

W.S. 1,281
ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
BURO STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21
No. W.S. 1,281

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 1,281

Witness

Edmond Grogan,
Clonmel Road,
Cashel,
Co. Tipperary.

Identity.

Vice-Commandant Second Battalion
Third Tipperary Brigade.

Subject.

Irish Volunteers,
Cashel, Co. Tipperary, 1917-1921.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

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STATEMENT BY MR. EDMOND GROGAN,

Clonmel Road, Cashel, Co. Tipperary.

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

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No. W.S. /281

(Vice Commandant, 2nd Battalion, 3rd Tipperary Brigade)

I was born in New York on May 13th, 1899. My father was a native of Cashel, Co. Tipperary, and my mother was from Tipperary town. My father died in New York when I was only eight years of age, and shortly afterwards I was sent to Ireland to be brought up by my uncle, James Grogan of Shanballyduff, Cashel. I attended the national school at Temple~~more~~^{NOE} until I was sixteen years of age, and then, for a few years, I assisted my uncle on his farm.

In 1917 a company of Irish Volunteers was formed in Cashel, with the late Paddy Hogan as Company Captain, and the late Paddy Casey and Paddy Philips as Company Lieutenants. At the time, Hogan and Casey were my two principal companions, and I joined the company with them at the time of its inception. From the start, we had about forty men in the company, and we paraded every Sunday in the school yard of the Christian Brothers' school. We had no arms of any description at the time, but each member paid a weekly subscription of, I think, threepence into an arms and equipment fund. The first item bought from this fund was a new bicycle which was used for despatch riding. Subsequently, when the funds permitted, Hogan succeeded in buying in Dublin two .45 revolvers and some ammunition.

During the conscription crisis in 1918, about an

additional ten men joined the Company. They remained loyal for some time and then fell away again. Even at that time, there was a fairly strong element of opposition to the Volunteer movement in Cashel. I remember, on the occasion of an anti conscription meeting which was held in the Square and to which the Company marched, we were jeered at by a certain section of the local people, probably those who were in receipt of "separation" money from the British Government. The late Seán Treacy frequently visited Cashel about that time and, on the occasions of his visits, he took over the training and drilling of the company, and usually rounded off his visit with a lecture on Volunteer organisation and training.

Later on in the year 1918, during the general election of that year, the Company was active in securing the election of the Sinn Féin candidate, the late Pierce McCann. Members made a house-to-house canvass to secure votes for him and, on polling day, did duty at the polling booths. I was on duty at the principal polling booth in the town hall in Cashel. Paddy Hogan, the Company Captain, had to go on the run at that time and, on the night of the polling, the other two company officers, Paddy Casey and Paddy Philips, were arrested by R.I.C. in Cashel. I was then Quartermaster of the company and, in the absence of the three officers, I took over as O/C of the company.

In January of 1919, the Volunteer companies in Cashel, Rosegreen, Golden, New Inn, Boherlan, Moyglass and Fethard were formed into a battalion and became the 3rd Battalion of the South Tipperary Brigade. Seamus O'Neill, now Garda Superintendent in Galway, was

appointed Battalion Commandant. I was appointed Battalion Vice Commandant. Paddy Casey, who had returned from imprisonment, was appointed Battalion Adjutant, and Patrick O'Loughlin was appointed Battalion Quartermaster. In a subsequent reorganisation in 1920, the Rosegreen and Fethard Companies were allotted to the 1st Battalion, Moyglass to the 7th Battalion, and the Dualla Company to our Battalion which was then designated the 2nd Battalion. The only change in the Battalion Staff was that Paddy Hogan replaced Seamus O'Neill as Battalion Commandant, the latter having been captured by British forces during a raid by British forces on a Brigade Council meeting at Blackcastle.

After the ambush at Soloheadbeg in January of 1919, Seamus Robinson, then the Brigade Commandant, Sean Treacy, Dan Breen and Seán Hogan stayed for a time in the vicinity of Cashel. I often acted as scout and guide for them while they remained in the Battalion area. In May of that year, immediately after the arrest of Seán Hogan at Maher's of Airfield, Paddy Hogan - whom I have so frequently referred to - told me that he was expecting a telephone message at any hour - from whom the message was to come, I cannot now say - and that he and I were to be ready to act on whatever instructions he received in the message. Beyond the fact that he knew that the message would concern an attempt to rescue Sean Hogan, Paddy Hogan had no further information about the matter. However, the message never came and, so far as we in Cashel were concerned, the matter ended there.

