

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

BURO STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21

No. W.S. 1,434

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21

STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 1434.

Witness

Paul Mulcahy,
Palmer's Hill,
Cashel,
Co. Tipperary.

Identity.

Captain, D.(Dualla) Company, 2nd Battalion,
3rd Tipperary Brigade.

Subject.

Activities of Dualla Company, Irish Volunteers,
2nd Battalion, 3rd Tipperary Brigade, 1914-1921,
and Battalion Active Service Unit, 1920-1921.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil.

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STATEMENT BY PAUL MULCAHY,

Palmer's Hill, Cashel, Co. Tipperary,

O/C 'D' (Dualla) Company. 2nd Battalion. Tipperary 3rd Bgde.

My connection with the Irish Volunteer movement commenced in the late autumn of 1914, when a company of that organisation was formed in Dualla by the late Pierce McCann of Ballyowen House. I was then 19 years of age and resided with my parents and the other members of my family at Dualla.

The strength of this company was thirty-eight men, and it was comprised mainly of employees on the Ballyowen estate, then owned by the founder of the Volunteer company. Pierce McCann himself was the O/C, and my late brother, Patrick Mulcahy, was 1st Lieutenant, with John Looby as 2nd Lieutenant. The late Patrick O'Donnell was our drill instructor, and in addition to learning foot drill we went on route marches to such places as Boherlan and Dundrum. Instruction was given in the care and cleaning of arms. Scouting was practised, and for target practice we were fortunate to possess two .22 rifles.

During 1915 Colm O'Loughlin, Ernest Blythe and Liam Mellows visited Ballyowen House at different times, and under their direction the company carried out sham attacks and practised night operations. On St. Patrick's Day of 1916 the company marched under arms to Mass at Dualla. At that time, too, prior to Easter Week, 1916, it was part of my duties to carry dispatches from Pierce McCann to Eamon O'Dwyer at Ballagh and to Patrick O'Flynn and D.P. Walsh in Fethard.

On Easter Sunday morning, 1916, there was a general mobilisation of the company under arms. Our arms at the time consisted of eight rifles, thirty shotguns, five revolvers, one thousand rounds of .303 rifle ammunition, some shotgun ammunition and some revolver ammunition. A courier, who, I believe, was a son of Eoin McNeill, arrived at Ballyowen House with a dispatch for Pierce McCann. I was one of a party of ten, including the courier, selected by McCann to act as an armed guard on the house. This guard remained on duty day and night until dismissed at the end of Easter Week.

After the arrival of the courier, Pierce McCann left, and returned again on Easter Monday. A further mobilisation of the company took place on that night, and, as far as I can now recollect, news of the fighting in Dublin had then come to hand. Additional provisions were secured for Ballyowen House, and one thousand rounds of shotgun ammunition were brought out from Dolan's of Cashel. Scouts were put out, and I might say that all measures for the defence of the house were taken. At the end of the week the armed guard was dismissed, and one of my duties then was to assist in the removal and securing of the arms and ammunition.

Shortly afterwards, British cavalry from Cahir Military Barracks raided Ballyowen House and arrested Pierce McCann. R.I.C. men from nearby stations visited the homes of Volunteers and searched for arms, but no other members of the company were arrested at that time. Despite the close attention which the R.I.C. then paid to its members, the company continued to hold its weekly parades and carried on with its normal training during

the remainder of that year of 1916. Towards the end of that year Pierce McCann was released from prison, and his return to Dualla was made the occasion for a great public demonstration of welcome to him.

In 1917 a Sinn Féin club was started in Dualla, and about the same time Irish language classes were organised and held on three nights a week. Accommodation for the Irish classes was provided by Mr. Owen Keevan of Dualla, who kindly lent us a room in his farmhouse. Pierce McCann conducted those classes on two nights each week, and we had the services of an Irish teacher named Hough on the third night. In that year, too, I was elected a delegate to, and with Pierce McCann attended the Irish Volunteer Convention which was held in the Mansion House, Dublin. I was also, during that year, engaged for some time compiling agricultural statistics in the area from Dualla to Kilhills. This latter work I did on instructions from Pierce McCann, and I understand that the information was required by the Sinn Féin executive.

