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NS 1751 WITHIN A STATEMENT THE HON JUSTICE COLIN DAVITT P 72873
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J. Moloney
Name: (J. Moloney.)

Grade: Col.

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Date: 7 March 2003.

ORIGINAL

W.S. 1400

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

BURO STAIRE MILEATA 1913-21

NO. W.S. 1400

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 1400

Witness

John Patrick Mc Cormack,
Lisheavy,
Milconly,
Tuan,
Co. Galway.
Identity.

Volunteer

Subject.

National Activities
1917 - 1921

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

nil

File No. *S. 2724*

Form B.S.M. 2

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

BURO STAIRE MILEATA 1913-21

NO. W.S. 1400

STATEMENT BY JOHN PATRICK McCORMACK,

Liskeavy, Kilconly, Tuam, County Galway.

I was born on the 27th January, 1895, at Liskeavy, Kilconly, Tuam, and attended Kilgevrin National School until I reached the age of about 15 years.

I joined the Belmont Company of the Irish Volunteers in September, 1917. The Company Captain was Patrick McHugh. The Lieutenants were Frank Ruane and Terence Goodwin. The strength of the company was about thirty to thirty-five men. It increased to about one hundred and thirty men at the time of conscription, but fell again to the original number when the scare of conscription had passed. Only the original thirty to thirty-five Volunteers remained. One reason for the falling away of the others was that Dáil Éireann had not been constituted at the time and they were not bound by any oath of allegiance.

Simple drill exercises were done once a week, sometimes twice. Drilling was done openly at first, usually on Sundays after Mass. I remember that the Belmont and Milltown Companies sometimes came together for parades on Sundays after Mass, when Battalion Staff Officers were present. I remember one of those officers very well. His name was Martin Bane and he is now a priest in the Foreign Missions. I cannot remember his rank at the time.

There was a good Sinn Féin Club in Belmont. The Secretary was named Patrick Burke and the membership was about thirty. The majority of the members were also members of the Belmont Company of the Volunteers. The

Club gave strong support to the Sinn Féin candidate - Dr. Brian Cusack - in the general election of 1918. The Parliamentary Party candidate was Thomas Sloyan of Tuam, and he was defeated in the election by a big majority.

In 1919, our company collected about twenty shotguns in the company area. Most of them were handed up to us quite voluntarily but I remember that a few owners of guns hid them to avoid handing them up to the Volunteers. I remember that about this time a sum of £18 for the purchase of three rifles was collected from members of the company and handed over to the battalion officers. Most of the £18 was subscribed by Volunteers Peter Brennan, Patrick Walsh, Daniel McCormack and John Patrick McCormack (myself). In that way we hoped to have the greatest claim on the rifles when they arrived. No rifle was ever delivered to the company for the money subscribed. I got a rifle in 1921 when I became a member of the Tuam Battalion Flying Column.

In the spring of 1920 the Belmont Company was actively engaged in connection with the attack on the Castlegrove R.I.C. barrack. We blocked the roads in our own area near Liskeavy. About this time or maybe a little earlier I had to go "on the run" owing to constant raids for me by the R.I.C. Raids were also made at the same time on the homes of Volunteers Daniel McCormack and Patrick Walsh. We believed that information had been given to the R.I.C. that we were in possession of arms. We arrested a native of the locality who was on intimate terms with the R.I.C. The arrest was carried out by Seamus Moloney, afterwards Battalion Commandant, Glenamaddy Battalion, Captain Patrick Brennan of Belmont Company who had just about then replaced Patrick McHugh as Company Captain, Mr. Alfie O'Dea who was prominently associated with Sinn Féin and Volunteers Daniel McCormack, Patrick

Walsh and myself. Mr. O'Dea brought his own motor-car to take the prisoner to "an unknown destination".

The prisoner escaped and made his way to Tuam where he joined the R.I.C. I am withholding his name as he is now dead and the rest of the same family are very respectable people.

At the end of 1920 or very early in 1921 I took part in an attempt to attack R.I.C. in the village of Milltown. About five or six men, with Captain Brennan in charge, took up positions within shotgun range of the barrack but none of the R.I.C. put in an appearance. A further attempt with the same men was made but the result was the same. These two attempts were made at night.

