

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

BURU STAIDE MILITAIRA 1913-21

No. W.S. 786

ROINN



COSANTA.

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 786

Witness

- (a) Denis Daly, 11 Main St., Cahirciveen;
- (b) Padraig O Conchubhair, West Main St., " ;
- (c) Micheal Breathnach, Knopogue, Mastergeehy,
Killarney, Co. Kerry.

Identity.

- (a) V/O/C. 9th (Cahirciveen) Batt'n.
V/O/C. Kerry III Brigade.
- (b) O/C. 'A' Coy Cahirciveen Battalion;
- (c) O/C. Mastergeehy Coy. 9th (Cahirciveen) Batt'n.
O /C 3rd Batt'n, Kerry III Brigade.

Subject.

National and military activities
of Irish Volunteers, Cahirciveen, Co. Kerry,
1913-1921.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil

File No S. 2043

Form B S M 2

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
BURÓ STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21
No. W.S. 786

THE 9TH (CAHIRCIVEEN) BATTALION, KERRY BRIGADE.

LATER

KERRY 111 BRIGADE.

STATEMENT BY DENIS DALY, 11, MAIN STREET, CAHIRCIVEEN,
V/O.C., KERRY 111 BRIGADE.

PADRAIG Ó CONCHUBHAIR, WEST MAIN STREET, CAHIRCIVEEN,
O/C., 'A' COMPANY, 1ST BATTALION.

AND MICHAEL BREATHNACH, KNOPOGUE, MASTERGEEHY, KILLARNEY,
O/C. 3RD BATTALION.

The Volunteers were started in Cahirciveen in November, 1913, by Jerry O'Connell, N.T., his brother Denis, Michael McCarthy, James O'Shea and Jeremiah O'Riordan. A big percentage of the young men of the town joined in due course; other Companies were organised in the area, Waterville, Valentia, Ballinskelligs, Foilmore, Caherdaniel, etc..

Training at this stage and on into 1914 was carried out under the supervision of ex-British soldiers. Equipment was secured, belts, hats, puttees and haversacks.

The Howth gun running and subsequent shootings in Dublin by the K.O.S.B. had the effect of bringing many more men into the Volunteers and then with the war and John Redmond's Woodenbridge speech the split came later that year, but very few remained with the Redmondite party.

Training continued into 1915, parades, route marches and manoeuvres. A section of twelve or fifteen from the Cahirciveen Battalion went to the Galtee Training Camp at Galbally, Emly, Ballylanders and near Mitchelstown. The late Ginger O'Connell was in charge of the Camp, which lasted

three weeks. Training, principally manoeuvres and night attacks, with range practice carried out by means of rifles provided in the Camp, was carried out.

Frank Fahy, the Crowes of mid-Tipperary, Lar. Breen, Tadgh Crowley and Seamus Brennan and Peadar Bracken, both of Tullamore, were there. In all there must have been seventy or eighty Volunteers drawn from all parts of the country.

Three men were in each tent and Tipperary Cumann na mBan looked after the rations and we did the cooking ourselves.

The local R.I.C. kept a watch on the Camp but they never attempted to pass our armed Sentries.

On the return of the Cahirciveen men after the Camp broke up in August, they were kept very busy training men in the area, imparting the instructions they had themselves received. The area extended as far as Glenbeigh in the East and Caherdaniel on the other side, and included Valentia and Ballinskelligs.

The normal training of the times continued into 1916, there being Sunday and night parades. By this time the Caherciveen Company, which numbered about seventy, were about half of them armed, there being some thirty Martini rifles and a few revolvers. Across the water at Villa Nova the rifles were tried out on an improvised range, only one or two shots each being fired on account of the scarcity of ammunition. There were a few crude bombs each. Alf Cotton was in charge of the range practice. As far as we can

recollect, he came here to instruct and test our unit in drill and the use of firearms. He was a Protestant and a native of Belfast. At that time, we understand, he held a Civil Service post in Tralee, from which he was dismissed and ordered to leave the county by the British because of his Volunteer activities.

