

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
BURO STAIRÉ MILITIA 1913-21
NO. W.S. 1,662

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 1662

Witness

John O'Mahoney
Lisarda P.O.,
Co. Cork

Identity.

Q.M. Kilmurray Company, Macroom Battalion,
Cork I Brigade, I.R.A.

Subject.

Ki;murray Coy. Irish Volunteers, Co. Cork
1917-21

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil

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STATEMENT BY JOHN O'MAHONEY,

Lisarda P.O., Co. Cork.

I was born at Ballymichael, Lisarda, on June 3rd 1888. I was educated at Kilmurray national school until I was about fourteen years of age.

There was a unit of the Irish Volunteers in Kilmurray prior to Easter 1916. This company was organised by Tomás MacCurtain and Terence MacSwiney who addressed a meeting at Bealnablath in November 1915. Local men prominent in the organisation of the unit were John T. Murphy, Matt. Murphy, Denis J. Long and Tom Neville. The company was divided into two sections, Dooniskey and Bealnablath. The strength of each section was about twenty. The officers of the sections were Denis J. Long, Bealnablath, and Tom Neville, Dooniskey. About twenty members of this company went to Carriganima and Macroom on Easter Sunday 1916. I was not a member of the company at this time.

After Easter Week 1916, John T. Murphy and Tom Neville were arrested. The latter was released after about a month, but John T. Murphy was detained and sent to Frongoch internment camp from which he was released at the general release.

I joined Kilmurray company of the Irish Volunteers in April 1917. Prominent in the work of reorganisation at this time were John T. Murphy, Denis J. Long, Patrick O'Leary, Patrick Sheehan, Tom Powell, John O'Mahoney (witness). The strength of the company was about

seventy. The company was a unit of Macroom Battalion. The companies in this battalion at the time were, I think: Macroom, Kilmurray, Clondrohid, Toames, Kilmichael, Ballinagree, Coachford, Rusheen, Kilnamartyra, Ballinageary and Ballyvourney. The officers of the Macroom battalion were, as far as I can recollect:-

O/C - Dan Corkerry
Vice O/C - Jack Lynch
Adjutant - Charlie Browne.
Q.M. - Christy Hartnett.

The officers of Kilmurray Company were:-

O/C - Patrick O'Leary
1st Lieut. - John O'Connell, Poulanargid.
2nd Lieut. - Denis J. Long.
Adjutant - Patrick Sheehan.
Q.M. - Mick Galvin.

The company was divided into four sections, the relative section commanders being David Healy, Paddy Kelleher, Jerome O'Sullivan and John O'Mahoney (witness).

The only type of training carried out in the early stages was close order foot drill and route marches to neighbouring areas for organising purposes. Amongst the areas in which our unit (Kilmurray) helped to establish units of the Irish Volunteers were, Farnanes, Coppeen, Castletown, —Kenneigh. When visiting the areas on these organising trips, our principal speaker was John T. Murphy.

About this time, all Volunteers helped in the

organisation of Sinn Féin clubs in the area. The members of these clubs were mostly Volunteers or members of their families. The Chairman of Kilmurray Sinn Féin club was Daniel Murphy, and the Secretary was John T. Murphy.

The arms held by the company were of a mixed variety. We had about twenty shotguns, two Sneyder rifles and four or five small revolvers. We had a small supply of ammunition for each type of weapon.

Training and organising continued throughout 1917. By early 1918, when conscription was threatened by the British, the strength of the company (Kilmurray) had grown to about 150. It was now the largest company in Macroom battalion, and was being visited regularly by instructors from Cork city, including Terry MacSwiney and Pat Higgins. There was no change in the officers of the company at this time.

We were now engaged in normal training as well as in organising the general public in the fight against conscription. Selected men were engaged in making canister bombs, black powder, refilling cartridges with buckshot and suchlike activities. A large supply of pike-heads were also made in a forge at Crookstown, and were distributed throughout the company area. All available arms in the area were collected. We now had about forty shotguns, with a small supply of cartridges for each. In addition, we had the Sneyder rifles and small arms, referred to previously. There was no change in the strength of Kilmurray company when the threat of conscription had passed.

During 1918 several aerideachta were organised

in the district, mainly by members of the Volunteers. The majority of these gatherings were proclaimed by the British, and were held in defiance of their armed forces on many occasions.

