

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

BURD STAIRS MILEATA 1913-21

No. W.S. 345

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 345.....

Witness

Mr. Brian Molloy,
Castlegar,
Co. Galway.

Identity

Member of I.R.B. Castlegar (Co. Galway) 1907 -
Captain Castlegar Coy. I.V's. 1915-16;
Batt'n Comd't. No. 1 Galway Brigade I.V's. 1920-21.

Subject

- (a) National activities 1907-17;
- (b) I.V. training, Galway, pre 1916;
- (c) Carnmore Cross (Co. Galway) Easter Week, 1916.

Conditions, if any, stipulated by Witness

Nil

File No. ...S.1327.....

Form B.S.M. 2.

ORIGINALSTATEMENT BY BRIAN MOLLOY,Castlegar, Co. Galway.

The Castlegar Circle of the Irish Republican Brotherhood was formed about 1907. I became a member and was sworn in by Dick Murphy. There were about thirty members in the Circle. The members took a leading part in the agitation for the division of land in the area. Following incidents, such as cattle drives, breaking of walls, etc., I was always questioned by the R.I.C. as to where I was at the time of the incidents.

Shortly after the Volunteers were formed in Dublin, a Company was formed for the parish of Castlegar at Brierhill. Thomas Newell (Sweeney) was made Captain. The Company was well organised and drilled; the men were eager to learn. Most of the Company were members of the I.R.B. When the split occurred a special parade of the Company was held at which the position was explained to the men. The Company stood solid behind McNeill. We then became a Company of the Irish Volunteers, and training, etc. continued as before.

About October or November, 1915, the re-organising of the Volunteers in the area was taking place. I was summoned to a meeting at Clarinbridge to discuss the re-organisation of the Castlegar Company. The following were present at the meeting - Fr. H. Feeney, Eamon Corbett, Matty Niland and myself.

Later the same day a meeting of the Castlegar Company was held at Breanloughane. About 65 men attended the meeting. I was unanimously elected Captain and Thomas Newell 1st Lieutenant.

The Company then started drilling very intensely and practising in sham warfare and carrying out manoeuvres in the Castlegar area. This area stretched from Oranmore to Lough Corrib at Menlo and from the seacoast at Gurrane more to the Clara-Galway river. I issued an order that each house in the Company area pay 5/- (five shillings) towards the cost of arms and equipment. This collection was completed before the end of December, 1915. This collection was very satisfactory as all gave willingly. During this period Michael Burke was appointed Company Quartermaster.

About this time the return of Michael Newell from Dunboyne, Co. Meath, added in a great way to the success of our organising.

In January, 1916, the Castlegar, Clarinbridge and Oranmore Companies carried out a sham battle, the manoeuvres lasting throughout the day. When the manoeuvres were over, on the same day the Company Quartermaster handed the proceeds of the parish collection to Rev. H. Feeney. From the proceeds of this collection each man in the Company was supplied with a Volunteer cap. The remainder went to the purchase of arms and ammunition.

Early in November, 1915, I appointed Tom Courtney, a postman in Galway town, to Company Intelligence Officer. On Michael Newell's return, I appointed him in charge of Intelligence and all communications, both to act conjointly, as we were beginning to get great attention from the R.I.C.

From his return Michael Newell, who is a blacksmith, with his brother Thomas, were making pikes. This came to the ears of the R.I.C. at Killeen Barracks, one mile away. Sergeant T. Reddington who was very active, warned the Newells under the Defence of the Realm Act and threatened them, but they continued to make the pikes mostly at night when it was possible for us to place sentries on all roads leading to the forge. The last batch of pikes was given to Micheál Ó Droighneáin, Captain Spiddal Company, on Easter Saturday. This incident is worth special mention. Ó Droighneáin had just packed the pikes under the cushions of his car when the Sergeant and three Constables arrived. He was swinging his car when he noticed that the R.I.C. were raiding the forge. He had his engine running and sitting at the wheel, being ready to move off, he sounded the horn. The three Constables were inside the forge. The Sergeant standing at the door, looked round at the sound of the horn and Ó Droighneáin beckoned him to approach and said to him, "do you know that you are wasting your time? You are speaking to Captain Grant from Dublin Castle. I have already inspected those premises. I will make a note of your being here and I will mention it to the District Inspector". He then marched his three Constables back to the Barracks, Ó Droighneáin driving off in the opposite direction.

