

W. S. 960

# ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

BURO STAIRÉ MILÉATA 1913-21

No. W.S. 960

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21

STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 960

Witness

Patrick Walsh,  
Annascaul,  
Co. Kerry.

Identity.

Member of Irish Volunteers, Annascaul, Co. Kerry,  
1913 - ;

Lieutenant same Company, later;

Member of I.R.B. Annascaul, 1915 - .

Subject.

Annascaul Company Irish Volunteers,  
Co. Kerry, 1913-1921.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil

File No. S. 2270

Form B S M 2

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STATEMENT BY PATRICK WALSH (Carpenter),

Annascaul, County Kerry.

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The first stirring of real national feeling in the Annascaul area after the Land League and the Fenians was on the occasion of a visit to Ireland of Edward VII. A Union Jack was flown from the tower of the local protestant church and in reply Thomas O'Connor and Michael P. O'Donnell of Annascaul hoisted a Black flag. Thomas O'Connor was arrested and fined 2/6d. The Magistrate asked O'Connor if he wanted to make himself King of Ireland. He stated that Annascaul was the only place outside Dublin and Cork which had offered an insult to the King.

We were interested in the formation of the National Volunteers in 1913, and units were organised in Annascaul, Lispole and Dingle. On the 15th August, 1914, a meeting of Volunteers was addressed by Thomas O'Donnell, M.P. and The McGillicuddy of the Reeks. They called on all able-bodied men to join the British Army and any man who was unfit or too old for active service should volunteer for Home Defence. Seven or so of those present including myself, Thomas Walsh, Paddy Houlihan, Denis Brosnan, John Costigan, Denis J. Sullivan and John J. Sullivan left the meeting in protest and we organised a section outside the Volunteers. After a while many of the men who had been at the meeting came over to our group and it should be recorded that not one joined the British Army.

About the time of the Redmondite split in the National Volunteers a sports meeting was held at Annascaul which was attended by Ernest Blythe, Desmond Fitzgerald, Frank Fahy and George Nicholls of Galway. Volunteers from Dingle and the surrounding areas attended. The question of taking sides for or against John Redmond was put to the Volunteers.

The Annascaul Unit was not concerned because we had already broken with the Redmondites.

The Volunteers were being trained by Thomas Foley who came out from Tralee to instruct us, but we were very short of arms; our only arms were a few shotguns and one rifle. But we carried on training as best we could.

At this time I was approached by Michael J. Moriarty of Dingle, who spoke to me about the I.R.B. and finding I was willing he swore me in.

About February 1915, we got instructions to collect some guns which were being sent out from Tralee. Thomas Walsh (now in U.S.A.) took some of the Annascaul Unit to Camp Railway Station where he collected the guns which were passed on to Lispole Company.

In view of the shortage of arms we were ordered to make pikes and we felt the things were taking shape for a blow at the British.

About a week before the Rising Austin Stack sent word to Annascaul from Dingle that he would be passing back to Tralee and asked that Thomas Walsh, who was in charge of the Volunteers at Annascaul, should meet him at the railway station. Along with Thomas Walsh at the station to meet Stack were Jim Counihan, Denis Brosnan and John Foley. Thomas Walsh and Austin Stack spoke aside from the others and then Austin Stack asked us all to be in Tralee on Easter Sunday for a parade which was being held.

Thomas Walsh later gave us orders about the place of assembly for the march to Tralee. We paraded at the house of Thomas Walsh in the village of Annascaul at 2 or 3 o'clock on Easter Sunday morning. The following members of the Annascaul Unit paraded :-

Denis Brosnan (Baker), . Annascaul.

Patrick Houlihan (Bootmaker now a Postman, Annascaul.

Patrick J. Walsh (Carpenter), Witness, Annascaul

Thomas Walsh (Company Captain), now in U.S.A.

