

W.S. 1,195

DUPLICATE

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21  
BURO STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21  
No. W.S. 1,195

ROINN  COSANTA.

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.  
STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 1,195

Witness

Patrick Roberts,  
Cname,  
Carrick-on-Shannon,  
Co. Leitrim.

Identity.

Vice-Commandant and later Acting Commandant  
1st Battalion South Leitrim Brigade.

Subject.

Cname Company South Leitrim Brigade,  
1917-1921.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

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BURO STAIRE MILEATA 1913-21

No. W.S. 7,195

W. 8.1.195

STATEMENT BY PATRICK DOHERTY, C.C.,

Cloone, Carrick-on-Shannon, Co. Leitrim.

I was born in Cloone, Co. Leitrim, which is my native place and where I now live. I went to the local school there. I joined the Irish Volunteers in February 1917 in Cloone. There was a company organised there then. It was only established about a fortnight when I joined. I was then sixteen years of age. Frank Maguire, who was a near relative of mine, was then Company Captain. Bernie Ryan was the 1st Lieutenant and John Donoghue 2nd Lieutenant. Peter Brady was Company Adjutant and John Harte Company Quartermaster. The Section Commanders were Michael Donnelly, John Mulligan, John Lennon and James Mulligan.

The strength of the company was then about forty-five, all ranks. Capt. Maguire then imparted the instruction we got and took charge of our drill parades. He had had some previous military training with the National or Redmond Volunteers. We had no arms except that a few of our members had revolvers. Such revolvers were generally of an obsolete type more or less - usually old 'Bull Dogs'. We had parades twice weekly, one on Sundays and one on some week-night. All parades were held in secret. The R.I.C. had a small barracks and garrison in Cloone but they did not interfere with us or seem to 'catch on' to our activities. Drilling and the carrying of dispatches, which were numerous, were our principal activities at this time. As time went on the strength increased slightly by the taking in of some recruits to the organisation. We did not take any oath

when we joined or make any promises or reservations whatsoever then. In order to get funds we organised dances and concerts and suchlike. There was no battalion or brigade organisation in South Leitrim at this time - just companies or the nucleus of companies in different areas but well in touch with each other and co-operating where necessary.

Things went on like this on into 1918, in the early part of which the conscription crisis came upon us. Our membership of the Volunteers now increased extensively and soon we were from a hundred to one hundred and twenty strong. After the crisis had died down a large number of this influx fell away, but most of them came back again to us in 1919. When the conscription crisis came we were still in the same position regarding arms. There was none except the few revolvers previously mentioned and a few shotguns belonging to individual members. A fund to fight conscription was started and the Volunteers were instrumental in collecting a good sum of money for this. The Volunteers also went around and had nearly everyone sign the anti-conscription pledge. Drilling and training were intensified but otherwise no special precautions were taken to meet the menace of conscription.

During the by-election in East Cavan, which took place in July 1918 and at which Arthur Griffith won that seat for Sinn Féin, about twenty-five Volunteers went over there to assist the local men. They travelled on cycles and Capt. Maguire took charge. On reaching Bailieborough they were held up by a party of military, who took the hurley sticks which they were carrying off them and punctured their cycles by putting bayonets through the

tyres. However, they managed to proceed and to have their cycles repaired and they did duty on the polling booths in the electoral area. They were away for three days. All got back home safely.

In August 1918 a brigade organisation came into being for South Leitrim. A big mobilisation of Volunteers was held at Gortvagh for this occasion. Ned O'Brien was appointed Brigade O/C and Seán Mitchell Vice O/C. Joe Beirne, who was later killed at Gortvagh with Seán Connolly and others, was appointed Brigade Adjutant and Frankie Sweeney Brigade Quartermaster. Battalions were now organised and our area became the 1st Battalion. SEAN Briody was appointed Battalion O/C, Barney Magee was, I think, Battalion Adjutant, and Johnny Conlon Battalion Quartermaster and Vice Commandant of the battalion. The companies comprising the battalion were: 'A' (Carrigallen), Capt. "Packie" Cosgrave, 'B' (Aghavas), Capt. Peter McIntyre, 'C' (Cloone), Capt. Frank Maguire, 'D' (Cornageeha), Capt. John Joe McGarry, 'E' (Drumreilly), Capt. Brian McEnroy, 'F' (Fearglass), Capt. Kirwan, 'G' (Drumeela), Capt. John Lee, 'H' (Barnacole), Capt. Patrick Keville. The position as regards armament remained the same.

In December 1918 a general election was held throughout the country and in our area, as elsewhere, this meant a huge amount of work for the Volunteers. Although <sup>which</sup> Sinn Féin was the political side of the movement, was the organisation conducting the election campaign against the Redmond or National party, the Volunteers did most of the spade work and were busily employed in canvassing voters, collecting subscriptions for the election fund, checking polling registers and suchlike. On polling day

they did duty at the different stations to ensure that those in sympathy with Sinn Féin could record their votes freely. They also indulged in, in some cases, in personating voters who were absent or dead, and in this way ensured the return of the Sinn Féin candidate. The R.I.C. had also some of their men on duty at the polling stations, but everything went off peacefully and there were no serious clashes anywhere in the area.

Cumann na mBan was also organised in the area in 1918. There were small branches in nearly every company area. The night the polling ended the Volunteers escorted the ballot boxes to Carrick-on-Shannon, where a Volunteer guard was mounted on them throughout the night. When the ballot boxes were leaving for Carrick-on-Shannon one R.I.C. man named Ward tried to travel with them but the Volunteers refused to let him do so. This man later resigned from the R.I.C.

In January 1919 the 1st Dáil assembled and took over the responsibility for the Volunteer force, declaring them to be the army of the Irish Republic. All members were now obliged to subscribe to an oath of allegiance to the Republic and the Dáil as the elected government. All our men took this oath and we had no losses. We were now the I.R.A. The Dáil now floated a public loan and a house-to-house collection was made by the Volunteers for subscriptions. At least a £1 was subscribed by every householder. The Sinn Féin Club handled the money and accounting end of this. A number of the Volunteers were also members of the Sinn Féin organisation. All subscribers to the loan were issued with a temporary receipt and later on they received an official receipt

from the Department of Finance of the Dáil.

