

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

BURO STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21

No. W.S. 1,532

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 1532.....

Witness

Daniel Harrington,
Coolavokig,
Lissacresig,
Macroom,
Co. Cork.

Identity.

Battalion Q/M.

Subject.

Activities of Ballyvourney Company,
I. Vols., Co. Cork, 1915-1921.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil.

File No S.2858.....

Form B.S.M. 2

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STATEMENT BY DANIEL HARRINGTON,

Coolavokig, Lissacresig, Macroom, Co. Cork.

I was born in Coolavokig, Lissacresig, Macroom, on the 29th June, 1891. I first went to the local national school in Coolavokig, and later attended a national school in Reenaree until I was sixteen years of age.

A company of the Irish National Volunteers was formed in Kilnamartyra early in 1915, which I joined with the other young men of the area. The strength of the company was about fifty men. The officer in charge or company captain was Henry A. Browne, and a British soldier named John Browne was drill instructor. John Browne was serving in the British army at the time but happened to be home on leave. The company lasted for only one month, when it ceased to exist. Later, in the harvest of 1915, a company of the Irish Volunteers was formed in the village of Ballyvourney, near which I was living at the time. On the occasion Terence MacSwiney, Seán Nolan and a John Lynch from Macroom addressed a public meeting in the village and appealed to the young men of the area to join the Volunteer movement. After the meeting about fifteen young men, including myself, came forward and handed in our names, after which we were marched around the village and drilled by Seán Nolan for about an hour. No officers were appointed. A fortnight later the three organisers came again and again drilled us for about two hours. By early 1916 more Volunteers had joined our company and two further companies had been formed in Kilnamartra and Ballingeary. No officers had been appointed for either of the three companies, but Patrick O'Sullivan, now Dr. O'Sullivan, was in charge of the three areas. Our arms consisted of a few shotguns and one .22 rifle.

Coming up to Easter Week, 1916, we heard rumours that a rebellion was pending, but it had started before we knew of it in Ballyvourney, although the adjoining company of Killnamartra went to Carriganima where they mobilised on Easter Sunday morning and awaited orders. They remained there on the nights of Sunday and Monday and returned to their own area on Tuesday morning. They had mobilised to receive a supply of arms which were to be collected by Limerick Volunteers from Kerry Volunteers in Co. Limerick. The arms expected were those brought by Roger Casement in the arms ship sunk off the coast of Kerry some days prior to Easter Sunday.

Things were very quiet for the remainder of that year, but early in 1917 we began to re-assemble again when several new Volunteers joined. About the same time new companies were formed or reorganised in the area. Our company soon numbered about forty men. Pat O'Sullivan, Ballyvourney, became Company Captain, and Patrick Lynch, 1st Lieutenant.

After the general release in the summer of 1917, a Battalion Council was appointed for the area. To the best of my knowledge, Pat O'Sullivan became Battalion O/C, then Paddy O'Sullivan, Vice O/C. Cornelius Sheehan became Adjutant and I became Q/M. The companies comprising the battalion were: 'A', Killnamartra, 'B', Ballyvourney, 'C', Coolea, 'D', Ballingeary, and 'E', Inchegeela. New officers were appointed for my company area - Ballyvourney. They were: Pat Lynch, Captain; Dan O'Sullivan, 1st Lieutenant; John Sheehan, 2nd Lieutenant. Routine drilling continued in each company area. Our arms were a few revolvers and a good number of shotguns. We also managed to obtain one .22 B.S.A. rifle.

During the conscription period of 1918 there was an influx of Volunteers into each of the five companies which increased our battalion strength to about 350. After the conscription scare all of the new Volunteers remained loyal and remained in their respective companies. Drilling was intensified and all arms - mostly shotguns - were collected.

In July, 1918, two R.I.C. men travelling by side-car from Inchegeela to Ballyvourney to reinforce the R.I.C. there, were held up by Dan McSweeney of 'B' Company, James Moynihan of 'C' Company, Jack Lynch and Tadhg Twomey of 'D' Company and another man at the Mouth of the Glen and disarmed of two rifles and two revolvers, after which their side-car was thrown over a precipice. An aeriocht had been advertised for that day in Ballyvourney and had been proclaimed by the R.I.C. After this incident the R.I.C. became very active and raided and searched several houses in the area.

With other Volunteers I took part in the election campaign at the end of the year in support of the Sinn Féin candidate. Routine drilling was continued. Further shotguns were collected and one rifle and a few revolvers were purchased from Brigade H.Q. in Cork out of our own funds.

