

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21

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No. W.S. 1,069

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 1,069.....

Witness

William C. Regan,
Park North,
Doneraile,
Co. Cork.

Identity.

O/C. Doneraile Co y. I.R.A. Co. Cork, 1919 - ;
Vice-Brigadier Cork II Brigade.

Subject.

Doneraile Company I.R.A. Co. Cork,
1919-1921.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil

File No. S. 2364.....

Form B.S.M. 2

W.S. 1,069

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
BURO STAIRE MILEATA 1913-21
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STATEMENT BY WILLIAM O'REGAN

Park North, Doneraile, Cork.

I was born in Park North, Doneraile, on 4th June 1896.

As far as I can recollect, my parents had no interest in politics, but I presume that I must have been affected by the general appeal of the politicians when I joined the British army in May 1915, when just approaching the age of 19. I was a member of the Cyclists' Corps attached to the 16th Irish Division. I served in France, Belgium, and later in Italy where I was wounded. I was invalided home from Italy in the Spring of 1918 and was demobilised in February 1919 when I returned home.

Towards the end of 1919 I was one of the pioneers in the organisation of a company of the Irish Volunteers in Doneraile. The initial strength of the unit was 12 to 15, but it later grew to about 40. The officers were:-

O/C. Wm. O'Regan (witness)
1st Lt. Dave Magner
2nd Lt. Dan O'Connor.

The usual foot-drill was carried out as well as some training in the care and use of arms. We had, before the middle of 1920, collected the following arms in some raids in the district: 1 German Mauser; 1 long Webley; 2 .320 rifles; 1 .22 rifle; 24 shotguns. In addition, several shotguns were held by Volunteers and were their personal property.

The Doneraile Unit was attached to the Castletownroche Battalion, Cork II Brigade, I.R.A. The battalion officers were:

O/C.	Tom Barry,	Glanworth
Vice O/C.	Ned Creed	Kildorrery
Adjt.	Dan Shinnick	Castletownroche
Q.M.	Sean Curtin	Ballylough

Towards the end of August 1920, I was one of the representatives from the Battalion who took up an ambush position with the East Limerick Column at Carrig near Mallow.

The expected enemy convoy did not arrive, so the ambush party withdrew. The East Limerick column returned to their home area.

When the brigade column was formed in September 1920, the Castletownroche Battalion was represented on same by Jerh. Donovan (O/C. Shanballymore); Jim Neill (O/C. Castletownroche); Dan Shinnick (battalion adjutant); Mick Halloran (1st Lieut. Ballinlough). Immediately before the attack on Mallow Barracks the column was reinforced by Jerh. Clifford (2nd Lieutenant Mitchelstown) and witness (Wm. O'Regan, O/C. Doneraile). The column was, at the time, in training at Burnfort, Mourneabbey under Liam Lynch, O/C. and Ernie O'Malley (Training officer).

The column was assembled originally with the intention of attacking an enemy convoy on the Cork-Mallow road but, owing to information which the O/C. received re the possibility of capturing Mallow Military Barracks, the plans were changed.

On the morning of 28th September 1920, before dawn, the column with some members of the Mallow Battalion entered Mallow where they took up billets in the Town Hall until it was time to move out to the attack on the barracks about 9 a.m. I was aide-de-camp to Liam Lynch for the day and entered the barracks with him. Dick Willis and Jackie Bolster, who were employed in the barracks, were already inside as was Paddy McCarthy, who posed as a representative of the contractor. He was supposed to be measuring up some work inside the barracks. Ernie O'Malley approached the gate with a letter which he handed to the soldier on duty at the gate. While the soldier was looking at the letter the gate was rushed by Ernie O'Malley, Paddy O'Brien and John O'Brien. They were followed by Liam Lynch and witness and then by the general mopping up party. The barracks was captured and all warlike stores were loaded on three cars which were driven off by Leo O'Callaghan, Mallow, and Paddy and Mick Healy, Millstreet. An attempt was then made to set the barracks on fire and the column then withdrew to Burnfort.