About this time too, i.e., during the summer of 1919, due to the attentions I was receiving from the R.I.C. and to the number of raids on my uncle's house,

I decided to go on the run, but remained in the vicinity of Cashel and stayed in the houses of various friends. I was on the run from this time until after the Truce in July, 1921, and during that period I was able to devote practically all my time to Volunteer work.

Early in the summer of 1920 a consignment of seven Lee Enfield rifles and a quantity of .303 ammunition arrived for the Battalion from G.H.Q. in Dublin. These were the first rifles we had. They came in a wooden crate addressed to E.D. Ryan's drapery shop in Cashel where Paddy Hogan worked. It so happened that, at the time, there were seven men - all members of the Battalion - on the run and each one took one of the rifles. These seven were Paddy Hogan, the Battalion Commandant, Paddy Casey, the Battalion Adjutant, Patrick O'Loughlin, the Battalion Quartermaster, William O'Donnell, Captain of the Cashel Company, Christopher Tobin, Captain of the New Inn Company, Sean Downey who subsequently became Battalion Commandant after Paddy Hogan's death, and myself. Ernie O'Malley was in the Brigade area at the time, and he gave us some musketry instruction. The seven of us generally stayed in the same locality, and we carried out operations of a minor nature, such as, raiding private houses for arms and holding up postmen and mail cars to seize correspondence addressed to the R.I.C.

Battalion Council meetings were at this time generally held at O'Dwyer's house on the Cashel-Clonmel road. Towards the end of May, 1920, at one of those council meetings, instructions were received from the Brigade O/C for the Battalion to block the roads between

Dualla to Drangan, and between Cashel and Fethard, on the night of June 4th, and for parties of armed men to be placed on the road-blocks. This was in connection with the attack on Drangan R.I.C. barracks, and we were also asked to send as many armed men as possible to report at Hayden's of Parsonshill on that night. Paddy Nolan of the Dualla Company took charge of the arrangements for the blocking of the roads. At a later meeting, Seamus Robinson, the Brigade Commandant, asked Paddy Hogan and myself if we could get a hose in Cashel which, he explained, would be required for pumping paraffin oil on to the roof of the barracks. On the evening of 3rd June, Hogan, Tom Taylor and myself took a hose from the railway station in Cashel and brought it to Drangan, leaving it at Hayden's house at Parsonshill.

It is approximately eighteen miles from Cashel to Drangan and, to get there for the attack, Paddy Hogan and myself borrowed a motor car from Mr. P. Dargan, of Cashel on the night of June 4th. We were accompanied by two Volunteers from Cashel, named Dan and Tom Taylor. The car was driven by Dan Taylor. He had only a very limited experience of driving and, when we were within about a mile of Drangan, the car crashed into a ditch at the side of the road and was damaged. All four of us were fortunate to escape injury, and we continued our journey on foot.

Scouts, whom we met on the road, directed us on towards Drangan and gave us a box of home-made bombs to bring along. It was near midnight when we got to the village, and the attack was already under way. We went, with the bombs, to a bicycle repair shop which was

situated next door to the barracks. Ernie O'Malley, Seamus Robinson, Sean Treacy, Tommy Donovan, Commandant of the 7th Battalion, and some others whom I did not know, were in this shop when we got there. Parties of Volunteers, from positions at the front and rear of the barracks, were firing spasmodically at the barracks, and the police were replying vigorously to their fire. I had left my rifle to be used by some of the men on the road blocks, and the only arms I had with me was a Webley revolver, so Seamus Robinson posted me at the door of the shop, with instructions to fire on any of the police who might attempt to leave the barracks by the front door. Mud bombs were flung on to the slated roof of the barracks by, I think, Sean Treacy, and, as these exploded, they tore holes in the slates.

The next thing that I noticed was that Seamus Robinson had gone on to the roof of the barracks, and that Tommy Donovan had started to work a hand-pump which pumped paraffin oil from a barrel on the floor of the bicycle repair shop on to the roof of the barracks. The hose from the pump led through a hole in the roof of the cycle repair shop and extended on to the roof of the barracks. A light pole was attached to that portion of the hose which played over the barrack roof to keep it steady and to direct the nozzle of the hose on to the part of the ~~roof~~^{roof} furthest from the shop. I remember that this pole became detached from the hose and crashed on to the street, straight in front of the barracks. I recovered it, after Ernie O'Malley had remarked to me, "We must get that pole back".

