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COSANTA.

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 1563.

Witness

Michael Dineen,
Knockea,
Lyre,
Clonakilty,
Co. Cork.

Identity.

Medical Officer, Clonakilty Battalion,
Cork III Brigade, I.R.A.

Subject.

Activities of Lyre Company, Clonakilty Battalion,
Cork III Brigade, Irish Volunteers, 1913-1921.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil.

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ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

BURO STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21

NO. W.S. 1,563

STATEMENT BY MICHAEL DINEEN

Knockea, Lyre, Clonakilty, Co. Cork.

I was born at my present address on 12th September 1900. My parents were farmers. I was educated at Knockskagh National School and at Clonakilty Technical School. When I left school I went to work on the farm at home.

I joined the Irish Volunteers as a boy scout in October 1913. There was no Fianna organisation in the area. I was attached to Lyre Company, Cork Brigade. The strength of the unit about this time was 14/15, and, by the end of 1915, it had increased to 30 or so. The pioneers in the Volunteer organisation in the area were: Jim Walshe, O/C.; John Cahalane, 1st Lieutenant; Mat O'Donovan, 2nd Lieutenant; Jim Donovan, adjutant; Patrick Dineen, Q.M.; John Cullinane, Patrick Donovan, Michael Crowley, Dan Barrett, Michael Dinneen (witness) Jerry Donovan, Charles Cullinane, Tim Crowley, John Crowley, John Meade and James Donovan. The company (Lyre) had also a section at Kilbree some of whose members were:- Peter Donovan, Edward Sullivan, Dan O'Leary, Jerome McCarthy, Maurice McCarthy, Martin Donovan and Michael Carey.

The only type of training carried on was close order foot drill under the O/C. Jim Walshe. It was carried out at night in the fields in the district.

In the years prior to Easter Week 1916, the company attended parades in Cork City on November 1st and St. Patrick's Day each year. On these occasions the members of the unit wore bandoliers and caps which had been purchased through a fund raised for this purpose by means of concerts and ceilis.

Nearly all the members of the unit were members of Lyre Gaelic League where Irish classes were held twice weekly. In

addition to the language classes, Irish dancing and singing was taught. The teacher was Seamus O'Brien from Glandore. He was paid a small fee which ^{was} obtained from the members' subscriptions. These classes were held in the homes of the various members as we had no hall or meeting place. The meeting place for each class was decided on at the previous class. As a result of our activities in the Gaelic League, we were able to supply the artists for our fund-raising concerts from amongst the members of the company.

As members of the Gaelic League, we organised feiseanna and Irish Ireland concerts throughout the area during the years from 1914 onwards. The proceeds of these functions were used mainly to purchase arms and equipment for the members of the company.

The armament of the Lyre company up to Easter Week 1916 consisted of about a dozen shotguns with a small supply of ammunition for each. These arms were the personal property of members of the unit. The remainder of the company were armed with croppy pikes which were made by the local blacksmith - Michael Murphy.

Normal parades and training continued up to February 1916, and, beyond the usual visits to Cork City on 1st November and St. Patrick's Day, we had no contact as a body with any of the other units in Cork Brigade up to this time. However, the O/C. (Jim Walshe) now invited the members of the Ballinadee and Gaggin companies to come to Clonakilty to meet Lyre Company. The two companies travelled by train to Clonakilty one Sunday evening in late February 1916. Tom Hales was in charge of Ballinadee and Eugene Walshe was in charge of Gaggin. Our company (Lyre) was mobilised at Scannell's Cross - about 1½ miles from Clonakilty on the Ballineen road, and marched into Clonakilty to meet the visiting units at the railway station.

The combined force then marched to Ardfield where we engaged in manoeuvres under Tom Hales. The parade and manoeuvres were carried out under the watchful eyes of a party of R.I.C. from Clonakilty. When the manoeuvres were finished, the assembled Volunteers marched back to Clonakilty railway station where the Ballinadee and Gaggin units entrained for home. Our company (Lyre) then marched through Clonakilty and was dismissed at the outskirts of the town.

Up to 1916, all arms in the company were held by the individual members, but, following Easter Week, they were kept in one dump under the control of the quartermaster. This dump was built into a stonefaced fence and was made of timber lined with felt.

