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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS

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Witness

George Joseph Dwyer,
39 Curlew Road,
Drimnagh,
Du blin.

Identity.

Member of 'F' Company, 4th Battalion,
Dublin Brigade, 1916 - ;

Lieut. same Company 1920 - .

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Dublin Brigade, 1916-1921.

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

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No. W.S. 678

STATEMENT BY GEORGE JOSEPH DWYER,

39 Curlew Road, Drimmagh, Dublin.

Immediately after the Rising of 1916 I joined "F" Company of the 4th Battalion, Dublin Brigade. My Company Officer at that time was Christopher Byrne with Liam Power as Lieutenant. The Company was about 50 strong at the time. Our regular parade grounds were Landesdowne Valley and the Brickworks. We carried out miniature rifle practices at Kavanaghs Banks or The Red Cow.

Our Company Headquarters was located at Miss Flood's, Port Lester House, Bluebells: there were three sisters, Lily, Josephine and Anne, who resided there. Unfortunately all three are now dead. We found them most hospitable always and helpful in every way. In fact we had one of our Company dumps there later on.

Procurement of Arms: Parades and Training.

When I joined the Company it was very poorly armed. We had a few Mauser rifles, relics of the 1916 Rising, and a few shotguns. We also had one or two miniature rifles. Sometime in 1917 when the 4th Battalion had its Companies fairly well organised, manoeuvres were held by the Dublin Brigade out in the Dublin mountains. We took part in these manoeuvres. We were out practically all day Sunday and our Company took up positions in the vicinity of St. Enda's and we

were given, as far as I can recollect, a definite point to defend. I think the Battalion at that time was under the command of Ted Kelly.

The next parade of importance undertaken by my Company was at the funeral of the late Tomás Ashe.

During the years 1918 to April 1919 the Company was actively engaged in raiding for arms to build up the Company armaments. The following places were raided for arms by us: Hely's in which we secured .38 revolver; Lamb's of Bluebell, a shotgun. In Dobles of the Canal Bank we got a box of cartridges and a shotgun. In Perry's of the Dark Lane we got a shotgun and a box of cartridges. In Blackies of Newlands we got a repeating Winchester.

In addition to guns taken on raids we were able to procure revolvers and ammunition from soldiers in Richmond Barracks, which is now Keogh Barracks. I was instrumental in arranging that source of supply. In fact we used to meet in Murphy's publichouse of Emmet Road (Mr. Murphy was father of Con Murphy who later became an International Rugby Player). There we got friendly with soldiers from Richmond Barracks. After some time when I got to know these soldiers better I approached them as regards the possibility of their being able to supply us with guns. They were agreeable at a price. I think the price asked was 50/- for a short Webley. I knew that the Volunteers of the Company would willingly come forward and buy whatever guns I would be able to procure. I mentioned my proposal of dealing with the soldiers to my O/C. and he endorsed my actions. I received the required cash from the Company O/C., and within a short

time three short Webleys came into my possession with ammunition. The soldiers just carried them out in their pockets and handed them over to me in the publichouse. I bought another Long Webley from the son of a policeman who lived at the Launch in Inchicore. I got a parabellum after this and later sold it to Seán Nolan who was then a Volunteer in my Company and is now a Solicitor.

Working side by side with the activities connected with the procurement of arms were special classes for training N.C.Os. which were held at 34 Camden Street. These were conducted by Captain Harry Murray and Vice Commandant Peadar O'Broin. These classes were held twice a week. I was Section Commander at the time and was sent down to Camden Street to undergo this special instruction. Our instruction consisted of rifle drill, squad and company drill, with lectures on the rifle and other military matters. When it was decided that I had received sufficient instruction I was returned to my squad to train them in a similar manner.

Our Company played a very prominent part in the Sinn Féin General Election of 1918. We were members of the Con Colbert Cumann of Sinn Féin and we paid a visit to all houses in our Company area and personally canvassed for the Sinn Féin candidate. We were generally received very well at the various places we visited. Even Unionist houses treated us with courtesy.