During the summer of 1918, the Volunteer organisation having increased considerably in strength, a new battalion, based on Ballyvourney, was established and the companies at the western end of Macroom battalion formed the basis for their new unit. Shortly after its establishment, a party drawn from a number of companies in the battalion (Ballyvourney) attacked a patrol of R.I.C. in the area. As a result of this attack, the British imposed martial law in the Macroom district, including the area included in Ballyvourney battalion. There was now more activity by enemy military and police forces. Raids on the homes of all known or suspected members of the Volunteers were a daily or, more often, a nightly occurrence. This increased activity by the enemy only spurred us on to greater endeavour. Training was intensified, but was now mainly engaged in under cover, and continued throughout the remainder of 1918.

In December 1918, a general election for members of the British House of Parliament was held throughout Ireland. With the exception of a few constituencies in the north-eastern section, Trinity College in Dublin, and Waterford city, nearly all the Sinn Féin candidates were returned, unopposed. Beyond taking part in public meetings being held to organise Sinn Féin in the area, we had no activities in connection with this election, as the Sinn Féin candidate - Terence MacSwiney, later to die on hunger-strike in

Brixton prison while O/C, Cork Brigade, I.R.A., and Lord Mayor of Cork - was returned unopposed. A member of the Kilmurray company, John T. Murphy, was Director of Elections for the constituency (Mid Cork).

Following the general election in December 1918, Dáil Éireann was convened in Dublin, and a government was established to rule Ireland. It was the government of the Irish Republic. When a Minister for Defence had been appointed by Dáil Éireann, the Volunteers were placed under the control of his Ministry and became officially the Irish Republican Army - for short, I.R.A.

Cork Brigade of the Volunteers, which included the whole of the county, was divided about this time into three brigades. Our battalion (Macroon) was now a unit of the new Cork I. Brigade which embraced the area of Cork city, mid and east Cork. Tomás MacCurtain was O/C, but I am not sure who the other brigade officers were.

During 1919, training became more advanced. Battalion manoeuvres were held at week-ends, and men were trained to move across country, making the best possible use of cover. Selected men in each company were trained as scouts, signallers and despatch riders. As 1919 advanced, several raids for arms were carried out in the Kilmurray area, as well as throughout the brigade. Some of the houses raided in the home area were:-

<u>Houses</u>	<u>Arms Seized</u>
Warrencourt.	1 Peter the Painter and a supply of ammunition.
Fuller's, Kilconly.	1 double barrel shotgun and cartridges.
Horan's, Farnanes.	1 single barrel shotgun and cartridges.

<u>Houses</u>	<u>Arms Seized</u>
Cotter's, Curraclogh.	1 shotgun 1 Snyder rifle 1 revolver - and a supply of ammunition for each.
Lucey's, Canavee.	1 shotgun and ammunition.
Finnegan's, Corragh.	1 revolver.

These raids and several others were carried out by several men from the Kilmurray company, including amongst others: Patrick Sheehan, Jack O'Connell, Tom Powell, Michael Galvin, Jeremiah O'Mahoney, Denis O'Mahoney, Denis J. Long, Denis D. Long, Con Murphy, Tadhg Murphy, Matt Murphy, Dan O'Leary, Denis O'Keefe, Patrick O'Leary and John O'Mahoney (witness).

When Daíl Éireann floated its first loan in the summer of 1919, selected members of the company were engaged in organising and collecting for the loan. The prime movers in this work were: Timothy Howard, Crookstown, Patrick Long, Pullerick, and John T. Murphy, Crossmahon.

Intensive training continued, and all members of the I.R.A. were becoming more military minded. Arms were becoming more plentiful, and musketry training, with .22 rifles, was carried out at regular intervals for each section of the company (Kilmurray). Men were regularly engaged at this time on the manufacture of canister bombs and buckshot. The bombs were made by filling 1-lb. cocoa or similar size tins with scrap and concrete, fitting a charge of gelignite with detonator and fuse into the centre of the tin and allowing the fuse to protrude through a hole in the cover which was

held in position by bolts set in the concrete filling. The buckshot was made by pouring white-hot lead - heated over the kitchen fires in many homes throughout the company area - into moulds usually made to make about a half a dozen slugs at a time.