G.H.Q. ordered a boycott of the R.I.C. to be carried out in an effort to force them to resign. All traders were visited by members of the Volunteer force and ordered not to supply the R.I.C. with provisions or foodstuffs of any sort. The R.I.C. were now compelled to commandeer their supplies, which they did. A void which had been growing between the R.I.C. and the people was now accelerated and the people no longer associated with them or spoke or assisted them in any way and they were generally avoided and treated as outcasts. There were, of course, a few exceptions to this rule, but generally the force was treated as an alien enemy force. The boycott had not the effect that it was hoped and there were no mass resignations. However, two of the local police did resign later on - Constable P. Carroll and Constable Patrick Curran.

Towards the end of 1919 - in the harvest-time - a general raid for arms was ordered by G.H.Q. The Volunteers, wearing masks, visited every house in the area where it was known or suspected that there were arms of any sort. This area contained a big percentage of Unionist loyal Orangemen and it was necessary, therefore, that our men when raiding should wear masks in order to conceal their identity. We collected a big number of shotguns, both double and single barrel type, and a small supply of cartridges. We also picked up a few revolvers of different types and calibre and a small amount of assorted ammunition for same. We got no service weapons - not even a sporting rifle. The raids went off peacefully and there were no shooting affairs. Generally, and

particularly amongst the Catholic population, it was only a matter of asking them for their guns, but some of the Protestant and Unionist elements had to be persuaded to do so by rougher methods such as threatening them with a revolver. The Company Quartermaster kept all the arms - mostly, I think, at his own house. Things were quiet then and raiding by the British forces had not started. Shortly after we started to collect the arms the R.I.C. and military also started to perform the same operation but we were always a jump ahead of them and had the area cleaned up before they arrived. It was soon apparent that our headquarters had previous information of the enemy's intention to take up all arms in the country. We collected about seventy-five shotguns but a big number of them were unserviceable and were only scrap. In fact, they were dangerous.

In 1919 a boycott of Belfast goods was started. All traders were instructed not to trade with Belfast firms or firms in the Six Counties who were black listed. Generally the traders were loyal to us and stopped trading with the firms notified to them. One trader named Pope in this village continued to get supplies of bread from a Belfast bakery and, although warned, continued to do so. One day six of our men met the bread-van between Mohill and here and upset the van, bread and all, into the valley below the road. That ended any attempt to bring boycotted bread into Cloone.

The Sinn Féin <sup>CWAFS</sup> were now organised and functioning very successfully. The Volunteers were now performing police duties in conjunction with the courts. A special police force of Volunteers was organised for this purpose. I was detailed to take charge of this force in our area

and was given five men for the duty. Our principal work was in settling disputes between people and in convincing others to have their cases tried by the Sinn Féin Courts. The people reacted to the Sinn Féin Courts very well and the British Courts were almost deserted. The Sinn Féin Courts were very fair in their decisions and, what was very important to the ordinary people, were inexpensive and easily available. The courts at first were held in secret but when the R.I.C. evacuated Cloone they were held in public. Three local men of standing - large farmers - acted as judges - Mr. McKenna, Mr. Foley and Mr. Harte. In the latter part of the year we had to make an arrest. This was an assault case arising out of a dispute over property. This man was kept in a place of detention or unknown destination guarded by Volunteers. The man was taken before a Sinn Féin Court and tried. He was sentenced to undergo a fine, which he paid, and also the medical expenses of the man he assaulted. Generally this was a peaceful area and easy to deal with.

The R.I.C. did not evacuate the local barracks until July 1920. Within an hour of their withdrawal, which was to Mohill, we had the premises burned and one of our men, while the walls were still hot, climbed up and put a tricolour flag on the highest point of the ruins. Another barracks at Agharas had been evacuated before 1918. We did not destroy this. The R.I.C. also evacuated their barracks at Farnagh. This was not destroyed either as the Battalion Commandant at the time failed to carry out his orders. The Sergeant's wife and family were still living in the barracks and the Commandant was too tender-hearted to have them thrown out and the house burned.

Prior to the evacuation of Cloone barracks, a plan had been formulated to capture it and its garrison. Seán Mitchel, who was now Brigade O/C, sent word with the 1st Lieutenant of our Company, whom he met in Mohill at the funeral of a Volunteer, to prepare an attack on Cloone R.I.C. barracks. Bernie Ryan was now O/C of our battalion. Maguire had died in 1918 from the 'flu which was raging then. Mick Brady was the local Company Captain at this time. A meeting of the officers of the Company was held at which I attended, although I did not as yet hold officer rank but was in charge of police.

I knew all there was to be known about the police in the barracks, their strength and armament and habits and movements generally. The garrison consisted of five Constables and a Sergeant. The Sergeant, who was married, lived in a small house next to the barracks. There was no barbed wire as yet around the barracks, but the windows were heavily sandbagged. Frank Brennan, who acted as drill instructor to our Company, was also at the meeting. I put up a plan at this meeting to capture the barracks by a ruse, rather than trying to take it by an attack, which was adopted. Two of the R.I.C. were wont to go to Heeran's publichouse (at the same time each evening) which was about two hundred yards from the barracks and which is next door to where I live. The window of my sitting-room looks out on to the back of Heeran's yard. The two R.I.C. always carried revolvers and, when they returned to barracks, two more would leave on a similar mission to Pope's, another publichouse in the town.

The plan was to have some men concealed in Heeran's yard and others in my house and, when the two R.I.C. men entered Heeran's, they were to hold them up and disarm them and take their uniforms, belts, revolvers and whistles, etc., to keep them from returning to barracks. Two of our men, specially picked because of their physique, were then to dress in the police uniforms and, having done so, were to feign arresting Frank Brennan as a British army deserter and kick up a general shindy in the place. They were to blow their police whistles, calling for assistance from the barracks. It was hoped that at least two more Constables would come to their aid, and they would likewise be held up and detained and their uniforms taken. Our party were then to proceed to the barracks, dragging their prisoner with them, and, in this way, it was hoped to get admission to the barracks. Meanwhile the remainder of our party were to lie low until the barracks was opened and then rush to the assistance of their comrades. When the second two police had gone to the assistance of their comrades, there would be only the Sergeant and one Constable in the barracks, and the Sergeant would be in his own house at this time. Two men were to take up position at the back of the Sergeant's house and a similar number at the wall in front, to keep the Sergeant in his house.