About November, 1915, at a meeting in Fr. Feeney's house at Clarinbridge at which Eamon Corbett, Matty Niland and I were present, Fr. Feeney told us that an armed rising had been decided on, but the date had not yet been fixed.

I might also mention that the Galway Brigade paraded through Galway town on St. Patrick's Day, 1916, all being armed with either pikes, shotguns and a few rifles.

About this time we had completed all possible arrangements for the Rising and had received constant advice from Captain A. Monahan on every matter concerning the coming Rising. During this time Captain Monahan was constantly being shadowed by Crown Forces. Then Tom Courtney told us that if Captain Monahan was not clear of Galway town in a day or so that he would never leave it as he found out he was to be arrested and that he had been the R.I.C. in civilian clothes, both day and night, watching his digs. We knew that was true as all information he gave was very good.

He escaped from the Crown Forces in the following manner. Father Feeney and Patrick O'Dea arrived at Brierhill, O'Dea dressed also as a priest. Instructions were given to two Volunteers, Thomas Newell and John Fallon, to go towards Galway town and wait near the town at Wellpark. There, Newell and Fallon gave their bicycles to Fr. Feeney and Pat O'Dea who proceeded on them to where Captain Monahan was staying at St. Francis Street, Galway. As the police who were watching, saw what

was, as they thought, two priests going into the house, and after a time the two came out again. This is as it appeared to police watching, but what really happened was, Captain Monahan changed into the priest's suit which O'Dea was wearing, and it was he who went out with Fr. Feeney, leaving O'Dea in the digs. They cycled as far as Wellpark where Newell and Fallon were waiting. Fr. Feeney and Captain Monahan then handed their bikes to Newell and Fallon and drove off in the car which was waiting for them. The police who, of course, followed anyone in contact with Captain Monahan, ignored the car and followed Newell and Fallon on the bikes. When Newell and Fallon had proceeded some distance they met Mr. Thomas Newell (senior) who was waiting for them, and hid the bikes. Then they started walking back along the road and met the two peelers who had been trailing them. We were on several occasions instructed by Captain Monahan after this.

A short time before the preceding incident, Captain Monahan arranged for a sham battle between the Clare-Galway, Oranmore and Castlegar Companies, the Clare-Galway and Castlegar Companies to attack Oranmore town; the Oranmore Company to defend it. Each Company Captain was left to use his own ideas, Captain Monahan to act as referee. I brought the Castlegar Company and Nicholas Kyne brought the Clare-Galway Company to the Oranmore Railway Station about a quarter mile from the town. We then decided to put a small section from both Companies on a hill in view of Oranmore town to attract the defenders. Then both Captain Kyne and myself proceeded with the main body over the low-lying Frenchfort bog and proceeded in single file until they reached the Athenry road. Our scouts then reported that

all the Orammore forces were at the river and bridge on the Galway road watching the men on the hill who were continuously moving about so that their strength appeared greater than it was. Then the section on the hill moved forward on a signal from the main body. We then advanced quickly with the main body capturing both the town and its defenders who had remained guarding the bridge. Then Captain Monahan dispersed the three Companies who heartily cheered him.

A few days before the Rising, Mick Newell and I went to Coshla to see Captain Monahan and discussed with him how the Castlegar Company was to proceed in the Rising and what action we were to take, and, of course, discussed the possible landing of arms from Germany. He instructed us to put Volunteers along the coast for to watch for such landing as at that time we were nearly sure that arms would come by a submarine. A number of suitable men were detailed for this duty. This was on Good Friday, 1916.

On Easter Saturday I advised all members of my Company to go to Confession and to offer up Communion on Sunday morning for the freedom of Ireland.

As I received final orders on Friday night from Eiam Mellows through Captain Monahan, I issued the following orders on Easter Sunday morning - that the Company was to mobilise at 2 p.m. that evening with arms, full equipment and two days' rations; for the sake of secrecy I said it was for a route march to Athenry. The real nature of the undertaking was only known to Lieutenant T. Newell, Michael Newell, Company Intelligence Officer, and Tom Courtney, Company

Intelligence Officer. Of course, all members of the Company were willing and ready to take part in the Rising, but for obvious reasons the date and aim were kept secret except to those mentioned already.

