

DUPLICATE

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
BURO STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21
NO. W.S. 1572

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 1572.

Witness

Pádraig Ó Catháin,
Castlecomer Road,
Kilkenny.

Identity.

Adjutant, Carlow Brigade, 1921.

Subject.

Activities of Carlow Brigade,
Irish Volunteers, 1913-1924.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil.

File No S. 2889.

Form B.S.M. 2

DUPLICATE

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

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NO. W.S. 1572

STATEMENT BY PÁDRAIG Ó CATHÁIN (PATRICK KANE),

Castlecomer Road, Kilkenny.

Brief testimony of Pádraig Ó Catháin (Patrick Kane) who was Adjutant of Carlow Brigade in 1921, and now, in December 1956, is the only survivor of the then Brigade Staff.

PRELIMINARY

This is the most difficult job I have ever had. I am now sixty-two years of age, and have a defective memory in consequence of a road accident over two years ago. In addition, with the passage of time and the passing out of old comrades, many things and incidents, which I should normally remember, are lost to me.

I was born in the townland of Rathcrogue in the parish of Tinryland, Carlow, a few miles south-east of Carlow town, on 21st February, 1895. My father, who lived into his advanced 80's, was one of a large family of an evicted tenant from the Carlow-Wicklow border. My mother was Mary Smullen - still alive, thank God, in her advanced 80's - and her father was a member of the Fenian organisation.

I went to the local national school at Tinryland where, in turn, I had two excellent principals, Tom Kennedy and Pat Shine. The former was a wiry, cultured little athlete from Tullow, County Carlow, and the latter was a similar type from Macroom. I was not a good pupil, nor were any of my school mates. We all had outstanding merits as mitchers and home-work

dodgers, but I managed to collect enough knowledge to secure first place in a post office clerks' open competition in 1912, after which I was employed in Carlow for several years.

Home Rule and its controversies were in the air at this time, and I naturally became interested, but I was more interested in athletics, Gaelic football and the language movement. In 1913 I was inducted into the Hibernian organisation by an old painting contractor who was born in the County Tyrone. He lived and worked in Carlow. He did not stay long in the Hibernians - nor did I. I soon got sick and sore of their secret signs, before-and-after-meeting-prayers, and their wangling and place-hunting.

I was in the National Volunteers in 1913/1914, and a member of my local company which was then drilled by a competent reserve sergeant, named O'Brien, who was killed at Mons. The old painting contractor, Patrick Donoghue, left the Hibernians too, and was later the local head-centre of the Irish Republican Brotherhood.

When the Parliamentarians sold the Volunteers in 1914, I refused to attend a parade which was reviewed by a big Unionist and estate owner, who was a British army reservist, with the rank of major, as well as a Catholic priest, and who later saw the light, mended his ways, and rendered good service to the nation. He will be referred to at a later stage.

That parade, at which all the men were advised and persuaded to join the British army and fight for someone else's king and country, finished my association with the National Volunteers.

A few weeks later, I was detailed to a telegraph station at Aghada, Rostellan, on the south of Cobh harbour. I spent some time there, and, as the station served a big military camp, I learned a good deal about military organisation, signalling by land and sea, communications and codes and ciphers.

