

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

BURO STAIRE MILEATA 1913-21

No. W.S. 698

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 698

Witness

Thomas (Sweeney) Newell,
"Alma",
74 College Road,
Galway.

Identity.

Lieut. Castlegar (Co. Galway) Company
Irish Volunteers, 1915-1921.

Subject.

(a) National activities, Co. Galway,
1916-1921;

(b) Mission to identify "Igoe" for
G.H.Q. Squad, Dublin, January 1921.
Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil

File No. S.1840

Form B.S.M. 2

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SECOND STATEMENT BY THOMAS (SWEENEY) NEWELL,

"Alma", 74 College Road,
Galway.

I returned home from Frongoch at Christmas, 1916. The Company (Castlegar) got going again. I took charge as the Company Captain Brian Molloy was still in gaolas he had been sentenced to ten years penal servitude. At this time very little was done beyond holding weekly training parades.

About June, 1917, Brian Molloy was released. He took charge of the Company and I reverted to my old rank of 1st Lieutenant.

We took an active part in the General Election in 1918. Members of the Company canvassed the electors to vote for the Sinn Féin candidates. On polling day Volunteers acted as personation agents and helped to bring the voters to the poll.

Early in 1919, the Company carried out many raids for arms on the houses of the loyalists. At Connie French's, "The Bungalow", Claregalway, we got a rifle, a shotgun and a revolver. In Eddie French's, Cloon, Claregalway, we got one double-barrelled shotgun and a few old fowling pieces. In Moffets, Rockwell, we got one shotgun. Mr. Pierce Joyce, Melvue, handed in some shotguns to the military at Renmore Barracks for safe keeping. He kept one shotgun, between thirty and forty rounds of .303 ammunition, and a

few old swords. Miss Nora King, a maid in Joyce's, brought these out and gave them to Tom Courtney and me.

At about 5.30 one evening in May, 1920, Joe Donnellan came to our forge at Brierhill and told my brother Mick and I that a lorry load of police had left Galway and had gone out the Tuam road and that they would be returning to Galway about 8 p.m. We immediately sent for Brian Molloy. He came to the forge with John Molloy. We decided to attack them on the way back. Brian Molloy went to Two Mile Ditch to get some more Volunteers. He did not return in time for the attack. My brother Patrick, Joe Donnellan, John Molloy and I went to Killeen and took up positions behind the wall on the top of the hill. Donnellan and I had rifles and eight rounds of ammunition each. Patrick and John Molloy had shotguns. At about ten minutes past eight the lorry approached. When it was about thirty yards from us we opened fire on it. It passed by and stopped about three hundred yards ahead. Donnellan and I continued to fire with the rifles; those with shotguns stopped firing as it would be waste to fire at that range. When the lorry stopped the police dismounted and took cover and opened fire on us. We retired. We heard later that two police had been badly wounded. The day following the attack, Seumas Murphy, Brigade O/C, and George Nichols came to the forge at Brierhill and made enquiries as to who carried out the attack. Nichols said if he found out who did it that he would have them courtmartialled.

On the night of the attack on Loughgeorge R.I.C. Barracks, I was in charge of a road mine at Killeen.

There was also an ambush party there, in case reinforcements came that way from Galway, we were to attack them. We remained in position while the attack on the Barracks was in progress, but nothing came our way.

During the month of August, 1920, we got reports that five or six R.I.C. men were in the habit of cycling from Oranmore to Galway on Saturday mornings. One Friday night that month a meeting, composed mostly of officers, was held at the forge, Brierhill. I was present and amongst others present were, Brian Molloy, my brother Mick, Thomas (Baby) Duggan and Bernard Fallon. The meeting discussed the possibility of attacking the patrol. It was decided to attack them next morning, Saturday. Brian Molloy was the senior officer present. We mobilised at Merlinn Park wood on the Oranmore-Galway road at 10 a.m. the following morning, Saturday. There were about fourteen or fifteen present. I was armed with a .45 revolver and had five rounds of ammunition for it. Four others had rifles, and the remainder had shotguns. About twelve of the party were placed along the wall of Merlinn Park at intervals of four or five yards apart, and two on the railway bridge about three hundred yards on the Oranmore side of our position. We were instructed not to fire until after the R.I.C. had been called on to surrender, and that they had refused to do so. At about 12 o'clock noon I saw two R.I.C. men on bikes coming under the bridge, and three others at intervals behind them. Before the leading R.I.C. man reached the ambush position, the men on the bridge contrary to orders opened fire on them. We then opened fire. One of the leading R.I.C. men fell. We discovered afterwards that he was shot dead. The other

crawled behind a gateway on the opposite side of the road; the remaining three escaped across country. When the firing ceased I went on the road with three others and collected one .45 revolver and five bicycles. I kept the revolver. We dispersed, going home in two's and three's. Later the five bicycles were sent to G.H.Q. in Dublin to be exchanged for rifles. I think that we got five rifles for them. Baby Duggan and Paddy Mullins were on the bridge. Among those in the main ambush position were my brothers, Willie and Michael Newell, Bernard Fallon, Joe Donnellan, Paddie King and Ned Broderick.

I attended the funeral of Joe Athy who had been shot by the Black and Tans. I went on a side car from Galway to Maree. On arrival at Maree Churchyard I got word that the R.I.C. and Tans were looking the place for us. I did not wait for the burial, but left immediately and went home cross country. Shortly afterwards the R.I.C. and Tans searched and assaulted those present at the funeral.

