Callaghan, John Moloney ('Congo'), Tadhg McCarthy, Denis Mulcahy, Jerh. Daly, Batt Walsh, Dick Willis, Jackie Bolster, Mick Nagle, Tadhg Mullane, Ned Murphy, They were all armed with rifles and had about 50 rounds of ammunition per man. They were billeted, as occasion demanded, in various houses in the area and moved about seeking enemy parties.

During January 1921, I received instructions from the assistant brigade Q.M. (Mick O'Connell) to carry out an inspection of all dumps in the battalion area. These dumps were usually built into fences. Some were made of concrete, while others were made of wooden boxes. I spent a week on this work and inspected all dumps in each company area.

A meeting of Mallow Battalion Council was held at Conway's, Island, on 6th February 1921. Plans for an ambush of a convoy of about 3 or 4 lorries of military on the main Mallow-Cork road at Mourne Abbey were discussed. The ambush was to take place on Tuesday, 8th February 1921. I opposed the plan in toto giving as my main objection the fact that there was no protection from the rear nor cover on the line of retreat for the party allocated to the east-north-east of the main road. Despite my objections, it was decided to proceed with the job. However, the job was called off on the evening of 7th February 1921 (Monday).

On 14th February 1921, I got written instructions from the battalion O/C. (Tadhg Byrne) to mobilise the Burnfort Coy. at Regan's, Greenhill, that night. I notified all available members to the number of about 30. I then visited the Battalio

O/C. at Lenehan's, Knockbrack. He informed me that he had been instructed not to go with the men, nor was I to go. I said that I had mobilised 30 men as instructed, but that I would not have them go anywhere unless I went also. I then left Lenehan's and went to Regan's. Next morning, about 4.30 a.m., we all moved off from Regan's to Jordan's Bridge which we reached about 5 a.m. All members of the Burnfort party were armed with shotguns.

At Jordan's Bridge we found the members of the column under Jack Cunningham as well as men from Analeentha Company. The Column O/C. allocated the Burnfort men and all the others to their positions. When they had all moved off I asked him where I would go and he said: "Any place you like". This attitude apparently arose from my opposition to the plans for the ambush discussed at the Battalion Council meeting on February 6th, 1921, and referred to previously and possibly to the fact that I was not supposed to be there at all as per the advice of the Battalion O/C. (Tadhg Byrne).

I then turned away and returned on the main road from Jordan's Bridge towards Mourne Abbey Stores. Just as I joined the main Cork-Mallow road at Jordan's Bridge I met my brother, Mick. He asked me what I was to do if the military came from Cork. I told him that I did not know. I continued on my way along the main road till I reached the junction with the Burnfort road - this was adjacent to the Mourne Abbey Stores. Here I met the men who were to push out the cars which were to barricade the road. Amongst these men were Paddy Dorgan, Tom Mulcahy, Con Mulcahy, Pat Ronayne and Pat Flynn. These men sought confirmation from me of the orders already received by them from the Column O/C. (Jack Cunningham). They were apparently of the opinion that I was in charge of the men at the eastern ^{SIDE} end of the road. As their instructions appeared to be in order I just said "that's all right" and passed on.

I continued along the main road in the direction of Mallow for about 300 yards to a point at which I found the remainder of the Burnfort men lying in ambush behind a fence overlooking the road and about 15-20 yards from same. I joined this section. We were all armed with shotguns. It was now about 6 a.m.

As I was worried about the party allocated to block the road, I returned to their position about 9 a.m. I met Paddy Dorgan who appeared to be in charge. He asked me what they would do when they had blocked the road. I said: "Get away out of here as fast as you can in case anything goes wrong". I then returned to my position with the ambush party of shotgun men.

We were still in position at 11 a.m. or thereabouts when firing broke out to the east of our position. We could not see any sign of the enemy but, as the firing appeared to be towards the rear of our position, I decided to investigate. I crept to the crest of a rise of ground to the rear and discovered that a party of military in extended order - taking in two fields - were closing in on our position from the east.

I returned to my party and we moved under cover of a fence in a north easterly direction for about quarter of a mile. At this stage we appeared to have evaded the encircling party from the east, but we found, to our dismay, that the fence of the Clogheen road on our western flank was lined with military. This party immediately opened fire from about 200 yards and we took cover on the opposite side of the fence behind which we had been moving up to this. We retired under cover of the fences - changing our direction more to the east - and succeeded in getting away from the second enemy group. We had now travelled about $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles from the ambush site on the main road and, as we had good cover, we decided to rest for a short time.

