

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
BURO STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21
No. W.S. 1,067

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21

STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 1,067

Witness

Daniel Healy,
Rockfield,
Beaufort,
Co. Kerry.

Identity.

Lieut. Listry Company Killarney Batt'n.
Kerry No. 2 Brigade;

Member of Brigade Flying Column.

Subject.

Listry Company, Killarney Batt'n.
Kerry No, 2 Brigade, 1917-1921.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil

File No. S.2373

Form B S M 2

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No. W.S. 1067

STATEMENT BY DANIEL HEALY,
Rockfield, Beaufort, Co. Kerry.

I joined the Irish Volunteers in 1917 when the Volunteers were being re-organised. The unit was known as the Listry Company attached to the Killarney Battalion. There had been a unit in Listry prior to 1916 but I was not a member at that time.

Daniel Allman of Rockfield was the moving spirit in the Volunteers in our area, and it was he who organised the Rockfield-Listry area.

A Sinn Féin Club was organised in 1917 and all members of the local company joined. Meetings of the club were held in an outhouse belonging to a man named Tagney on each Sunday morning and the Volunteer parade was held immediately afterwards.

During 1917 our company was engaged in drilling and training and we organised concerts and sports to raise funds.

During 1918 we were preparing to resist conscription into the British Army and the work of organising protest meetings and the signing of the anti-conscription pledge was undertaken by the local company.

During this period the area was policed by R.I.C. stationed at Beaufort. In April 1920 the R.I.C. evacuated the barracks at Beaufort and retired to Killarney.

In 1918 the Listry Company continued as a part of the Killarney Battalion. The other companies in the

battalion were: Killarney, Ballyhar, Lissagiveen, Kilcurmin and Muckcross. Michael Spillane was officer in command of the battalion. A further company was organised covering Beaufort at a later date.

Daniel Allman continued as officer in charge of the Listry Company.

In 1919 we collected any arms held by civilians in our area and continued drilling and training. We had pikes made and when the threat of conscription passed they were stored away.

Our drilling and training continued but I cannot say they were put to the test until November Night 1920 (31st October, 1920). Just before November Night we were mobilised under Daniel Allman to go to Killorglin to carry out an order which had been received from Brigade headquarters that all Tans were to be shot at sight.

The following members of the Listry Company paraded for the job:

Daniel Allman, Captain
 T. Lyne
 S. Hobbins
 J. Flynn
 J. Doyle
 T. Sullivan
 T. Brosnan
 J. Scully
 M. Scully
 D. Scully
 Daniel Healy (witness)
 J. Scannell.

After meeting at Listry we moved towards Killorglin and when about half a mile outside the town we were stopped and told that the job was off. The other

companies of the battalion had some of their men assembled near Killorglin. After getting word that the job was off Daniel Allman was told that two Tans had gone from Killorglin towards Miltown along the main road. Dan Allman decided to have a try for the two Tans and he led the members of the Listry Company who were with him to a spot about half a mile on the Miltown side of Killorglin. The position he selected was on rising ground. On one side of the road there was a high bank and on the other side a hedge. Dan Allman and our group took up position behind the bank on the side of the road. The two Tans came along on cycles and, acting on orders, one of our party called upon them to halt. They ignored the call and attempted to cycle through. Our party had orders to fire on the Tans if they failed to halt. We opened fire. One Tan went down. He was killed outright. The second Tan was wounded but he tried to go on. After travelling about 10 yards the wounded Tan fell against the ditch. Daniel Allman went out on the road and took some of the party with him. He approached the wounded Tan and brought him to the spot where the dead Tan lay. Dan Allman questioned the wounded Tan, who pleaded for a chance. He said he would resign next morning. Dan Allman reminded him that he was a Tan. The Tan again pleaded that he was the only son of a widow. Near the side of the road where this was taking place some members of the Killorglin Company had been 'standing to' in a hayshed and one of them came out to see what was happening on the road. The man who came out was the man who had told us that the job was off and he also told us about the two Tans being

out the road. Daniel Allman invited this man to finish off the wounded Tan, but he declined the invitation. Dan Allman then called on us to finish off the Tan. We captured one revolver, as one of the Tans was unarmed. Our party was armed with three rifles, one revolver and the remainder had shotguns. All the members of the Listry Company who paraded that night were on the job at Hillville. It was a purely company job.