On Easter Sunday 1916, about 16 members of the company (Lyre) mobilised at Lyre under the O/C. (Jim Walshe). We marched to Dunmanway where we joined up with the men of the Dunmanway battalion. The combined force moved on to Inchigeela where we were met by (I think) Tomas MacCurtain (O/C. Cork Brigade Irish Volunteers). We were now instructed to return home and marched back to Lyre area where we were dismissed. Some of those who went to Inchigeela were:- Jim Walshe (O/C.), John Cullinane, Charles Cullinane, Jerh. Donovan, Patrick Donovan, Michael Crowley, Matt Donovan, Jim Donovan, Jack Cahalane, Peter Donovan, Dan Leary, Patrick Dineen, Ned Sullivan, Mick Carey, John Meade, Mick Dineen (Witness).

The next parade of the company was held on Easter Tuesday 1916. At this parade the O/C. (Jim Walshe) informed us of the events in Dublin. After the normal drill instruction we were ordered to 'stand to' and be ready to await orders at short notice.

There was no exceptional activity for about a week or ten days. At this stage a strong force of R.I.C. accompanied by military carried out wholesale raids for arms in the area. They

did not get any arms, but they arrested Jim Walshe (O/C.), Tim Crowley, Jim Crowley, Peter Donovan and Ned Sullivan. They did not raid for any others. The arrested men were taken to Cork Jail and later, I think, to Frongoch. Following these raids and arrests I did not sleep at home for some weeks until things had quietened down somewhat and the raids were discontinued.

Following the arrest of the O/C. and other members mentioned, the remainder of the company continued to carry on. Parades were held under 1st Lieutenant John Cahalane, but not at such regular intervals as formerly, up to the end of 1916, when the O/C. (Jim Walshe) was released from prison.

Early in 1917, following the general release of the prisoners, the reorganisation of the Volunteers was undertaken in the area by the O/C. (Jim Walshe). The arrests had a stimulating effect on the whole area and the general public were becoming more interested in our activities. The strength of the company (Lyre) was gradually increased by the acceptance of selected men who were usually 'vetted' by the officers before being invited to join. While strengthening our own unit we also visited neighbouring areas on organising tours, establishing units in Ahiohill and Kilmeen. The strength of our company towards the end of 1917, was about 50. There was no change in the officers who still were:- O/C. Jim Walshe; 1st Lieutenant Jack Cahalane; 2nd Lieutenant Matt Donovan; Adjutant, Jim Donovan; Q.M. Patrick Dineen.

Training in close order footdrill and arms drill with shot-guns and wooden guns was carried out in the fields. Towards the end of 1917, we held several public parades and route marches to the neighbouring companies.

At this time, all Volunteers were active in organising feiseanna, concerts and Irish Ireland activities of every kind.

Branches of the Gaelic League were formed in each company area where the League was not already in existence, and each Volunteer felt it part of his duty to learn and use his native language. The propagation of the Irish language in the area was felt by our O/C., who was a fluent Irish speaker, to be one of the most essential duties of the time.

The members of all units took an active part in the organisation of Sinn Fein - the political wing of the republican movement. This organisation was mainly composed of Volunteers and the members of their families.

The Volunteers in our area of Cork Brigade were organised on a battalion basis early in 1918. At this time there were companies in Clonakilty, Lyre, Ardfield, Rosscarbery, Reenascreena, Kilmeen, Kilkerrinmore, Ahiohill and Ring. These units were formed into Clonakilty Battalion, Cork Brigade. The first officers of the battalion were, I think :-

O/C.	Jim Walshe
Vice O/C.	Pat Harte
Adjt.	I cannot recollect
Q.M.	Joe Flynn

When the British threatened to enforce conscription there was a big increase in the membership of all units. The strength of Lyre Company reached about 76. At this time, all members were engaged in organising the general public to fight against conscription, collecting for the anti-conscription fund, obtaining signatures to the anti-conscription pledge. All shot-guns, ammunition and other arms in the area were collected and placed in convenient dumps. All these arms were surrendered to the Volunteers voluntarily on request. We now had about 35 shot-guns in the company. In addition to the normal training and the collection of arms, we were engaged on the manufacture of buckshot and the loading of cartridges with this charge in lieu of the ordinary shot with which they were already loaded. Eventually, the threat of conscription passed and normal

activities were resumed. The new recruits who had joined up during the conscription scare continued to serve in the Volunteers.

Normal training continued at this time and, in addition, selected men were trained as scouts, signallers and dispatch riders. Manoeuvres in which two or three neighbouring companies took part were held occasionally. The main idea on these occasions was to train the members in the use of cover and, occasionally, there was target practice with a .22 rifle.

There was no activity in our area in connection with the general election in December 1918, as the Sinn Fein candidates for the area were returned unopposed.