After about ten minutes we moved on towards the Monee road. We were just about to cross same when we saw a lorry of military at a crossroads about 100 yards away. We immediately took cover and in a few minutes the military party moved off in the direction of Mallow. We were now over two miles from the ambush position and, crossing the Monee road, we retreated to Jack Sullivan's, Beanaskeha, where we billeted. We returned home to our own district next day.

Amongst those who were with me in this withdrawal were: Mick Sullivan, Maurice Walsh, Dick Nagle, John Ronayne and about eight or ten others whose names I cannot remember.

During this engagement two Volunteers (Paddy Dorgan and Pat Flynn) were killed as was one Volunteer (Ned Creedon) who was not on duty. One Volunteer (Mick Looney - my brother) was wounded, captured and died of his wounds within a week. Three others were captured and tried by courtmartial for levying war. Two of these (Tom Mulcahy and Pat Ronayne) were found guilty and were executed, while the third (Con Mulcahy) was found not guilty and was released.

Having regard to what had happened and the loss of life involved, I felt very upset. I wrote to the Brigade O/C. (Liam Lynch) and asked that an inquiry should be held into the whole affair. In view of the steps taken by the enemy to encircle the area in which the ambush was laid, it was obvious that they were in possession of first hand information. An investigation was, in fact, held at Glantane early in March. Liam Lynch (Brigade O/C.) presided. All members of the battalion staff and a number of other officers were present. A long discussion took place and I expressed the view that any leakage which had occurred must have come from "higher up". Liam Lynch appeared to be of the opinion that information had been passed to the enemy by some local outsider. This could

not be possible as no local was aware, even when moving off from their billet at Regan's, of where they were going or what was "on". The investigation was not brought to any final conclusion and the question of how the enemy became aware of the Mourne Abbey ambush was not solved. As I was of opinion that there was a spy somewhere in the camp, and I felt that he was not among the locals, I informed the Brigade O/C. that I would not be responsible for any man in the circumstances. I then tendered my resignation from the post of Battalion Vice O/C. and returned to the ranks of the Burnfort company in which I continued to serve to the Truce. My resignation led to the following appointments in the battalion staff:- O/C. Tadhg Byrne; Vice O/C. Ned Murphy; Adjutant, Jerry Hanlon; Q.M. Mick Nagle.

Despite the fact that the investigation into the happenings at Mourne Abbey reached no definite findings, it can safely be assumed that the information was passed to the enemy by Shiels - a British ex-soldier - who was a member of the Kanturk battalion column. I was given to understand at a later date that arrangements for the ambush on 15th February 1921, were discussed at a Brigade Council meeting held near Nadd on Sunday, 13th February 1921. The Kanturk column were, it is understood, to 'stand-to' in case it was found necessary to call upon them for assistance. It is said that the O/C. of this column (Denis Lyons) informed his column of this arrangement on the evening of the meeting. Shiels was present on the occasion and left for Kanturk next day. No suspicion rested on him at the time nor until the events at Nadd on the morning of March 10th, 1921, when the brigade staff together with the Mallow and Kanturk Battalion columns were encircled under much the same circumstances as at Mourne Abbey. It then came to light that Shiels was seen drinking in Kanturk public-houses and had, in fact, called to the R.I.C. barracks there

on the eve of the round up at Nadd. He was, I believe, identified by Tom Bride, the owner of the publichouse at Nadd, where he was dressed in the uniform of a Black and Tan. He disappeared after this incident and was never traced. It is now generally accepted that the information regarding Mourne Abbey, as well as that regarding Nadd, was passed on to the enemy by Shiels. It is a coincidence that the I.R.A. casualties in both engagements were more or less the same -

Mourne Abbey 3 killed, 1 died of wounds and
 2 executed.

Nadd 4 killed, two wounded (both recovered).

Between Mourne Abbey 15th February 1921) and the Truce (11th July 1921) there was very little enemy activity in the Burnfort area. All I.R.A. men in the district were constantly engaged on blocking roads, cutting lines of communication and endeavouring to hinder in every way British administration in the area. The work of keeping the roads closed to enemy traffic involved the whole time attention of all available men.

Rank at the Truce - Volunteer, Burnfort Company.

Strength of unit - About 60.

Signed: Timothy Looney
(Timothy Looney)
Date: 21st June 1955

Witness: P. O'Donnell

(P. O'Donnell)

