

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

BURO STAIRE MILEATA 1913-21

No. W.S. 1,585

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 1585.

**Witness**

Timothy Dinneen,  
Candromey,  
Ballyvoige,  
Macroon,  
Co. Cork.

**Identity.**

Adj. of Kilnamartyra Company.  
Battalion Adjutant.  
Battalion O/C Police.

**Subject.**

Kilnamartyra Coy., Macroon Battn.,  
I. Vols., Co. Cork, 1914-16.  
Activities of Ballyvourney (8th) Battn.,  
I.Vols., Co. Cork, 1917-21.

**Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.**

Nil.

File No S.2923.

Form B.S.M. 2

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STATEMENT OF TIMOTHY BINNEEN

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Candromev, Ballyvoige, Macroom, Co.Cork.

I was born in the parish of Kilnamartyra, Macroom, on 9th March 1896, the son of a small farmer. I attended the local National School until I was 13 years, by which time I had reached the 6th standard. I was an Irish speaker from the cradle. When I left school I worked on the farm with my father.

A company of the Irish National Volunteers was formed in Kilnamartyra in the early summer of 1914. The company strength was about 80 men. I joined at the start. We were drilled by a British army reservist named John Browne. A week or two after the start of World War I he was called up. Soon after the start of the war the company ceased to meet or drill and gradually ceased to exist altogether. Early in the year 1916, the company was reorganised in the area by Henry Browne of Macroom and Patrick O'Sullivan, who is now Dr. O'Sullivan. We numbered very few at first, not more than twenty men. We met and drilled once a week and managed to procure a few shotguns and a revolver or two from different sources.

On Easter Sunday 1916, in charge of Henry Browne, we mobilised at Carriganima to receive orders from Volunteer H.Q. in Cork. We carried a few shotguns and there met Volunteer companies from Macroom and two or three other areas. We were aware that something serious was about to take place and had heard rumours of a pending rebellion, but did not know anything definite. During that Easter Sunday we drilled with other companies present for a time. In the evening, two messengers arrived from H.Q. in Cork City and spoke to Daniel Corkery, who was in command, after which we were ordered to return to

our homes. After the surrender in Dublin, Daniel Harrington and John Riordan were arrested by the R.I.C. and were sent to Frongoch Jail. Henry Browne was not at home when his house was searched, so he went on the run to avoid arrest. After Easter Week, Volunteer activity ceased for a time and many of the local members took no further part in the movement.

Early in 1917, the company was reorganised once more. Patrick O'Sullivan was appointed captain and I was appointed adjutant. This time, our strength was about 40 men. We met once a week for drill and collected shotguns from time to time. By this time the local people who were more or less hostile to us at first were becoming more friendly towards us. Activities throughout the year 1917, apart from routine drilling, included the making of cement bombs and slugs for shotgun cartridges. On one occasion, while returning from Volunteer H.Q. in Cork with a number of cartridge cases, the R.I.C. attempted to arrest me at Macroom railway station, but I managed to evade them, after which I went on the run for some time.

Following the election of Mr. de Valera for East Clare in 1917, a great victory parade of Volunteers from around Macroom was held in the town of Macroom.

During the conscription period in 1918, the strength of the company increased considerably, but following the danger period, many of the new Volunteers as well as others dropped out. Those who remained were loyal to the end. Parades and shotgun drills were held regularly once a week. In about the middle of this year, the company officers went to Ballingearry to inspect a Lee Enfield rifle which Captain John Lynch of Ballingearry had obtained for the use of his company. He explained to us how it worked. It was the first one we had seen.

Around this time I went to Cork and bought a quantity of canvas for the making of haversacks. Three members of the Cumann na mBan spent some days at my home making the haversacks. They made about 60 which we painted with linseed oil to make them waterproof. They were later used by the Cork No. 1 Brigade flying column. The R.I.C. were now very busy watching us and proclaimed an aeriocht which was to be held in the Ballyvourney company area in the month of July. The Aeriocht was held in the Coolea company area on the same day instead. That same evening the two R.I.C. men returning from Ballyvourney by side-car were held up by Jack Lynch, James Moynihan, Dan McSweeney and other Volunteers and disarmed of two rifles. In the encounter one of the R.I.C. was wounded. After this, martial law was proclaimed in the area. During the period the R.I.C. became more active than ever and raided and searched the houses of wellknown Volunteers, many of whom had to go on the run.

Coming up to the general election at the end of 1918 we were very busy preparing for the election and canvassing for the Sinn Fein candidate - Terence McSwiney; but, on nomination day, McSwiney was not opposed, so we had no contest in Mid-Cork.