All arrangements to bring off the ruse were ready and all men detailed for the job had taken up their allotted positions on the night set for the adventure. The Vice Commandant of the Battalion had got a revolver from Sean Mitchel, the Brigade O/C, for the occasion. This was a six-chamber revolver. He.

I and another man named Harte were in the kitchen of our house, awaiting the fun to start. The Vice Commandant took five bullets from the revolver and then started pulling or snapping the trigger. I shouted at him to be careful, that the gun was still loaded, and he answered that it was all right, there was no danger. He pressed or pulled the trigger once too often, and a shot went off. I believe he did this deliberately and that he had actually removed the lead from the round previously, as I could find no trace of the bullet lodging or hitting anywhere, and I saw the direction in which the gun was pointing at the time the shot went off. My mother now came into the kitchen and ordered him out of the house and told him never to come near the place again.

The game was now up, as the police could easily hear the shot in the barracks. I immediately went to the sitting room window and told the boys in Heeran's that it was all off and to disperse and to meet later at Rogan's house. This they did. The police did not come out of barracks that night. We met later at Rogan's that night and discussed the matter. We decided that we would have another try later on, another night, but without the man who fired the shot. This man was kept away from all activities after that. Shortly after this, the barracks was evacuated as we never got another chance to put our plan to the test.

As stated, we burned the barracks in broad daylight as soon as the police had left the town. There was at this time a force of British Cavalry camped at Gorravagh, some few miles away from Cloone. On the night of the burning, we were having a general celebration at

Pope's Hall where we used to hold meetings, etc.

While the celebrations were in progress, a little girl named Theresa Sweeney, aged eleven years, came into the Hall and told us that the troopers were coming. She lived on the Gorravagh side and had run a mile and a half, in her bare feet, in front of the troopers to warn us. About twenty troopers entered Cloone that night but, thanks to her warning, we just had time to get out and disperse before they arrived. Were it not for this little girl's bravery and intelligence, we would have been all caught in the Hall. Fortunately for her, the horses were proceeding only at a walking pace. She had heard them coming while they were still some distance from her own house and realised the position and their intentions. Other children of her age would have been frightened to venture out on the road at night, especially in those times. The Volunteers made her a present of a pair of shoes as a token of their appreciation of her actions. Several times afterwards, this same girl saved our men by warnings of the enemy approaching when there were large scale rounds-up. She would make her way through the enemy lines by using the fields and bogs, and warn our men of the enemy movements. They fired at her a few times but she always succeeded in evading them.

There was a rate collector named Curran for this district. The Volunteers were ordered to burn all rate collection books, and Curran refused to hand over his books. He would not let the Volunteers into his house when a number of them went there - about fifteen under Paddy Charles who was O/C of Aghavas Company. The Volunteers fired some shots into Curran's house. The

matter was reported to the Brigade O/C, Sean Mitchel, and he ordered that the Volunteers and a man named Murphy, whom Curran had insinuated was with the Volunteers, be put under arrest. There was some sort of private spleen between Curran and Murphy, neither of whom were Volunteers.

The Volunteers were placed under arrest; and Pat Cosgrave, the Battalion O/C, myself and six Volunteers went to get Murphy. We arrested Murphy and brought the whole lot to Cloongrange for questioning. The Brigade Staff were there, and statements were taken from the Volunteers and Murphy. The Volunteers were allowed to go home and Murphy was detained. Three other Volunteers and I took Murphy to Ballinamuck in Longford and handed him over to the Volunteers there. He was later tried there and released. Seán McEoin was a member of the court that tried him.

In September, 1920, an ambush was planned to take place at Racullen, about a mile from Cloone, on the Carrigallen road. A lorry of R.I.C. ~~was~~ in the habit of travelling that road from Mohill to Carrigallen. A system of signalling had been worked out and was operating in the area at this time. Signals were made by bugle blasts and by using the barrel of a shotgun by blowing down it. We took up a position on the side of the road at a very bad bend. There were twelve men, armed with shotguns and cartridges filled with slugs. There were also a couple of revolvers in the party. We lay waiting for the lorry to come. Eventually, our scout high up on the hill picked up a signal from Carrigallen which was being sent via Aghavas to Mohill. The signal was to the effect that the R.I.C. had been to

Carrigallen and arrested a man. This was conveyed by a certain number of calls or blasts. We realised now that we could not ambush the party of R.I.C. as we would endanger the prisoner who was probably some important Volunteer. We withdrew from our position and were up on the top of the adjacent hill and, while there, the R.I.C. passed through with their prisoner. Next day we learned that the prisoner was our Battalion O/C, Patrick Cosgrave. Our party was dispersed to their homes. Cosgrave had been appointed Bn. O/C in lieu of John McGarry (deceased).

There was living in the area a man called William Bohan. This man had spent a considerable time in America and returned to live here. Bohan's uncle had, at one time, owned a business premises in Mohill which had gone down, and was sold. These premises were now owned and conducted by a man named McKenna who had bought it. Bohan had come into some money through some legacies and now thought to get this business premises for himself. He was unsuccessful through peaceful means, and decided to try more forceful means. He organised a gang who went, wearing masks, to McKenna's customers and warned them, under threat of severe penalties, not to trade with McKenna. In this way, he started a boycott, so to speak, of McKenna's premises. Bohan's gang raided the house of a Volunteer named Tiernan and abused Tiernan's father and mother. This matter was reported to me. I was the Company Captain at this time. I went to the Brigade O/C, Sean Mitchel, and reported the matter to him. Mitchel came out to Cloone and, with some other Volunteers, he and I proceeded to Bohan's house. Bohan at this time lived with his brother. After an investigation,

Bohan was arrested by us and brought to a disused house where we kept him for two weeks under guard. He was then tried and fined £9.0.0.

