

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

BURO STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21

No. W.S. 1442

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21

STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 1442

Witness

Thomas Ryan,
Ballymurphy,
Borris,
Co. Carlow.

Identity.

Intelligence Officer, 4th Battalion, Carlow Brigade.

Subject.

Activities of 4th Battalion, Carlow Brigade,
1914-1922.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil.

File No S.2780.

Form B.S.M. 2

W.S. 1442

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BURO STAIRE MILEATA 1913-21
No. W.S. 1,442

STATEMENT BY THOMAS RYAN, N. T.,

Ballymurphy, Borris, Co. Carlow.

The first company of Volunteers was formed at Ballymurphy in June, 1914. The late Fr. John Lawler, P.P., Rathloe, then C.C. at Borris, introduced Mr. Judge and Mr. L. Mellows. He referred to the fight in '98 by the men of this area at Scollough Gap, etc. About sixty young men gave their names and got forms to sign.

They began drilling and procured wooden guns for rifle drill. A fee of 3d per week was paid by each member to form a fund for supplies. The drill master was an ex British soldier named Synott, and he was succeeded by J. Gallagher, Borris. As I was not eighteen years, I could not formally join but was in the ranks. The company became linked up with North Wexford and made a big amount of lead pellets for re-loading shotgun ammunition. The De La Salle Brothers in Bagenalstown helped to procure lead from eve-gutters and disused wells in the area. The work was done at Byrne's cottage. Moulds were procured from Wexford and a filling machine from John Ryan, Coolin St., Mullens. Felt hats were used for wads.

Messages and counter messages came to Borris in 1916. E.P. Hogan, Borris, took them to Enniscorthy area on Fr. Lawler's motor bike. John Ryan, Mullingown, and James Murphy, Mohurry Mills, brought flour by horses and carts from St. Mullins Mills to help the food supply in Enniscorthy. Word was sent out early in the week for no reinforcements to go in as the fight seemed to be over. But arrests would follow and any outsiders would surely be kept. Dr. Dundon, Borris, was very active and was interned later on.

In 1917 a Brigade was formed in Carlow. South Carlow was transferred to them as the 4th Battalion.

In 1918 one of the first, if not the actual first public meeting protesting against conscription was held in Borris. The entire population of the parish attended and marched in a torchlight procession. The meeting was addressed by Messrs. Milroy and O'Mahoney. The R.I.C. took possession of the Square to prevent addresses, but the Volunteers pushed them out and carried on. The people were greatly inspired by the work and advice of the late Fr. P. Doyle, P.P., Baltinglass, then C.C. in Borris. A collection was made at the church doors on Sunday, and a very generous response showed the earnestness of the people.

A young shop assistant from Graiguenamanagh, a native of near Killealy, Co. Wexford, was drowned in the Barrow when going home from the meeting. His companion, M. Fogarty, had a narrow escape. It was one of the darkest nights ever seen in the district. Many people bumped into one another on the road home.

A sports was held at Ballyine, Ballymurphy, to raise funds, and E.P. Hogan, who was chief transport officer at the time as he had a motor car, brought Mr. O'Mahoney to address the crowd.

The 4th Battalion was composed of:

'A'	Coy.	-	Ballymurphy	-	Capt. Pierce Murphy, later Maurice Kelly
'B'	"	-	Clashganney	-	Capt. Peter Hynes
'C'	"	-	Rathanna	-	Capt. John Lawler
'D'	"	-	Ballyglisheen	-	Capt. Silvester Flood
'E'	"	-	Ballylany	-	Capt. James Doyle
'F'	"	-	St. Mullons	-	Capt. Michael Hickey
'G'	"	-	Borris	-	Capt. Joseph Millet.

T.P.R.

That was the final full strength at the first critical date,
July 11th 1921.

Battalion Staff on 11th July, 1921:

Pierce Murphy, Ballymurphy, O/C
John Hynes, Ballinagrane, Vice O/C
Michael Lawler, Clashgannev, Adjt.
John Murphy, Ballinagrane, I/O.
Seamus Lennon, Courtnellan, Q/M.

Battalion Staff on 1st July, 1922:

Maurice Kelly, Ballyene, O/C
John Hynes, Ballinagrane, Vice O/C
Michael Nolan, Adjt.
Seamus Lennon, Q/M
Michael Kehoe, I/O.

Dr. Dundon, Borris, was the first O/C of the 4th Battalion on its formation in 1917. Pierce Murphy, Ballymurphy, succeeded him. Dr. Dundon was said to be disfavoured because he did not name on request the leading "light" in R.I.C. at Borris. Pierce Murphy got into bad health about the time of the truce and Maurice Kelly became O/C.

Seán O'Farrell collected the Dáil loan in this area. Two Volunteers did each district and gave up the money to O'Farrell at the home of Seamus Lennon, Courtnellan. When O'Farrell went to America, Thomas O'Connell became O/C.