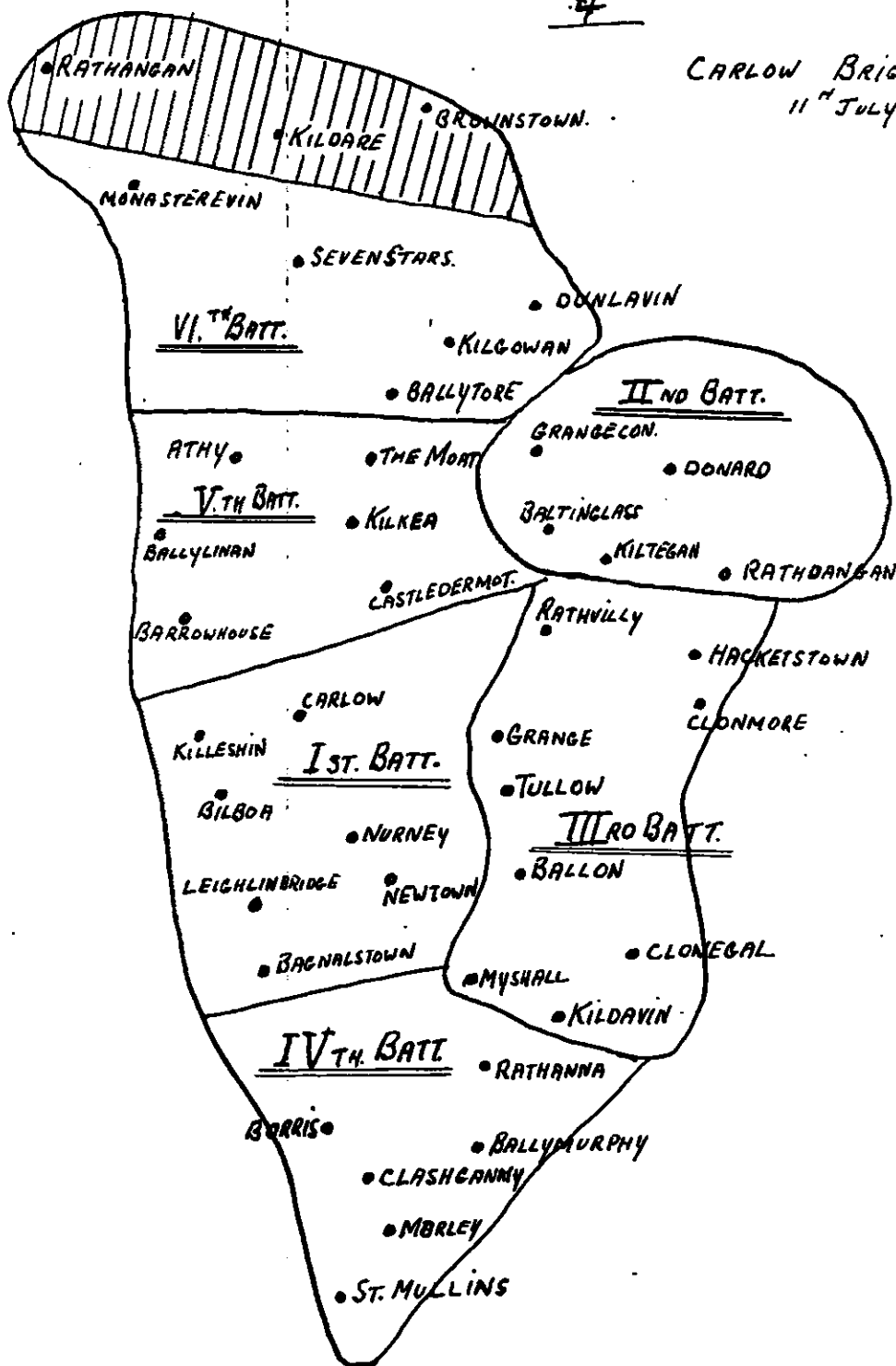
This brings me to 1917 when, back in my home County, I joined the Volunteers again, and was quickly detailed to intelligence and communications duties.

At this stage, I am enclosing a map, showing the set-up of the Carlow brigade in July, 1921, and the rest of my narrative must, of necessity, be written round it. (SEE OVERLEAF.)

I was, for a while, on the strength of A. Company (Carlow), and was later included in B. Company (Nurney). I kept a watchful eye on all police and army communications by telegraph, telephone and post, but nothing much happened. The organisation of the Volunteers and Sinn Féin went ahead. At that time, there came to Knockbeg College, Carlow, as a professor, Gearóid O'Sullivan, who had been released from Frongoch where he had been interned after the Rising. He took an active part in both organisations, and became O/C of 1st Battalion. The first interesting police cipher I intercepted related to him.

He was in West Cork on a visit when he made a seditious speech. He had returned to Carlow when the police at Skibbereen sent a cipher wire to the police in Carlow. I sent it back "RQ" (for repetition), to delay it while I made a copy which I went to Gearóid, with a covering message that it was probably an order for his arrest. When it was later deciphered, I was right.

CARLOW BRIGADE
11th JULY 1921



THE SHADED PORTION AT THE NORTH WAS TRANSFERRED TO NORTH KILDARE IN AUG-SEPT. 1921

BRIGADE OFFICERS 1921.

- O/C EAMON MALONE.
- VICE O/C T. O'CONNELL.
- O.M. W. BRENNAN.
- ADJUT. P. O'CATHAIN.
- I. O. LIAM STACK.

BATTALION O/C.

- 1ST - M. DOORLEY.
- 2ND - KEHOE
- 3RD - A. O'NEILL
- 4TH - J. HYNES.
- 5TH - F. LAWLER
- 6TH - M. HICKEY.

Gearóid had to go "on his keeping", but was soon seized and given a sentence in Cork jail. He never returned to the Carlow brigade. He was later T.D. for Carlow-Kilkenny, and Adjutant General of the I.R.A.