Before he paid this fine, he bought a house in Mohill and moved in there. We asked the Volunteers in Mohill to collect the fine or to rearrest him, but they failed to do either. Bohan came out to the Cloone area to attend his mother's funeral and, on his way back to Mohill afterwards, Owen Brady, Michael Donnelly and I held him up at Drumarkin, Glebe. We were armed with revolvers. He was driving a horse and trap. I grabbed the horse by the head and held him; and Brady was behind me. Donnell was on a hill, keeping a watch on the road in case any British forces might come upon us. It was about 5 p.m. at the time and quite bright. John O'Donnell, a man who worked with Bohan's brother and who was with Bohan, went to Bohan's brother to get the £9.0.0. from him to give to us. While O'Donnell was away getting the money, Brady let off a shot accidentally behind me where I was still holding the horse. O'Donnell returned with the money and, having got it, we let Bohan go his way. When we got up to the top of the hill where Donnelly was, he, Donnelly, asked me what had happened to my coat, and I then discovered that the bullet, accidentally fired by Brady, had passed close under my arm, ripping a piece out of the cloth of my coat and under my breast pocket.

In November, 1920, the Black and Tans, or the first detachment of them, arrived and took up quarters in the R.I.C. barracks in Mohill. I think it was on the 9th of November. There was quite a big number of them came to the County, and they established strong

garrisons in all the towns and places where the R.I.C. had remained. Things now became very nasty, and those men immediately became very active and started to raid, hold up and abuse people. The day that they arrived in <sup>MCHILL</sup> ~~Gloone~~, they raided Cloone that night. The first house they raided was that of James and John Reynolds who were both in the Volunteers. Before entering the house, the Tans fired several shots into it. The two brothers were sleeping in a settle-bed in the kitchen and had a very near escape from death, as one of the bullets lodged in the bolster under their heads. They took the Reynolds brothers out of the house and, having given them a few kicks and punches, they questioned them and then let them go.

The Tans next visited John Harte's, the Company Quartermaster. Harte was in bed at the time, and his brother, who was not a Volunteer, opened the door to them. John concealed himself behind the bedroom door which was ajar at the time. The Tans searched the house but did not discover John until they were about to leave, when one of them happened to pull the door. They took John out and put him between an escort with fixed bayonets, and were marching him off. John was a big, powerful man and he suddenly flung out his arms, knocking the men of the escort, who were close to him, down and made a dash for liberty into a ravine and river close by. They fired after him but did not hit him, and he succeeded in escaping. They raided two or three other houses that night also. At Donnelly's they took out two young boys, who were just past school age, and an older brother who was a Volunteer. They put them down on their knees and told the oldest boy to give up

his guns. The boys' mother, who was standing by in her night attire, said, "If it's guns or information you are looking for, you will get neither here". The Tans then set the house on fire and took the eldest boy with them for about a mile or so, for identification purposes, and then released him. Meanwhile, the mother and the other two boys had succeeded in stopping the fire but not until considerable damage was done.

Brady's was then visited by the Tans where they fired a number of shots into the house. Both the two young Brady's were Volunteers but they succeeded in getting away. They had spotted the lights of the lorries stopping on the roads. There was a lane leading to the house. The R.I.C. and Tans smashed up the furniture in the house and the pictures on the walls and generally wrecked the place. The Tans could not have accomplished all this dirty work unless they had the R.I.C. to guide them and to tell them who was who. It was apparent that the new force were out to start a reign of terror and to attempt to frighten the people.

In July, 1920, a lorry of British soldiers, about four or five, were travelling on the Carrigallen road on a Saturday night. The lorry broke down and the soldiers had to remain there all night. Some of the local Volunteers spotted this and hurriedly prepared to surprise and disarm them. The Volunteers planned to come along with the people returning from Mass and, in this way, catch the soldiers off the alert. This plan worked out all right. Some of the soldiers were actually having a wash at the time and yielded without a fight. The Volunteers captured four rifles and a quantity of ammunition. They then burned the lorry.

It was members of the Drumreilly Company that brought off this capture and were in charge of Captain McEvoy. About fifteen men, some of whom were armed with revolvers of various types, took part. There was no shooting whatsoever.

After this, there was immense enemy activity in the area around, in an effort by the enemy to recover their rifles, but they did not succeed in capturing anything. So intense was enemy activity that it became almost impossible to go anywhere or to use the roads at all, as the enemy had continuous patrols on them. The R.I.C. and Tans now paid a visit to Aghavas and carried out another episode in their reign of terror there. They visited Cooney's, but Cooney was not at home to them. Cooney was Battalion Adjutant at the time. They also visited Canning's. Canning was the Battalion Quartermaster, but likewise he was not at home either. They now went to Owers's where they burned the dwelling house and all the out-offices to the ground. The three Owers brothers were at home. They were all in the Volunteers. The Tans gave them terrible abuse, and put a rope around the youngest brother's neck and hung him up from the arm of a tree. Lucky for him, the knot on the rope had been faultily tied; otherwise he would have been choked. The lad recovered all right. They next went to Pat McKiernan's and, having abused him, they also tried to burn his house. Although they saturated it with cans of petrol, it refused to burn for them. The McKiernan's put this down to the fact that they just had their house consecrated to the Sacred Heart.

About twenty of the Aghavas Company had previously

established themselves in a camp and this accounted for a number of the boys not being at home when the Tans called to their houses that night. The Volunteers in the camp concentrated on making mines or bombs from the boxes of cart and trap wheels and in filling slugs into shotgun cartridges. Aghaves Company had sixty double-barrel and twenty single-barrel shotguns. Most of the guns were taken in raids on Protestant and ex-R.I.C. men's houses.

Extensive blocking of roads by the Volunteers was now carried out throughout the area in an effort to curtail the enemy movements and to harass them. Roads were trenched and trees were felled across them. Despite this the Tans and military kept up their activities and raids, and beatings were the order of the day.

