

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

BURO STAIRÉ MILITÁ 1913-21

NO. **W.S.** 1,697

ROINN



COSANTA.

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

DOCUMENT NO. **W.S.** 1697.....

Witness

Dan McCarthy,
Coolickey,
Donoughmore,
Co. Cork.

Identity.

O/C, Donoughmore Company; Donoughmore Battn.,
Cork 1 Brigade, I.R.A.

Subject.

Donoughmore Company, Irish Volunteers, Co. Cork,
1917-21, and Donoughmore Battn. A.S.U. 1921.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil.

File No **S. 3007.**.....

Form B.S.M. 2

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
BUREAU STAIRS MILITARY 1913-21

No. W.S. 1,697

STATEMENT BY DAN McCARTHY,

Coolickey, Donoughmore, Co. Cork.

I was born at my present address in March 1892. My parents were farmers. I was educated at Ballykerwick national school until I reached the age of sixteen when I left to go to work on my parents' farm.

There was a company of the Irish Volunteers in Donoughmore prior to Easter Week 1916, but I was not a member.

When the Irish Volunteers were being reorganised after Easter Week 1916, I joined the Donoughmore company in the autumn of 1917. The strength of the company at this time was about sixty. The officers were:-

O/C - Jack Manning.
1st Lieut. - Joe Collins.
2nd Lieut. - Jeremiah Scanlan.

The only type of training carried on was close order foot-drill under our own officers. This training was usually carried out in the fields in the area, but occasionally, on Sundays, we went on route marches to nearby districts.

The arms held by the company consisted of about a dozen to fifteen shotguns. These were the property of members or their families.

Training went on as usual in the early stages, and we were all enthusiastic and anxious to learn. In the spring of 1918, the British threatened to enforce conscription in Ireland, and there was a general uprising of opposition amongst the general public. The

young men, who had not previous associated with the Volunteers, now saw in them an organisation which could do something constructive in the fight, and there was a big influx of new recruits. The strength of the company (Donoughmore) was more than doubled - reaching about one hundred and fifty. There was no change in officers. Training became intensified at this period. Men were engaged in making canister bombs, filling cartridges with buckshot, making gunpowder and collecting arms of every description. All shotguns in the area were taken up by the Volunteers.

In addition to the military activities, we helped to organise the general public, collect the anti-conscription fund, and arouse the fighting spirit of the people. Every single person in the district was prepared to help in the fight, should the British endeavour to enforce their military service act.

When the conscription scare had passed, a number of the new recruits, who had joined up, fell away, but the majority continued to serve right through the fight against the British. The tension had now died down, but the Volunteers continued to train. Public parades, with many in uniform, now became a regular feature of our activities, and, as the general election fixed for December 1918 approached, we all took a hand in working with the political end of the Republican movement - Sinn Féin. There was no contest in our area, as the Sinn Féin candidate was returned unopposed, but our company (Donoughmore) sent about twenty men under Jack Manning, O/C, to Cork City to engage in protection activities. All other companies in the battalion sent similar contingents. I was a member of the Donoughmore

party. We remained in the City for three days, and were billeted in a yard in Drinan Street, owned by W.L. Kelleher, a building contractor.

Cork brigade, which embraced the whole county and consisted of about twenty battalions, was now considered too big, and it was decided to divide it into three brigades. Our battalion, Donoughmore, now became a unit of Cork I Brigade which covered the area of mid and East Cork and Cork city. There were nine battalions in the area, as follows:- Cork City(two), Whitechurch, Cobh, Ovens, Donoughmore, Macroom, Ballyvourney, Passage West. The Brigade officers were, I think:-

O/C	- Tomás MacCurtáin.
Vice O/C	- Terence MacSwiney.
Adjutant	- Florrie O'Donoghue.
Q.M.	- Sean MacSwiney.

During 1919, training continued as usual, but was becoming more advanced. Week-end manoeuvres in which the whole battalion and sometimes neighbouring battalions took part were held, especially during the summer months. Selected men were now being trained as scouts, signallers, or engineers; and target practice with .22 rifles was a regular feature of our Sunday evening parades. Arms were becoming more plentiful, and revolvers and one or two service rifles were purchased through Brigade headquarters. In addition to our military activities, all Volunteers took part in the collection of the first loan floated by Dáil Éireann, which had been set up after the general election in December 1918. Arising out of the establishment of a Republican Government in

January 1919, the Volunteers decided to give allegiance to this government, and so became the Army of the Irish Republic - the I.R.A.