About the end of 1917 also, Éamon Price, who was in Jacob's factory in the 1916 Rising, came to Carlow as Gaelic League organiser. He did a good job at this, but his chief task was as Volunteer organiser, and he can be said to have been the architect of the organisation of the brigade. When in the Carlow area, he lived in the same lodgings with me at No. 1 Montgomery Street, and we occupied the same bedroom which we named "the Republic". It was through Éamon originally that I was in constant contact with how things were going. He could be both wittily and sarcastically polite, spoke very good English and other languages, and dearly loved a "half-one". He gave me the task of organising intelligence in the post office service, and, with that end in view, I got myself elected to the National Executive of the Post Office Clerks' Association which gave me scope for travelling and widening my contacts. All information that came my way was to be passed to the then Brigade O/C, Seán O'Farrell, an ironmonger, of Tullow Street, Carlow. Progress was slow, and I was out of Carlow for more than a year, in Athy and Portarlinton, from October, 1918. I made one useful contact in Athy, a lady named Kathleen Dooley, an I.R.B. man's daughter, who later was the wife of the Brigade Commandant, Éamon Malone (R.I.P.).

The conscription scare fill the Volunteer ranks, but, when it had passed, many of these new recruits vanished with it.

Raids for arms were the next phase, but yielded

nothing exciting in the way of weapons, and many of the shotguns taken up were badly stored and deteriorated in some areas by 1921.

Our first piece of real activity was a raid on Baltinglass police barrack which took place in the winter of 1918/19 - before the first critical date stated in the 1934 Pensions Act. It was carried out by men from the 2nd Battalion and Carlow town Company, and was led by J. Gallagher, 2nd Battalion O/C, a Wexfordman who worked in Baltinglass. An attempt was made to rush the barrack when an evening paper was being passed in, and the raiding party got into the dayroom, but withdrew without seizing the prize. Two police were wounded, and one of them died.

By early in 1920 I had contacted post office intelligence workers as far apart as Wexford, Kilkenny, Clonmel, Limerick and even Belfast, but I do not take the credit of having organised them. About this time too, Carlow, which was a junction for postal, telegraphic and telephonic communications, was being serviced by three others, along with me. These were recent transferees - Charles Reynolds, born in Donegal, his wife-to-be, Miss Dolly O'Shea of Kilsheelan, Clonmel, and Miss Alice O'Sullivan of Kenmare. Little escaped us, and we escaped, luckily, several times, but we were still carrying on when the Truce came in 1921.

About 1919 also, we found a County Carlow man, Michael Carpenter, in Kildare. He was arrested early in 1921, and got a heavy sentence for being in possession of wire-tapping instructions which he should not have had. After his arrest, the homes of suspected "disloyal" post office officials were rigorously searched.

I was frequently raided and held up on the streets after this. We were unable to replace Carpenter.

By this time, a Brigade Intelligence Officer, Pádraig Conkling, a Dublin secondary teacher, was functioning, and all our captured information, from ciphers to tapped telephone messages and intercepted informers' letters, passed to him who passed them to headquarters and the brigade staff. We never kept any documents which would betray us, or anyone else. Conkling had ingenious ways of hiding documents, etc., one being a innocent-looking child's stool, with a false bottom; and another was up the handle of a big saucepan which nearly always stood on the kitchen range. Together, we worked out the keys of many ciphers for which we did not have the keys. He did a good job until about the end of 1920 - the time of the general round-up - when a party of Tans and military raided his house at 2.00 a.m., threatened to shoot him which they could have done, had not his wife thrown herself in front of him when they tried to do so. He was then warned to get out at once or be shot. I was at a wake in a house, three doors away, while this was happening, and some of my friends advised me to go too. Conkling had to go, and he joined the Dáil Local Government staff in Dublin. I stayed, but was careful of my movements and where I slept.

Finding a new Brigade I.O. was then another problem, but we succeeded in a short time.

1920 was a difficult year. Raids and arrests and sentences depleted company, battalion and brigade staffs, which changed so often that it is now impossible to remember them. The house of a Volunteer was burned at Clonmore, two shops, in which Volunteers worked, were

burned in Tullow following an ambush in which two police were killed, and two Volunteers were killed at Barrowhouse in a badly sited ambush. A civilian, who was alleged to be consorting with the Tans, and an innocent man, who was with him, were shot dead in Borris; and a Tan was badly wounded outside the barrack door.

The Brigade Commandant, O'Farrell, and some others were removed because they had conscientious objections to carrying out certain military orders. Towards the end, we had lost the Intelligence Officer (Conkling), the Quartermaster (P. O'Toole), who died in Ballykinlar camp, and the Adjutant (Seán Hayden), who was captured asleep in the bunk of a canal boat on the Barrow, while on the run.

I had a narrow escape about this time too, as I was held up and thoroughly searched one night coming from work. I had the copies of half-a-dozen cipher wires, written closely on flimsy press paper, in the band of my hat which, fortunately, were not found.