The first major activity in the area took place on the night of January 3rd, 1920, when the local R.I.C. barracks (Kilmurray) was attacked by a party drawn from several companies in the Macroom battalion. The Battalion O/C, Dan Corkery, was in charge of this operation. Four members of Kilmurray company took part in this engagement, viz.: Patrick O'Leary, O/C, Denis O'Mahony, Matt Murphy and Dan Cotter. I did not take part in the attack which was called off, after about an hour, as the attempt to force an entrance through the door of the barrack failed. It was anticipated that the bombs thrown at the door would make a breach, but they did not do so.

The Company O/C, Patrick O'Leary, and 2nd Lieutenant, Denis J. Long, were arrested in March 1920. They were removed to Cork, and later to Wormwood Scrubbs in London. They were detained there for some weeks before being released after a hunger-strike lasting twenty-two days. Following these arrests, the officers of the Kilmurray company became:-

O/C - Jack O'Connell.

1st Lieut.- Denis O'Mahoney.

2nd Lieut.- (I cannot recollect.)

When the general order for the destruction of evacuated enemy posts at Easter 1920 was received, several men from the Kilmurray company took part in the destruction of Farnanes R.I.C. barrack. The Battalion

Adjutant, Charlie Browne was in charge. The building was destroyed by demolishing the roof as it was not feasible to set the place on fire, due to the fact that an adjoining house was occupied. Amongst the men from the company who took part were William Powell, Denis O'Mahoney, Jeremiah O'Mahoney and Joseph Murphy.

The R.I.C. barracks at Kilmurray was evacuated by the garrison on the morning of June 7th, 1920. It was burned that evening by a party consisting of the majority of the members of the company. The operation was carried out under Jack O'Connell, O/C, Kilmurray Company.

When Carrigadrohid R.I.C. barracks was attacked on the night of June 9th, 1920, every available man in Kilmurray company was engaged in the blocking of all roads in the area leading from Ballincollig and Bandon and in holding outpost positions. The men holding the outpost positions were armed with shotguns. About five men from the company took part in the actual attack on the enemy post. As far as I can recollect, these men were William Powell, Con Murphy, Denis P. Long, Dan Murphy, Dan O'Leary. In addition, the paraffin oil used in the attempt to set fire to the building was commandeered in Kilmurray company area by members of the unit, in charge of Dick Browne, a member of the Macroom Battalion Staff. On the occasion of this attack, I took part in the blocking of the Bandon road by felling eighteen trees. When the road had been blocked, I remained on outpost duty at States Cross, about 500 yards from Crookstown, where the Bandon road joins the Crookstown-Cork road. I was accompanied by about six others. We were all armed with shotguns. We remained in our positions until about 4 a.m. when the attack was called

off. I then returned home.

Two members of the company, Patrick O'Leary and Denis J. Long, who were prisoners in Wormwood Scrubbs, were elected to membership of Macroom Rural District Council at the Local Government elections in June 1920. Another member, John T. Murphy, was elected to the Cork County Council.

About this time, the men from the Bandon battalion, Cork III Brigade, carried out a raid on the mail train at Kinsale Junction. Amongst the correspondence captured was a report furnished by the sergeant i/c (Sergeant Peter Byrne) covering the attack on Kilmurray R.I.C. post in January, 1920. The report gave a detailed account of the attack. It stated that the strength of the attacking party was about four hundred, whereas the number engaged in the actual attack was about twenty-five. The report concluded with a reference to the leaders of the local Kilmurray company, and included the names of John T. Murphy, Denis J. Long, Patrick Sheehan and myself as being the leaders in the conspiracy. This report was passed on to the officers of the company by the men from Cork III Brigade.

A strong party from Kilmurray company under Denis O'Mahoney, 1st Lieutenant, took part in the demolition of the roof of Shandangan courthouse on July 27th, 1920.

Beyond the usual parades and training, there was no real activity until Saturday, August 21st, 1920, when a strong party drawn from the Kilmurray company took up an ambush position on the Macroom-

Cork road at Lisarda, about six miles from Macroom. The strength of the party was about thirty-five. There were three riflemen and about thirty shotgunmen. In addition, about twenty other members of the company were engaged on scouting and outpost duty.