The first engagement in which I took part occurred about the end of September 1919. About this time, I arranged to meet Ben Hickey and Leo Murphy - two men from outside areas who were on the run in our district - and Jeremiah Scanlan, 2nd Lieutenant of Donoughmore company, at Mass at Berrings one Sunday morning. We were all armed with revolvers. We had received reports that two R.I.C. men, fully armed, had been attending Mass there each Sunday, and we had decided to try and disarm them. I walked to Berrings - a distance of about six miles - on Sunday morning (September 28th, I think) where I met the others at about 11 a.m. When Mass was over, we left the church and waited outside on the roadway for the two R.I.C. men. The first man to come out was to be taken care of by Ben Hickey and Leo Murphy, while Jeremiah Scanlan and I waited for the second. As our man reached the roadway, the sound of the scuffle between our colleagues and their man, who yelled for help, forced us to tackle our man immediately. We drew our guns. I grabbed the R.I.C. man and knocked him over. We took his revolver without any further struggle. The R.I.C. man, tackled by Ben and Leo, did not surrender so easily. He drew his gun and fired, so that our men had to shoot him in order to get his gun, and to save themselves. This R.I.C. man was seriously wounded.

Our party (Ben Hickey, Leo Murphy, Jeremiah Scanlan and myself) now left Berrings together, and marched off on the road to Donoughmore. We had travelled only a short distance when we took to the

fields and made our way across country to Stuake in Donoughmore company area. Here we held a conference, and it was decided that Jeremiah Scanlon and myself should not go on the run, but should not sleep at home, until we discovered whether the enemy were aware of our identity.

In order to have an alibi in case of my arrest, I cycled immediately to Donoughmore Cross where a game of football was usually in progress on a Sunday evening, and joined in the game there. Although there were a number of raids by enemy forces in the area about a week later, my home was not raided, so I must not have been recognised, so I was able to resume my normal life for the time being. The following six men were arrested in these raids: John Scanlan, Dan Looney, William Ahearne, Dan Moynihan, Owen McCarthy, Tim Connell. They were released after a few days.

Jeremiah Scanlan, who had taken part in the raid at Berrings, was now on the run. He had apparently been recognised, as the enemy raided for him on a number of occasions. He was now billeted outside the battalion area - in Millstreet battalion, Cork II brigade area. It was decided that he should be allowed to leave the country and, with the co-operation of Maurice Brew, his transfer to the vicinity of Cork City was arranged. He left the country in November 1919, I think.

There was nothing beyond normal training now until about the end of February 1920 when about thirty men from the company (Donoughmore) were mobilised for an attack on a party of R.I.C. who were attending an inquiry into the shooting at Berrings on Sunday, September 28th, 1919. The inquiry was held at Coachford, and the R.I.C.

from Donoughmore cycled to and from Coachford each day. Their route was kept under observation for two or three days, and it was decided to lie in ambush for them on about the fourth day, on the return journey from Coachford. About twenty men from Donoughmore company were mobilised at Tullig on the Coachford-Donoughmore road - about four miles from Coachford - at about 3 p.m. With the exception of two who were armed with rifles, the party carried shotguns. We took up our positions on the western side of the road behind the roadside fence. We were on high ground which overlooked the road, and were extended over a distance of about sixty or eighty yards. As we were expecting the R.I.C. party to pass through the position about 4.30 p.m., we held up a few people who came along after 4 p.m., and we detained them until after 5 p.m. At this stage, we learned from one of our outposts that the R.I.C. had returned to their base by another road, so we released our prisoners and withdrew to our home area. The Company O/C (Jack Manning) was in charge of this abortive ambush. Others who were present on this occasion were: Paddy Collins, Thos. Healy, Maurice Brew, William Kelleher, Owen Sullivan, William Foley, Batt. Healy, Tim Sweeney, Paddy Murphy, Michael O'Shea, John Regan and Dan McCarthy (witness).

Jack Manning, the Company O/C, was arrested towards the end of February 1920, and was replaced by Paddy Collins, 1st Lieutenant. I was now appointed to replace the latter as 1st Lieutenant.

Early in March 1920, the annual point-to-point races were held at Forest near Blarney. Two members of the R.I.C. stationed in Donoughmore were driven to

the races by a shopkeeper in the village (Donoughmore) - Michael R. Walsh. The O/C, Paddy Collins, arranged to ambush the R.I.C. on their way back from the races. He assembled the party, which had been at Tullig some days before, at Clonmoyle, on the Donoughmore-Coachford road, at about 4 p.m. We took up our position behind the roadside fence, about two and a half miles from Coachford, but, although we remained there for about two hours, the R.I.C. party did not put in an appearance. We then learned that they had returned to Donoughmore by another road, so we withdrew to our homes.