Conscription Crisis.

During the conscription crisis some 20-30 rifles were transferred by us in a cab from Stanley Street to Miss Flood's of Bluebell. I cannot recollect where these rifles came from but I know they certainly were in good order.

The conscription crisis in 1918 was responsible for a big influx of Volunteers into the Company and from the original strength of 50 it increased to approximately 120. When this crisis had passed quite a large number of the men who had joined at that time left us.

British recruiting meetings held in James' Street and the North Strand were broken up and obstructed by members of our Company. While there was no physical violence used the speakers and those who addressed the meeting failed to get a hearing as the Volunteers cried them down.

Funeral of Richard Coleman.

Richard Coleman of Swords died in Usk Prison on the 9th or 10th December, 1918. His body was taken to Dublin and he was buried in Glasnevin Cemetery where he was given a military funeral. My Company took part in this funeral. We were ordered on this occasion to take small arms and ammunition as it was felt that the British might intervene and prevent military ceremonial. When the burial had been completed instructions reached us that we were to avoid trouble with the British if possible and that for this reason we were to avoid returning home by the front gate. We, therefore, left the cemetery by a rear entrance and were dismissed at Parnell Square. We didn't encounter any British military on our return journey.

I. R. A. Police Guard for Dáil Meeting.

At the meeting of the first Dáil at the Mansion House on the 21st January, 1919, our Company supplied specially selected men for police duty. They were fully armed and took up duty at the Mansion House. I was one of

the number selected and as far as I can recollect our main duty was to defend the delegates attending this function, and if any attempts were made to arrest them we were to attack and try and prevent such arrest.

Battalion Active Service List.

Towards the end of 1919 or perhaps early 1920, special men of whom I was one, were nominated by the Company Commander to be in readiness night and day for active duty. The idea was that if an operation against enemy forces was to be brought off at any time during the twenty-four hours of the day or night the men selected would be available.

In this connection the list of selected men from the various Companies of the Battalion was given to Dr. Ted Kelly, Battalion Commandant. It was found in his possession when his place was raided by Detective Officer **BRUTON** Barton, with the result that I was raided by a Detective Officer Smith from Drumcondra, who was known as "Dog" Smith.

Attack on British Forces at Grattan Crescent.

An attack by six or seven members of the Company was staged on British Forces at Grattan Crescent, Inchicore. I think this took place about February, 1920. It was observed that a British lorry would pass this point at approximately the same time each day so it was decided that this lorry should be hit up. I should say that I was not a member of the party on this occasion but I was told later that the ambush was a success - that a number of soldiers had been hit. This was later verified by

members of the Company who had been prisoners at Richmond Barracks. Before the lorry came into view a car was taken from Burke's Yard at Grattan Crescent and it was intended to put this car across the road as an obstruction but for some reason or other the car was not got into position in sufficient time before the lorry came. The lorry swept by and our men opened fire on it. They got safely away having satisfied themselves that casualties were effected.

The sequel to this was that the Company was ordered to stand by to protect the district in the event of reprisals. The only thing which happened was that a few soldiers ran riot and fired on P. O'Connor, wounding him. I carried him from Tyrconnell Road, where he received the wound, to the house of Miss Bushel, at 2 New Road, Inchicore, where medical attention was provided for him.

Company Manoeuvre - Surprise Raid by R. I. C.

Following this a Company manoeuvre was staged between two sections in the vicinity of a sandpit near the Second Lock on the Grand Canal, Inchicore. Paddy O'Connor was in charge of one section and I was in charge of the other section. It took me a long time to get my section to the point of attack. Paddy O'Connor's section was lying in wait for us in the sandpits. They were, however, surprised by a party of R. I. C. men from Chapelizod and taken into custody. Some shots were exchanged. Jim McGuinness received a bullet through his hat. Nine of the section were arrested and taken to Chapelizod Police Barracks. They were subsequently tried at Lucan and sentenced to imprisonment.

Armistice Parade.