After we had left the Killorglin-Miltown road one Tan came out about 2 a.m. the next day and found the bodies. He reported to the Tans in Killorglin, who removed the bodies and started to shoot up the town. The Tans shot a civilian named Denis O'Sullivan. He was a publican whose pub was being looted. The Tans burned the Sinn Féin Hall, Foley's garage, Steeven's timber mill and the creamery which was next door.

The night following, our company, under Daniel Allman lay in ambush at Ballymalis Cross to get any party of Tans coming out for reprisals. They did not come as far as our position but they came as far as Listry and burned the creamery. Before they got to Listry they had been fired on by the Miltown Company on the main Killorglin-Miltown road at Kilderry wood.

On the 9th November, 1920, two Tans were shot at Ballybrack Station by a party under Thos. McAllistrin (Tommy Mac) and the Tans carried out reprisals on the following day. Two or three houses were burned.

When Daniel Allman heard of the reprisals

he had all the available members of the Listry Company mobilised and we went in position on a hill overlooking Ballybrack Station to await any further reprisal party. We held our positions all day but no further reprisal party came out and we were dismissed. Daniel Allman lost no opportunity in trying to get a crack at the Tans.

On the 8th December, 1920, some members of the Listry Company happened to be at Beaufort Bridge when they were surrounded by British military and Tans. Some of our men got away under fire but about eight were captured and were later charged with the shooting of the two Tans at Ballybrack Station. None of them was convicted but they were held until December 1921.

In February 1921 an ambush was laid at Killorglin by the Killorglin Battalion and Dan Allman was asked to assist. He sent his brother Pat and one other member of the Listry Company, but the job did not come off. One of the men who had been in the ambush position was shot dead by Tans at his home in Glencar when he was resting after his journey.

In February 1921 Andy Cooney came to our area. He was an organiser from G.H.Q. It was decided to form a column of men who were on the run with some others. When the question of membership of the column was being discussed Dan Allman was laid up with a cold. He sent ~~me~~ ^{Mr Hobbins} to a meeting which was being held in the Gap of Dunloe. ^{Mr Hobbins} got a despatch following the meeting and returned with it to Dan Allman. It was proposed to take some men from each company to make up the column. Dan Allman sent ~~me~~ ^{him} back to the Gap the next morning with a dispatch, which ~~he~~

gave to Mr. Spillane, O/C of the Killarney Battalion. When Mr. Spillane read the despatch he told ^{him} ~~me~~ that he had discussed the whole question of the formation of the column with Andy Cooney, and each company was to nominate two men for the column. There was some talk of the company officers remaining with their companies. The despatch from Dan Allman was to the effect that he would pick no man from the Listry Company unless he was taken on with the column himself.

Later in February 1921 an ambush was laid at Beaufort Bridge. Pat Allman was in charge of our party, and the idea was that the column which had been formed in the Gap was to come out of the Gap and the Listry Company was to co-operate.

The position at Beaufort Bridge was occupied by the Listry Company but they were unaware that their position had been given away. A Dr. Scargil was at that time residing with his wife at Lehard House about $\frac{1}{4}$ mile from Beaufort Bridge on the Lehard road. On the morning of the proposed ambush the Dr. was fishing when his wife came from the house for him. He returned to the house with his wife but left again by another road and went into Killarney to warn the British military.

In the meantime the Listry Company were in position and Pat Allman sent a messenger to the Gap to ascertain whether the column was coming. A reply came that the job was off. Pat Allman withdrew us from the position and we moved back towards Listry. At this time the column was moving out of the Gap towards Beaufort Bridge, but while we had left the

bridge and the column had not yet reached it the proposed ambush position was surrounded by British military. Word reached the company of the part Dr. Scargil had played in giving away our position. We raided Lehard House and stripped it of its furniture, which was owned by the doctor. The doctor and his wife had to take refuge in the military barracks in Killarney. The day after the doctor returned to Lehard House under military escort and removed some personal belongings. The furniture we had seized was distributed around the district. The British made no attempt to recover it. Dr. Scargil and his wife left the district. ,

On the day of the encirclement by the British at Beaufort Bridge the column, which had moved back into the Gap to avoid the British forces, stood to arms and remained in the Gap until the following evening.

