

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

BURO STAIRÉ MÍLEATA 1913-21

NO. W.S. *64*



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BURO STAIRÉ MÍLEATA 1913-21

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Statement by

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Rathroe, Clonbanin,
Banteer, Co.Cork.

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STATEMENT OF CORNELIUS MEANY, M.C.C., RATHEROE,
CLONBANIN, BANTEER, CO. CORK.

PERIOD: 1911 to MAY, 1916.

UNITS: MUSHERA COMPANY, I.V.
KEALE COMPANY, I.V.

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The background and the events that gave rise to the formation of the four local Companies of Volunteers, viz.; Millstreet, Rathduane, Mushera and Keale, which existed before Easter, 1916, are the background for all of them. Seamus Hickey and Denis O'Brien are giving details of Millstreet and Rathduane Companies, respectively, from their formations; and, in addition, to similar particulars for the Mushera and Keale Companies, I would like to record something of the background of all four.

Some time about 1911 or 1912 two men in the town of Millstreet, Jerry Twomey, baker, Main Street, and Seamus Hickey, blacksmith, Main Street, both members of the Millstreet Branch of the Gaelic League, took part in the anti-recruiting campaign which was then in progress. They were supplied with the essential propoganda material, namely, anti-recruiting leaflets and slogans, by the Anti-Recruiting Organisation. These leaflets and slogans (no one knew from whence they came) appeared on the telegraph poles and dead walls of the Millstreet district.

In 1912 I joined the two existing workers and the campaign was intensified. After a time the R.I.C. got suspicious of the three of us. They attempted to keep us under observation but failed to catch us out. Each of the three of us had been sworn into membership of the I.R.B. but never attended any meetings of that organisation and, as far as we know, were not attached to any particular Circle.

A County Council election was held in June, 1914. It was contested on party lines; feeling between the opposing parties, All for Ireland League (O'Brienites) and the Ancient Order of Hibernians (Redmondites) was very bitter in the Millstreet district. Several clashes took place between them, extra R.I.C. reinforcements arrived in the town and a number of baton charges took place.

The A.O.H. party, in preparation for an election victory which they did not achieve, formed a branch of the Irish Volunteers, but they did not affiliate with Headquarters. This Volunteer Company was under the charge of an ex-N.C.O. of the British Army, who put them through some close order drill and short route marches. They were armed with dummy wooden guns.

On the night of the declaration of the election results the victory of the O'Brienite candidate was announced. The town of Millstreet was thronged with the supporters of both parties. A large force of R.I.C. stood ready to use their batons. The A.O.H. Volunteers assembled at the A.O.H. headquarters on the Square, fell in, and proceeded to march to the West End. The R.I.C. cleared a passage through the angry O'Brienites. When the marchers passed clear of the throng there were subdued cries of "Get them on the return, boys" At this juncture Jerry Twomey and I, who up to then were standing on the sidewalk, stepped into the centre of the O'Brienite crowd and reasoned with those who advised an attack on their political opponents. On our suggestion this crowd, over 100 strong, formed into fours and proceeded in processional order in the direction taken by the A.O.H. men. An ex-British soldier took charge. About midway between the Square and the West End both bodies of marchers met. Each got the

order, "Left incline", and then, "Eyes right", and that ended the political feud between the Redmondites and the O'Brienites in Millstreet.

That night the O'Brienites decided to meet again a few nights afterwards. At the next meeting a Corps of Irish Volunteers was formed with a strength of approximately 120 men. A civilian Committee was formed and the Corpá was duly affiliated to Headquarters. The members of the Committee included two old Fenians, Jeremiah Riordan, Corner House, and Jim Buckley, Church Street, Millstreet, as well as the I.R.B. men, Jerry Twomey and myself. Seamus Hickey was not at this time in Millstreet.

Parades were held once a week and a number of ex-servicemen put the new Volunteers through the initial stages of military training. Shortly after the outbreak of war on 4th August, 1914, the Volunteers received intimation that they were to be inspected by Captain Talbot Crosbie and another Officer. Two bodies of Volunteers existed in the town at the time. The Irish Volunteers paraded in the then football field which is situated on the side of the station road about 800 yards North of the town. The A.O.H. Volunteers paraded in the old Deer Park, which is about 600 yards East of the town.

