

**ORIGINAL**

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21  
BUREAU STAIRS MILITARY HISTORY  
No. W.S. 996

ROINN  COSANTA.

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 996.....

**Witness**

Thomas Carmody,  
Bridge Street,  
Ballylongford,  
Co. Kerry.

**Identity.**

Member of Irish Volunteers, Ballylongford,  
Co. Kerry, 1914 - ;

Lieutenant same Company, later.

**Subject.**

National activities, Ballylongford, Co. Kerry,  
1911-1921.

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

Nil

File No. S. 2292.....

Form B.S.M. 2

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STATEMENT OF THOMAS CARMODY

Ballylongford, Co. Kerry

I was born here in Ballylongford in December 1888. My father was a carpenter; he sent me to the local National School which I left at the age of 14 years. I then became an apprentice to the carpentry trade with my father.

I became a member of the A.O.H. in the year 1911, when the branch was first formed in Ballylongford.

When the Volunteers were formed here in early 1914, I became a member. A man named Roger Mulvihill was in charge and an ex-British soldier, Ted Enright (called Tadie Bawn) became drill instructor. There were between 80 and 90 men all told in the company at the time. We drilled and paraded around the village for some time. When John Redmond called on the Volunteers to defend the shores of Ireland there was a split in the company which soon after ceased to exist.

Early in 1916 two local men, Roger Mulvihill and <sup>Brian</sup> ~~Grady~~ <sup>Grady</sup>, reorganised the Volunteers which I then rejoined. Mulvihill and <sup>Grady</sup> ~~Grady~~ were the officers. About two months before Easter Week of 1916 a man named Michael Griffin, an I.R.B. man, of Listowel, a schoolteacher, came here to Ballylongford and asked me to select a few of the most reliable men in the company in the event of the Volunteers having to go into action at short notice. I gave him the names of Brian Grady, Eddie Carmody, Paddy Ahern, Michael McNamara and Tom Ryan. The only arms we had in the company at this time were a few shotguns.

Up to and during Easter Week 1916, we received no instructions of any kind in regard to the Rising, so the company took no part whatever in the events of Easter Week.

From Easter Week up to early Spring of 1917, things were very quiet. In about April 1917, the company was reorganised. Roger Mulvihill became Captain, Liam Scully 1st Lieutenant,

and Eddie Carmody 2nd Lieutenant. The strength of the company when reorganised was about 30 men. We drilled and paraded all that year. About July of this year I, with Roger Mulvihill of Ballylongford attended an inspection of Volunteers by E. de Valera in Killarney.

Early in 1918 during the conscription scare all the men in the locality joined the Volunteers. In all, we got about another 80 men which brought the strength up to about 110 men. When the conscription scare was over, most of the older men left the company and had nothing more to do with the Volunteers. One of the members of the company at this time was a man named Liam Scully, a Gaelic teacher. He had been appointed treasurer of the anti-conscription fund which had been formed then for the purpose of buying rifles. When Scully asked for Volunteers to make a collection in the area for the fund, James O'Sullivan and myself volunteered for the job.

After the collection, Sergeant Brennan of the local R.I.C. reprimanded us for making the collection, but apart from this he took no action. Liam Scully later lost his life in an I.R.A. attack on Kilmallock R.I.C. Barracks.

In about July of 1918, the Gaelic League Fheis, which was to have opened about this time, was proclaimed by the R.I.C. Days before the opening date British troops about 150 strong entered the town with armoured cars and machine guns mounted on lorries. On the opening date the Volunteers were sent out through the country to inform the people that the Fheis would be held in the <sup>"Building" Ardell, three miles from Ballylongford,</sup> ~~open~~ and not in the open. The Fheis was successfully held in the <sup>"Building"</sup> ~~open~~; speakers included Canon Hayes, P.P., and Cathal Brugha. At the end of this year I took part in a raid for arms on the home of a local loyalist. We got a couple of shotguns and ammunition. Later, two brothers named Moroney were arrested, charged and sentenced at Cork Assizes to six months each for the raid.

All through the year 1919 the company continued to meet

and drill outside the village. At the latter end of the year I took part in the collection of all shotguns and arms in the area. In a raid/on the house of an ex-British officer named Colonel Hickey we got two rifles and ammunition for same..

On the 2nd January 1920, two men of the company named Thomas Ryan, Mick McNamara and myself held up an R.I.C. man named Constable Clarke to disarm him of his revolver. He was held up at the Bridge near Bridge St. in the town. We were armed with revolvers. We called on him to <sup>put</sup> his hands up; he made to draw his revolver and we opened fire. He was wounded and fell to the ground. We did not succeed in taking the revolver.

