

W. S. 1,238

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
BURO STAIRÉ MILITAIRA 1913-21
No. W.S. 1238

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 1,238

Witness

Michael McCarthy,
Creggane,
Lombardstown,
Co. Cork.

Identity.

Member of Irish Volunteers
Lombardstown, Co. Cork, 1917 - ;
Brigade Dispatch Rider.

Subject.

Lombardstown Company Irish Volunteers,
Co. Cork, 1917-1923.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil

File No S. 2536

Form BSM 2

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1918-21 238
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NO. W.S. 1238

STATEMENT BY MICHAEL McCARTHY,
Creggane, Lombardstown, County Cork.

I was born at Creggane, Lombardstown, on December 18th, 1898. My parents were farmers. My father was a member of the Land League and a follower of Parnell. He later supported Wm. O'Brien against the Irish Parliamentary Party under John Redmond. He was a violent opponent of the latter following his appeal at Woodenbridge seeking recruits to join the British Army to fight for the alleged freedom of small nations.

When the Gaelic League was formed in Lombardstown early in 1917 I became a member. Other pioneer members were Phil Singleton, Mick Ring, Denis O'Shea, Paddy Corkerry, Denis Cremin, Dan McCarthy, Pat Healy, Dave Cronin and Denis O'Callaghan. The teachers were Liam Foley and Paddy Foley. Classes were held in Glantine national school once a week.

When the Irish Volunteers were formed in Lombardstown in the autumn of 1917 I became a member. Other members were Ned Murphy, Dan McCarthy, Phil Singleton, Con Buckley, John Connell, Dan Callaghan, and the others recorded above as members of the Gaelic League. The strength of the company was about 15 in the initial stages. The first officers were:

O/C - Ned Murphy

1st Lt.- Phil Singleton

2nd Lt.- Dan McCarthy.

The only training carried out at this time was close order foot drill. The instructors were our own officers.

During 1917 we were all engaged in organising the political side of the movement - Sinn Féin. This organisation was mainly composed of members of the Irish Volunteers and their families. The Volunteers were slowly gaining in strength and towards the end of 1917 the membership had increased to about 40.

The threat of conscription early in 1918 led to a more or less united front by nearly all sections of the community. As a result the national outlook of the Irish Volunteers became very popular and there was as everywhere a rush of recruits to the ranks. At this time we must have doubled our membership - the roll being in the neighbourhood of 80. There was no change in officers at this stage. All shotguns in the area were collected by the Volunteers at this period. They were handed up voluntarily in every case and it was only necessary to call and collect. The company must have had up to 50 shotguns at this stage. Ammunition was, however, scarce but I think we had about 600 rounds or so. Most of this ammunition was loaded with buckshot at my home. Most of the new recruits fell away when the conscription scare had passed.

I think that up to early 1918 our company was an independent unit of Cork Brigade. It was about this time that Mallow Battalion was organised. It embraced all the Volunteer companies in the area surrounding Mallow and included the following units: Mallow, Mourne Abbey, Lombardstown, Ballyclough, Ahadillane and Two-pot-house. The officers of the battalion were:

O/C - Liam Jones
 Vice O/C - Jerh. Buckley
 Adjt.- Paddy McCarthy
 Q/M - Mick Nagle.

Routine drilling and parades continued during 1918 and towards the end of the year we were engaged in preparing for the general election in December. There was no contest in our area as the Sinn Féin candidate was returned unopposed. The Sinn Féin candidate was Paudeen O'Keeffe.

The success of Sinn Féin in the general election gave a boost to the Volunteer movement. Our activities at this time seemed to meet with more public approval. However, in our area there were few additional recruits.

In January, 1919, Cork 11 Brigade was formed. It comprised the area of North Cork from the Waterford border near Fermoy to the Kerry border in Millstreet area. There were seven battalions as follows: Fermoy, Castletownroche, Mallow, Charleville, Kanturk, Newmarket and Millstreet. The first officers of the brigade were:

O/C - Liam Lynch
 Vice O/C - Dan Hegarty
 Adjt.- Tom Barry
 Q/M - George Power.

There was nothing outside the usual training during 1919 in the area. However, during the summer and autumn we were all busy organising and collecting the Dáil Loan.

When the G.H.Q. order for the destruction of evacuated enemy posts was received at Easter, 1920, it gave rise to the first organised operation to be carried out by the company. The only evacuated post in the area was at Glantine where the R.I.C. had been withdrawn from their post. The job of destroying this post was taken on in conjunction with some members of Ahadillane Company. The building was burned down and the following members of Lombardstown unit took part: Phil Singleton, Dan McCarthy,

Con Buckley, Jack Connell and Ned Murphy who was in charge. I cannot recollect the names of the members of Ahadillane Company who were on the job.

Some officials of one of the banks in Millstreet were held up at Knocknagree and a considerable amount of money was seized by the raiders. The sum was supposed to be in the region of £18,000. As there was a lot of talk that the robbery had been carried out by the I.R.A., Liam Lynch ordered the members of the army to investigate the matter. I think that he took charge of the investigation himself. Eventually certain individuals came under suspicion and orders were issued to arrest them, especially three brothers named O'Brien from Inchmay in the Kanturk area. On May 13th, 1920, (Mallow fair day) I was on duty at Mallow with Jerry Hanlon searching for the wanted men. Two of the O'Brien brothers were at the fair and were allowed to board the train at Mallow station. The train proceeded towards Killarney but the wanted men were taken from the train at Lombardstown station. They were taken from the train by my brother - Dan - Denis Curtin and myself and handed over to O/C Dromahane Company at Dromahane.

