

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21  
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NO. W.S. 981

ROINN  COSANTA.

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21  
STATEMENT BY WITNESS.  
DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 981

Witness

Patrick Riordan,  
Longfield,  
Firies,  
Co. Kerry.

Identity.

Section Leader, Firies Company  
Irish Volunteers, Co. Kerry,  
1916 - .

Subject.

Firies Company, Irish Volunteers, Co. Kerry,  
1916-1921.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil

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BURO STAIRS FILE 174 1213-21
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STATEMENT OF PATRICK RIORDAN

Longfield, Firies, Co. Kerry

My brother James and I joined the Volunteers when they started in the district; this would have been 1913-14. An Seabhach organised the Volunteers in the Firies area and James Fitzgerald was the first captain. I was appointed a section commander. We drilled and trained up to 1916. Just before Easter Week Paddy Cahill, who was in charge of Tralee area, gave orders through Dan O'Mahony, O/C. Castleisland, for a mobilisation order at Dysart near Castleisland. We mobilised at Firies Chapel at midnight on Monday and marched through Currans to Castleisland. Dan O'Mahony was there with Ulick O'Sullivan and Tadhg M. O'Connor. We stayed there all night and kept in touch with Tralee. Word came from Dan O'Mahony that we were to return home and await orders. O'Mahony was then O/C. Castleisland Battalion.

Arrangements were made for Ulick O'Sullivan to keep a man at Currans to receive any dispatches which came through and I was to keep a man at Firies for the same purpose.

We disbanded and proceeded home. When passing through Firies Village with my brother James, who was also on the mobilisation, we saw two R.I.C. men. On seeing us, the R.I.C. went inside a gate

Before being disbanded, D. O'Mahony gave strict orders that we were not to start anything until we got orders. We remained at home awaiting orders and, on Saturday morning, my brother James rose and had his breakfast. We heard the train passing; it was known as the 11 o'clock, and my brother decided to go into Firies for the papers to see if there was any news. When he got to the village he met two men, Donoghue and Costelloe, and he saw two R.I.C. men, McLoughlin and Cleary, dismount from their bicycles and post a proclamation on the post office window. Some remark was passed by either Costelloe or Donoghue about James Riordan

giving up his arms and one of the police said: "These damned Shinnors should give up their arms". Both the police were armed and when my brother approached they opened out to let him pass between them. As he passed, it is said that one of them made to open his holster and the other started to unslung his carbine. My brother drew a Webley and fired two shots at each and wounded them. I was on the bridge at Longfield and heard the shots. It sounded like my brother's gun. I had no coat on and I went back to our house which was just at the bridge and, having got my coat, I went looking for my brother. I missed him as he had come back over the fields. I was told this by some Volunteers I met on the verge of the village.

When my brother arrived home my father directed him to go to the house of an old moonlighter and Fenian named Tadhg Quirke who lived up in the hills. My father had been in the I.R.B. with Tommy Mac's (Thomas McEllistrim, T.D., Ballymacelligott) father and he knew he could trust Quirke. When I got home, my father told me where my brother had gone and I made off after him. I met him and we discussed the position. We then knew that the Rising was over.

While I was away at Quirke's two carloads of R.I.C. arrived at Longfield and they approached our house in single file. An R.I.C. man named Kelly was in the lead, but when he came to the gate he funk'd going in and the rest of the R.I.C. gathered up behind him. They then rushed the house; it was a thatched house by the side of the road. They started to wreck the place when they found we were not there. They smashed a fiddle, struck my father, broke windows and, entering an outhouse where milk was held for churning, they spilled the pans of milk and a barrel of cream on to the floor.

This was only the first of many raids on the house; during some of the raids following they even ripped the flowers out of the garden.

My brother tried to contact the Volunteers in Tralee but the town was surrounded and he went on the run to Keel, which is a district overlooking Castlemaine Bay. I moved from Quirke's to near Farranfore. I stopped at Brosnan's and heard a train going to Farranfore. It was carrying British troops (The Leinsters). They detrained and marched to the Police Barracks. The troop then divided - one half going for Farranfore and the other to Firies. The whole district was under the military. They searched our house and in my rush to leave I had overlooked a list of names of men with arms; they found the list and carried out many raids and arrests. One man named Spring was held and sent to Frongoch.