An Armistice parade was held in Dublin in the year 1919 to commemorate the entry of the Allies into the Great War. We paraded under arms and took up positions in Dame Street and George's Street. We were to open fire on the parade but at the last moment this instruction was cancelled. On our way home we observed a camera man who had taken pictures of the parade. We took the camera off him and destroyed it.

We provided police protection, fully armed, for Sinn Féin Courts when in session. The Court was held in the Technical Schools, Kevin Street. Our men were not interfered with while carrying out their duties.

Company Dumps.

Our Company dumps were located at Miss Flood's of Bluebell, and we also had one in the Brickyards at Inchicore. On one occasion I transferred a sack full of .303 ammunition from Miss Flood's to Harding's at Christ Church where it was taken over by Frank Harding, who, I think, was Brigade Quartermaster at the time. I understood that it was being transferred to the North of Ireland.

Capture of Crossley Tender.

In 1920, I was appointed 1st Lieutenant of the Company. Christopher Byrne was made Vice-Commandant.

When I became Company Officer, one of the first requests made to me was by four young boys of the Company

who asked permission to stage an attack on a Crossley Tender which they had observed passing regularly at Killeen Lane, Bluebell. At first I objected as I thought they were much too young and I considered them too irresponsible. However, they persisted and eventually I gave in. They succeeded in capturing the Crossley and destroyed it. I think the driver was taken completely by surprise on account of their youth. However, he soon saw they meant business when they fired on the windscreen of the car.

Income Tax Documents Destroyed.

On the 3rd April, 1920, a general instruction was issued for the destruction of all Income Tax documents on that night. In my area these documents were kept by a Mr. Harrison at his house in Lucan. We entered the house on the night in question and took all books and records relating to Income Tax and removed them back to Bluebell where we destroyed them the following day in a ditch by burning them. They were so bulky and so numerous that it took some time to burn them. As this was the anniversary of Easter Week, 1916, the British military were taking precautions against another Rising. All roads in the area were cordoned off which meant that we could not avail of the roads to get our books and documents away. We crossed the fields with them.

Rate Collection Money Seized.

Sometime after this event an instruction was issued to seize all monies which had been collected for rates by the local Rate Collector. Our instructions on this

occasion were that we should enter the house of Mr. Shields at Mount Tallant, Terenure, at 9 o'clock in the morning. We were to allow nobody to enter or leave the house until such time as we had word that the cheques had been cashed. The Rate Collector was compelled by Paddy Lambe, one of our party, to make out a cheque for £1,500 which was to cover the rates assessed for that area. Paddy Lambe then took this cheque to the Bank and cashed it. The Rate Collector saw there was nothing for him to do but sign the cheque. Lambe took it to the Bank and exchanged it for cash which was afterwards handed over to a responsible person in the Government. I believe that this type of operation was very general throughout the Brigade on that day. Our instructions were that all cheques collected from the various Rate Collectors would be cashed at the same time so that there would be no repercussions and to prevent word from leaking out to the British Authorities as to what was happening.

Bloody Sunday.

In connection with the Bloody Sunday operations Paddy O'Connor and myself and about 8-10 others were detailed to proceed either to Eastwood Hotel, Leeson Street, and shoot a British Intelligence Officer there by the name of Lieut. -Colonel Jennings. That morning on the 21st November the party entered the hotel in question, took it over and asked for Lieut. -Colonel Jennings. The Registrar of the hotel said he was not residing there. We searched the office books but could not find his name in them. O'Connor and myself then searched the bedrooms but failed to locate him. We then withdrew our men and dismissed individually. All got safely away with their guns.

Teeling Escape.

