

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
BURO STAIRS INLE STA 1913-21
No. W.S. 1677

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 1677.

Witness

Seán Broderick,
Inishowen,
University Road,
Galway.

Identity.

O/C, 4th Battn., Galway Brigade.

Subject.

Castlegar Coy., 4th Battn., Galway Brigade,
I.R.A., 1917-21.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil.

File No S.101.

Form B.S.M. 2

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STATEMENT BY SEAN BRODERICK

Inishowen, University Road, Galway.

I was born on 8th February 1900, at Prospect Hill, Galway. Both my parents were of local stock and were fluent Irish speakers; they were strong supporters of the national Cause. I remember this very well. I was educated at Bohermore National School, Galway Technical School and St. Joseph's College, Galway.

I joined the Gaelic League when a very small boy and gained a fair knowledge of the Irish language. I was very interested in Irish music, having been taught the piano and violin. I attended feiseanna throughout the county and won many prizes. I took part in concerts for the Gaelic League and Sinn Fein and was also a pupil attending the old Shambles Barrack a few nights a week learning the bagpipes, as Mr. George Nicholls, a solicitor, had organised a very fine pipe band at this time.

During and before 1916, I knew Liam Mellowes and Monaghan (who was killed in Kerry on the way to the landing of rifles from the German ship "Aud" at Easter 1916), and many other prominent Irish leaders.

The principal officers of the I.R.B. in Galway, of which I later became a member, were George Nicholls, Tom Hynes, Larry Lardner, Seamus Carter, Tom Flanagan and Michael Thornton. I was too young in 1916 to be of much use or help, but I did some scouting and warned some I.R.B. on the approach of the R.I.C. who were then making a lot of arrests.

During the eventful week, George Nicholls, Ml. Thornton, Tom Flanagan, Padraig O'Maille and some others were arrested and put aboard a British warship which lay in the Bay and were later taken to England. Before leaving, this ship shelled an area some distance inland towards Oranmore where Mellowes and his men were mobilised, without killing anyone or doing much damage.

I joined the Irish Volunteers in the early part of Sept. 1917, when the reorganisation took place and I was soon appointed a section commander although I was then only 17 years.

In 1918, I was acting O/C. of the Galway Company and, later, battalion adjutant of the Galway Battalion which, at this time, comprised an area which included the districts of Briar Hill Castlegar, Clare-Galway, Oranmore, Maree and Letterach.

I was later, in 1918, promoted vice-commandant of the battalion at Con Fahy's workshop at Ballinew near Galway Race Course. Present at this meeting was the brigade commandant, Seamus Murphy, Father Tom Burke, Nicholas Kyne and many company officers. I conducted the training in the different companies and succeeded in procuring arms and ammunition from British soldiers, by purchase and otherwise. I was also responsible for getting a number to desert from the British army from Renmore barracks and Oranmore Camp, and procured berths for them on Steamers from Galway Docks to England.

Towards the end of 1919 we planned an attack on Lough George R.I.C. barracks which contained a garrison of about twelve men. A meeting took place at the Rope Walk, Two-mile-ditch - the home of Father Harry Feeney - to draw up the plan of attack. Father Heeney was chaplain to Liam Mellows's force at Athenry in 1916. Fr. Feeney escaped with Mellows to the U.S.A. after the Rebellion. During the meeting we were checking our arms and I was examining a .32 automatic which we had given to Father O'Meehan (who had also received, like Father Griffin, the same type of letter from the Murder Gang as were sent to the two Lord Mayors of Limerick and to the Lord Mayor of Cork). He assured me it was empty, but that the magazine was jammed. It went off, sending a bullet right through my hand from palm to back. I was treated for the wound as the bullet had gone through and was very lucky not having to have at least one finger amputated.

To come back to the Lough George attack which was to take place about the end of September, on the night of the attack Hynes and myself brought out two extra rifles, gelignite and our own revolvers. Where we thought we might be noticed, we walked with the rifles down the legs of our trousers, thereby making progress very difficult. The attack started about 11 o'clock and, despite the fact that we soon had the roof well ablaze, the garrison refused to surrender and, with the coming of daylight, we were obliged to withdraw.

As a result of this failure, a serious rupture took place between the brigade and battalion officers, after which rupture Kyne, the battalion O/C., chucked up his appointment, and I was later appointed in his place. The brigade commandant, Seamus Murphy, was a captain during the Rebellion of 1916 and was afterwards sent to organise Galway. He was employed at the "Galway Express" newspaper as manager, this paper having been started to counteract "The Connaught Tribune" which fostered the Redmondites and the British cause.

Early in 1920, following an order from G.H.Q., I took charge of the burning and destroying of all Custom House books and documents, also any evacuated R.I.C. barracks, three of which were demolished - Barna, Killeen and Lough George (which had been evacuated after the attack.) The Custom House was situated between the docks and Spanish Place. It was a three-storied building containing about 20 rooms. Our original intention was to strip the building of everything we found and have the lot taken away to a safe place and destroyed at our leisure. We planned to use a truck, which at the last moment failed to turn up, and all we could get was an open Ford car which would not hold the contents of even one room. So, there was nothing else to do but fire the complete stuff as it lay there and chance an attack from the Tans or military, or both.

Meanwhile, I sent Captain Turk to call on the private residences of the Custom House occupants in case any of them were so "loyal" as to hold anything important in their homes.