When Cork Brigade, which embraced the whole county, was organised on a battalion basis, there were about 20 battalions in the brigade. It was decided early in 1919 to divide the county into three brigades representing, roughly, Cork City and Mid-Cork - No. 1 Brigade; North Cork - No. 2 Brigade, and West Cork - No. 3 Brigade. Our battalion (Clonakilty) now became a unit of Cork III Brigade. The battalions in this brigade at its formation were: Bandon - 1st; Clonakilty - 2nd; Skibbereen - 3rd; Dunmanway - 4th; Bantry - 5th; Castletownbere - 6th.

The first officers of Cork III Brigade were, I think:

O/C. Tom Hales
 V.O/C. I cannot recollect
 Adj. Michael McCarthy (killed at Kilmichael 28.11.20)
 Q.M. Pat Harte.

Some time in August 1919, Michael McCarthy returned to Dunmanway Battalion as Vice O/C. and Liam Deasy became brigade adjutant.

During 1919, there was no exceptional activity in the area. Normal training, which was generally becoming more advanced, continued. All Volunteers were engaged during the summer of that year in the organisation and collection of the Dáil Éireann

Loan. There were some changes in the battalion staff (Clonakilty) in the summer of 1919 as the battalion O/C. (Jim Walshe) and battalion Q.M. (Joe Flynn) retired, and Pat Harte - the vice O/C - went to the brigade staff as Q.M. The vacancies were filled immediately and the new staff were:

- O/C. Dan Harte
- V.O/C. Jim Hurley
- Adj. Batt. Murphy
- Q.M. Paddy O'Keefe

Early in 1920, Dan Harte retired. He was replaced by Jim Hurley (V.O/C.), and Tim O'Donoghue now became battalion vice O/C. These changes set up the battalion staff, which served to the Truce on 11th July 1921, as follows:

- O/C. Jim Hurley
- V.O/C. Tim O'Donoghue
- Adj. Batt. Murphy
- Q.M. Paddy O'Keefe

At this stage, Special Services - engineering, first aid, signals, supply and transport, intelligence and police - were established in each unit throughout the brigade. The battalion officers (Clonakilty) for these services were:

- Engineering --Jim Lane
- First Aid --Michael Dineen (witness)
- Transport & Supplies) --Jim Hurley (Sonny)
- Signals --Joe Donoghue
- Intelligence --Ted Hayes
- Police --C. Fitzpatrick

My appointment as medical officer (first aid) to the battalion (Clonakilty) necessitated the organisation by me of special first aid units in each company area and the training of same. As a matter of fact, I travelled through most of the brigade area. On these activities, in company with Leslie Price - now wife of General Tom Barry - who was later to become brigade training officer and O/C. brigade flying column.

When the Republican Courts were established during the summer of 1920, the members of the Parish Court (Kilmeen) for this area were: John O'Mahoney and James O'Brien. The members

of the District Court for the area were: Dan Bennett, Ned Sullivan and John O'Mahoney.

These Courts dealt with all types of cases. The members of the Court, having a certain amount of local knowledge, were often able to smooth over difficulties and settle cases to the mutual satisfaction of the litigants who were often their neighbours.

The brigade O/C. (Tom Hales) and Q.M. (Pat Harte) were captured by enemy forces towards the end of July 1920. They were both tortured by the members of the enemy garrison in Bandon with a view to forcing them to divulge information, but the enemy's worst effort failed. However, Pat Harte was driven insane as a result of the ill-treatment he received and died later in a mental hospital.

Battalion H.Q. (Clonakilty) was established at Knockea in Lyre Company area about mid-1920, and was situated there until a short time before the Truce. The presence of the H.Q. in the area necessitated the constant provision of guards, scouts and dispatch riders throughout this period. The men of Lyre company performed more duty of this type in the period than any company in the brigade.

I was sworn into the I.R.B. by Liam Deasy during the summer of 1920. The Centre of my Circle was John Cullinane (O/C. Lyre Company). I cannot recollect the names of the other members.

About this time the Brigade Council decided to establish a flying column and to put it in the 'field' on a more or less permanent basis. In order to supply the men on active service with clothing, cigarettes and suchlike necessities, it was decided to establish an Arms Fund. To procure the necessary cash, a levy was imposed on the farming and business community. The responsibility for assessing the amount and collecting the

levy fell on the shoulders of the local officers in each area. The amount of the levy in the case of the farming community was based on the number of cattle carried on the farm, and, in the case of business people, on the estimated means of the person concerned. The vast majority contributed voluntarily, but about twenty Protestant loyalists in the area refused to pay. In order to ensure that everybody paid their fair share, arrangements were made to seize stock to the respective value of the levy on the same night from each of these families who were distributed over the battalion area. This operation entailed a considerable amount of organisation, as the seized stock had to be moved during the night to a fixed assembly point from where it was driven to Ballineen Fair where it was sold next day. In addition to arranging for the seizure and collection of the stock, arrangements had to be made to post guards on all roads throughout the area to ensure that no representative of the loyalist families concerned was allowed to enter Ballineen until the stock had been disposed of. This operation was successfully carried out under the battalion O/C. (Jim Hurley) and with the co-operation of representatives from every company in the battalion.