As there was a general boycott of the R.I.C. by all nationally-minded people about this time, it was decided at the next meeting of Donoughmore company council to boycott Michael R. Walsh, who had driven the R.I.C. to Forest races. Posters, calling on the public to boycott him, were pasted up throughout the district and the boycott was rigidly enforced. However, after about two months, Walsh came to the church gate one Sunday, and apologised to the congregation as they left the church after Mass, for having co-operated with the R.I.C.. The boycott was then lifted.

When Blarney R.I.C. barracks was attacked on the night of June 1st, 1920, I was one of a party of about twenty-five men from Donoughmore company who were on outpost duty on the road from Blarney to Leemount. We were armed with shotguns. We took up our position on the railway embankment at Healy's Bridge, about 8.30 p.m. and were so placed that we could enfilade the road for a distance of between two hundred and three hundred yards. A section of about twenty men from Grenagh company were also in position in the vicinity. We were in position

until about 10.15 p.m. before there was any activity. At this state, a strong force - about fifty - of military was observed moving along the road towards our position. We opened fire on them and, after an exchange of fire lasting about twenty minutes, the enemy force withdrew towards Leemount while our party and the men from Grenagh moved away to our home districts. Amongst those who were with me at Healy's Bridge were Michael Falvey and Paddy Collins. I cannot recollect the names of the others.

On our way back from Healy's Bridge after the attack on Blarney, our party called to Donoughmore R.I.C. barracks which had been evacuated some days previously, and destroyed it by setting it on fire.

The next operation in which the members of Donoughmore company took part was the attack by the men from Macroom battalion on Carrigadrohid R.I.C. barracks on June 9th, 1920. On this occasion, we were engaged on outpost duty at Fitzgibbon's Cross on the Cork-Dripsey road. We were to intercept any military reinforcements which might attempt to go to the relief of the garrison at Carrigadrohid. Our party, which numbered about seventy, was armed mainly with shotguns. We took up our positions about 10 p.m., and remained until about 4 a.m. when we withdrew to our home area. The Battalion O/C, Jackie O'Leary, was in charge of the party on this occasion. There was no activity as the expected enemy force did not put in an appearance.

Our next effort to engage the enemy took place on June 27th, 1920, when about a dozen men from the Company (Donoughmore) were mobilised at short notice in the vicinity of Crean's Cross on the Donoughmore-

Ballycunningham road. We were to engage a patrol consisting of two R.I.C. men and one soldier who had been observed going towards Donoughmore. We remained in position for about an hour when we learned from one of the local Volunteers that the enemy patrol had left the district by another route. In an endeavour to intercept them, we travelled hurriedly across country to Matchy where we hoped to take up another position, but, when we got there, we found that the enemy had already passed through.

On the evening of July 14th 1920, I learned that a military lorry had broken down on the Donoughmore-Nadd road. I immediately mobilised about a dozen men, and we destroyed the lorry which had been left unattended, by setting it on fire.

The majority of the members of Donoughmore company, to the number of about seventy, took up an ambush position at Kilcullen on the Donoughmore-Rylane road, each evening in the period, August 12th to August 20th, 1920. We were awaiting a military lorry which was reported to pass through the selected positions about once a week. Positions were occupied each evening in the period at about 6 p.m. and were evacuated about 11 p.m., but the expected enemy party did not put in an appearance.

On the night of August 31st, 1920, I was one of a party of about twenty-five men from Donoughmore company who were mobilised at Stuake, about midnight. We were armed with shotguns. We moved off about 4 a.m. on September 1st to Inniscarra where we met men from other companies in Donoughmore battalion. The strength of the combined force was about eighty. We took up positions about one mile from Inniscarra bridge on the

Dripsey-Inniscarra road, about 8 a.m. Our party (Donoughmore) were under cover of the roadside fence, with the river Lee to our rear. Some of the other sections were on our flank, and others on the opposite side of the road. The whole party were extended over a distance of about eighty yards.

