

W.S. 1,002

**ORIGINAL**

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
BUREAU STAFFE MILITA 1913 21
No. W.S. 1002

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21

STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 1,002

**Witness**

John J. Walsh,  
Lyre,  
Farranfore,  
Co. Kerry.

**Identity.**

Member of Currow Company Irish Volunteers,  
Co. Kerry, 1917 - ;  
Lieut. same Coy. later.  
Q.M. 1st Batt'n. Kerry No. 2 Brigade.

**Subject.**

Currow Company, 1st Battalion, Kerry No. 2  
Brigade, 1917-1921.

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

Nil

File No. S. 2304 ..

Form B S M 2

# ORIGINAL

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STATEMENT BY JOHN J. WALSH,

Lyre, Farranfore, Co. Kerry.

Currow Company was formed early in 1917. I began to drill a section at that time about twice a week.

On Easter Saturday night or early Easter Sunday morning 1917, members of this section put a Sinn Féin flag up on the belfry of the chapel or R.C. Church. I was in charge of this party.

By the end of 1917 the company was about forty strong. An election was held to appoint officers. Patrick Dennehy was appointed O/C. I was appointed 1st Lieutenant.

A Sinn Féin Club was formed in Currow in the year 1917. Thomas B. Brosnan was appointed Chairman. Patrick Bradley, Ballybeg, secretary, and Patrick O'Shea, Ballybeg, treasurer.

During the winter months of 1916-17 a Gaelic Class was held two nights a week at Reidy's cottage, Killeentierna.

Early in March 1918, every young man of military age in the parish joined the Volunteers when the country was threatened with conscription. The Volunteers were drilling on Sundays and about four nights a week.

A company of Cumann na mBan was formed in Currow in 1918.. Miss M.B. Daly, The Presbytery, was appointed O/C. Julia Butler, Ranalough, adjutant or secretary; Nora Walsh, Lyre, treasurer or Q.M.

About September 1918, Currow Company was reorganised.

The Volunteers collected all arms in the area not in the possession of Volunteers, and also material for making spears during 1918. The following officers were appointed when the Volunteers were reorganised: Patrick King, Ballybeg, Captain O/C.; myself, 1st Lieutenant; Thomas Murphy, Ballybeg, 2nd Lieutenant; Daniel Griffin, Killeentierna, adjutant; Patrick Bradley, Ballybeg, quartermaster.

There were four section commanders appointed: Timothy Cronin, Killeentierna, No. 1; James Walsh, Lyre, No. 2; John Sullivan, Clounclough, No. 3; Patrick Healy, Currow Hill, No. 4.

The company drilled and paraded on Sundays and two nights each week.

After the First Dáil was established, a Sinn Féin Court was formed in Killeentierna. Father W. O'Halloran, P.P., was appointed chairman. John (Champion) Brosnan of Glounlea, Scartaglin, and Bryan D. O'Sullivan of Gortshanafa, were the other members of the Court. Patrick Bradley of Ballybeg was appointed clerk of the Court.

About this period a police force was formed in Currow.

In May 1918 a parish collection was held to fight conscription. The money collected was later handed over to the I.R.A. to buy arms and ammunition.

The Sinn Féin Court was held once a month in Barry's house, Killeentierna.

About the end of 1919 the local policemen did all police work in the parish and prosecuted anybody who broke the law.

In September 1919 ten members of Currow Company, then called D/Coy. 1st Battalion, Kerry No. 2 Brigade, lay in ambush at Droumroe. They had their faces blackened with boot polish, as all raids and ambushes at that time were carried out by masked men. Humphrey Murphy was in charge of this party. The other members of the ambushing party were: Patrick King, Company O/C., myself, 1st Lieut.; Timothy Cronin, Killeentierna; Patrick Bradley, Ballybeg; Patrick O'Leary, Gloundaeigh; Patrick Healy, Currow Hill; James Walsh, Lyre; Daniel Fleming, Currow, and Michael Fleming, Currow.