Towards the end of 1920, a Battalion Training Camp was set up at Maulbrack, Killeens. This camp, which continued for about a fortnight, was confined to arms training. It was attended by three representatives from each company in the battalion. At the same time, camps for each of the Special Services were set up in other districts, being attended by selected men from each company. The first aid camp, of which I was in charge, was held at Budrameen, Ballineen. It was attended by three representatives from each company, and a regular series of lectures in first aid was given by Dr. Tadhg Sullivan and Dr. Con Lucey. This camp continued for a week, as did the Engineering camp at Ballinward, Kilméen, and the Signalling camp at Reenascreena.

I should have mentioned that, since the summer of 1920, the mails in the area - both local and district - were raided at irregular intervals. As far as I can recollect, no information of any importance was gleaned from these raids, but they must surely have prevented the enemy intelligence people amongst the loyalist population in the district from using the mails to transmit information.

The brigade column, which had taken part in the engagement with the enemy auxiliary force at Kilmichael on 28th November 1920, were billeted in Knockea, about 6th December 1920. The Lyre Company was responsible for the provision of guards, scouts, supplies and dispatch riders, while the column was in the area. When the column moved to take up positions at Gaggin on the Bandon-Clonakilty road on 8th December 1920, I accompanied them. I was armed with a rifle and travelled in the leading horse and trap with Jim Hurley, Stephen O'Neill and Tim O'Donoghue. When we reached Gaggin, I was ordered to return to Ahiohill area to arrange for the blocking of the road between Gaggin and Clonakilty. This operation was carried out by the members of Ahiohill Company.

After the abortive engagement at Gaggin on 8th December 1920, the column moved into Kilbrittain area but returned in a few days to Lyre where they were disbanded prior to Christmas 1920. All arms held by the column were dumped in this area where they were kept under guard until the column reassembled about mid-January 1921.

During the spring of 1921, all units were engaged in cutting enemy lines of communication - digging trenches, felling trees, demolishing bridges and removing railway tracks. The work of keeping roads closed involved continuous rounds of duty by members of the various companies, as trenches dug and demolition work carried out at night were usually repaired by forced labour

squads, working under military guards, next day. This necessitated the opening of a new trench or the demolition of some other bridge at another point that night.

All bicycles and motor cycles in the area were seized by our forces about this time, as information had been received at Brigade H.Q. that the enemy intended to take them up. These machines were utilised by our supply and transport section to transport the column and its supplies throughout the area.

A dugout to accommodate the battalion staff was excavated at Knockea about March 1921. This dugout was made by excavating the earth from a space 20' x 10' x 9', removing the clay a considerable distance away and covering the hole with corrugated sheeting resting on wooden supports about 3' below the surface. The space on top of the corrugated sheets was then filled in with clay thoroughly tamped and the sods replaced. There was nothing to indicate that there was a vacant space underneath. Entrance to the dugout was made through a tunnel leading from furze-covered rough ground in the next field. The sides and floor of the dugout were lined with timber while beds and other equipment were installed.

When the General Order to shoot up British forces on sight, as a reprisal for the execution of I.R.A. prisoners, was carried out on 14th May 1921, I led the members of the battalion column who took part into Clonakilty and supplied the arms for the attack from the battalion dump in the area.

Between 14th May 1921 and the Truce on 11th July 1921, I was moving around the area organising and training the first aid sections of the various companies as well as attending to various other duties delegated to me by the battalion O/C.

Just prior to the Truce, Cork III Brigade was divided into two brigades. Clonakilty Battalion was still attached to Cork III Brigade, as were Bandon, Dunmanway, and a new battalion

based on Kinsale. The battalions at the western end of the brigade - Bantry, Castletownbere, Skibbereen and Schull - were formed into a new brigade - Cork V. I think that, although the plans for this reorganisation were completed prior to the Truce, the scheme did not come into effect until the end of July 1921.

My rank at the Truce : Medical Officer, Clonakilty
Battalion, Cork III Brigade.

The approximate strength of the battalion at this time
was 600.

Signed: Michael Dennis

Date: 17-1-1957

Witness: P. L. Gonnall

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