

# ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

BURO STAIRS MILEATA 1913-21

No. W.S. 1719

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 1719.

**Witness**

Daniel Corkery,

Casement Street, Macroom, Co. Cork.

**Identity.**

O/C., Macroom Battalion, Cork 1. Brigade.

Chairman, Mid-Cork Executive, Sinn Féin.

**Subject.**

Macroom Battalion, Cork 1. Brigade I.R.A.

1917-1924, and Macroom Battalion Column, 1921.

**Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.**

Nil.

File No. S. 3018.

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NO. W.S. 1719

STATEMENT BY DANIEL CORKERY,

Caseement St., Macroom, Co. Cork.

I have already furnished a statement covering my activities in the period up to and including Easter Week, 1916.

When, with the other prisoners from Macroom who had been arrested after Easter Week, I was released from Frongoch Internment Camp, we arranged with the other Cork prisoners, who were released at the same time, to hold a meeting in Macroom on the date of the annual sports meeting there about mid-August, 1916. This meeting, which was held in Regan's licensed premises, was attended by representatives from practically every Volunteer unit in Cork City and County. This was, I think, the first reorganisation meeting held anywhere following Easter Week. Seán Sullivan from Cork City presided. At this meeting, it was decided to set about reorganising the Volunteers immediately.

All present at the Macroom meeting returned to their own areas and took early steps to establish Volunteer units in their districts. In Macroom area, we organised units in Clondrohid, Ballinagree, Kilnamartyra, Kilmurry and Macroom. All these units had been organised before the end of 1916. All sections drilled in secret, and recruiting was intensified as the year 1917 advanced.

When the order to parade in public was issued by G.H.Q. towards the end of the summer in 1917, all companies held public parades regularly. Arising out of these parades, I was arrested about the end of September, 1917, as were a number of other officers throughout the country.

The majority of the officers arrested in the South were taken to Cork Gaol. Included in the prisoners here were Tomás MacCurtain, Terence MacSwiney, T.D. Sinnott (Wexford), Frank McGrath (Nenagh), Seán Keane (Mitchelstown), Paddy Cahill (Tralee), and a number of other Kerry men whose names I cannot recollect. There were also a number of men from Limerick and Clare. We were all charged with illegal drilling, tried by courtmartial and sentenced to varying terms of imprisonment. The prosecuting solicitor was Jasper Wolfe, Crown Solicitor, Skibbereen. Some days after being sentenced, we all went on hunger-strike. We were released under the Cat and Mouse Act after we had been a few days on strike.

During the autumn of 1917, several raids for arms were carried out by the men of the Macroom Company. Several shotguns were seized in these raids, and, in addition, a number of shotguns were surrendered to the Volunteers by friendly disposed persons.

In December, 1917, Eamon de Valera undertook an organising tour of the country, during which he addressed numerous meetings. When he came to Macroom, we organised a big parade of all units in the district. The strength of the Volunteer organisation in the area was revealed by this parade, and attracted a great deal of attention. As a result, the interest of the young men in other districts was aroused, and units varying in strength from 20 -50 were now organised in Kilmichael, Rusheen, Canavee, Ballingeary, Inchigeela, Ballyvourney and Coolea within a few weeks.

Early in 1918, as the British threatened to enforce Conscription, there was a greatly increased interest in

Volunteer activities. The strength of all units increased and, in many cases, doubled. There were now fifteen companies in Macroom district, as follows - Coachford, Rylane, Aherla, Kilmichael, Rusheen, Canavee, Ballingeary, Inchigeela, Ballyvourney, Coolea, Macroom, Clondrohid, Ballinagree, Kilnamartyra, Kilmurry. These units were now organised as Macroom Battalion, Cork Brigade. The area embraced extended from Ballincollig to the Kerry border. The first officers of the battalion were: -

	O/C	-	Daniel Corkery (Witness)
Vice	O/C	-	Jack Lynch
	Adjt.	-	Charlie Browne
	Q/M	-	Charlie Hartnett (I think).

The establishment of the battalion meant that I was now practically engaged full time on organisation and training duties. The job of ensuring that the new recruits to all units were whipped into shape necessitated regular visits to all companies. It was also necessary to organise dispatch routes and to deal with correspondence from H.Q., transmitting, where necessary, orders to the various units. The Battalion Council, which consisted of the battalion officers recorded above with the O/C of each company in the battalion, held regular meetings at fortnightly intervals. At these meetings, reports were submitted by each Company O/C and were considered by the Council. Where it was considered necessary, these reports were submitted to Brigade H.Q. for further consideration. In addition to dealing with the work of the battalion, I had to attend regular meetings of the Brigade Council.

The possibility that the British would enforce Conscription necessitated the provision of arms, ammunition and weapons of all kinds for our men. Every available

weapon in the area was now taken over by the Volunteers; pikes were fashioned in the local forges; canister bombs of various kinds were improvised; gunpowder and buckshot were manufactured. These activities were normal duties in all company areas at this period. In addition, all units were engaged in organising the general public for the coming fight.