Patrick O'Connor, Derrygorman, Annascaul

John Jeremiah O'Sullivan, Annascaul

James Counihan, "

Thomas Curtain, "

Patrick T. Kennedy (Garda) "

John Curran "

We marched from Annascaul to the village of Camp where we rested and were joined by Volunteers who had marched from Ballyferriter, Dingle and Lispole. We then marched on for Tralee arriving there at about 10.30 a.m. After attending Mass we went to the Rink where we remained for some time, being served with food by the Cumann na mBan. Early in the afternoon we took part in a parade of Volunteers to the sportsfield. I remember it was raining and there were a few tents in the field. We had a bit of a sing-song before marching back to the Rink. After returning to the Rink we were served with more food and later the same afternoon we were ordered out for another march. The Units were mixed up and I went with a Unit which marched out by Moyderwell Cross. We got a bad reception, as we marched along, from women who appeared to be the British soldier's wife type. After our march we returned to the Rink where we stayed on the Sunday night, sleeping on hay. The next morning at 7 a.m. we got orders to return to our own area and to hold ourselves in readiness and we left Tralee by an early train to return to Annascaul.

Some of us knew that something had gone wrong because Tadhg (Tim) Kennedy, who was living at Annascaul but worked in Tralee and was a Volunteer officer in Tralee, had brought out word that a man had been arrested at Panna and Austin Stack was arrested also. I think we knew on Saturday night.

When we were back in Annascaul we heard of the Rising in Dublin and on the Wednesday of Easter Week a dispatch came from Dingle to be carried to Tralee. Paddy Houlihan and Pat Kennedy of Annascaul Company took the dispatch from Annascaul to Tralee and after contacting some officer in the Rink they returned with a reply which was passed on to Dingle. We were all anxious to know what orders were going to come to us but nothing definite came.

Paddy Houlihan and Pat Kennedy had cycled 40 miles between dark and dawn over bad roads.

We heard of the end of the Rising and shortly afterwards a train came out from Tralee carrying British troops. Some of the troops alighted at Annascaul and with members of the R.I.C. acting as guides they arrested Jim Counihan. They were looking for Thomas Walsh but he was not at home. Counihan was released after about a week.

Things were quiet after the arrest of Counihan but the lads on whom we could depend used hold an occasional meeting in my workshop in the village of Annascaul. When Thomas Ashe was released he came home to Kinard which is near Lispole, and on his arrival at Annascaul he got a great reception. We met him with a band and torchlight procession. He addressed the people and said he was glad that the spirit was so good.

In 1917 we attended a parade in the sportsfield in Tralee and marched to Banna Strand for the Casement Anniversary.

We had the Volunteers reorganised, our ranks began to swell and then came the death of Thomas Ashe. He was one of our own and on the day of his funeral we sent representatives to Dublin but we also organised a procession to the Ashe family burial ground at Kinard. We had a great muster of Volunteers. They came from Dingle,

Ballyferriter, Lispole, and some came by boat from Caherciveen. An oration was delivered at the graveyard.

During 1918 we continued our efforts to organise and drill and the threat of conscription sent us many recruits but we had no arms to speak of.

We collected £210 for the anti-conscription fund in the Annascaul district. I made the collection in the village and the priests were on our side. The R.I.C. gave no trouble. When the conscription threat passed we held our membership and even increased in strength.

Thomas Walsh (Company Captain) who was my brother, and Captain T. Kennedy were arrested in 1918 for illegal drilling and released without trial following a hunger-strike. They were arrested again, however, some short time afterwards and were sentenced to four months' imprisonment. They were released again before the end of their sentence.

In November, 1918 I put a Republican poster in my own window. The R.I.C. came to arrest me and I resisted. My mother, father, and my brother Thomas came to my assistance and after a struggle we were all arrested.

My mother was released. She was summoned and fined at the local Court. My father, brother and myself were tried by courtmartial in Cork. My father and brother were released but I got six months which I served in Cork.

When I was arrested I was taken to Cork by train under an escort of R.I.C. and when the escort was returning it was attacked by some of the local Company. The attackers used shotguns and an R.I.C. Sergeant named Moloney was wounded. The Sergeant was taken to Tralee Hospital and he never returned to duty in Annascaul. John J. Sullivan of Annascaul, who is now in America, fired the shot that wounded Sergeant Moloney.

