

W.S. 1,180

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
BURO STAIRÉ MILEÁTA 1913-21
No. W.S. 1180

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

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 1,180.....

Witness

Michael Power,
 Sleveen,
 Kill,
 Kilmacthomas,
 Co. Waterford.

Identity.

Adjutant 'E' Company, 5th Battalion,
 East Waterford Brigade, 1920 - .

Subject.

- (a) Irish Volunteers, Kill, Co. Waterford,
 1913-1921;
- (b) Death of James Power, Kill, Co. Waterford,
 October, 1920.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil

File No. S.2462.....

STATEMENT BY MICHAEL POWER,Sleeven, Kill, Kilmacthomas, Co. Waterford.

I was born on January 20th, 1896, in Sleeveen, Co. Waterford. My people were agricultural labourers. I am employed by the local County Council as a foreman on road repair work.

During my young days I was an active member of the local G.A.A., and when the Irish National Volunteers were started in Kill in 1915 I joined up along with a good number of lads from the district. In the Irish National Volunteers I took part in the drilling and general training, most of which was carried out by the use of wooden guns. We had no firearms, so far as I can remember.

Our instructors were ex-British soldiers. As a matter of fact, I think all our officers were of the same type. The strength of the Kill Company was about eighty men.

When the split in the Volunteers came in 1915 about thirty or so of us formed an Irish Volunteer Company, as we had no confidence in John Redmond's policy, which to us seemed to be pro-British. I cannot now remember who our officers were.

When the Easter Rising of 1916 broke out in Dublin the first news we got of it was when we read of it in the papers. We were not mobilised during that week. Indeed it was almost over before we knew rightly what had actually happened. There were no arrests of Volunteers in this area following the

Easter 1916 Rising.

The company broke up after 1916 and was not reorganised until the middle of 1919, when Dr. White and Paddy Brazil of Waterford came out to us with Jimmy Power of Ballycraddock. The latter place is about four miles east of Kill. Dr. White was the candidate for Sinn Féin in the famous Waterford parliamentary election of 1918. Paddy Brazil was an officer in the Volunteers in Waterford City, and Jimmy Power was head of the Volunteers in his area.

We really had no proper company going in Kill until early 1920, when we formed "E" Company of the 5th Battalion, East Waterford Brigade. Andrew Kirwan of Grenan, Kill, was Company Captain, Jeff Hayes of Cahirua, Kill, was a Lieutenant, and I was appointed Company Adjutant. We had about twenty-five men all told in the company strength. Jimmy Power of Ballycraddock was the Battalion Commandant.

At first we had very little arms, perhaps a revolver or two and a few shotguns, but then we were instructed by Jimmy Power to raid houses for guns, and during the spring and summer of 1920 we carried out many such raids on farmhouses and houses of the local gentry. These raids used take place at night. Four or five of us, armed with revolvers and shotguns, did the job.

I remember raiding the house of a Colonel O'Shea at Gardenmorris, a few miles from Kill, where we had been told by some of his servants (girls) that there were guns and a quantity of .303 ammunition. We were successful in getting the guns, some of which were a

heavy type used by Col. O'Shea for big game hunting in Africa. We learned, however, that the Colonel had dumped a large quantity of .303 ammunition in a large pond near his house, and I remember well being held by the legs by some of our lads as I "fished" the stuff from the bottom of the pond.

We kept the captured guns and ammunition in two dumps, one at Kilbeg, Sleveen, and the other in Rathanny, Kill. Some gelignite we obtained from County Council quarries was also put in these dumps. They were really excavations made in fences, then covered with planks and stones. These dumps were constantly used by the I.R.A. but were so concealed that British raiding parties never discovered them.

Sometime in the late summer of 1920 we heard a rumour that the R.I.C. were leaving Kill barracks and we were anxious to get some information about this in the event of an attack being made on the barracks. A couple of us held up the postman bringing mails from Kilmacthomas to Kill and examined the letter addressed to the Kill R.I.C. On the first occasion we raided the mails we got nothing of any worth, but on the second occasion we got a letter which led us to believe that the barracks at Kill would shortly be evacuated by the R.I.C. We passed this letter on to Commandant Jimmy Power.

In late September of 1920 I heard from our Captain, Andrew Kirwan, that it was proposed to attack Kill barracks, and I went with him into Kill on the Friday before the attack came off. So far as I can remember, the attack was planned to take place on a

Saturday night in the last week of September 1920. During all that Friday Andrew Kirwan and I were watching the movements of the six or seven R.I.C. men who made up the garrison. The barracks at Kill was a very solid building, built of stone and slated. The windows were all covered with steel shutters with loopholes. It was situated about thirty or forty yards west of Kill village.

On the Saturday night of the attack I met Jimmy Power, our Commandant, when he came into the village of Kill about nine o'clock with about twenty men from his district of Dunhill. Those of the Kill Company there that night were: Capt. Andrew Kirwan, Lieut. Jeff Hayes, Lieut. Walter Walsh, Thomas Kirwan, Patrick Kirwan, John Coleman and James Merrigan. I was armed with a revolver. The others had shotguns. Walter Walsh and myself were sent to fell trees to block the roads south and east of the barracks. We did this and reported back to Jimmy Power.

I remember seeing a fairly large number of I.R.A. men around the village that night. They came out from Waterford City for the attack under their leader Paddy Paul. I believe there were also about twenty men from the West Waterford Brigade there under Commandant Pat Keating of Comeragh, but I had no contact with the West Waterford men.