This was on Saturday and the R.I.C. did not come until Monday when we had dispersed.

A week after this prepared ambush ~~John Walsh's~~<sup>my</sup> house ~~at~~<sup>at</sup> Lyre was searched by R.I.C. and Tans for arms, ammunition and seditious literature.

Early in 1920 prisoners were transferred from other company areas in the battalion to serve sentences imposed on them by Courts in different company areas.

On 30th March 1920 Scartaglin R.I.C. Barracks was attacked. Three members of D/Coy. took part in the attack. All members of D/Company were mobilised that night and divided into two sections to block the roads leading to Scartaglin from Farranfore. One section blocked the road at Dicksgrove and the other at Droumulton. Outposts were placed at Droumulton and Threegneaves to light bonfires and give signals to the I.R.A. in case the R.I.C. and military got through the blocked road. I was on outpost duty about 5 miles from Scartaglin.

Early in 1920 or late 1919 John Foley of Currowbanefield

an I.R.A. man, was appointed R.D. Councillor for Killarney rural area.

Early in May and June 1920 a suspected spy called John Malone was a prisoner by D/Company. I think he was executed some time afterwards near Newcastlewest, Co. Limerick. There were other prisoners from Knocknagoshel served sentences imposed on them by Knocknagoshel Parish Court.

During the month of June 1920 Brosna R.I.C. Barracks was unsuccessfully attacked twice by the 1st Battalion, Kerry No. 2 Brigade. Three men from D/Coy. took part in the first attack - Patrick King, O/C., Thomas Murphy, 2nd Lieutenant, and P. Bradley, Q.M. On the second attack two D/Coy. men took part - P. King, O/C. and P. Bradley, Q.M.

On the following day a military lorry was attacked and two D/Coy. men took part in the attack.

About the 4th October 1920, an ambush party lay at Headley's Bridge, Knocknagoshel, for military lorries. About twelve men from D/Coy. lay in this prepared ambush. They were: - Patrick King, O/C.; myself, 1st Lieutenant; Dan Griffin, company adjutant; Patrick Bradley, company quartermaster; Timothy Cronin, section commander; Maurice Butler; Dan O'Brien; Patrick O'Leary; Patrick Healy; Timothy Cahill; John Reidy and John Doherty. No lorries came.

About this time the parish Court was held once a month in Barry's house at Killeentierna.

About 1st November 1920, a general order was issued

from I.R.A. H.Q. to shoot all Black and Tans on sight. About twelve men from D/Company proceeded to Castleisland to occupy the town to prevent reprisals if any shooting took place. The following members of D/Company proceeded to Castleisland that night armed: Patrick King, Coy. O/C.; myself, 1st Lt. ; Thomas Murphy, 2nd Lieut., Daniel Griffin, company adjutant; Patrick Bradley, company quartermaster, Timothy Cronin, section commander; James Walsh, section commander; John Sullivan, section commander; John Reidy, Dan Mahony, Paddy Mahony, Timothy Cahill, John Doherty and James Cunniffe. No shooting took place.

About the last week of November 1920, the Courthouse in Killeentierna (Barry's) was surrounded by military, Tans and R.I.C. As it was too early for the Court to sit, very few were present. One man was searched - John O'Connor of Gloundaeigh, and a summons was found on him. He was arrested and taken away in the lorry by the Tans. They proceeded to Ballybeg and set fire to H. Murphy's hay after searching the house. On the road from Murphy's to Farranfore Barracks the Tans threw O'Connor out of the lorry and fired at him and wounded him badly. They said he attempted to escape. He was removed to the house of Thomas Brosnan, Threegneaves and a priest sent for as he was dying. An officer and two men returned in a private car from Farranfore in a short time. They saw women and the priest on the road near Brosnan's house. They inquired where the wounded man was and were told he was in Brosnan's house. They entered, ordered out the occupants, propped up O'Connor who was in bed in the corner of the kitchen, dying, and murdered him there and then, and then drove off to Farranfore.

