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ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
BURO STAIRE MILEATA 1913-21
NO. W.S. 1290

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 1,290

Witness

Lawrence Sexton,
Sunview,
Courtmacsherry,
Co. Cork.

Identity.

Section Commander Barryroe Company Bandon
Battalion Cork III Brigade, I.R.A.

Subject.

Lislevane, later Barryroe, Company
Irish Volunteers, Co. Cork, 1915-1922.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

N11

File No. S.2596

Form B.S.M. 2

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STATEMENT BY LAWRENCE SEXTON,
Sunview, Courtmacsherry, Co. Cork.

I was born in Lislevane on 31st August, 1896. My parents were farmers. I was educated at Lislevane National School until I was about 12 years of age when I then attended Evening Classes under the Board of Education for four nights each week from 7.15 p.m. to 9.15 p.m. until about the year 1918.

In November, 1915, a public meeting to organise a unit of Irish Volunteers was held in Lislevane. It was attended by Terence McSwiney, Cork, who was in Volunteer uniform. This meeting was also attended by Volunteer units from Ballinadee and the surrounding area as well as by units from Lyre and district. Jeremiah O'Brien, Curraheen, was Chairman of the meeting, which was addressed by Terence McSwiney and James Cahalane, Clonakilty. The meeting was attended by members of the R.I.C. from Courtmacsherry and Timoleague, who watched a parade of 32 local men who joined up and paraded after the meeting under Terence McSwiney. I cannot recollect the names of the men who took part in this parade.

As far as I can recollect no further parades took place until Palm Sunday, 1916, when a further effort was made to organise a Volunteer unit in the district. Donal Barry, Cork, attended as organiser on this occasion but, although a number of locals turned up, nothing was done due to the activities of the R.I.C. who remained in the village throughout the day.

There was no activity in the area at Easter 1916.

In July, 1917, a Volunteer Company was formed in Barryroe. The Company included four sections from different areas in the Parish, i.e.

Butterstown, Lislevane, Augha and Grange. The strength of the unit was about 80. The first officers of the Company were :-

O/C. Michael O'Sullivan,
1st. Lieut. Jim Moloney,
2nd Lieut. Dan Santry.

The Company was a unit of Bandon Battalion, Cork Brigade. As far as I can remember the other Companies in the Battalion were :- Bandon, Ballinadee, Ballinspittal, Kilbrittain, Clogagh, Ahiohill, Timoleague, Newcestown, Innishannon and Farnivane. The officers of the Battalion were :-

O/C. Tom Hales,
Vice O/C. Eugene Walsh,
Adjt. Hugh Thornton,
Quartermaster William Walsh.

Weekly parades were held at which the members were trained in close order foot-drill under their own officers. This was the only type of training carried out at this time.

The Barryroe Company took part in its first public parade on the occasion of a big Sinn Féin meeting, which was addressed by De Valera, in Bandon early in December, 1917. All other Companies in the Bandon Battalion took part in this parade.

The first training in the use of arms received by the members was carried out early in 1918 when Tom Hales (Battalion O/C.) made a miniature rifle (.22) available for training purposes. All members had an opportunity of getting in some target practice while the rifle was in the Company area.

Towards the end of 1917 or early 1918 the instruments of the A.O.H. (Ancient Order of Hibernians) Band in Timoleague were stolen

by the Volunteers. The supporters of the band immediately set about collecting subscriptions from the loyalists in the area and soon procured a new set of instruments. The reorganised Band paraded for the first time on the occasion of the victory of Major Willie Redmond over the Sinn Féin candidate (Dr. Vincent White) in the bye-election in Waterford City in March 1918. The local Volunteers raided Timoleague on the night of the parade but failed to capture the new band instruments. This was, however, the one and only occasion on which the Band appeared in public.

The members of the Company (Barryroe) were engaged about this time (I think) in seeking signatures for the plebiscite on the Freedom of Ireland.

During the spring and early summer of 1918 the normal routine training of the Company continued. In April, 1918, the membership of the Company (Barryroe) increased by about twenty five to thirty following an appeal by the Company O/C (Michael O'Sullivan) to the congregation leaving Barryroe Church after Mass while the Company was on parade. All the new recruits continued to serve until the Truce.

During the early summer of 1918 several raids for arms were carried out in the Company area. In some cases the arms were surrendered voluntarily but in a few cases they were taken by force. The arms held in the Company about this time comprised 25 to 30 shotguns and 2 rifles. Members of all sections of the Company took part in the arms raids. The R.I.C. were also raiding the homes of Volunteers for arms and on a number of occasions my home was raided. At this time the members of the unit were engaged in making buckshot, re-filling cartridges and generally preparing to fight Conscription.

