

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

BURO STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21

No. W.S. 518

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 518

Witness

James Sullivan,
Anveryerg,
Aughnamullen,
Castleblayney,
Co. Monaghan.

Identity.

Member of Irish Volunteers, Monaghan, 1913-1921;
Brigade Adjutant, June 1921;

Member of I.R.B. Monaghan, 1919-1921.

Subject.

- (a) Events of national importance, Co. Monaghan, 1914-1921;
- (b) Organization of Flying Column, South Monaghan, October 1920;
- (c) Shooting of spies, Easter 19 21.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil

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STATEMENT OF JIM SULLIVAN,

Anveryerg, Aughtnamullen, Castleblayney, Co. Monaghan.

At the General Election in the year 1910 in South Monaghan the Irish Parliamentary Party put up a Mr. Laverty to oppose the sitting member Mr. John McKeane. This action of the Parliamentary Party caused dissention amongst Nationalists in County Monaghan and paved the way for the successful organisation of Sinn Féin later on.

I joined the Irish Volunteers at their inception in the year 1913.

When the Volunteers were formed in 1913, the followers of Mr. Laverty, who were extremely loyal to the leadership of Mr. John E. Redmond, aimed at capturing all the important positions in the new volunteer organisation. The Redmondites captured the control of the Volunteers. I and many others associated with me resented this control and eventually in 1914 we withdrew from the volunteer organisation. This split in the Volunteers in South Monaghan was I think previous to the general split which took place in September 1914. When we cut adrift from the Redmondite section we formed a small section of our own. This small section remained together. We procured drill books and we got the services of a drill instructor who gave us lessons in the use of arms, etc.

When John E. Redmond advised his section of the Volunteers to join the British Army in the defence of small nations, his local followers fell away, and their organisation ceased to exist.

I was a member of Latton Company of the Volunteers

in 1915. We continued drilling and training. Pre 1916 we had no rifles; our equipment consisted of shotguns and one small revolver. During this period the Volunteers were organised in companies. There was then no Battalion organisation. Eoin O'Duffy was in charge of all the Volunteers in the county, which might be considered a Brigade area.

In 1916 - Easter Week - there was no attempt made by our Company to mobilise. We were not asked to mobilise and we didn't know that a rising was to take place. We heard after Easter Sunday that Volunteers had mobilised at Rockcorry under arms but that nothing further took place.

There were no arrests made following 1916 in our area. A start at re-organising the Volunteers was made in 1917. In early 1918 the effort to re-organise was begun in earnest and Companies were formed in a number of local parish areas, and then a Battalion organisation was put together. Our Battalion was known as the 4th County Monaghan Battalion and was made up of three Companies - Latton, Rockcorry and Tullycorbett. During the Conscription Scare in April 1918 a peculiar situation arose. The Sinn Féin organisation, which was very strong at this time, organised Volunteer Companies which were not linked up with our Battalion organisation but were under the control of the Sinn Féin organisation.

The Battalion staff at the formation of the 4th Battalion were :-

Battalion O/C.	Terence McGee
Battalion Vice O/C.	James Timmoney
Battalion Adjutant	?
Battalion Quartermaster	John McEntee

Company Captains. -

Latton	John Farmer
Rockcorry	James Timmoney
Tullycorbett	Paddy McDermott

From the time the Battalion was formed I acted as Battalion Lieutenant of Signalling and Battalion Lieutenant of Intelligence.

From 1912 onwards we had in many Unionist districts in County Monaghan a vigorous Ulster Volunteer organisation. In Rockcorry district there was a large Unionist population and also at Aughamullen in my parish area. In both these districts the Ulster Volunteers were well organised and well armed. In 1914 some of the Ulster Volunteers joined the British Army as did many of their catholic neighbours.

During the critical days of the conscription menace the Volunteers, although practically unarmed, were standing-to to take whatever action was possible to defeat the attempt to conscript our young manhood. Plans were made for instant mobilisation and the alarm to mobilise was the ringing of the church bells in each parish area. This danger passed.