Eamon Malone (R.I.P.) was then Brigade O/C. He had been O/C of the Barrowhouse company and 5th Battalion, and had led the 1919 Mountjoy hunger-strike. He took over a difficult assignment, and had much re-building to do. Right from his taking over, the police and military had orders to shoot him at sight, his name having been got amongst papers found in Professor Carolan's house in Dublin, following a dramatic fight and escape by Seán Treacy and Dan Breen. But the threat did not worry Eamon who frequently came into the different towns, under their noses, to see his friends. He was small, wiry, courageous, but rather delicate - an excellent soldier, but not a good organiser.

Bill Brennan (R.I.P.) of the Kilkea company, 5th Battalion, was appointed Quartermaster, and Jim Lillis (now Colonel and Quartermaster-General of the Defence Forces) was appointed Adjutant, and also acted as Intelligence Officer. From this onwards, I was in daily contact with the three.

The question of suitable arms was our paramount difficulty, but a deal was made for money, when a sizeable number of rifles were secured from the Curragh. I was not in on the deal, and am not aware of the number - variously said to be between thirty and ninety.

The general round-up at the end of 1920 made further gaps in the ranks, but many succeeded in evading the net.

Intelligence work became our important development in these days, and some documents and information were captured. If they could have been kept, they would be interesting. I was able to secure a few times the military cipher keys which were issued from the Curragh camp. The 6th Battalion did useful mail raiding at Cherryville junction and Kildare; when the military and informers' correspondence, over a wide area, were selectively held up and censored. The police went from plain ciphers to figures - ciphers which we quickly learned to deal with - and we were beating the enemy in every phase of local and general intelligence and communication work, even to the extent of having the exact times and areas of the night Lancia car patrols which they sent out, but we were unable to capitalise it.

A captured letter to the police, giving information about a man, who was a Sinn Féin Justice, caused us to pass the word to him to be careful, as he might be

raided and arrested. On receiving the information, he promptly left home, with his wife, for a fortnight's visit to friends. The night he returned, he was raided, searched, arrested - and released!

In Graiguecullen, across the bridge from Carlow, a police barracks, which boasted a beautiful crest in cut-stone, was vacated. One Saturday night, some of the local Volunteers, with more enthusiasm than sense, started to hack it down. While they did so, a watchful loyalist took their names, and posted them in an anonymous letter to the police. I intercepted it an hour after it was written. The Volunteers were not arrested, but the writer of the letter was - and given orders to get out in twenty-four hours.

About this time, there was a very pompous, and incompetent - Thank God, from some of us! - old police Superintendent in Carlow, named Townsend. There was a quarter sessions, or assizes, held which he attended in full dress, complete with sword - a presentation. In the afternoon, he met a few of his ilk at a hotel where they slaked their thirst. Townsend was coming home, somewhat tenderly, on his feet when two Fianna Scouts came behind him, one pushing him and the other grabbing the sword from the scabbard. Both made away at top speed, with the sword, and the old fellow panting and puffing after them. All the police and military were alerted to seek out the sword which was never recovered. A month later, it was used to cut a wedding cake, not far from where it was seized.

Completing the Brigade Staff at the end of 1920 was Tommy O'Connell, a woodworker and a native of Edenderry, who had held different ranks in A. Company

(Carlow) and on the 1st Battalion Staff. Tommy was a courageous, impetuous type of Volunteer, with much fire and ability, small and tough, who let nothing stand in his way.

Also about this time, there came to Carlow, Liam Stack, a Listowel man and chemist's assistant. He had to leave Ennis where he was supposed to have been engaged in some attack on police. He went under the name of "Leahy", and was employed across the road from the post office. He was not long there when his rooms were searched, and he was very searchingly questioned. His then employer, who was friendly to us, asked me whether he should leave. Without knowing anything about Stack then, I said, "No" - that, if the police knew anything against him, they would have detained him. We applied for his transfer from the Clare brigade, and, as far as I recollect, it never came through. He did a "line" with a Miss Sorcha Reynolds, a sister of my colleague, Charlie, and soon became accepted in our circle. He was well placed to handle intelligence and communications reports, and, as we needed an Intelligence Officer badly, I recommended that he be appointed. After some time, this was done, and I was detailed to instruct him in his duties. I had reason to live to regret this decision, because Stack was indolent and jittery, and unwilling to take advice from, or co-operate with others. He was an undistinguished Intelligence Officer, but was appointed Brigade O/C and Liaison Officer after the Truce. Amongst other things, he became my most bitter personal and political enemy. He joined the pro-Treaty side, entered the Army as a Commandant, later became a Garda Superintendent, married Miss Reynolds, by whom he had a big family, and died many years ago.

