

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

BURO STAIRE MILEATA 1913-21

No. W.S. 473

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 473.....

Witness

Denis Leahy,
34 St. Aidan's Park Road,
Fairview, Dublin.

Identity

2nd Lieutenant 'E' Company 9th Battalion
1st Cork Brigade 1919-1921.

Member of Garda Siochana.

Subject

Raids by I.R.A. on train carrying military
stores at Carrigaline, Co. Cork,
early 1921.

Conditions, if any, stipulated by Witness

N11

File No. S.1491.....

Form B.S.M. 2.

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Statement of Mr. Denis Leahy,

34 St. Aidan's Park Road, Fairview, Dublin.

In late 1918 or early 1919 - I cannot remember the actual date - I joined "E" Company of the 9th Battalion of the 1st Cork Brigade. Dick Mahoney was the Battalion O/C., and Eddie Sisk was Vice-Commandant. Jack Barry was the Company Captain. Eddie Cogan, now dead, was 1st Lieutenant and I was 2nd Lieutenant.

For some time after I joining the Volunteers my activities were concentrated on drilling and attending lectures. I took a course in morse signalling.

The 9th Battalion area extended from Cork city to Kinsale, but I cannot say whether Kinsale was included in it or not - actually I don't think it was. At the time that Battalion was very poorly armed. In the Company we had a few rifles and several shot guns and a goodly number of revolvers, but the total armaments were not at all sufficient to equip the Company adequately. The armaments of the Company were, of course, increased by raiding private houses for shot guns and anything we could get hold of.

On a number of occasions the West-Cork Column came into our Company area. When the Column was billeted in Gerry Delaney's farm-house in the vicinity of Carrigaline, it was the duty of our Company to guard them while they were in our area. As the war against the British developed my Company was actively engaged in the blocking of roads, the dismantling of bridges and such obstructive tactics.

Some time before the Crossbarry ambush, January 1921, two home-made land-mines were made by Dick Buckley in Roberts' Engineering Works at Carrigaline. As far as I remember, they

/were

were the only two made in Carrigaline. For what specific purpose they were made, I cannot recall, but when they were made I was instructed to convey them in a pony and trap to Hydes' at Ballinhassig which was a long journey away and in another area. I handed them over to some member of the Hyde family whose name I cannot recall at the moment.

In the early months of 1921 it was decided to raid a train carrying supplies of military stores to the military at Crossbarry from Cork. Four of us were detailed for this job. When this train would arrive at Carrigaline Station we were to hold up the guard. We expected no resistance as we knew the guard would be sympathetic towards us. When the train pulled into the Station we raided it and seized all the foodstuffs and provisions that were being sent to the military at Crossbarry. Cars were commandeered locally and the provisions and coal were loaded on to them. Whisky and cigarettes were later discharged to the West Cork Column and the rest of the stuff was given to anyone who wanted it. We raided it on at least four consecutive occasions and on each occasion we were able to supply the Column with cigarettes, etc.

In connection with the raids on the train at that time, I do know that questions were asked in the House of Commons and the railway was closed down for a period. Some of the lads who were employed on the railway were annoyed with us as they were thrown out of employment.

I have in my possession the I.R.A. police code handed to me personally by the late Dinny Barry, the first Brigade Officer of police. I was instructed to study it and let it be a guidance to us.

/During

During my time with the Battalion I was also appointed Company Police Officer. My functions were to deal with crime in the area and to attend to public-house duty. The only crime worth recalling in our area concerned the stealing of poultry. There was one particular individual there who was continually raiding poultry runs. We knew who the culprit was and one night we arrested him and dealt with him summarily. The punishment effected was that one of our men stripped him to the waist and caned him. I must say that this punishment was most effective. Ever after that there was no poultry raiding by him. We dealt with a number of similar cases too numerous to mention.

In the summer of 1921 a message was taken by two members of our Company from the guard of the train at Monkstown, County Cork. It was from the District Inspector in Cobh to a lady in Crosshaven whose maiden name I cannot remember. That message, which was in code from the District Inspector, was delivered to the Company Captain who later in the morning instructed me to deliver it to the Brigade Commandant at Hydes' in Ballinhassig, which I did. Some days later - possibly five or six - a message was received from the Brigade that this lady's house was to be raided for the purpose of obtaining the code which she possessed, as the captured letter implied. Four of us approached the vicinity of the house on two successive nights. On each occasion we sensed that the house was being guarded on the inside and that it would be foolhardy on our part to enter it. We had a disagreement amongst ourselves over this but, as it transpired later, our better judgment prevailed on each occasion as we learned that the house was, in fact, guarded by British military and, had we entered it, there is

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no doubt that we would have been fired on without any warning.

Signed: Dennis Leaby, D/Sgt.

Date: 11th February 1957.

Witness: William Ivory Bondt

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