Since the reorganisation of the Volunteers following Easter Week, the organisation of Sinn Féin clubs throughout the country went hand in hand. The Sinn Féin organisation at this period was mainly composed of Volunteers and the members of their families. In many cases the officers of the Sinn Féin clubs were also officers in the Volunteers. Wherever there was a company of Volunteers, there was also a Sinn Féin club. Sinn Féin was now organised on the basis of the existing British electoral system of constituencies. Sinn Féin Executives were now set up in each area, on which all Sinn Féin clubs in the area were represented. The mid-Cork Executive of Sinn Féin controlled an area larger than Macroom Battalion, and included the districts of Blarney, Millstreet, Macroom, Donoughmore. I was elected Chairman of this Executive. Other members were Revd. Fr. Breen (Millstreet), W.L. Kelliher (Blarney), Paud O'Donoghue (Coachford), and - Mahony (Berrings).

The Volunteers were engaged in all activities which would help to boost the national morale at this time. Several aeriocchts were organised throughout the area - mainly by our men. The majority of these gatherings were proclaimed by the British, but were held in defiance of their armed forces on many occasions. Usually when an aeriocht was proclaimed at one venue, it was held at another, often in the neighbouring parish.

An aeriocht was held in Ballyvourney early in July, 1918. A number of armed R.I.C. men from Ballingeary attended the gathering. This R.I.C. party were attacked on their way back to their barrack by some men from Ballyvourney, Reinaree and Ballingeary Companies. Their arms were seized. As a result of this attack, Martial Law was proclaimed in Macroom district. This was the first time that Martial Law was proclaimed in Ireland.

The imposition of martial law led to increased enemy activity in the area, but it also helped to intensify Volunteer activities because all now felt that there was a fight in prospect. Raids by enemy forces in an effort to arrest prominent Volunteers were a regular feature of life in the area. As a result, the vast majority of officers in the district were 'on the run'. The necessity to procure arms was now becoming very obvious and all Volunteers were endeavouring to establish the whereabouts of hidden weapons. Raids for any available arms were now a regular feature of our activities. The anxiety of the Volunteers to obtain arms is typified by the actions of the men of Macroom Company, three of whom, although unarmed, attacked a British soldier in Castle St. and seized his rifle on November 23rd 1918. During the first week or so in January, 1919, another party from the same company, armed with sticks, attacked a military patrol at Tinker's Hill and captured three rifles.

In December, 1918, a General Election to elect <sup>members</sup> to the British House of Commons was held. Sinn Féin candidates, who were pledged to abstain from attendance in the House of Commons, were elected in all constituencies.

in the South, except Waterford City. As a matter of fact, with the exception of a few constituencies in North East Ulster, Trinity College and Waterford City, Sinn Féin swept the country. The Sinn Féin candidates were, in fact, returned unopposed in the vast majority of the areas. There was no contest in mid-Cork constituency as the Sinn Féin candidate - Terence MacSwiney was returned unopposed. Our main activity in connection with this election consisted of the transporting of about 30 men from the battalion to Waterford City, where they were engaged in protection duty. Here, Captain Willie Redmond was elected by a majority of about 500 votes over Dr. Vincent White, the Sinn Féin candidate.

At this stage, Cork Brigade of the Irish Volunteers, which embraced some twenty battalions covering the whole county, was divided into three brigades numbered one, two and three. My battalion (Macroom) now became the 7th Battalion of ~~this~~<sup>No. 1.</sup> brigade. The other battalions in the brigade were - Cork City (Nos. 1 and 2), Ovens (No. 3), Cobh (No. 4), Whitechurch (No. 5), Donoughmore (No. 6), Ballyvourney (No. 8), and Passage West (No. 9). The respective areas controlled by the three Cork brigades now approximated to the following: -

Cork No.	1	-	Cork City, Mid and East Cork.
"	"	2	- North Cork.
"	"	3	- West Cork.

I should mention that, at this stage, Macroom Battalion, with 15 companies, was divided into two, and a new battalion composed of the companies at the western end was organised with Ballyvourney as H.Q.

This battalion was numbered 8. It consisted of Ballingeary, Ballyvourney, Inchigeela, Kilnamartyra and Coolea Companies. Some short time later, Coachford Company was transferred to the 6th Battalion (Donoughmore), and Aherla Company to the 3rd (Ovens). We had now ten companies in Macroom Battalion - Macroom (2), Rylane, Rusheen, Canavee, Ballinagree, Kilmurry, Clondrohid, Kilmichael, Toames.

The overwhelming success of the Sinn Féin candidates at the General Election gave a boost to Volunteer activities, and the general public as a whole became more interested in our movements. Funds to arm and equip our units were more readily obtainable, but it was not easy to procure the arms.

The successful Sinn Féin candidates assembled in Dublin on January 21st 1919 and set up a Government for the Irish Republic. This government established in due course a Department of Defence, and the Volunteers, who had up to this been controlled by their own Executive, agreed to be controlled by the new department. They now became the official Army of the Irish Republic - the I.R.A.

Training was now intensified throughout the country. Selected men in each company were trained as scouts, signallers, engineers, intelligence and transport officers. Battalion manoeuvres were held regularly, and nearly all men in the battalion (Macroom) were trained in the care and use of the rifle. In some cases, the training officers were not members of the I.R.A. but were reliable men who had seen service with the British Army in the World War (1914-1918).