Up to this stage, no serious efforts were made to carry out any large scale military attacks. The changing state of organisation, the lack of rifles and ammunition, and the state of the terrain over half the brigade area made the selection of activities very limited. The 6th and 5th battalion areas, covering the southern plains of Kildare and dominated by the Curragh camp, provided scope only for maintaining our own communications and interfering with those of the enemy. The 2nd battalion area, embracing part of the Dwyer country, was sealed off by Coolmoney camp and a garrison at Baltinglass. The greater part of the 1st battalion area in north Carlow is so bisected and intersected with roads that any position sited could be overrun or surrounded. There remained only the strip of territory stretching along the west bank of the Barrow river and the hilly and mountainous 3rd and 4th battalion areas of East and South Carlow, skirted by the Wicklow and Blackstairs mountains and more or less delimited by the rivers Slaney and Barrow.

1921 dawned, with a more or less reorganised force, about twenty to twenty-five rifles, men who had little or no effective training, limited scope for activities, and with big concentrations of enemy soldiers and Tans in Carlow, Tullow, Bagenalstown, Borris, Inistioge and Kileenny. The problems of where and how to strike the most vulnerable blow were always in mind, and hard to find.

Early in 1921, it was decided to attack Bagenalstown police barrack, but the attack was badly planned and co-ordinated, and shotgun ammunition was so swollen that it would not fit the gun breeches, so that the attack had to be abandoned.

A second attack, planned sometime later, had no better fate, because news of the attack reached the police there on the morning of the day for which it was fixed, and it was only a series of lucky accidents and incidents which saved all the attackers from being annihilated.

About mid-day on that day, the Bagenalstown police wired - in plan language - to the police and military in Carlow, Kilkenny, the Curragh Camp and Wicklow that they had "reliable information that the barracks was to be attacked that night by Sinn Feiners from Carlow and Kilkenny", and to send reinforcements. I knew this to be the case, and sent despatches and couriers at once to the Brigade O/C and Vice O/C and to the Battalion and Company officers within the immediate area. I was in despair all the evening, and this was heightened at about 8 p.m. when I saw the convoys of troops that began to roll south from the Curragh. Next morning, I learned that none of my warnings had reached the assembly points, but the too-early move in by the British reinforcements was the big factor in saving a worse situation. Scouts observed them in time to prevent the Volunteers moving in to the attack, but not before Vice O/C O'Connell was trapped, with about ten men, between the town, the Barrow and a road which runs east-west from the railway station to the Royal Oak, which was heavily patrolled. However, he led his men out of the trap without being observed, with great skill. Thus another action failed.

There was a high level inquiry into the leakage of the information, but it yielded little. Some time afterwards, a man was shot in the district, but whether he was tried by court martial, I cannot say, nor can I say to what degree he was guilty or innocent. But he

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- (ii) How many documents have been abstracted: 1A
- (iii) The date of each such document: 5/2/57

(iv) The description of each document:

WS 1572 Witness statement Pádraig Ó Catháin. P 14.
detail of a personal note

(Where appropriate, a composite description may be entered in respect of two or more related documents).

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(c) Would or might cause distress or danger to living persons on the ground that they contain information about individuals, or would or might be likely to lead to an action for damages for defamation.

(These will be the reasons given on the certificate under Section 8(4).)

J. Moloney

Name: (J. Moloney.)

Grade: Col.

Department/Office/Court:

Date: 7 March 2003.

did have a bad reputation in national circles.

Early in 1921, it was decided to form a number of useful men, who were on the run, into an active service unit under the leadership of Larry O'Neill, a Tipperary man who held different ranks in the Carlow company and 1st battalion. They did their preliminary training in the difficult-to-approach hilly and small-farm terrain of the Killeshin company, where the people were very sound, west of Carlow, and on the borders of Leix and Kilkenny. Their headquarters was an empty farmhouse, and the neighbours fed them.

While they were there, a Tan, named Duffy, and an informer, named James, found their way in, to find out what was doing. Duffy was shot dead, and James was so badly wounded that he was out of the way for good.

Also about this time, a Mayo-born peeler, named O'Boyle, stopped half-a-dozen 45's in a Carlow street, but, as he wore a chain waistcoat, he did not die, and to-day - December, 1956 - still lives in Carlow.

The then Master of Carlow Workhouse (the late Mr. W.P. Morrow, R.I.P.) was a good friend of ours. Jim Lillis's mother was a teacher in that institution, and Jim, the Brigade Adjutant, imprudently visited her too often. One morning, I knew he was there, and went to see him with some documents, including a few ciphers. We discussed some things for a while in a small ante-room in which he had a typewriter. There was an alarm that the place was being surrounded by police and military. Lillis went one way. A Nurse Brown - long since dead, R.I.P. - came in and grabbed the typewriter, and carried it and all the papers on the table away. I had gone another way and, knowing the locality,

climbed over a wall into the Protestant Minister's grounds, and got away. Lillis was captured and interned. A few days afterwards, I was ordered by the Brigade O/C to take over his duties, and I had a big task on hands as I had few records, but my general knowledge was helpful.