On February 21st, 1921, Seán Connolly from Longford, who was formerly Brigade O/C North Longford and now of the G.H.Q. staff, arrived in the area. He first came to my house. He had walked all the way from North Roscommon. Seán Litchell, who was our Brigade O/C, had directed him to come to me. He came to my house looking for me and met my mother. He inquired for me and my mother told him I was not in but was not very far away. We were actually holding a company meeting at the time in the tap room of a publichouse in the village. Owen Brady was on picquet duty outside the publichouse and he came in and told me I was wanted outside. I went out and walked down the road to meet Connolly, who was accompanied by another man named Guckian from Leitrim town. I did not know Connolly at this time. Connolly spoke to me and asked

me did I know where "Sonny" Doherty was. I was known as "Sonny" among the local boys. I replied that I did and then Connolly asked me to get him for him. After a further short conversation which indicated to me that he was not an enemy, I told him I was the man he was looking for. He, Connolly, then told me that Seán Mitchell, the Brigade O/C, had told him to call on me when he arrived and that I would tell him where the column was located and bring him there.

I returned to the company meeting and told the officers there that I had to go away and for them to carry on with the business in my absence. I was Vice O/C of the battalion at this time. Connolly and I started off on foot for the Drumreilly Company area. When we were going along the Ballinamore road Connolly asked me if the police or military patrols came this road, and I replied that plenty of them did. He then asked if they were ambushed or any shots fired at them. I said "No. We have no ammunition and the range is too far for shotguns". He next asked what the column was doing and I said "nothing that I am aware of". To this he replied: "Wait for a few days and you will see what happens".

En route to the column he fired a shot from a revolver which he had in his hand at a wicked dog which attacked us. We contacted the column at Charley Dowd's of Drumreilly. The Brigade O/C, Seán Mitchell, was there, as was also the Vice O/C, James Rynne. A meeting was being held that night at Charley Dowd's place and arrangements were made then for an ambush at Sheemore.

Soldiers and Tans from Carrick-on-Shannon were known to be going to raid the chapel at Gowel on Friday morning, that being the First Friday of the month, when devotions were taking place. The column took up position behind a stone ditch or fence. There were eight or nine men armed with rifles. Seán Mitchell, Brigade C/C, was in charge. It was about 9 a.m. A party of enemy forces consisting of R.I.C., Tans and military, mostly military, after searching the people coming out from Mass were returning on two lorries to Carrick-on-Shannon. Fire was opened on this party and a number of them were hit. The enemy stopped and dismounted from their lorries and, taking cover, engaged our men. A couple of soldiers got up along a side wall and outflanked our men, who had some narrow escapes. One Volunteer got a bullet through the collar of his coat. Volunteer Geoghegan spotted the man who nearly had shot him and had a shot at him and succeeded in getting him. This wounded soldier was picked up by his comrade and carried back to their lorry unmolested by the Volunteers. This incident saved our men on that flank and the enemy fire eased off somewhat and the column now withdrew.

The column's ammunition was now down to four or five rounds per man. The column got safely away without suffering any losses or wounds and withdrew to the Aughnasheelin area in the mountains. They had no gains and had expended some valuable ammunition. Connolly was not with the ambushing party.

On the Saturday night following, Connolly and Mitchell and a few more of the column came to Cloone

and we went up to Humphrey's sawmills near Mohill and carried out a raid there to secure an electric battery. We got the battery without any trouble and I brought it home to my house. Connolly and the others returned to the Drumreilly area.

The following night (Saturday) I took the battery to Drumreilly, a distance of about two and three-quarter miles. The battery was a fairly large one, being about fourteen by ten by five inches. I was carrying it on the back of my cycle. I dismounted and started to walk at the foot of the Gordon Short Brae. I had just dismounted when I heard the noise of cycles coming down the hill towards me and immediately concluded it was an enemy patrol. It was pretty dark at this time. I snatched the battery of the cycle and dumped it at the foot of the quicks in the hedge by the side of the road and then dumped the cycle in under the hedge also. I concealed myself as best I could underneath the hedge. A man now passed by, apparently in civilian attire, going fairly fast and was followed at a short distance by another whom I recognised as Mitchell, the Brigade O/C. I shouted at him "Is that you Seán?" He shouted back "yes" and dismounted. Connolly was the man who was leading and there were four more of the column also on cycles.

Seán Mitchell told me they were just going to collect me. They were heading for Co. Longford to arrange for the transmission of some war material from there. They wanted me to have picquets posted in the village and at the four different crossroads in my area

as a protection when they would be returning later that night. They said that they would be returning between twelve and one a.m., and that if they were not back by then the picquets could be withdrawn.

I immediately went and mobilised some of our men and placed two men at each crossroads and four in the village. The picquets were told that when the party arrived they were to precede them to the next picquet and hand them over there and so on. Two of my men were at the Keeldra crossroads. At half-past one or quarter-to-two in the morning as no one had arrived these men withdrew as per their instructions. The two men at Eslin crossroads remained on at their posts after this time. The men who had been on duty at Keeldra cross had lighted a turf fire in the centre of the road and this was still burning when Connolly and his party arrived there. They took the fire to be a signal that the enemy forces were in the village. After some delay and scouting around Connolly and his party decided to chance it and came on to Esker where my men were still on duty. Connolly asked where I was and what was the idea of the fire. My men did not know anything about it and told him I was in the village. They then came on to Cloone and I met them there. One of the Esker picquet had come on in front of them. Similarly another man travelled in front of them to the crossroads on the other side of the village.

Connolly was anxious to get refreshments, and as young Pope was on duty this did not present any trouble. Pope's was a publichouse. While we were having our drink at Pope's there was a sudden rap on the door by our men outside. This was a warning that something was

coming. We immediately rushed out and took cover. The alarm was a false one. A man named McKeon was going for the priest for an old lady who was dying. Connolly held him up and the old man said "I am Harry McKeon's brother. I am going for the priest". Harry McKeon was a Volunteer. After this incident Connolly and his party left for Drumreilly.

