

U.S. 1,466

# ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

BURO STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21

No. W.S. 1,466

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 1466.

Witness

Joseph Cashman,  
Killydonoghue,  
Glanmire,  
Co. Cork.

Identity.

Battalion Quartermaster.

Subject.

Activities of Riverstown Company, Co. Cork,  
Irish Volunteers, 1917-1921.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil.

File No ..... S.2801.

Form B.S.M. 2

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STATEMENT OF JOSEPH CASHMAN NO. W.S. 1466

Killydonoghue, Glanmire, Co. Cork.

I was born in the townland of Killydonoghue in the month of March 1891. I attended Riverstown National School up to the age of 14 years. When I left school I went to work on my father's farm.

A company of Volunteers was formed in Riverstown in the year 1913. About the latter end of 1914, after John Redmond's speech at Woodenbridge offering the Volunteers to England in her fight against Germany, the company almost ceased to exist, but a few members managed to keep a small section of the men together as a company until early 1917 when they were re-organised. I did not become a member until the latter end of that year. Riverstown Company was then known as D. Company of the 5th Battalion. Our company captain was Edward Heagarty and our strength was approximately 40 men. We had a few shot-guns at the time with which we drilled and carried out field exercises.

In the early part of 1918, during the conscription scare, our strength increased to about 90 men. Drilling was intensified and shotguns in the area were collected. When the scare was over, most of the new recruits left the company. We continued routine drilling to the end of the year and throughout the year 1919. One small incident occurred during the year 1919. It happened on 7th September 1919, on the same day that members of the Cork No. 2 Brigade disarmed a number of British army men in Fermoy. On this particular day, after one of our routine parades, we decided to have a game of bowls. This was a game which consisted of throwing a 28-oz. ball along the public highway and was regarded as illegal. As we

were about to start, an R.I.C. sergeant came on the scene which caused us to postpone our game for a while. After a while we decided to carry on, whereupon the sergeant proceeded to follow the group taking part so as to ascertain their names. After a while we got hold of him and after some rough handling threw him into a ditch. We expected to hear from him again but did not.

Our nearest R.I.C. barracks was located at Glanmire and it had a garrison of a sergeant and six men. In March 1920, it was decided by our company - Riverstown - to try and capture it. As a rule, about three of the garrison went on patrol together in the area. Our plan was to try and hold up this patrol of three men, disarm them and march them to the barracks and make them give their usual password to the man in charge within so that we could rush in and seize whatever arms were inside. With a number of the local Volunteers I had been placed near the barracks to take part in the rush on the door when it opened, while the company captain and a few of the men proceeded to hold up the three R.I.C. men who were sheltering under a hedge during a shower. Our men were armed with a revolver or two and some shotguns. When the R.I.C. got the order 'Hands up', one of them - a Constable Scully - resisted and was shot dead. This put an end to our attempted seizure as, after the shooting, we returned to our homes for the time being. A short time after this incident, Glanmire barracks was evacuated. After the evacuation one of the R.I.C. who had been stationed at Glanmire always accompanied military raiding parties in subsequent raids and house searches in the area. Shortly afterwards, on the instructions of the Battalion O/C., the barracks and local Courthouse were burned down.

Other activities around this time included raids on the houses of loyalists for arms and the seizure and censorship

of mails. In the month of July of this year, at a company mobilisation one night, the company captain - Edward Heagerty - asked for Volunteers to attack a military lorry which usually travelled between Fermoy and Cork city on a certain day each week. A number of men volunteered for the job, including myself, but a good number were reluctant to do so; even a number of those who did volunteer never turned up for the ambush. The place chosen for the attack was a place called Bleach Hill on the Fermoy side of Sallybrook. The lorry usually passed this point between 3 and 3.30 p.m.