I was now engaged full time travelling through the area - attending to organisation and training as well as attending meetings of the Brigade and Battalion Councils. At this time, all units were also engaged in the collection of the first loan floated by Dáil Éireann - the Government of the Irish Republic.

When the men of the Ballyvourney Battalion attacked a military patrol at the Slippery Rock, Coolavookig, on 7th September, 1919, they captured their arms and bicycles. As a result, we expected that the enemy garrison in Macroom would take reprisals in the town. I assembled about sixty men - armed with shotguns, rifles and home-made bombs - and we took up ambush positions in various parts of the town but mainly in the vicinity of the R.I.C. barracks and on the road to Mount Massey where the military were stationed, about 10 p.m. We remained in position until dawn next day, when we returned to our home areas as there was no enemy activity.

The administration, organisation and training of the battalion now occupied my full time. I was continually on the move around the various companies on training and inspection duty. The intelligence service, to which I paid much attention, was now becoming very efficient, and the movements of all enemy forces - police or military - were recorded in each company area and furnished to Battalion H.Q. at weekly intervals, and sometimes at shorter notice if the circumstances of the particular enemy activity warranted such action.

The next major activity in the Macroom area was the attack on Kilmurry R.I.C. Barracks on the night of January 3rd 1920. This was a battalion job carried out under my command. About sixty men drawn from various companies took part in the attack, which was unsuccessful. They were armed with shotguns, three or four rifles and canister bombs. The barrack was an isolated building standing about  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile south of Kilmurry village. It was surrounded by a low wall which enclosed yards at the front and rear of the building. Positions were occupied all round the building under cover of the wall surrounding the yards and at a distance of about twenty yards. All men were in position about 11 p.m., when fire was opened on the building and several bombs were thrown at the door. The garrison replied to our fire and the shooting continued intermittently for about two hours. As there was then no prospect of capturing the barracks, and the garrison refused to surrender, I decided, in conjunction with Charlie Browne (Battalion Adjutant), to call off the engagement. All sections then withdrew to their own company areas.

Our activities were now intensified, and every available opportunity to harass the enemy throughout the area was utilised. All Company O/Cs were instructed to attack the enemy whenever they appeared in their districts in suitable strength. Acting on these instructions, the men of Macroom town companies attacked an enemy transport squad at Mount Massey on March 15th 1920. They captured four training rifles. There were only four men in the I.R.A. attacking party and, as far as I can recollect, three of them were: Dick Browne, Jimmie Murphy, and - Kelleher.

When the general order for the destruction of evacuated enemy posts was received at Easter, 1920, three posts were destroyed by members of the local companies. About one hundred men were engaged in these operations, either as scouts, outposts or in the actual demolition parties.

As the year 1920 advanced, our activities were intensified and a number of attacks on R.I.C. barracks throughout the brigade were planned. Blarney R.I.C. post was attacked on June 1st 1920, and on June 9th we carried out an attack on Carrigadrohid R.I.C. barracks. There was a large force of men from the various companies in the battalion (Macroom) mobilised for this job, as all roads in the area had to be blocked to prevent the arrival of assistance from Ballincollig or Macroom for the beleaguered garrison. The majority of the men mobilised for this job were engaged on these roadblocking and outpost activities. The covering parties at the front and rear of the barracks numbered about forty, and were armed with rifles, shotguns and home-made bombs. They were in position about 11 p.m.

The main attacking party, which proposed to enter a house adjoining the barrack and smash through the roof so that they could get on to the roof of the barrack, consisted of "Sando" Donovan, Seán Hegarty, Florrie O'Donoghue, Wm. Powell, Joe O'Connor and myself. We then proposed to smash the roof of the barrack, pump paraffin oil through the opening and then set the building on fire. We forced an entrance

to the post office, which adjoined the R.I.C. barrack. We entered through a window in the gable end. We took with us a quantity of paraffin oil in a drum, a pump to force the oil through the hole in the roof of the barrack, and tools to smash through the roof. Having taken over the post office, we proceeded to smash our way through the ceiling and roof of the building. When we reached the roof of the post office, we smashed a hole in the roof of the barrack and immediately began pumping paraffin oil through the opening. We then set the paraffin on fire. I should have mentioned that the garrison had started shooting through the windows and loopholes immediately we had begun to smash our way through the roof of the post office. This fire was being replied to by the members of the covering parties at the front and rear of the building while we continued our efforts to set the barrack on fire.

We had now been attacking the barrack for about two hours, and the fire which we had succeeded in starting in the upper floor did not appear to be making very much progress. We now collected some blankets and other bed clothes in the post office, and having soaked them in the remainder of the paraffin, we pushed them through the hole in the roof of the barrack. We then set them on fire, and in a few minutes the upper floor of the barrack appeared to be burning fiercely. The garrison was called on to surrender, and there was no reply. There was now hardly any shooting by the garrison and they appeared to have withdrawn to a room on the ground floor at the opposite side of the building. There was nothing to do now but wait until the fire had burned through to the lower floor, so, as daylight

was now close at hand, the Brigade and Battalion officers from Cork City - Seán Hegarty, Joe O'Connor, Florrie O'Donoghue, "Sando" Donovan - withdrew towards the City (Cork). I remained behind with the covering parties from my own battalion in the hope that the fire would compel the garrison to evacuate. Eventually, as there was grave danger that reinforcements might reach the enemy garrison now that day had dawned, I decided to call off the engagement. Some time after we had withdrawn, the garrison evacuated the barrack and made their way to Macroom.