On the following Monday night a meeting of the Brigade Council was held at Edward Sweeney's of Drumnamore. That night the material that Connolly and Mitchell had gone to Longford for arrived in a pony and trap driven by Mrs. Kate Donoghue, then Kitty Keegan. She had taken over charge of the trap at Nicholl's crossroads and driven it to my wife's home - Sweeney's of Drumnamore - where the Brigade Council meeting was being held. The Captain of Cloone Company took charge of the trap and materials it contained.

At the meeting that night arrangements were made for a party of Volunteers to go into Mohill and ambush a Black and Tan patrol there. Twelve of the column and the Captain of Cloone Company and I, under the command of Seán Connolly, went to Mohill for this job. I had the battery mentioned beforehand. A small mine was placed on the street and attached to the battery by means of a cable. We took up a position on the graveyard side of the town. Although we waited there for some hours, no patrol turned up and we had to return as we went. No patrols came out that night. Patrols were out the following night and the night before we went there. The column men returned to the Drumreilly area.

This was the last time I saw Seán Connolly alive. A few days later the column left Drumreilly and visited Sweeney's house at Drumnamore, where they were given food and refreshments and then left for the Corra area, apparently with the intention of staging an ambush there. Seán Connolly, J. Rynne, Bernard Sweeney, Andy McPartland, Baxter, the two J.J. O'Reillys and Beirne put up at a house owned by Mr. ~~Flynn~~<sup>Flynn</sup> of Glostrin. They went into the place early in the day. They were apparently seen entering the place by a Protestant named Lattimer who lived in the district. They were told twice by a local man named Murphy that they should leave as the place was not safe owing to there being a number of Protestant and Loyalist individuals in the neighbourhood, but Connolly decided to stay on and made it known to his pals that that stunt had been worked on him before by peace-loving individuals who did not want any trouble in their district.

Dr. Pringle, also a Protestant, had a dispensary in the area which he attended that day. Pringle lived in Mohill. Lattimer apparently told Pringle about Connolly and his men being at Flynn's, and Pringle informed the British military at Mohill. Just at the close of day a large mixed force of military and Tans with armoured cars and machine guns came out from Mohill and Carrick-on-Shannon. The Tans were under the command of D.F. Hickman of Mohill. This force approached from all sides the house where the men of the column were. The house was under view from a hill on the road a few hundred yards away and was in a very exposed position with no cover around it. Behind the house was an open valley with a river

running through it.

On learning that the enemy were approaching, Connolly and his men ran from the house in an effort to make a getaway or get to cover, but were immediately fired on by machine guns and rifles. A running fight now took place in the open with the boys making down the valley. Connolly, Baxter, one of the two O'Reillys and Rynne were badly wounded. The other O'Reilly boy was killed immediately. McPartland and Sweeney escaped. Sweeney was wounded in the thigh but managed to get to the river and got under the water with a bunch of rusnes hiding his head and remained there until the enemy had departed and all was quiet again. The enemy searched for him extensively but failed to find him. Some of the Corva Volunteers rescued him from the river that night.

The remainder of the wounded and dead were thrown into a Black and Tan lorry and brought to Mohill and then on to Carrick-on-Shannon. Most of them were dead before they arrived in Mohill. Connolly was still alive and was heard to be asking for a priest. At Mohill the Tans called on the R.I.C. in the barracks to come out and have a look at the load of Irish pork they had got. This easily led to a fight between the Tans and the R.I.C., who resented this remark, but the Tans were in the vast majority. By the time the contingent reached Carrick-on-Shannon all the wounded, including Connolly, were dead. Their bodies were given back to their relatives after a few days and they were buried in their own parishes with their own relatives.

This unfortunate affair completely disorganised the Brigade Headquarters staff, but the morale of the ordinary Volunteers did not seem to be affected in any way and the rank and file were as ever willing to do whatever was asked of them. Rynne had been Vice Commandant of the Brigade and Beirne was Brigade Adjutant. An officer named Paddy Morrissey of the G.H.Q. staff was now sent down from Dublin to organise the South Leitrim Brigade and to fill the vacancies. A meeting to organise the Brigade Headquarters was held at Pat Tiernan's of Drumreilly. I represented our battalion at this meeting as our O/C was under suspension at this time for failing to carry out some orders that had been given to him.

At this meeting Harry McKeon was appointed Vice O/C of the brigade. Eugene Kilkenny was made Brigade Adjutant and Pat Tiernan Brigade Quartermaster in lieu of Sweeney who had been arrested. This was a different Sweeney from Bernard Sweeney who was wounded and escaped at Gorva. At this meeting it was decided to burn Lord Leitrim's castle - afraid that it might be occupied by the enemy as another post of theirs, and this was duly done.

At this meeting the Brigade O/C, Mitchell, who, fortunately, was not at Gorva with the others, asked what battalion would organise an ambush. I said I would and asked the Brigade O/C to supply me with four rifles or four men from the column armed with rifles. Rifles were none so plentiful now as seven or eight had been lost at Gorva. All we had in our battalion were shotguns and cartridges. Eugene Kilkenny and I had planned this ambush long before the brigade meeting

and it was only the lack of a few rifles prevented us from carrying it out. The Brigade O/C consented to supply four rifles or, if the column men did not like parting with their rifles, to supply four of the column so armed. They were to arrive the following day. We had planned to ambush an enemy patrol at Red Hill on the Cloone - Mohill road.

I mobilised the required number of men on the following Thursday night at Cloone, armed with shotguns and slugged cartridges, but the four men with the rifles never turned up. We could not attempt the attack without at least four riflemen to cover our retreat after the ambush, as shotguns, owing to their short range, would be useless and it would only mean sacrificing our men needlessly to do it without them. I tried again to get the rifles from the brigade later but they now refused to give us any. This was in April, 1921.