Early in 1918 the Dualla Company became part of the newly organised Cahsel Battalion, which later became the 2nd Battalion of the 3rd Tipperary Brigade. The late Paddy Hogan of Cashel, who had close family connections with Dualla, was appointed Battalion Commandant and my brother, Patrick, for some time before he went to reside in the Clonmel area held the post of Battalion Vice Commandant. It was then that the first election of company officers by secret ballot took place in our company. The election was conducted by the Battalion Commandant, and at it I was elected Company Captain, James Looby elected 1st Lieutenant, and Patrick Nolan, 2nd Lieutenant.

The conscription crisis period in 1918 was a busy time for all of us. The company arms and ammunition were stored in a dump on my father's farm, and I made myself responsible for their care and safety. The company marched to, and did police work at anti-conscription meetings. Raffles and dances were held to raise funds. Guns were collected from local farmers and shotgun cartridges were refilled with buckshot. Pikes were made in the local forge, where I assisted the blacksmith, Bill Delaney, in making them. Battalion Council meetings were frequently held and the scheme of battalion organisation was firmly established. Two years later, on the 18th December, 1920, Bill Delaney, whom I have just mentioned, met his death at the hands of the Black and Tans. Himself and the Company Lieutenant, James Looby, were, while prisoners, shot dead by the Tans at Kilfeacle, and on the following night, December 19th, James Looby's brother, Laurence, was taken from a house and shot dead on the roadside by either the same or another party of Black and Tans.

Towards the end of the year of 1918 our activities centred mainly on securing the return of the Sinn Féin candidate, who was none other than our friend Pierce McCann, in the general election of that year. An armed guard was maintained on his election headquarters, and on polling day the company did duty at the Sinn Féin election rooms and at the polling booths in Cashel. Pierce McCann won this seat by a large majority, but shortly afterwards he was re-arrested by the R.I.C. and within a few months he passed to his eternal reward in Gloucester Prison in England.

In the late autumn of 1919 a convention of Brigade and Battalion Officers of the 3rd Tipperary Brigade was held in Meldrum House, which was situated in my company area. This convention was attended by Seumas Robinson, Seán Treacy and Dan Breen, who were then men much "wanted" by the R.I.C. and the British forces. The security arrangements on that occasion were left in my hands, and units from the Cashel Company assisted my company in providing armed guards and scouts on all approaches to the house while the convention was in session.

About 2 a.m. on a morning towards the end of March, 1920, my home was surrounded and searched by a party of British military and R.I.C. men. They found nothing incriminating, but they placed me under arrest and took me to Tipperary Military Barracks. From Tipperary I was taken by train to Cork and placed in what was then known as Cork No. 10 Detention Prison. Here I met some old cronies, including Paddy Philips of Cashel and Walter Cantwell of Loughcapple, Fethard, who had been arrested the day before.

This No. 10 Prison was in reality a reception more than a detention prison. It accommodated about sixty prisoners and when full to capacity the prisoners were removed elsewhere and their places filled by newly arrested prisoners. Then one morning I found that the only prisoners in this prison were Seán Fitzpatrick, the late Jack O'Meara of Tipperary, and myself. Fitzpatrick and O'Meara were awaiting trial. As prisoners came and went on about six occasions, I concluded that I, too, was being held for trial or for

some special reason, but no charge was preferred against me. Then one night I was one of a party of sixty prisoners taken by lorry to Cobh (then called Queenstown), put on board a gunboat and brought to Crumlin Road Prison in Belfast.