We moved into the selected position about day-break. We were on high ground overlooking the road, under cover of a fence and some rocks. About twenty men were in position south of the road, and the remainder were on the opposite side. The whole party were extended over a distance of about a hundred yards. Three men from the party on the southern side were allocated to a position on the western flank, from which they could enfilade the road to the east. This party consisted of one rifleman, Joseph Murphy, and two shotgunmen, Dan O'Donovan and Denis J. Long. We remained in the position all day, but the expected enemy convoy did not turn up. We were awaiting a lorry of military which had travelled this road each Saturday for some time, but, for some unknown reason, they did not travel on this date. We evacuated the position about 8 p.m. and were to reoccupy it early in the following week. Some members of the Kilmurray company who were present on this occasion were: Patrick O'Leary (O/C), Jack O'Connell, Denis O'Mahoney, Denis D. Long, Con Murphy, Dan O'Leary, Patrick Long, Michael Galvin, William Powell, Cornelius O'Mahoney, Jim Murphy, Dick Browne, Matt Murphy, Tadhg Murphy, Patrick O'Brien, John Carroll, John Dineen, Jim O'Donovan, James Kelleher, Maurice Hennigan, Jeremiah O'Leary, Denis O'Keefe, Jeremiah O'Mahoney, Patrick Sheehan, Dick Burke, Dan H. O'Leary, William Leahy, Tom Taylor, Jack Taylor, Jack O'Mahoney(witness).

A member of the R.I.C. was shot in Inchigeela on the night of August 21st, the day on which we lay in ambush at Lisarda. Next morning (August 22nd, Sunday), the County Inspector of the R.I.C., with a party of men passed through the ambush position of the day before, on their way to Inchigeela. On their way through Macroom, they raided a house in the town, and broke up some furniture. They then continued on to Inchigeela. A despatch was now received by our Company O/C, Patrick O'Leary, from Battalion Headquarters in Macroom, instructing him to arrange to ambush this police party on their return journey. It was now about 11.30 a.m., and it was not possible to mobilise the available members of the company (Kilmurray) until after Mass (12.30 p.m.).

All available members of the company were contacted as soon as possible, each being instructed to report with all speed to the position occupied on the previous day at Lisarda. The men were arriving in ones and twos and it was approaching 2.30 p.m. before the majority of them had reached the appointed meeting place. As the men arrived, they were placed in positions, but, before all positions had been occupied, the approach of the enemy party was signalled by our scouts to the west.

Arrangements had been made to block the road, both in front of and behind the enemy lorry when it entered the ambush position, by pushing two carts on to the road from two gateways, approximately fifty yards apart, on the northern side of the road. When the lorry drove into the position, the carts

were pushed on to the roadway. The lorry halted. The occupants were called on to surrender, but, instead of doing so, they immediately opened fire on our ambush party south of the road. At the same time, they hurled themselves from the lorry, and took cover at the northern side of the road where only one or two of our men had reached the selected positions. After an exchange of fire lasting close on one hour, our party was forced to withdraw. In this fight, we lost one man killed (Mick Galvin), and one man wounded (Dan O'Leary). Several members of the enemy party were wounded, and it was never established whether any of them had been killed, although there were strong rumours to this effect at the time. Patrick O'Leary (Company O/C, Kilmurray) was in charge of this operation. Other members who took part were: William Powell, Thomas Powell, Patrick Sheehan, Cornelius O'Mahoney, Matt Murphy, Sean Galvin, Michael Galvin (killed), Con Murphy, Tadhg Murphy, Denis J. Long, Denis D. Long, Patrick Long, Con Murphy, Tim Murphy, Jos. Murphy, Denis O'Mahoney, John O'Mahoney, Jack O'Mahoney (witness), Patrick O'Brien, Denis O'Keefe, Denis O'Brien, Dick Browne, John Lynch, Maurice Hennigan.

When withdrawing from the position at Lisarda, we took with us our fatal casualty, Mick Galvin, and our wounded man, Dan O'Leary. We had now to arrange to have the latter attended to urgently, and also to conceal from the enemy the fact that we had one of our men killed. The wounded man was taken by me to Dr. Murphy, Lisarda, who dressed his wounds. He was then removed to the home of Cornelius O'Leary,

Coolduve, Lisarda, where he was billeted in safety. Mick Galvin's body was taken by Patrick Sheehan and a few helpers to a safe spot, where he was anointed by Fr. Cotter, C.C. His body was removed later that night and buried secretly in Kilmurray churchyard. It was later removed to the family burial ground at Kilmurray where he was buried, about six weeks later.

During September and October, 1920, ambushes were laid on several occasions for the leader of the Auxiliary force stationed in Macroom. He was supposed to be visiting the area without the usual strong escort. All the efforts proved abortive, as we were unable to make contact with the enemy.

