

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
BUREAU STAIRS MILITARY 1913-21
NO. W.S. 1233

ROINN



COSANTA.

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 1,233

Witness

Deuglan O Reagain (D. Regan)
Shanakil,
Ring,
Dungarvan,
Co. Waterford.
Identity.

Member of Ring Company Irish Volunteers,
Co. Waterford, 1914 - .

Subject.

Irish Volunteer activities,
Ring Co. Waterford, 1914-1923.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil

File No. S. 2542

Form B.S.M. 2

N. S. 1, 233

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
BUID STAIRÉ MILÉATA 1913-21

NO. **W.S.** 1233

STATEMENT BY DEUGLÁN Ó RÉAGÁIN.

An tSean Cill, An Rinn, Dúngarbhain,

Co. Puirte Láirge.

(Declan Regan, Shanakil, Ring, Dungarvan, Co. Waterford)

I was born in Shanakill, Ring, Co. Waterford, in the year 1898. My family were farmers and all were native Irish speakers. My own family today use Irish as their everyday language. I was educated at the local National School.

When the National (Redmond) Volunteers were started in the parish in the year 1914, I joined up and was a member up to the time of the split in the Volunteers in 1915. In common with all of the Ring men, I took the side of the Irish Volunteers. We took no part in the Easter 1916 Rising. For one thing, we knew nothing about it until it was well on, and, in any case, there were no arms worth talking about in the company at the time; in fact, the company was in existence in name only, previous to the Rising.

Early in the year 1917, a man named P.C. O'Mahony was organising for Sinn Féin in the Ring area. He started a Sinn Féin Cumann of which I was a member.

About the same time, Jim Mansfield of Old Parish (the next parish to ours) came over to reorganise the Volunteers here. Jim was later commandant of the 3rd Battalion, West Waterford Brigade, and Ring was in his area. His brothers, Mick and Charlie, were also wellknown Volunteers.

We had about 20 men all told in the Ring Company, but the arms we had weren't worth talking about. I suppose we had a couple of shotguns, but I doubt that we had even that little when we started in 1917.

The captain of our company was Michael Curran of Ring and our drill instructor was a man named Kenneally, who taught Irish in Ring College. Ours was known as "A" Company, 3rd Battalion, West Waterford Brigade, the commandant of which was Jim Mansfield, and the Brigade O/C. Pax Whelan of Dungarvan.

During 1917, our time was mostly taken up drilling and helping in the work of Sinn Féin. There was no much activity around this time.

In 1918, I remember bringing three double-barreled guns into the company, which I got from Jim Mansfield. To the best of my knowledge, these were the first guns to come into the company.

During the General Election of 1918, when Cathal Brugha won Co. Waterford for Sinn Féin, I helped in guarding ballot boxes at the Courthouse, Dungarvan, for about a week, day and night. These ballot boxes were not opened until the postal vote from Irishmen serving in the British army overseas were received; hence the delay in counting the votes.

During the year 1919, I took part in many raids for arms on farmhouses and on houses of those known to be hostile to us. We collected quite a few shotguns and sporting guns generally in these raids, which added greatly to the meagre supply of arms we had. Raids on post office mails were also started this year and continued to 1921. I happened to take part in many of these raids. The mails captured were handed over to the O/C. for examination.

In Helvick, which is at the end of the Ring Peninsula, there was a coastguard station. At this particular time it was occupied by coastguards only, but it was feared that,

like the stations in Ballinacourty at the opposite side of Dungarvan Harbour to Helvick, and at Ardmore, ten miles to the west of Ring, British Marines would be drafted in to take the place of the coastguards. It was, therefore, decided by the Battalion Commandant, Jim Mansfield, that the Ring Station should be burned before that should happen.

Although we didn't know it at the time, the Brigade O/C., Pax Whelan, was in touch with our G.H.Q. in Dublin about landing a cargo of arms at Helvick, the arms to come from Germany or Italy. It was considered very important then that our area should be kept as clear as possible of enemy forces. One night, therefore, a party of us went to the coastguard station, evacuated the coastguards and their families to neighbouring houses and did our best to burn the place. We weren't very successful in setting fire to the buildings which were very strongly built of stone, but, the night following the firing, we again returned with pickaxes and demolished the roof, making the place useless for occupation.

This could not be described as a military action of much consequence; but the fact remains that no Marines were drafted into Ring subsequently.