I would say that we were about three or four weeks in Crumlin Road Prison when, with the other political prisoners who were there, we went on hunger-strike against the prison conditions. On the second day of the hunger-strike the same sixty of us as had left Cork together were taken out into the prison yard and handcuffed in pairs. When handcuffed, we were kicked and boxed by both warders and military. One army officer, who wore an eye-shield over one eye, used unprintable language and was particularly prominent in this attack on the prisoners. From Crumlin Road Prison we were taken, still handcuffed, to the Quays. Here we were charged by an Orange mob and a party of Carson's boy scouts in uniform, who flung stones, bolts and nuts at us. We were divided into two parties and put on board two boats which were moored alongside the Quays. We were put into the holds of the boats and next morning we arrived at Pembroke in Wales. The handcuffs were not removed during the night, and the only consideration we received was from the master of the second boat who came aboard ours at Pembroke. Seeing our plight as we, still handcuffed in pairs, tried to climb out of the hold, he called some sailors from his own boat to assist us.

In Pembroke we were put on board a train bound for London - two prisoners and an escort of six soldiers in each carriage - and we arrived at Paddington Station in London at 6 p.m. that evening. The reader can

picture our condition as we left the train at Paddington. We were then three days and three nights without food or drink and had endured the journey from Belfast which I have just described. We lay down on the platform at Paddington Station and were dragged or carried by military to waiting lorries, which conveyed us to Wormwood Scrubbs Prison. Here we continued the hunger-strike until we secured our release. Including the two days in Belfast, the sea and train journey and my time in Wormwood Scrubbs, I was in all sixteen days on hunger-strike, and when I was put on a scales in St. Mary's Hospital, Highgate (where I was taken after my release), I found that I had lost $3\frac{1}{2}$ stone in weight. On my discharge from St. Mary's Hospital, the prison authorities refused to hand over my money and belongings, but these were posted to me at my home address some months later.

On the night of June 4th 1920, when Drangan R.I.C. Barracks was attacked, my company was out in full strength blocking side roads between Moyglass and Dualla. The main road between Moyglass and Dualla was held open as this road was part of the line of retreat from Drangan. The instructions for the blocking of the side roads and for the holding open of the main road were conveyed to me by Seán Hayes of Moyglass (now Senator Hayes) from Paddy Hogan, the Battalion Commandant. I was only a short time back from Wormwood Scrubbs then, and as I was still very weak and ill from the effects of the hunger-strike, James Looby, the Company 1st Lieut., offered to deputise for me and he did the lion's share of the work that night.

On the morning of the 2nd July, 1920, Tommy Donovan, Commandant of the 7th (Drangan) Battalion, came to me in Dualla and told me that Sergeant Tobin of the R.I.C. at Ballinure and six constables had gone on bicycles to Cashel, presumably to draw their pay. With Donovan were Seán Hayes, Seán Walsh, Joseph Ormond and Michael Burke. He asked me to go with them to Newtown Cross, where he proposed to ambush the police on their way back from Cashel. I agreed, and suggested getting four or five others to come, but Donovan considered that the six of us would be quite sufficient. Seán Hayes cycled into Cashel to scout the policemen's movements and Donovan, Hayes, Walsh, Ormond, Burke and I went to Newtown Cross, which is on the main Cashel-Ballinure road. About 3 p.m. Hayes returned with the news that the police party had left Cashel and were on their way back. He had handed over the scouting to two other Volunteers, Paddy Loughlin and Joe Nagle, and the police had made a detour to call at the residence of an ex-R.I.C. man with his pension. Donovan was armed with a rifle and a Peter the Painter. Mick Burke had two revolvers, and the remainder of us were armed with shotguns. The police were armed with revolvers strapped in holsters to their belts. We occupied a position behind a wall at the cross, and it was our intention to call on the R.I.C. men to "halt and put up your hands" and then to disarm them. We did not consider seriously the fact that they might offer resistance.

It was about 4.30 p.m. when the R.I.C. party arrived at the crossroads. We then saw that they were spread out over a distance of about ninety or one hundred yards. One, a ginger-haired Black and Tan, was cycling

about 50 yards in front of Sergeant Tobin and Constable Brady, who were cycling together, and the other four were cycling in pairs at intervals of about twenty yards behind Tobin and Brady. This was a contingency for which we were not prepared, nor had we sufficient men to extend out and cover all the R.I.C. men at the same time.