Dan Allman had been appointed O/C of the column, with Thos. McEllistrim 2nd in charge. The column consisted of 30 men, each man armed with a rifle and revolver.

The column left the Gap and moved through Listry to Scartaglin, from Scartaglin to Kilsarkin, and then to an ambush position at Dysart near Castleisland.

There was a sham attack carried out on Farranfore R.I.C. barracks in the hope that the military might be drawn out from Castleisland through the ambush position, but they did not come out. After lying in wait for several hours we withdrew to

the Gweerequilla area.

We next moved to Kilquapp near Barraduff, but as the position was near the main Killarney-Mallow road we moved back to the foot of the Paps Mountains. We went into training at the foot of the Paps and remained there until the 21st ^{MARCH} ~~February~~, 1921, when we got orders to move towards Headford. The column was divided into sections. I was in No. 4 section under John Flynn of Bonane, who was acting as training officer to the column. He had served in the British Army.

When the column arrived near Headford we were halted at a house about 30 yards from the railway station and ordered to leave our surplus belongings there. We then marched to the railway station and halted at the gate near the railway crossing. No. 1 section was taken away and put into position, and it was then clear that we were going to attack a train. There was some delay in placing the section. The same thing happened with No. 2 and No. 3 sections. Before my section was placed Dan Allman came out and said some wagons would have to be moved. Two or three of us went with Dan Allman and left our rifles with some of the others. We shifted the wagons and were half way across the station yard when the train was signalled. Dan Allman said: "Come on lads". We recovered our rifles and Dan Allman led us into a lavatory on the platform. We were just into the lavatory. I had Dan Allman's rifle. He told me to load it. Just then the train drew in.

There was no view from the lavatory on to the

platform. After a few seconds Dan Allman remarked that there must be no military on the train. There had been no move at this time. Jim Coffey was standing inside the door of the lavatory and he said he would have a look. He was just making to look out when a British soldier came into the lavatory. He said: "Hello Paddy" to Jim Coffey. Jim made a grab for the muzzle of the soldier's rifle and Dan Allman drew his revolver and fired, getting the soldier in the chest. The soldier toppled over and the parties outside opened fire. Dan Allman took his rifle from me and we went by the side of the lavatory on to the platform, where we lay down and opened fire on the British soldiers who had alighted from the train and were on the platform. There were civilian passengers running in all directions.

After about ten minutes firing Dan Allman got a wound in the forehead from a splinter. The shooting went on for another five or ten minutes and Dan Allman ran short of ammunition. He walked across the platform and took a bandolier off a dead British soldier. At this time any British soldiers who were on the platform had been wiped out and things had quietened down. James Coffey had a peep round the guard's van at the end of the train and got a pick of a bullet which grazed his arm. The shot came from under the train. He came back to us and warned us to be careful of that spot.

Things got quieter, except for sniping. Dan Allman said we were staying at the station too long as the Cork train must be due. On second thoughts

he said that if we had three or four more with us we could shift the train. The only fire coming from the British was an occasional shot from under the train. Dan Allman told us to keep on firing on the floor of the carriages, and he himself moved across the Killarney line on to the Killarney embankment. Whatever decision he reached after speaking to someone there, he came back alone and went straight behind the guard's van. He went down on his knee as if to have a last shot. He had only one shot fired when we heard him say: "I got that, lads; I'm done". He fell down on to his elbow and rolled on to his back. He called for water. Jim Coffey thought he wanted a drink and as Jim had a water bottle he made to get it, but Dan said "not that" and pointed to his breast pocket where he had a bottle of holy water. Jim Coffey got out the holy water and sprinkled Dan with it as he died.