I should mention that some men in the area surrendered their arms. It was said that the Dean in Tralee arranged it and Paddy Cahill gave the order.

I retreated to Clifford's of Ballybawn (this was the home of Madge Clifford who is now married to Dr. Comer of Laois). I was sitting down on a bank talking to the man of the house whe the dogs barked and as I stood up I saw the D.I. with police approaching. I got a couple of fields away and waited. I saw two cars that came with them waiting on the road.

My brother James was staying in a hut at Keel and he was there until the snow came on. One night he left the hut to sleep in a house and during the night the weight of the snow brought down the hut and buried it.

One day I was sitting in J. Daly's field cutting tobacco and on looking up I saw my brother James looking through the hedge at me. He had come from Keel back to Quirke's. My brother then made for Cooper's of Scartaglin and then to Kerrisk's. I parted from my brother James for the last time. I never saw him again in life. Some time after we got word that my brother James wanted money. I collected the money from

our people and went with it towards Kerrisk's. On the way I called to a house in the mountains where a girl told me that the police were at Kerrisk's. I left the money for him and he went to Ballyvourney (Fleming's) where he was taken over by the Cork Volunteers who got him away to Liverpool. John Marcus O'Sullivan, now living in Cork, helped to get him away. He went as a seaman on another man's book. He got away to America and, his health failing, he went to Australia where he died.

I continued on the run and I did not always get a good reception. I slept in the fields and in a calf-shed in the corner of a field. While sleeping in the calf-shed the police raided the house nearby. Things got very hot and I moved into the mountains with a couple of blankets and some straw.

Arrangements were made to get me out of the area. I got away on a breadvan. Charlie Daly got me to Brosna and we got the breadvan at Broadford. Con Ring arranged for me to work at Burke's of Newtown near Charleville. I went under the name of Daly. I had trouble with my employer and went to work at McAuliffe's. While there I was arrested on the 1st December 1916. My description had been circulated to all police stations. I was taken to Tralee on 2nd December and arrived at midnight. The jail was locked up for the night and I was held in the barracks (R.I.C.) until the next day.

I was held in Tralee Jail until 23rd February 1917. While there I was asked to pick a place in Donegal where I would like to reside. I refused, stating that I would not live outside my own place. Well, on the 23rd February, I was taken handcuffed through Tralee to the railway station and put on board train for Carlow. When I arrived at Carlow I was taken to the R.I.C. barracks where an order was served on me to reside in a certain area and report to the police. I was released from the order

on the 29th June 1917. While in Carlow I developed kidney disease and I returned home on the 3rd July and I was very weak. I was in hospital in Tralee for three months.

F. Lynch and Austin Stack came to Kerry after my return. They were reorganising the Volunteers and I was asked to attend a meeting at Firies Chapel. I was too weak to go and they sent a car for me. After this, Lynch and Stack went on to Keel where they were arrested.

We reorganised the Volunteers and at a meeting held in Killarney I was appointed commandant of the Castleisland Battalion. Dan O'Mahony was made commandant of the South Kerry (No.2) Brigade. O'Mahony held his rank until the Spring of 1921. I was arrested early in 1918 for illegal drilling and while in jail I was ordered to sign bonds for my release. Because of the threat of conscription I was required outside. On my release I went on with the training and organising work as before.

In April 1918, an attack was made on the R.I.C. post at Gortatlea by some of the Ballymacelligott Company under Thomas McEllistrim and two of our men lost their lives. On the following day Thomas McEllistrim and Jack Cronin attacked two R.I.C. men from the Gortatlea post in Tralee and there was extensive R.I.C. activity in the area.

Early in 1920 I was called to Dublin to discuss the organisation in Kerry. Headquarters were anxious about how things were developing. Thomas McEllistrim, Jack Cronin and Charlie Daly (R.I.P.) came with me. We stayed at Whelan's Hotel in Eccles St. We met Dick Mulcahy at 39 Parnell Square and there was a long discussion about organisation and military activities. I remember Mulcahy impressed on us not to tackle too much. I think it had to do with an ambush we were planning for Beaufort.