Denis Daly came home from London prior to Easter Week, at Christmas, 1915, in fact, when all members of the I.R.B. were advised through the circles to get out. He knew a little more than other people in the Volunteers and anticipated the fight. He remained in Cahirciveen only for a short time. About the end of February he went to Dublin and fell in with the Kimmage Company at Larkfield where he remained until Easter, when, following on the carrying out of certain special tasks, he fought in the G.P.O. during the Rising.

There was a certain amount of whispering going on through Holy Week and the Volunteers were told to go to Confession. On Easter Sunday morning about twelve men, under Jeremiah O'Connell and with Jeremiah O'Riordan and Tadgh O'Shea at the head, cycled to Tralee. The R.I.C. from Cahirciveen followed them as far as Glenbeigh but no further.

The party got to the Rink at Tralee and got some food there. All the North Kerry Volunteers were there. In the evening a big parade was held in the Sports Field. A sham mobilisation was held in the town late that night. This was for the purpose of covering Monteith's removal into safety from the town.

On the following morning the Cahirciveen Volunteers were told to go home. They cycled to Castlemaine and took the train to Cahirciveen. The remains of Con Keating, who, with his two comrades Dan Sheehan and Charley Monahan, was drowned at Ballykissane, were placed in this train en route for Cahirciveen and were interred in the local burial grounds on the following day.

Following Austin Stack's arrest, Paddy Cahill it was who may have been in charge of all the Volunteers in Tralee.

Things were quiet and very little news came through of what was going on in Dublin, but then after the surrender there at the end of Easter Week Paddy Cahill came along to order the Cahirciveen Volunteers to hand up their arms to the R.I.C. A few rifles were kept but the majority were given up. A number of Volunteers who had been identified as going to Tralee stayed away from home to avoid arrest. John Morgan O'Shea of Portmagee and Tim Ring, an operator in the Cable Station at Valentia, and both of whom were Volunteers, were arrested and sent to Frongoch.

In 1917, after prisoners were released from Frongoch, reorganisation started in Cahirciveen, was intensified and gradually extended out to the other areas, and by Summer, 1917, when Tom Ashe inspected the Volunteers in Tralee, the Volunteers in the whole Battalion area were as strong as before Easter Week. A very strong contingent from our Battalion was present at this parade in the Tralee sports-field, whence we marched to Casement's Fort at Banna Strand, Ardferf and back again.

Tom Ashe was arrested for his part in the Tralee parade and died in the following September while on hunger-strike. There was a parade to Dingle, four boats being chartered to carry the Volunteers across the bay and the Rosary was recited in the Ashe family burial ground the morning of his funeral in Dublin, 28th September. Some men went to Dublin for it.

After this the Cahirciveen Volunteers came out in public and held parades, wearing uniform and equipment. Patsy O'Connor, Jeremiah Reardon and Paddy O'Donoghue were arrested in November for their activities and lodged in Cork Jail but the hunger strike caused their release before Christmas. John White, Bracaragh, Cahirdaniel, was arrested for drilling in March, 1918, and sentenced to a short term of imprisonment.

Shortly after the "German Plot" there were wholesale arrests in 1918; Denis Daly, just recovered from an illness, was taken up in June and interned in Reading Jail. He was there until March, 1919. In the meantime training was being carried on; the strength of the Volunteers had increased considerably during the Conscription threat in April, 1918. The Cahirciveen Company increased to about 130, but fell again to about 90 once the likelihood of imposing conscription faded away.

The R.I.C. were getting busy, interfering with parades and carrying out arrests for illegal drilling. Patsy O'Connor, Cahirciveen, Dan O'Connell, Killelan, and Daniel Sullivan, Killoe, were arrested and got six months' imprisonment in Cork Jail. The normal routine of prison

life was interrupted by the tactics of the political prisoners, who eventually got out about three weeks short of their term. This was in July, 1919.