On Sunday evening the full Company mobilised and we marched under arms to Carnmore where we were joined by the Clare-Galway Company. At about 5 p.m. on Sunday evening I received a despatch stating that the Rising had been cancelled. The despatch rider was Michael Walsh and he brought the despatch from Athenry. After receiving this despatch I marched the Company back again to Breanloughane, Castlegar. On our arrival back we heard that an old man named Forde from my village, Coolough, had died, and the men asked me to allow them to go to the wake. After putting all arms, etc. into Newells' barn and placing a strong guard on them, I allowed the remainder of the Company to attend the wake. This would be about 10 p.m. on Sunday night.

Early on Sunday I sent Tom Courtney back to the town. This was when the Company was starting out for Carnmore. I ordered him to get as many boats as he could and to put them in a safe place on both sides of the Corrib. This was to make sure that the two Companies, Spiddal and Moycullen, could join us as it would be better than coming through the town of Galway,

At about 11 p.m. on Sunday night Tom Courtney was making his way to join the Company at Carnmore when he was taken by surprise by an armed Volunteer guard at Breanloughane. He refused to comply with orders to hand up his bike. He was then taken to me in Newells'

barn as a prisoner as the guards did not know him in the dark and bikes were very scarce. He was the first prisoner; it was very amusing. I was so pleased with the alertness of the guards and amused at taking our Intelligence Officer prisoner that I allowed the guard off duty until 6 the following morning. They were glad to go to the wake.

On Monday morning all the men's haversacks were empty of food as they all had eaten the two days' rations during Sunday night as well as all they got at the wake. They then went for a sleep in various houses in the locality. During Monday the main body of the Company was sent to collect food. The remainder were in Newells' barn opening shotgun cartridges and pouring tallow and candlegrease into the shot - this was to make the cartridges more effective.

After waiting all through Sunday night and up to Monday night, and as the men were weary and impatient at doing nothing, about 10 p.m. on Monday night I issued the order which surprised the men, that the Company fall in with full equipment immediately. I then ordered each man to keep his arms and equipment and to go home and have a rest but to be ready at a moment's notice.

About 3 o'clock on Tuesday morning, P. Callanan (The Hare) and Joe Fleming arrived with a despatch, stating that the Volunteers were fighting in Dublin. I issued orders to Michael and Thomas Newell for the immediate mobilisation of the Company. I proceeded,

accompanied by Patrick Callanan, to Moycullen to mobilise the Volunteers there. Joseph Fleming who had accompanied Callanan with the despatch, remained at Brierhill. When we arrived at Clooniffe, Moycullen, we met P. Ó Droighneáin, Captain of the Moycullen Company, Irish Volunteers. I told him of the fighting in Dublin and asked him to mobilise his Company and to take the Company to the east side of Galway town, and that there was no need to go through the town as I had arrangements made to transport his men across Lough Corrib. This would shorten the distance by half and would bring them directly into the Castlegar area. Well, at any rate, we saw that he did not intend to mobilise the Company, and in fact they were not mobilised.

We returned to Galway town hoping to get in touch with some of the Spiddal Company. When we reached University Road we went to George Nichols' house but got no answer. We found out that the police and military were very active in the town and we, therefore, had to make a circuit to get to Castlegar area. Later that evening I got a despatch stating that Micheál Ó Droighneáin, Captain of the Spiddal Company, had been arrested.

When we returned to Brierhill the full Company were "standing-to" ready for anything.

We were just about to leave for Carnmore when Courtney arrived and reported the arrests of Nicholas Flanagan, James Carter and M. Ó Droighneáin, and also of the positions the police and soldiers had

taken up in the town. He had gone earlier that morning to arrange for transport of Connemara Volunteers across the Corrib.

The whole Company then proceeded towards Carnmore. It had been arranged previously that the Oranmore, Maree and Clarinbridge Companies would be there and we were to join them. In the course of our march we met the Clare-Galway Company going in the same direction. As the Maree and Oranmore and Clarinbridge Companies were not at the place appointed, we proceeded on towards Oranmore. On arriving at the Oranmore Station I received a despatch informing me that the Companies which we were to meet, had proceeded towards Athenry under Commandant Mellows, in which direction I sent my Lieutenant Thomas Newell, to get in touch with Commandant Mellows as to what action my Company was to take. T. Newell was accompanied by John Walsh, Clare-Galway Company.

