

ROINN



COSANTA.

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21

STATEMENT BY WITNESS

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 116

Witness

Daniel Donnelly. *DENNELLY*

Identity

I.R.B. Rathmore, Co. Kerry

Coy. Captain, Rathmore Coy. I.V.

Subject

I.R.B. 1909.

I.V. Rathmore 1914-1916.

Conditions, if any, stipulated by Witness

File No. ... S.732

Form B S M. 2

Military Archives Cathal Brugha
BKs Rathmines Dublin 6

26 Rd,
Clapham
Dublin
1/5/48

Dear Florence

I forgot to mention
that Rathmore was
represented by your humble
servant Daniel Denny
& John Murphy now
residing at Bannaduff
at O'Donovan Rossa's
funeral. We cycled to
Mallow & travelled on
the Cork train as there
was none from Kerry.
We marched in the funeral
from City Hall to Glasnevin.

D. Denny 1422

STATEMENT OF DAN DENNEHY, 56, MOYNE ROAD,
RANELAGH, DUBLIN.

PERIOD: 1909 to EASTER, 1916.

UNITS: RATHMORE, CO. KERRY, I.R.B.
RATHMORE, CO. KERRY, COMPANY, I.V.

I joined the I.R.B. in 1909. I was taken in by Miceal Griffin of Listowel. About the same time Diarmuid Cronin and Seán Byrne were sworn in, and we formed the nucleus of a Circle in Rathmore, of which I was Centre. We recruited members slowly, accepting no one but teetotallers and men without any R.I.C. connections. I had no contacts with Austin Stack before the start of the Volunteers, my contact was with Dublin, where I generally met Tom Clarke. Later I got to know Seán McDermott and Seán Milroy. I usually availed of any excursion train to Dublin to keep in touch. Our main activity in the year before the start of the Volunteers was the distribution of anti-British recruiting literature, and the circulation of "Irish Freedom".

For a number of years before the formation of the Volunteers we had been using the Total Abstinence Hall and the Total Abstinence Association in Rathmore to inculcate our ideas by endeavouring to instil patriotism in the members. We had occasional plays, such as the "Patriot Priest". The chief credit for the national work done in the Hall is due to Diarmuid Cronin, N.T. I was a subscriber to "Sinn Fein" and got the paper regularly, so that the members in the Hall were being gradually enlightened. It was through these activities that I got acquainted with the two O'Connors, Paddy and Tom. Paddy (K.I.P.), killed in the Rising in Dublin, was a staunch supporter of Irish manufactures. I knew him to go into shops and ask for matches or boot polish and throw the goods back if not offered Irish manufacture at first.

Immediately after the Volunteers started I got into touch with the leaders in Dublin. I saw McNeill, The O'Rahilly and Major McBride. "An Seabach" was a member of the I.R.B. and was an influence in getting the Volunteers started in Killarney. The members of the I.R.B. in Rathmore were instrumental in getting the Volunteer Company started there. We discussed the matter with a number of likely recruits and did as much propaganda as we could to create a favourable atmosphere for the start of the Company.

On the 27th April, 1914, the Rathmore Company was formed at a public meeting held after Mass. "An Seabach", Seán O'Casey and Michael Spillane from Killarney attended and spoke. They brought with them an instructor named Tarrant, and he put the Company through some initial drill. I had put up notices calling the meeting, and about forty men joined the Company at the start. The following are the names of those who joined up at the start:-

Dan Dennehy.
Michael Dennehy.
Pat Dennehy.
Mattie Daly, Nohoval.
Patrick Murphy, Clounts.

Dan Duggan.
Michael Duggan.
Edward Buckley.
Fred Crowley.
Larry Hickey.
Connie ~~Con~~ Moynihan.
Pat Reen.
Con Morley.
John Sharry.
Dan Tadg Linehan.
John Linehan.
John Moynihan.
Jerry Mahony.
Tim Collins.
John Connor.
Timothy Ds. Leary, Clounts.
Willie Dineen, Hollymount.
John Dineen, N.T. do
Philip Moynihan, Shinnagh.
Jeremiah Leary (Patrick Jer.)
Patrick Joe Hickey, Rathmore.
David Crowley, The Mill.
John Cronin, Shinnagh.
John Tom Connor.
Daniel O'Keefe.
Dan Maurice O'Connor.
Frank O'F. Moynihan.
Francis Kelleher.

