

**ORIGINAL**

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

BURO STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21

No. W.S. 504

ROINN



COSANTA.

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 504.....

**Witness**

Lieut. Col. Harry Murphy,  
Headquarters Eastern Command,  
Collins Barracks, Dublin.

**Identity**

Member of I.R.A. Dublin, 1921;  
Commissioned Officer, National Army,  
at present.

**Subject**

Ambush of Auxiliary Party by I.R.A. at  
Ranelagh Road, Dublin, 20/5/1921.

**Conditions, if any, stipulated by Witness**

Nil

File No. S.1764.....

Form B.S.M. 2.

# ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

BURO STAIRE MILEATA 1913-21

No. W.S. 504

STATEMENT BY LIEUTENANT COLONEL H. MURPHY

HEADQUARTERS, EASTERN COMMAND.

"A Battalion Job".

In the Spring of 1921, our country experienced the full force of ruthless aggression and tyranny. The scale of murder, rapine, executions, the sacking of towns and villages, wholesale beatings and floggings, had reached a crescendo in intensity, but the I.R.A. was undaunted and struck the enemy with even greater daring and fierceness at every available opportunity. It is with pride we recollect that "C" Company 3rd Battalion, at this time, was credited by I.R.A. Headquarters with the greatest number of street ambushes, outside the Active Service Unit, than any other Company in the Dublin Brigade.

A Unit of Auxiliaries was garrisoned in Lissenfield House, Rathmines, and each evening at 8 p.m. a group of these malefactors moved, in two "wired-in" tenders, to Beggars Bush Barracks for briefing prior to proceeding on their nocturnal, nefarious raids throughout the city. The regularity of this daily "excursion" was too good an opportunity to be missed and the Battalion Staff duly arranged for an appropriate reception. The plan formulated was simple. The route of the "Auxies" took in Ranelagh Road-Dartmouth Road-Upper Leeson Street-Mespil Road, and it was decided that "A" Company would hold the Bridges over the Grand Canal at Portobello, Charlemont Street, Leeson Street, to cover the retreat of "C" Company, who had been given the task of carrying out the actual ambush. Our Unit was disposed as follows:-

Nine Volunteers armed with grenades and revolvers, under Lieutenant "Alfi" Rutherford, occupied the Railway Bridge crossing Dartmouth Road, and seven Volunteers, under Lieutenant J. Curdale, were in position on the flat roof of McLoughlin and Harvey's, which was lower and directly at a right angle to the Railway Bridge. Two of the latter party were armed with shotguns for the purpose of shooting the drivers of both vehicles. The then Company Captain - Séamus Kavanagh - armed with a rifle, positioned himself in a house on Ranelagh Road, overlooking Dartmouth Road, and was to signal the arrival of the enemy in the vicinity of the ambush position by firing a shot. At 7.50 p.m. every man was in position, tense and eager for the fight. The writer, who was a member of the McLoughlin and Harvey's party, was allotted the task of disrupting telephonic communications, and duly proceeded to cut every wire in sight, including at least fifty on a huge transmission Pylon near the railway, thereby, I am sure, completing dislocating the entire system in that area and as far as Wicklow.

But, L'homme propose et Dieu dispose, 8 p.m. arrived and passed, 8.15, 8.30, and at 8.55 word came to us on the roof that "A" Company had been withdrawn from the Bridges and that we were to get ready to pull out. Frank Kerlin (R.I.P.) hastily scribbled a note, which read "Nar mhor an trua nar thanais - Bhí sé beirithe ar bhainne againn dibh" - (What a pity you did not arrive - we had it boiled in milk for you).

Revolvers and grenades were placed in pockets and we got ready to depart. Suddenly a shot rang out, a glance over the roof edge revealed our quarry slowly approaching towards the Railway Bridge. Without any command, or order, there was practically a simultaneous explosion of the bursting of a dozen grenades and the firing of the two shotguns.

followed immediately by a rapid rat-tat-tat as we hurriedly emptied our revolvers at the enemy.

The Score. "C" Company, one Volunteer - McDermott - wounded (caused by one of our own grenades rebounding back off the parapet of the Railway Bridge) and two Volunteers captured - Frank Kerlin and, I think, Paddy Dunne.

Enemy; the British official Gazette in describing the ambush blandly mentioned "a few Auxiliary Officers received slight wounds". However, I.R.A. intelligence later confirmed that at least four of the enemy were killed and several wounded.

SIGNED

DATE

WITNESS

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21  
BURO STAIRE MILEATA 1913-21  
No. W.S. 504