On July 12th 1920, the men of the Macroom Company were again active when about eight members of the company attempted to attack a military lorry at Main St., but the attack proved abortive as the driver became suspicious and accelerated.

It was customary at this time to carry out raids on the mails, both local and district, in all areas. All companies in the battalion (Macroom) raided the mails in their own districts at irregular intervals, but, as far as I can recollect, no information of military value came to light from these activities.

The men from Kilmurry Company, in co-operation with some men from Macroom town unit, took up an ambush position at Lisarda on the Cork-Macroom road about six miles from Macroom on August 21st 1920. They were awaiting a convoy of military which had been passing the road regularly for some time. They took up position in the early morning and remained all day, but the enemy force did not travel.

Early next day (Sunday, August 22nd 1920) a lorry of R.I.C. and Tans passed through the ambush position of the previous day on their way towards Macroom. The passage of the lorry was reported to Wm. Powell - a member of the Kilmurry Company - who immediately reported the fact to his O/C (Patk. O'Leary) and sent word to me at Battalion H.Q. All available men from Kilmurry-Crookstown area were mobilised at short notice, and instructed to report to the ambush position which they had occupied on the previous day. It was after last Mass - about 12.30 p.m. - at Kilmurry before the mobilisation order was issued, and it was approaching 2 p.m. before the majority of the men reached the mobilisation point. Only some of the men had taken up positions - mainly south of the road - when the enemy lorry drove into the ambush from the west (Macroom). It was halted by a cart which had been pushed across the road by Wm. Powell. Fire was opened on the occupants, who immediately jumped from the lorry and took cover behind the roadside fence north of the road. The exchange of fire continued for about an hour, after which the I.R.A. party south of the road were forced to withdraw. They had sustained one fatal casualty (Mick Galvin) and one wounded (Dan O'Leary). The enemy casualties in the engagement were never definitely established, but it was said that two R.I.C. men had been killed and a number wounded.

I was in Macroom town area on September 5th 1920 when three men from one of the town companies attacked a soldier at Masseytown and seized his rifle. As I anticipated that the military stationed at Masseytown might take reprisals for this operation,

I ordered the mobilisation of the men of the two Macroom Companies (A & B) and placed them in various positions on the approaches to the town from the two enemy posts - Masseytown and the R.I.C. barracks. About sixty men - armed with a mixture of rifles, small arms and shotguns - were engaged on this operation for a period of about a week following the incident of September 5th. No action developed, as the enemy forces were confined to barracks after dark.

The men of Macroom Companies were continually endeavouring to engage the enemy forces in the town at this period. They were availing of every opportunity to harass them. On November 11th 1920, a small party raided the railway station at Macroom and seized a quantity of military stores in the hope that some others would be able to engage an enemy raiding party, but the enemy did not put in an appearance. Two nights later, a strong party - armed with revolvers - took up ambush positions in the laneways leading off the Main St. to await an R.I.C. patrol, but the patrol did not pass. The men then dumped their guns and returned to their homes or billets.

About this time, a big number of men in the battalion (Macroom) area were 'on the run'. At a Brigade Council meeting, I suggested that a number of the rifles held by the units in Cork City - where they could not be utilised - should be given to my battalion. Should this suggestion be agreed to, I undertook to place an **Active Service Unit** "in the field". The suggestion received favourable consideration, and notification was received from Brigade H.Q. just before Christmas, 1920, that twenty rifles and a supply of

ammunition would be given to us. During the Christmas holidays, I made arrangements to have the rifles and ammunition collected by a party of men drawn from Crookstown, Kilmurry, Toames and Macroom Companies, under Charlie Brown (Battalion Adjutant), I think.

We were now well armed, and about thirty men drawn from the various companies in Macroom Battalion were mobilised for training in Clondrohid area early in January, 1921. Each man was trained in the care and use of the rifle, but in view of the scarcity of ammunition - we had 20 rounds for each rifle - we could not put the men through a musketry course. Some men who were more adaptable than others were returned to their home units after a week's training, as they were considered proficient. They were replaced by fresh men, who underwent the usual course of training. This procedure was followed for about a month or more, at the end of which period approximately sixty men had been trained. It should be noted that all men selected for training had considerable musketry experience with the miniature rifle. The training officer was Dan McSweeney - an ex member of the Irish Guards. An active service unit with a strength of 27 was now selected from the trained men, as we had only 27 rifles.

The Brigade Flying Column - composed of men from Cork City Battalions - and the column from the 8th Battalion (Ballyvourney) were in an adjoining area at this period. It was arranged that the Macroom Column, under my control, should join them in an effort to engage an enemy convoy at Poul nabro (Coolnacaheragh) on the Macroom-Ballyvourney road, about seven miles from Macroom. The combined force numbered about 60. In



addition, several men from the local companies were engaged on scouting and outpost duties.

