

N.S. 1.114

DUPLICATE

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21  
BURO STAIRE MILEATA 1913-21  
No. W.S. 1, 114

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

1,114

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. ....

Witness  
John Scannell,  
Genta Bawn,  
Rathmore,  
Co. Kerry.

Identity  
Captain 'A' Company 5th Battalion  
Kerry No. 2 Brigade;  
Q.M. 1st Battalion do.

Subject.  
'A' Company 5th Battalion Kerry No. 2 Brigade  
1917-1921.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

N11

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File No. ....

Form B.S.M. 2

DUPLICATE

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

BURO STAIRS MILEATA 1913-21

No. W.S. 1,114

STATEMENT BY JOHN SCANNELL,

Geata Bawn, Rathmore, Co. Kerry.

I joined the Irish Volunteers in 1917 when a company was formed in my area. The company was known as A (Anabla) Company, 5th Battalion, Kerry No. 2 Brigade. When the company was formed we had very little idea of drill or military training but, like most men who were reared in the country, we had some knowledge of firearms. Most of us could use a shotgun.

The early days of the company were devoted to gaining some knowledge of drill, and the first incident of defiance of British rule was the hoisting of the Republican flag at Anabla School. We sent four of our company to Kenmare wood to cut a long pole. The men were: Dan Kelly, Tom Scannell, Clement Cooper and Denis McGillicuddy. They left for the wood at midnight in a pony cart and arrived home at five o'clock next morning, bringing a pole eighteen feet long. We secured the flag to the pole and erected it in front of the school. The R.I.C. called to the school to remove the flag and failed, and the flag remained flying all that year.

This incident may appear to be a small thing, but when we remember the conditions then existing and the poor national feeling in the country before 1916 it looked very important to us and to arouse the people in the district.

We had our company well organised when the threat of conscription came in 1918 and we commenced a series of night marches to surrounding villages. One night we marched to Scartaglin, a distance of about six miles, and

as we approached the village the R.I.C. prepared to defend the barracks fearing an attack.

On another occasion we marched to Greeveguilla, a distance of five miles. We carried a rifle and some shotguns. When we were approaching Greeveguilla we met some of the local company (at Quarry Cross) under their Captain, Dan Cronin. Dan Cronin advised us to dump our arms. We left the arms in Michael McGillicuddy's house and marched into the village, where we drilled under the eyes of the R.I.C., who did not interfere.

When the threat of conscription passed we continued organising and we trained an I.R.A. pipe and drum band.

Early in 1919 Denis O'Sullivan, who up to then had been our Company Captain, got into bad health and had to resign. I was appointed Captain.

At this time an organiser named Thomas Daly called to our company and administered the Oath of Allegiance to our members. We numbered thirteen. The open drilling was stopped but we carried on quietly. We were collecting all shotguns we could get but we did not have to raid for them.

In the summer of 1919 Michael Spillane from Killarney came out to us. He was an officer of the Killarney Battalion. He brought a prisoner named Thomas Malone who was suspected of spying. We kept the prisoner for three weeks, but the charge was dropped and Malone was released.

In the summer of 1920 we prepared to hold up Lord Kenmare's game-keepers at Cooper's Cross and disarm them, but they did not turn up.

On the 10th July, 1920, Dan Cronin, Captain of Greeveguilla Company, told me I was wanted in Rathmore on the following evening for an attack on the R.I.C. barracks. I left my area the next day at about 4 or 5 in the evening and travelled to Rathmore along with Denis Sullivan, John Kelly, John Moynihan and Jack Fleming. When we got to Rathmore there was no one to meet us and we proceeded down through the village to the creamery. We went to the side of the creamery where we met up with some others. We were armed with shotguns. I cannot say who was in charge of the operation. Manus Moynihan, Captain of the Rathmore Company, appeared to have planned the attack, but each group was under a different officer. Now for the attack.

Rathmore R.I.C. barracks was a two storey stone building. It was built gable to the road with the front of the barracks facing a railway. The windows were protected by steel shutters which did not completely cover the window openings. In preparation for the attack someone (I don't know who) had gone to the barracks after dark and measured the height of the windows from the ground. Four hods similar to those used by bricklayers were made, the handle being long enough to reach from the ground to the windows. In the hods large bombs with time fuses attached were placed, and as the attack was just about to begin four of our men, who had removed their boots, moved silently in towards the front of the barracks and having lighted the fuses raised the hods and tipped the bombs into the barracks through the space left between the window opening and steel shutter.

Another part of the operation was taking place on the railway. An old cannon, which had been taken from Ross

Castle, had been loaded and placed on a railway truck protected by sandbags, and the truck was held in readiness on the railway out of view of the barracks. It was intended that the bombs and the gun would go off at the same time and give us an opportunity of rushing the barracks. However, it did not work out like that. The truck found the points on the railway and could not be moved into position before the attack started. In any event the exploding of the bombs started things and the barrack garrison opened up a heavy fire. As I stated, I was armed with a shotgun and was at the side of the creamery, and when no breach had been made in the barracks our party did not get into action. The attack was beaten off and we were ordered home.

Sometime round the end of 1920 we tried to prevail on motor drivers to cease driving on permits issued by the British military authorities. In order to give them an excuse to surrender their permits we held up a Killarney motor driver. He was driving a dentist named Vesey (or Vese). We took the car and although we had no training we drove it away, but it went in over the ditch at a bad bend at Quarry Cross. We had driven it about four miles. I was accompanied on the job by Clement Cooper and Michael Brosnan. When the driver got back to Killarney he reported the hold-up to the British military and they sent three lorries of troops after the car. They located it over the ditch at Quarry Cross and, thinking we were under the car, the British spread out and approached it with fixed bayonets.