Organisation in the Cahirciveen Battalion was difficult on account of the extensive area to be covered and the lack of communications, bicycles being the only means of getting about and roads few and bad. There were four Companies, including two half Companies, in Cahirciveen Parish alone. There were seven other Companies. They all were known by the townlands and were situated in Cahirciveen (4), one in the town, one in Foilmore, one in Killoe, a half Company in Coonana and the other half Company in Ballycarberry. The other Companies were at Waterville, Mastergeehy, Caherdaniel, Valentia, Ballinskelligs, Portmagee, and a half Company each in Lohar and in the Glen. Each Company had its full complement of Officers and N.C.Os, Captain, 1st and 2nd Lieutenants, Company Adjutant and Company Quartermaster, and four Section Commanders. They were mostly all strong Companies, varying from seventy to one hundred and thirty each. A parade of the Battalion in the town of Cahirciveen in 1919 totalled 998 on the anniversary of the Ballykissane drownings at Easter 1916. Jeremiah O'Connell was O.C. Battalion, Jeremiah O'Riordan was Vice O.C., Murt O'Connell was Adjutant, Denis Daly was Quartermaster, Patsy O'Connor was O.C. 'A' Company (Cahirciveen) and Michael Walsh was O.C. Mastergeehy Company.

The making of slugs and loading of cartridges for shotguns were being carried on and bayonets were forged by the local blacksmiths to fix on wooden shafts, pikes in fact. There were not many firearms and raids were not carried out as there was an order from Brigade Headquarters not to display much activity owing to the possibility of the landing of arms at the Glen between Portmagee and Ballinskelligs and about ten miles from Cahirciveen.

Denis Daly used to go up to Dublin occasionally in 1919 and 1920 with plenty of money to try and secure arms from General Headquarters. He used contact Michael Collins or, if he was absent, Leslie Price (now Mrs. Tom Barry) to try and contact him. A few revolvers were secured now and again but without rifles and with the order to lie low nothing much could be accomplished in the way of ambushes. The nature of the country did not permit of close fighting with small arms. Denis Daly was up in Dublin ~~early~~ early in 1921 on the same mission and Dick Mulcahy, then Chief of Staff, remarked to him that there was not much activity in the Battalion area and when told of the order to lie low expressed surprise. The order to "lie low" was presumably received from Divisional H.Q. by the Battalion O.C. It may possibly have originated in G.H.Q. Though not observed too rigorously it was kept in a general way up to the time this statement was made by General Mulcahy. It was supposed that no official cancellation of the order was sent to the Battalion O.C.

In March, 1920, an R.I.C. man named Martin Clifford, home on leave in the Mastergeehy Company area, was suspected, from a conversation overheard in a publichouse, of being engaged in spotting. He used frequent the local R.I.C. Barracks too. The O.C. Mastergeehy gave an order to have him ambushed and this was done and he was wounded in the hip by a shotgun. He was taken away and recovered and continued to serve in the R.I.C. He never visited the district again.

There were not many military in the area; about half a Company of some Artillery Unit was stationed in the Barracks at Cahirciveen. They were not much in evidence and took no part in raids or other activity against the I.R.A. They only displayed annoyance when their girl friends had their hair bobbed.

The R.I.C. were withdrawn from outlying Barracks into Cahirciveen. They were augmented by Black and Tans early in 1921.

The Auxiliaries were stationed in Cahirciveen in 1921, in the R.I.C. Barracks. There were only about a dozen and they rarely moved around, only carrying out occasional raids on the houses of known Volunteers.

The Volunteers raided for arms in 1920, getting a lot of shotguns from loyalists' houses. A couple of rifles, a carbine and a Martini were secured from an ex-Sergeant of the R.I.C. who handed them up on demand.