Instructions were sent to the Company that an attempt was to be made to rescue a number of prisoners in Kilmainham Jail, including Frank Teeling, Simon Donnelly and Ernie O'Malley. As a result of this we had a Company parade. Arrangements were discussed and it was decided to select a number of men from my Company. Some of those men were to appear around the Jail walls in the guise of road sweepers. Two more were detailed to stand by in a little van which was for the purpose of getting the prisoners away immediately they escaped. To effect the escape a rope ladder was made at Inchicore Works. This was carried to the Jail walls in a bag. The escape took place on the 14th February, 1921, but nevertheless I should say that we paraded morning and night outside the Jail walls for a week before that time. We were there early in the morning and late in the evening. The reason being that we were given to understand that the prisoners had access to the yard at these times for a very short period, which made their chances of escape possible. We didn't know what definite date was fixed for the escape. All we were told was that we were to be in readiness, in case an opportunity arose at any time. I cannot say whether it was the second or third night on which we had taken up our positions outside the walls that some of our men were able to contact the prisoners and had conversation with them through a side gate. We were informed that the men inside were ready to chance the escape that night. With that we proceeded immediately with arrangements for getting the ladder over the wall. We attached a long strong piece of cord to the rope ladder itself and a heavy weight at the end of this. We threw the weight over the wall and no sooner had we done so than the men inside started pulling it with a view to getting the ladder proper over the wall.

However, with the friction caused by pulling the cord on top of the wall the cord severed and the ladder fell back on to the outside. The prisoners at this time shouted from inside "We are stuck, lads. We have to get back this time to our cells. To delay any longer would defeat our plans".

While this was happening some of our men observed soldiers in the vicinity with their lady friends. They obviously saw what was happening and as we feared that they could identify us and possibly ruin the job in future we took them into custody. Having obtained the names of the ladies in question we notified their people so that they would not be uneasy about them. We did this through an Oblate Priest in Inchicore who was a friend of ours. We approached him and he carried out this mission for us. We assured the people through him that they would be released in a few days. We took them out to a place in Bluebell where we had them well looked after.

The rope ladder attempt at escape having failed, alternative arrangements were made. Bolt cutters were sent in and eventually the prisoners made their escape by cutting their way through the gate. To get the bolt cutters in we had to cut the handles as otherwise they would be too bulky. This meant that the leverage on the bolt cutters was reduced to the extent that they were rendered practically useless. Word was sent out again to try and remedy this defect. As a result pieces of gun barrel were sent in to make up for the handles which had been cut off, thereby giving the required leverage to cut the bolts on the gates. As I have already said this proved a success and the prisoners made good their escape.

When they had escaped we released the soldiers and their lady friends who were in our custody. The late Paddy O'Brien gave the soldiers a note to their Commanding Officer explaining their absence. When they were receiving this note one of the soldiers jokingly remarked "Well Paddy, did the stunt work?". Paddy replied that it had. The soldier then said, "By Jove, you deserve to win".

Raid on Inchicore Works.

We knew that the British Authorities intended to make use of armoured plating which was lying in Inchicore Works. They had proposed to equip railway engines with it. It was decided to take over the plating, get it away from the Works and destroy it. On the night planned for the raid the whole Company turned out. We took over the complete Works at Inchicore from about 10 p.m. to 7 a.m. the following day. We commandeered a railway lorry and loaded the plating on to it. We took the lorry to the 7th Lock Bridge, Inchicore, but as it was overloaded we found it impossible to take it over this bridge. Consequently, we dumped the plating into the canal at this point. We succeeded in our mission as I don't think the British ever bothered with the stuff afterwards.

Burning of Police Barracks.

A general order was issued for the burning of all vacated police barracks. There were two in our area, one at Crumlin and the other at Chapelizod. From 10 to 15 men of the Company went down to Crumlin, assisted by at least two lads from an Engineer Company. We took over the Post Office which is near the Barracks, and so