In November 1920 I was ordered to go to Scartaglin to collect a rifle for the company. I was accompanied by Clement Cooper and the rifle, which had come from Dublin,

was handed to me by the late Humphrey Murphy, O/C Kerry No. 2 Brigade.

During the period November/December 1920 we were engaged raiding the mails. We held up a train near Rathmore and took the mails. After this raid a man named Andrew Moynihan, a Volunteer, was shot by the Tans as a reprisal.

In March 1921 I was ordered to bring some of my company to a place known as "The Bower". It is near the Cork-Kerry border. I brought Clement Cooper, Denis O'Sullivan, Jack Fleming, John Moynihan, Michael Carroll and Tim Kerrisk. On the way one of my party, Tim Kerrisk, backed out and returned to his home; he gave no further service to the Irish Republican Army. I suppose I should have taken stern action against him, but as we were a volunteer army and his failure as a soldier did not endanger any life, I thought it well to let him go.

When we got to "The Bower" we found the Kerry No. 2 Brigade O/C with a lot of men from different battalions, together with the North Cork Column. I was told that General Strickland was on a tour of British army posts and it was the intention to ambush his party which, it was expected, would pass "The Bower". We lay in ambush for two days but as no British party arrived we were ordered home.

In April 1921 a training camp was held at Clydagh Valley. The camp lasted a fortnight and we received training in arms, drill, first aid etc.

When the camp was over we got word to prepare for a big round-up by the British military. Troops were being

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: WS1114/2
- (ii) How many documents have been abstracted: 1p
- (iii) The date of each such document: 10 March 1955

(iv) The description of each document:  
WS1114 Affidavit Statement John Scannell p 6.  
names of individuals

(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.

assembled in Tralee, Killarney, Castleisland and across the Cork border around Millstreet, Mallow and Macroom. It appeared to be their intention to sweep into the hills and along the Clydagh Valley.

At this time two British Army deserters, who had been held prisoner round the 5th Battalion area for some time, were moved into my company area. Their names were Jack Stay and George Motley. When the round up by the British was imminent it was feared that if the deserters fell into the hands of the British they might give information regarding the movements and identity of the men who had guarded them. They also knew the houses at which they had been held. I heard it stated at the time that the Brigade O/C, Humphrey Murphy, had placed the responsibility for the safe custody or, if necessary, the execution of the deserters on Humphrey O'Sullivan (Freedy), who was then O/C of the 5th Battalion Kerry No. 2 Brigade.

The British were in position to commence the round-up and the night before it started the two deserters - Stay and Motley - were shot in the cow house attached to the home of Michael Moynihan in Lyratang, Kilcummin, Killarney.

They were buried in a bog nearby by

helped them to

load the remains on to a cart.

In the spring of 1921 we approached all the young men in our area and asked them to join the Volunteers. They all joined up.

After the round-up, which yielded nothing to the British although they had thousands of troops employed, we got active again and I was called with members of my company for prepared ambushes at Knockeenahone and Loughfuddan.



Humphrey Murphy, Brigade O/C, was in charge.

In June 1921 I was asked by the O/C of a neighbouring company (Lissavigeen) to take part in an attack on some British officers near Killarney. It was the practice for some of these officers to come out on horseback from Killarney for pleasure. Nothing was being done about it so we set an ambush for them. Word must have been conveyed to Killarney about our position because troops came out from Killarney and attempted to surround us, but they started their sweep on the side of the road opposite our position and we were able to slip away.

Just before the truce I was engaged with Jeremiah Murphy in sniping Rathmore R.I.C. barracks. The job was under the command of Manus Moynihan, O/C of the Battalion Column.

When the truce came we concentrated on training. I spent a fortnight in October 1921 at a battalion camp. The camp was held at John Cronin's, Toureenamult. Jeremiah Murphy, an ex-British soldier, acted as instructor to my company. Both of these men were members of my company (Anabla). During this camp all the Company Captains were present, along with an instructor from each company. The camp was under the Battalion Staff. When the camp finished the company officers and instructors returned to their companies. Camps were then held in each company area.

After the camp the brigade was reorganised. A Company (Anabla) was transferred from the 5th to the 1st Battalion. I was appointed Quartermaster of the 1st Battalion. Peter Brown was appointed O/C; Paddy King, Currow, Vice O/C; Bill Cronin, Battalion Adjutant;

In March 1922 we established battalion headquarters at Meredith's of Currow and used the house as a barracks. From that period we were paid. The Battalion Staff were paid as captains and received £2 - 14 - 3 per week. The Battalion Instructor was paid as a Lieutenant and received £2 - 7 - 6 per week. I as Quartermaster acted as paymaster.

On the 4th May, 1922, I left for Beggars Bush and was appointed O/C No. 1 Battalion under G.H.Q.

The arms held by A Coy (Anabla) from 1920 to the truce consisted of 2 rifles and 5 or 6 shotguns. The arms were kept in a dump by Michael Carroll, Quartermaster. The Anabla Company area covered the eastern half of the parish of Kilcummin.

Signed: Sean O'Scannell

Date: 10.3.55

Witness: James J. O'Connor

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BURO STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21

No. W.S. 1, 114