

W.S. 1565

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 1565.

Witness

Timothy Sexton,
Ballycaskin,
Carrignavar,
Co. Cork.

Identity.

O/C, Ahadillane Company, I.R.A.

Subject.

Irish Volunteer activities, Co. Cork,
1914-1921.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil.

File NoS.2891.....

Form B.S.M. 2

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

BURO STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21

No. W.S. 1565

STATEMENT BY TIMOTHY SEXTON,

Ballycaskin, Carrignavar, Co. Cork.

I was born in February, 1889, at Donoughmore, Co. Cork. I went to the local national school until I was thirteen years of age. When I left school I went into the shoemaking business as an apprentice to my father in the same parish.

A section of the Irish Volunteers was organised in Donoughmore by Patrick Looney in November, 1914. I joined the section at the start. We numbered twenty at our first meeting. John Mannion became Captain, Paddy Daly, 1st Lieutenant, and Patrick Collins became 2nd Lieutenant. We started off drilling and marched into adjoining parishes, where we organised other sections. The parishes included Banteer, Glentane and Aghabullogue.

In November, 1915, on the occasion of the Manchester Martyrs' Commemoration Parade, the Donoughmore Company went by train to Cork City for a general mobilisation of all Volunteers in the city and county. We carried shotguns. In Cork we met the Volunteers from other parts of the county. They also had shotguns. Some of the Cork City Volunteers carried rifles. After marching through the city we were addressed by Tomás MacCurtain, Terence MacSwiney and other speakers at Grand Parade.

At Christmas, 1915, my parents left Donoughmore and went to live in Glentane, four miles away. I left with them, but continued to be a member of the Donoughmore Company.

From the month of November to Easter, 1916, parades were held on two nights of each week. In the meantime, Patrick Looney had succeeded in purchasing out of Volunteer funds a few revolvers and a number of shotguns from Volunteer H.Q. in Cork. Other shotguns were borrowed from local farmers. On St. Patrick's Day, 1916, the Donoughmore Company again went by train to Cork City, carrying shotguns and one day's rations. The St. Patrick's Day parade in the city that day was attended by Volunteer companies from all over the county, most of whom carried shotguns or arms of some kind.

A couple of days before Easter Sunday, 1916, I received a message from the Company Captain to attend a company mobilisation at Beeing on Easter Sunday morning after Mass. I was instructed to take my shotgun and two days' rations with me. I attended the mobilisation as instructed. In addition to the Donoughmore Company, at Beeing that day there were companies from Courtbrack, Whitechurch, Mallow, Castletownroche, Kilmona and Mourne Abbey. Patrick Looney was in charge. During the day we drilled and carried out field exercises, while two R.I.C. men who had followed the Mallow Company that morning remained on the field throughout the day. Late that evening Terence MacSwiney and Tomás MacCurtain arrived on the field in a car from Cork, which was driven by a Donoughmore Volunteer named Dave O'Callaghan.

Terence MacSwiney and Tomás MacCurtain spoke to Patrick Looney and some of the company captains for some time, after which Tomás MacCurtain addressed the Volunteers. He advised us to return to our company areas and to hold ourselves in readiness and ^{to} stand to our arms for the next

week. I returned to Glentane that night and travelled to Donoughmore next day and each day during the week, but no instructions or orders were received from our H.Q. in Cork. During the week the sinking of the arms ship off the coast of Kerry and the arrest of Roger Casement was known to everyone in the area.

On the Sunday following Easter Sunday, I organised a section of Volunteers at Shanavoher near Glentane. I got ten recruits that day and marched them to Beeing, two miles away, and back. From then onwards I became attached to a company in Lombardstown for a while. While attached to the Lombardstown Company, with Dinny Murphy I organised or formed new sections throughout the area, but I always regarded the Donoughmore Company as my own company.

During the conscription scare in 1918, all companies in the area prepared to resist conscription. All shotguns were collected. The strength of Lombardstown Company increased to 25. Frank Singleton, the Company Captain, and Ned Murphy, the 1st Lieutenant, were both active in collecting the shotguns. During this period I helped to organise another section in Ahadillane. This section, with sections already in existence in NURGESTOWN, Glenogue, Leer, Shanavoher and Gurranees, was formed into a company which became known as the Ahadillane Company. Tim O'Shea was appointed Captain, and Con Hanlon, 1st Lieutenant. No battalion officers had been appointed by this time, but each company worked independently.

With the permission of Fr. Francis Murphy, P.P. of Glentane, we obtained the use of the local school to run dances to raise funds for the purchase of arms. Unknown to the schoolteacher, all shotguns in the company were

stored over the ceiling in Glenogue school.

At the general election at the end of the year, we canvassed for the Sinn Féin candidate. We had a tough job persuading the tenants of a Mr. Newman, a large land owner, to vote for Sinn Féin.