On 29th September, 1920, in the Mastergeehy Company area a Sergeant and six Constables of the R.I.C. went out

to investigate the hold-up of a postman and the taking of the mails and were ambushed at Bunadireen. The postman had been carrying civil bills in registered letters and orders to farmers for non-payment of rent. The O.C. Company and six Volunteers armed with shotguns and one revolver lined one side of the main road and opened fire on the R.I.C. when they refused to halt. The fight was maintained until a Constable, named English, an ex-soldier, was wounded in the face. While the fight lasted, intense and constant fire was kept up by the two leading files of R.I.C. A Volunteer reported to the Company O.C. that a gate leading into a boreen was open and that there was a danger of the ambush being outflanked. Orders were given to watch out and when the R.I.C. man, English, put his head up over the fence he was wounded and that put an end to the fight. The R.I.C. patrol was armed with four rifles and three revolvers - two riflemen in front and two in rear. One of the riflemen in rear had his rifle strapped to his bicycle and left it behind. This, as well as the rifle used by the wounded R.I.C. man, and the seven bicycles which they discarded when fire was opened were captured. Rev. Fr. Courtney arrived on the scene almost immediately after firing ceased and he, with two members of the Cuman-na-mBan who were in the vicinity during the fight, rendered first aid to the wounded R.I.C. man and had him conveyed to Waterville.

There was no immediate round-up or reprisals following this action. Some time after, however, the Tans were drafted into Waterville, and early in January, 1921,

information was received by Mike Walsh, Company O.C., from Dr. Evans and Michael P. O'Sullivan of Waterville that the Tans intended to carry out reprisals at his place. Soon afterwards he received a letter typed in red and headed "Headquarters, Tralee". It mentioned the names of the seven men who took part in the Bunadireen ambush and, in addition, Michael Moran and Michael Fogarty, two Officers of the neighbouring Waterville Company. It stated: "We will visit you when you least expect us. Don't run. A quick death is better than a lingering one". It was learned from the same sources subsequently that one evening when the Tans had apparently everything prepared they secured a hackney car which was to be driven by Jim Shea, Waterville. He, however, put the car out of action in such a way that it couldn't be made serviceable for some time, and the Tans had to postpone their journey. But it so happened that no further action was taken by them.

Ambushes were planned late in 1920 at Ohermong, outside Cahirciveen, three miles to the West, and at the West end of Cahirciveen in 1921. The Volunteers lay in ambush for several nights at the latter place but the enemy did not appear. At Ohermong a party of seven Volunteers, under command of Dan Sullivan, Killoe Company O/C. and armed with six shotguns and two revolvers waited nearly all day for a party of R.I.C. who were supposed to cycle from Cahirciveen to Ballinskelligs. The R.I.C., however, failed to travel.

At the beginning of May, 1921, Kerry 111 Brigade was formed from the Units of the Cahirciveen Battalion, with the addition of two Companies from the former South East

Kerry Battalion - Sneem and Glenlough - which, however, were not included until the end of May or beginning of June, 1921. Previous to this change, all Kerry was one Brigade of which the Cahirciveen area was the 9th Battalion. In the Kerry 111 Brigade there were four Battalions. (The names and addresses of the Brigade and Battalion Staffs, with the names of the Companies of each Battalion are given at the close of this statement). Before May, 1921, plans for all activities were made by the Battalion Staff. When the Brigade was established, however, such plans were made by the Brigade Staff in conjunction with the Battalion O.C. directly concerned with their operation.

On the night of the 10th May, all the cars, motor-bikes and push bicycles were seized in the area. The cars were conveyed to 3rd Battalion area at Mastergeehy and the bikes were distributed among the Companies throughout the Brigade area.

