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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 448.....

Witness

Patrick Callanan,
Craughwell, Co. Galway.

Identity

Brigade Chief of Scouts,
Galway Brigade, 1917 - Truce.

Subject

Reorganisation of Irish Volunteer Brigade
Co. Galway 1918, and its activities up
to Truce 1921.

Conditions, if any, stipulated by Witness

Nil

File No. S.1324.....

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THIRD STATEMENT BY PATRICK CALLANAN,

Craughwell, County Galway.

Following my return from America I went back to my own home in Killeeneen. I found the Galway Brigade had been somewhat re-organised. The late Larry Lardiner was Brigade O.C., Matty Niland, Adjutant, and Jack Broderick, Quartermaster. I was re-appointed Brigade Chief of Scouts. Meetings of the Brigade staff were held monthly in Galway City. With Eamon Corbett I organised the Clarenbridge Company of the Volunteers, and drilled openly although the Volunteers were proclaimed an illegal organisation at the time. There were about eighty men in the Company.

At this time I was appointed I.R.B. Centre for the County of Galway by Diarmuid Lynch, and held that position for about three months, during which time I organised several I.R.B. Circles. I also organised Volunteer Companies in Maree and Cranmore.

Things were very hot in Clarenbridge at this time. One Saturday night the R.I.C. attacked some Volunteers with the butt ends of their rifles. The following Sunday I stopped the people coming from the 10 o'clock Mass and lined up the Volunteers. Eamon Corbett addressed the congregation and the

Volunteers, but his remarks were directed towards the R.I.C., some of whom were present. He said, "Some of our young men were assaulted last night by the police, and I want to warn you that if this happens again, nothing but your blood will satisfy me". He then referred to a land dispute in the parish.

We continued to drill openly, and a few weeks later, about March 1918, I was in my mother's house in Killeeneen when Sergeant Gaffney of the R.I.C. entered the house and served me with a deportation order to take up residence within five miles of the town of Portadown in the County of Armagh, in the province of Ulster, within twenty-one days. About the same time Eamon Corbett was also served with a deportation order. We refused to obey the order and we went "on the run".

About March 1918, the Brigade was re-organised. A meeting was held in the Town Hall, Galway, at which Micheál Staines presided. The Brigade O.C., Larry Lardiner, stood down in favour of Seamus Murphy, who was then appointed Brigade O.C. Lardiner was appointed Vice O.C., Matty Niland, Brigade Adjutant, Jack Broderick, Brigade Quartermaster, Joe Howley, Director of Communications and Intelligence. I was appointed Brigade Chief of Scouts. There were about nine Battalions in the Brigade, but the Battalion Commandants were not present at this meeting.

About a month after being served with the deportation order, a wedding dance was held in our house.

When the guests were leaving at about 5 a.m. they noticed the police coming in the direction of the village. One of them ran back and told me. I made my escape through the back of the house. I returned home when the police had gone. Four R. I. C. men came back about 3 o'clock that evening. I was lying on the bed. A young lad named Purcell looked out and saw the police. He shouted, "Here's the police, he's caught". I jumped out of bed and ran out the back in my stockinged feet, with the police after me. I again succeeded in making my escape.

One Sunday shortly after the date by which we should have complied with the deportation order, Eamon Corbett and I went to 10 o'clock Mass in Roveagh Church. As we arrived back in Killeeneen about 1 o'clock Eamon said he had no revolver and asked me for one. I had three and I gave him one. About 4 o'clock that afternoon Eamon was in the yard of his house talking to a cousin of his named John Hynes. Two R. I. C. men arrived on bicycles and on seeing Eamon dismounted and made an effort to arrest him. Eamon ran through the village, trying to load his revolver as he ran. The police discharged two shots at him. I heard the shots and got my revolver and ran in the direction of the shooting. The policeman was coming close to Eamon. An old man about 65 named Peter Connolly took a large stone and told the R. I. C. man he would break his face with it if he came any further. A few women came on the scene and the R. I. C. man turned back. I made contact with Eamon immediately and we went to Mrs. Walsh's house in Killeeneen.