After this outrage all the young men of the parish joined the I.R.A. and it was then about 127 strong.

Members of D/Company raided the mails at least once a week from this onwards.

In the month of December 1920, about ten members of D/Coy. held up and raided the mail train two miles from Farranfore Barracks at Fell's Gates, Ballybane. Humphrey Murphy was in charge of this party. The others were: - P. King O/C., myself, 1st Lieutenant; Thomas Murphy, 2nd Lieutenant, Dan Griffin, company adjutant; P. Bradley, company quartermaster; James Walsh, section commander, Timothy Cronin, section commander; John Doherty, James Cunniffe, and John Fitzmaurice.

John Doherty was ordered to proceed to Headford, a distance of 25 miles, and procure men and hold up the train coming from Mallow in the morning, as we did not get the mail bag we wanted.

About the end of December 1920, G.H.Q. Dublin sent down an organiser to Kerry No. 2 Brigade. His name was Andy Cooney. He went under the name John Browne. He immediately organised the brigade staff, suspended D. O'Mahony <sup>Brigade O/C</sup> and appointed Humphrey Murphy Brigade O/C. The Battalion Staff at this time was as follows: Timothy O'Connor, O/C., Daniel McCarthy, Vice O/C., David Griffin, adjutant, John Mahony, quartermaster.

David Griffin resigned shortly after this and Richard Shanahan was appointed adjutant.

About the 20th January 1921, 6 men from D/Company were ordered to be ready with their arms at a moment's notice to proceed to an ambush position in case they were required

to support Seán Moylan's column who were lying in ambush at Tureengarive. Moylan did not need assistance and our men dispersed.

On the 2nd March 1921, men from D/Company proceeded to the Bower, Rathmore, about 20 miles away and laid an ambush there on the 3rd and 4th March. We abandoned our positions on the 4th, and a brigade column was formed. Tom Fleming, who came to D/Company from Tralee, was put on the column from D/Company.

The following are the men who went to the Bower, Rathmore: - Patrick King, O/C.; John Walsh, 1st Lieut.; Dan Griffin, adjutant; P. Bradley, quartermaster; James Walsh, section commander; Timothy Cronin, section commander; Pat Leary, Tom Fleming, P. Healy and John Doherty.

After ten days training at the Gap of Dunloe, the column were moved to D/Company area. We had to procure billeting, transport, scouts, and bring them from Rockfield to Currow.

On the 17th March, Martin Daly, who informed the R.I.C. about the court in which O'Connor was arrested and murdered, was captured by members of D/Company. He was drinking and associating with the Tans at Farranfore. He was courtmartialled and ordered to leave the country at once, which he did.

About this time the company was well organised and all members were instructed in all kinds of firearms and grenades.

About the 8th April 1921, twelve members of D/Company



proceeded to the Black Banks, Brosna, and lay in ambush there.

On the 2nd May 1921, 20 men from D/Company proceeded to Glounsharoon, Castleisland, and lay in ambush there. As a land mine accidentally exploded we had to retreat back to our company area.

On the 8th May 1921, two scouts on duty at Droumroe - Pat Walsh and Timothy Keane - spotted four or five Tans moving through the country searching houses. They sent word to section commander James Walsh. He got five men with him and arms and proceeded from Currow Hill to Killeagh and they just got into positions as the Tans were approaching. They opened fire on them and severely wounded two or three of them and the others ran through the fields to the barrack. Fire was immediately opened on the men retreating to the barracks and a revolver was captured from the Tans.

On the following day - 9th May - three parties of mixed forces left Farranfore Barracks and burned three houses as a reprisal for Killeagh shooting. The houses were - Humphrey Murphy's, Ballybeg, Brigade O/C., Thomas Daly's, Ballyfinnane, brigade adjutant, and my house at Lyre.