In May 1920, an I.R.A. party including T.P. Shea, Patrick Walsh and Patrick Corridan attacked a party of R.I.C. in charge of Sergeant McKenna at Gale Bridge, <sup>Listowel.</sup>. The R.I.C. were on their way from Listowel to Ballylongford. I was not in this attack. Sergeant McKenna was shot dead and two R.I.C. were wounded. The next morning the R.I.C. raided my house in Bridge St. I was not at home at the time. When they had left the furniture and everything in the house were in disorder.

About the end of May 1920, one of our men was summoned to appear at the local Courthouse in connection with some minor matter. The company staff decided to burn down the Courthouse the night before he was to appear. I with Michael and Patrick McNamara, Patrick Ahern and another man were detailed for the job. I was in charge. We sprinkled petrol on the side of the roof, then placed straw from a nearby field in the garret, lit a candle, set fire to the straw and "made" for the door. When the McNamaras, myself and the other man got outside we discovered that the door had banged shut and that Patrick Ahern was trapped inside. We managed to break open a back window and pull him through in a state of exhaustion.

A short time afterwards a cycle patrol of military which were stationed at Tarbert Island arrived in Ballylongford one night. My brother and myself were in bed at the time. Our

scouts who for some time before were constantly on duty in the town informed us immediately. We just had time to grab our clothes and make for the country in our night attire. As we left by the back the military came in by the front door. When we returned in the morning we found that nothing had been disturbed in the house.

All through the year 1920 I took part in the trenching of roads and cutting of telegraph lines in the area. In October of this year I, with Brian Grady, Jack Ahern, Ger Hunt, Con Brosnan, Dan Grady and Ned Joe Walsh and others held up and disarmed two R.I.C. in the village. We got two revolvers and took the R.I.C. to Newtownsandes where they were held in a local farmer's house under I.R.A. guard.

Soon after the hold-up and arrest of the two R.I.C. the Tans arrived in Ballylongford. The Tans and R.I.C. between them numbered about 20 men. The Tans were not long in the village when they started searching and raiding the homes of members of the I.R.A. In one of these raids on the home of one of our men - Jerry Carmody, who was at home at the time, but who managed to escape - a civilian named John Heapy was shot by mistake and was removed to hospital with a bullet in the chest. The Tans went from house to house warning the people of the village that if the two R.I.C. men who had been arrested were not returned to the barracks that they would burn down the village. In order to save the village the two R.I.C. were released after about a week.

About a month after the arrest of the two R.I.C. on the night of the 21st November 1920, the Tans were going from one publichouse to another, drinking and shooting all around them, breaking windows, holding up people at the point of the revolver and beating innocent people. It was a night of terror, most of the people of the village left for the countryside as they were expecting their homes to be burned down.

On this particular night three of our men - Eddie Carmody, Jimmy Dillane and Edmund Hayes were in Brian Grady's house, Ballylyne St. As the Tans came along this street breaking the windows, the three of them rushed out the back and got to the sports field some distance away. It was about 3 o'clock on the morning of the 22nd November 1920. In the sports field I later learned that Hayes volunteered to go to Rusheen about half a mile away to try and obtain three rifles for the purpose of having a shot or two at the Tans in their drunken frenzy. They had agreed to meet later at the doctor's gate about quarter mile outside the town. While Carmody and Dillane waited at the doctor's gate, the shooting stopped in the town; just then Hayes came along with one rifle only which he gave to Carmody. Hayes then left the other two men to go elsewhere for two more rifles. Soon after, Carmody and Dillane were joined by another of our men, Peter Deegans, who had also left the town when things were becoming too hot.

While Carmody, Dillane and Deegan were waiting for the return of Hayes, they heard voices and footsteps approaching. It was a moonlight night and they assumed that the footsteps were those of Hayes and other men of the company returning with arms. Carmody said: "They are the lads", meaning that they were our own lads. Carmody advanced towards a bend in the road about 50 yards away. As he neared the bend he discovered that the footsteps were those of a party of about 6 Tans. He turned and ran, the Tans opened fire, shooting him in the back. He managed to throw himself across a low wall in front of the doctor's house. The Tans immediately raided the doctor's house but found nothing there. As they were leaving they found Carmody behind the wall, pulled him out on the road and shot him dead on the spot.

Having shot Carmody, the Tans came back into the village and burned down the Creamery, Saw Mills and business premises

of a Mr. Collins, firing shots in the air until daylight.

Shortly after the shooting of Carmody I visited his father at Cush, Newtownsandies. As I left his father's house, which is a quarter mile from the public road, and was making for the public road, I saw several lorry loads of Tans coming over a bridge on the road. I immediately took cover behind a hedge in long grass. Then the lorries stopped. I thought they had seen me. I waited, and after a while they started up and went off. That day they arrived in Ballylongford, held up and searched the people as they were coming from Mass; they raided my house and took my bicycle, also the big drum and side drums of the local band which were in my care.