At this stage, Kilmurray company was divided into two companies, Crookstown and Kilmurray. The officers of the respective units now were:-

	<u>Kilmurray</u>	<u>Crookstown</u>
O/C	- Patrick O'Leary.	- William Powell.
1st Lieut.-	John O'Connell.	- Denis J. Long.
2nd Lieut.-	Denis O'Mahoney.	- Con Murphy.
Adjutant	- Patrick Sheehan.	- Patrick Long.
Q.M.	- John O'Mahoney.	- Dan O'Leary.

It was now decided to establish a Brigade Flying Column, and, in order to equip and keep it "in the field", a levy was imposed on all property owners. The responsibility for the collection of this levy - called the Arms Fund Levy - was thrown on the shoulders of the officers of the various companies. The work of collecting the money was carried out by selected men from each company. It involved visiting every landholder and shopkeeper in the area, and collecting from them the amount assessed by the Battalion Staff as due by each. The collection of the arms fund levy was carried out in the area during the period, October to December, 1920.

There was very little activity in the area up to the end of January or early February, 1921. About this time, twelve rifles were dumped in the company area. They were received from Brigade Headquarters, and were for use by the Battalion Flying Column which was now about to be formed. Six men from the company, including Patrick O'Leary, O/C, Jack O'Connell, Dan O'Donovan and Tom Powell, went to Bishopstown where they collected the rifles from the officers of the Cork city battalions. They took the rifles along the Cork-Macroom railway line to Lisarda where they were placed in a dump, constructed by excavating the earth from a double fence, lining the opening with timber and covering the timber casing with sods, so that there was nothing to indicate that the fence had been interfered with.

About this time, instructions were issued to cut all enemy lines of communication by trenching roads, demolishing bridges and cutting railway lines. All roads in the Kilmurray company area were trenched or obstructed at a number of points. Several bridges were blown up, and the railway lines broken. This work was more or less continuous at this time, as trenches were being filled in and bridges repaired daily by the enemy. This compelled us to open fresh trenches and erect other obstacles practically each night. These operations were carried out nightly up to the Truce, and occupied the full time of the majority of the members of the company (Kilmurray).

In addition to ensuring that all roads were kept closed, it was necessary to provide an all-round-the-clock- scouting system to ensure the safety of the columns resting in the area. It was customary

at this period for Cork III Brigade Column to retire into this company area following major engagements with the British. This column rested in this area at Gurraneigh following the Crossbarry fight, and they also returned here after Roscarbery. The presence of this column in the area as well as occasional visits from Cork I Brigade and Macroom battalion columns necessitated the provision of constant guards, scouts and outposts throughout the district, causing the majority of the men in the company to undergo full time service for long periods.

On June 6th, 1921, I took part, with Patrick O'Leary, Company O/C, and Denis O'Mahoney, in the seizure of military stores from the railway station at Dooniskey. We held up the train from Macroom, and removed the stores, taking them to Gurraneigh. Following this incident, the enemy forces from Macroom threatened to shoot the stationmaster at Dooniskey. In anticipation of their attempting to do so, an armed guard was posted in the vicinity of the railway station each night for over a week, but, as there was no appearance by the enemy during this period, the guard was withdrawn.

The enemy were now finding it difficult to move around the area, and information came to hand that they intended to occupy Warrenscourt House. In order to prevent its occupation, it was decided to burn the building. About sixty men, drawn from Kilmurray and Crookstown companies, were detailed for this job. Three attempts were made to carry out the job, but it had to be called off owing to the unexpected

appearance of strong enemy patrols on each occasion. Eventually, the house was set on fire about mid-day on June 16th, 1921. It was totally destroyed. About a week later, Crockstown House was destroyed under similar circumstances, and for the same reason.

Beyond normal guard, scouting and road-blocking duties, there were no further activities up to the Truce on July 11th, 1921.

My rank at the Truce - Quartermaster,
Kilmurray Company,
Macroom Battalion,
Cork I Brigade.

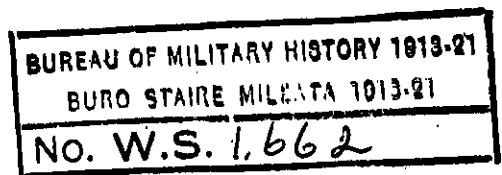
The strength of the company was about a hundred.

SIGNED:

John Mahony

DATE:

August 27th 1957



WITNESS

P. Lonnell