When, following his capture by brigade officers at Kilbarry near Fermoy, General Lucas (O/C British forces at Fermoy) was taken into our area by Liam Lynch, Jerry Buckley and Jerry Hanlon, he was held prisoner at Pat Connell's, Lackendarra. I was one of the guards on the evening of the day following his arrival when Paddy Connell, who was a student at St. Colman's College, Fermoy, arrived home. He brought news that the British were going to burn down Fermoy. Liam Lynch questioned him

on the matter and then got General Lucas to write a dispatch to the O/C British Forces in Fermoy. I was given the dispatch with instructions to hand it to George Power's father in Fermoy. Should I fail to make contact with Mr. Power I was to hand the message to any soldier I saw on the street. I handed the message to George Power's father. I left for Fermoy about 7 p.m. on June 28th, 1920, and arrived back about 11 a.m. on 29th June, 1920. I travelled by bicycle. When I got back I found that General Lucas had been moved from Connell's to my home at Creggane, where he remained one night before being removed to West Limerick by Seán Moylan, Paddy Clancy and some officers of West Limerick Brigade. He was removed in a motor car which we commandeered from Dr. Ryan, Glantane.

On the occasion of the raid on Mallow barracks on September 28th, 1920, I was on scouting duty in Mallow and when the raid was over I returned to Lombardstown about 11 a.m.

The arms and stores taken in the raid on Mallow were dumped on the day of the raid (28/9/'20) in Ahadillane Company area. On the night of the raid the members of the Brigade Column, who had taken part in the capture of the enemy post, arrived in Lombardstown area. They were billeted at Pat Connell's, Lackendarra, Myles McCarthy's (my home) and Pat Lyons's, Gurtavoher. With all other members of the local company I was on guard duty that night. On the evening of September 29th, 1920, about 8 p.m. I travelled with George Power in a horse and trap to Kenny's, Lahakineen, where we collected the rifles and machine-guns taken at Mallow. We later collected the

ammunition in Beeing area. We took all the stores to my home at Creggane, where the rifles were distributed to the members of the Brigade Column. The rifles with which they had been training were those captured in Wesleyan raid in Fermoy and these were taken back to Fermoy area by "Dorney" Regan and Matt Flood.

When the Republican Courts were set up in June, 1920, I was appointed clerk of the Parish Court for the area. The members of the court were: Michael Hallinan, Patrick O'Sullivan, Wm. O'Callaghan (later Senator), representing the farmers, and Dan Murphy (Labour). The chairmanship of the court rotated amongst the members. There were no cases of any special significance tried by our court. We dealt with cases of petty larceny, dog licence cases, collection of small debts and, in a few cases, family disputes. The decisions of the court were accepted in all cases and the fines or other rulings of the court were enforced by the I.R.A. in the early stages and later by the Republican Police.

From September, 1920, until the Truce the H.Q. of Cork 11 Brigade was at my own home at Creggane or at other houses in the area for considerable periods at a time. The presence of the Brigade Staff in the district necessitated constant rounds of guard duty by the members of Lombardstown Company and the provision of a fairly regular supply of dispatch riders to be available at all times at short notice. I was appointed Brigade Dispatch Rider immediately following the Mallow raid and I was continually engaged in this work until I was arrested at my home on June 29th, 1921. In addition to Brigade H.Q. I should like to say that, following the setting up of

1st Southern Division about the end of April, 1921, the latter H.Q. was also in our area for the greater portion of the period to the end of 1921 when it moved to Mallow Barracks.

From the summer of 1920 the following houses in the district accommodated Brigade H.Q. for varying periods at one time or another:

Tadhg Looney's, Mourne Abbey.
 Myles McCarthy's, Creggane (my home)
 Jerh. Roche's, Gortmore, Lombardstown.
 Jerh. Sheehan's, Mount Hilary, do.
 Mick Hallinan's, Brittas, do.
 Patk. McCarthy's, Nadd, do.
 Patk. O'Sullivan's, Mortonville, do.
 Patk. Murphy's, Laharn, do.
 John Lenehan's, Pallas, do.

The H.Q. were also in Jerh. Hallinan's, Kilcorney, Millstreet, and Ned McSweeney's, Gortrahilly, Co. L^olea, (Divisional H.Q.). The latter was in Cork 1 Brigade area.

Following my arrest on June 29th, 1921, I was taken to Kanturk, Buttevant Military Barracks, and later Cork Gaol, Spike Island and, finally, to Maryborough Prison, from which I was discharged at the general release of internees on December 8th, 1921.

My rank at the Truce - Volunteer (Brigade Despatch Rider). The strength of Lombardstown Company at this time was about 50.

On my release from Maryboro Gaol I rejoined my unit and was shortly afterwards appointed District Court Clerk. I attended to this duty in addition to carrying out my normal I.R.A. duties as despatch rider. When Mallow Barracks was taken over I moved in there and continued to serve under Liam Lynch until the evacuation of this post. After the evacuation of Mallow and Fermoy

barracks Liam Lynch returned to Lombardstown area for a short time and my usual despatch riding activities continued until he left the area. I then resumed normal activities with Lombardstown unit and continued same to the cease fire.

Signed:

Michael McCarthy
(Michael McCarthy)

Date:

31st August 1955

Witness:

P. O'Connell

(Investigator)

