

W.S. 1,169 ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
BURO STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21
No. W.S. 1,169

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 1,169

Witness

John Looney (Jack),
Ballyphilibéen,
Mourne Abbey,
Co. Cork.

Identity.

Lieutenant Analeentha Company
Mallow Battalion Irish Vol's.
Co. Cork.

Subject.

Mourne Abbey Company Irish Volunteers,
Co. Cork, 1915-1921.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil

File No. S.2457

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STATEMENT BY JACK LOONEY,

Ballyphilibeen, Mourne Abbey, Co. Cork.

I was born in December 1896 at my present address.
My parents were farmers.

I joined the Irish Volunteers in July 1915 at Mourne Abbey when I became a member of the Burnfort section of the Mourne Abbey Company. The pioneers in the Volunteer movement in the area were Liam Jones and Jerry Mullane. Other members of the unit were Con Regan, Maurice Walsh, Dave Walsh, Mick Looney, Thade Looney, Tom Mulcahy and Paddy Dorgan. The strength of the section was about 20, while the strength of the Mourne Abbey Company was about 60 to 80. The Company officers at this time were:

O/C - Liam Jones

1st Lt.- Jerry Mullane

2nd Lt.- I cannot recollect the name.

These Company officers were elected at a general meeting of the members of the unit.

Training, which was carried out in public, consisted of foot-drill and arms drill with wooden guns. The company was an independent unit of Cork Brigade, Irish Volunteers. Nearly all Volunteers owned shotguns and these were the only fire-arms held at this time.

On Easter Sunday morning 1916 the full company assembled at Analeentha after 9.30 a.m. Mass. We then paraded under our own officers and marched to Beeing Cross, where we were joined by several other units from the

surrounding districts. The combined units took part in some skirmishing exercises and about 2 p.m. the parade was dismissed. I think that the parade was in charge of an officer from Kinsale - I cannot recollect his name. All units paraded again about 4 p.m. and were addressed by Tomás McCurtain, who was, I think, O/C Cork Brigade. He was accompanied by two other officers not known to me. I don't remember what Tomás McCurtain said, but on the termination of his speech the parade was dismissed by the officer-in-charge. The Mourne Abbey Company re-assembled in a short time and we marched back to our own area. Our company was "standing to" during the remainder of Easter Week but no fresh orders were received.

About ten days after the surrender in Dublin a meeting of the company was held at Greenhill. Some of the older members of the committee which controlled the Irish Volunteers proposed that all arms held should be surrendered to the Catholic Curate at Burnfort. It was suggested that there was no need for individual Volunteers to hand their guns to the priest - they could, if they wished, leave them in the stable at the Curate's house. In any event, the proposal led to a very heated discussion and those who opposed the surrender of arms left the meeting. I think that some old guns were surrendered but I did not hand in any gun.

Nothing much happened until early 1917 when the Irish Volunteers were reorganised, but the company still carried on its drills and parades in secret. There was no change in officers.

On the eve of the anniversary of Easter Week 1916 the members of the company placed a tricolour on a tree

at Analeentha and another on Mourne Abbey Castle. When the flags were noticed next day by the R.I.C., immediate steps were taken by them to have the flags removed. Several efforts to remove the flag from the tree at Analeentha failed, and the local sergeant of the R.I.C., with one of his constables, procured a cross-cut saw and set about sawing down the tree on which the flag was flying. After some hours hard work they succeeded in felling the tree but the flag was rescued by some Volunteers who had gathered to see the R.I.C. men at work. The R.I.C. tried to recapture the flag and this led to several clashes between themselves and the Volunteers. Eventually the R.I.C. party withdrew without the flag. In the meantime the flag on Mourne Abbey Castle had been removed by another party of R.I.C. This flag was replaced on the same night and in such a position that it could not be removed so easily. In order to prevent anyone from approaching the new position several blackthorn bushes were fixed along the wall of the Castle. This flag was never removed and was blown to shreds by the wind.

The R.I.C. men who had been involved in the clash with the Volunteers at Analeentha charged a number of the latter who had been present with unlawful assembly and obstructing the R.I.C. These were tried at Mallow Court sometime in July 1917 and I think that small fines were imposed on them. I remember that on the day of the trial the Volunteers held a parade in Mallow. The police tried to break up the parade and made several baton charges. Several police and some of the Volunteers were injured. This was the first occasion since Easter Week that the Volunteers in the area had shown their strength, and their reaction to the baton-charges appeared to have

impressed many of the general public. The Volunteers who were charged in connection with the flag incident were, I think; Liam Jones, Jerh. Cronin, John Cronin and another whose name I do not remember.

Sometime during the summer of 1917 I cycled with Jerry Mullane and Con O'Regan to Macroom where a sports meeting was being held. On this occasion Jerry Mullane attended a meeting which was being held in connection with the reorganisation of the Irish Volunteers. Regan and I were also to attend this meeting, but Jerry Mullane forgot to give us the password and we would not be allowed into the house in which the meeting was held. We returned home to Mourne Abbey that night but Mullane did not return till next day.