One member of the garrison - Sergeant Gibbs - was killed. The I.R.A. party had no casualties. The material captured included:- Lances, saddlery, bandoliers, 27 rifles, 2 Hotchkiss guns, 1 revolver and some thousands of rounds of .303 ammunition.

Prior to this raid the column were armed mainly with the rifles captured in the raid on the church party at the Wesleyan Church, Fermoy, in September 1919, but the new capture strengthened the position considerably. The Brigade O/C. now felt that he could return the Fermoy rifles to the home area so, with Jerh. Clifford, I took 14 of the Fermoy rifles to Badgers Hill that night where they were dumped by Denis Hickey (O/C. Glanville Company). This finished my connection with the brigade column from which a number of the battalion officers were disbanded and ordered to return to their own areas where they were to establish columns.

About the end of October 1920 a column was formed in Castletownroche Battalion. Tom Barry, Glanworth, was O/C. Witness (Wm. O'Regan) was Vice O/C. Other members were:- Dan Shinnick (battalion adjutant); Tim Barry (O/C. Glanworth); Wm. Barry, Dave Bernard, Jack Sullivan, John Leamy, Patrick Cronin (all Glanworth), Dick Smith, (Ballinlough), Patk. J. Luddy (Mitchelstown), Jim O'Mahony (Mitchelstown). The following also joined the column at a later stage:- Dan O'Keefe, Jimmie Walshe, Tim Fay, Wm. Gallahue (all Mitchelstown John O'Brien (Ballygiblin), John Noonan (Kildorrery), Dave Magner (Doneraile); also Michael O'Connor and James Murphy from Doneraile, Jack ^{LANE} ~~Lee~~ (Killavullen), and Dave Collins (Ballyhooly ^{THOS. O'GORMAN (DONERAILE)}

One of the first engagements of this column was at Labbacally about the end of November 1920. I think the date was November 26th. A few days prior to this date a man named O'Donnell was shot by the Tans in Kildorrery. A party of British military in one lorry and a private car came to

Kildorrery to attend the inquest on November 26th 1920. This party came from Fermoy and remained only a short time. The arrival of this party was reported to the column O/C. who decided to ambush it on the return journey.

The column, to the number of 18 supported by some shotgun men from the local company, took up positions inside the roadside fence at the top of a steep hill on the Glanworth-Fermoy road. This was about 5 p.m. The party was divided into three sections - two on the western side and one on the eastern side of the road. They were extended over a distance of about 100 yards. The convoy was seen to approach the ambush position about 6 p.m. Owing to the short time available and lateness of the hour, it had not been possible to arrange for an obstruction on the road. The lorry drove into the ambush position and fire was immediately opened on it. The driver swerved the lorry on to the side of the fence and the officer in charge of the party was thrown out but the lorry continued on its way and got through. The touring car did not enter the ambush position at all and when firing opened it changed direction at a cross-roads at the foot of the hill and returned to Fermoy by another route. The enemy party did not fire a shot on this occasion. A revolver and his Sam Browne belt were taken from the officer who was thrown from the lorry and the ambush party then withdrew.

The column together with members of the local companies were mobilised that night at Glanworth in anticipation of reprisals but, although a strong enemy force arrived in the village in an armoured car and four or five lorries, they did no damage. They were apparently out on a drinking spree - all drinks, of course, were free. As they did not burn or shoot no action was taken by our party. The column withdrew to billets when the enemy party had withdrawn, while the members of the local companies returned to their own areas.

I would like to point out that our column was now operating in an area in which the enemy were very strongly positioned. Our area was in the centre of a district which held the following enemy forces:

Buttevant	-	H.Q. of an infantry brigade	
Ballyvonare	-	H.Q. of a machine gun battalion	
Mitchelstown	-	Military post and strong R.I.C. garrison,	
Kilworth Camp	-	Strong enemy forces.	
Moorepark Camp	-	do.	
Fermoy	-	H.Q. of infantry brigade (two barracks and a aerodrome)	
Castletownroche	-	Military post; R.I.C. and Black and Tan garrison.	
Kildorrery	-	R.I.C. and Black and Tan garrison.	
Doneraile	-	do.	do.