Attack on Ardmore R. I. C. Barracks.

It was some time early in 1920, so far as I can remember, that I was ordered to go to Ardmore one night, with about five others of the Ring Company, to help in attacking the R. I. C. Barracks there. We set off on bikes for Ardmore carrying shotguns and, leaving the bikes outside the village, entered it under cover of darkness. There seemed to be quite a big number of I. R. A. there that night under the command of Jim Mansfield, but I have no idea of the number engaged.

The party of shotgun men, of which I was one, was placed in houses directly opposite the barracks, which was in the village street and, so far as I can remember now, a land mine was to be exploded against the wall of the barrack as a signal for us to open fire. What actually happened, so far as I remember, is that one of our lads fired off a shot, accidentally, before the mine was exploded. When the shot went off, the R. I. C. began to let go with all they had, rifles, machine guns and bombs. They had no target to fire at, because we were concealed; but that didn't worry them, they blazed away as hard as they could. This, of course, made it impossible for our lads to rush and capture the barracks, and all we could do in reply was to take aim at loopholes in the barrack windows, from which the garrison was firing and hope for the best.

We didn't keep up that sort of thing for long, for the simple reason that we had little ammunition and certainly none to waste; so, after about 20 minutes or so, we were ordered to break off the firing and get away home. This may sound an easy matter, but it should be remembered that we were at least ten miles from our base and, as the R. I. C. were firing Verey lights to call for help from the moment the shooting started, we stood a good chance of meeting with parties of military from Youghal or Dungarvan who would be on the way to relieve the R. I. C. in Ardmore. I'M sure there wasn't a round of ammunition apiece between us when we pulled out of Ardmore to return to Ring, so I suppose we were lucky we didn't meet any of the enemy on the return journey.

As the year 1920 wore on, things began to get a bit hot. We were busy collecting empty shotgun cartridges and having

them filled with powder and buckshot by one of the boys skilled in the job. Orders were received to wreck bridges, trench roads, cut telephone and telegraph wires, prepare dumps for arms and suchlike, so that we had a very busy time indeed.

To add to my little bit, it was my job to carry dispatches to the battalion headquarters. At periods, this was almost of daily occurrence. Very often I had to travel up to 12 miles with a dispatch and then get back again safely. For the purpose I 'borrowed' a horse famous in the district as a jumper. His name was "Silver Tail" and his owner was by no means a supporter of ours. Hedges and ditches all came alike to "Silver Tail"; he was better than any aeroplane.

I carried the dispatches sometimes in the saddle and sometimes concealed in the horse's bit and never once was a dispatch lost or delivered late.

Piltown (Co. Waterford) Ambush.

On the night of 1st November 1920, the boys lay in ambush at Piltown Cross - 2 miles from Ardmore and about 3 miles east of Youghal. To coax the military from Youghal into the ambush, a fake attack on Ardmore R. I. C. Barracks was staged. I was one of a party told off to snipe at the barracks that night. Before we 'opened up', a few lads from the column came into Ardmore under cover of darkness and slung a few grenades in through the fanlight of the barracks. This was the signal for general firing both from the R. I. C. and from the British marines stationed in the coastguard station overlooking the village. Verey lights went up by the dozen, while we kept having an odd pot at the barracks to give the impression that it was a mass attack. We kept this up for nearly an hour, when word

reached us of the successful ambush at Piltown. We pulled away from Ardmore then and returned to Ring.

In addition to the activities I have mentioned, there were periods of weeks when I was engaged coast-watching with others of the Ring Company. There was some question of a boat putting into Helvick with a cargo of arms. I think this boat was supposed to come from Germany and we had orders to watch for her and see her safely into Helvick Harbour. For nights in the bitter cold we kept a lookout for that boat but she never showed up. I heard later that she was captured by a British sea patrol when on her way from Germany.

To store the guns and ammunition which we hoped she would land, we had prepared elaborate dumps. These dumps were constructed at night by relays of our men. We worked until dawn and then broke off until night came again. It was tough work while it lasted, but we wouldn't have minded if the guns had arrived.

Ring, Roberts' Cross, Engagement.

This could hardly be called an 'engagement', but I would like to set down the facts as well as I remember them, on that occasion.