The conscription menace did not increase the membership of our Volunteer Companies very much. All the big rush to join in the effort to defeat conscription was into the Sinn Féin Volunteers as distinct from our Battalion organisation. When the danger had passed all the Sinn Féin Volunteers dropped away. We did not consider this type of Volunteer much good, so we did not regret their leaving.

From mid 1918 up to the end of 1919, the Volunteers devoted their efforts to matters, such as, drilling and training and the procuring of arms and military equipment.

The Second Lieutenant of my Company, Patrick McPhillips, was a carpenter and was working at Bellemount Castle, Cootehill, Co. Cavan. He was able to procure a large quantity of ammunition, .45, .38 and ammunition for a 12 bore shotgun which was fitted with a big lead bullet. He had access to the room where this ammunition was stored and he removed it in small quantities. He was able to procure a large amount of this stuff without attracting attention. This man lodged in Cootehill and when he had a large amount of the stuff collected in a secret receptacle near the Castle, we went in and removed it, so that McPhillips would not be endangered by removing it to County Monaghan himself.

About July, 1919, we got information of rifles being kept in a house at Ashfield on the Cavan-Monaghan border. This information came to us through a Rockcorry Volunteer who heard it from a chum whose mother worked in this house. We invited this man to Latton to give us full details of the location of the house where those rifles were dumped and to discuss with him the best means of getting at them. We then passed on the information we gathered to Eoin O'Duffy, and he told Latton Company to proceed in seizing the rifles. We made plans to raid the place on the following Sunday night - 13th July, 1919.

I and four other members of Latton Company went by car to the entrance gate of the house. Eoin O'Duffy and Dan Hogan met us there to call off the raid. They

informed us that they got information in Clones that the British Authorities were aware of the plans to raid the house and that if the raid was attempted we would be in for a hot reception. We heard afterwards that the young man who first reported about the rifles, got scared about what he had disclosed and reported the matter to the Police Authorities.

Our next attempt to raid for arms was made on a Unionist house. This took place about the spring of 1920. We raided the house and obtained an Ulster Volunteer rifle.

About January, 1920, Ernie O'Malley came from G. H. Q. to County Monaghan as a volunteer organiser. Mr. O'Malley was full of energy and worked very hard in our area. He was with us when the plans were made for the attack on Ballytrain Barracks.

On the night of the 14th-15th February, 1920, Ballytrain Barracks were attacked. The Latton Company did all the preliminary work of scouting, Intelligence, and the details of the layout of the various rooms in the Barracks, and its relation to the other neighbouring houses in the street. The Barracks was part of a street of houses and was attached to other houses on both gable ends. A gateway was at one of its gables which led into a yard at the rere, and over this gateway was a loft. We had to break into a shop directly opposite the Barracks in order to provide cover for riflemen to cover the front of the Barracks. Access was gained to the loft over the gateway to the Barrack gable and from this position explosives were mined into the gable wall.

General Eoin O'Duffy was in charge of this operation, and it was his opinion that when the first shot was fired

at the Barracks and a demand made for the surrender of the building, the small garrison would surrender. The police, however, refused to surrender and they returned the fire. It was then realised by O'Duffy that the police intended to fight. Volunteers had then to be sent out from the main body to barricade the three principal roads leading into Ballytrain. I was sent in charge of a party to barricade the road leading from Castleblayney and we barricaded it at the cross at Corduff Church. John Farmer took a party and barricaded the road at Corlea. My brother, John, took a party to hold a bridge on the Shercock - Ballytrain road. In the meantime the shooting at the Barracks proceeded. The mine of explosives was fixed at the gable wall and was fired. Immediately after the explosion of the mine the police surrendered.

The attack on Ballytrain Barracks - which was one of the earliest Barrack attacks in Ireland - caused very little local excitement. The British did not make any local move to raid for or arrest local Volunteers. They apparently believed that the attackers all came from Clones and Monaghan towns and they concentrated their attention to those places. After the attack the local Volunteers took precautions against their capture by sleeping away from their homes.