On the 14th May an ambush was prepared at the Protestant Church in the West end of Cahirciveen, two Sections lying, one on either side of the road. Through a misunderstood signal, one Section withdrew when the street lights went out, and, while the other Section still lay in wait, the R.I.C., mostly Tans, appeared and one Volunteer opened fire without orders. Then they all fired. It was 12 o'clock midnight and when a Volunteer named Curran had been slightly wounded the ambush party withdrew under cover of darkness. The enemy, numbering twelve, remained there until morning, one of their party having been wounded slightly. 16 Volunteers

were engaged here. They were armed with two revolvers, two rifles and twelve shotguns. Michael Griffin, Battalion O.C., was in charge. No reprisals followed this action.

On the 15th May, 1921, Brigade H.Q. was moved from Cahirciveen, 1st Battalion Area, to Knopogue, Mastergeehy, 3rd Battalion area, where the functions of the Brigade Staff continued until the truce. Two columns of about 20 men each were formed; one with H.Q. at Teeromoyle, about six miles to the East of Cahirciveen, had Mike Griffin, O.C. 1st Battalion, in command, and was armed with 3 rifles and 17 shotguns with a few short arms; the other, with H.Q. at Knppogue, about seven miles to the East of Waterville, was armed with two rifles and 18 shotguns and was in charge of Mike Walsh, O.C. 3rd Battalion. A series of outposts were established at vantage points in the country intervening between each column and the nearest enemy H.Q. at Cahirciveen and Waterville. Two men were on duty for four hours at each of these posts night and day, and a system of signalling was arranged with smoke by day and a torch at night.

On the 17th and 20th May there were two more ambushes, both at the East end of Cahirciveen. There were no casualties on the 17th but on the 20th an R.I.C. man, Kilcoyne, was wounded and a girl was killed by a ricochet. The girl's name was Bridget Falvey and she had been standing in her doorway. Both these ambushes were carried out in the daylight. The I.R.A. force at each of these two attacks consisted of 12 men armed with 4 rifles and 8 shotguns in charge of the Battalion O.C., Michael Griffin. The police patrol on each occasion numbered 6 men.

Official reprisals followed these actions, three houses in the town and one outside being burned. The owners were known to the British as supporters on the Irish side, one of the houses actually belonging to the father of the Brigade O.C., Jeremiah Riordan. The others were belonging to Joe Brennan, subsequently to become a Senator, to Bartholomew Sheehan of Villa Nova outside the town and to Jeremiah O'Connell, formerly O.C. Cahirciveen Battalion.

At the end of May, 1921, a party of seven men armed with shotguns, in charge of Jack Tehan, Sneem, attempted an attack on a lorry of Tans and R.I.C. at Dirreensalagh, Sneem, on the main road between Kenmare and Waterville. They had the road trenched with a view to wrecking the lorry, which they assumed would accelerate when they opened fire. On the contrary, however, the lorry stopped, the Tans and R.I.C. dismounted and took cover from which they kept firing in all directions for a lengthy period. The ambush party were obliged to retreat, which they did successfully.

On the 7th July when six of the men concerned in the above incident at Dirreensalagh, and under the same leadership were billeted near Millmount, Sneem, they were surprised and almost surrounded by a military patrol. Word reached them just in time to enable them to get clear through a ravine in the hills. There was an exchange of shots before they reached actual safety, but the military apparently had no desire to advance through this hilly country.

On Sunday, the 3rd July, 1921, at Spunkane Chapel one of the scouts, a number of whom were on the watch along the road, reported a patrol of R.I.C. and Tans had gone cycling

along the road towards Cahirciveen. An ambush party, under Mick Fogarty, took up position near the Chapel about 3 a.m. and watched for the enemy's return. The Volunteers had two rifles and a number of shotguns. They remained in position until the people were coming to Mass about 8 a.m. and then retired from the position to the rear. In the meantime, while Mass was going on, two scouts, about 1½ miles away, signalled the approach of the enemy patrol, using smoke, i.e. a bush on fire, but apparently the patrol had actually passed them when the smoke signal went up. The ambush party rushed into position. The enemy observed this and opened fire. Fire was returned by the ambush party. The firing continued for some time. The enemy moved away into the bog under covering fire and the Volunteers retired. The only casualty was a horse shot dead in a field near-by.

