

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
BURO STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21
No. W.S. 1213

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 1,213

Witness

Timothy O'Shea,
Kilmore,
Granagh,
Bruree,
Co. Limerick.
Identity.

Captain Drumcollogher Coy.
Irish Volunteers, Co. Limerick, 1913-'21.

Subject.

Drumcollogher Company Irish Volunteers,
Co. Limerick, 1913-1921.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil

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STATEMENT OF MR. TIMOTHY O'SHEA,
Kilmore, Granagh, Bruree, Co. Limerick.

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I was born in Drumcollogher in October, 1893, and was sent to the local national school until I was fifteen years of age. In the year 1913, a Company of Volunteers was formed in the town. Our strength at first was only thirteen men but, after a while, it increased to fifty men. Charles Wall was the Captain. I was Lieutenant. A man named Maurice Kiely, an ex British soldier was drill instructor for a while. We paraded and drilled with wooden rifles.

After Redmond's famous speech at Woodenbridge, Co. Wicklow, the Volunteers ceased to exist for a short period. Sometime in 1915, Father Wall, now Canon Wall, Parish Priest of Ballingarry, reorganised the Company. Charles Wall again became Captain and I became Lieutenant. Our strength was twelve men and, between us, we subscribed threepence per week into a fund for the purchase of arms.

A short time after reorganisation, we cycled to Charleville and, from there, took a train to Limerick to attend a special meeting of Volunteers there. At least one thousand Volunteers attended from various areas in Co. Limerick. We were addressed by Ernest Blythe and Cathal Brugha. We subsequently paraded to Newcastlewest and other towns for similar meetings where we were addressed by Seán McDermott and other speakers.

On Easter Sunday 1916, our Company marched to Glenquinn, armed with Martini Henry's and other types

of guns. We numbered a dozen men. In Glenquinn we met Companies from other areas in West Limerick. Fr. Wall and Fr. Hayes were present. While awaiting orders from Dublin, we did some exercises. Charles Wall and I were in charge of the Drumcollogher men. As well as I can remember, a man by the name of Captain McInerney was to take charge of all the West Limerick men when instructions came through. At about 7 p.m., however, we were dismissed and returned to our homes.

During the week, we took turns in the town, awaiting a despatch rider from Dublin with instructions, but no despatch arrived and so nothing happened. Some days after the surrender in Dublin, Fr. Wall called a meeting of the Volunteers. He advised us to surrender our arms to the R.I.C. in the local barracks. Next day, headed by Fr. Wall, we marched in a body to the barracks and handed in about a dozen guns, including some shotguns. After this, the Company ceased to exist until early in 1917 when two men - Garrett McAuliffe and a man named Creegan from Newcastlewest - visited Drumcollogher and contacted Fr. Wall. He became more enthusiastic than before. They contacted Charles Wall but he refused to take part. They then called on me. I agreed to reorganise the Company and gave Fr. Wall every assistance. He was the leading light at the time.

Within a few days, I had the Company reorganised. Our strength was seventeen men. I became Acting Captain and Mick Sheehy of Drumcollogher became Acting Lieutenant. We had no arms, but we drilled and paraded regularly to the end of the year.

In 1918, during the conscription scare, our

membership increased to seventy men, all of whom remained loyal and remained in the Company when the scare had subsided. During this period, we collected about thirty shotguns and a number of cartridges in the area. These guns were held and looked after by the individual Volunteers. A Féis was held in the town at this time. On the night previous, we met William Cosgrave outside the town and escorted him to the Square where he addressed the Volunteers. Next day, we paraded in the town. The police, under District Inspector Dudgeon, attempted to stop the parade, but we continued to march in formation. A party of military had come from Newcastlewest to Drumcollogher that morning. Dudgeon called on the military to stop the parade. They refused to interfere. Some days later, Ben Sullivan, Pat Buckley, Robert Costello, another man and myself were arrested. We were taken to Limerick and charged with unlawful assembly. We were sentenced to a month in jail and three months in default of bail. We did the month in Limerick jail and the three months in Belfast jail where we met Austin Stack, Ernest Blythe, Jack McKenna (Listowel) and other prisoners serving sentences on similar charges.