Towards daybreak, the roof of the barracks was

burning fiercely, and the police then surrendered and gave up their arms. Immediately after the surrender, Ernie O'Malley and myself went into the barracks to search for any arms, ammunition or grenades which might still be there. We found one large wooden box of .303 ammunition and, as we carried it out, a piece of a burning rafter fell and hit O'Malley on the back of the neck. It gave him a pretty nasty burn. One of the police - a Black and Tan named White - had a slight wound over his right eye. I gave him first-aid and bandaged him up as well as I could.

When it came to going home, I mentioned to Seamas Robinson about the car crashing the previous night, and said we had no way (except walking) of getting back to Cashel. He said, "Take the first bicycle you meet". I did, and took a bicycle which was left leaning against a wall, about one hundred yards from the barracks. With one of the captured rifles tied to it, I cycled towards home and subsequently - perhaps some days later - I discovered that it was Robinson's own bicycle that I had taken!

The next job of importance was the destruction of the Courthouse in Cashel. It took place in or about the time of the attack on Drangan R.I.C. barracks - maybe shortly before it. It was done on an order issued by the Brigade headquarters to prevent its occupation by British troops. The courthouse was a big stone building, surrounded by a high wall, topped with spiked railings. There were three approaches to it from the barracks which was then occupied by both military and R.I.C. The shortest and principal route was via John Street, and Paddy Hogan, the Battalion

Commandant, and myself tossed a coin to see which of us would take charge of the party of Volunteers detailed to hold this street while the job was in progress. I won. I had twenty men with me, including Paddy Casey, the Battalion Adjutant. Most of them were armed with shotguns, a few had revolvers, and one, who was considered to be an expert with them, had a quantity of grenades. Our position in John Street was behind a stone wall, which we loop-holed when we got there. Meanwhile, another party, with Paddy Hogan in charge, took up a position in Friar Street, and the third route or approach - that via Boherlough Street - was held by a party under Jerome Davin, Commandant of the 1st Battalion. Paddy O'Loughlin, the Battalion Quartermaster, and Tom Taylor were in charge of the men who burned and destroyed the courthouse. While this work was in progress, the police and military made no effort to leave the barracks and, when the job was done, we were able to withdraw from our positions in the town without incident.

In August or September, 1920, I was one of a party of twelve, all men on the run, who lay in ambush at a place called Newtown, on the road between Ballinure and Cashel, for six policemen (R.I.C. and Black and Tans) whom we expected would pass that way when going from Ballinure to Cashel to draw their pay. The ambush position was exactly in the same spot as where Tommy Donovan and some Volunteers from the 7th Battalion had successfully ambushed a police patrol a month or two previously. Seven of our party were armed with rifles, the remaining five being armed with shotguns. As we missed the party of R.I.C. on their way into Cashel in the morning time, we remained in the ambush position

all day, hoping to catch them on their return journey. Towards dark that night, a scout reported that the police were approaching the ambush position, that they were six in number, and that each of them was armed with a rifle and a revolver. On this occasion, however, the policemen reversed the position, for it was they who ambushed us. While we were waiting for them after receiving the scout's report, they apparently changed direction, crossed some fields and opened fire on us. We returned the fire but, as I have said, it was dark or almost dark at the time. Only a few shots were exchanged and there were, I believe, no casualties on either side.

I do not think that the police received information of our presence in the ambush position. They probably feared attack at the place where, as I have stated, a patrol had been ambushed a month or two before, and, more than likely, that led to their decision to take to the fields at the time they did. Our scouts were badly at fault for failing to inform us that the police had left the road and that they were proceeding through the fields.

By October of 1920, we had formed an Active Service Unit, the strength of which was twelve or thirteen men. During that month, we captured two R.I.C. men who were cycling back from Cahir to New Inn. On searching them, we found a few despatches which were of no importance, but, to our surprise, neither of the two were armed. We took their bicycles and let them go. About a week later, we again captured two unarmed R.I.C. men. This time, they were on the Cashel-New Inn road and again, after taking their bicycles, we let them go.