Directly after the Ballytrain attack, about March 1920, a big re-organisation of the Volunteers took place. A number of new companies were formed and incorporated into our Battalion. The following Companies came to us: Ballybay, Dohamlet, Castleblayney, Carrickatee, Loughglish. These new Companies with the three already with us made up eight Companies in our Battalion.

After this re-organisation each Battalion in the country was under the direct control of G.H.Q. No Brigade organisation was now in existence in County Monaghan. Under this re-organisation the Battalion staff was as follows :-

O/C.	Terence McGee
Vice O/C.	Paddy McDermott
Adjutant	J. Sullivan
Quartermaster	J. McEntee

Company O/Cs.

Ballybay	Patrick Coyle
Duhamlet	James Finnegan
Carrickatee	James Duffy
Lough Eglisb	Patrick Daly
Castleblayney	John McGinn
Latton	John Farmer
Rockcorry	James Timmonee
Tullycorbett	Paddy McDermott

Up to the summer of 1920 the Volunteers carried out their usual drilling and training schedule. We carried out a few raids for arms in June and July, 1920. Those raids were on Unionist houses and resulted in the obtaining of one revolver. General O'Duffy then countermanded those isolated raids for arms and nothing further in that line took place until the general raid for arms at the end of August, 1920. In the general raid for arms the entire area was raided simultaneously. I and a few Latton Volunteers travelled on the night of the general raid to Tullycorbett Company area and carried out the raids there. This exchange of raids was intended to prevent the easy identification of Volunteers taking part. Nothing

except shotguns was obtained in the general raid for arms. We got very little arms in Unionist houses as the Unionists had handed in their firearms to the police before the raid took place.

A Volunteer - John Keenan - was wounded in the general raid for arms in the Monaghan Battalion area. This man later died of his wounds. The Volunteers attended the funeral from Monaghan town where he died, to his burial ground Corcaghan, and marched in military formation and gave full military honours at the graveside.

In the Ballybay area - "A" Battalion - we had two men shot dead in a raid on a Unionist house - one at Rockcorry and the other near Castleblayney. Those men were both buried secretly as it was not considered good policy to publish our casualties.

A man named Kelly from Monaghan town area was fired on by "B" men whilst driving a car, and wounded in the neck. This man also died of his wound about October 1920. After Kelly's burial our Battalion O/C., Terry McGee, got in touch with General O'Duffy and was informed by O'Duffy that a Flying Column was being organised in South Monaghan and that McGee was the man selected to organise it. The following men were selected for the Column by McGee:-

Latton Company		Patrick McPhillips
" "	" "	John Sullivan
Ballybay "	" "	Alex Duffy
Rockcorry "	" "	Patrick Timmonev
" "	" "	John McCabe
" "	" "	Eddie McGahy
" "	" "	Owen McGahy
Carrickatee Company		Patrick McQuillan
Tullycorbett "	" "	Patrick McDermott
" "	" "	Joe Duffy
Lough Eglisn "	" "	Patrick Daly
" "	" "	Patrick Brennan

The remainder of the Column strength was made up by men from Carrickmacross Battalion area. Patrick Brennan, Lough Eglisish, was Column O/C. for a short time. The Column first mobilised at Crossduffin Carrickmacross area and after a short time there they moved to Rockcorry area. The idea behind this movement was that the Column should spend a week in each Company and then move on to the next Company and thus cover all the Volunteer Companies in South Monaghan. Rockcorry was a Unionist area and whilst the Column was there a Unionist fired on them. This man's name was Duffy. Brennan, the Column O/C., decided that he would take out the Column and attack the Unionists openly. This policy did not receive the approval of the Column men, the area being much too hostile and dangerous for such an experiment and also in consideration of the fact that the Column had got strict orders to lie low until their first military operation was ready to take place. Brennan was replaced as Column O/C. by Terry McGee and he, Brennan, then severed his connection with the Column.

I was not connected with the Column so I am not competent to detail the movements or the activities of the Column up to the time its activities ceased.