In January of 1921 the flying column for North Kerry was formed. Brian Grady, Paddy Ahern and myself, who were on the run at the time, were selected for it from the Ballylongford Company. Some time later, Paddy and Michael McNamara of the company also joined the column. In all, there were 35 men in the unit. We had only six rifles at first. We got three of these from the Tarbert Company; two that had been captured at the successful disarming of the guards at the Coastguard Station at Ballyheigue in May 1920, and one that had been taken some time earlier from a fishery patrol man at Killelton Weir.

The column met on the first night at the home of Paddy Hayes of Mount Hayes, Tullamore. That same night they went to Knockanure where they put up for the night. Next day after dinner we crossed the Feale River on horseback and reached Duagh where we stayed for one night. As we were crossing the river Feale, an ex-British officer named Sir Arthur Vickers of Kilmorna House saw the full column. After one night in Duagh we moved to Rahee about four miles away. In the early hours the next morning we heard that the Tans were looking for us at Duagh; they had come from Listowel and Tralee. We

concluded that Sir Arthur Vickers had sent word to the Tans of our movements on the previous day after he had seen us.

We took up positions in Rahee expecting the Tans to follow us to Rahee; however, they did not follow. In the meantime we got word that military and Tans were coming in the opposite direction from Listowel, so we decided to retreat up Stack's Mountain and reached the peak at about 9 o'clock that night.

Late that night we received word that the military and Tans were commandeering all motor cars and lorries in the town of Tralee; we were expecting a large-scale round-up and remained in full kit that night. I was on guard duty during the night when I saw the headlights of about 40 cars and lorries coming from the town of Tralee and turn up a road leading to the mountain. We immediately retreated to Glenelema on another mountain. When we got there we could still see the lorries and cars which were the military and Tans making for Stack's Mountain. We saw them come to a halt at a point where they had to cross a mountain river. It appears the river was swollen and they could not cross, so they retreated.

Some time later they returned and by-passed the mountain road. We thought that their intention now was to come in behind us on the other side of the mountain, so we decided to go back to Stack's Mountain and make for Duagh. That evening we were located in a field behind a thick hedge on the main road between Tralee and Listowel when we heard the lorries and cars returning to Tralee. The O/C. gave the order to ground arms. This was in case a gun went off accidentally. Immediately afterwards the entire raiding party of Tans and military passed in the lorries and cars which we had been avoiding for about twelve hours. They were only a few yards from our positions.

Just after the formation of the column, it would be about a week after the event referred to above, the column decided to go to Tarbert to attack a number of Tans who used to frequent



a certain publichouse there. Denis Quille was in charge; other men present were Brian Grady, Jack Ahern, P.J. McElligott and myself. When we arrived in Tarbert I was allocated a position at the pier of a gate opposite the publichouse; the other men of the column were located about twenty yards behind and out of sight. I had only taken up my position at the pier for a couple of minutes when I spotted two Tans leaving the publichouse. They stood for some minutes talking to a girl in a nearby doorway. I went back to the other men of the column and told them the position. The Tans were in revolver range and could easily have been shot at. Brian Grady and the others loaded up. They were armed with revolvers and rifles. Due to the presence of the girl, Denis Quille, the man in charge, did not give the order to open fire. Soon after the Tans parted with the girl and made for the barracks. We thought that other members of the column located nearer the barracks would have a shot at the two Tans before they reached the barracks, but it seems that they were not in suitable positions. The Tans proceeded to the barracks which they reached in safety. The column then returned to Newtownsandies.

In about the middle of February 1921, the column were in the neighbourhood of Tullamore. They had decided to attack Tan patrols in Ballylongford and Ballybunion. The column was divided into two parts, about 17 men were detailed for the Ballylongford attack and 17 men for the Ballybunion attack. I was with the party that went for the Ballylongford attack.

On the 22nd February 1921, our party arrived in Ballylongford and took up positions in gateways and lanes in the village. The Tans had no fixed time for patrolling the village. Denis Quille was in charge of our party. We were not very long in our positions when two Tans emerged from a publichouse and were making for the barracks. Our men opened fire; they were armed with either rifles or revolvers. The two Tans fell wounded.

The column got the order to retreat, so we returned to Tullamore.

The next morning the Tans turned out of the barracks and, a short time after, were joined by lorry loads of Tans from other towns in the area. They looted and raided almost every house in the village. They filled the lorries with groceries, whiskey, cigarettes and anything they could lay their hands on. They then went from one house to another setting fire to each. The women were terrified and many of them threw their children from the top windows into the street. In all, 14 houses were completely burned out, while several others were partly damaged.