The year 1919 saw a repetition of the drilling carried out in 1918. During this year, Patrick Lynch, John O'Sullivan, John Riordan, Jim Lehane, Mick Leahy, myself and brother, John, Harrington, and others procured two horses and carts and proceeded to Macroom Castle which was garrisoned by the military. Our intention was to remove one of two cannon mounted outside the castle which, we thought, would enable us to blow up all R.I.C. barracks in our area. Using

ropes and main strength for a considerable time, we failed to dislodge the cannon and were greatly disappointed at the time. Looking back on this incident later, we had many a laugh at such a silly idea.

In January, 1920, with Pat O'Sullivan in charge, we attacked Inchegeela R.I.C. Barracks. At least fifty men, drawn from each company in the battalion, took part in the actual attack. We were armed with shotguns. One man had the rifle which we had purchased from H.Q. in Cork. The barracks stood in its own ground, the nearest house being fifteen yards away - which we occupied - while the rest of the attacking party surrounded the building on all sides. It had a garrison of a Sergeant and four constables. At a given signal the garrison was called on to surrender. They refused and with that the attack started. One of the garrison happened to be in a nearby pub and ran for the barracks when he heard the shooting. As he did so he fell wounded in the street and was taken back to the pub, where he remained. The R.I.C. within immediately replied to our fire. The attack lasted from 9 p.m. to 5 a.m., when we ran out of ammunition, after which we withdrew. On the same night Carrigadrohid and Carrigtwohill R.I.C. barracks, also in Cork No. 1 Brigade area, were also attacked. In Carrigadrohid the barracks was burned down but the arms of the garrison were not captured. In Carrigtwohill, however, the attacking party captured all arms and burned down the barracks. As we had failed to take the barracks in Inchegeela, we were reprimanded by the Brigade Staff, some of whom remarked that they would come out and take it themselves.

On the 7th March, 1920, members of the Brigade Staff, including Mick Murphy, Dan Donovan (known as Sando), Seán Lucey and others, with members of the City Battalion arrived in the area for the purpose of attacking Inchegeela again. They were met by at least 70 men of this or the Ballyvourney Battalion. I had previously reported to the Brigade Staff that this barracks was surrounded by barbed wire entanglements for a depth of ten yards, that the windows all had steel shutters and that the gable ends of the building had loop holes, but the Brigade Staff were dubious about my report and thought we had "cold feet". They had come fully prepared for a long attack. They had rifles and gun cotton prepared in a rack together with a battery. They had intended to place the gun cotton against the gable ends with which they intended to blow down the walls with the use of the battery. However, when the Brigade Staff saw the position for themselves they decided not to attack.

On the 10th March, James Moynihan, Captain of 'C' Company, and Dan O'Sullivan, 1st Lieutenant of 'B' Company, held up an R.I.C. Sergeant named Ryan in Rath and seized his revolver, after which they gave him a beating up for his activity in the area.

On the night of the 4th April, with members of 'B' Company I burned down Ballyvourney Courthouse and an old military barracks which had been evacuated several years before. During the operation the R.I.C. barracks was surrounded by members of the local company armed with shotguns. The R.I.C. never ventured out. In the burning, the Battalion O/C, Pat O'Sullivan, and John and Michael Lucey - two brothers - were severely burned with exploding petrol fumes and were very lucky to escape with their lives.

A short time later we again attempted to take Inchegeela Barracks by drugging the members of the garrison. On this occasion, Pat O'Sullivan, the Battalion O/C, agreed to a suggestion of Con Murphy to try and drug the garrison. This attempt took place on the 13th June. Con Murphy, an I.R.A. man, was rather friendly with one of the R.I.C. stationed in the barracks. He procured a bottle of poteen. A doctor attached to the Volunteers supplied a drug which was mixed with the poteen. When the mixture was prepared Murphy approached the barracks and was admitted. He gave a drop of the mixture to his pal inside. The pal took a drop and became violently sick. The others, suspecting something, refused to touch it. Murphy came out to us and told us what had happened. There were nine of us armed with revolvers, with Pat O'Sullivan in charge, waiting to rush in as soon as Murphy gave us the word that the garrison had been put to sleep. Needless to say, we did not attempt it when we heard what had happened.

Members of Inchegeela Company had approached the Sergeant in charge of Inchegeela Barracks to resign on several occasions but he refused. On a Sunday evening, the 20th June, three members of the company ambushed the Sergeant, whose name was Monsell, and shot him dead. It subsequently transpired that Sergeant Monsell had actually handed in his resignation on the Saturday before he was shot. The garrison was evacuated a couple of days later to Macroom. The local company burned down the building a couple of days later. The same company, about the same time, burned down Glebe House which at one time had been occupied by the military. Glebe House was a fine old mansion standing in its own grounds.