ensured that communications were cut. The two men of the Engineers mined the barracks because it was a very strong building and it was felt that fire alone would not destroy it. When everything was ready all men were told to get outside the building excepting the Engineers. I was standing at the graveyard on the opposite side of the road expecting to hear the barracks go up any minute when all of a sudden I saw the place was enveloped in fire and I heard shouts and screams from the inside. I rushed to the door and saw that one of the Engineers - Joe Larkin - a young man from Balbriggan, was badly burned. I succeeded in getting him out and putting my coat round him. What actually happened was that the other Engineer was sprinkling the place with petrol when he accidentally let some of the petrol touch an oil lamp which Larkin was using as a light when planting the sticks of gelignite. When this happened the place burst into flames. Immediately Larkin had the presence of mind to pull the fuse from the gelignite. With as little delay as possible I took Joe Larkin to Miss Bushel's house at No. 2 New Road, Inchicore. When we came to Crumlin Road I observed a curfew lorry and I said to Joe, "Are you able to get over this ditch because if not I am afraid we have had it". He bravely replied, "I am, Dwyer". With that we both got over the fence and lay there until the lorry had passed. We then proceeded to Miss Bushel's house. A Cumann na mBan girl was there and she dressed Larkin's wounds as best she could by dipping cotton wool in olive oil. Paddy O'Connor and myself went on two bicycles looking for medical aid. We went to the house of Dr. Kelly of Rathgar. He said he would come along but as he was so long in getting ready we became impatient and went to look for another doctor. This time we went to Cork Street Hospital and met a Doctor Reddin, a brother of D.J. Reddin.

He said he would willingly come but since he was not connected with the movement he would not like to interfere, as other medical assistance had been summoned.

I informed him that I was a Volunteer Officer and that as one of my men was badly injured and needed his attention I wished him to come. This eased the position for him. He there and then packed his bag and came along with us. He examined Larkin and said he would have to be removed to somewhere in which he would receive medical attention. I then got in touch with Christy Byrne, the Company Officer, and told him the position. He there and then got in a taxi and we drove to a Mr. Cassidy of Crumlin Road Brickworks. At Mr. Cassidy's house there was a Dr. Rock staying. Christy Byrne explained the position to him. Dr. Rock came along with us to Miss Flood's house at Bluebell where Joe had been removed in the meantime. Dr. Rock attended to Larkin for about six weeks and he made a perfect job of him.

With regard to the burning of the barracks, the operation was not a success, due to the accident to Joe Larkin, the gelignite was not exploded and only a part of the barracks was burned out. The second barracks in our area was not burned. On the night we set out to burn it armed with bundles of hay and oil, as we came near the village we saw a lorry pulled up there. Two of our men went down to examine this lorry to see if it was a military one. No sooner had they approached it than an order was given "Hands Up" by the military. With that they ran and the military opened fire. There was nothing for it then but for our entire party to withdraw leaving the job unfinished.

Destruction of Military Transport.

An order was issued to the Company that we were to destroy all military property in our area. A number of us took up positions on the Naas Road as we were aware that it was usual for a military lorry to travel there at a certain time. They had an aerodrome in Tallaght. Half the Company spread itself out along the road at a selected point. We put a signaller well out ahead to signal to us when the lorry was to be stopped. We weren't long in position when the signal came through to us that a military lorry was coming towards us. I had my men in position behind the wall on both sides of the road and another man and myself remained on the road, and when the lorry came up I held it up. The men then exposed themselves on top of the wall and the driver pulled up. We ordered the driver out of the lorry and two or three other soldiers who were travelling with him. We then destroyed the lorry by burning it.

Sometime after this we staged another attack on three lorries of the Royal Air Corps coming in from Baldonnel. This ambush took place near the Red Cow Publichouse. Practically all of my Company were engaged on this ambush, together with members of the Active Service Unit. When the lorries came abreast of our position which we had taken up on both sides of the road, we opened fire on them and the soldiers returned fire. I cannot say if we inflicted any casualties as the lorries kept going.

Shortly after this I was transferred to "B" Company and for all practical purposes this finished my

activities as I was arrested and interned in Richmond Barracks, Arbour Hill, Collinstown and Kilmainham Jail, from which I was released on the 8th December, 1921.

SIGNED George Joseph Dwyer.
GEORGE JOSEPH DWYER

DATE 14 May 1952.
14 May, 1952.

WITNESS William Ivory Comdt.
(William Ivory, Comd't.)