The combined force took up positions at the selected spot early on the morning of February 14th 1921 (I think). The men from the Ballyvourney and Brigade Columns, with about six members of my column (Macroom) occupied positions on the northern side of the road under cover of some rocks and loose stones. They were on high ground overlooking the road and were extended over a distance of about 200 yards. In addition to being armed with rifles, this party had two machine-guns. As far as I can recollect, the machine-guns with their crews were positioned on the eastern flank. The remainder of my column - to the number of 21 - were in position south of the road about the centre of the ambush position and within distances varying from 10 to 50 yards of the road. My party was extended over a distance of about 80 yards. All sections remained in position throughout the day, but the expected convoy did not travel. The same positions were occupied on two succeeding days, with a similar result. The Brigade O/C (Seán Hegarty) was in charge of the combined force. "Sando" Donovan was in charge of the Brigade Column.

All sections now withdrew from the area and moved into billets in neighbouring districts. We returned about the middle of the following week and occupied the same positions on two successive days, but the enemy convoy did not put in an appearance. All sections again withdrew to billets.

We now left the area for a few days and returned about the middle of the following week, when we again occupied the positions held on the occasions of our two previous visits. On this occasion, we spent a further fruitless day, retiring to billets in the area that night. Next morning (February 25th 1921), we again moved into the old positions. We had only been there a short time - it was sometime after 8 a.m. - when I observed an enemy lorry driving slowly into the eastern end of the main position. This lorry stopped directly opposite the men on the eastern flank of my position. As the occupants of the lorry appeared to be about to jump from their transport, my men on that flank opened fire on them at a distance of about 50 yards. All the members of my column on the southern side of the road now opened fire on any of the enemy Auxiliary force visible to them. At the same time, the sections on the opposite side of the road took up the engagement. While the fight was in progress, the occupants of several other enemy lorries detrucked and made their way under cover of the roadside fences towards a cottage south of the road to the east of the position occupied by my men. They succeeded in getting into the cottage despite the efforts of our men north of the road. The engagement continued for over two hours, and the only enemy force of which I was aware was now occupying the cottage to the east of my position. From our position we could not bring effective fire to bear on this building, so we ceased firing and kept it under close observation in case the occupants would endeavour to break out and take our party from the rear. At this stage, I noticed that shooting had ceased north of the road, so I sent one of my men - Dan McSweeny, I think -

to find out the position there. He returned after some time and informed me that there was no trace of any of our (I.R.A.) forces on the opposite side of the road. They had withdrawn from their positions and retired in a north westerly direction.

I now decided that I had no option but to withdraw from my position. Before doing so, it was necessary to extricate two of my men - Ned Neville and Mick Murphy - who were more or less cut off on my eastern flank. With Charlie Browne (Battalion Adjutant), I moved to the vicinity of their position, where two of us opened fire on the cottage to distract the attention of the occupants while our two men - Neville and Murphy - were working their way to where we were. They eventually reached us, and after a short time the four of us succeeded in rejoining the other members of our column (Macroom) at the western end of our position. We then moved in single file in a westerly direction under cover of a low fence for a short distance. We ~~then~~<sup>now</sup> changed direction, crossed the Macroom-Ballyvourney road, and moved towards Coomaguire. The military reinforcements had reached the ambush position before we crossed the road and began our withdrawal.

A portion of the main body, which had been engaged at the northern side of the road, reached Coomaguire where they went into some houses for a meal. Before the meal had been served up, two lorry loads of Tans arrived in the vicinity from Killarney. This force was engaged by I.R.A. scouts. The whole party then succeeded in extricating themselves from the engagement and withdrew to safety. While this engagement was taking place, my party (Macroom Column)

reached the top of a hill overlooking the valley in which the fight was in progress, but we were too far away to take part.

After the engagement at Poul nabro, ammunition was in short supply as far as my column was concerned. As a matter of fact, when I withdrew from the fight I had only three rounds of .303 left. Other members of the column, who had not fired so many shots, had a larger supply.

During the first week in March, 1921, a raiding party of Tans surprised some unarmed members of the Macroom Column who were resting in Toames area. One man - "Neilus" Foley - was shot dead, but the remainder escaped. Some days later, Macroom Workhouse was raided by the members of the local companies, but I cannot recollect the purpose of the raid. Later in this month, large enemy forces engaged in a comb-out of the Macroom-Ballyvourney district with negative results.

About this time, the Macroom Column was broken up into a number of small units. The representatives from the various companies returned to their home areas, taking their arms with them. As a general order for the destruction of enemy lines of communication had then been issued, the members of all companies were regularly engaged on the demolition of bridges, digging trenches and otherwise blocking roads. The column men in each company area, as well as other members of the local units, were engaged as armed guards for the demolition parties while the operations were in progress. As it was customary for enemy convoys, who now travelled in large parties, to round up the people resident in the vicinity

of trenched roads and compel them to fill in the trenches, the majority of the men in the local companies were engaged nightly on these activities.