About 10th December 1920, the battalion column in co-operation with the members of the local companies were preparing to ambush a military convoy which passed regularly between Tipperary and Kilworth via Mitchelstown. The position, which had been selected for this ambush, was at Glenacurrane on the Mitchelstown-Tipperary road and in the East Limerick Brigade area. While waiting the arrival of a Hotchkiss gun and crew from Brigade H.Q., we made contact with the O/C. East Limerick Brigade (Denis Hannigan), who was in the district with his column. Both columns met at Ballyarthur and it was agreed between the column leaders (Denis Hannigan and Tom Barry) that the job should be postponed for a few days. Eventually, when the Hotchkiss gun and crew (Dick Willis and Leo O'Callaghan) arrived, the columns took the selected positions at Glenacurrane on the morning of December 17th 1920 about 8 a.m. The position was about 3 miles from Mitchelstown.

There was nothing strange until 11 a.m. or so when an enemy convoy was seen to approach from Tipperary direction. It consisted of a touring car and two lorries and, as there appeared to be I.R.A. prisoners in the lorries, the party

were allowed to pass through and we lay in ambush throughout a very cold day until their return sometime around 14 p.m. when their approach was signalled by scouts placed on high ground on the Mitchelstown side. The road was then blocked at the western end of the position by pushing a pony car into the roadway at a bend.

The convoy was now being led by the ~~towing~~^{TOWING.} car and all vehicles were travelling close together. When the ~~towing~~^{TOWING} car was approaching the bend where the road was obstructed, fire was opened on it by the machine gun party which was situated to the Galbally end of the position. The driver was killed and the car crashed into the obstruction just as the remainder of the ambush party opened fire on the convoy. The members of the enemy party who had not been killed by the opening burst of fire, jumped from their transport and took up positions close to the roadside fence. They continued to fight for a short time, but eventually they surrendered. The fight must have lasted about ten minutes or so. I think that we captured 18 rifles with some ammunition and two bags of Mills bombs in this engagement. The enemy lost two killed, four wounded, while the lorries and ~~towing~~^{TOWING} car were burned.

The joint columns in this engagement numbered about 40. They were under the command of O/C. East Limerick Brigade (Donnchadh Hannigan). The columns were in position on high ground overlooking the road and extended over a distance of about 200 yards. The machine gun and crew were placed at the Galbally end of the position (western end), but there were some members of the ambush party further west as well as the usual flanking party. I was positioned with a party of about ten riflemen on high ground on the opposite side of the road to the main party and at a distance of approximately 150 yards from the point at which the road was obstructed. We were in a position to cover the members of the enemy party who took cover

beside the roadside fences. Following the termination of this engagement I withdrew with the members of my party to the Aughaphoooca district where we billeted that night.

Next day three lorries were seen on the Kilfinane-Mitchelstown road and it was decided to move into a position at Ballinacourty in the Kilfinane district about 2 p.m. that evening in the hope that the enemy convoy would return through the ambush position. The joint columns took up positions on high ground on both sides of the road. The machine gun crew (Dick Willis and Leo O'Callaghan) with their gun were in position on a high bridge overlooking the road and from which they could enfilade same. About 3 p.m. Fr. Ambrose, P.P., Glenroe, drove into the ambush position. He halted a short distance inside the site and I think he spoke to Donnchadh Hannigan. He then drove off and shortly afterwards we were ordered to withdraw from our positions. As far as I can recollect, the priest had informed the O/C. that the enemy were aware of our whereabouts.

The members of the Castletownroche Battalion column then retired to Knockaneevin and Kilclooney where they billeted. Next day we returned to Ballinlough area where the column was disbanded for Christmas - the members returning to their home areas.