The four last named were old veterans of the moonlighting days, and, although their national spirit was good, it was a little difficult at times to get them to understand that discipline was essential, and to get them to realise that the Volunteers had a national aim from which it would be unwise to divert the organisation in the interests of local or individual greivances.

I was appointed Company Captain and no other officer was appointed in that time. The Killarney instructor came for about three Sundays, for which we paid him; after that we carried on the training ourselves. We then got a local Reserve Naval man, Patrick Sullivan, and he gave us drill instruction for some time. He also was paid for his services. Later, one of our own men, Paddy Murphy, was appointed drill instructor and was very successful at the job. The Total Abstinence Hall in the village was utilised for the running of Irish plays, and its membership became a recruiting ground for the Company.

Parades were held once a week and on most Sundays. The usual training was in close order foot drill and marching. We had no arms at this time, but were collecting funds and making preparations to get some. Subscriptions were small and difficult to collect.

I went to Dublin on the excursion to the 1914 Home Rule demonstration. I went to Tom Clarke and he gave me a note to Whelan and Sons, Ormond Quay, from whom I purchased two Lee Enfield rifles and 200 rounds of ammunition for £10. 0. 0. I paid for these myself and was the first to bring arms into Kerry for the Volunteers. These rifles were a help in keeping the Company together. We fired a few shots for practice, and were able to give the men training in the rifle and in rifle drill. About this time we started making pikes, and a number were made.

I worked on the then Great Southern and Western Railway at Rathmore, and used to travel to Dublin frequently on the Saturday night mail. On one of these occasions, when the Redmond Split was brewing, I saw Liam Mellows at 41, Kildare Street. While I was there a British Officer called a few times looking for Mellows but did not see him. Michael O'Hanrahan gave me 200 rounds of .303 on that occasion. I spent altogether about £40. 0. 0. of my own money on arms and ammunition at that time.

On the occasion of an All Ireland final, probably in September, 1914, I got an armful of anti-recruiting pamphlets in Dublin. Miss Polly O'Leary of Kilgarvan was on the train coming home, and I gave her a supply. She distributed some at Templemore Station. There were German prisoners there interned at Templemore. There was a British soldier in plain clothes from Kenmare on the train and he gave information to the police, with the result that Polly O'Leary later did a term of imprisonment for the distribution of the literature. They tried to trace the person who gave her the pamphlets; they knew he got off at Rathmore. I was not questioned about the matter but another man was.

When the Split came in the organisation generally, I put the matter to the men, and persuaded all, except one man, to remain loyal to the Irish Volunteers. A few Sundays afterwards the Marquis MacSweeney, Coughlin and Brooks from Killarney came to Rathmore by train, bringing with them some Killarney Irish National Volunteers armed with Italian rifles. They endeavoured to organise a Company of I.N.V. in Rathmore but were unsuccessful. No Company of I.N.V. ever got going in the district. There was not much local support for the Irish Party.

I attended the Irish Volunteer Convention in Dublin in October, 1914, as representative of Rathmore Company. I had the honour of standing on the saluting stage as the Volunteers marched past. On that occasion I purchased twelve Martini-Henry .303 single shot rifles, and I got one magazine rifle free. That brought the armament of the Company up to fifteen rifles, that that continued to be the position up to Easter, 1916.

I started to recruit and organise in the neighbouring districts. I organised a Company at Ballydaly and another at Knocknagree, Co. Cork. I started a Company at Barraduff, Co. Kerry, of which Fred D. Sullivan, Daniel K. Spillane, Dan Jim O'Donoghue and Flor Jim O'Donoghue are the names I remember. The Rathmore Company marched to Boherbue, Co. Cork, one Sunday through Knocknagree and Doon, and a Company was started that day in Boherbue. I started a Company in Cullen, Co. Cork, also. Later we organised a Company in Gneeveguilla. This district was a bit backward and representations were made to me that it was necessary to do something there to stir up the national spirit. Con Leary, myself and two other men from the Company went to Gneeveguilla late on a Saturday night, carrying a tricolour flag which we had painted and attached to a broom handle. I went to the top of the chapel spire and tied the flagpole securely to the chapel bell. The school teacher in the village kept pictures of the King, Kitchener, etc., on the school walls. We got in, smashed up these pictures and painted the tricolour on both piers of the school gates. The bell was being rung for half the day on Sunday before they got the flag down.