A surprise mobilisation of Barryroe Company took place on 4th June, 1918. All members reported for duty at the appointed time (2 a.m.) and venue. All members as instructed carried 24 hours rations. The parade was inspected by the Battalion Adjutant (Hugh Thornton).

Early in July 1918, due to a reorganisation of the Company, an election of officers was held with the following result :-

O/C., Michael McCarthy,
 1st Lieut. Michael O'Sullivan,
 2nd Lieut. Michael Coleman.

As well as engaging in the normal training at this time all Volunteers were active in promoting every aspect of Irish culture. In support of this aspect of the work the members of the Barryroe Company organised an Aerideacht on 28th July, 1918.

About 4th August, 1918, there was a full muster of the members of the unit together with the other Companies in the battalion at the funeral of Lieutenant William Hurley (Kilbrittain Company) in Clogagh.

There was no unusual activity in the area following the end of World War I (1914-1918) in November 1918. The members were mainly engaged at this stage in organising the political side of the Republican movement (Sinn Féin) in preparation for the General Election due to be held in December 1918. There was, however, no contest in the area as the Sinn Féin candidate - Diarmuid Lynch (R.I.P) - was returned unopposed.

In January, 1919, Cork Brigade, which was made up of about twenty battalions and embraced the whole of Cork County, was divided into three Brigades. Our Battalion (Bandon) became the

1st Battalion, Cork III. Brigade. The other battalions in the Brigade area were, as far as I can recollect, - Clonakilty (2nd), Dunmanway (3rd), Skibbereen (4th), Bantry (5th). The O/C., Cork III. Brigade, was Tom Hales who, up to the formation of the Brigade, was O/C. Bandon (1st) Battalion. I cannot recollect the names of the other officers on the Brigade Staff.

During 1919, beyond normal training, which was becoming slightly more advanced, -selected members were being trained in scouting, signalling and the use of arms - there was no unusual activity in Company area. There was, however, a change in the officers about this time, the new officers being :-

O/C. Jim Moloney,
 1st. Lieut. Michael O'Sullivan,
 2nd Lieut. Michael Coleman.

A training camp for officers was held in Glandore in August, 1919. This camp was attended by the officers of the Barryroe Company. As far as I can recollect the camp was raided by enemy forces of Military and R.I.C. and had to be disbanded. I was not at this camp.

On 25th February, 1920, Timoleague R.I.C. barracks was attacked. This was a Battalion operation and Seán Hales, who had replaced his brother Tom as Battalion O/C., was in charge. The members of the Barryroe Company were engaged in various activities in connection with this operation. Some were on outpost duty at a roadblock on the main Timoleague-Bandon road while others were acting as scouts and sentries. With seven others I was on duty at a roadblock on the Timoleague-Clonakilty road. I cannot recall the names of those who were with me. This attack led to wholesale raids by enemy military and police forces on the homes of suspected Volunteers.

At Easter, 1920, the evacuated R.I.C. post at Courtmacsherry was destroyed in accordance with a General Order from G.H.Q. for the destruction of such posts. The operation was carried out by the members of the Timoleague and Barryroe Companies under Sean Hales (O/C., Bandon Battalion).

In May, 1920, a patrol of four R.I.C. operating from Timoleague - Barryroe - Clonakilty road were ambushed at Ahawadda about $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles from Timoleague. This operation was carried out by the officers of the Barryroe and Timoleague Companies in co-operation with Charlie Hurley who later became Brigade O/C. on the arrest of Tom Hales. He was, at this time, Vice O/C., Bandon Battalion. I did not take part in this operation.

A cycle patrol of military to the number of about a dozen passed at irregular intervals through the Barryroe Company area during the early part of August, 1920. They usually travelled the route Timoleague-Courtmacsherry-Barryroe-Timoleague. With the other members of the Company I lay in ambush on three or four occasions with a view to attacking and disarming the patrol, but there was no appearance by the enemy on the dates selected for the operation.

The Company was represented in the parade at the funeral of Lieutenant Tim Fitzgerald, I.R.A., who was killed in an ambush at Brinny in August, 1920. The representatives were Michael Coleman, Batt Whelton, Jerome O'Hea and Lawrence Sexton (Witness).

In September/October, 1920, all members of the Barryroe Company assisted in the collection of a levy for the Arms Fund for the I.R.A. This levy was based on a valuation basis at the rate of $\frac{1}{3}$ d. in the £. (pound) on the Poor Law Valuation of the occupier's holding or premises.

The establishment of the Republican Courts in the area about this time led to additional work for the members of the I.R.A. Scouts and guards had to be provided for the Courts when in session and the I.R.A. were also responsible for enforcing the orders of the Courts. At a later stage this work was taken over by the Republican Police.