Some days after this the column moved to Gahard. We had just arrived there when we got word that the Tans and military were filling in trenches which had been cut in the road between Listowel and Bedford Crossroads. The column decided to attack there and then. When we reached our intended positions, we learned that the Tans and military had left, so we returned at our ease to Gahard.

As we were going up Gahard Hill, we heard a whistle behind us. It was Tom Kennelly who was in charge of the column. He had just been informed that a party of Tans who had come from Ballybunion were raiding houses, including his father's house, in the vicinity of Lisselton crossroads. Kennelly divided the column into three sections. He was in charge of the section that I joined. He sent the other two sections to the right and left of Lisselton so as to surround the Tans. We got the order to double. The distance from where we were was about two and a half miles. As we approached Lisselton railway station we saw the Tans jump into the train in which they had come; the train started moving out of the station; we got down and opened fire on it as it gathered speed. The Tans had escaped us.

In the month of May 1921, the column decided to come into Ballylongford to attack a patrol of five Tans who usually patrolled the village under a Sergeant Gillooly. Gillooly always went into the houses of members of the I.R.A. making inquiries, while the other four Tans acted as a bodyguard. On this particular night we were armed with revolvers and rifles and were divided into three sections, Tom Kennelly, Denis Quille and Paddy Joe McElligott being in charge of the sections. We took up positions in different parts of the village. We waited for over two hours for the patrol to appear, but they did not venture out of the barracks that night and likely they had been told by someone that we were in the vicinity. After a short talk between the men in charge, it was decided to attack the barracks. We took up positions around the barracks. We knew it was not possible to take it, but we opened fire for several minutes; in all, we fired about 100 rounds. The Tans returned the fire and after fifteen minutes we decided to retreat. This attack took place on the 24th May 1921.

Some time after this the Column was disbanded for a while. I was then staying at the home of John Ahern of Leitrim and one morning decided to go into Newtownsandes Village. When I reached the public road I met a girl named Miss Mulvihill. While I was speaking to her two soldiers, with rifles slung, appeared about 800 yards away. The soldiers belonged to a party which had arrived in the village in five lorries. I was armed with two revolvers at the time and the girl knew this. She volunteered to walk down the road and meet the soldiers and engage them in conversation. This she did while I calmly walked back to a by-road out of <sup>their</sup> sight. I crossed a high fence into a meadow and, after some minutes, the five lorries passed by on the road I had just left.

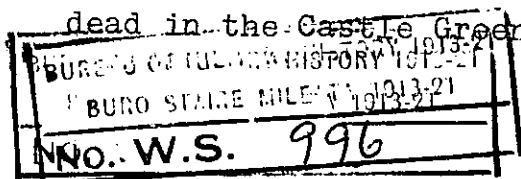
In the month of June 1921, the No. 2 Brigade Column carried out an attack on Causeway R.I.C. Barracks. Our column on this

occasion took up ambush positions on each side of the road about midway between Ballyduff and Causeway. Ballyduff is about five miles from Causeway. Our column were all armed with rifles and revolvers. Our intention was to prevent reinforcements of Tans or military from Ballybunion or Listowel reaching Causeway. We were in position for about one hour when we were informed that the attack had been called off, so we decided to return to Newtownsandies from which we had come.

Some time prior to the Truce on 11th July 1921, the column had decided to ambush a party of Tans who used to come to bathe every day when the tide suited, in the local river - the River Forde. On the morning of the Truce I, with six other men of the column, Mick McNamara, Pat Cox, Mick Keane, Michael Mahony, Tom Sullivan and Jim Moran (deceased), took up positions in a house which the Tans would have to pass on their way to the river. A certain lady in the neighbourhood who had observed our movements had the information conveyed to the Tans in the barracks. The Tans did not come out for their bathe that morning. When 12 o'clock arrived we all returned to our digs,

Some few days after the Truce I was appointed company captain in Ballylongford, as well as O/C. of police in the area. We were doing police duties up to the Civil War. The company then divided. When this happened I resigned and took no further part in the I.R.A.

Before I close my story, I would like to say that during the Truce I, with Patrick Cox, Michael McNamara and John Creadon went to Ballybunion one day for the purpose of shooting the Tan, named Sergeant Maher, who had shot Eddie Carmody in November of 1920. We all knew the Tan and that he had been transferred to Ballybunion after the death of Carmody. We located him as soon as we arrived in Ballybunion and shot him dead in the Castle Green.



Signed: Thomas Carmody

Date: 28 Aug. 1954

WITNESS:

John J. Daly

(Thomas Carmody)