While we were there, one of our men, named Doran, was denied political treatment, with the result that Stack and other prisoners, one Sunday after Mass, brought him to our wing of the jail. He had been in a different wing but was allowed to attend Mass on Sundays. This action resulted in our wing of the jail being wrecked. We received no food from the prison authorities for the best part of a week. Food parcels, sent to individual prisoners by their relatives, were pooled and rationed out to all prisoners by our O/C. Eventually, order

was restored through the efforts of the prison chaplain and Austin Stack. When the Drumcollogher men had completed their term, they were released. We were met at Charleville railway station, nine miles from Drumcollogher, by Fr. Wall and a big contingent of Volunteers and sympathisers, and got a great reception. This was about January, 1919.

Routine drilling continued all through 1919. During the year, Sinn Féin courts were set up. Fr. Wall became President of the local parish court, and a Fr. Punch, President of the district court. The local Volunteers acted as police and carried out all decrees of these courts.

In June, 1920, in a discussion with Sean Finn, Brigade O/C, he ordered me to have the courthouse in Drumcollogher burned down. I issued instructions to the Company to procure petrol and paraffin for the job. All of the men of the Company, assisted by members of Feohanagh, Broadford and other Companies took part. About eight men carried out the actual burning, while the others were on guard or outpost duty, armed with shotguns or revolvers. The eight men took a pump into the courthouse, after they had broken down the door. With this pump, they sprayed the body of the courthouse with petrol. In a second or two, there was a great explosion. All but one of the eight managed to get out. One was trapped inside. Two of those who got out died within a few hours. The names of the three men who lost their lives were Pat Buckley, William Danaher and David Brennan. A fourth man, though badly burned, survived. His name is Jack Farrell. From this to the end of the year, our main duties were trenching and

blocking roads.

Early in 1921, an Active Service Unit was formed within the Battalion. All of the men in the unit were on the run for some time previous. It was made up of about twenty-five men from the different Companies in the Battalion. Ben Sullivan, Michael Sheehy, Bob Ahern and myself represented the Drumcollogher Company. Con Foley, Battalion O/C, took charge. It was a full-time active service unit. Several attempted ambushes were laid but, for one reason or another, they never materialised until Con Foley took the Column into Drumcollogher on the night of the 13th May, 1921, for an attack on a patrol of Tans and R.I.C. at 6 p.m. on the 14th May, 1921.

We divided into two sections when we arrived in the town and occupied a house on each side of the main street to await orders for the following day. I was with the section that occupied the house and restaurant known as Lil Connors'. Next morning, while a bull sale was in progress in the town, several lorry loads of military arrived and took up positions at all main exits from the town. They searched or visited several houses or pubs during the day, including the restaurant, over which the section to which I was attached was waiting. At 5 p.m. they got into their lorries and moved off. At 6 p.m. we took up positions. Shortly after, a couple of police appeared on the street and were fired on. One of them was wounded. The patrol then left the barracks and were advancing to the ambush position proper when fire was opened on them by the other section. The patrol retreated to the barracks. After this, we got the order to retreat.

The following day, the military returned and

burned down a shop owned by people by the name of Murray and the two farmhouses of Quaid's and Sullivan's. They were looking for my house, which was also a farmhouse, but were unable to locate it at the time. Next day, however, they returned again when they found my house and burned it down.

From then to the Truce, except for routine duties, there was little activity.

After the Truce, I attended a training camp at Loughill and, later, a Battalion camp at Ballygran for two weeks.

SIGNED: Timothy O'Shea
(Timothy O'Shea)

DATE: 26th July, 1955
26th July, 1955.

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WITNESS: John J. Daly
(John J. Daly)