As a result of some ruse, or for some other reason, Captain Crosbie and his companion inspected the men at the Deer Park. About 1½ hours after the appointed time, the Inspecting Officers not having arrived at the football field, it was decided to march into town and dismiss the men in front of the Carnegie Library. After the dismissal the Committee retired into the Library. Just then Captain Crosbie and his companion arrived. After some apologies and explanations Captain Crosbie proceeded to address the Committee, and, in the course of his remarks, spoke somewhat as follows: "We are actually at war with Germany and the boom of her guns may at any moment be heard on our shores". At this point he was interrupted by a member of the Committee who said, "We are not at war with Germany; England is, but we are not". Crosbie replied, "That is all very well, but if we are invaded and you tell that story to a German soldier his answer would be a crack of a rifle butt across your head, and what would our women and children do?" The interrupter answered, "Our women and children could not fare worse than they recently did at the hands of the British at Bachelors Walk".

When the Captain found that he could not make any progress he stated that further discussion would not serve any purpose, and said he was about to take a certain course which he would not state then, but that he would make a public announcement in a day or two. On the following night in Cork he publicly announced his intention of joining the British Army.

Immediately after Messrs. Redmond and O'Brien offered the services of the Irish Volunteers to the British Military Authorities both Corps of Volunteers in Millstreet ceased to exist. There followed a period of apparent inactivity, but a small group of those originally enrolled in the Irish Volunteers carried on secretly. Rifle practice with a .22 rifle was engaged in on a few occasions. Organisation work was slowly and secretly carried on until November 1st, 1915. In the meantime P.H. Pearse, on the invitation of the local Branch of the Gaelic League, had addressed an Aerideacht in Millstreet about September, 1915.

November 1st, 1915, was Fair Day in Millstreet. It was also a Church Holiday. Arrangements were made for a parade of the small group of local Volunteers and for a public meeting. Cork Brigade Headquarters sent Terence MacSwiney, who addressed the parade and the members of the public asking for recruits for the Irish Volunteers.

Mr. Jeremiah O'Riordan, Corner House, a veteran of the Land League and an old Fenian, presided. As a result of the meeting three Companies were formed immediately, Millstreet, Rathduane and Musherá. Keale Company was established about a week later.

The initiative in the formation of the Musherá Company was taken by me, and seven men joined at the start. I had, by personal contact with likely recruits, arranged for their attendance at the Millstreet meeting, and then arranged for the meeting at which the Musherá Company was formed. As a member of the I.R.B. I had no communication with that body in reference to the formation of the Volunteer Company. I estimated that I was acting in the spirit of the organisation, and anticipated that I would remain in charge, as I did. No Committee was formed, but the following Officers were elected:-

Captain: Con Meany.
Lieut.: Denis C. Kelleher.
Q.M.: Eugene O'Riordan.
Section
Commander: Jeremiah Sheehan.

There were no changes of Officers, and all continued to hold office.

There were seven in the Company at the first meeting, and by December, 1915, strength had increased to fifteen. That strength was unchanged at Easter, 1916.

Parades were held once a week. There were no ex-service-men in the Company. The training was carried on by me from what I had acquired in the original Volunteer Company and from the Fianna Handbook. The training consisted mainly of close and open order drill, arms drill with dummies, and marching.

The Company attended a Volunteer recruiting parade in Millstreet on 6th January, 1916. Some men from the Company had attended the Manchester Martyrs' Commemoration in Cork in November, 1915, and some attended the St. Patrick's Day parade in Cork in 1916.

The arms which we had at Easter, 1916, were:-

One old type rifle, useless as a weapon. We had
350 rounds of ammunition, but
it was too large for the rifle.
Seven shot guns, with 175 rounds of ammunition.
One .32 revolver, with 6 rounds of ammunition.

Two of the shot guns had been purchased, the others were the property of members of the Company or on loan from local farmers. Some shot gun cartridges had been loaded with slug.