They also intended to burn Timothy Doherty's house at Droumroe, but they exhausted all their supplies of petrol at my house and had to leave it alone. It was on the list they handed to me before they burned my house and out-offices.

The following five men took part in the Killeagh ambush with James Walsh, who was in charge: - John Doherty,

Michael Kelliher, Florence Mitchell, John Galwey and Jeremiah Walsh. I was not there.

The brigade organiser was instructing an officers' class at Kilsarcon on the morning of 8th May 1921. Patrick King, O/C. and myself, 1st Lieutenant, were at this class from D/Company.

The 1st Battalion staff was reorganised this week. Jeremiah O'Leary was appointed O/C., David McCarthy, Vice O/C., Richard Shanahan, adjutant, myself, quartermaster.

Thomas Murphy was promoted 1st Lieutenant in D/Company and James Walsh 2nd Lieutenant. About 20 members of D/Company remained armed ready to defend Doherty's house after the notice being received at Brigade H.Q., but the enemy did not attempt to burn it.

In the month of April D/Coy. cut the principal roads in the area. They cut trenches about 12 or 14 feet wide at Killeagh, Rossanean, Kilsarcon, Droumulton, Lahern and Lisheenbawn.

Early in May each company in the brigade area had to have scouts posted on hills during the day and night. They had torches at night and horns to sound during the day.

About 15th May, members of D/Coy. lay in ambush at Droumroe and Dicksgrove for a car which was to take a Tan in civvies to Killarney through a mountain road. He did not travel.

In the last week of May some members of D/Coy. lay in ambush near Castleisland railway to ambush a train which

was taking military and supplies from Tralee to Castleisland.

About 12th June a Battalion A.S.U. was formed. There were six men from D/Company in it. P. King, O/C, James Walsh, 2nd Lt., P. Bradley, Q.M., Timothy Cronin, James Cunniffe and John Doherty.

On 15th June those six men proceeded to Castleisland and burned the library, which was to be occupied the following days by Auxiliaries. Rio Donoghue, Rathmore, was trainer of the battalion column.

On 16th June two engineers from D/Coy. proceeded to Glountane, Cordal, to attend a battalion engineering class for two days. Tom Fleming, brigade engineer, and Tim Leahy, battalion engineer, were in charge of this class.

When the brigade engineer was demonstrating how to prepare a mine it accidentally exploded and killed himself and wounded some badly - about 12 others.

David Coffey, company chief of engineers, D/Company, and Johnny Mahony were severely burned and suffered from shock.

About the first week of June a party of military from Tralee proceeded to Kilsarcon to exhume the remains of John O'Connor who was murdered in November 1920. His murder was questioned in the House of Commons by Commander Kenworthy and an inquiry was instituted by the British Government. As the party were leaving the graveyard they were sniped from Ranaleen by H. Murphy, P. King, T. Fleming, P. Healy and J. Sommers. Those men retreated before them and again sniped them at P. Fleming's land, Killeentierna.

They were again fired at from Ranalough as they were passing the school at Clounclough.

About 18th June, Engineer Thomas Fleming was buried with full military honours at Kilsarcon. The battalion A.S.U. and all the men of the battalion paraded in the funeral.

About 20th June and 1st July, 20 men from D/Company lay in ambush at Knockeennahone, Scartaglin.

On the 3rd July, 20 men from D/Company lay in ambush at Knockeencrene, Knocknagoshel, for military lorries.

On 10th July, two members of D/Company took part in an ambush in a patrol in Castleisland. They were Patrick King and Thomas Murphy. Richard Shanahan, battalion adjutant, John Prendiville, Cordal, and John Flynn, Ballymacelligott, were killed in action in this engagement.

Signed:

John J. Walsh  
John J. Walsh

Date:

2<sup>nd</sup> Sept., 1954

2nd Sept. 1954.

Witness:

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

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BURO STAIRS MILITA
NO. W.S. 1002