We had been in position about two hours when a lorry of military approached from Dripsey. When the approach of the lorry was signalled, the man who had been deputed to block the road by placing a tree trunk across it, failed to complete the job before the lorry reached his position, and the lorry got through. At this state, it is necessary to point out the circumstances in which the road blocking failed. The tree trunk was balanced on one end which rested on the fence, about four feet above the roadway and was laid against a high rock. A man in position on the rock was to push out the upper end of the trunk until it would over-balance and fall across the road where the upper end would rest on the fence on the opposite side. This would make a barricade at about the height of the bonnet of the lorry, and would more than likely decapitate the driver of the lorry if he endeavoured to dash his lorry through the ambush position. However, as the lorry was approaching from Dripsey, the man on the rock made three attempts to overbalance the tree trunk, but on each occasion it swayed and fell back to the original position. The lorry driver, who must have noticed the swaying tree trunk, first slowed down and then suddenly accelerated to about fifty miles per hour, dashing through our position before the tree actually fell across the road. As the lorry gathered speed, fire was opened on it by all sections, but it got through

the position and dashed on towards Inniscarra. The enemy party replied to our fire, but we had no casualties. We had now to withdraw in haste from our position, as the sound of the firing was likely to attract reinforcements from Ballincollig military barracks, which was less than two miles from us. Our whole party withdrew across country towards Donoughmore area. The representatives of the other companies broke away towards their own districts as we withdrew. I recollect that, during our withdrawal, we were forced to take cover in the vicinity of the railway line, as a train-load of military passed along the Cork-Coachford line. I cannot recollect the names of all the men from Donoughmore who took part in this operation, but some of them were: Maurice Brew, John Crowley, Paddy Collins, Owen Sullivan, Batt. Healy, Tim Sweeney, Pakey Mahoney, William Foley and Dan McCarthy (witness).

It was about this time that Warder Griffin - a prison warder in Cork gaol who was not friendly to I.R.A. prisoners on hungerstrike - was taken prisoner in Cork City. He was removed to Donoughmore company area to be detained for a period. He was imprisoned in a labourer's cottage at Kilcullen, and, as 1st Lieutenant of the company, I was made responsible for the posting of a double guard on the prisoner, all round the clock. Having removed his boots, the prisoner tricked the guards into allowing him to go outside the door on the first night, and he immediately dashed away in the darkness. However, his escape was immediately reported to me. The whole company was mobilised, and word was sent to the neighbouring companies at Rylane and Inniscarra. After an all-night search, the prisoner was recaptured next day. He was detained in the area for about two months

when he was transferred to Cork City.

The Brigade Council now decided to put an Active Service Unit (A.S.U.) in the field on a full time basis. In order to raise funds to arms and equip this unit, it was decided to impose a levy on all householders in the area. The levy was based, in the case of farmers, on the number of stock on the holding and, in other cases, on the Poor Law Valuation of the premises. The responsibility for the collection of this levy fell on the shoulders of the officers of each company and involved visits to all householders to collect the amount of the levy assessed in each case. In a few cases, the people approached were reluctant to pay; but when they were informed that stock or goods to the value of the levy would be seized, they invariably paid up. The work of collecting this levy went on from October 1920 until the approach of Christmas in that year.

As activities were now being intensified, an order was issued from Battalion headquarters to prepare a number of dumps in each company area, so that arms could be safeguarded, as the enemy military and police forces were now raiding houses all over the area and at all hours. Several dumps were made in Donoughmore company area, by building waterproofed wooden containers into double fences, so arranged that the openings, when closed, could not be discovered except by a very close examination of the spot. Usually, the openings were blocked by gate posts or large stones acting as such, and the traffic of animals through the gateway or passage helped to cover up any marks made by our men when removing or placing materials

or arms in the dumps.

Early in January 1921, a Battalion A.S.U. was formed in our battalion (Donoughmore - 6th Battalion, Cork I Brigade). It was assembled for training in my company area (Donoughmore) at Sweeny's, Monatagart. The strength of the unit was about thirty, and it was representative of all the companies in the battalion. Training was carried out under Denis Dwyer - an ex British soldier - from Grenagh Company. The Battalion O/C (Jackie O'Leary) was in charge of the training camp. The men were billeted in houses around the area, and when training had gone on for about two weeks, the column was moved to the labourer's cottage at Kilcullen which had been used as a prison. Here training was completed during the course of a further week.

I joined the column at its billet in Kilcullen on the night of January 27th 1921. I was accompanied by Paddy Murphy and Mick Shea of Donoughmore company. About 3 a.m. next morning, we moved off from the billet to take up a position at Dripsey on the Cork-Macroom road. We reached the position about daybreak. I was a member of a party of about a dozen under Jack Manning (O/C, Donoughmore) which took up a position at Godfrey's Cross, about one mile from Dripsey, on the eastern flank of the main position. Our party were armed with a mixed collection of rifles and shotguns. The main party under the Battalion O/C (Jackie O'Leary), Jim Barrett (Battalion Q.M.) and Denis McNeilus were extended over a distance of about one hundred and fifty yards to the west, and in line with our position. There was a slight incline towards the east from the point at which the men on the western flank of our party joined the main body, so that we were unable to see the men in the main body

who were on level ground above us, to the west.