Meanwhile routine duties went on, such as parades and drills, the cutting of roads and running dispatches. On the night of the 26th May, 1921, six of us took up a position of guard or outpost while road cutting operations were taking place at Gortnaraw on the Mohill-Cloone road. The following day was a fair or market day in Cloone. Some of the older men had been in Mohill the day previous to the fair and were approached by the R.I.C. who asked them if the road was being cut. Naturally they denied any knowledge of such thing. The R.I.C. said that if the road was not cut they would allow the fair to be held but if it was they would stop it. We went out the night previous to the fair to cut the road.

While our men were cutting the road a party of four R.I.C. on cycles came out from Mohill, apparently scouting to see if the road was clear. When we saw them coming we fired at them while they were still at very long range with shotguns. They jumped off their cycles and turning them round on the road made back for Mohill with all speed. Next day a force of R.I.C. and Tans under the command of D.I. Hickman arrived in Cloone and scattered the fair. They chased the farmers and their cattle out of the town and the fair could not be held.

The day following this the Gorva-Mohill road was being cut at a place called Sata<sup>son</sup>row. The local Protestant Minister passed by in his motor car during this operation. He was believed to have informed the military in Mohill. A cycling patrol came out from there. The picquet and guard who were protecting the working party did not give any warning of the approach of this force but dumped their guns and made off, leaving the road-cutting party to be surprised. Some of this party escaped - two I think were captured after being fired at. One man was wounded and subsequently had his leg amputated. The two Morans (who were not brothers) were wounded and taken prisoner. The man in charge of the Volunteer party that night was a Battalion Commandant and was also an ex-member of the Irish Guards Regiment, British Army.

The men who ran away came to the Cloone area that night and would not go back to look for their guns, so the Cloone Volunteers went over to the area and found the guns where the other men had dumped them.

National Archives Act, 1986, Regulations, 1988

**ABSTRACTION OF PART(S) PURSUANT TO REGULATION 8**

**Form to be completed and inserted in the original record**

**in place of each part abstracted**

- (i) Reference number of the separate cover under which the abstracted part has been filed: W.S. 1195 / A.
- (ii) How many documents have been abstracted: 5
- (iii) The date of each such document: 14 June 1955
- (iv) The description of each document:  
W.S. 1195 Witness Statement Patricia DeLoey p. 29-32 (incl)  
names of individuals and families

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

- (v) Reason(s) why the part has been abstracted for retention:  
**(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.



woman dressed herself and admitted what she presumably thought were two British officers. I asked for her husband and she said he had pulled the window out and gone, as he thought it was the "murder gang" coming for him when he heard the footsteps on the road. I asked why he did that and she said that a number of the "murder gang" had been arrested yesterday and that they might have blamed him for giving information to "you" people. She was not able to give us any information about her husband or the local Volunteers, but directed us to go see a Protestant girl named \_\_\_\_\_ who lived in a friend's house - \_\_\_\_\_ up the road - who would be able to give us some useful information. \_\_\_\_\_ said she believed the worst of them had been arrested the previous day and that if her husband was at home he would be able to give us a good deal of information. She said "I know that". She promised he would be there the next night and for us to be sure and come. We thanked her profusely and apologised for her husband being disturbed so, and then left.

We now went to \_\_\_\_\_ and knocked quietly on the door and the man of the house answered. We told him we were officers of the British Army and wanted to talk to him. On no condition would he admit us. Francis <sup>KIERNAN</sup> ~~Kekeca~~ said to me "What will we do?" and I said "Give me your hand". Both of us now jumped against the door and broke it in, jambs and all. I put Donnelly in in front of me with a gun in his hand to show that he was a British officer. He was better dressed in uniform than I. When the \_\_\_\_\_ man saw the uniform he apologised for not admitting us. We

questioned him about "the murder gang". He told us he did not know much about them but that

would be able to tell us something about them - where she saw them going and the houses that they entered. He called \_\_\_\_\_ and she dressed and came down from her bedroom. We chatted <sup>Te</sup> her about the boys that were arrested the previous day and she started to tell us about whom she had seen three days before the big round-up: John Joe Cooney (our Battalion Adjutant) going into the house of the Brennans. She said he was in the I.R.A. She also said she heard men talking in Farrelly's publichouse that Cooney had a narrow escape in Brennan's the day of the round-up, and that we nearly got James Cannon (our Quartermaster), that he had hid in a ditch near Pat McKiernan's. I said "why didn't you tell us that the day of the round-up?" and she replied that she was not talking to any of the military that day. She promised that she would deliver any information she could get to know about the "murder gang" or the I.R.A. to one of the \_\_\_\_\_ - another Protestant family in Aghavas.

After apologising for disturbing them we left then and went to the house of \_\_\_\_\_, whom she also mentioned as having information. She also said that the police visited \_\_\_\_\_ on the quiet. We had no trouble at \_\_\_\_\_ place. When we knocked the man put his head out the window and asked who was there, and when we replied "military" he said he would be down in a minute. When he admitted us I said to him: "I am sure you are proud and delighted at all the "murder gang" we picked up yesterday." He said

he was delighted but that we had left the worst blackguard after us - Patrick Charles. Clawey was the townland Charles lived<sup>in</sup>, which we noted in a book. I then asked him what about Fr. Ryan (Fr. Ryan was on the run at this time). He said Fr. Ryan used to stay around Corriga and Drumakeen and that he never could be seen in the daytime. He gave us the name of an ex R.I.C. man at Corriga and said we should see him and that he would tell us where Fr. Ryan was or we could try the boy in . . . That was all he could tell us and promised that if he did get any information he would give it to the D.I. in Mohill.

After the usual apologies we went to and knocked on the door and were admitted without a word. It was a two storey house and Donnelly went upstairs to talk to the two girls who were in bed. I sat down to talk to the boy of the house. He told me he had no more information to add to what he had already given to the R.I.C. As it was near daybreak now and I wanted to get away before daylight, I told him to go up and tell the officer upstairs to come down, saying that it would be bad for him if we were seen around the place. I waited until Donnelly and he came down.

promised that anything he could find out he would send to us and we then left.