When we returned to the village after blocking the roads Walsh and I saw Verey lights being sent up by the R.I.C. in the barracks. Heavy rifle fire was coming from the building. The garrison was also throwing out grenades. The police were, apparently,

warned that something was wrong when they heard a shot from the direction of the village before our attack really began. The shot was fired by, I believe, Jimmy Power, our Commandant, at an R.I.C. man who was caught out of barracks drinking in a publichouse in Kill. It was not aimed to kill him but only to frighten him into giving some information Jimmy Power wanted about the men in the barracks. Anyhow, the shot had the effect of giving the police warning, and they immediately began sending up Verey lights and fired out of the barrack windows with everything they had.

While this was going on an attempt was being made by our lads to get a petrol pump going so as to pump petrol on to the roof of the barracks and set the place on fire. The handle of the pump was found to be missing, so the thing could not be got to work at all. I should have said that our lads were by this time replying to the firing from the barracks with rifles and shotguns from positions about thirty to forty yards from the building. As the petrol pump wouldn't work I was told to get a ladder, place it on a lean-to shed beside the barracks, and, with Walter Walsh, climb up on to the roof of the barracks carrying bottles of petrol. We got hammers to smash the slates so that we could pour the petrol into the openings in the roof and then set fire to the place. We were about to do this when Jimmy Power came along to us and told us to get away quickly as there were British military in the vicinity.

Actually what happened was that some of the East Waterford men under Paddy ^{PAUL}~~Power~~ heard horses galloping about in a field near them and thought that the military

were around and had frightened the horses. I did not see, or meet, any enemy troops that night, but I know they did come into Kill about three or four hours after the barrack attack.

Kill barracks was evacuated shortly after being attacked and the police in it were sent to Portlaw and other stations. We burned the evacuated barracks to prevent the enemy re-occupying it.

It was in the month of October 1920 when we learned that an R.I.C. constable named Cullen, whose home was in Kill but who had been transferred to Portlaw, had returned home by bicycle. We decided to raid his house and take his bicycle, revolver and uniform from him. It was about 7 o'clock in the evening when eight of us, under Capt. Andrew Kirwan, came together in Kill village where the R.I.C. man lived. A few, including myself, were armed with revolvers. The majority were unarmed. One of the men engaged was a newly enrolled I.R.A. man named James Power of Carrigeen, Kill.

We approached Cullen's house and knocked at the door. He asked who was there and we said: "Open up in the name of the I.R.A.". Cullen refused to open the door. Andrew Kirwan then fired a revolver shot up towards the roof of the house and Walter Walsh and I began to break in the door with a hatchet we had with us. When Cullen heard us smashing the door he went upstairs and threw a grenade out through the window. It landed about three-quarter ways across the street before it exploded. Walsh and I fell down with the blast and then got up and ran around a corner out of

range. James Power, who was some way out on the road, went across the street and into the chapel yard after the explosion. We then lost him in the darkness.

I set out for Commandant Jimmy Power's place at Ballycraddock, about four miles distant, with a view to getting hold of a few rifles. When I returned again to Kill later that night I found that our men had dispersed to their homes.

The following day I heard that James Power had been badly wounded the previous night by the grenade thrown by the R.I.C. man, Cullen. He (Power) had apparently gone home a distance of over a quarter of a mile the previous night in spite of his bad wound. We brought Dr. Walsh of Bonmahon to attend him but it was no use, as the poor fellow died three days afterwards and was buried in Kill graveyard.

At the time of James Power's death it was said by his relatives that he died of pneumonia, and everybody, except those of us who really knew, believed this. The idea was, of course, to keep the British ignorant of the truth and so save his people from raids, or, maybe, arrest.

I am particularly anxious to put on record the fact that this I.R.A. man died in the service of his country, as it is not known even yet by many in Co. Waterford (not even by old I.R.A.) that James Power met his death at the hands of the enemy.

On January 7th, 1921, I was instructed to bring six rifles and ammunition to Tramore for the ambush which took place outside that town that same night.

I got a horse and trap and drove with the guns to the place I was instructed to go to - Riverstown, about half a mile outside Tramore. I handed over the arms and ammunition to Martin Cullinane of the Dunhill Company and then returned to Kill, as ordered, the same night. I met no enemy forces on the way.

After the attack on Kill R.I.C. barracks I had to go on 'the run' as my home was being constantly raided by British troops. These raids became so frequent that my family had to leave the house altogether. One particular night the military came into Kill village, smashed up the local publichouse and drank all they could lay hands on. The publican heard them say "come on down for Power". They did come out to our place after midnight that night and, finding no one at home, proceeded to smash up the place.

Following the ambush at Tramore in January 1921 I took part in the blowing up of bridges, blocking of roads, cutting telegraph wires etc., which was done all around our area of Kill to hinder enemy movements.

About the same period I remember collecting a levy on farmers in the locality. This levy was fixed on the valuation of the holding. The money collected was sent on to the Battalion Quartermaster, Martin Cullinane of Dunhill, Co. Waterford. The levy was made by the I.R.A. authorities to provide funds to carry on the fight in the way of buying arms and suchlike. I remember being ordered to threaten any farmer refusing to pay the levy that he would be burned out. There was no necessity to do any burning

as everybody paid up.

Apart from the activities in regard to road-blocking mentioned previously, there was nothing of very great interest to mention so far as the Kill Company was concerned prior to the Truce in July 1921. Myself and the Company Officers were, of course, on "the run" all the time and were not able to return to our homes until after the Truce was signed.

Signed:

Michael Power

(Michael Power)

Date:

6 June 1955

6th June 1955.

Witness:

T. O'Gorman (T. O'Gorman)

(Investigator)