On 3rd December, 1920, members of the Barryroe and Timoleague Companies co-operated in the destruction of Timoleague R.I.C. post (evacuated), Timoleague Castle and the house of Colonel Travers. While this operation was in progress I was engaged on scouting duty on the Timoleague-Clonakilty road.

During the early part of 1921 large enemy forces were engaged in endeavouring to round up the I.R.A. Columns which were operating in the Brigade area. In an effort to hinder the movement of these enemy troops all members of the local Companies throughout the Battalion were engaged in blocking roads, cutting trenches and demolishing bridges. This work continued right up to the Truce on 11th July, 1921. It entailed the continuous attention of a considerable number of men as the enemy were compelling civilians to make good the damage by filling in trenches and repairing bridges so that their transport could operate. In the circumstances obstructions created by our men at night were sometimes removed under duress by civilians next day and so it meant a continuous round of duty for the demolition squads of the I.R.A.

During this period orders were issued for the preparation of dumps and the building of dug-outs in each Company area. The dumps were usually made in wide fences by excavating the centre of the fence and inserting a wooden box which had been thoroughly waterproofed. The boxes varied in size from 7' X 2' X 2' to 10' X 2' X 2' according to the amount of materials to be stored. The open end of the boxes was usually closed by a stone slab or pillar,

which acted as a gate post. Dug-outs were excavated beside fences to a depth of about 10' and were usually 12' square. When the earth had been excavated and distributed at a reasonable distance from the site of the dug-out, the open space was then lined with timber and roofed with galvanized iron at a height of about 8'. The roof was then covered with clay to a depth of about 2" and the original sods of grass were then laid over all. The approach and opening to the dug-out was always through the fence from the adjoining field.

In addition to the activities mentioned in the two preceding paragraphs, the men of the I.R.A. in our area were engaged in removing goods and stock from the farms of loyalists who had been shot as spies and whose lands had been confiscated by the I.R.A.

On the night of 13th May, 1921, I removed twelve rifles with a supply of ammunition from a dump at Lissycree to a dump in the vicinity of Courtmacsherry Coastguard Station where a party of the Essex Regiment were stationed. These arms were used next day to attack the enemy forces in the Station. This operation was part of a general attack on enemy forces throughout the country on the date in question. I was accompanied in the operation by Ned Fleming, Mick O'Leary, Michael Holland, James O'Hea, Con Whelton, Ned Long and Jack McCarthy. All were members of the Barryroe Company - Lislevane Section.

From May, 1921 to the Truce, I was engaged with all the other members of the Barryroe Company on various activities in connection with the destruction of enemy lines of communication, the delivery of dispatches as well as guarding prisoners - amongst them Lord Bandon - who was held prisoner in the Barryroe area.

Just prior to the Truce our Company (Barryroe) was transferred from Bandon Battalion (1st) to Clonakilty (2nd) Battalion, Cork III. Brigade.

In addition to the officer changes in the Company already recorded, there were the following :-

O/C.	Jim Moloney)	
		)	March 1920
1st. Lieut.	Michael Coleman	)	to
		)	August 1920.
2nd. Lieut.	Dan Santry)	

O/C.	Michael Coleman)	
		)	August 1920
1st. Lieut.	Dan Santry	)	to
		)	January 15th., 1921.
2nd. Lieut.	John Hayes)	

O/C.	Michael Coleman)	
		)	January 16th., 1921
1st. Lieut.	Dan Santry	)	to
		)	April 30th., 1921.
2nd. Lieut.	Denis O'Brien)	

O/C.	Michael Coleman)	
		)	May 1st., 1921
1st. Lieut.	Dan Santry	)	to
		)	July 1st., 1922.
2nd. Lieut.	Tim Crowley)	

My rank at the Truce - Section Commander, Barryroe Company, Bandon Battalion, Cork III. Brigade.

Strength at the Truce - About 80/90.

In September, 1921, a Brigade Training Camp was established in Barryroe Company area. The men present at this camp were officers drawn from the Companies and Battalions in the Brigade area. They were billeted in different houses throughout the parish. The headquarters of this camp was at Rock Cottage, Lisseycremin. Guards for the camp were provided from the members of the Barryroe Company.

The members of the Barryroe Company underwent a course of training in the use and care of arms for one week in October, 1921. The O/C. of the Clonakilty Battalion (Jim Hurley) was in charge of this camp. There were also camps about this time for the Special Services attached to the Battalion, e.g. First Aid, Scouting and Signalling, and Engineering.

I continued to engage in all normal training activities up to the end of June, 1922, after which date I took no further part in I.R.A. activities.

Signed: Lawrence Sexton
 (Lawrence Sexton)
 Date: 17. 11. 55
 17.11.55

Witness: P. O'Donnell
 P. O'Donnell