Pre Truce list of major activities:

- (1) Destroying Glynn, St. Mullins R.I.C. barracks, 1920
- (2) Destroying Killedmond R.I.C. barracks, 1920.
- (3) Destroying Borris R.I.C. barracks, 1920.

Raid on mail train at Borris, January, 1921.

Police codes etc. found. Letters lead to raid on premises of Dempsey, solicitor, Enniscortny.

Attack on Gowran Barracks, 1921; Road cut and mined at Borris. Expecting Auxiliaries from Inistioge to come that way to Gowran, but no lorries came.

March 21st, 1921: Train raided again for mails and raid on Mount Leinster Lodge for arms and ammunition and general collection of arms.

February, 1921: Domestic enemy William Kennedy, Borris, attacked. Kennedy out against I.R.A. and used go to Gowran and bring Tans to Borris to raid, chiefly E. Hogan's and Dr. Dundon's. He and Dempsey were identified as part of raiding party searching for Dr. Dundon, who escaped through the small window of a yard shed by jumping into P.P.'s garden. He was out all night.

It was usual for Kennedy to drive his motor car and Black and Tan friends down the village street with the left-hand wheels on the footpath at Hogan and Dundon's side. He would hoot the horn outside the said houses and shots were often fired. Dr. Dundon and E. Hogan applied to the Volunteers for protection, as both had to leave their homes and only return occasionally under cover of darkness. Kennedy, apparently, knew this and had a watch kept. O'Brien (an Excise man) was always on the look-out, and when he saw Dr. Dundon return, Kennedy & Co. would raid for him. The local Volunteer O/C had orders to take over house at opposite side of street to protect Dundon's and Hogan's (~~Bojants~~ ^{Bolgers}), ^{T.R.} and was proceeding to occupy it with nine men from 'B' Company Kennedy arrived and flashed light into Maloney's lane as usual. Some men then on guard called on him to halt.

He emptied his six chamber revolver at them, and as he had bad sight he was little use with a gun. One of the guard had his gun practically against Kennedy but it missed fire. They shouted at men at ~~school's~~ ^{Bolger's} door that it was Kennedy and "get him". Not being really ready, the safety catches were on their guns and first pulls failed. Two shots from D.B. gun struck the church gate and another hit the skirting of Kennedy's door as he dashed in.

Attack No. 11 - 18/3/'21:

Kennedy, O'Brien, Coburn and Dempsey were all in Kennedy's at 5 p.m. Three parties of four each were to attack them: No. 1 party from the south via demesne; No. 11 from north via railway; No. 111 by same route to Maloney's lane. No. 11 had a placard to attach to his (Kennedy's) body. Plan was to let him come to the centre party, who were in church grounds. If they succeeded, No. 1 and 11 were to move in, disarm and label him. No. 1 pulled on Kennedy and Dempsey coming out of house. The other two escaped by back. Kennedy emptied his gun into centre party and retreated back to school steps, where he reloaded and again fired six shots rapidly. One bullet smashed a revolver on one of the attackers' ^{T.R. hands} ~~heads~~. Then Kennedy and Dempsey fell, Kennedy dead, Dempsey wounded mortally.

Kennedy's assistant in his chemist shop (M. Kelly) was secretly in the I.R.A. and was a great help, as he always gave word when Kennedy was gone for the Tans, etc.

Two superior officers of I.R.A. came and stayed in Kennedy's, which was a hotel at that time. The public thought they were secret British agents. I believe one

of them was O'Brien of Meath, father of the present O'Brien, the celebrated footballer. They were really I.R.A. organisers and knew all about the Kennedy affair, trial, sentences, etc.

April 21st 1921:

The Flying Column from Carlow arrived in Mullinagown on Saturday 19th, and billeted in an unoccupied house belonging to Doyle. They were in a poor way for communication etc. and intended joining up with the North Wexford Column, then in Blackstairs Mountains. On Sunday night one of the column (Pádraig Gaffney) and Thos. Ryan, N.T., Mullinagown, went to the mountains, but as a fog fell they were unable to get contact and had to return at midnight. On Monday, about midday, a mixed patrol of R.I.C. and Tans from Bagenalstown and military from Carlow came via Borris to Graiguenamanagh and apparently picked up a spy named Finn on the road near Graigue. They returned by the back road of Inch and were absolutely covering the column, who were out in a field for exercise, before the column saw them. John Ryan, Mullinagown, was leaving his home with I.R.A. dispatches for Coy. Captains when he was fired on and had to retreat to the yard. His father, Michael, was going to pump for bucket of water and he warned him not to go as there was shooting on. The aged man (62) did not heed. John thought to get out the back, but was fired on again. He returned and put the dispatches in the fire. Not seeing his father, he went to yard again and there found him dead at the pump with a bullet wound in his face at bottom of nose passing out the back of head. He called a carpenter (Arthur Whelan) who was working at the back. Together they lifted the dead man and said some prayers. Then John got

a bicycle to go for a priest and doctor. He was fired on again when he got to the road, but he continued amidst a hail of bullets and succeeded in getting to Borris, and Fr. M. Doyle came to the scene. After attending Michael Ryan, cries were heard up the field, and he went and found James and Peter Farrell of Mullinagown dead and bayoneted side by side in Mr. Stephen Murrin's field. They had been sowing corn in their own field when attack began, and it appears they (both were Volunteers) attempted to get to tell the column what was on, as they would have no other reason to go in that direction, which was opposite from the home.