We had been some hours in the position when Jack Manning, who was in charge of our section, drew our attention to the presence of a number of soldiers moving behind a fence on our left (eastern) flank. This enemy party was so placed that they could enfilade our position, and we had no alternative to seeking fresh cover. Our section of a dozen or so now moved to the rear, but, as we did so, fire was opened on us by the enemy party referred to above. This alerted all sections. Our section continued to withdraw, firing an odd shot as we moved through a ploughed field where we were joined by the main body. When we reached the cover of the fence at the top of this field, we opened fire on the enemy troops who were following us. They were then forced to seek cover, and we continued our withdrawal, during which I was cut off and had to make my way back to Donoughmore area on my own. During this engagement, six men, one of whom, Jim Barrett, was wounded and later died of his wounds, were taken prisoner. The other five prisoners - Patrick Mahoney, John Lyons, Dan O'Callaghan, Tadhg McCarthy, Tom O'Brien, - were later tried by court martial by the British, were sentenced to death and executed.

The surviving members of the column eventually reached Knocknagown in Rylane company area where they billeted for a couple of days, before being disbanded. The column was not re-assembled until about a month later.

About this time, every available man was engaged in blocking roads, demolishing bridges and cutting all enemy lines of communications throughout the battalion area. The men engaged on this work were always

protected by armed scouts. A further instruction was issued about this period to all Company O/C's made them responsible for the construction and maintenance in their areas of a dug-out to accommodate ten to twelve men. This work, which was again performed under armed guards, engaged the attention of a large number of men for some weeks. All clay excavated from the selected spot, at which the dug-out was constructed had to be moved and disposed of at a considerable distance, so that the minimum signs of any disturbance of the area would be visible in the vicinity.

In company with the Battalion O/C (Jackie O'Leary), Maurice Brew and Paddy Collins, I took part in a raid on the office of the Petty Sessions Clerk at Coachford, about the end of March 1921. We seized all records held by him, and endeavoured to obtain from him some cash which he had collected for dog licences, but we failed to get the cash. On our way back to our home area, we carried out a similar raid on the Petty Session Clerk at Donoughmore, with like results.

We now learned that a strong force of military were raiding in the area, and next morning my home was raided, but I was not available. A complete comb-out of the area was undertaken by this force - estimated strength, between two and three thousand. They moved across country, searching fields and fences; but, as far as I can recollect, they made no capture. In this round-up, the British used an aeroplane to search the area, and the Battalion Staff, including Jackie O'Leary, O/C, Paddy Collins, Adjutant, Mick Buckley, Maurice Brew, Arthur O'Leary and myself were lucky to be able to keep ahead of the encircling force as we withdrew towards Bweeing where we discovered that the destruction

of the bridge across the Clydagh river by the men from Mallow Battalion Cork II Brigade, had prevented the enemy from closing the ring.

About this time, there was a change in the officers of Donoughmore Company, as the O/C (Jack Manning) resigned, and I was appointed to replace him. The officers of the company now were:-

O/C - Dan McCarthy (witness).

1st Lieut. - Maurice Brew.

2nd Lieut. - Paddy Murphy.

During the intervening period to the Truce on July 11th 1921, I was engaged in organising and training the men of the unit as well as ensuring that all enemy lines of communication in the area were kept closed.

My rank at the Truce was O/C, Donoughmore Company, Donoughmore Battalion, Cork I Brigade.

The strength of the Company at this time was about one hundred and twenty.

After the Truce, I attended a number of training camps, including a Brigade Training Camp at Gougane Barra in August 1921. Seán Murray was O/C, Training, at this camp which was carried on for a fortnight, and at which we underwent an intensive course of training in all aspects of military training

On my return from this camp, I took part in the training of all companies in the battalion. I was engaged full time on training and other activities up

to the outbreak of the Civil War on June 28th 1922,
at which stage I severed my connection with the
I.R.A.

SIGNED:

Daniel M. McCarthy

DATE:

27th November 1957

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
BURO STAIRE MILEATA 1913-21
No. W.S. 1.697

WITNESS

P. L. Donnell