The presence of the men from the column in the various company areas helped to boost the morale of the locals. They were regularly mobilising small parties and taking up ambush positions in their areas in the hope of engaging small enemy parties which might happen to enter the district. On March 16th 1921, a few members of the column, with about half a dozen locals, took up a position at Caum on the Cork-Macroon road about three miles from Macroon. They remained in position from midday until darkness set in, but no action developed. However, some weeks later - about the end of the first week in April - the same party occupied the same position and ambushed a patrol of R.I.C. and Tans. One Tan was shot dead. His revolver and ammunition were captured. The remainder of the enemy party escaped. Again, on April 20th 1921, three members of the column and three locals from Macroon town company ambushed a party of Auxiliaries at Glen Gate, Macroon. All were armed with revolvers. One Auxiliary was shot dead and his revolver and ammunition taken. On the same date, a lorry of military was attacked at Coolcower on the Macroon-Bandon road, but the enemy party escaped. This I.R.A. unit were, at the time, engaged on protection duty for another section who were engaged on the demolition of a bridge in the district.

At this stage, my duties as O/C of the battalion (Macroon) kept me continually on the move. I was moving round the area visiting the various companies and ensuring that the various duties allocated to them were being

carried out. At the same time, I was seeking to ensure that any enemy parties entering any particular area in suitable strength should be harassed and attacked. The maintenance of our own lines of communication and furnishing of regular reports - especially intelligence - was stressed by me to all officers.

On May 6th 1921, a strong force of military and police raided my home in Macroom and destroyed it by bombing. On the same date, the home of the O/C Kilmichael Company ("Neilus" Kelleher) was destroyed by fire by another raiding party. The destruction of both houses was carried out on the instructions of the British Competent Military Authority as official reprisals.

I received a notification from Brigade H.Q. on the evening of Thursday - May 13th 1921 - that it was proposed to surround Macroom on the night of Saturday, May 15th. All roads leading from the town were to be held by armed sections in ambush. The men of Donoughmore Battalion were to co-operate in this operation with the columns from the Brigade, Macroom and Ballyvourney Battalions. In addition, the members of the two companies from Macroom town were to take part. When all positions had been occupied, it was proposed to set fire to the house of a British loyalist (Barnard) on the Coolehane road in the hope that some parties from the enemy garrisons in the town would come out to investigate. All sections were in position about 9 p.m. on the date arranged. The paraffin oil and inflammable materials to set the house on fire were on the spot. Just as everything was in readiness, the operation was called off by the Brigade Staff.

A small column of military from Macroom entered Ballinagree Company area on a raiding expedition about this time. It was engaged by a few members of the Battalion Column acting in co-operation with about six members of the local company (Ballinagree). The enemy column withdrew hurriedly, leaving some machine-gun parts behind.

The Government of Ireland Act, 1920, which was passed by the British House of Commons, came into force in May, 1921. Under this act, Ireland was to be partitioned. Separate Parliaments were to be set up for (1) the six North Eastern Counties (Antrim, Down, Derry, Armagh, Tyrone, Fermanagh) and (2) the remaining twenty-six counties. A proclamation summoning the two Parliaments to meet in June was issued by the British Lord Lieutenant. The elections of members to sit in these Parliaments were held in May, 1921.

The Government of the Irish Republic (Dáil Éireann) decided that the elections should be contested and that the elected candidates would be invited to sit in the Dáil. Each successful candidate would be allowed to sit in Dáil Éireann on taking the Oath to the Republic, and the Dáil would be representative of all Ireland.

The system of Proportional Representation was now introduced for the first time, and several constituencies throughout the country were re-arranged. Cork County, which had previously been divided into a number of independent single seat constituencies, was now re-arranged into three electoral areas. A line was drawn from the county boundary at Charleville to, I think, the sea at Cork Harbour. Seven members were to be elected for the area west of this line - the area to be known as West,

Mid and South Cork. Four members were to be elected for Cork City, and three members were to be elected for the remainder of the county east of the dividing line. This latter area was to be known as East Cork.

I was resident in the area west of the line, for which five members had been elected at the General Election in December, 1918. These men were: Seán Hayes, Michael Collins, Terence MacSwiney, Diarmuid Lynch, and Paudeen O'Keefe. Terence MacSwiney had since died on hunger-strike in Brixton Prison, and Diarmuid Lynch, who was now working for the Republic in America, had resigned. Four new candidates had now to be selected to complete the quota for nomination with the sitting men (Seán Hayes, Mick Collins, Paudeen O'Keefe). I was selected to replace Terence MacSwiney; Seán Hales was nominated instead of Diarmuid Lynch. Seán Moylan, Seán MacSwiney and Seán Nolan were then selected to complete the panel for nomination. I should have mentioned that Mick Collins at this stage had decided to contest the Armagh constituency, so that we had five new candidates in the area.

There was no election in the Twenty-Six county area, as all the Republican candidates were returned unopposed. We had now been elected M.P.s to the Parliament of Southern Ireland according to the British, whereas in reality we were members of Dáil Éireann - the Parliament of the Irish Republic. The only opposition in the area consisted of four members returned unopposed by Trinity College.

The election in the Six Counties resulted in the election of 40 Unionists and 12 Nationalists and Republicans.