At this time arrangements had been made to hold a brigade training camp to train a column O/C. and deputy for each battalion. The arrangements for this camp were being made by Moss Twomey, Brigade Adjutant, and the camp was to have been held at Burnfort. When the arrangements had practically been completed the Brigade Adjutant (Moss Twomey) was arrested about Christmas 1920. As the Brigade O/C. (Liam Lynch) was afraid that correspondence relating to the establishment of the camp may have fallen into enemy hands, the site was changed to Nadd in the Kanturk Battalion area.

This camp was assembled at Nadd early in January 1921 under Paddy O'Brien, Liscarrol, (Brigade Q.M.) while I acted as his assistant and training officer. The battalions and their personnel taking part in the camp were:

- Mallow - Jack Cunningham, Jerh. Daly, Joe Morgan.
- Kanturk - Denis Lyons, Denis Murphy
- Millstreet - Jerh. Crowley and another
- Charleville - Ned Ryan and another
- Newmarket - Two representatives - I don't recollect the names.
- Fermoy - No representatives. Two from this battalion - Lar Condon and John Fanning - had served with the brigade column during October 1920 and were now in the home area.
- Castletownroche - No representatives required, as we were already operating the system it was proposed to put into operation following this camp.

There was very little drilling at this camp. The main subjects dealt with were - the use and care of arms; use of cover, tactical training and outpost duty. The training continued for about a fortnight when the personnel returned to their own battalions to establish and train battalion columns.

The instructions of the Brigade O/C. regarding battalion columns were that - when not lying in ambush, each column should carry out a regular schedule of training on its own during the day. At night the members of the column were to train the members of the companies in whose areas they were billeted. In this way he felt that an unlimited supply of trained personnel would be available throughout the brigade area at all times.

About the end of January 1921, I moved with the battalion column into Castletownroche to attack enemy posts (military and R.I.C.). The column was supported by members of Castle-townroche, Killavullen and Shanballymore companies. All,

except the column, who were armed with rifles, carried shotguns. In order to obviate any danger of disclosing our whereabouts the shotgun men were ordered not to insert cartridges in their guns until they had reached their positions. However, ^{BEFORE} ~~when~~ some of the parties had reached their pre-arranged positions, a shot was accidentally discharged by one of the men. As a result, the enemy were alerted and as all sections had not reached their posts the job had to be called off. This attack was planned to take place about 8 p.m. In addition to the men mobilised at Castletownroche, the members of the Glanworth and Ballyhooley Companies under the Battalion O/C. were in position on the Fermoy-Ballyhooley road to await any military who may come from Fermoy if the attack had proceeded as arranged. This job was carried out on brigade instructions as Fermoy Battalion were to attack Rathcormac R.I.C. barracks and our attack on Castletownroche was intended to draw the enemy forces in Fermoy away from Rathcormac.

Early in February 1921, the column took up a position at Scargannon on the Doneraile-Kildorrery road. In an endeavour to draw the military out from Ballyvonare Camp two military policemen, who were patrolling the area, were fired on. The column, which was divided into three sections, took up positions on the north side of the road about 10 p.m. while small outposts were posted on the south side. The ambush position extended over a distance of about 350 yards. As we were not sure that the enemy would come out, we made no arrangements to barricade the road and, in any event, the enemy had a choice of roads by which to enter and leave the district. Two lorries of military arrived in Doneraile where they collected an R.I.C. man at the barracks. They then left the village and took the road on which we were in position. It was at this time after midnight, but it was as bright as day as we had a full moon. The lorries travelling slowly into our position were about 150 yards apart