Still in 1920, I remember that Jack Nagle of

New Inn and myself were summoned to assist Denis Lacey's Column in some ambush which it was proposed to carry out. I regret that I now cannot recall the name of the place of the proposed ambush. I know that we remained all day with the Column and that the expected party of British military did not come along. When the Column moved off, Nagle and I returned to our battalion area.

During the winter months, our party of twelve or thirteen men remained together, and a feature of our activities then was the sniping at irregular intervals of the R.I.C. barracks at Golden, New Inn and Ballinure. These sniping attacks were done just to keep the garrisons' nerves on edge. They were never intended as serious attempts to capture the barracks.

About the 1st March, 1921, a Brigade order was issued that an R.I.C. man, or a Black and Tan, was to be shot in each Battalion and, if possible, in each Company area. As a result of this order, Constable Besant, a member of the Auxiliary Division of the R.I.C., was shot dead in Cantwell's public house in Cashel by Paddy Hogan, the Battalion Commandant, and Tom Nagle early on the night of March 4th, 1921. That same night, Hogan, Nagle, Paddy Casey, the Battalion Adjutant, Paddy O'Loughlin, the Battalion Quartermaster, Bill O'Donnell, then Captain of the Cashel Company, Paddy Keane and myself went to Derrycloney near New Inn. We had with us a large attache case containing the Battalion papers. Before going to the houses where we intended to billet for the night, I suggested to Hogan that we dump the attache case, but he said "No", but to keep it with me. Hogan and Paddy Keane went to Dagg's of Derryclooney, and O'Loughlin, Casey and myself stayed in a house owned by people named either Walsh or Byrne.

About 6 a.m., I heard rifle fire. I told Casey that I would take the case and, with only my shirt and trousers on, I dashed out of the house, bringing the case with me, and took cover in a drain which ran beside a wall, a short distance from the house. Although they were still some distance away, I could see that the place was completely surrounded by military. I was joined in the drain by Casey, O'Loughlin, Nagle and O'Donnell. They brought me out the remainder of my clothes. For over an hour, we lay silently in the drain while the troops searched the houses. They even passed along by one side of the wall while we were hiding in the drain, at the opposite side of it. When eventually they moved away, I sent a boy to Dagg's to find out what had happened there. He returned with the news that Paddy Hogan had been killed and that Paddy Keane had been captured. I went back towards Cashel and sent word to Miss Nevin, a Cumann na mBan girl, to arrange to have Hogan prayed for during the Masses in the Churches.

After Paddy Hogan's death, Sean Downey, now in the U.S.A., was appointed Battalion Commandant. With him and a few others, I went in May of 1921 to the Bansha area where we shot a Black and Tan named Chelster. Chelster was a member of the murder gang who shot the brothers, Frank and Edward Dwyer, after taking them from their home at Ballydavid in the previous October. We were informed that he was visiting the house of a lady friend of his, and we shot him as he came out the gate from her home. He was, I think, the last of that particular murder gang, all of whom paid retribution for the murder of the brothers Dwyer.

There is just one other incident which occurred before the Truce to which I would like to refer. It occurred towards the end of May, 1921, when we (the A.S.U.) were proceeding to Rockwell. With two others, I went to visit Cooney's of Garranlea. As we neared Cooney's house, we were fired upon by members of a party of about one hundred and fifty British soldiers who were in and around Cooney's place and into whom we were walking blindly. We three were armed with rifles at the time. Telling the other two to get back, I scrambled over a wall, from the cover of which I fired on the soldiers. By the time the magazine of my rifle was empty, one of my companions - a man named Delaney - had got suitable cover and he covered my retreat. All three of us succeeded in getting safely away from the troops; the only thing we lost was an old slouch hat which I was wearing at the time. Captain Marshall, who was in charge of the British troops, showed this hat to Mrs. Cooney and, pointing to a bullet hole in it, he remarked, "I got the Commandant and I very nearly got the Vice Commandant".

After the Truce, I attended the training camp at Carrigeen, Rockwell, of which Sean Downey, the Battalion Commandant, was in charge.

Early in 1922, with a party of Volunteers, I took over the barracks in Cashel from the British at the time when it was evacuated by the R.I.C. and the military.

With my old Battalion, I fought on the Republican side during the Civil War.

SIGNED: Edmond Grogan
(Edmond Grogan)

DATE: 8th November 1955.
8th November 1955.

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NO. W.S. 1281

WITNESS J. Grace
(J. Grace)