The Column's first operation was an attack on a police patrol in the town of Ballybay on the 1st January, 1921. In connection with this attack I took charge of eight men whom I led into the town of Castleblayney to snipe a patrol there and so to divert the attention of the local Crown Forces from the Ballybay affair. In Castleblayney I was to be joined by five or six other Volunteers from the Castleblayney Company, whose duty it was to have the town scouted for the exact location of

enemy patrols at the time we arrived there and to provide us with arms for the operation. At the arranged rendezvous only two of the Castleblayney men had arrived and they had no arms for us or information as to police movements in the town. Mick McEntee and myself then went into the town to see what was doing there. We saw no police. We called into a public house where the police usually frequented, but found none there. We returned to where the rest of the boys were. One of the Castleblayney men was then sent into town to get in touch with - McGinn, his Company Captain, and a few others, and we arranged to meet them in a yard opposite York Street where they were to bring us any information available.

When we arrived at the yard one of the young scouts who had proceeded us into town, informed us that a police patrol was approaching. When I asked the scout where was McGinn he told me that McGinn had gone home, and he added "if you are wise you will go home also". I enquired as to the strength of the patrol and he informed me there were seven R. I. C. armed with rifles. I then went down to the yard where the men were and consulted with them about the position. As we had only shotguns and one revolver, we decided not to attack them, and we left Castleblayney for home. McGinn was arrested the next day and I believe it was to save himself from the danger of being associated with us that he allowed himself to be captured.

The Column next moved from Ballybay area to Latton, my Company area. On the 9th January, 1921, Patrick McQuillan, a member of the Column, left the Column billets for his home and on his journey there he was arrested by British Forces. This man gave all the information at his disposal to the British - where the Column was located and anything

else he knew. During the weeks he was arrested the Crown Forces - military and Tans - attempted to throw a cordon around the Column's billets. The Column scouts gave the alarm and were able to conduct the Column through a small breach in the Crown Forces' ring of encirclement, and all the men escaped to safety under rifle fire. Were it not for the difference of intention between the military and the Tans as to whom would get to the Column first, the Column might not have been so lucky as to find a gap in the ring surrounding them. McQuillan accompanied the Tans and military on this occasion.

After the escape of the Column the Tans burned the house of a man named McDonnell where the Column had been billeting. After this escape the Column demobilised and did not re-mobilise as a full-time Column again.

On the day previous to the raid on the Camp at Gerrybawn a civilian lorry came along and filled trenches to enable it to get through. It was believed later that the purpose of this lorry's activities was to make the road passable for the round up forces.

In February, 1921, the three McGahy brothers - John, Owen and Eddie - were arrested. The morning following in a round-up at Tullycorbett, Paddy McDermott was captured, together with some others of lesser importance in the area. On the following Sunday - Timmonee was sending a dispatch to Terry McGee at Latton by a dispatch bearer named Larmour. When Larmour came as far as Rockcorry Church gate a crowd of young fellows were on the road tossing halfpence and he stopped and took part in the game. A patrol of Tans came along and held up and searched all the men on the road and found the dispatch on Larmour.

He was arrested and later he devulged all he knew; he gave the names of all the members of the Rockcorry Company and they in turn were all arrested.

Our Intelligence, about mid March, 1921, intercepted a letter passing through the post, addressed to the O/C. Military Barracks, Monaghan, in which the writer, a man named Harry Carr, stated that there were a number of other members of the Tullycorbett Company who should be arrested. We sent a few Volunteers to interview this man, posing as British military. Carr was asked how he could be so definite as to who were members of the local Company. He took his visitors to the door and showed them the Volunteer Drill Hall a short distance from them and said, "Many a night I was there peeping through the window when drilling was taking place". This man was shot as a spy on Good Friday night 1921.

On Easter Monday night 1921, a man named Flemming and his son who shot McKenna of Castleblayney on the night of the general raid for arms, were executed for the McKenna shooting. On the following Saturday morning Duffy of Rockcorry, who fired on the Flying Column - mentioned previously - was shot for this activity. Those three shootings carried out inside of a week were done by three different sets of men. The police, however, thought that it was the Flying Column who carried out all the shootings.