When Dan died Jim Coffey went across the Kenmare line to tell Thos. McEllistrim, who was next in command. There was nothing else doing and I followed Jim Coffey but lost track of him and returned to the platform. I went to the Killarney side and met Jim Coffey again, and being joined by some other man we crossed the line and went into the "V" shape between the Killarney and Kenmare lines. When crossing the "V" we came in line with the train and a bullet passed between us. Jim Coffey told us to keep down and we went under cover of the railway embankment along the Kenmare line for about 100 yards. Jim Coffey directed us across the line one by one. When we got across the line we went towards the mountains

across the bog, but when we were gone about 100 yards a Lewis gun opened up from the Cork train, which had arrived at the station carrying a party of British troops. We kept going, falling and running, under fire until we got to the ~~the~~ Mesk river. We waded across the river where the railway bridge spans the river. After crossing the river and going five or six hundred yards up the mountain we met the majority of the column. A section which had retreated to the north of the station was missing.

After a short rest we were taken across the mountains in the direction of Loo Bridge. We rested there for the night. The following night we were moved along the mountains to the Kilgarvan side. We were billeted in the townland of Mangerton for a few nights. I think John Joe Rice, Vice O/C of Kerry 2 (our brigade) met us there.

After a few days I learned that John Joe Rice was going to the Gap of Dunloe and I asked Thos. McEllistrim for permission to travel with John Joe, as far as the Gap, and leaving him there I proceeded home where I stayed for a few days. I also got permission for another member of my company, Thos. Lyne, to accompany me.

At the end of my few days' leave I rejoined the column, which was then at Carnahone, Beaufort. We remained at Carnahone that night and the following night we moved to the Listry area and billeted at a place named Keel. We stayed one night at Keel and then moved to Cordal, Castleisland. The following night we moved into the town of Castleisland and took

up positions to engage a curfew patrol. The patrol did not show up.

We next moved to the Blackbanks between Castleisland and Brosna, but after waiting from 2 a.m. to 3 p.m. the following day we withdrew. We had had the road mined waiting for three lorries which did not show up. After our wait at the Blackbanks we moved back to billets where we stayed for 2 or 3 days. We then moved to the area at Kilcow, Castleisland to attack a train.

A length of rail was removed from the line and we got orders to open fire when the train was derailed. The train came on and we opened fire, but after running on the sleepers the train regained the line and kept going, with the exception of the guard's van which left the rails and continued running on the sleepers for about 300 yards where the train stopped, and after the crew had disconnected the guard's van they brought the train away, leaving the van behind. We got orders to retreat as we were near Castleisland and we moved to the mountains to the north of that town. We billeted on the mountains that night and the next day the column was disbanded, the members being returned to their own areas. The column was disbanded sometime in April 1921. I think the column was disbanded in order that the men trained in the Brigade Column were to form Battalion Columns and operate in the battalion areas.

I returned to the Listry Company area. We were evading arrest but our place was a bit backward and the

roads around were cut, so that we got good warning if the British forces were moving near our place. A Battalion Column was organised and two members of the Listry Company, Jack Flynn and James Doyle, were taken on.

About this time a general reorganisation of the brigades and battalions was taking place and this affected us down to the companies. Pat Allman, who had been O/C of Listry Company from about February 1921, was appointed Battalion O/C in place of Michael Spillane who was removed. Thos. Lyne, who had been 1st Lieut. of Listry Company from February 1921, was appointed Company O/C and I was appointed 1st Lieutenant. I was left in the Listry Company area but I was called for any job being organised by the battalion.

Sometime in May 1921 Thos. Lyne and I were called to a job being planned to attack a patrol of R.I.C. which used travel over the road between Farranfore and Firies once each week. We stayed on the job for two days but no patrol came out. We were ordered back to our own areas.

The next job prepared was an attack on a curfew patrol in the town of Killarney. It was usual for the patrol to pass along High St. - Port Road - Cathedral - New St. We were taken up the lakes by boat and went into position near the Cathedral. After waiting for about two hours we withdrew through the woods on the Killarney road to Aghadoe and returned to our own area.