Early in 1919 an election took place for new officers for the Ahadillane Company. Batt Walsh became Captain; I became 1st Lieutenant, and Michael Healy became 2nd Lieutenant. Our strength was then 40 men. Routine drilling continued throughout the year. During the year a bank robbery took place at the Munster and Leinster Bank in Millstreet. Bank officials from Millstreet on their way to Knocknagree cattle fair were held up and robbed of a large sum of money. We got orders from our H.Q. in Cork to locate the thieves. We arrested three brothers named Brien and two men named Buckley, and got most of the stolen money. A Hugh Brien was the ringleader. The prisoners were handed over to the Millstreet Company, where they were courtmartialled by members of the Brigade Staff. Two of the Briens were ordered to leave the country and were escorted to the boat in Cork.

Early in 1920, Batt Walsh went into business as an egg merchant and resigned his post of Captain of Ahadillane. I was appointed Captain in his place. Weekly meetings and parades continued for the most of the year. During the year an evacuated R.I.C. barracks in Glentane was burned down, on instructions from H.Q. in Cork, by members of Lombardstown and Ahadillane Companies. In the same year, local courts were set up, the Volunteers doing all police duties attaching thereto. I, being Captain, became Clerk of Court in Ahadillane. The President was Patrick Barrett, who

was assisted by Ned Waters. One of my last jobs in this area was to detail members of the company to guard the route when General Lucas was being taken as a prisoner from Fermoy through our area to Lombardstown.

On the 4th August, 1920, I bought a house in Carrignavar and left the Ahadillane Company area and came to live in Carrignavar. By this time the Brigade Staff had reorganised the entire brigade area. Carrignavar, Riverstown, Whitechurch and Tubbernmire Companies were formed into a separate battalion, which was known as the 5th or White^scross Battalion. Christopher O'Gorman was appointed Battalion O/C; John Barry, Vice O/C; William Hickey, Adjutant; and Joseph Cashman, Q/M. Shortly after my arrival in the area, I contacted Jerry Hegarty, 2nd Lieutenant of Tubbernmire Company, who brought me to a meeting of the company one night and introduced me to the Company Captain - John Manley. After the meeting, which was held in the corner of a field, I pointed out to Manley the necessity for having scouts posted while meetings were in progress. This was a procedure we had always adopted in Ahadillane, following the advice of Tomás MacCurtain. Manley asked me to remain a member of the Tubbernmire Company instead of joining the Carrignavar Company. This I agreed to do, so he appointed me Company I/O on the instructions of the Battalion O/C, Chris. O'Gorman. From then onwards I sent regular reports of enemy activities in the company area to the Battalion I/O, Michael Moynihan of Glanmire. I often met him at company meetings in Tubbernmire. My warning in regard to the posting of scouts was ignored, with the result that two Volunteers were arrested by the military at the next meeting of the company. The remainder of the company managed to make good their escape.

A short time before my arrival in Carrignavar, John Manley had raided the home of a Protestant family named McCarthy for arms. During the search, he, or one of the Volunteers assisting him, came across the home address of a District Inspector Swaney of the R.I.C., who was a great friend of the McCarthys and was a constant visitor there while stationed in Cork City. Swaney had by this time been transferred to the North of Ireland for his own safety following the murder of Tomás MacCurtain, Lord Mayor of Cork. Using this address, Swaney was subsequently shot dead in his home town by three Cork Volunteers. The jury inquiring into the death of the Lord Mayor had returned a verdict of murder against Lloyd George and members of the R.I.C. Donal Barrett was foreman of the jury.

Following the inquest, I received an order from Brigade H.Q. to bring the Ahadillane Company to Cork for a military funeral for the dead Lord Mayor. This I did at very short notice.

In a general round-up in April, 1921, all the young men of the village, including a number of Volunteers, were arrested. After being held for a couple of weeks, they were all released. Activities around this time were mostly confined to the trenching of roads.

In May, 1921, a Volunteer named Davy Flynn, who was a carter, met a man named Saunders on the road, who inquired for the names of farmers likely to give him employment. Flynn sent him to me, telling him that I would be able to direct him. While in conversation with the stranger - Saunders - being a shoemaker, the first thing I observed about him was that he was wearing a pair of British army boots which were new. As I was much taller than he was,

I observed a tab on the collar of his shirt which showed that it was also issued by the army authorities. After delaying him for some time, I had him arrested by Volunteers James McKeown, Tim Ownes and Denis Leahy, who took him to John Murphy's of Bohard. A day or so later he was courtmartialled by members of the Brigade Staff. He confessed to having an appointment with the military a day or two after his arrival in our area. He also confessed to having informed the enemy of the Mourne Abbey ambush and was responsible for the arrest of a number of Volunteers at Killeens. He was sentenced to death, executed and buried in a nearby bog. The body was subsequently disinterred and buried elsewhere.

Apart from the trenching of roads, there was little activity from then to the Truce. Following the trenching of the roads one night, Volunteer Batt. Hegarty was killed by falling into one of the road trenches. He was buried with military honours.

Signed: Timothy Seaton

Date: 24/1/57

Witness: John J. Leahy
(Investigator).

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