Young Larmour, whom I have mentioned about previously, was released from Belfast Jail in April 1921, and he returned home to Rockcorry area. He lost no time in getting in touch with the local Volunteer officers whom he instructed to meet him at the house of a man named McCabe of Baraghy, Co. Cavan. We met him there and he made a full

confession of all he had told to the Tans, which I wrote down for him in the form of a statement which he signed. In this statement he emphasised that he told the Tans nothing but what they already knew. He was subsequently arrested by the Volunteers. I attended a Brigade meeting which was held at Tullycorbett, at which General O'Duffy and Dan Hogan attended. When the meeting was over I was preparing to leave when O'Duffy noticed the fact and told me to wait. He then informed me that Larmour was to be courtmartialled. During this conversation something happened or was said which gave me the impression that Larmour was to be shot. I protested against shooting him and O'Duffy said it would be an example and a warning to others. I replied that it would be very bad to take a young life as a warning. I said that I believed that Larmour told the Tans nothing but what they already knew. I also stated that I was with young Larmour on his first night out on a volunteer operation when we had more men than arms to go round, and I asked for volunteers to man the arms we had and that Larmour was the first to step forward and say, "I never was out before on a job but I am prepared to do my bit". After the above conversation with O'Duffy I told him I was in a hurry to get home as I had a horse closed in a house all that day and that I was anxious to get him out. I got permission to leave.

The courtmartial on Larmour was held and a sentence of death was imposed. He was kept under guard for some days after his trial. He was then executed along with another spy from the Monaghan Battalion area, named McPhilipps. Those executions took place at Aghabog.

The McGahy brothers and Patrick McDermott were tried by courtmartial in Victoria Barracks, Belfast. McQuillan

gave evidence against all those men and on his evidence all were found guilty and sentenced to death.

On the 11th June, 1921, a big round-up took place in our Battalion area in which thousands of military, Tans and R. I. C. took part. Most of our "wanted" men succeeded in evading capture. It was during this round-up that many men, who previously considered themselves safe from arrest, found that the police were looking for them and they had to go "on the run" up to the Truce. About ten days later we got information about a military force coming in our direction from Ballybay. There were five of us together when we received this news, and we had two rifles between us. We went to a hill overlooking the road on which we expected the military to travel and about 500 to 600 yards distant. Just on the edge of darkness the military came along and we fired four or five shots at them. Later we could not agree amongst ourselves if the military had replied to our fire. My own opinion is that the military did not fire but that our shots, which were fired over a lake, created an echo. The military passed on.

From the spring of 1921 on to the Truce we carried out a constant campaigning of road blockings and cuttings. In places where the County Council placed stones for stone-breaking we used the large boulders by placing them on the roads to cause obstruction which would immobilise to a great extent motor traffic.

The Brigade was formed about the end of June 1921. The meeting to organise the Brigade was held at Tullycorbett on or about the 19th June as far as I can remember. The Brigade staff appointed then was as follows:-

O/C.	Terence McGee
Vice O/C.	P. J. O'Daly
Adjutant	Jim Sullivan (myself)
Quartermaster	E. McNally

Nothing further of importance took place from the formation of the Brigade up to the Truce on the 11th July, 1921.

I will now deal in a concise manner with the Irish Republican Brotherhood of which I was a member. I joined the I.R.B. about 1919 or early 1920. Terence McGee was head of our Circle. John Farmer was second to McGee. I was third and B. McEntee was fourth. In the Battalion area there were two Circles of the I.R.B. with about ten to twelve men in one Circle and about six or seven men in the other. At the time I joined the I.R.B. there seemed no usefulness in the organisation as the Volunteers left nothing over that the I.R.B. could usefully carry out. We would hear things that were likely to happen in the I.R.B. but as far as that went we would also get to know the same information in the Volunteers.

SIGNED

James Sullivan

DATE

22nd May 1957

WITNESS:

John Mc Coy.
22/5/51

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I am almost certain that I have left out members of the Flying Column in the list given, but I cannot at the moment remember any others but those I have given.

J.S.