I attended the Brigade meeting in Cork at which the orders were issued for the exercises on Easter Sunday, 1916. The orders were for a parade and route march with all arms, ammunition and equipment. We were instructed to bring rations and trench-digging implements. No special place of parade and no destination for the route march were specified at this meeting. We received no communications or orders between then and Easter Sunday and we had no information that anything more than an ordinary parade was intended. We all expected to be home on Sunday night. We had no information about a concentration of Volunteers in Carriganimma.

and knew nothing about it until afterwards.

We assembled in our own area on Easter Sunday morning and marched into Millstreet. The following fifteen paraded:-

Con Meaney	O.C.
Denis C. Kelleher	Lieut.
Eugene O'Riordan	Q.M.
Jeremiah Sheehan	Section Commander.
Denis J. Kelleher.	
John O'Connell.	
Owen O'Riordan.	
Humphrey O'Sullivan.	
Clement Kelleher.	
Daniel Buckley.	
William O'Riordan.	
Michael Healy.	
Cornelius Buckley.	
John Buckley.	
Cornelius O'Callaghan.	

At Millstreet we met the Companies from Rathduane, Millstreet and Keale. The whole body marched as far as Kilmeeady, about 1½ miles South of the town, where training in open order drill was carried out. We did not expect and did not receive any order cancelling the parade that day. We did not expect it because we assumed the parade to be just an ordinary one. No one from the Brigade, or on behalf of the Brigade, or of any other body of Volunteers, visited us that day. At the conclusion of the exercises the whole body marched back into the town, the outside Companies returned to their own areas and were dismissed.

I met Jerry Twomey of Millstreet on Sunday night and he told me something was coming off on Monday. I re-mobilised the Company late that night, but as no further information or instructions came the men were sent home. On Monday night various rumours of the Rising were in circulation. In the expectation that instructions would be received, I mobilised the Company again on Tuesday morning. We assembled at Lackabawn Wood about a mile from the town and remained there all day. The following paraded on that occasion:-

Con Meaney.
Denis C. Kelleher.
Eugene O'Riordan.
Jeremiah Sheehan.
Denis J. Kelleher.
Clement Kelleher.
John O'Connell.
Daniel Buckley.
Con Buckley.
Owen O'Riordan.
William O'Riordan.
Michael Healy.
Con O'Callaghan.

As no orders came from the Brigade or elsewhere during the day the men were sent home on Tuesday night with orders to stand to in case they were called on again for active service.

No order with reference to arms was received from the Brigade during Easter Week and no arms were surrendered or lost in raids in the Company areas.

Con O'Callaghan, Mill Lane, Millstreet, a member of the Company, was arrested and deported. I was raided for by R.I.C. and Military but evaded arrest.

There was no Fianna or Cumann-na-mBhan organisation in the Company area before Easter, 1916.

KEALE COMPANY.

About a week after the public meeting in Millstreet on 1st November, 1915, I attended the first meeting of the Keale Company. Eighteen men joined, and the following Officers were elected:-

Captain: William Kelleher.
1st Lieut.: Daniel W. Murphy.
Secretary: Jeremiah Crowley.

About the same time I arranged for and held a meeting at Buckley's Hall, Kilcorney, but, as recruits did not join, a Corps was not formed.

Keale Company held weekly parades between then and Easter, 1916. Its strength remained unchanged in that period.

The Company paraded almost full strength on Easter Sunday, 1916, and took part with Millstreet, Musherá and Ráthduane Companies in the exercises at Kilmeedy.

The Company was mobilised again on Easter Tuesday morning in similar circumstances to those under which Musherá Company was mobilised. The following paraded on that occasion:-

William Kelleher.
Daniel W. Murphy.
Jeremiah Crowley.
Thomas Crowley.
Timothy Murphy.
Jeremiah Moynihan.
James Kelleher.
Batt Corcoran.

The Company paraded at Drishanebeg. From there they sent a message to us at Lackabawn Wood to the effect that they intended to tear up the Railway line. Con J. Meany had not yet arrived and we had no instructions to take action. I, therefore, sent them a message that they should not take any action without orders. They remained in position all day and were dismissed that night when no orders had come from the Brigade.

Keale Company had no rifles. They probably had shot guns and some ammunition but I am unable to state the amount.

SIGNED: Lo Meany

DATE: November 25th 1947

WITNESS: Florence Donohue

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