

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
BUREAU STABE MILITARIA 1913-21
No. W.S. 1736

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21

STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 1736.

Witness

Maurice Donovan,
Quarry's Cross,
Crookstown,
Co. Cork.

Identity.

C/C Quarry's Cross Coy., Bandon Battn.,
Cork 111 Brigade, I.R.A..

Subject.

Bandon Battalion, Cork 111 Brigade,
I.R.A., 1919-21, and Brigade Column, 1921.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil.

File No S, 5026, ..

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STATEMENT BY MAURICE DONOVAN,
Quarry's Cross, Crookstown, Co. Cork.

I was born at my present address in June, 1897. My parents were farmers. I was educated at Mount Pleasant national school until I reached the age of fifteen, when I left school to go to work on my parents' farm.

I joined Quarry's Cross Company, Bandon Battalion, Cork III Brigade, when it was organised in early 1919. The prime movers in the organisation of the company were Batt. Fahy, Tim O'Mahoney, Dan O'Callaghan, John Desmond and myself. The strength of the company was about forty. The first officers of the company were:-

O/C	- Maurice Donovan (witness)
1st Lieut.	- Daniel O'Callaghan
2nd Lieut.	- Timothy O'Mahoney.
Adjt.	- Batt. Fahy
Q.M.	- John Desmond.

During the early stages, training was carried on in close order foot-drill and route marches. Later on, our company took part in manoeuvres with some of the other companies in the battalion (Bandon). These manoeuvres usually took place at week-ends, and were carried out under one of the officers of the Battalion Staff.

All arms in the area, not already held by members of the Volunteers or their families, were collected before the beginning of 1920. We now

had about twenty shotguns, with a small supply of cartridges.

Training continued throughout 1920, and selected men were trained as scouts, engineers, despatch riders and intelligence officers. These selected men became very important as the fight advanced - more especially in this area through which the main line of communication between the eastern and western ends of Cork III Brigade operated. Our intelligence system was very important, as we had to keep all officers and men, passing through, posted on the movements of the enemy forces, while despatch riders had always to be available at short notice.

The first major engagement in which I took part was against a British military convoy at Toureen on October 26th, 1920. On the previous evening, I received instructions to report to the O/C of the Brigade Flying Column (Tom Barry) in Crosspound area. I was accompanied by Daniel O'Callaghan (1st Lieut.) of my company (Quarry's Cross). When we reached Crosspound, we found several men from other companies in Bandon Battalion assembled there. The strength of the combined force was about thirty. Tom Barry (Column O/C) was in charge. The Brigade Adjutant (Liam Deasy) was also present. All were armed with rifles.

Early in the morning of October 25th, 1920, we moved into position at Toureen on the main Cork-Bandon road. We were about eight miles from Bandon. We took up positions at 6 a.m. The

Column had been divided into four sections, as follows:-

- (a) A main body of ten riflemen under Tom Barry (Column O/C) at the gate of Roberts' Farmyard.
- (b) Two flanking parties of, I think,
- &
- (c) nine men each, in position about 150 yards to the east and west of the main position.
- (d) A party of two men - the Brigade O/C (Charlie Hurley) and another - to explode a mine about 80 yards to the east of the main position.

The party at (a) was in position inside the main gate of Roberts' farmyard. All the other sections were under cover of the roadside fence south of the road. Seán Hales - O/C, Bandon Battalion - was in charge of the section at the western flank. The section on the eastern flank was under Liam Deasy (Brigade Adjutant). I was a member of the latter section, and was in position near the western end of our flanking position. We were extended over a distance of about 150 yards.

We were expecting a convoy of two lorries. The leading lorry was to be allowed to pass through the main position, to be dealt with by the mining party and, in the event of the mine failing, it was to be attacked by our party. The second lorry was to be attacked by the main party at the gate of the farmyard. The section at the western flank were to

deal with any additional force in the enemy convoy, or with any reinforcements which might come from Innishannon - four miles - should the fight be prolonged.

We had all been in position about two hours, when the leading lorry in the convoy drove into the ambush position from the west, about 8 a.m. It was allowed to pass on to the mine which failed to explode. In a matter of seconds, it was passing the position which I occupied on the eastern flanking party. I immediately opened fire, as did all the others in the section, but in less than a minute, it was gone out of range and was speeding towards Cork.