During 1917 all Volunteers were active in organising Sinn Féin in the area and in supporting other national organisations, e.g. Gaelic League and Gaelic Athletic Association. The usual drilling and parades were held.

Early in 1918 Mourne Abbey Company became a unit of the 6th (Blarney) Battalion of Cork Brigade, while Paddy McCarthy of this company became Battalion Adjutant.

When conscription was threatened in the spring of 1918 there was a big influx of new recruits. The strength of the company was now in the region of 120.

The conscription scare passed and there was a slight reduction in the strength of the units but normal activities continued.

About this time the Volunteers were doing a lot of work on the political side as Sinn Féin was preparing

for the general election in December 1918. There was, however, no contest in our area as the Sinn Féin candidate was returned unopposed. Our only activity in connection with the actual election was confined to sending a strong detachment of men to Waterford City to carry out protection duty for our supporters who were getting a rather tough time from the Redmondite supporters and the "separation women" (wives of soldiers serving with the British Forces).

The success of Sinn Féin in the general election gave a general boost to Volunteer activities and the general public began to take more notice and to tender greater support.

When Cork 11 Brigade was formed in January 1919 the Mourne Abbey Company became a unit of the Mallow Battalion of the new brigade. The other companies in this battalion were: Mallow, Glantane (Lombardstown), Ballyclough, Two-pot-house and Ahadillane. I think that about this time the Mourne Abbey Company was divided into two - Burnfort and Analeentha. The officers of these units were, as far as I can recollect,

<u>Burnfort.</u>	<u>Analeentha.</u>
O/C - Jack Sullivan	O/C - Jerome Buckley
1st Lt. - Mick Nagle	1st Lt. - Jack McCarthy
2nd Lt. - -	2nd Lt. - Jack Looney.

The first officers of the Mallow Battalion were:

- O/C. - Liam Jones
- Vice O/C - John Buckley
- Adjt.- Paddy McCarthy
- Q/M - Tadhg Looney.

The officers of Cork 11 Brigade were:

O/C - Liam Lynch, Fermoy.

Vice O/C - Dan Hegarty, Mallow.

Adjt.- Tom Barry, Glanworth.

Q/M - George Power, Fermoy.

There were seven battalions in this new brigade as follows: Fermoy, Mallow, Newmarket, Kanturk, Charleville, Castletownroche, Millstreet.

Beyond the normal training, which was now becoming slightly more advanced - as we were getting occasional target practice with .22 rifles - there was no great activity in the area during 1919 and into early 1920.

All members of the Analeentha Company, together with representatives from all the other companies in the battalion, took part in the destruction of Blackrock evacuated R.I.C. barracks in accordance with G.H.Q. instruction of Easter 1920. On the way to the assembly point fixed for this unit with about ten other Volunteers of the company, I met two people resident in the area who were hostile to the Volunteers. In order to ensure that they would not pass on any information to the enemy we held them up and placed them under arrest. I was placed in charge of the prisoners, who were detained until the operation was completed. They were then released.

When the men arrested by the Volunteers in connection with the robbery of a bank at Millstreet about this time were being held as prisoners in this district, I acted as jailer for-about a week at Denis Barter's house at Kilquane. Three of the prisoners (Carmody, Murphy and Connors) were detained here while I was on duty.

These men were tried by the Brigade Staff and sentenced to deportation to England. When they were being deported I drove them in a pony and trap to the Mourne Abbey Stores where I handed them over to Liam Lynch and Seán Sullivan. It was now about July, 1920, I think.

The Cork 11 Brigade Column assembled at Island in the Burnfort Company area early in September 1920. The column was under the command of Liam Lynch. Ernie O'Malley was Training Officer. The members of the column were billeted in several houses in the district, principally Looney's and O'Connell's. The first job undertaken by the column was the capture of Mallow Military Barracks on September 28th, 1920. I was a member of the guard for the meeting at which the raid was planned. This meeting was held at Sheehan's, Mourne Abbey, on September 19th, 1920.

On the morning of the raid (September 28th, 1920) I mobilised all available members of the company at Analeentha at 5 a.m. About an hour later I proceeded with Paddy McCarthy (now Battalion O/C), Paddy Healy (Millstreet), Paddy McCarthy (Meelin) and four others to the home of Capt. Horne at Dromore where we commandeered his car. I was one of the guard left at the house to ensure that none of the occupants left. We remained at Horne's until we received word from Owen Harold (now Battalion Vice O/C) through Jack McCarthy that the raid was over. It was now about 10 a.m. and I then went home.

Two nights after the raid I was one of a party of five or six who took up ambush positions in the vicinity of McCarthy's, Lahakineen, as it was anticipated that the

British forces might attempt to carry out reprisals in the area. Other parties were in position at Mourne Abbey Creamery under Ernie O'Malley and near Mourne Abbey Railway Station under Liam Lynch. The latter parties were mainly composed of members of the Brigade Column and were armed with rifles. There was also a party of locals under Liam Jones in the Burnfort area. With the exception of the members of the column who carried rifles, all were armed with shotguns. The members of the party with me at Lahakineen were, as far as I can remember, Paddy Buckley, Paddy Duggan, Pad Donovan, Jack McCarthy. There were also two members of the column armed with rifles. There was no appearance of enemy forces so all parties withdrew at daybreak - the column to their billets while the locals went to their homes.