Early in the month of July, at a meeting of the Battalion Staff, it was decided to attack a military lorry which travelled fairly regularly between Ballyvourney and Macroom. The lorry appears to have been a supply lorry and carried several soldiers. We selected the ambush position at Gattabawn, in the townland of Coolabokag. The men were selected from 'A', 'B' and 'C' Companies to the number of thirty. Pat O'Sullivan, Battalion O/C, was in charge. I was armed with the rifle we had bought from our H.Q. in Cork. Michael Sullivan, an ex-British soldier, had one of the rifles captured from the two R.I.C. men at the Mouth of the Glen ambush on the 7th July, 1918. The others had shotguns. The attacking party, after being evenly divided, took up ambush positions on high ground overlooking the road. We had been waiting three days for the expected lorry before it turned up. We went to our homes each night, returning to our positions each morning. During the period

The driver of the lorry was hit immediately. The lorry swerved to the right, striking the northern bank alongside the road, then to the left where it mounted a low fence on the other side and continued for a distance of 50 yards with its two left wheels running on the fence. Just as it reached a telegraph pole it came back on the road and continued at speed for a distance of a quarter of a mile around a bend. I continued to fire until it had gone out of sight around the bend. We came out on to the road and observed a stream of petrol, which showed that the petrol tank had been pierced by a shot. We followed the petrol trail for about a mile and then took to a by-road until we came upon the lorry which had pulled up for want of petrol about a quarter of a mile from the village of Ballyvourney. The military had got out and walked to Ballyvourney, taking their wounded with them. They left one dead man in the lorry behind them. He was Major General Eyrie, who had been brought to Ireland specially from Palestine. He was referred to in the papers a few days later as an experienced guerilla fighter. Several of the military had been badly wounded. I should have mentioned that except for one or two R.I.C. men, the military had by this time taken over Ballyvourney R.I.C. Barracks.

After the military had reported their experience in the barracks, their comrades came out in force on foot and raided and searched the area. We had returned to our homes in our own areas. Expecting reprisals that night in Ballyvourney, we occupied the village and took up positions armed with shotguns. The barracks was situated outside the village between Ballyvourney and Ballymackerry. We stood to all night but nothing happened.

A fortnight later, three lorry loads of military arrived in Ballyvourney from Cork City, returning on a Sunday towards Macroom and Cork, leaving one of the lorries on the roadside about a mile and a half from Ballyvourney apparently abandoned. At about 3 p.m. several children congregated in the vicinity of the lorry. At the time we were contemplating the possibility of burning it, and Bill Hegarty, Company Q/M of "B" Company, approached the children in the company of Dan Healy, a Volunteer, to send them away. Healy lifted up the canvas covering the lorry and saw that it was full of soldiers. The soldiers opened fire and shot Hegarty, who dropped to the ground. One of the soldiers approached him as he lay there and, pointing the rifle to his face, put a bullet through his head. A civilian named Michael Lynch, who came to his door when he heard the shooting, was also shot dead. Lynch happened to have two brothers in the R.I.C. at the time. The children and youths around the lorry had taken cover in the dykes on the side of the road.

Later in the month of July, the Ballingeary Company were successful in capturing fourteen rifles and two lorry loads of military stores. It appears that the two lorries, carrying petrol, paint and military equipment, were on their way from Cork City to Bantry. When about two miles west of Ballingeary, one of the lorries, for some unknown reason, pulled into the side of the road where it sank in the soft earth. The second proceeded for a further mile, where it also pulled in to the side of the road and bogged down. As they did so, sentries were placed on each, after which a patrol of military marched up and down between the two. The local company in Ballingeary took action immediately. They mobilised and armed themselves with shotguns and advanced towards the lorry nearest to Bantry. They waited

until the patrol reached the lorry. The Company Captain, John C. Cronin, gave the order "hands up". The soldiers were about to shoot, but when they saw the number of armed I.R.A. they put up their hands and surrendered their arms. Cronin left a guard on his prisoners while he brought his company around some hills to lorry No. 1, where he also disarmed the soldiers on guard. Having captured fourteen rifles, the Volunteers seized a quantity of petrol and other materials, after which they set fire to the two lorries. The fourteen soldiers who had been disarmed were then marched into Ballingearry village, where they were entertained to tea, after which they were told to march into Macroom. This was one of the easiest captures in the brigade area.

