

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

BURO STAIRÉ MILÉATA 1913-21

No. W.S. 1626

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 1626.

Witness

Bernard Brady,
Lattoon,
Ballyjamesduff,
Co. Cavan.

Identity.

Captain, Lurgan Company.
Battn. Comdt., 6th Battn.,
Cavan Brigade.

Subject.

Lurgan Coy., I. Vols., Co. Cavan,
1918 - '21.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil.

File No 3. 2956

Form B.S.M. 2

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STATEMENT OF BERNARD BRADY

Lattoo, Ballyjamesduff, Co. Cavan

I was born in the townland of Correagh, Virginia, in the year 1893. I attended the local National School until I was 14 years of age. When I left school I went to work on my father's farm.

I helped to organise a company of Irish National Volunteers in the town of Virginia in the year 1913. I was appointed chief officer or captain. An ex-British soldier named Reilly was our drill instructor. Our strength was about 100.

In the year 1915 the company ceased to exist after John Redmond, the leader of the Irish Nationalist Party, had called on the Volunteers of Ireland to join the British army. In this year I organised a Sinn Fein Club in Lurgan where I lived at the time. I became chairman and John Brady, a Gaelic speaker, became secretary. A similar club was formed in Virginia around the same time by H.B. O'Donoghue and others.

From among the members of those two clubs a company of Irish Volunteers was formed at the latter end of 1916, in the town of Virginia. We numbered 12 at first; at the time I was the only one from Lurgan. Ernie McDonnell was the organiser and became captain. We started off by learning foot drill. By the spring of 1917 our strength was 50. Throughout that year we continued to drill and, in the meantime, marched to surrounding areas where we formed Sinn Fein clubs and companies of Volunteers.

In the spring of 1918, during the conscription scare, our strength increased to 100. Ernie McDonnell was still captain. At this time, Phil Wrett was appointed 1st Lieut. and Harry Fitzsimons was appointed adjutant. Anti-conscription

committees were appointed in Virginia and Lurgan. Those committees were responsible for the organisation of anti-conscription meetings and the collection of funds for the purpose of opposing the measure. The Very Rev. Fr. Gaffney, Parish Priest, was chairman of the Lurgan committee. At one of these meetings a Mr. Sheehy, M.P., father of the present Judge Sheehy, spoke for some time after which Fr. Gaffney addressed the audience. He said that if Mr. Sheehy and his party were unable to prevent the enforcement of conscription on Ireland, Sinn Fein would do so with black-thorn sticks. This statement was received with great applause after which the entire audience, with the exception of two people, proceeded to a nearby hall, led by a Sinn Fein flag, where the meeting was continued without Mr. Sheehy. When the scare had subsided, most of our new members remained with the company.

In July 1918, a by-election took place in East Cavan. Arthur Griffith, the Sinn Fein candidate, was elected by a good majority. All the Volunteers in Virginia and Lurgan worked hard for his success. In the month of October, I was appointed delegate to a Sinn Fein Convention held in Dublin. While there I got the 'flu which was of epidemic proportions in Ireland at this period. I spent three months in Sir Patrick'Dunn's Hospital before I was well enough to come home.

When I got home in January 1919, the Virginia Company had ceased to exist. The captain, Ernie McDonnell, had been arrested while I was in hospital and was serving a sentence in Belfast jail for drilling or similar offence. It appears that Phil Wrett assumed command of the company after McDonnell's arrest. He was a heavy boozier and, while in a drunken bout, would give military orders such as "halt" or "form fours" to individual Volunteers on the streets of

Virginia, with the result that the company ceased to meet or have anything to do with him. More often than not, Wrett gave the orders while the R.I.C. were present.

During the year 1919, I confined my activities to the Sinn Fein club in Lurgan. We were all elated with the great victory at the general election in the previous December. At the latter end of the year I helped to reorganise the company in Virginia once more. Only about ten men participated at first. Hugh Barney O'Donoghue was appointed captain, Michael McMahon 1st Lieutenant and Harry Fitzsimons adjutant. By early 1920, the company strength increased to 20. I then formed a separate company in Lurgan and, in a short time, had a membership of 32. I became captain, Patrick McCabe became 1st Lieutenant, Frank Daly 2nd Lieutenant. Some time earlier, companies had been formed in Killinkere Upper, Killinkere Lower, Cross, Maghera, Castlerahan and Mountconnaught.

A battalion staff was appointed about this time. Hugh B. O'Donoghue became Battalion O/C., Harry Fitzsimons adjutant, and Thomas Smith Q.M. I don't remember who became Vice O/C. We were known as the Virginia (or 3rd) Battalion, Co. Cavan Brigade. The companies making up the battalion were: Virginia, Lurgan, Killinkere Upper, Killinkere Lower, Cross, Maghera, Castlerahan and Mountconnaught. After its formation, all shotguns in the area were collected. In certain cases we had to raid the houses of people opposed to us and Sinn Fein generally and seize their guns. In the Lurgan Company area we got 50 shotguns. During the year an R.I.C. barracks, which had been vacated in Mullagh, was burned down by members of Virginia and Newcastle companies in charge of H.B. O'Donoghue, and Thomas O'Reilly. Thomas O'Reilly was captain of Newcastle which was in the Oldcastle (or 5th) Battalion, Co. Meath Brigade. Virginia had the only R.I.C. barracks in our battalion area.

Throughout the year roads in the area were extensively blocked.

In the spring of 1921, all battalions in Co. Cavan and Co. Meath were reorganised. The Virginia (or 3rd) Battalion then became attached to what became known as No. 3 Brigade, 1st Eastern Division. We were one of four battalions making up the brigade and were still the 3rd (or Virginia) Battalion of this brigade. Tim Carolan became Battalion O/C., I became Vice O/C., Harry Fitzsimons remained adjutant, Thomas Smith remained Q.M. and Michael McMahon became battalion engineer. The other three battalions were: 1st - Newcastle; 2nd - Kells, and 4th - Bailieboro.

The No. 3 Brigade officers appointed were: Patrick Farley, O/C., Sean Farley, Vice O/C., T.P. McKenna adjutant, David Smith Q.M., Ralph McKenna I.O., and Dick McKenna engineer.

A very short time later, the Kells (or 2nd) Battalion was divided and a 5th Battalion was formed which became known as the Oldcastle (or 5th) Battalion of No. 3 Brigade. Tom Bradley became O/C. of this battalion, Tom Callan vice O/C. and Ned Gavan became adjutant. The Virginia (or 3rd) Battalion was divided at the same time which made a sixth battalion in No. 3 Brigade and was known as the Lurgan (or 6th) battalion. I became O/C. of this battalion, Pat Nugent vice O/C., Phil Donoghue adjutant, and Hugh Brady Q.M. With the splitting of the Virginia (or 3rd) Battalion, Virginia, Killinkere Upper, Cross and Maghera Companies remained as they were, while Killinkere Lower, Lurgan, Castlerahan and Mountconnaught Companies comprised the 6th or Lurgan Battalion. Our former company captain in Virginia, H.B. O'Donoghue, was appointed divisional chemist of the 1st Eastern Division. The other officers of the Division were Sean Boylan O/C., Seamus Finn adjutant, and a man named O'Higgins became Q.M.

Road blocking continued right up to the Truce. After the Truce I attended a training camp set up by the Divisional Staff at Dunboyne and spent about a fortnight there. I later spent a period in a brigade training camp in the Bailieboro Company area. I later joined the National Army with the rank of Commandant.

Signed: ^{his} Bernard J. Brady P. C.
 Date: ^{Knock.} 4th June, 1957

Witness: John J. Lally