When I was released from jail the boycott of the R.I.C. had commenced and an order came from the Battalion Commandant that all shotguns in our area were to be gathered in. We carried out raids and took guns off Thomas Moriarty, an ex-London policeman, James Sheehan, Process Server, Thomas O'Donnell, J.P., and some others. A few surrendered their guns to us voluntarily amongst whom were Dr. Kane and Father Slattery. We raided the Protestant Rectory but got nothing. Many shooting parties used come to our area from Tralee and we were always on the lookout for guns from them. A Captain O'Malley of the Munsters stationed at Ballymullen Barracks, Tralee, came out shooting and we took his gun out of a shooting-brake while he was in for a drink. He didn't report it to the R.I.C. but got in touch with a Volunteer officer in Tralee named Tadhg Kennedy and made a complaint to him. An order came from Tralee instructing us to return the gun to Captain O'Malley because he was friendly. Another gun was taken off an English shooting party by Patrick Murphy and John Kennedy of Annaleck, Annascaul.

During 1920, the officers from the Brigade staff and some others from Tralee started to come to Annascaul 'on the run' and they greatly assisted in the training and organisation in the area.

In February, 1920, we got orders that we were to join with the Lispole Company in blocking the Inch-Castlemaine Road at Inch Chapel. This was to protect another unit which was to attack the R.I.C. Barracks at Camp. We blocked the road and the barracks was attacked on the 19th February, 1920. Thomas Ashe (cousin), who was later killed at the Lispole ambush, together with about twelve men from the Annascaul Company were on the job with me.

The R.I.C. evacuated the barracks at Annascaul and at Easter, 1920 we destroyed the barracks. I was sick the night the job was done and was in Tralee Hospital. I know that the local Company along with Thomas Ashe (cousin) and James McKenna did the job.

On the 14th April 1930, acting on instructions, the Company arrested a man named Patrick Foley as he was leaving a publichouse in Annascaul. It appeared that Foley, who had served in the British Army, had been recruited by the R.I.C. to return to his home area to act as a spy. He had been under observation for some time and just before his arrest he had been trying to pump people for the names of the men who had destroyed the barracks. When he was searched after his arrest, a lot of documents were found in his possession.

On the night of his arrest Foley was held in a shed near Glenmore School and was then passed on to the Camp Company. A courtmartial was held that night. The Court examined all the evidence including the documents found in his possession, and it was clear that he was a spy. He was sentenced to death. The execution took place on the 15th April 1920. The job was done at Camp and the body was left in the creamery yard at Deelis, near Camp.

Following the shooting of Foley, three members of the R.I.C. came to Annascaul from Dingle by train. They stayed around the district for some hours and word of their presence was sent to Tadhg Brosnan, O/C., 4th Battalion, Kerry I Brigade. Tadhg sent me out scouting to locate the party of R.I.C. I told Tadhg where they were and we collected a few of our men with guns. We made up a party of myself, Patrick J. O'Neill, John Kennedy, Dan Connell and Tadhg Brosnan.

We waited on the R.I.C. men on the Dingle side of Annascaul where they would have to pass to get back to the railway station.

I was left on the Dingle Road in case the R.I.C. might avoid Annascaul station and walk to a railway halt about three miles back and nearer Dingle. The R.I.C. came where Tadhg Brosnan had the party waiting. As the R.I.C. approached Tadhg's party the Sergeant was walking a little behind the two Constables and as they came near they were ordered to put their hands up.

On receiving the order the Constables drew their guns and opened fire. Tadhg Brosnan's party replied to the fire and Constable McPherson was wounded. The Constables took cover in a forge and the Sergeant escaped into a house but came out after a short time and surrendered his gun. Meanwhile the Constables had made their way back to the Railway Station and as the Station was crowded with civilians they could not be followed.