The A.S.U. opened its campaign with another attack on Bagenalstown, but explosives were necessary to succeed; it was abortive, and we had no useful engineer to call on.

They went south into the 4th battalion, in the Ballymurphy company area, and were not long there when high-level disaster overtook them. Camped in the townland of Mullinaglow, they were cleaning their rifles, with no scouts posted, and preparing for an inspection by Simon Donnelly of the G.H.Q. training staff, whom O'Connell had gone to contact in an adjacent company area, when they were surrounded on three sides by police and Tans. Only four were able to grab their rifles and fight a rear-guard action. A Volunteer, named Fay, was killed, O'Neill and a Volunteer, named Ryan, were wounded, and two innocent farmers were shot dead. All the rest of the unit were arrested and given long prison sentences in Dartmoor and other English prisons.

I got a report of the catastrophe a few hours afterwards, and promptly went to Kilkea where I knew the Brigade O/C was staying, with the Quartermaster, Bill Brennan. When I went in, Malone, who was sitting down to a cup of tea, looked at me and said - because he must have seen the painful look on my face - "What disaster has happened now?" I explained all as quickly as I could, and Malone said, "My God, this is nearly the end! All the rifles we had, have gone too!"

The O/C's words were blunt and prophetic. We had enough men, but no arms to equip a second A.S.U.

The aftermath of the A.S.U's defeat held one bit of compensation. The people of the 4th battalion area (excluding Borris) were sound and solid. They sold no one.

After 1920, the sources of British information about the I.R.A. had so dried up that Tans and soldiers were travelling the country as spies, disguised as tramps and bacháchs. One of these had spied on the A.S.U. men, and led the British to their location. He was captured near the Tans barracks in Borris by men of the 4th battalion soon afterwards, arrested, and detained. He tried to disarm the guard, was shot dead, and nearly £100 was found on him.

The Mullinaglowm tragedy gave Stack, the Intelligence Officer, an opening to reveal his impish sense of irresponsibility. He caused letters to be typed and sent to the Tans and military in Carlow, congratulating them on their murderous behaviour and threatening them with the fate in store for them when they came up against the "4th Flying Column"! It was typed on a machine which was kept in the home of a member of Cumann na mBan. Immediately, there was a raking search for the typewriter, and the author of the stupid missive, during which I had a narrow escape. So had the typewriter which was covered with a frock in a dressmaker's workroom. There was some disorganisation, in consequence, but not with our intelligence activities. Stack reported to G.H.Q. that, following raids on the Post Office and some post office workers' homes, and others, it had broken down. A trusted emissary was

sent from G.H.Q. to me for a report, and I was able to send him back with an assurance that, though disturbed, we were carrying on our end of the job.

Some scattered men were having a hard battle to evade capture. A few were staying in a farmhouse in the Ballon company area of 3rd battalion when, one night, I got information that they would be rounded up next morning. I had a sister, Christine, in Cumann na mBan, and I got a postman, who started his round at 6 a.m., to go out of his way and quickly deliver her a letter. This letter gave her instructions to go to the farmhouse - twelve miles away - and tell the men to get out. She got there in good time, and, when the raid took place at breakfast time, the birds had flown.

Two other incidents about this time I recollect. A section of the North Wexford brigade were in the Carnew area, and, late at night, I got information that they were to be rounded up next day. I sent a courier to Tullow, to pass on the news, and was relieved when, next day, I read a Tans telegraph message that the round-up had failed.

The Kilkenny A.S.U. was resting near Graiguenamanagh when, late one night, again I listened in on the telephone switchboard to police and military in Carlow and Kilkenny, arranging a scissors round-up of them at dawn next day. I quickly managed to get a cyclist courier whom I sent to Borris, with the news, and to have it passed on at once. I cannot say how my message was passed from Borris, but I was greatly relieved next day to learn that no one was captured.

The only other thing, which I can remember at this period, was something that did not happen to myself.

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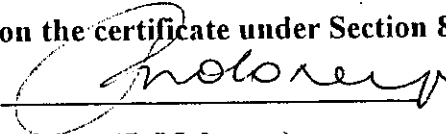
- (i) Reference number of the separate cover under which the abstracted part has been filed: WS 1572/A
- (ii) How many documents have been abstracted: 1p
- (iii) The date of each such document: 5/2/57
- (iv) The description of each document:

WS 1572 witness statement Paddy O'Connell P 18
detail of a personal matter.

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(These will be the reasons given on the certificate under Section 8(4).)


Name: (J. Moloney.)

Grade: Col.

Department/Office/Court:

Date: 7 March 2003.

Some drunken Tans tried to force their way into my (nominal) "digs" after midnight, but my landlord, who had a short chain fitted to the front door, refused to admit them. Anyway, I was not at home to them. I had to be mighty careful in these days, and I was almost always unarmed.