During May and June 1921 we cut many of the roads

in our area. The main Killarney road was cut between Beaufort and Killorglin at Ballymalis. Two days after we had cut this road two lorries of Tans came along and did not see the cutting until they were right on it. The driver of the first lorry put on speed and attempted to clear the cutting. The lorry plunged into the cutting and blew up. The lorry caught fire. One of the party was killed and several injured. Thos. Lyne, O/C Listry Company, and I took seven or eight of the company to the scene of the crash that night and searched the debris and the ground around. We found a rifle with a stock slightly burned on a fence nearby and two revolvers in the debris round the lorry. The guns were in good order. We also got some good .303 ammunition and a pan for a Lewis gun with the ammunition burned out. We pulled the burnt out lorry out of the cutting and dropped it over a nearby bridge into a river. The British military came out next day and broke down the ditch and got a lorry down to the river to pull out the burnt out lorry. They removed it to Killarney.

When the Tans found they could not travel the main Killarney-Killorglin road they made a detour by a boreen which we thought was impassible for lorries. The boreen was across wild country and crossed a river where there was a ford. When we found that they were using the boreen we deepened the river at the ford by digging out the bed of the river, and on the next occasion a lorry came along the engine went under water and the Tans had to tow the lorry back out of the river.

The route Killarney-Killorglin was now closed

to the Tans. About a week after closing the boreen the Tans commandeered civilians to fill the main cuttings to allow a lorry to pass. On the following night we opened the cuttings again and they remained open until the Truce.

In June 1921 we got orders from the Battalion O/C, Pat Allman, to cut the telegraph wires between Killarney and Killorglin at a place called Coolrue. We cut the wires and lay in wait for a repair gang to come out. When they came out we held them up and took all their tools. The idea was to keep the wires down and after our capture of the tools the repair gang did not come out again. The wire remained down until after the Truce.

During June 1921 orders were received that all commercial vans coming into our area were to be searched for Belfast goods. Three of us under Thos. Lyne, O/C Listry Company, were proceeding to intercept vans. We were moving in the direction of Ballybrack from the Killarney road, and at Ballymalis, when on a bend of the road, we ran into a British Army cycling patrol. We jumped a ditch and crossed an open field towards a river. The British opened a heavy fire on us. Three of our party crossed the river under fire. I took cover under a bank and remained there for two or three hours waiting for darkness to get away.

On the 8th June, 1921, I went with Pat Allman, Battalion O/C, to Ballybrack station where we met a party of our men. Andy Cooney was there. It was planned to hold up a train to search for Belfast goods. Nine or ten of us under Pat Allman were to form a

covering party in case the train carried British troops.

We got a signal from a party at the station that the train carried troops and it was not searched. We were at a cutting about 200 yards west of the station. When the train reached our position we opened fire as it passed. It was established afterwards that one soldier was killed. I was armed with a rifle and Andy Cooney had a loan of my Colt Automatic. After the job we returned to our own area.

In the period immediately prior to the Truce our main task was to keep the roads cut.

On the 9th July, 1921, Thos. McEllistrim and Jack Cronin arrived in our area where they were billeted there. I contacted Thos. McEllistrim on the morning of the 10th July (Sunday) and he told me of a proposed attack on the R.I.C. stationed at Killorglin. It was to be an all-out attack and a large mine was to be used to breach the wall of the R.I.C. barracks. Up to this I knew nothing of the attack but after leaving Thos. McEllistrim I got word from the O/C Listry Company (Thomas Lyne) that I was wanted for the attack. I met Thos. Lyne and we crossed the river Lane, where we met up with Thos. McEllistrim and Jack Cronin who were then with the main body for the attack. The party had assembled about one mile to the south of Killorglin at a place named Mountrivers. We waited there for some time and the officers had a conference, following which we were told the attack was off. It was known that the Truce was coming the next day and Thos. McEllistrim, who was in charge of the proposed operation, called off the job

because it might have involved the lives of some of the people of Killorglin, and when the Truce was so near the risk to human life would not be justified.

Signed: Daniel Healy
(Daniel Healy)

Date: 21st Jan 1955
21st Jan. 1955.

Witness: James J. Bonner
(Investigator)

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