It was shortly after the general election I was sworn in a member of the local circle of the I.R.B. We had about ten members of the I.R.B. in the company.

Early in 1919, battalion areas in Cork No. 1 Brigade were reorganised. Kilnamartyra company up to this was attached to the Macroom (or 7th) Battalion. A new battalion - known as the Ballyvourney (or 8th) Battalion was formed. The companies comprising the 8th Battalion were: Kilnamartyra, Ballyvourney, Coolea, Ballingeary and Inchigeela, and were known as A, B, C, D and E Companies, respectively.

Patrick O'Sullivan became battalion O/C., Dan McSweeney, vice-O/C. I became adjutant and C. O'Connell, Q.M.

Battalion Council meetings were held regularly. During the year I visited each company in the battalion from time to time attending company parades and organising each area in preparation for attacks on enemy forces wherever possible. We had several prominent visitors in our area around this time including Mr. Richard Mulcahy, Deputy Chief of Staff, who addressed a Battalion Council meeting one night and gave us an outline of things to come in the shape of attacks on enemy outposts.

An escaped I.R.A. prisoner named McNeilus spent a long period in our area where we were responsible for his safety. Activities this year included the making of cement bombs, raids for shotguns and explosives and the transport of rifles and ammunition from our H.Q. in Cork. In this respect the local Cumann na mBan were very useful and helped in the carrying of dispatches as well as arms and ammunition. Our battalion, situated as it was in a mountainous area, was a safe retreat for many men on the run from the city and country. Attacks on R.I.C. barracks had been planned by the battalion staff during the latter part of the year, but were not sanctioned by H.Q. until later.

In January 1920, approval was received for an attack on Inchigeela R.I.C. barracks. Selected men from each company, to the number of about 50, took part in the actual attack which was in charge of Patrick O'Sullivan, Battalion O/C. Except for one man who had a rifle, we all had shotguns. Having surrounded the barracks at about 10 p.m., we opened fire simultaneously and called on the garrison to surrender. They replied with rifle fire. After about two hours, we withdrew, as our ammunition had run out. One R.I.C. man who happened to be outside the barracks when the attack started was wounded.

A short time later, members of the brigade staff with a number of Cork City Volunteers arrived in our area to attack Inchigeela barracks again. The city men included Dan Donovan ('Sandow') and Mick Murphy. After inspecting the barbed wire barricade around the building and seeing the steel shutters on the windows, they decided not to attack.

Following the murder of Tomas McCurtain, Lord Mayor of Cork, in the month of March 1920, with members of Kilnamartyra Company and the other companies in the battalion I attended the funeral parade in the city. Up to then it was the biggest Volunteer parade held in the city. I well remember a dispatch I received at that time. It ran thus:

"Brigade H.Q.

"This is to inform you that Commandant McCurtain, Brigade O/C., was last night murdered in his home by enemy agents. A meeting of the Brigade Council will be held this evening at the Students' Club Malor St. at 3 o'clock. Your attendance is required.

Signed: F. O'Donoghue

Brigade Adjutant".

In the following month, with fifteen Volunteers I took up an ambush position at Poul nabro, about two miles from the village of Ballyvourney, to intercept enemy forces if they came that way, while the Ballyvourney Company in charge of Daniel Harrington and Patrick Lynch burned down the Courthouse and an old disused R.I.C. barracks in the village of Ballyvourney. In the burning of the two buildings some of the local Volunteers were badly burned and had to go to hospital for a period. No enemy forces came our way that night.

In the month of June, the sergeant of Inchigeela R.I.C.

barracks was shot dead by a member of E/Company. A few days later, the remaining garrison of about five men were transferred to Macroom. Some nights later, I assisted the local company in burning down the evacuated building.

In the following month, with some members of Kilnamartyra, Ballyvourney and Coolea Companies, I took part in an attack on a military lorry at Coolavokig between Macroom and Ballyvourney. We numbered about 30 men all armed with shot-guns. Patrick O'Sullivan, the battalion O/C., who was in charge, placed 15 men on high ground on either side of the road. As the lorry came into the ambush position, we opened fire sending a volley of slugs into the canvas covered lorry. The lorry went out of control for a while, but continued on its way. It pulled up some distance from the village of Ballyvourney as it had run out of petrol due to the fact that the tank had been pierced with shot. We had followed up the lorry through a byroad. By the time we reached the abandoned lorry, the military had reached the village and had taken their wounded with them leaving one dead man in the lorry.