We then marched from Oranmore towards Carnmore. The Clare-Galway Company was quartered at Carnmore village and the Castlegar Company at Kiltulla, there to await orders from Commandant Mellows. T. Newell and J. Walsh returned from Athenry about 3 a.m. on Wednesday morning with orders from Commandant Mellows to proceed to the Farmyard, Athenry. His despatch also contained the following order - that we were to commandeer horses and carts and other means of transport, food and other commodities.

With the object of carrying out those orders I was taking the Company in full military formation towards

Carrmore. When nearing Carrmore we saw a girl on a hill waving a white apron frantically. This was Miss Bena King. She was calling our attention to a number of cars coming from the direction of Galway town. At first we thought the cars contained Volunteers from Galway town and then discovered that they contained R.I.C. and soldiers under the command of Colonel Bodkin and D.I. Heard. We were about fifty yards from the cross roads at this time. I rushed the Company with all speed to the cross roads. I quickly placed some of the men at Greashish's house and others at Cooneys' house to hold the Carrmore road, and the remainder of the Company with myself took up position at the eastern corner. This position was an open wall about four feet high. We opened fire on the Crown Forces which had arrived in thirteen cars. They replied with intense revolver and rifle fire and then tried to rush our position but we beat them off with one of their number killed and several wounded. They then retreated along the Galway road, all the time keeping up on intense rifle fire. This was kept up for a considerable time while they were safely out of range of our shotguns. They then tried a flanking movement but I was able to rush men to a position which stopped this movement; in this we wounded another peeler.

After the Crown Forces had retreated, both Companies joined forces and went across country to the Farmyard, Athenry. When nearing the Farmyard we were again under rifle fire as the R.I.C. etc. were attacking the Forces under Commandant Mellows who held the Farmyard.

On Wednesday afternoon the whole Brigade under Mellows and Monahan marched to Moyode.

I will touch briefly on our stay at Moyode Castle from Wednesday to Friday evening, of how Commandant Mellows billeted the different Companies, how each Company was placed in a section of the grounds, of how sentries from each Company were placed in position, of how men were sent out with big Patrick Kennedy and his horse and cart on foraging expeditions, (Kennedy belonged to the Kilconeron Company), of how Miss Greally took charge of the baking of bread, of how the beast which was slaughtered on our arrival at Moyode was all eaten that day, of how Monahan and Mellows would at intervals during the night blow a whistle calling the men to "stand-to" as a test.

On Friday afternoon the Brigade under Liam Mellows marched to Lime Park, arriving there late that night. Shortly after our arrival at Lime Park a meeting of the Brigade Council was held, at which the following were present - Liam Mellows, Alf Monahan, Eamon Corbett, Matty Niland, Larry Lardiner, Fr. Feeney and Fr. Tom Fahy. After the meeting was in progress for some time, the Company Captains were called in. Mellows asked us if the men were prepared to continue the fight. I said, "my men are better now than when we started out". The Captains then left. The Brigade Council went into conference with the priests, and after a short while the Council and priests came out. Fr. Fahy addressed the Volunteers and told them that as far as he knew the Volunteers in Dublin were on the verge of surrender and that it was useless for us to carry on any longer, and that it had been decided to disband. Every man was to go home and secure his arms as he would need them again, and that the leaders would go "on the run".

After the order at Lime Park to disperse, I remember Monahan and Mellows shaking hands with us and bidding us "goodbye", and indeed we were then very brónach in parting with the leaders who had been with us, training and advising ^{us} for the Rising. We knew that neither Mellows nor Monahan did not like to give the order to disband and I am sure they knew that the men would have followed them to the bitter end, but as the priests who had come there, had advised against further bloodshed and as Mellows and Monahan considered themselves responsible for all our lives, had to make a decision which they hated to do.

The memory will ever live with me of the time Monahan and Mellows called all the men on parade and issued the order to disperse to their own areas, to hold on to their arms and evade arrest.

I then marched my Company away and at different places dispersing some of the men until Mick Newell and myself made our way back to Brierhill late on Saturday night. And on Sunday evening nearly all the Company were together again and we were trying to decide what was best to do when we were nearly surrounded by police and military. We managed to escape and made our way towards Lough Corrib. On Monday most of the Company was captured in the round-up.