When the first lorry, which was armour plated and covered with wire, reached the eastern end of the ambush position, two grenades were thrown - one by witness and the other by Liam Kearney. One rolled off the top of the lorry into the road, while the second struck the R.I.C. man who was sitting in the back of the lorry. Both bombs rebounded into the road where they exploded. The home made grenades, which were thrown into the second lorry, did not explode. The other sections of the column opened fire on the enemy, but both lorries got through. They halted 100 yards further on where they mounted two machine guns under cover of a cottage and endeavoured to enfilade the positions occupied by the column. With four other members of the column (Jim Luther, Jimmie Walsh, Jemmie O'Mahony, Wm. Gallahue) I moved into a position where, across the acre of land on which the cottage covering the enemy was built, we were able to cover the posts from which the machine guns were being operated. We opened fire and succeeded in putting one gun out of commission, while the second gun was moved to a new position where it was mounted on one of the lorries. This latter section then began to fire indiscriminately and, as we could not get into a suitable position to get a line on it, we withdrew to a pre-arranged spot where we met the other members of the column. Our party did not suffer any casualties, but three soldiers and one officer of the enemy party were wounded. About this time Tom Barry (Battalion O/C.) was arrested and I was appointed O/C.

About mid-March 1921, when most of the column had gone to Fermoy to do a shooting job in the town as a reprisal for some executions in Dublin, I moved with Tim Fay, Jackie Sullivan, Jimmy O'Mahoney and Danny Shinnick of the column into Castletownroche to ambush a patrol of Tans and R.I.C. which moved regularly about the village each night. We were

assisted by representatives of the Castletownroche and Killavullen companies who performed scouting and outpost duties. It was proposed to open fire on the patrol when it reached the gate of "The Close" - this was the name of a house which marked the end of the area usually patrolled. It was within about 60 yards of the R.I.C. post. Jackie Sullivan, Tim Fay and Jack O'Brien were in prone position at the gate of the "The Close", while some of the locals were posted in various positions. The scouts who were to report the position of the enemy returned to the gate of "The Close" while they were being followed by the enemy patrol. This, apparently, made the enemy suspicious and they called on the scouts to halt. The party at the gate then decided that it was time to open fire and did so. Two of the patrol were wounded and the others escaped to the barracks. The column members and local Volunteers then withdrew. One of the members of the patrol died from wounds.

About this time I was instructed by the Brigade O/C. (Liam Lynch) to take the column into the Fermoy Battalion area. The column was assembled at Ballyhooley and we moved into Glenville area where I met Liam Lynch and Dan Breen. I was then informed that plans had been changed and instructed to take the column back into the home district to disband same - the members being instructed to take part in the training of the local companies and to ensure that every effort was made to break up the enemy administration in the district.

As a result of this change I returned to Castletownroche where I established permanent H.Q. in Shanballymore area. In co-operation with the other battalion officers I arranged for the collection of the levy for the Arms Fund throughout the area as well as the organisation of Special Services (Engineering, Intelligence, Training). The battalion staff at this stage (March 1921) was:-

O/C.	Wm. O'Regan (Witness)	Doneraile
Vice O/C.	Patk. J. Luddy	Mitchelstown
Adjt.	Dan Shinnick	Castletownroche
Q.M.	John Curtin	Ballylough

At this time I got permission from the Brigade O/C. (Liam Lynch) to sub-divide the battalion into four sections made up as follows:- (a) Doneraile and Shanballymore Companies - O/C. Dick Smith; (b) Castletownroche, Killavullen, Ballyhooley - O/C. Jack Lane; (c) Glanworth, Kildorrery, Ballinlough - O/C. Tim Barry; (d) Mitchelstown, Ballygiblin - O/C. Wm. Roche. The Battalion Vice O/C. (P.J. Luddy) was also in area (d). The rifles in the battalion were distributed - a few to each area with the bulk of them in the three-company area at (c) where they were readily available in the centre of the district should urgent mobilisation be found necessary. Another change which occurred in the battalion staff at this time was the appointment of Michael O'Connor, Doneraile, as Battalion Q.M. to replace John Curtin who was considered too old for the job.

During the period to the truce the members of the disbanded column were operating in their own company areas. They were engaged in the training of the members of the local companies as well as ensuring that everything possible was done to impede enemy administration. Roads were being regularly trenched, telegraph wires cut and railways dismantled.