When the ginger-haired Black and Tan came opposite to my position, I called on him to halt. He jumped from his bicycle and, shouting "don't shoot", put up his hands. I kept him covered. Donovan and Burke immediately climbed out into the road and were fired at by Sergeant Tobin, who, with Constable Brady, had got off their bicycles and were seeking cover in the ditches. Donovan and Burke both fired and Sergeant Tobin was shot dead. Brady was then lying in the ditch beside the dead sergeant. Meanwhile, the other four R.I.C. men had dismounted and got into cover along the sides of the road, but, as far as I can now recollect, they did not at that stage take any part in the action. Donovan disarmed my prisoner and ordered him to walk in front of him towards Constable Brady, who was firing from his position in the ditch. The Black and Tan, however, refused to go. Leaving Constable Brady where he was, Donovan and I moved around by the ditches in an effort to get into a position on the road at the rear of the four R.I.C. men, and as we again approached the road we saw Brady cycling furiously back in the direction of Cashel. We both fired at him and Donovan's second shot wounded him, but he continued to cycle on. Joe Nagle and Paddy Loughlin arrived on the scene, and giving the revolver he had taken from the Black and Tan to Nagle, Donovan told him to cycle after Brady and to shoot him

when he overtook him. Brady fell from his bicycle at Dunphy's publichouse in Dualla, and as a crowd of people had collected around him by the time Joe Nagle arrived there, Joe refrained from carrying out Donovan's order.

Donovan and I came under fire from the four R.I.C. men who had secured good cover at the roadside, and eventually we had to leave them there. We rejoined Walsh, Burke, Hayes and Ormond near the cross, where they still held the Black and Tan a prisoner. After some consultation it was agreed to free the Black and Tan, and leaving Sergeant Tobin's body on the roadside and the four R.I.C. men still under cover, we moved off quickly through the fields. Donovan went back to his own 7th Battalion area, and Paddy Loughlin and I went "on the run".

Later on in the year of 1920 a Battalion Active Service Unit, of which I was a member, was formed. Paddy Hogan, the Battalion Commandant, took charge of this unit. When at full strength, the A.S.U. numbered about fifteen men, some armed with rifles and some with shotguns and revolvers. Ammunition was always in short supply. Ambush positions were occupied at Heaney's gate on the Cashel-Tipperary road and on the Marlhill road near New Inn, but without result. In the former position we waited in vain all day for a patrol of R.I.C. men from Golden who passed that way regularly on certain days. To show that our luck was out, we missed by minutes that morning a party of six British soldiers who went by in a horse-drawn vehicle as we were moving over the brow of a hill to go to the ambush site.

The area of the 2nd Battalion, that is the area around Cashel, Dualla, New Inn and Golden, is almost

all level countryside, interwoven with a network of roads, and this made it impossible for an Active Service Unit to function as a unit within the area; and to avoid the periodic round-ups by the British forces. To counteract this difficulty, the unit frequently broke up into small parties of twos and threes, or threes and fours. This procedure enabled members of the A.S.U. who were company officers to look after affairs in their company areas. Work such as the collection of levies, Volunteer police work, billeting of the Brigade columns, blocking and trenching of roads and assisting at Sinn Féin courts needed constant attention.

In January, 1921, instructions were received from the Brigade H.Q. that all enemy posts in the battalion area were to be sniped by rifle fire on the night of January 21st. The A.S.U. was divided into two sections to carry out this order, one section to snipe Golden R.I.C. Barracks and the other to snipe the barracks at Ballinure. Paddy Hogan, the Battalion Commandant, took charge of the section going to Golden, and five of us, viz. Paddy Loughlin, Bill O'Donnell, Paddy Keane, Martin Quinlan and myself were detailed to go to Ballinure. As Paddy Loughlin was the Battalion Quartermaster, I would say that he was in charge of our party. There was a very strong garrison of R.I.C. men and Black and Tans in Ballinure at the time, and as a precautionary measure I arranged for my own company in Dualla to block the roads around Ballinure on that night. As a further security measure, I placed twenty armed men from the Dualla Company in a position to cover our retreat from Ballinure in the event of pursuit by the garrison. I should also mention that, owing to the scarcity of .303

ammunition we were limited to firing only five shots per man in this sniping attack.