Late on the following Friday night or early on Saturday morning, Mick Newell and myself went to my house in Coolough to get a change of clothes before making our way to Connemara. We had barely arrived when the house was surrounded and we were taken prisoners and

brought to Galway Jail. On Monday I was handcuffed to a policeman and brought by train to Richmond Barracks, Dublin. A couple of days later I was tried by courtmartial, being charged with waging war against His Majesty's Forces. I was asked if I was in charge of the Castlegar Company of the Volunteers. I said I was. I was also asked if I was with the Company at the Carrmore Crossroads when the policeman was killed. I answered, "yes". I was sentenced to death which was commuted to ten years' penal servitude. I was sent to Mountjoy Prison where I was given a convict suit and put in solitary confinement.

After a week we were given civilian clothes and transferred to Dartmoor. Here we were again put in convict garb and placed in solitary confinement for fourteen days, during which time we were occupied sewing sandbags in our cells. After fourteen days we were allowed one hour's exercise each day; the rest of the day was spent in a shed sewing coal bags, but we were not allowed to talk. This continued until October when we were informed by the Governor that we were to be transferred to Lewes. He asked us to wear civilian clothes for the journey, but on Diarmuid Lynch's instructions we refused. We were brought by train to Lewes, three prisoners being handcuffed together.

Conditions were much better here; we were allowed to talk at exercise. About May, 1917, De Valera demanded prisoner-of-war treatment, and he instructed us that if our demands were not granted we were to break the glass in the cell windows and the glass spy-hole in the cell door, and if transferred to another prison to refuse

to work, and not to go on hunger strike. The demands were refused so we broke the windows as instructed, and as a result we were put in solitary confinement for ten days during which time we were not allowed to attend Mass.

After the ten days I was handcuffed to two fellow prisoners, Jim Lawless and Tom Doyle of Enniscorthy, and transferred with a number of other prisoners, all handcuffed in threes, to the Isle of Wight. The day after our arrival at the Isle of Wight a warder appeared at my cell door and told me to go to work. I refused. Later that evening I was brought before the Governor for refusing to work and sentenced to two days' bread and water in the punishment cells in the basement. I was due to do a second term when the Catholic Chaplain came to my cell and told me that we were to be released. He said, "I am from Cork. Your lads made a great fight and you deserved to win". I said, "we can thank De Valera who organised it".

On Saturday night we were again handcuffed, three together, and transferred to Maidstone Prison. On Sunday morning we were issued with civilian clothes and given five shillings each. That evening at about 7 o'clock we were taken in cabs to Euston Station and put on a special train for Holyhead. Shortly after the train leaving Euston, De Valera came along the carriages and asked the men to subscribe 1/3d. each for refreshments, which we received and appreciated very much, as it was the first tea we had since we left Dublin. On the Mail Boat

coming home we were all assembled on the upper deck, and when we first sighted Ireland, De Valera called for three cheers for Ireland which were lustily given.

The following members of the Castlegar Company answered the call during Easter Week, 1916 :-

The five brothers Newell -

Thomas
Michael
William
James
Patrick

Thomas Courtney

John Molloy
John Molloy (2 persons)

Thomas Molloy

William Mulroyan
William Mulroyan (2 persons)

John Mulroyan
Bartley Mulroyan
Michael Burke
Thomas Burke

Patrick King
Patrick King (2 persons)

John King
Peter King
Thomas Mahon
Patrick Mahon
Michael Ryan
John Ryan
John Fallon
Michael Fallon
Bernard Fallon
James Fahy
Michael Fahy
Patrick Grealish
Thomas Grealish
Michael Connell
Michael Blake
Michael Flannery
Michael Flaherty
Gilbert Ryan
John Hanley
James Feeney
John Casserley

Thomas Weston
 Patrick Harte
 Thomas Silke
 Thomas Summerly
 Patrick Roonan
 Martin Carr
 Michael Coyne
 James Coyne
 John Wall
 Thomas King
 John Connolly
 Patrick Glynn
 Thomas Conner
 Thomas Duggan
 Martin Wall.

SIGNED

Brian Malloy

DATE

26th Jan 1950

WITNESS

Seán Brennan. Comdt.

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