About the middle of April 1921, the column members in Kildorrery area, assisted by some members of the local company, ambushed a party of two Black and Tans at Kildorrery. Both members of the enemy party were killed. It was later discovered that they were unarmed. Amongst those who took part in this job were Maurice Cronin, Paddy Cronin and Jim Cronin (Rockmills) and Jackson.

During the spring of 1921 the British military stationed at Fermoy ordered the destruction of the following Republican homes as reprisals for attacks on their forces:-

Jerh. Magner	Shanballymore
David Daly	do.
David Bermingham	do.
Sean Creed	do.
Sean Noonan	Kildorrery
Sean Cronin	Curraheha, Fermoy
Wm. Shinnick	Rathnadarrahy, Castletownroche (home of the brigade adjutant)
Mrs. Lenihan	Ballyhooley
Dave Barry	Parkclough, Glanworth
Mick Walshe	Castlequarter, Kildorrery

As a counter-reprisal, the I.R.A. in the area destroyed, Lord Kenmare's, Conwaymore House, Ballyhooley; Penrose-Wellstead; Shanballymore, and Oliver's, Rockmills, Kildorrery. These counter-reprisal operations were under the control of the sub-battalion O/Cs. in the respective areas.

On 14th May 1921, as a result of a General Order to shoot up any enemy forces seen in the district, all units took part in the sniping of enemy posts in their own areas. There were, as far as I can recollect, no enemy casualties recorded. Activities of this nature continued right up to the truce.

Following the establishment of the First Southern Division at the end of April 1921, arrangements were made to divide the brigade (Cork II) which, at the time, consisted of seven battalions (Fermoy, Castletownroche, Mallow, Charleville, Newmarket, Kanturk, Millstreet) into two brigades. The battalions in the western end of the area (Millstreet, Kanturk, Charleville, Mallow, Newmarket) were to form a new brigade - Cork IV - while the new Cork II Brigade was to include Fermoy, Castletownroche (now divided into two battalions - Glanworth and Castletownroche), and Lismore (of neighbouring West-Waterford Brigade) battalions. The officers of the new Cork II Brigade were:-

O/C. George Power	Fermoy
V.O/C. Wm. O'Regan	Doneraile (witness)
Adjt. Dan Shinnick	Castletownroche
Q.M. Tom Hunter	do.

I should have pointed out earlier that, when Liam Lynch was appointed first O/C. of the newly-formed 1st Southern Divn.

Sean Moylan became O/C. of Cork II Brigade. The other officers then were:-

Vice O/C. & Adjt. .. George Power.
Quartermaster Paddy O'Brien

When Sean Moylan was arrested in May 1921, there was a further change in the brigade officers. The new officers were:

O/C.	George Power	Fermoy
V.O/C.	Paddy O'Brien	Liscarrol
Adjt.	Dan Shinnick	Castletownroche
Q.M.	Ned Murphy	Lombardstown

When the brigade was divided the officers of the new Cork IV Brigade were:-

O/C.	Paddy O'Brien	Liscarrol
V.O/C.	Ned Murphy	Lombardstown
Adjt.	Eugene McCarthy	Charleville
Q.M.	Mick O'Connell	Lombardstown

As far as I can recollect, the actual division of Cork II Brigade, although agreed on in principle sometime about the end of May 1921, did not come into effect until about a week after the truce.

On July 10, 1921, the Battalion Vice O/C. (Patk.J.Luddy), in conjunction with the O/C. of the sub-battalion O/C. (Wm. Roche) at Mitchelstown, carried out an attack on a party of British military at Mitchelstown. The enemy party suffered a number of casualties while two members of the I.R.A. party were wounded. On the same date a British soldier was captured in the Doneraile area and executed in the vicinity of Ballyvonaire Camp.

My rank at the truce - O/C. Castletownroche Battalion,
I.R.A.

The strength of the battalion would be in the neighbourhood of 650.

Signed: William C. Regan

(William C. Regan)

Date: 31st January 1955

31st January 1955.

Witness:

P. O'Donnell
(P. O'Donnell)
Investigator