With Volunteers Patrick Walsh and Daniel McCormack I left Belmont Company about March, 1921. We were not satisfied that the company officers were sufficiently active. We joined Milltown Company which at the time was inclined to be a little more active. Company Captain Thomas Feerick and the two Lieutenants, Patrick Burke and John Thornton, were glad of our assistance. We worked well with them and about the middle of April, 1921, an attack was made on a patrol of R.I.C. that was in the habit of going from the village of Milltown to the railway station. Eight members of Milltown Company took part in the attack. They were: Captain Thomas Feerick, Lieutenant Patrick Burke, Lieutenant John Thornton, Volunteers Daniel McCormack, Patrick Walsh, Martin Slattery, Peter Brennan and myself. We got information that four R.I.C. who were patrolling the road between the village of Milltown and the railway station had gone into a

publichouse in the village on their way back to barracks. We took up positions between the publichouse and the barrack and waited for the R.I.C. to come along. Two R.I.C. came and we opened fire on them at point blank range with shotguns. Both R.I.C. fell and we thought that they had been killed. There were four R.I.C. in the patrol but two of them ran back to the publichouse the moment fire was opened on the first two who approached our position, and escaped. We learned later that the two who fell were not killed but that they were very badly wounded and were never able to resume duty again. Their names were Brennan and Dunne. They were both constables. We were not able to capture the rifles with which the R.I.C. were armed owing to the proximity of the R.I.C. barrack. There were about thirty R.I.C. and Black and Tans in the barrack 150 yards away and they opened fire in our direction the moment they heard the firing.

After this attack I stayed with the Tuam Battalion Flying Column which was under the command of Thomas Dunleavy, Commandant of Tuam Battalion. I remember a prepared ambush at Clonbern on the Dunmore/Moylough road. It was about May, 1921. The Tuam Brigade Flying Column, numbering about twenty, with about eighteen men drawn from various companies of the Tuam and Glenamaddy Battalions took up positions on the main Dunmore/Moylough road quite close to the village of Clonbern. I remember that a house on one side of the road was occupied and a gate lodge on the other side. The gate lodge belonged to a family of landlords named O'Rourke. I was in the gate lodge. I remember that we occupied the positions at daybreak. Two lorries of R.I.C. were expected to pass the ambush

position but they did not turn up. I cannot remember how the information about the two lorries came to the Flying Column.

I remember that about 11 a.m. Miss O'Rourke and a man called Hannon rode into our positions on horseback. They were called on to halt. Miss O'Rourke did so but Hannon rode on. He was captured and brought back to the gate lodge, where he was held prisoner all day with others who had come into our positions. Our party was armed with about fourteen rifles and twenty-four shotguns. I was placed as guard over Hannon for part of the day and given orders to guard him carefully as he was accused of spying. I think he was courtmartialled that day. Volunteer Patrick Walsh and I took him to one of the priests of Clonbern parish before he was executed. He was executed immediately after having been attended by the priest. There was a firing party of seven men as far as I can remember. His body was labelled "Spy" and left in a field close to the ambush position. Brigade Commandant Patrick Dunleavy was in charge at Clonbern.

I remember another prepared ambush at Carrareagh on the main Tuam/Dunmore road about midway between the two places or maybe a little nearer to Dunmore than to Tuam. The Brigade Flying Column, with Brigade Commandant Patrick Dunleavy in charge, took up positions at daybreak. R.I.C. in lorries passed the way quite frequently. Some time during the day the Brigade Commandant was called away on another job. I cannot now remember what it was. He took with him the members of the Glenamaddy Battalion Flying Column, leaving his brother, Thomas, Column Commandant of the Tuam Battalion Flying Column, in charge. We moved

our positions a short distance from the original positions and one lorry of R.I.C. passed in the direction of Dunmore when we were about two hundred yards from the road. We opened fire on the lorry, which did not stop. We heard afterwards that some of the R.I.C. were wounded but this was not confirmed.

There were two battalions in the Tuam Brigade and in 1921 each battalion had its own Flying Column composed of officers and men 'on the run'. When the two Battalion (Tuam and Glenamaddy) Flying Columns were brought together for particular operations the combined force was called the Brigade Flying Column. The Brigade Staff were nearly always with the Glenamaddy Battalion Flying Column.