At about 10 o'clock Eamon asked me where I was going to stay that night. I said I intended staying in the village. Eamon said he was going to Rhinn, which was about one mile distant. He then left. Amongst those present in Walsh's house were, Matty Niland, Martin Newell, Michael Cummins, Michael Kelly and Peter Corbett. Less than half an hour after Eamon leaving, my brother arrived. He did not see any police on his way in. Shortly after that he went to leave; he was ordered to remain. Others arrived then and they did not see police as they came in. When they went to leave they also were ordered to go back into the house. I attempted to leave and I was also ordered back. It appeared that shortly after Eamon Corbett's departure the village of Killeeneen, including Walsh's house where we were, was surrounded by a force of over 100 R. I. C. men who were carrying out a house to house search of the whole village. There was only one door to the house so I knew there was no way of escaping. It was decided that I should lie on the wire mattress, with the fibre mattress over me, with the usual bed clothes. Miss Grett Walsh then got into the bed pretending to be sick. The room was set out accordingly with medicine bottles and hot water jar. This was about 11 o'clock. I remained like this until about 8 a.m. when the police arrived and searched the house. They took the names of all present and then searched the room where I was. When the District Inspector and policeman entered the room, Grett Walsh in a weak voice called "Mama, Mama". The policeman said "there is no one here except a sick girl". The District Inspector flashed a lamp on her and said "Oh, my dark Rosaleen", and then left.

When the search of the village was finished I went back to my own house. I fixed up a "hide out" in the attic which had a secret entrance. Although the house was raided several times during the next few weeks I was never discovered. I then went to Corcorans of Kilcorman where I stayed for three months. I then went to Delureys, The Glebe, Kilcolgan, and took an active part in the training and organising of the Volunteers in that area. I then went to Martin Linane's, Caltra, Headford, where I remained six months. I went under the name of Patrick O'Dea, a nephew of Linane's, who lived in Clarenbridge.

The police called at the home of O'Dea in Clarenbridge and made enquiries as to whether O'Dea was at home or where he was. The Volunteers heard this and sent me a wire saying "the black cattle are going down tonight". I knew what that meant and decided to go to the house of Willie McHugh, a Volunteer who lived in the district. I met McHugh on the road, and as I was telling him the story, the police arrived in three motor cars and passed us by on their way to raid Linane's.

Next day I sent word to Fr. Tom Burke who was C.U. in Glen Corrib in the parish of Shule, that the police had raided Linane's for me. Fr. Burke arrived next night on a bicycle and both of us left for Sullivans house in Ballycurran where Fr. Burke was staying. A night or two after our arrival there, Fr. Burke and I went for a walk along the Corrib and

on our return to the house we saw two R. I. C. men standing outside the gate. He was somewhat startled when he saw them and we decided that it was better that I should leave immediately. I went to the house of Pat Geoghegan about a quarter of a mile distant. After half an hour there I went to the house of Mr. Garvey, N. E., Kilroe, and remained there about half an hour.

I then went to Patrick Kynes, Headford, where I remained two days, and then went to Cravens, Clydadh, and stayed there three months. As we had a feeling that it was not safe to remain there any longer, Fr. Burke arranged for me to go to County Louth. A few days before I was due to go the house was surrounded by police and I was captured after evading them for fifteen months. I was brought to Tuam R. I. C. Barracks and held there about a week and was then taken to Galway Jail. After about a month I was brought to Renmore Barracks and tried by court martial for failing to comply with the deportation order. I refused to recognise the court and was sentenced to three months imprisonment. I served the sentence in Galway Jail and was released in September 1919.

I returned home to Craughwell and resumed my appointment as Brigade Chief of Scouts. In addition to my duties as Brigade Chief of Scouts I was instructed to organise the Loughrea Battalion of which Larry Burke was O. C. There were six Companies in the Battalion at the time, but after about three months the number had increased to sixteen. This Battalion was later formed into a Brigade and was known as the South East Galway Brigade.

About this time there was considerable trouble over land. Land was being seized by people who thought they had a claim to it. Cattle were being driven off lands and walls knocked down. Instructions were received from G.H.Q. that the land agitation would have to cease until the fight for freedom was over. Following this the land agitation faded out considerably. The Volunteers had to enforce the decisions of the Republican Courts. We also had police work to do, including the enforcing of closing public houses at the proper times.

Late in 1919 the Volunteers became very active. In addition to intensive training, numerous raids for arms took place, and police held up and disarmed. Headquarters at this time was not satisfied with the way things were going in Galway.