As it had been decided to block the road preparatory to the attack, the company captain ordered Jim Hurley, Charley Curnane and myself to cut down a tree for the purpose or to cut it in such a way that it could be pulled down with the use of ropes at the right moment. While the three of us were engaged on this job at about 10.30 a.m. on the morning of the proposed attack, a convoy of three military lorries approached. One of the lorries broke down within a few yards of where we were engaged on the tree. If the attacking party had been in position we could easily have wiped out the military party in the lorries as they were very few in number. However, we took cover in a nearby ditch until they went on their way. After some time we returned to the tree and found that the attacking party, which numbered 18 men, had arrived and taken up positions on high ground in extended formation on one side of the road.

As the military lorry was signalled approaching, the Volunteers, whose duty it was to pull the tree across, were unable to do so as it refused to stir. I was in position with the rest of the attacking party by this time and was armed with a shotgun. We had about six rifles for the attack; all the other men were armed with shotguns. As the lorry came

into the ambush position we opened fire simultaneously. As it continued through I saw a number of the military slump in their seats. They at once returned our fire and continued to do so until they got clear of the ambush position. After the attack we returned to our homes. We subsequently heard that a number of the military were wounded. We suffered no casualties. I would like to mention, in regard to this particular ambush, that the company captain had received instructions from the Brigade O/C. - Terence McSwiney - to shoot only in self defence which, it was presumed, meant that once the lorry was halted by the road block, the occupants were to be called on to surrender. If they failed to do so, then, and only then, were we to open fire. As it was, I would say that the reluctance of members of the company to participate in the attack was a direct result of this order. I understand that the six rifles used in the attack were part of a large number of rifles captured in a raid by one of the Cork City companies on a Grammar School in the city which had been used for training cadets for the British army.

A short time after the attack on the lorry, the company captain left the area. Richard O'Mahony was appointed company captain in his place. Patrick Cashman then became 1st Lieut. and Joseph O'Callaghan became 2nd Lieutenant. The number of active men in the company numbered about 40. Our principal duties to the end of the year consisted of blocking and trenching roads. A short time before the end of the year a reorganisation of the battalion staff took place. Christopher O'Gorman, a Cork City man, became Battalion O/C. John Barry became Vice O/C. William Hickey became a djutant and I became Battalion Q.M. This battalion staff remained in charge until the Truce in July 1921.

It was a round this time also that Sean Heagerty replaced Terence McSwiney as Brigade O/C. The companies which made up our battalion, which was known as the 5th Battalion, Cork No. 1 Brigade, were:- Whitechurch, Carrignavar, Tubberenmire and Riverstown. The strength of the battalion was approximately 160 men. Christopher O'Gorman and John Barry are now dead.

Around this period certain well-known spies visited the area, including a man named Kelly who arrived on horseback one day, but managed to get away before we knew of his identity. The next visitor was not so lucky. We succeeded in tracking him from our area into Cork No. 2 Brigade area where he was arrested, tried and shot dead as a spy. Later, a man named Shields arrived looking for work as a farm labourer. He was subsequently arrested in the Carrignavar area where he was also tried and shot dead as a spy.

The main activities from then to the Truce in the battalion area consisted of road trenching, raids on mails and dispatch carrying. Our battalion area was one of the chief areas for the receipt and issue of dispatches from and to Dublin, Waterford and other areas. It was also used for sheltering men on the run and it may be one of the reasons why the active service unit never brought off a major attack in the area. Except for a few minor incidents, the incidents which I have related are the only ones carried out in the battalion area.

After the Truce I attended a training camp at Lyrenamon for a fortnight and later spent a week at a camp at Whitechurch where Daniel O'Donovan was instructor in the use of arms. A battalion active service unit was formed at Whitechurch. I was appointed in charge. It appears that the reason for the formation of the unit at that time was to be prepared in the event of the peace talks breaking down.

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NO. W.S. 1.466

Witness:

John J. Sahy

Signed:

Joseph Cashman

Date:

July 25<sup>th</sup> 1956.