About the first week of November, 1920, Baby Duggan came to me and told me that he had been to Dublin and that Collins was anxious that someone from Galway who knew Igoe well should go to Dublin and point him out to the "Squad". I knew Igoe very well, as he had been stationed in Killeen for about six or seven years. I agreed to go to Dublin and point out Igoe. Baby Duggan accompanied me to Dublin. We were met near the Broadstone Station by Stephen Murphy who was a friend of Baby's. Baby and I got digs on the North Circular Road. A day or two afterwards Baby brought me to see Collins. Stephen Murphy got me a

job in the Dublin Whiskey Distillery, Jones' Road. I worked from 7 a.m. till 1 p.m. I spent the evenings with the Active Service Unit. After about three weeks I gave up the job in the Dublin Whiskey Distillery and went full time with the Active Service Unit. It was arranged that I would meet another member of the Active Service Unit at 9.30 each morning near McBirney's, O'Connell Bridge. Jim Hughes who was also a member of the Active Service Unit, told me that the A.S.U. Headquarters was in Crow Street. I used to walk round various parts of the city each day with a member of the Active Service Unit. Different members of the A.S.U. used to accompany me, on the look out all the time for Igoe. My companion was with me so that when we came across Igoe he could report back to A.S.U. Headquarters to give them the news where Igoe was and the direction in which he was proceeding, and I was to continue to follow him. I saw Igoe on two occasions, and my colleague reported to Headquarters as arranged, but apparently there were no members of the A.S.U. available to take action.

At about 9.30 on the morning of the 7th January, 1921, I was proceeding to meet my companion for the day at McBirney's. When near McBirney's I saw Igoe with about sixteen or eighteen others, in two's and three's, coming along the South Quays towards McBirney's. I stepped into McBirney's door so as to let them pass. Before reaching McBirney's they turned into one of the side streets. My companion for the day had not arrived, so I followed them up the side street into Dame Street. They crossed Dame Street into Trinity Street and into Wicklow Street. In Wicklow Street I met Charlie Dalton and told him that

Igoe and his gang had gone into Grafton Street. We both went back to Headquarters, Crow Street, where he reported the matter. Tom Ennis was standing outside Headquarters. After a few minutes Dalton came back and told me that he and I would walk on one footpath, and Hughes and Dan McDonnell would walk on the opposite path and that the Active Service Unit Squad would come along behind. I was not armed; Dalton was not armed either. Dalton told me that he thought that Igoe and his gang had gone to Harcourt Street Station to look out for I.R.A. men coming off the country trains. We proceeded into Wicklow Street and were turning into Grafton Street when I almost collided with Igoe, who was returning from Grafton Street into Wicklow Street. I had gone only a few yards when I felt a hand gripping the collar of my coat. I turned round to see who was holding me. It was Igoe. "Come on, Newell", he said, "I want you". "My name is not Newell", I replied. "I know you anyhow", said Igoe. Turning to one of his companions and pointing to Dalton, he said, "arrest that man". We were then turned into Wicklow Street and continued along until we were opposite the Wicklow Hotel where we halted for a few minutes. I saw several members of the Active Service Unit including Tom Ennis, Frank Bolster, Joe Dolan, Tom Keogh and _____ Flood, pass along on the opposite side and turn into Grafton Street.

We were again marched off into Dame Street where we were halted again. Igoe then questioned me as to who Dalton was. I said I did not know him and that he was not with me. Dalton was also being questioned. I did not hear the questions that were being put to him as we were too far apart. Igoe continued to question me. I realised the game was up and I said, "I know you, Igoe, and you know me".

I was then marched off, two of Igoe's gang in front, one on either side of me, and two behind, until we arrived at a street junction of which I have since heard was Greek Street, where I was again halted. Igoe again questioned me as to how I came to be in Dublin, what was I doing there, where was Baby Duggan and many other similar questions, all of which I refused to answer. Four of Igoe's gang were beside me and two on the opposite corner. Igoe said, "run into that street", pointing to Greek Street. I said, "if you want to shoot me, shoot me where I am standing". Then he gave me a hell of a punch which sent me several yards into the street, and immediately opening fire on me. I fell and I was not able to get up as I had received four bullet wounds, one in the calf of the right leg, two in the right hip and one flesh wound in the stomach.

I then saw Igoe blow a whistle. Within a minute a police van arrived. I was thrown roughly into it, and taken to the Bridewell. I was questioned as to where I lived in Dublin. I refused to tell them. I was beaten on the head with butt ends of revolvers, four of my teeth being knocked out and three or four others broken. I was left lying on the floor for some hours and was then taken in an ambulance to King George V Hospital. I was detained in King George V Hospital until December 1921. While there I underwent eleven operations.

In December, 1921, I was removed on a stretcher to the Mater Hospital, Dublin, and the following day I was operated on by Surgeon Barnaville. In May, 1922, I was allowed home for a month. I was still wearing a steel body jacket with a steel rod attached to it and running down to the heel.

WITNESS Sean Brennan Comdt. SIGNED Thomas Newell
(Sean Brennan) Comdt. (Thomas Newell)
DATE 17 June 1952
17 June 1952