The members of the Brigade Flying Column, as far as I can remember them, were:

Patrick Dunleavy, Bde. Comdt. & Column Comdt.
 Thomas Tarmay, Bde. Adjt.
 Patrick Conway, Bde. Q/M.
 Thomas Dunleavy, Battn. Comdt., Tuam Battn.
 Thomas Nohilly, Battn. Adjutant, Tuam Battn.
 Thomas Ryan, Battn. Q/M, Tuam Battn.
 Timothy Dunleavy, Capt. Barnaderg Coy., Tuam Battn.
 Patrick McHugh, Capt. Sylane Coy., Tuam Battn.
 Thomas Feerick, Capt. Milltown Coy., Tuam Battn.
 Peter Brennan, Volunteer, Milltown Coy., Tuam Battn.
 Daniel McCormack, Volunteer, " " " "
 Patrick Walsh, " " " "
 John Pat. McCormack, " " " (myself)
 James Moloney, Battn. Comdt., Glenamaddy Battn.
 Martin Ryan, Vice Comdt., Glenamaddy Battn.
 Martin Mannion, Adjt., Glenamaddy Battn.
 Jack Knight, Q/M, Glenamaddy Battn.
 Thomas Mannion, Capt., Dunmore Coy., Glenamaddy Bn.
 Patrick Treacy, Capt. Glenamaddy Coy., " "
 Brian Cuniffe, Capt. Kilkerrin Coy., " "

Of these, Thomas Dunleavy, Thomas Ryan, Patrick McHugh, Thomas Feerick have since died, and Daniel McCormack was so severely wounded in the Civil War that he died of his wounds. Of the remaining fifteen, Thomas Tarmay, Patrick Conway, Timothy Dunleavy, Jack Knight and Brian Cuniffe emigrated to the United States.

In June, 1921, shortly before the Truce, there was another attack on the R.I.C. near the village of Milltown. On this occasion the attack was carried out by the Tuam Battalion Flying Column under the command of Thomas Dunleavy, Column and Battalion Commandant. The first attack on the R.I.C. at Milltown was carried out by members of the Milltown Company without any outside assistance. The Flying Column on the evening of the second attack was at Carrareagh, Milltown, about half a mile from the village, when word was brought by scouts that a patrol of R.I.C. which had left the village were returning thereto from the direction of Kilconly. The Column was rushed to where the Tuam/Milltown road meets the Kilconly/Milltown road about three hundred yards from the village of Milltown. Positions were taken up inside the fence of the road on the Milltown side of the junction. The R.I.C. patrol numbered six as far as I remember. It was about 11 p.m. and dark at the time. When the patrol had turned into the Tuam/Milltown road they were almost immediately in the ambush position. Two of the patrol were killed by the first volley and one wounded. The killed were Sergeant Morrin and Constable Day. Morrin was Irish and a member of the regular R.I.C. Day was a Black and Tan. His remains were taken home to England. We learned afterwards that another member of the patrol named Carter got a hole in his cap from our fire. None of our party was hit.

Carter and the others who were not hit got inside the fence of the road opposite to our positions and eventually made their way to the R.I.C. barrack and safety. We made a few attempts to capture the rifles

of the killed and wounded but we were not successful. The scene of the attack was lighted up by Verey lights. Heavy fire came from the barrack as well as from the R.I.C. men across the road so that we had to withdraw without much delay. We withdrew safely across country by Knock, Milltown, to Russelstown, where I remember we got the blessing of a newly-ordained priest. From Russellstown we went on to the Roscommon border, where we joined forces with the Glenamaddy Battalion Flying Column under the command of Brigade Commandant Patrick Dunleavy and Brigade Staff Officers Thomas Tarmay and Patrick Conway.

The information leading to the two attacks near the village of Milltown was furnished by Company I/O Michael John O'Donnell. I heard Commandant Dunleavy say that he was easily the best Company I/O in the whole battalion. He was often out late at night attending meetings and was never suspected by the R.I.C. of being a member of the Volunteers although his mother's house was only about thirty yards from the R.I.C. barracks with only a garden between. He emigrated to the U.S.A. after the War of Independence.

The two scouts who followed the R.I.C. patrol across country from the time they left the barrack in Milltown were Company Q/M Thomas Donnellan and Volunteer Laurence Sullivan.

Those who took part in the attack, as far as I remember, were:

Thomas Dunleavy, O/C Tuam Battn., in charge;
(Now deceased)
Thomas Nohilly, Adjt. Tuam "
Thomas Ryan, Q/M Tuam Battn. (now deceased)
Patrick McHugh, Capt. Sylane Coy., Tuam Battn.
(now deceased)

Patrick Walsh, Vol. Milltown Coy., Tuam Battn.
 Timothy Dunleavy, Capt. Barnaderg Coy., Tuam Battn.
 (now in U.S.A.)

and Volunteers Martin Slattery,
 Daniel McCormack (now deceased),
 Peter Brennan,
 Peter Burke.
 John Patrick McCormack (myself).

There were also a few other Volunteers from Barnaderg
 Company of the Tuam Battalion but the only one whose
 name I can now remember is Volunteer James Hynes.

Signed: John Patrick McCormack

Date: 14-April 56

Witness: Con Moyrha

(Investigator))

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