Following this ambush, there was much military and police activity in the battalion area. At the same time there was much trouble with the civil population and a lot of litigation was pending. On the instructions of the Brigade Council, magistrates and District Justices were appointed to hear and deal with all cases before parish and District Courts. Four men were selected from each company to act as policemen. The magistrates appointed were John Sheehan, Daniel Lyons and Cornelius Kellegher. The District Justices were Callaghan McCarthy, Jeremiah Crowley and Paud O'Donoghue. I was appointed battalion O/C. of police, which kept me fully occupied throughout the period until the Truce and

during the Truce period. There were a number of robberies, assaults, trespass and other cases dealt with by the magistrate. All decrees were dealt with by the Volunteer police. It was in this year that a serious bank robbery took place in Millstreet. We received instructions to keep a look out for the robbers. They were eventually arrested in the Donoughmore area and tried by the local District Justices. All of the stolen money was recovered.

After my appointment as O/C. of police, some changes were made in the battalion staff. Patrick O'Sullivan remained battalion O/C., Dan McSweeney, the vice O/C. resigned and was replaced by Patrick O'Sullivan, captain of Ballyvourney Company. Cornelius Sheehan replaced me as battalion adjutant and Daniel Harrington replaced C. O'Connell as battalion Q.M.

About the month of August, the battalion Vice O/C., Patrick O'Sullivan, and Patrick Lynch, who replaced O'Sullivan as captain of Ballyvourney Company, with the help of Ballyvourney Company, carried out a very successful attack on a military cycle patrol at Knockanure, about one mile from Ballyvourney. They captured ten rifles and a quantity of ammunition. In the encounter, the officer in charge of the patrol was killed.

By the end of the year I had the battalion police department in good working order. The people were very thankful to us and trusted us in every way. I remember on one occasion to hear an old woman say she did not see any use in the I.R.A. until she could keep as many dogs as she pleased without a licence - we did not enforce the licensing of dogs. Around this time, we had a Judge from Dublin down to try a number of land disputes in the area. In holding those Courts we had to be very careful as the R.I.C. and Tans were always on the lookout to find out where they were



being held.

In February 1921, the battalion carried out a big ambush near Ballyvourney. All Volunteers in the battalion as well as the brigade flying column took part. The fight lasted all day. I will not go into details of that ambush as, no doubt, it has already been given by some of the senior officers who took part. An old man who lived in the Nahoona was asked by an officer in charge of a group of Tans on their way from Bantry to Macroom that day if he saw any armed men hereabouts. The old man said 'Yes'. Well, the officer replied "we are looking for them". "Bedad" replied the old man, "they are looking for ye too".

In April 1921, Cork No. 1 Brigade H.Q. was transferred to Michael McSweeney's in the Ballyvourney company area. About a month later, the Divisional H.Q. was established in the Coollea company area in the house of Edward McSweeney. From then to the Truce every Volunteer in the battalion was on full time doing scout guard or signalling duty or carrying dispatches. I was in charge of a lookout post on Rahoona Rock where we had a large telescope fixed and trained on Macroom, eight miles away. Two Volunteers did four-hours duty at a time, night and day, on this particular rock. Flags were used by day and fire signals by night. Activities at this period also included the cutting of roads and blowing up of bridges. Civilians were mostly commandeered for the trenching of the roads, some of whom resented it very much, but I must say that the people generally were very willing to help us in anyway they could.

On my way to the O/C. Ballyvourney Company early in June on horseback, which is a distance of six miles, I was held up on the road by Tans and searched. They asked me where I was going. I replied that I was taking the mare to

a sire horse, so they let me go. I had twelve electric detonators tied in a packet under the horses mane. They had searched the saddle as well as my person, but never thought of the mane.

On 29th June, which was a holiday, Kilnamartyra Company in charge of Patrick O'Sullivan, Battalion O/C., carried out an attack on seven lorries of military at Clohina in the company area. The attacking party included several members of the company who had been in the brigade flying column which had a short time earlier been disbanded. All carried rifles and had just taken up positions behind fences in extended formation for about quarter of a mile on one side of the road when the lorries drove into the ambushade, With three other Volunteers I was behind a fence on my father's farm at Candromey. As the lorries passed through fire was opened by the main body. The military replied with machine gun and rifles while the lorries continued on their way. As they passed our positions, we continued the firing until they got clear of the ambushade. The attack, which took place in the morning, was decided upon in a matter of minutes after the receipt of information that the military lorries were approaching our area.

The Volunteer police helped the Battalion I.O. - Dan McSweeney- and his staff a great deal in tracing suspicious characters such as tramps and individuals who were strangers in our area who were often taken to be spies. Our men, in fun, often referred to the I.O. as "The Minister of Tramps", due to his close watch on those individuals.

Signed: Timothy Dinneen

Date: 26th February, 1957

Witness: John J. Lally

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