Towards the end of October the Battalion O/C (Paddy McCarthy) was arrested. He was replaced by Tadhg Byrne, Mallow. During the period to January 1921 the usual drilling and scouting activities continued. About this time particular attention was being paid to the movements of enemy forces and all Volunteers were furnishing reports of any enemy activities in their particular districts. These reports were collected by the Company Intelligence Officer and co-ordinated. He in turn furnished weekly, or more frequently if considered necessary, reports to the Battalion I.O.

The Battalion Column was formed in January 1921. The members of the column were, I think, Jack Cunningham, O/C; Tadhg Mullane, Leo O'Callaghan, Jerh. Daly, Joe Morgan, Jack Moloney ('Congo'), Tadhg McCarthy, Ned Murphy, Ned Waters, Batt Walsh. There were also some

others whose names I cannot remember. The column underwent a course of training under the column O/C and lay in ambush in the area on a number of occasions, but no enemy forces appeared.

On the night of February 14th, 1921, I received a note from the Company O/C (Jerome Buckley) to mobilise all available members at Jordan's Bridge at 5 a.m. next morning (15th). I notified six or seven Volunteers in my own district and all reported at the assembly point at the time specified. We arrived at Jordan's Bridge before any of the others but were soon joined by the Company O/C and several other members of the unit. The members of the Burnfort Company also reported at the assembly point, where all were joined by the Column O/C and his men. I should have mentioned that Jordan's Bridge is at the point where the road from Analeentha joins the main Mallow-Cork road and is approximately one mile on the Cork side of Mourne Abbey Railway Station.

With about 5 others I was instructed by my Company O/C (Jerome Buckley) to take up a position in the quarry on the road between Jordan's Bridge and Analeentha and to ensure that all traffic on this road was held up from the time on which we took up our positions. Anybody held up by our party was to be accommodated in the quarry. We were armed with shotguns. Amongst those in my section were Tim Harold, Phil O'Shea and Jack Buckley. Between 6 a.m. and 11 a.m. we detained several people who were passing along the road on which we were posted and, as instructed, we kept them in the quarry.

About 11 a.m. I saw four or five lorries of military approaching from Cork on the main road at a fast

rate. The first two lorries, which were about 100 yards in front of the third, passed by Jordan's Bridge and continued on towards the Abbey Stores, which were approximately 150 yards beyond the bridge on the Mallow side. I then heard somebody shout "Military - push out the cars". I looked in the direction of the Stores and saw a cart being pushed out by someone. The military in the lorries opened fire with a machine-gun and the man pushing the cart fell. At the same time the lorries halted. A second cart was then pushed out and the man who pushed it got back to cover. The other lorries of military were halted at this stage at the Cork side of Jordan's Bridge. The military in these lorries were standing up. The men on the left-hand side of the lorries jumped to the ground, crossed Jordan's Bridge and entered the avenue to Joe Corry's house. The military on the right-hand side of the lorries jumped to the ground and moved through a disused quarry towards Sheehan's, Mourne Abbey. Both parties of military were now firing indiscriminately, especially those on the eastern side of the road moving towards Sheehan's.

As our position was now untenable - the military who had gone into the avenue to Corry's would be moving towards the rear of our position - we decided to make contact with the column. We withdrew in the direction of Corry's and made contact with the column, who were also retreating. The whole party withdrew in a westerly direction. When we had gone about three fields machine-gun fire was opened on us by some military who had travelled in a lorry from Jordan's Bridge by Analeentha to Mooneparson Cross. The troops in this lorry were intended to make contact with another section of their

forces at Mooneparson Cross, but through an error in map reading the officer in charge of the latter party had turned in the wrong direction and so left the gap through which the column escaped. When fire was opened on our joint party we changed direction. The column crossed the road between Mourne Abbey Castle and Mooneparson Cross, while my party followed the boreen to Con Regan's house at Mooneparson and then the road from Mooneparson Cross to Mourne Abbey Creamery. We then found that we had to cross a thirty acre field, and it was only by good luck that we managed to do so before the military lorry reached a position from which we could have been seen.

We rejoined the column some fields further on and continued to withdraw with them till we reached Clashmorgan. We remained here for a couple of hours and then returned to our home area. The column went on to Horgan's, Nursetown.

During the withdrawal of my party through Regan's farmyard Mrs. Regan was holding a donkey which had just been driven in from the creamery by a young lad who, when he heard the shooting, ran away. Mrs. Regan asked us to unload the milk churns from the car and, although pushed for time, with the enemy on our heels - we did so.

There was no other major activity in the area up to the Truce. In the intervening period all members of the company were engaged on the blocking of roads, the cutting of communications and in using their best endeavours to break up the enemy administration in the district.

Rank at Truce - 1st Lieut. Analeentha Company.

Strength of Company - about 60.

Signed:

John Rooney
(John Rooney)

Date:

18th May 1955

Witness: *P. O'Donnell* (P. O'Donnell),
(Investigator).

18th May 1955.