And then came the Truce, training camps, the Treaty, the Split - and disaster.

TRAINING, ETC.

After the Truce, I visited all areas, checking on membership, organisation and training. I accounted for a little more than nine hundred members of the Brigade on 11th July, 1921, and these included internees, sentenced men, some of whom were politicals, but not I.R.A. men.

A brigade training camp was opened at Duckett's Grove, a big estate, four miles east of Carlow town, then in the hands of a land committee. Our first training officers were Captain McCurtain of Nenagh, a gentleman and soldier who was, most unfortunately, killed at Tunduff, Leix, in an ambush in the early Civil War days. The other was a ex-British cavalry man, named Heaslip,

He went to the army afterwards,

Stack was appointed Liaison Officer and Brigade Commandant after the Truce. Malone was placed on the reserve, on the alleged compassionate grounds of ill-health, but it is my opinion that it was because he was not a complaisant yes-man. Stack did not hit it

off with any of the brigade or battalion staffs, and there was constant schism, discontent and inefficiency.

I spent a month on a refresher course at the Camp, and was amazed at the low standards of training and discipline in all ranks, but we did our best to improve them. Most of our exercises consisted in covering wide areas of the country, and trying out attack and defence points, because we believed that a renewal of hostilities would prove guerrilla tactics to be the best. Two Irish ex-American army officers spent a week with us, on machine gun training, with special attention to the then new Thompson gun.

Jim Lillis escaped from internment, and reverted to his post as Brigade Adjutant, and I became Director of Organisation, my task being to build up a new intelligence system, communications, engineering, transport, supply and first-aid. I continued in this capacity until the Split.

About this time, our men rescued Mick Carolan (Belfast), a man named Trainor, and a third, whose name I forget, from a Curragh internment camp. They needed medical care, and, with the connivance of the then manageress, a Miss Byrne from Wicklow, and the "boots", named Martin Whelan - a relative to "Pakes" Whelan of West Waterford - they were concealed in the Royal Hotel, Carlow, for a month, although a Black and Tan officer was then staying there.

About this time also, Nurses Linda Kearns and Coyle and another young lady escaped from internment in the North Dublin Union, and we put them up at Duckett's Grove until passing them to quieter and more suitable circles.

About September, 1921, the Kildare, Rathangan and Brownstown companies of the 6th battalion were transferred to the North Kildare brigade, as an aid to organisation and administration.

On 5th December, 1921, I was ordered to get a good car and driver, and go to G.H.Q., Dublin. I selected a good Volunteer, Tom Dillon, a then county footballer, for the mission. At G.H.Q., I was given four envelopes to deliver, and their general contents were revealed to me. They were to the effect that the London negotiations were breaking down, and gave instructions about the military methods to be adopted if they did. I had to deliver one to the Offaly brigade at Tullamore, another to North Tipperary at a training camp, near Roscrea, another to Kilkenny at a camp near Castlecomer, and the fourth to my own brigade. Dillon and I carried out our mission, and, having travelled all night, reached our own headquarters about 7 a.m. on the morning of 6th December.

Exhausted, I went to bed, had a long sleep, and, when I awoke late that night, there was hell to play about the Treaty which had been signed and which I had not read. When I did, I did not understand it, but instinctively felt it was something I did not want.

Divisions quickly grew. We took over the evacuated British garrison posts, and I tried to carry on my organisation work, but there was only disorganisation everywhere. I argued and fought against the Treaty, Civil War and military dictatorships, and was suspect by both sides. Finally, the second day after the banned Volunteer Convention, I refused to parade before the late "Ginger" O'Connell, and left Carlow military barracks - but not for good. I was

back there, as a prisoner, before the year ended.

FLASH-BACK.

From 1912, I was intensely interested in the language, athletics and the G.A.A. I was also active in the trade union and labour movement, and became a Labour Councillor in 1919. I never joined Sinn Féin, as I did not like Griffith's "kings, lords and commons" stuff, and, green as I was then, I could foresee catastrophe when the Republicans and Sinn Féin coalesced under de Valera's leadership. My old painter from Tyrone, Pat O'Donoghue, who had brought me into the Hibernians in 1913, later became Head Centre of the Irish Republican Brotherhood in Carlow, and, some time after 1918, I joined his circle, but rarely attended meetings. During 1920-1922, I was Director of the Economic Boycott in the Carlow area, and this nearly earned me a sentence after I was released from internment in 1924. This flash-back, at this stage, is necessary, as my background determined my further national and political thinking and action.