The second lorry was fired on by the main body. The driver was killed by the opening fire, and the lorry crashed into the fence. After a sharp exchange of fire, Lieut. Dixon, who was in charge of this party, was killed, and the surviving occupants of the lorry surrendered. The fight was over in a few minutes. The members of the main attacking party collected over a dozen rifles and a supply of ammunition from the enemy. All sections were now called in. The lorry was set on fire, and we all withdrew towards the Bandon river. With Dan O'Callaghan, I returned to my home area.

At this stage, it had been decided to put a Flying Column in the field, on a more or less permanent basis. In order to keep the members of this unit equipped, it was decided to impose a levy on all property owners. The amounts levied

varied from £1 to £50. The amount of the levy in the case of farmers was based on the number of cattle carried on the holding and, in the case of others, on the Poor Law Valuation of the premises. The collection of this levy was thrown on the shoulders of the officers of the various companies. It necessitated a visit - and very often more than one - to each householder in the area. The officers and selected members of the company were engaged on this work during the months of November and December, 1920.

Early in December, 1920, a party selected from Kilpatrick, Crosspound, Quarry's Cross and Newcestown Companies took up ambush positions at Clashanimuck^B on the old Cork-Bandon road about daybreak. Liam Deasy (Brigade Adjutant) was in charge. They were armed with shotguns and rifles. They were in position on two successive days. On the evening of the second day, as they were about to withdraw, an enemy convoy of five or six lorries passed through the ambush position and were fired on. They continued on their way, returning the fire. Enemy casualties were unknown. The I.R.A. had no casualties. My company (Quarry's Cross) was represented on this occasion by William Murphy, John Donovan and David Keane.

About this period, the British military were carrying out numerous raids in the area at irregular intervals. As a result, the majority of the members of the company (Quarry's Cross) were on the run. A number of members of the company were taken prisoners in these raids; amongst them were Dave Keane, Bill Harte, Pat Hayes and John Murphy.

About mid-January, 1921, a column from Bandon

Battalion under Sean Hales were mobilised in Quarry's Cross Company area. Within a day or two - I think the date was January 18th, 1921 - a strong force of military arrived in the district, and threw out a number of raiding parties. The column was kept posted on the movements of the enemy force by the company scouts, and were thus enabled to avoid the enemy efforts to round them up. When the enemy force had withdrawn from the district, the column moved to billets in Farranthomas where we (David Keane and I) joined it. We now made contact with the Brigade column under Tom Barry (Column O/C), and, scouted by the men of Quarry's Cross company, the combined force moved into positions at Mawbeg on the Bandon-Ballineen road, about six miles from Bandon. We were in position behind the roadside fence north of the road, and were extended over a distance of about four hundred yards. We remained in position from early morning until darkness set in, but the expected enemy convoy did not turn up.

The Brigade column were mobilised in the company (Quarry's Cross) area prior to moving to take up positions at Shippool on March 17th, 1921, and later to Crossbarry on the morning of March 19th, 1921. The scouts, on both occasions, were drawn from Quarry's Cross company. Every available member of the company was engaged on scouting duty when the column was withdrawing through the area, on its way to the west, after Crossbarry. Similarly, when withdrawing from Rosscarbery after the attack on the R.I.C. barracks there on March 31st, 1921, the column passed through the area to the east. On this occasion, the Column

O/C (Tom Barry) was expecting some important messages from Bandon. These despatches were collected in Bandon during curfew hours by two members of the company - named Mahoney - and myself, and were duly delivered on time.

As mentioned earlier, the Company (Quarry's Cross) area was kept an open area, to enable the Brigade Column to move freely through, from east to west, or to rest in the district for short periods. As a result of these responsibilities, the members of the company were continually engaged on scouting, guard and despatch carrying duties. Throughout the year 1921 to the Truce, the men were regularly engaged on activities of this nature.

About mid-June 1921, Major Percival's column from Bandon surrounded the company area, and remained in the district for three days. During this period, they captured and shot my brother - Matthew Donovan - about two hundred yards from his home, and left his body on the roadside. The enemy forces continued to raid the company area continuously up to the Truce on July 11th, 1921.

My rank at the Truce was -
O/C, Quarry's Cross Company, Bandon Battalion,
Cork III Brigade, I.R.A.

The strength of the Company at the Truce was about forty.

SIGNED: Maurice Donovan
DATE: 31-3-38

WITNESS _____