On the 17th August, 1920, preparations were made to attack a British lorry which was expected to pass Annascaul on its way from Dingle to Tralee. Arms were collected from the dump. I went to a place called Clash and collected rifles and about 70 rounds of ammunition. A land mine which had been left behind by the R.I.C. when they evacuated Clabane barracks was brought from Castlegregory.

We sent word into Tralee and Dan Jeffers, Johnny (Boss) Sullivan came out to Annascaul along with Paddy Kelly who now lives in County Kildare, who was to lay the mine. We assembled on the night of the 17th August, 1920 in the house of John O'Connor in Annascaul near the chapel. I distributed the arms.

We left Connor's house at 9 a.m. on the 18th August and went into the ambush position. The position chosen was on the main road Annascaul-Dingle about a quarter of a mile west of Annascaul village.

The ambush party took up position on the north side of the road, shotgun men lining the ditch and twelve riflemen behind a hedge further back and to the north. There is a cottage (Mrs. ~~Maddocks~~ <sup>MANNIX</sup>) about 200 yards on the eastern side of the ambush position.

The land mine was laid in the road in line with a telegraph pole which was used as a marker. The mine which was electrically fired was laid and wired by Paddy Kelly. He used a battery and coil as an exploder. I know a battery was used because a man named Milner who drove a hired car for a man in Dingle was passing through and he lent his car battery to Paddy Kelly. At that time cars could run without batteries. Batteries were only used for lighting.

We had a long wait in the ambush position and as we had twice as many men as we had shotguns the men took turns with the guns.

At about 2 p.m. Tadhg Brosnan, O/C., 4th Battalion, Kerry I, who was in charge, instructed John Costigan, who was with the riflemen, to move to a rise where he could get a good view of the road from Dingle. Costigan was trained in Signals and he was instructed to semaphore "Enemy advancing" when a lorry came in sight. Costigan had no sleep the previous night and in case he got drowsy he brought a boy scout named Jimmy ~~Maddocks~~ <sup>MANNIX</sup> (who lived in the cottage nearby) with him.

When Costigan sighted the lorry he gave the signal. I was with the riflemen and I had a clear view of the spot at which the lorry would be over the mine.

The lorry drove into the ambush position at about 3 p.m. and just as the engine of the lorry was over the mine Paddy Kelly pushed the button and immediately the lorry was covered with smoke.

The lorry rocked from side to side and after going forward for about 20 yards plunged into the fence on the north side of the road.

The occupants had jumped or been thrown out and they took cover at the fence where the shotgun men were placed.

They fired some shots and then there was a scattered volley from the shotguns. The shotgun men, acting on previous orders, retreated, under cover, by the western fence of the field to clear the way for the riflemen. The shotgun men had only two rounds each.

When the shotgun men were clear, the riflemen opened fire and after one or two rounds the British party surrendered.

There were about twelve men in the British party under a Sergeant. Six of the British were wounded. The wounded were brought on a commandeered motor car to Dr. Kane at Bunnear, about a half-mile south of the village of Annascaul.

The unwounded were brought to Annascaul and after being served with tea they were placed in motor cars, which had been held up during the operation, and sent back to Dingle. The lorry was burned. We captured twelve rifles and bayonets, some ammunition, trenching tools, a crosscut and a pickaxe.

Reprisals were expected following the ambush and that night the Annascaul, Lispole and Castlegregory Companies 'stood to' and took up positions at the north-east of the village of Annascaul to await any party which might come out. Word came that two lorries and an armoured car were on their way out from Tralee.

Tadhg Brosnan, O/C., 4th Battalion, who was the senior officer with us, gave orders that if the British did not start reprisals we were not to fire. The lorries and armoured car drove through about 1 o'clock in the morning. They drove slowly but did not start anything. All the people of the village of Annascaul had left their homes; some had gone out to the country while others had gathered in the chapel.

They went out taking anything they could carry. The publicans dumped their whiskey; they left the plain porter.

The British returned from Dingle the next day and brought their wounded with them. On their way from Dingle to Annascaul they picked up a farmer named Daniel Moriarty whom they had seen "signalling". He was calling a dog.