We prepared a report on our night's activities and brought it to the Brigade O/C, who ordered us to have . . . and . . . executed. A day later I received a dispatch from the Brigade O/C telling me to call a halt to the executions. We intended as well to cut . . . hair and then to tar and feather her and finally to have her deported. Nothing further was

done by the brigade about the matter and the Truce arrived without any of the people concerned being punished.                    was never seen after the night he went through his window.                    also sold out and left this part of the country. They must have realised that they had been duped.

There was a cut on the Aghavas-Tensagh road in the Cloone Company area. The Fans had filled in this cutting and some men of the Cloone Company were reopening it. They came upon a large flagstone and two of the Volunteers were removing this. The Company Captain, who was closeby, heard a fizzling sound come from underneath the stone and shouted to the boys to run for their lives. They had only reached a safe distance when a grenade or some sort of bomb exploded in the cut. No one was injured. After the explosion they returned and removed the stone and reopened the cutting.

A big round-up by the enemy now took place in the area west of the Cloone road. The only wanted man in the area at the time was Michael Donnelly and he escaped by hiding underneath a "kesh" or temporary bridge in the bog. They took out Donnelly's two brothers - Frank and John - and told them to dig their own graves and detailed a firing party to shoot them. One of the boys said: "Shoot away. That will do you no good". They were now placed amongst others and brought to a point a few miles distant for identification purposes. They were compelled to carry stones on their backs to refill the cutting in the road which had been re-opened, as previously mentioned. Later, on June the 9th, the Lancer Regiment made another big round-up in the area and again did not get any of the men they wanted,

although I and some others could lay our hands on their horses as they passed by where we were concealed.

After Connolly's death it was decided that Lattimer, the Protestant farmer who had given the information that led to their deaths in the first instance, would have to die. Two of the column, Michael Geoghegan and Marty Boylan, were detailed to carry out the execution. They were accompanied by two men from the Cloone Company who could identify Lattimer, and also for protection purposes. Lattimer had locked and barricaded himself in his house, and when ordered by our men to come out would not do so and fired a number of shots from a revolver he had in his possession. Geoghegan threw a hand grenade in through one of the windows and then Lattimer came out with his hands up. They took him away some distance from the house and shot him dead. Dr. Pringle had left the country on the day after Connolly's and the other man's death and went to London, where he was subsequently killed by being crushed to death by a car or lorry against a wall. This may have been accidental but quite a number of people believe that it was planned so.

Throughout the period in question the Sinn Féin Courts continued to function successfully and the people gave them their full support despite the risks involved. Fr. Ryan, who was 'on the run', usually presided over the courts, which were mostly held in Rogan's house in Faughal near Cloone. Many cases were disposed of satisfactorily. The Volunteers as well as trying to fight the enemy, had also to carry out the police duties in connection with the courts.

The British forces raided extensively to try and locate the courts but never succeeded in capturing any of them.

The Truce came upon us all as a great surprise and to most of us was incomprehensible, coming at the time when the fight was only reaching its peak and was still indecisive. Of course, we in our position knew nothing of the influences that were at work outside our own scene. None of us thought that it, the Truce, would last for long, but we were glad to be able to get home again and to get proper food and sleep. Our morale generally was still high, despite our adverses of deaths and arrests, and our men at this date were anxious to continue the fight and were hoping from day to day to get rifles and ammunition. The supply of arms and ammunition was very low indeed. The column had sixteen or seventeen men all armed with rifles. Ammunition for the rifles was, however, very scarce, being about ten pounds per man - barely enough to try and keep alive on - and the days of capturing any from the enemy were past as they were operating in very large forces now.

The only attempt made to make munitions in the area was the construction of concrete land mines and bombs or small mines from cart wheel boxes and metal piping. A large amount of cartridges were emptied and refilled with lead slugs which we made locally. Cartridges were hard to keep, being subject to swelling from damp in the paper casing, with consequent failure to eject from the guns.

Intelligence sections were organised inside the brigade and battalions, but by reason of their location

and circumstances they were not of much value in gaining information about proposed enemy movements. They could and did check on enemy patrols and on local persons who were suspected of being sympathetic to the enemy and on any individuals on whom a special report was required. We had no agents that I know of within the enemy forces. There was a Constable Ward of the R.I.C. in the local barracks and he was inclined to be helpful, but when the barracks was evacuated he resigned and went to Canada. The Post Offices were of no value to us in this area as they were in the hands of people who were not in sympathy with us.

The Courthouse in Cloone was situated at the end of the R.I.C. barracks, now evacuated and burned. The Court Clerk from Mohill, by name Coleman, used to come out to Cloone on the first week of each month to collect fines, dog licences and such. It was now March 1921 and there was very little of such things being paid to the British authorities now, except by the Loyalist element. Yet he came as per routine. On the first Monday of March, at a company meeting, it was decided to hold up Coleman and take his books from him. Owen Brady, John Cassidy, P. Brady and I decided to do the job. Brady and I were on the run and we undertook to do the actual job. Armed with revolvers we made our way by a back way to Cloone Wood. Brady and I went this way as we were 'wanted' and could not very well use the road, while the other two did. They were to guard us while we were doing the hold-up. We took up a position at a gate leading into the wood. Coleman came along on a side-car and escorted by four R.I.C. on cycles. The other two men of ours should have known

that Coleman had an escort but did not make any attempt to warn us. From our position we could see the side-car coming but could not see the escort, which was some little distance behind. When the car arrived at the gate we rushed out on the road and I grabbed the horse's head by the reins with my left hand while I held my gun with my right. My pal jumped up on the car and opened the lid of the well or box in the centre of the car and seized the parcel of books it contained, and then jumped off. I let the horse's head go. There was still no sign of any escort. We went for the gate as fast as we could and just as we entered it I looked back to see the policeman coming round a slight bend in the road a short distance back. I fired two shots at them from my gun and then we made up through the wood with all the speed we could muster. They made no attempt to follow us and we got away safely. The books that we wanted were in the parcel and we destroyed them. There was no money in it.

Signed:

*Patrick Doherty*

(Patrick Doherty)

Date:

*14 June 1955*

Witness:

*Matthew Barry*

(Investigator)

(Matthew Barry) Comd't.