I brought about £40 with me from my battalion to buy rifles. We wanted six rifles, one for each company in the battalion. We were put in touch with Sean McMahon who, I think, was Quartermaster General. He agreed to let us have five rifles and the stuff was delivered to us at Whelan's of Eccles Street.

The rifles were packed in parcels - the stocks in one and the barrels in another. I took the stocks and I went alone to the Kingsbridge Station on the top of a tram. The other parcel was taken by Thomas McEllistram and Jack Cronin in a horse-drawn cab. When I got to the Kingsbridge Station I put my parcel on a luggage rack in the train and stood out on the platform until the train was about to start. Thomas McEllistram and Jack Cronin travelled in a different carriage. We changed at Mallow and, while waiting for the connection, I left the parcel of stocks on the platform and walked away some distance. Thomas McEllistram and Jack Cronin did the same thing with their parcel. When we got on to the Tralee train we put the two parcels on the rack and when the train stopped at Ballybrack I got out and left the two parcels with Thomas McEllistram and Cronin. I heard afterwards that they stopped the train between Gortatlea and Tralee and got the parcels off.

About a week later the rifles were assembled at Thomas McEllistram's house and shortly after that I took a rifle to the Firies company. We wanted a rifle for each company for training purposes, but we had six companies and only five rifles. I think Keel Company was left without a rifle.

While we were having discussions with Mulcahy he told us of an order that if Terence McSwiney died every Tan and every R.I.C. man with a bad record was to be shot on sight. There was a brigade meeting held and Dan O'Mahony, the Brigade O/C., gave orders about the shooting.

Thomas McEllistrim, Jack Cronin, Humphrey Murphy, Tom Daly (R.I.P.) and Ulick O'Sullivan (Currans) were there. John Joe Rice and some of the Killarney officers may have been there but I am not sure of that.

Thomas McEllistrim, Jack Cronin and Tom Daly were relieved of responsibility in their units and given a free hand. Officers were appointed to replace them if necessary. It was at this meeting that Humphrey Murphy was proposed as Brigade Quartermaster. About this time I got orders from Dan O'Mahony to send two men from each company for an attack on Brosna Barracks. I was not there myself. My health was very poor all through this period and I could not do any farm work but it left me more time for organising. I could not cycle and I travelled on foot or in a pony trap. I was attending a specialist in Cork for my kidneys for thirteen years and all through the time up to my arrest I visited the companies and sometimes helped to train them.

There is another job in which I was involved; it was the attempted ambush at Beaufort. On the Sunday before the attempt I went with the late Dan Allman to Beaufort and after looking over the position I suggested knocking a tree on the main Killorglin to Killarney Road on the Killarney side of Beaufort Bridge and this was agreed. The job was to be in charge of Dan Allman who was a company captain in the Killarney Battalion and, as I was of a different battalion (Castleisland), we were only to assist him. I brought Batt Riordan, Jackie Brosnan, Pa (Mac) Sullivan and Tommy Woods, my battalion adjutant, with me to the ambush. On the morning of the attempt Tom and Charlie Daly came along and suggested leaving the Killorglin to Killarney road open and when the lorries were coming on a given signal to roll a common cart out of a gateway across the road. Dan Allman agreed to change the plan and I was placed up in a tree to take a signal from a scout who had been placed on the Killarney side



of the position. When a car was sighted I took the signal and as the car approached an attempt was made to roll the cart out of the gateway, but it got stuck at a tree and the road was left open for the car which was approaching. The car drove through the position but, as it went by, Tom Daly threw a bomb which exploded at the rear of the <sup>car</sup> ~~lorry~~ which continued its journey. There was a discussion as to what we should do and I advised that as we had no roads blocked and the enemy could come at us from all sides we should get away. This advice was accepted.

I was arrested on 21st January 1921 and held prisoner until the 8th December 1921.

Signed: Patrick Riordan

(Patrick Riordan)

Date: 29-7-54.

29.7.54

Witness: James J. O'Connor

(James J. O'Connor)

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