The nett result of the election was that the Republican party held 136 seats out of 180 allotted to the whole of Ireland. This was a sweeping victory for Sinn Féin.

Despite my election to Dáil Éireann, my main interest was to ensure that the fight against the British was prosecuted as energetically as possible throughout my battalion area. Intelligence reported towards the end of May, 1921, that the British proposed to occupy Macroom Workhouse. Arrangements were immediately made to evacuate the occupants and destroy the building by fire. The operation was carried out about midday on May 18th, 1921, by about sixty men drawn from the companies in Macroom town. Before setting fire to the building, several patients and old people had to be removed to safety. The operation was carried out by selected men under Mick Murphy (O/C Macroom "A") and - Crowley (O/C Macroom "B").

Early in June, 1921, a large enemy force including Major Percival's column combed out the Ballyvourney-Macroom area in which our columns were billeted, but all the fighting men managed to escape. The only casualties were three civilians who were shot. In this round-up, the Brigade O/C (Seán O'Hegarty), the Battalion Adjutant (Charlie Browne), the O/C Crookstown Company (Wm. Powell) and myself were in Gurraneareigh area when a raiding party suddenly made its appearance. While endeavouring to evade capture, we worked our way across country towards the south east. We had not proceeded very far when the Adjutant (Charlie Browne) and O/C Crookstown (Wm. Powel), when crossing a fence, jumped into a party of the enemy and were taken prisoners. I was following on, and when I reached the

fence I saw that the other two had been held up, so I signalled the Brigade O/C (Seán O'Hegarty) who was following me. We both changed direction immediately and escaped under cover of the fence behind which our colleagues were prisoners. The prisoners were removed to Cork, but were released about ten days later.

Reports now reached Battalion H.Q. that the O/C of the British forces in Macroom used to take occasional walks on different roads in the vicinity of the town. Several small parties were detailed to take up positions on different roads at various times over a period of about ten days in the hope that they could make contact with him, but they never appeared to be in the right place at the right time. This officer, in view of the efforts made to deal with him, must have had a charmed life.

A lone Black and Tan was shot by some members of the local company on the Macroom-Millstreet road about the end of June, 1921, and his arms were taken. His body was left on the roadside in the neighbourhood of Carriganima in the hope that his colleagues would come to collect it, while I lay in ambush with the Battalion Column close by. The body was, however, removed by some local people and buried.

Coolcower House, on the outskirts of Macroom, was destroyed by fire on the night of July 7th 1921, as information had come to hand that it was to be occupied by enemy forces. This house was the property of R.C. Williams, a hotel proprietor in the town. The job was carried out by men from the Macroom town companies.

The last operation prior to the Truce was planned for July 9th 1921, when four men from Macroom Company, armed with small arms, lay in ambush for an enemy patrol which travelled between the enemy H.Q. and the railway station. Although the men remained in position for over two hours, the patrol did not pass, so the I.R.A. party withdrew.

My rank at the Truce was O/C Macroom Battalion, Cork 1 Brigade, I.R.A.

The strength of the battalion at the Truce was about 700.

The cessation of hostilities led to a reduction in the tension existing throughout the area, and the members of the I.R.A. in all areas looked forward to the successful conclusion of the negotiations with the British. However, within a matter of days, training camps were established in each battalion area, and selected men from the various companies were called up to undergo special courses of training. Camps for Macroom Battalion were held at Clondrohid and Ballinagree. Each camp was continued for about a fortnight, and the men in attendance were given an intensive course of training. On their return to their own units, the representatives from the various companies set up similar camps in their own company areas. The members of each company were then trained on the lines followed at the battalion camps. In addition to the camps established for routine training, the members of the Special Services - especially engineering and signalling - were called for training to camps set up for the respective services.

Normal military training went on throughout the summer of autumn of 1921. At this stage, every member of the I.R.A. in the battalion had undergone a course of training and was fit to take his place "in the field" should hostilities be re-opened.

During the period to January, 1922, I carried on as O/C Macroom Battalion, I.R.A., as well as attending to my duties as a member of Dáil Éireann. I attended several meetings of Dáil Éireann at which the progress of the negotiations with the British were under consideration. In addition, there were numerous meetings of I.R.A. officers to review the position, so as to ensure that we would be fully prepared for a resumption of the fight should the negotiations break down. Arising out of these meetings, orders were issued to mine roads at suitable ambush positions and to prepare bridges on all roads for demolition by explosive charges. These precautions were taken to ensure that our columns could take the initiative at short notice.

When the Treaty was signed on December 6th, 1921, there was at first a general air of rejoicing amongst the public and the I.R.A. However, within a day or two it was realised that the terms of the Treaty did not give us the Republic for which we had been fighting. We were now offered a partitioned Ireland, and the general reaction of the I.R.A. in the area was one of profound disappointment.

The meeting of Dáil Éireann to deal with the Treaty was held in University College, Dublin, on December 14th 1921. I was present at this meeting and at all meetings in the period to January 7th 1922, when a vote was finally

taken. The Treaty was accepted by the members of Dáil Éireann on the voting - for 64, against 57. I voted against the acceptance of the Treaty.