Several times at Brigade Council meetings, Brigade officers and Battalion O.Cs. made suggestions, submitted plans and sought permission to carry out ambushes and other attacks on enemy forces. Permission was always refused by the Brigade O.C. on the grounds that G.H.Q. did not approve of such attacks. Two attacks on enemy forces were carried out in North Galway without the knowledge or sanction of the Brigade O.C. He was very annoyed when he heard of them.

About August, 1920, I went to Galway to get in touch with some members of the Brigade staff. When I was returning through the village of Oranmore I was fired on by R.I.C. and Black and Tans.

About June 1920, the Brigade O/C. received orders from G.H.Q. in Dublin, that three of the easiest R.I.C. Barracks in the Brigade area were to be attacked and captured on the same night. Shortly after that he was summoned to Dublin. On his return to Galway he issued instructions that no member of the Brigade staff was to take part in the attacks, and that the attacks were to be carried out by the Battalion Commandants and their staffs. The Barracks selected for attack were, Carraroe, Connemara, Castlegrove near Tuam, and Merville, Athenry. Castlegrove Barracks was attacked but it was not captured. The other two were not attacked at all.

When I saw the failure to attack the Merville Barracks I took it on myself, although contrary to orders, to attack Bookeen Barracks near Dunsandle, in the Athenry Battalion area. This Barracks was a strong two-storey building with a lean to outhouse. It was situated in the centre of an open plain with very little cover for attackers. There was a ten-foot wall at the rear of the Barracks which afforded great cover for the Barracks. There was a low wall about thirty yards in front of the Barracks and running parallel to it. There were five windows in the front of the Barracks and two at the rear. There were steel shutters in the windows, but they must not have been fixed as they fell inwards following the first volley. The garrison was one Sergeant and sixteen Constables.

My plan was to set fire to the Barracks as it would be impossible to capture it with rifle fire or with the poor explosives we had at our disposal. About twenty-eight men were to take part, which included outposts on the various roads, and those detailed to cut telephone wires. We had nine rifles and about twenty rounds of ammunition for each rifle.

We had seven or eight shotguns with a plentiful supply of shotgun cartridges.

The attack was timed for 1 a.m. On the night selected we got into position as silently as possible. I detailed seven riflemen to take up positions behind the low wall in front of the Barracks; the other two riflemen were placed at the rear. A ladder was placed against the rear wall of the Barracks by Martin Nevin and another man. Edward Burke of Kilimor climbed the ladder and broke some slates on the roof. He then poured about eight gallons of petrol through the hole and on to the slates. He then descended the ladder to below the level of the gutter. He was then handed a burning torch on a nine foot pole which he placed on the broken portion of the roof. The roof caught fire immediately. It was our intention to take the Barracks without using any ammunition if possible. After about five minutes the roof was only smouldering and we thought it would go out. I gave an order to open fire on the roof so as to give ventilation to keep the fire blazing. There was a heavy exchange of rifle fire for about ten minutes, during which time the police fired many werry lights. The roof was now blazing fiercely, and we called on the police to surrender, which they did not do. There was spasmodic firing on both sides; we did not want to waste ammunition. This continued till 3.30 when the roof collapsed. I went to the back of the building where Seán Kelly

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before this Gill Morrissy went to Galway to inform the Brigade O.C. that the plans were complete and that the attack was to take place the following Monday night. The Brigade O.C. told Morrissy that attacks on occupied buildings were postponed for the present. The attack was, therefore, called off. The Brigade at this time was being reorganised. Five Brigades were to be formed. The enemy became very active as during the reorganising period which occupied a few weeks; volunteer activity had slackened off.

Although I was "on the run", I used call to my house an odd morning. The Wednesday before Bloody Sunday I called at about a quarter to eight. I was barely inside when six or seven R.I.C. men and an auxiliary entered the house and I was arrested. I was taken to Craughwell R.I.C. Barracks and then to Newford Military Camp, Athenry. I was held there for a week and was handcuffed each night before going to bed. One night I was taken out in the fields about a quarter of a mile from the Camp and interrogated. My hands were tied behind my back; my legs were tied. Four officers and some privates of the 17th Lancers questioned me if I knew Michael Collins and Larry Lardiner. I said I did. They threatened to shoot me. After a short time I was brought back to the Camp. I was transferred to the Town Hall, Galway, and held there for about a month. I was then sent to Ballykinlar where I remained till December 1921, when I was released.

SIGNED Patrick Gallagher
WITNESS Sean Brennan Const. DATE 26 October 1950