About the end of July, a military patrol of three lorries arrived in the area where the fourteen soldiers had been disarmed, and shot dead Christy Lucey, an I.R.A. man from Cork City who was staying with friends in the neighbourhood. It appears that when he was warned of the approach of the military, he ran out through the back door of his friend's house and had almost escaped when he was picked off at a distance of nearly a mile.

Patrick Lynch, Company Captain of 'B' Company, and members of his company received information that a number of bicycles had been received by the military in Ballyvourney, early in August for the use of the garrison in patrolling the area and for the protection of military convoys taking food supplies to the local barracks. On the 17th August, a military cycle patrol from the barracks accompanied a military lorry which had delivered supplies there, for a distance of about three miles along the road towards Clondrohid. On their return journey, Pat O'Sullivan, Battalion O/C,

Paddy O'Sullivan, Vice O/C, my brother, John Harrington, Battalion Engineer, Patrick Lynch, Captain of 'B' Company, James Moynihan, Captain of 'C' Company, with members of 'A', 'B' and 'C' Companies, while armed with shotguns and revolvers, ambushed the patrol at a place called Knockanure, one and a half miles from the village of Ballyvourney. In the first volley fired by the attacking party, several soldiers were wounded, while the officer in charge, a Lieut. Sharman, was shot dead. The fight lasted for about half an hour, after which the military surrendered. Pat O'Sullivan and his men came out on the road and took the surrender and captured eleven rifles, one revolver, twelve cycles, over 600 rounds of .303 ammunition and several rounds of revolver ammunition. The I.R.A. suffered no casualties.

Later, in about the month of October, the barracks in Ballyvourney was evacuated. A night or two later, the local company, in charge of Paddy Riordan, with the help of members of 'C' Company, in charge of James Moynihan, were in the act of sprinkling petrol on the barracks to set it on fire, when a sentry which they had placed outside saw two military lorries approach. The sentry immediately opened fire on the approaching lorries. The lorries put up speed and drove past the barracks. The burning of the barracks was postponed after this incident until the following night.

In the month of November a convoy of eight lorries of military, R.I.C. and Tans arrived in the village of Ballyvourney and rounded up every man in the village, shooting at random all the time. In the meantime they placed tins of petrol along the village street preparatory to burning down the village. While this was happening, a group of Tans called to the house of the local blacksmith, whose name was Sullivan. Here they arrested a man named Lehane, a civilian.

When the Tans had ascertained his name, they took him into a by-road where they riddled his body with bullets. Lehane was found later with his pipe in one hand and a penknife in the other. He had been in the act of filling his pipe when they arrested him. We had a very good I.R.A. man of the same name in the local company. The military officer in charge, hearing the shots in the by-road, immediately ordered the tins of petrol to be collected, after which the raiding lorries hurriedly left. It was assumed that he was under the impression that it was the I.R.A. who had fired the shots, whereas the shots were fired by his own men when they murdered Lehane. From then until after Christmas, 1920, things were quiet.

Early in 1921, the Brigade Staff formed a Brigade Flying Column. The column was made up of about forty men, fourteen of whom were Cork City men. Brigadier Seán Hegarty was in charge, while Dan Donovan (Sando) was 2nd in command. They opened a training camp at Ullans in our battalion area which lasted three weeks. During the period numbers of each of the five companies in our battalion attended. "D" Company had ten men there. We had rifle practice, such as aiming at fixed targets and practice in the use of the revolver. We had not enough ammunition to practise actual shooting.

When the course was over we proceeded to a place named Coolnacaragh, where we were joined by a Battalion Flying Column of about twenty men from Macroom or the 7th Battalion. In all we numbered 60 men and had between us two machine-guns, sixty rifles, a number of revolvers and bombs. A shotgun section of about 20 men also joined us. We took up positions in extended formation for about quarter of a mile

on each side of the road and waited for anything that came along. It was early February and we waited for a week before anything happened. Each night we went to local billets and each morning resumed our allocated positions. We were getting impatient when the enemy would not show up, so Seán Hegarty and Dan Donovan (Sando) conceived the idea of sending a man into Macroom to let the enemy know we were waiting for them. They selected an I.R.A. man named Collins who had a brother killed in France fighting with the British forces. When Collins reached Macroom he had a couple of drinks and feigned drunkenness, while he let the military and Tans know that the I.R.A. were located at Coolnacaragh and were waiting to ambush them.