A Provisional Government to operate the Treaty was now set up and made arrangements to take over from the British. The British now began to evacuate the posts held by them throughout the country. These posts were taken over in Macroom area, and throughout the country generally, by the members of the I.R.A. Maintenance units were installed in all posts taken over from the British military and police forces in the district. A permanent H.Q. for Macroom Battalion was now established in Macroom. The staff of the battalion at this time was: -

O/C	-	Dan Corkery (witness)
Vice O/C	-	Jim Murphy
Adjutant	-	Charley Browne.
Q/M	-	Richard Browne.

Routine training was carried on by all units in the battalion as usual while discussions were going on in Dublin as to the best means of keeping the army united. The Headquarters Staff of the Army were divided on the question of the acceptance of the Treaty, as were several units throughout the country. The officers who opposed the Treaty now requested the Minister for Defence in the Provisional Government to summon an Army Convention. It was agreed to call a convention for March 26th 1922. Arrangements to hold Brigade Conventions to select delegates were made, and it was discovered that about 80% of the units of the army were opposed to the acceptance of the Treaty. When this information came to light, the Minister for Defence held a consultation with the Government and it was decided to ban the holding of the Army Convention.

Three British Army Officers arrived in Macroom sometime early in April, 1922. Two of them were wanted men - members of the British Intelligence Staff - who had tortured and shot unarmed prisoners. They were taken prisoners by the I.R.A. forces and lodged in the barracks which had been taken over from the R.I.C. When their arrest was reported to Brigade H.Q., instructions were received to execute them. These orders were carried out that night. Next morning, a large force of British troops entered Macroom area to search for the missing officers. As they were unable to get any information, they withdrew after some time.

Beyond normal training, there was no activity until the H.Q. of the I.R.A. in the Four Courts, Dublin, was attacked on June 28th 1922. A Battalion Column to the number of about 50 was mobilised immediately. The members of this column joined a number of other units in the brigade and saw service in several engagements in the counties of Limerick, Waterford and Tipperary in the period to early August, 1922. Another column of about 30 men under Charley Browne (Battalion Adjutant) took part in an attack on a garrison of Free State forces at Skibbereen. This column was operating with Cork 111 Brigade. After an engagement which continued over a period of two days, the garrison surrendered. The Macroom Column got fifteen rifles as their share of the spoils.

When the Free State forces landed at Passage West on August 10th 1922, the Battalion Vice O/C (Jim Murphy) was in charge of a column of 30 men from the battalion which engaged the landing party. This column engaged in intermittent scraps with the Free State troops for some days and was eventually forced to withdraw to its own area.

As far as I can recollect, the Battalion Vice O/C (Jim Murphy) was captured during one of these engagements. He was imprisoned in Cork Gaol for a few weeks, at the end of which period he managed to escape.

The Free State forces were now infiltrating into our own area (Macroon) and were being engaged as circumstances permitted. They were engaged by a column at Macroon on August 15th, and at Carrigaphooka on August 27th 1922. The Free State garrison occupying Macroon was attacked by a strong Battalion Column operating in conjunction with the Brigade Column on September 3rd, and on the same date an enemy column was attacked at Clondrohid. Several other engagements with Free State forces took place in the months of September and October, 1922, in which columns of varying strengths from the Macroon Battalion were engaged.

At this stage, there was close co-operation between the Macroon Column and the columns from Cork 111 Brigade. On November 4th 1922, a column of about 50 men from Macroon co-operated with a column from Cork 111 Brigade in the capture of a number of posts held by the Free State forces in Ballineen. On the date of this engagement I was taken prisoner in the vicinity of Bealnablath, as were Paud O'Donoghue and Con Murphy who were with me at the time. I was eventually removed to Cork, and later to Hare Park Internment Camp. Owing to the death of my wife, I was released on parole in July, 1923. I was on parole until September, 1923, when I was ordered to return to Hare Park Camp. When I reached the camp, the officer in charge there had instructions regarding me, but after making some enquiries he arranged for my immediate transfer

to Mountjoy Prison, Dublin. Some days after my arrival in Mountjoy, the authorities endeavoured to bring in more stringent regulations and to treat us, more or less, as ordinary criminals. In order to combat these tactics, it was decided to go on hunger-strike and to demand the release of all Republican prisoners. All I.R.A. prisoners in Mountjoy, to the number of about 400, went on hunger-strike early in October, 1923. Our example was followed by the prisoners in the other jails and camps. I remained on hunger-strike with my fellow prisoners until the strike was called off by our own officers about mid-November, 1923, when I had been 34 days on hunger-strike. Some weeks following the termination of the strike, I was transferred with a number of my fellow prisoners to Hare Park Internment Camp, from which I was released in April, 1924.

It would not be right to conclude this statement without paying tribute to the civilian population, particularly in the poorer and mountainous districts where small farmers fed and housed the columns - often making their own rations available without thought of recompense. The men and women engaged on intelligence work for us supplied accurate information regarding enemy activities, and, in many cases, at great personal risk, were responsible for obtaining arms and ammunition from friendly members of the enemy forces.

Signed: *J. Mac Carthy*Date: *17<sup>th</sup> December 1954*Witness: *P. J. Donnell*

(Investigator).

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