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Captured at Mullinaglow and sentenced to a stretch in Dartmoor, was Padraig Machgamhna (Patrick Gaffney) of Killeshin, who had previously served a sentence for reading the 1916 Proclamation. He was a strong Labourite, and we were kindred spirits. He was chosen as Labour candidate for Carlow-Kilkenny in the Pact election of 1922, and I was appointed as his Director of Elections very shortly after I had left the military barracks.

Gaffney, who was anti-Treaty, got a big Labour vote and a big share of the anti-Treaty vote, and beat

Mr. W.T. Cosgrave, later to replace Griffith, by a two-to-one vote. Within ten days, the Civil War broke around our ears, before the newly elected Parliament met.

Within another fortnight, my old and reliable colleague, Miss Alice O'Sullivan, and myself were removed from our jobs in the post office, on the alleged grounds that we were "associating with and assisting the Irregulars". It was only the volume of opinion behind me that prevented my being interned at once. As it was, I was arrested, and released, in Dublin while a delegate to the Trade Union Congress in August, 1922. I was again interned in Carlow, Wicklow and the Curragh early in 1923, without rhyme or reason, and for my opinions and criticisms only, as I had engaged in no military activities whatsoever from the day I had walked out of the Carlow military barracks. I had stood, and spoken against Civil War, and had meant it. To-day, thirty-four years afterwards, I am happy to remember that my attitude was right, for that Civil War threw the progress of Ireland back half a century.

.....

During the early days of the Civil War, Southern Divisions penetrated as far north as Blessington, and were forced to retire via Tullow, Enniscorthy and Waterford. Their all-round resistance was doomed to fail against superior numbers and equipment. At the Split, about half the members of Carlow brigade went neutral, and the other half divided, about equally, between pro- and anti-Treaty. Most of the Republicans were quickly rounded up and interned in July-August, 1922, and there was then little or no active resistance in the Carlow brigade area, except by a small A.S.U., which, I am glad to say, was made up of

half the men who had been captured and sentenced after the Mullinaglowm debacle. They had succeeded in evading capture at the Cease Fire in 1923, and were led by the former Brigade Vice O/C, O'Connell, and Larry O'Neill, who led the 1921 A.S.U. O'Neill still lives, I am glad to say, but O'Connell was killed in a road accident in 1924, after he had made a dramatic escape from the Curragh glasshouse. They had not achieved much, beyond capturing and disarming a number of Free State troops in a schoolhouse, and a successful ambush between Castledermot and Baltinglass, following which a man, named Lillis, from Bagenalstown was executed. All the political and military conditions were against them, and they did extremely well to have been able to carry on to the melancholy end.

.....

I must pay a very high tribute to great railwaymen, drivers, firemen, guards, checkers and porters who rendered colossal national service during all those years. Drivers walked off their footplates, and faced hunger for themselves and their families, rather than carry British troops, and all of those great, quiet men helped us to maintain our intelligence and communications services. It pains me greatly to-day to meet some of those men who have now retired and are trying to keep their great souls and bodies together, on pensions of six shillings a week, plus the old age pension. The nation owes them a debt of more than gratitude which it can never repay.

I also wish to pay a tribute to the great-hearted women of Cumann na mBan who could never find enough to do, and were wonderful in helping us to maintain communications. It is really invidious to name any

of them, but I must, and, if my memory causes me to omit some of their names after all those years, they are still revered by me just the same as those whom I name. I cannot resist naming the Mistresses Geogheghan and Kearney (Carlow), Mulhall (Tullow), Dundon and Lennon (Borris), and the Misses Daly (Kildare), Cosgrave (Castledermott), Laffan, Colgan, Murphy, Fitzgerald, Bolger, Maher, Prendergast, Brophy, Doyle, Quigley and Woods (Carlow). Some of them were better than many of our men.

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I finish on the note on which I started, by saying that this has been my most difficult task. I have forgotten many things, and I have had to deliberately exclude many details, but, if you want any amplification of anything while I live, I shall be glad to assist you. I have little literary ability, and, if I have not done this job as well as I would like to, then I have done it as well as I am able.

.....

After my release from internment in 1924, I spent nearly ten years in England where I had to go to find employment. I worked in four important industries and qualified as a Factory Cost Accountant. I have worked in four important Irish industries since 1934, and have just been compulsorily retired on the

hypocritically-compassionate grounds of ill-health, from the firm of Padmore and Barnes (Ild.), Ltd., on a small pension which still forces me into the labour market, after twenty years' hard work and good service. This industry, like many others, was set up by Irish capital, but control of it has been acquired by an unscrupulous bunch of English financiers and exploiters. We, of the old movement, did not achieve all we had hoped, but we did help to set up native governments to promote and protect native industries - not to have them exploited, or probably extinguished, by adventurers. And so, another of my ideals and ambitions has gone down in dust and ashes under my feet, and life has to begin again at sixty-two!

THE END.

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SIGNED - _____

DATE - _____

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WITNESS _____