It was, I imagine, early in the month of February 1921, and about 8 o'clock at night, when I met Michael Curran, our company captain. He told me to go home at once for my gun as we were going into an ambush. I got my shotgun and met the boys at Bergin's Bridge. The following are the names of those who were present that night:- Michael Curran, our captain; Paddy Whelan, ... Terry, ... Griffin, ... Hayes, ... Walsh, Jack Curran and myself, eight of us all told and all of us Ring men. So far as I can remember, Curran

(the captain) told us that we were to proceed to Killongford Cross, which is about three miles west of Dungarvan on the main Dungarvan-Ring road and about four miles from where we then were. We were to lie in ambush for a party of military at Killongford.

We were walking along the road westwards towards the ambush point and had reached a spot about half a mile from Roberts' Cross on the road to Ring, when a pony and car approached us coming from the direction of Dungarvan. There were four or five men in the car wearing civilian clothes. We glanced at the men in the car and thought they might have been local men on their way back to Ring from the town of Dungarvan. The car passed us and went on for about 30 yards and then pulled up. Suddenly, lights from the car shone on us and the men in the car opened fire on us. (We learned afterwards they were 'Tans' in civilian clothes). In the first burst of fire I got shot in the right hand and dropped my gun. We all scattered over the fence and dived for cover. The night was dark but clear (no fog). I jumped into a cutting in the adjoining field and then discovered that I had been badly wounded. My thumb and first finger were shattered and I was bleeding very badly. I made my way out of the range of flying bullets and met up with Michael and Jack Curran and Hayes. These men accompanied me towards Ballinagall where we crossed the strand and made for the village. I was bleeding profusely and in great pain. When we reached Ballinagall village, we discovered the Tans there before us. The boys wanted me to go over to Ring College, but I wouldn't go, as I was afraid if I was caught there the Tans might blow the place up as a reprisal for giving me shelter. However, they insisted on bringing me into the house of a man named Walsh of Ballinagall when the Tans had cleared away.

I remained in Walsh's a week and was attended to by Dr. Moynihan. I was wounded about 9 o'clock the previous night but couldn't get the doctor until 8 o'clock the following morning. As a result I lost the use of the two fingers on my right hand. I was out of action for about a month after this incident and then resumed my dispatch riding activities on "Silver Tail" again.

When George Plunkett, a G.H.Q. officer, came to the Ring area sometime about March 1921, I was given the job of guarding him until he left us about the end of the month.

From then onwards until the Truce in July 1921, I was able to take part in the destruction of roads and bridges in our area and in coast-watching for another arms ship due to land a cargo at Helvick. This ship did, eventually, turn up all right, but the night was so bad when she arrived off Helvick that she didn't put in to the harbour, but went on further up the coast east to Cheekpoint, where she landed her cargo. It was just as well she did go on because a British destroyer was anchored in the harbour near Helvick that same night. It should be stated that this happened during the Truce period. No arms were landed on the Waterford coast while the Tan scrap was on.

In April 1922, a ship named the "Hannah Bremen" came from Germany and put in at Helvick with a cargo of arms, mainly parabellum revolvers and German Mauser rifles. Her skipper (I think) was Charlie McGuinness. Horses and drays and everything on wheels was commandeered to take the stuff away to the Comeragh Mountains district. The pity of it was that all this stuff didn't come even a year earlier, when we would have been in a position to give a much better account of ourselves.

A little incident occurred in connection with the "Hannah Breman" which might be of interest. It was a stormy night when the ship was sighted by us off Helvick, and John Terry, my father-in-law, who was coxwain of the lifeboat, decided to go out with his crew and bring the German ship in. When drawing near the "Hannah Breman" the crew of the latter saw the red, white and blue colours on the lifeboat and thought that the 'game' was up, so they tried to ram the lifeboat until John Terry shouted out the password. That saved the situation and the German ship was safely brought to harbour.

When the civil war broke out in June 1922, I took the republican side. I helped in cutting telegraph and telephone wires and generally disrupting communications. I also constructed a special dump in a cave on a hillside where the republican active service unit used store their arms and ammunition. Many a time I helped, with my father-in-law, John Terry, in ferrying the active service unit across the bay from Ballinacourty to Helvick and back when they were being hard pressed by Free State troops.

In 1923, when the Cease Fire Order came, I returned to my home in Shanakill, Ring.

Signed: Deuglan O Reagain

(Deuglan O Reagain)

Date: 26-8-55

26.8.55

Witness: T. O'Gorman

(T. O'Gorman)

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

BURO STAIRE MILENTA 1913-21

NO. W.S. 1233