They took him to Annascaul and tried some looted beer on him in case it had been poisoned. He was then taken to Tralee and sent to Cork under-arrest. They also arrested a lad named Daniel McKenna from Iougher, Glenmore, Annascaul. He was brought to Cork also. Moriarty and McKenna were tried by courtmartial. Moriarty was released, but McKenna got 5 or 15 years.

McKenna was not in the ambush but he was identified by a resemblance he had to a cousin of his who was in the ambush.

On the next day all the Volunteers had been sent home or back to their units and Patrick Kennedy, one of the men who had been in the ambush, was working on an out farm he had near the scene of the ambush. He was making hay when another man who had been in the ambush, John Costigan, came along the road. Costigan was a postman. Patrick Kennedy spoke to Costigan and asked him to send out a few of the lads to give him a hand with the hay on the next day. Kennedy knew that some military were on their way from Tralee and he asked Costigan how he proposed to avoid them. Costigan told him that he would have to go back to the Post Office at Annascaul before he could decide. Patrick Kennedy said that he would cross to Gurteens about half a mile to the south of his land.

The British lorries came along into Annascaul and started shooting round the village. They looted a few shops and held up and threatened

an ex-British sailor named Patrick Brosnan - they were seeking information regarding ~~Michael Brosnan~~ <sup>myself and my brother Thomas.</sup> Patrick Brosnan refused to answer and they put him in one of the lorries but they released him again before they left the village. The British ex-soldiers and sailors living round the area were in sympathy with us against the Tans and Military.

The British divided their forces when leaving the village and one party went out by Gurteens where they found Patrick Kennedy and some other lads in hiding. A British soldier who had climbed on to a ditch saw the group in hiding and fired one shot killing Kennedy. He then ordered the others to put their hands up. The boy scout (Jimmy ~~Maddock~~ <sup>MANNIX</sup>) who had been at the ambush was with the party in hiding (the remainder were not Volunteers). ~~Maddock~~ <sup>MANNIX</sup>, who is now a National Teacher in Ballinalee, County Longford, asked to be allowed to go for a Priest for Kennedy. One of the soldiers told him to go ahead but when he attempted to run across a hill he was fired on by an armoured car and he had to return.

Paddy Kennedy got a public funeral to Ballinacurty. The whole 1st Brigade and a large crowd attended and a firing party came from Tralee.

After the Annascaul ambush I went with Paddy Connor of Derrygorman for an attempted ambush at Camp but it did not come off.

I was a Quartermaster and I was responsible for seeing that any arms we had were kept in order.

The 5th Battalion Column under Michael Moriarty and the 1st Kerry Brigade Column were moving in and out of the area and I was busily engaged looking after their needs.

There is another incident before the Truce that I wish to record. About two days before Christmas, 1920, I was working at carpentry in the Chapel in Annascaul when Father Lyne (who is now Canon in Dingle) came to me and asked me to take a message to Taigh Brosnan, O/C., 4th Pattalion, at Castlegregory.

The message was to the effect that Father Lyne had got word from the Bishop that the British were aware of plans Tadhg was making for an ambush round Connor Hill or Castlegregory. I went looking for Tadhg but could not find him in Castlegregory and I gave the message to Dan Jeffers of Tralee who was with the Brigade Column at Stradbally, Castlegregory.

I was ill for some time before the Truce and I missed the Lispole ambush but the Annascaul Unit sent the following to Lispole :-

Denis Brosnan (Boker), Michael Pierce,  
 Patrick T. Kennedy, Michael D. Kennedy, Alfred Fullerton,  
 Patrick (<sup>SPUD</sup>~~Speed~~) Murphy, Thomas (Bawn) Kennedy,  
 John Kennedy, Annaleck, John (ex) Kennedy, Daniel O'Connell.

Signed: Patrick Walsh  
 (Patrick Walsh)  
 Date: 22<sup>nd</sup> June 1954.  
 22nd June, 1954.

Witness: James J. O'Connor  
 (James J. O'Connor)

