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COSANTA.

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 557

**Witness**

Patrick O'Driscoll,  
Bawnlahan,  
Union Hall,  
Co. Cork.

**Identity.**

O/C. Myross Company, 4th (Skibbereen)  
Battalion, Cork III Brigade, 1920-1921.

**Subject.**

Plans for reception and transfer inland of  
cargo of arms expected from Italy, December 1920-  
January 1921.

**Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.**

Nil

File No. S.1826

Form B.S.M. 2

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

BURO STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21

No. W.S. 557

STATEMENT BY PATRICK O'DRISCOLL,  
O.C. MYROSS COMPANY AND VICE O.C.  
SKIBBEREEN BATTALION, CORK III  
BRIGADE, RE PROJECTED LANDING OF  
ARMS FROM ITALY, 1920-1921.

It was in December, 1920, that, on Liam Deasy's return from Dublin, I was entrusted with the task of making preparations in the Myross Company Area for the reception of a cargo of rifles and ammunition which were supposed to be coming to us from Italy. I brought Liam Deasy and the late Sean Lehane out in a motor boat around Rabbit Island about 30th January, 1921, and we surveyed the coast near at hand for a likely landing place for the arms.

Rabbit Island forms a very effective cover for a ship coming into Myross. There is a good depth of water between the Island and the mainland and the channel is some hundreds of yards wide. I selected three landing places so that the work could be carried on simultaneously and three times as fast as if the arms were to be brought ashore at only one point. The three places were named respectively Squince, Ardra and Carrigillihy Strands. Opposite Ardra, about 150 yards out, the ship would be anchored and the boxes of rifles lowered away to the waiting men below. Boats would ply backwards and forwards to the other two Strands as well. Both Carrigillihy and Squince would be about 400 yards from the ship's anchorage. There were plenty of four-oared and six-oared rowing boats available and altogether I could arrange for sixteen or seventeen yawls, and two or three motor boats as well. All the men in the area were oarsmen and there would be no difficulty about providing crews for the boats. Members of the Company were told not to leave the neighbourhood for more than twenty-four hours at a time and to hold themselves in readiness, without, of course, divulging the secret to them.

The rifles were to be in boxes strapped around, so I prepared a big number of hooks with ropes spliced on to them as a means of raising the boxes from the hold and lowering them away over the side to the boats which would come alongside each side of the ship.

There were plenty of horses and carts to be had. On two of the Strands, Squince and Carrigillihy, it was possible to bring horses and carts to the water's edge, but on Ardra Strand the boxes would have to be man-handled across the beach to the foot of a steep bank to where the transport would be waiting. I arranged for about a dozen strong horses to pull the loads up this bank to where other horses and carts would be waiting. I prepared about nine or ten dumps in the Company Area, one big one capable of holding up to 200 rifles, the others to hold twenty to sixty each, for any rifles which could not be got away. The big dump was situated at old ruined buildings where there were plenty of big round stones covered with moss and forming a perfect hiding place by reason of their appearance untouched for years. The others were made by burrowing into the ends of earthen ditches and blocking up the opening with earth and sods to look as if never

disturbed. It was intended to convey the rifles by means of relays of horses without changing the carts by about two routes through Leap, Corran, Drinagh and towards Dunmanway: the other route, as well as I remember, through Bawnlahan, on to Hooley's Forge and turn off there to the Derryleigh Bridge, across the Skibbereen road towards Drimoleague.

While security measures around our scene of operations might suffice to guard against surprise or stave off even a strong enemy attack as far as the land side was concerned, our one trouble to seaward was a British Naval sloop which used come into Glandore Harbour at varying times; it might come and stay awhile, then go out and not be seen for days, or it might come back the day after. Its arrival was uncertain and its stay indefinite and with its searchlights it would be a real menace should these be played upon the arms ship as it tried to slip into the sheltered channel behind Rabbit Island. Once behind the Island the ship would be safe from that quarter.

Published statements that guns were to be run into Glandore Harbour are without foundation. The frequent presence of the sloop there, moored off the pier, not to mention the Coastguard Station in Union Hall itself, manned by a garrison of about 35 Marines, would have been very effectual in frustrating any such attempt at that place.

I believe a fairly big drifter was bought in Scotland and Captain Collins of Cork went across there to bring her back to Cork. Nets and gear were bought for her as a blind and she was supposed to be fishing off the coast and meet the arms ship and transfer her cargo to the drifter while out at sea. The drifter would then come into Myross and berth inside Rabbit Island for the unloading while the Italian Ship would clear off. The man who was selected to go out in the drifter and pilot her into Myross was Curly O'Driscoll, of my Company, and who knew every inch of the coast.

Signed

Pate O'Driscoll

Witnessed

[Signature] Lt Col

Date

3rd May 1951

ADDENDUM TO PATRICK O'DRISCOLL'S STATEMENT

By LIEUT.-COLONEL G. SAURIN.

On Patrick O'Driscoll's advice I went to see Sam Kingston of Drinagh, Co. Cork, formerly O/C. Skibbereen Battalion, 3rd (West Cork) Brigade, as he believed that Kingston might have some information about the plans for landing the arms from Italy.

Kingston confessed he had very little that was not given me already. What he did was to have dumps prepared in the different Company areas to lodge the arms should the attempt to get them further inland and to North Cork and beyond not succeed on account of enemy activity. He could not remember the number of dumps prepared but at least one was made ready in each Company area north and west of the Myross Company area.

Old buildings and earthen fences were the locations and strong timber boxes were made to hold the arms. In Drimoleague it was difficult to get suitably prepared timber and the local Company had recourse to the Church of Ireland Parish Hall where the planking was removed from the floor to make the boxes. Kingston had strong horses capable of hauling a ton load each, and carts, all picked in the area for use as transport when the time came.

SIGNED



DATE

25th April, 1951.

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