A short time later, seven or eight lorry loads of military, including a couple of armoured cars and three or four small motor cars, ventured out of Macroom and Cork military barracks. Cork was twenty-four miles from Macroom. They approached our positions with caution. We were six miles from Macroom or thirty miles from Cork City and one and a half miles from the village of Ballyvourney. Our scouts on high ground warned us of their approach. They were approaching at a crawl. The first four lorries just came into the ambush position, where the occupants dismounted and proceeded across a field towards ground above our positions. As they did so, the shotgun men opened fire on them, causing them to retreat back to the road. In the meantime, an armoured car, accompanied by one of the small cars, came halfway into the ambush position proper. They were fired on by one of the men - Hugh Sullivan of "C" Company, an ex-British soldier - in charge of one of ~~the~~ machine-guns. The little car was spun round on the road with the burst of machine-gun fire. It eventually

straightened up and got away. By now all of the lorries had approached the eastern end of the ambush position. The occupants had dismounted and had taken cover in the dykes alongside and under the shelter of high protruding rocks on the roadside. I was in charge of the section overhead, but we could not see the enemy below. Our men on the opposite side - the men of the Macroom Battalion - however, got them and moved them down.

With my section situated as we were, we had no opportunity to attack. Just then we got word from the O/C to get back to higher ground and work our way around to the east of the military and Black and Tans. This we succeeded in doing. While we were on the higher ground, we observed a number of the enemy taking cover in a labourer's cottage, from where they opened fire on us on the height. We, the main attacking section, replied to their fire. It was the first time the main attacking party had got a chance of firing on the enemy. By this time one of the lorries and one of the small cars had returned to Macroom for reinforcements. The fight had been in progress for a couple of hours and by now reinforcements were on their way from Macroom, Cork City, Bandon, Bantry, Millstreet and Killarney. We got the order to retreat across a hill to the back of us, across the Cloonadrohid road, to Ullans, from there to Kappoch and on to Cloonacloha. About thirty-five of the attacking party arrived in Cloonacloha. Some of the Macroom men retreated south to Kilnamartra.

While most of our group were having a meal in a house situated away down in a hollow in Coolnacloha, with four others - Pat O'Sullivan, Battalion O/C 8th Battalion, and his brother ^{nick,} Paddy O'Sullivan, Vice O/C, Patrick Lynch and

Hugh Sullivan, the machine-gunner - I was having a meal in a house situated on a by-road off the main road. We discussed the possibility of the enemy following us up and decided that the thirty men having the meal down in the hollow were in a death trap if the enemy approached. Pat O'Sullivan, the Battalion O/C, left us immediately and went down to the men to warn them to get out. He had only just left us when we got word that three lorries of military - which, we learned, had come from Tralee - were advancing towards us on the main or top road. A plane which had been circling overhead earlier had apparently signalled the presence of our men in the hollow. The lorries continued and when within a few hundred yards of the house where the four of us were situated, they halted. The military dismounted and, instead of advancing into the hollow, proceeded to advance in open formation uphill across a rough meadow towards the house where we were located. We spread out and opened fire on the advancing troops. In the meantime, Seán Hegarty, the Brigade O/C, who was with the men in the hollow, got them into position and engaged the enemy from his position. We both fought a rearguard action, which enabled all of the column to get away. We retreated up the side of a mountain, where we were joined by the main body later. It was now dark. We struck directly north across mountain and bog to Cleadagh in Co. Kerry. We had only one casualty; one of our men had been wounded in the fleshy part of his leg. The enemy had lost several dead and wounded. We never knew the exact number. After nightfall at least thirty corpses were shipped in coffins from the quays in Cork City back to England. One of those killed was a Major General Grant.

Soon after the Coolnacarahg ambush, a Divisional H.Q. was formed and set up in 'C' Company area. It was in the month of April. This necessitated a constant guard by this and adjoining companies. Liam Lynch was appointed Divisional O/C. Our column had been disbanded by then. In the month of June a big round-up by military, Tans, Auxiliaries and R.I.C., numbering about 30,000 took place in the area. They had been drawn from every barracks in Counties Cork and Kerry.

In the month of June, on a Sunday morning, 'A' Company, in charge of Pat O'Sullivan, O/C, and Paddy O'Sullivan, Vice O/C, carried out an attack on a convoy of six or seven lorries of Black and Tans and military at Knocksahering. Using rifles, they had taken up a position behind a fence on the roadside when the lorries came along. The attack opened as the lorries drove through the position. The enemy replied to their fire but the lorries continued on their way. That evening a plane circled the area trying to spot the attackers. The rifles used were those belonging to the column before it was disbanded. From then to the Truce there were few major activities. I have not mentioned several minor incidents which took place in the various company areas and will leave those to the officers in charge of the companies concerned to relate them for themselves.

Signed: Dan Hawington
Date: Nov 15th 1966

Witness: John J. A. O'Leary
(Investigator).

