

N. S. 1.381

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
BURO STAIRE MILEATA 1913-21
No. W.S. 1386

ROINN  COSANTA.

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

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 1,386.....

Witness

Commandant Hugh Maguire (retired),
72 Lindsay Road,
Glasnevin,
Dublin.

Identity.

Commandant Crosserlough Battalion, Cavan Bgde.:
Acting Centre Cavan I.R.B.

Subject.

Plans for
~~Attempted~~ capture of Ballyjamesduff
Barracks, 17th December 1920.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil

File No. S. 2699.....

Form B.S.M. 2

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
BURO STAIRE MILEATA 1913-21

W. S. 1, 386

No. W.S. 1386

STATEMENT BY COMMANDANT HUGH MACGUIRE (retired)

72 Lindsay Road, Glasnevin, Dublin.

From time to time, statements have been made and articles have appeared in the Press about an attack by the I.R.A. on the R.I.C. Barracks at Ballyjamesduff, Co. Cavan. I wish definitely to state that this post was not attacked during the occupation by R.I.C.

On Sunday, 12th December 1920, a meeting of the battalion commandants of Co. Cavan was held at the residence of Mr. John Lee, Upper Lavey. At this time, the I.R.A. of Co. Cavan were directly under the control of G.H.Q. which was represented at the meeting by Lieutenant General Peadar McMahon, Organiser (now Secretary of the Department of Defence). The purpose of this meeting was to discuss and make arrangements for attacking Cootehill, Virginia and Ballyjamesduff Barracks on the same night and before Christmas.

The commandant of Cootehill Battalion asked to have the attack on Cootehill Barracks deferred for local reasons. A similar request by the commandant of Virginia Battalion was granted. Crosserlough Battalion undertook the task of capturing Ballyjamesduff Barracks on the following Friday night, 17th December. The effort was to be made at 10 p.m.

Previous to this, while quartermaster of Cavan Brigade, I had taken eight rifles, twelve grenades and fifteen revolvers from Dublin by rail via Mullingar to Drumhownagh railway station. The rifles were distributed later as follows:- Bellanagh Battalion, six rifles; Corlough Battalion (Pat Woods), one rifle; Castlelara Company (Phil McCaffrey) (J. Tully), one rifle. An application at the meeting to have the six rifles transferred from Bellanagh to Crosserlough Battalion for the attack was refused. Instead, the O/C.

Bellananagh Battalion was instructed to have six men armed with the rifles referred to to report to the McDonagh Memorial Hall, Crosserlough, at 9 p.m. on the night of the attack, where they would be met by a guide, John J. Coyle, who would conduct them to a position on the bog road at Derrylurgan just outside Ballyjamesduff. Here they would join the main attacking force.

The attacking party was made up as follows:-

Upper Lavey Company, 40 men in two sections, with Bernard Monaghan and Dan McDonald in charge.

Crosskeys Company, six men.

Crosserlough Company, two men.

Captain Peter Moynagh, who was on the run and in the area at the time, was in charge of mines and explosives, having completed a course in engineering.

Motor drivers were not as numerous then as now, and Mr. Patrick McMahon, Virginia, reported as such to convey wounded, if any, to a prearranged place of safety. The remainder of Crosskeys and Crosserlough companies together with Mounthugent, Kilnaleck and Drumkilly were engaged in blocking roads and maintaining communications. The six riflemen were to occupy houses opposite the front of the barracks.

Ladders, pickaxes and sledges were placed in position at McDonald's Garage by the late Sergeant James West (R.I.P.) Petrol and paraffin supplies were distributed. At 10 p.m. communication wires were cut by two men of Crosskeys Section (J. Gaffney, P. Dowd). At this time, the guide (J.J. Coyle) reported that he had waited until 9.30 p.m. at Crosserlough and had not contacted the rifle party. He was sent back immediately with instructions to wait until midnight. He arrived back at 1 a.m. alone. After consultation, it was

decided to withdraw.

Shortly afterwards, I met Peadar McMahon while in Dublin in an effort to get rifles. While we were purchasing footwear at Winstanley's Shoe Store, South Great Georges Street, the area was surrounded by military and auxiliary police. We separated. McMahon was arrested and interned at the Curragh until the Truce, with the result that no inquiry was held into the affair.

What happened to the six rifle men? One theory was that some of them were injured in an accident on the roadway between Kilcogy and Kilnaleck. The truth is that they did not leave the vicinity of Ballyhananagh, only three reporting to the place of assembly to pick up the rifles.

With the exception of Patrick McMahon, Virginia, Captain Peter Moynagh, Ballyhananagh, and Lieut.-General Peadar McMahon, Dublin, all those at Ballyjamesduff on that night were members of Crosserlough Battalion.

Finally, roads were blocked extensively over Co. Cavan and also in parts of Meath, Longford and Monaghan in the belief that the three barracks were being attacked. It was after noon on the following day when British military reached Ballyjamesduff.

Signed: Hugh Maguire
(Hugh Maguire)

Date: 28th March 1956

28th March, 1956.

Witness: Matthew Barry Commandant.

(Matthew Barry)

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
BURO STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21
No. W.S. 1386