In the week before the Truce a training camp to organise an Active Service Unit was established at Derriana in the Mastergeehy area about twelve miles from Caherciveen, to carry out a special course of training. This was being done by Fionan Walsh from General Headquarters, Paddy Coffey - an ex-British Army man - who was a Volunteer from the Cahirciveen Battalion - and John (Guy) Golden, a former American soldier, with Con Cronin of the Mastergeehy Battalion as Quartermaster. About fifteen Volunteers were drawn from the Brigade to make up the A.S.U. They were all armed mostly with shotguns, though there were two rifles. Training was in progress when the Truce came.

Following are given names and addresses of Officers, Kerry 111 Brigade and Battalion Staffs and location of Companies :

The personnel of the Cahirciveen Battalion Staff was changed in September, 1920. For health reasons, Jeremiah O'Connell, the Battalion O.C., retired, and Mortimer O'Connell, the Battalion Adjutant, left the district to take up a job in Cork City. The names and addresses of the new Battalion Staff appointed in that month were :

This was the Battalion) Staff from September,) 1920 to May, 1921.)	C.O. Jeremiah Reardon, Cahirciveen.
	Vice C.O., Denis Daly, Cahirciveen.
	Adjutant, Muris O'Clery, Cahirciveen
	Q.M., Maurice Walsh, Knopogue, Mastergeehy.

From May, 1921, when the Brigade was formed,
to the Truce.

BRIGADE STAFF.

Jeremiah Reardon, Cahirciveen.	O.C.
Denis Daly, do	Vice O.C.
Muris O'Clery, do	Adjutant and I.O.
Maurice Walsh, Knopogue, Mastergeehy,	Q.M.
Daniel O'Sullivan, Killoe, Cahirciveen,	Operations.

1st Battalion: Cahirciveen & Foilmore Parishes: Companies (6)

Mike Griffin, Cahirciveen,	O.C.	Cahirciveen.
John Ryan, Foilmore,	Vice O.C.	Foilmore.

1st Battalion (Contd.)

Companies.

John Curran, Foilmore,	Adjutant.	Killoe.
Dan Connor, Cahirciveen,	Q.M.	Coonana.
		Ballycarbery.
		Kells.

2nd Battalion: Prior and Valentia Parishes: Companies (5)

Pat Lynch, Mairisk, Glen, Ballinskelligs,	O.C.	Ballinskelligs.
Batt Fogarty, Cloon, Ballinskelligs.	Vice O.C.	Glen.
Seamus Connor, N.T., Ballinskelligs,	Adjutant.	Fermoye.
Patrick Dennehy, Killurley, Ballinskelligs,	Q.M.	Portmagee.
		Valentia.

3rd Battalion: Dromod and Lohar Parishes: Companies (7)

Mike Walsh, Knopogue, Mastergeehy,	O.C.	Gortatlea, Mastergeehy.
Mike Fogarty, Murreigh, Waterville.	Vice O.C.	Doorra, do
Mike Moran, do do	Adjt.	Kilagurteen, Waterville.
Con Cronin, Derrianna, do	Q.M.	Baslicon, Waterville.
		Lohar, do
		Tullig, Aghatubrid.
		Moulnahone, Aghatubrid.

4th Battalion: Caherdaniel & Sneem Parishes: Companies (5)

Jack Tehan, Sneem,	O.C.	Sneem.
Mike Tehan, do	Vice O.C.	Caherdaniel.
Denis J. Sullivan, Sneem.	Adjutant.	Raw.
James Clifford, Castlecove.	Q.M.	Castlecove. Glenlough.

Signed: Denis Daly
(Denis Daly)

P. O. Conchubhair
(P. O. Conchubhair)

Michael Breathnach
(Michael Breathnach)

Witnessed: C. Saurin LT. COLONEL
(C. Saurin)

DATE: 12th January 1953