At this time our own Company strength had increased somewhat, and we appointed a first and second Lieutenant. The Officers then were:-

Captain:	Dan Dennehy.
1st Lieut:	Con Morley.
2nd Lieut:	John Sharry.

These were the only Officers and all held office up to Easter, 1916.

During 1915 we procured a number of shot guns cartridges and filled them with buckshot. There were a number of shot guns in the district that we could pick up at any time. We also made a number of bombs or small land mines out of cart wheel boxes and fish plates which I got off the railway. Gelignite was the explosive used. I had got some gelignite from Denis Galvin, Newmarket, which had been procured in a raid. We tried one of the weapons on a rock at the "City" and it was successful.

At that period I was attending Volunteer meetings both in Tralee and Cork. The Company area was partly on both sides of the County boundary, and I had contacts with several of the local Co. Cork Companies. I used to get notices of meetings in Cork from Diarmuid Fawsitt and Tadhg Barry. The meetings I attended there were held in the Volunteer Hall in Sheares' Street. Before the end of 1915 the Rathmore Company was, however, definitely included in the Killarney Battalion.

Some time in 1915, Tadhg Sullivan (shot in Douglas Street, Cork, during the Tan war) and Sean Murphy of Cork came to me with a proposition that I should handle a quantity of rifles for them which were to come from the Curragh. Tadhg Sullivan and I had been in school together. These rifles were to come on a wagon on the railway. I agreed, but the thing never came off. About the same time I got a communication from Paddy Cahill, Tralee, about rifles coming from the Curragh. I am not sure if this was the same job that Tadhg Sullivan and Sean Murphy were on. I went to Tralee and saw Cahill. As a result of what he told me, I went to Dublin and saw Seamus O'Doherty, 32, Connaught Street. He told me that an arrangement had been made with a man at the Curragh to send a wagon of rifles to Rathmore. I wanted to have the wagon sealed, but at that stage the arrangements were out and dried. I undertook to look after the Rathmore end of the job, but it never materialised - I don't know why. I wanted some of the Ballydaly Company to help in handling and concealing the rifles, and, with this in view, I took a number of them into the I.R.B.

I marched about 100 Volunteers from Rathmore to Killarney on the occasion of the Review there by Eoin McNeill of the Kerry Volunteers on Whit Sunday, 23rd May, 1915.

In November, 1915, I had a talk with Liam Mellows in Dublin. He told me of Casement being in Germany, and said that the Rising would be at the end of April or early in May.

On the Wednesday before Easter Sunday, 1916, I got a despatch from Tralee, via Killarney, giving instructions for the parade on Easter Sunday. In view of what Mellows had told me, I guessed that it meant we were going into action. The instructions were to the effect that we were to march to Tralee on Easter Saturday with all arms and equipment and three days' rations. The necessary arrangements to mobilise the Company were made. I knew I had 25 men who could be absolutely relied upon, and I decided to march with these. I gave the tip to the Ballydaly Company but did not give them any details.

On the same Wednesday Paddy O'Connor was at home for the funeral of his brother, Denis. I had taken him into the I.R.B. a short time before. I knew what was coming and could not make him aware of it otherwise. I sent him word on Wednesday to come and see me. We had a long walk and a chat. I suggested that he would not return to Dublin but join us at Rathmore, but he insisted that he would go back to Dublin as his rifle was in the digs with Seán Hayes in Charlemount Street. When I parted with him he was in good spirits and anxious for the fight. That was the last I saw of him. He went back to Dublin and fought in the G.P.O. He was mortally wounded in Earl Street and fell against the door of a blazing house. His body was not recovered as far as I know.