In Ballinure we met, by arrangement, a Cumann na mBan girl named Burke, who told us that there was no police patrol out and that all the police were in the barracks. This was a disappointment to us, for we were hoping to catch with our fire some of the garrison as they entered the barracks. From behind a low cement wall we opened fire at the windows and door of the barracks, and the garrison were certainly on the alert, for they immediately commenced to spray the road with machine-gun fire. They sent up Verey lights and fired some rifle grenades. One grenade fell on a window sill of the barracks, exploded there and blew in the window. Having fired our five rounds per man, we withdrew from the village, but the police maintained their fire from the barracks for, I should say, the best part of an hour afterwards.

It was probably some time after this incident at Ballinure that we (the A.S.U.) went into the 3rd Battalion area and linked up with the A.S.U. of that battalion for a proposed attack on three lorries of British forces which frequently passed between Cashel and Dundrum. Ned O'Reilly and the late Denis Sadlier were in charge of the joint A.S.U.s. I recollect one occasion while there when three of us had a miraculous escape from capture. We had been in an ambush position near Ballinahinch from early morning, and as the day wore on and no sign of the lorries coming - it was long past their normal time - Ned O'Reilly withdrew the 3rd Battalion A.S.U. and they moved off towards New Inn.

Two of our men, Paddy Keane and Pake Gorman, went to a nearby shop to purchase cigarettes. As they were slow in returning I went to the shop to hurry them up. Whilst we were in the shop a girl shouted, "Here are the lorries". We rushed out the back and took the only shelter we could find, inside a small wooden coal shed. The lorries stopped at the door, the military searched the shop and house, and, demanding to know where the "Shinners" were, assaulted the shop assistant. They then turned their attention to the yard, and from the coal shed we could see them as they searched some of the other outhouses. They had not got as far as the coal house when their attention was attracted by a commotion outside on the road. They rushed out on to the road without searching further. The commotion on the road was due to the arrival of a cyclist, who, when halted and questioned, could not produce a permit for his bicycle. They took him a prisoner and drove away with him.

On another occasion an ambush position was being prepared at Camas Bridge for these same three lorries when they passed, much earlier than expected. Ned O'Reilly and Sadlier had taken over a house and the barricade was being put together at the time they arrived. I remember seeing a man named Wallis, who was a process-server in Cashel, in the lorries with them that morning. This man Wallis was subsequently shot as a spy.

The final incident to which I will refer relates to the capture and execution of a spy named Cummins, at whose execution I was present. Cummins was employed as a motor driver at Armtouches, Noan, Ballinure.

I had known him for some time but had no evidence that he was a spy. The Brigade and Battalion Staffs had apparently information about him of which I was not, or am not now aware. Paddy Byrne, the then Battalion Quartermaster, was in charge of the party sent to arrest him, and I understand that the decision to execute him had already been made. Cummins was taken by surprise in broad daylight in a stable on his employer's farm. As far as I am aware, he made no effort to resist nor did he protest in any way. We took him over the hill to Dualla, and there Byrne received a dispatch, from whom I do not know, instructing him to have Cummins executed and to leave his body on the road between the two publichouses in Dualla.

In Dualla, Byrne asked him if he wished to see a priest or to make an Act of Contrition, and he replied, "No, I am not a Catholic". Later before his execution Byrne again asked him if he wished to see a clergyman or if he had any final request to make, and he replied, "No". In my presence, at any rate, there were no other conversations with him. The firing party was then arranged, and after the execution a label "spy" was placed on the body, which was left on the roadside. This incident took place on July 8th 1921.

Signed:

Paul Mulcahy

Date:

15th June 1956

Witness:

J. Grace
(Investigator).

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