The column ran and were followed. After a chase, with continued firing, Michael Ryan, I.R.A., and ^AFoy, I.R.A., fell wounded, and when attackers were approaching M. ^AFoy he is said to have fired at them. He was shot and brutally bayoneted. Several parts of his hands and his teeth were scattered round. Two of I.R.A. escaped. The remainder, including the wounded Michael Ryan, were captured and taken to Borris. The local Volunteers got a coffin that night and collected remains of Ml. ^AFoy and put it in the church. Next day Tans etc. arrived again and took coffin, opened it and then took it away with them to Carlow. Hundreds of the British forces occupied the area for the next few days and brought blood hounds into the church on the funeral day. They gave orders for the bodies of Michael Ryan and the two Farrells to be kept until they could hold an inquest. These orders were not obeyed and funerals took place at 11 o'clock. The military arrived and opened the coffin in the graveyard and thought to make the people believe that they were accidental shootings. John Ryan had to be present ^{at inquest} under protest. Thos. Ryan

refused to attend. The investigating officer was humane enough under the conditions, but the remainder of troops were rough.

Finn disappeared after being seen the evening of the shooting, and it is believed he was in the lorries at Mullinagown. All attempts to find him failed, but later on he appeared in the Ballinree area and was captured, but he escaped from an old house where he was locked in. Next morning he was taken again quite near Borris, apparently on his way to the barrack. He was tried and executed. He is said to have had a big amount of money on him.

In June, 1921, orders were sent down to shoot R.I.C. Sergeant Farrelly at Borris, as he was on black list and was reputed to be on shooting of Lord Mayor MacCurtain in Cork. Attack was arranged to be from demesne at Borris while Farrelly came from his house in Upper Borris to the barracks at Protestant school. The attackers were only getting into position on demesne wall when their victim came. They fired and wounded him, but as a number of people were at that time going to early Mass it was difficult. Farrelly returned the fire from his revolver and staggered on to near the barrack gate, where he fell, but he did not die.

In September, 1920, there was an attack arranged on R.I.C. patrol in Borris, but patrol did not arrive as usual and nothing happened.

In March, 1920, an attack was planned on Bagenalstown Barracks and Southern units moved in, helped by Graiguenamanagh, Co. Kilkenny. But that night nine lorry loads of Auxies arrived in Bagenalstown and were moving

round the town and district most of the night. Hence no hope of attack.

Another mass attack planned for Inistioge Auxiliary post by crossing Barrow at Clashganney and joining Kilkenny men was called off just before the main body were to move from Ballyglisheen.

In 1922, local I.R.A. aid ^{see TR.} E. O'Malley to capture Borris Free State Barracks and get away with all the stores. They were also in the capture of Tullow, and while waiting there for reinforcements to attack Carlow, Free State, reinforcements arrived and they had to fly.

Lives lost in the area:

Vol. James Farrell, Mullinagown.

" Peter Farrell, "

Michael Ryan, " aged 62.

" Michael Foy^A, Carlow, shot at Mullinagown.

James Hayden, Crannagh, Rathanna, shot going from Mass.

✓ William Kennedy, Borris, domestic enemy.

✓ Dempsey, Enniscorthy, domestic enemy.

✓ Finn, spy.

Wiley Carroll, Killedmond, civil war.

✓ Charles Byrne, accidental in civil war ^{TR.} at ~~Rock~~ ~~Barrow~~ ~~age~~

✓ Doyle, Ballindaggin, found dead, labelled as spy at Knockroe.

✓ Farrelly, R.I.C. sergeant, wounded.

✓ Flood, Kiltaly, drowned night of anti-conscription meeting.

Members of Carlow Column at Mullinagown, April, 1921:

Three Behans
 Two Gaffneys
 ., ~~Fay~~, Ryan, Connell, Byrne
 & Fitzpatrick.

William Gaffney and Fitzpatrick (I think) escaped.

'A' Company Officers:

Pierce Murphy, Kilmesan.
 Gerald " "
 Peter Breen, Coonogue.
 Patrick Byrne, Knockmore.
 John Ryan, Headfield) or Mullinagown.
 Thomas Ryan, Mullinagown.
 Patrick Bolger, Rathgeran.
 Daniel Kavanagh, Ballymurphy.
 Maurice Kelly, Ballyine.
 Patrick Lawler, Mullinagown.

Sin a bhfuil agam le rá.

Signed:

Thomas Ryan O.S.

Date:

June 13th 1956

Witness:

Seán Brennan Lieut.-Col.

(Thomas Ryan n.t.)

(Investigator).