I would like to mention that the operation was carried out with the utmost secrecy up to this time; a key had been previously procured for the main entrance and a handy carpenter with a bit and brace accounted for all the locks which were stubborn. We destroyed the complete contents and made a safe withdrawal. G.H.Q. were good enough to compliment us on the success of this operation.

A short time afterwards, my Castlegar Company ambushed a party of R.I.C. at Red Bridge, Merlin Park. One R.I.C. man was shot. The officers in charge were: B. Molloy and T. Duggan.

An ambush was also laid about the same time by a party from the city company with Sean Turk in charge, but the R.I.C. patrol did not turn up. As a result of the ambush at Red Bridge, the village of Oranmore was sacked as a reprisal and, as they threatened to come back and finish it off later, we lay in ambush for two nights, but they did not return.

Having met the Brigade O/C. of Longford, Tom Reddington, who was a native of Galway, we went up to the railway station to meet Michael Thornton of Connemara, who was coming from Dublin on the 11 p.m. train, as we expected he would have some stuff for our attack on Spiddal R.I.C. barracks. We were told by Volunteers that there were a few armed Tans swaggering about after leaving Baker's Hotel in Eyre St. (which was a resort for the R.I.C. and Tans). I had already told Captain Sean Turk to meet us at the station with a few armed men. I met him and we decided to hold up the Tans and disarm them. I was just walking into the station when I heard shots. I found one Tan shot and his pals gone. Two Volunteers were wounded, one slightly. One who, unfortunately, died later, was Sean Mulvey. I had

them removed to a safe place. The name of the Black and Tan shot was Krum.

My father's house was raided later that night. They pushed him out of their way shouting for me. I heard them coming, but, as I slept at the top of the house, I had no means of escape. My mother and sister also lived in the house. They pulled me down the stairs in my shirt and trousers, without boots, and brought me towards the station, poking me with their rifles and revolvers and accompanied by choice language. I saw several patrols of military on our way and, when we got to the station, I shouted to a British army officer that as an officer of the I.R.A. I demanded a fair trial. The reply from several was: "You bloody b.....s didn't give much trial to the policeman last night". I was brought further up and put against a wooden railway door and a party of about seven or eight R.I.C. and Tans took up a position as a firing party some short distance away. I heard the words of command: "Present", "Fire", closed my eyes and prayed to the Blessed Virgin who undoubtedly saved my life. I felt a sharp sensation on top of my head and fell to the ground. I realised I was not seriously wounded and commenced to moan and kick my legs and then lay still. To my complete amazement, they then cleared off hurriedly without any further shots at me. After a little while, I succeeded in getting to my feet and staggered to the house of people I could trust, where I stayed and got attention until the next day. Then I first of all went home and then had to go "on the run". My wound was only where a bullet had little more than grazed the top of my head.

The following night, my sister Peg was taken out by Black and Tans who cut off her hair to the scalp and attempted to burn down our home after doing a considerable amount of damage. The house would have been burned to the ground but for the good

neighbours who, despite the threats and shots in the air from the R.I.C., had carried buckets of water and sacking to put out the fires.

I was expecting some rifles and ammunition from G.H.Q. at this period, but received none. Matters were somewhat interrupted after this, as my contact at the railway station, Hugh Tully, was shot by the R.I.C. I had already made arrangements with Michael Thornton and the Brigade O/C. (Longford) to attack Spiddal Barracks. This was postponed and, later, successfully carried out. At this time, we succeeded in disarming some British soldiers.

Being "on the run" and well sought for by the British, I went to South Mayo and carried out some training with the various companies in Commandant Tom Maguire's area.

Later, I was responsible through our own Sinn Fein Courts for the jailing of prisoners and the collection of fees, etc.

Galway Lawn Tennis Club, which was a favourite meeting place for British military officers, was destroyed together with various military stores, barbed wire and feeding stuffs for the horses of a Lancers' regiment which was stationed at Earl's Island, Galway.

We got a few rifles from G.H.Q. where I had a few hundred pounds lodged at this time, and these were used at the Kilon ambush near Headford.

Before the Truce, we raided the Auxiliary H.Q. at Lenaboy and succeeded in getting away with some rifles (about twelve) together with a number of .45 and .32 revolvers and a few Verey pistols.

After the Truce I was appointed Liaison Officer under Michael Staines, T.D., who later became Commissioner of the Garda Siochana. I was responsible for the taking over of all British posts including Renmore (now Mellows Barracks) and supplying guards for them all.

The various posts occupied by the British were, to the best of my recollection, as follows:

Renmore Barracks, the H.Q. of the Connaught Rangers (altho' I think there was only a skeleton party of them there) was occupied by a battalion of the Sherwood Foresters, while portion of this battalion was in Oranmore Camp, a distance of about four or five miles from Galway.

Earl's Island, University Road - a large detachment of Lancers.

Eglinton Barracks, together with two more in Dominick St. - and many private houses

400 to 500 men.

The Auxiliary R.I.C. had a company in Lenaboy Castle at Taylor's Hill.

Together with the above, there were at varying periods a number of troops encamped near Galway, so that it would be difficult to give anything like an accurate number of the enemy forces.

There are, I feel sure, a number of other incidents which I do not recall, so this concludes my statement.

Signed: Sean Broderick

Date: 16th Sept 1954

Witness: [Signature]
[Signature]

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