On Holy Thursday I was speaking to "An Seabach", who was on the train from Dublin. He confirmed that the Rising was on. I said I thought it was too soon. On the same day two Volunteers came to me from Killarney. One of them, I think, was Michael John Sullivan. They told me verbally that the instructions for the Company had been changed, that we were not to march to Tralee on Saturday, but were to remain in our own area until Sunday, that on Sunday night at 12 o'clock we were to cut the railway line between Millstreet and Rathmore, and then march to join the other Kerry units on the North Kerry-Limerick border.

I got a despatch on Good Friday, but, as far as I remember, it did not alter the last instructions or give any additional information, but the messenger who brought it told me that 30,000 stand of arms, machine guns and machine gun crews were to arrive at Fenit. On the same day I heard that three foreigners, supposed to be Germans, landed at Banna Strand. The police were using the railway phone that day.

On Easter Saturday I saw Casement passing through under arrest on the train for Dublin, but I could do nothing. I got a despatch from Tralee that day containing instructions not to move until further orders.

On Easter Sunday the following twenty-five men of the Company mobilised and were ready :

Daniel Dennehy,	Clounts.	(Captain).
Michael Dennehy,	do	
Patrick Dennehy,	do	
John Dennehy,	do	
Laurence Hickey,	Shinnagh.	
John Sharry, (Baker)	Rathmore.	(2nd Lieut.)
Con Morley,	do	(1st Lieut.)
Daniel T. Linehan,	do	
John (Baby) Linehan,	do	
Tim Ds. O'Leary,	Clounts.	
Patrick Joe Hickey,	Rathmore.	
Fred Crowley,	do	

Dave Crowley, Rathmore.
John Moynihan (Carpenter), Shinnagh.
Jeremiah Mahony do Farranceal (working with my
brother Michael).
John Murphy, do (who was working and living with
us at Clounts).
Tim Collins, Gneeveguilla (working at Jerh. H.
Moynihan's Nohoval).
Manus Moynihan, Nohoval.
Frank Kelleher, Islandeeragh.
Denis Duggan, Nohoval.
Michael Duggan, do
Mattie James Daly, do
Patrick Tadg Matt Daly, do
John Tom O'Connor, Shinnagh.
Jerh. Kelleher, Nohoval. (Working at the time with
E. O'Keeffe, Clounts).

No instructions came. I cycled to Killarney, taking John Murphy of Barraduff with me. I saw Mick Spillane in Killarney. He had no definite information or orders, but had sent two men to Tralee for instructions. I waited until they came back, but they brought no orders nor any definite news that we did not already know. They brought a despatch for Cork, the substance of which they said was that Tralee wanted to know what Cork was doing, and that the Limerick men had refused to move. I cycled back to Rathmore, left instructions for the men to remain mobilised, and cycled to Millstreet. There was no news in Millstreet. I gave the despatch for Cork to Jim Hickey there, and then cycled back to Rathmore. When I got back there was another despatch from Tralee for Cork, the purport of which was, I understood, the same as the one I had taken to Millstreet. I sent John Linehan on horseback to Macroom with that despatch. No reply came through us anyhow. I was in touch with Ballydaly Company, who would have acted when I gave the word.

On Easter Monday we were without any further information or instructions. I dismissed the men to their homes then. In the following week an order came from Killarney to hand up our arms to the police. The R.I.C. were after us for the arms. I gave them four Martini Enfield rifles, saying that was all we had, that the others had been taken back as we only had them on loan and were unable to pay for them. There were no arrests in the Company area at that time.

There were no Fianna or Cumann-na-mBhan organisations in the Company Area before Easter, 1916.

Shortly after the Rising I got a despatch from Dublin calling a meeting. I travelled up with Seán Nolan and Seán Jennings of Cork. A meeting was held at which a temporary Executive was formed. Kelleher from Macroom was there. Nolan and Jennings were appointed representatives of Cork, and "An Seabach" and I of Kerry.

SIGNED:

Daniel Dannelly,

DATE:

1st May 1948

WITNESS:

Florence O'Donoghue

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
BURO STAIRE MILEATA 1913-21
No. W.S. 116