

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

BURO STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21

No. W.S. 566

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 566

Witness

Charles O'Connell,
2 St. Vincent's Place,
Blarney Street,
Cork.

Identity.

Member of Irish Volunteers, Cork, 1917 - ;

Second Lieut. Irish Volunteers;

Company Captain Irish Volunteers.

Subject.

History of 'D' Company, 1st Battalion
Cork 1 Brigade 1917-1921.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil

File No. S.1792

Form B.S.M. 2

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'D' COMPANY, 1ST BATTALION, CORK I BRIGADE.

STATEMENT BY CHARLES O'CONNELL,
2, ST. VINCENT'S PLACE, BLARNEY
STREET, CORK.

1916 - 1917.

The area of 'D' Company embraced that portion north of the Lee enclosed by and including Blarney Street, Sunday's Well, Fair Hill, Blackpool, the North Channel of the Lee from Wellington Bridge to St. Patrick's Bridge, by Bridge Street, Leitrim Street, Watercourse Road, and back by Fair Hill.

The original Company Officers were : Captain D. Cotter, 1st Lieut. C. O'Gorman, 2nd Lieutenant Con Collins.

Late in 1917, with membership increasing, 'C' and 'E' Companies were formed from part of 'D' Company, and the latter Unit's area was restricted to Shandon Street, Mulgrave Road, Wolfe Tone Street, Pine Street, to Fair Hill. Membership in the reorganised 'D' Company then, and up to the Truce, was steady at about 160, apart from the Conscription period around April, 1918, when mostly all Units became swollen by large numbers of recruits most of whom fell away shortly after.

In 1917, the Company armament consisted of three rifles, about six revolvers, one Miniature Rifle and a Morris Tube for Target practice. There were no means of augmenting these by raids for arms within the area, the inhabitants of which were very friendly to the National Movement, but none of the usual possessors of shot-guns or rifles of any kind lived there.

Company Parades were held on Sunday mornings and often there were all-night parades for Company Exercises or for manoeuvres in conjunction with the Blarney Company, whose area was to the northward of 'D' Company's. A week-end Training Camp was held in Killeens outside the Company Area. There was no interference with this by the police.

1918.

The same position prevailed as indicated above, except that Company Officers now were: Captain D. Cotter, 1st Lieut. Eugene O'Callaghan, 2nd Lieut. Con O'Callaghan. These carried on until September, 1919.

1919.

In September, Seán Lucey became Captain: the 1st Lieutenant was P. O'Sullivan and the 2nd Lieutenant Michael McAuliffe.

An Aeridheacht was held by the Company in Dillon's Field, Churchfield, where about £60 (Sixty pounds) was made, which sum was handed over to the Battalion. Out of purchases made from this money 'D' Company got as its share 6 Webley Revolvers. For the purpose of raising interest in the Aeridheacht a Challenge Match was arranged between the Fair Hill and the Redmonds'

Hurling Teams. This Match brought a huge crowd as a short time previously the same two teams played for County Championship in the Park, when Fair Hill won by two points. Redmonds won the challenge match, but the idea achieved its object in bringing the crowd and getting the money.

During this year, too, there was no interference by the police stationed in Shandon Barracks and they never interfered with 'D' Company's public activities. They were mostly married and lived within the area and presumably wanted to lead a quiet life.

At this time home made bombs were being manufactured - the usual tin can type filled with scrap. In November a raid was carried out by the Battalion Signallers on Marsh's of the South Mall for signalling apparatus. 'D' Company provided the covering party for the raiders. Mr. Marsh came unexpectedly on the scene and when he refused to put up his hands was wounded. It was not serious and he recovered eventually. This incident, however, spoiled the raid. However, the same night there was another raid on Marsh's Yard where hundreds of British Army Bicycles had been stored prior to an Auction. This raid was a success and, in fact, hundreds of bicycles were taken.

1920.

Early this year Battalion Signallers carried out another raid for signalling apparatus, which included field telephones and other equipment, a consignment of which was being sent to Charleville for the British Forces there. This equipment was at Rathpeacon, the Railway Marshalling Yards, and no guard was placed over it. 'D' Company combined with the Signallers on this raid, and an amount of stuff was secured. Some was used subsequently in a tapping Station established in a Cottage near Blarney with connections to the wires along the railway.

There was an attempted burning of the evacuated Police Barracks at Commons Road during May. This was spoiled on the first go off by the charge laid by the Battalion Engineers and members of 'D' Company participating had not the satisfaction of carrying their job through.

Later this month the attack on Blarney Police Barracks took place. 'D' Company supplied three men for the actual attacking party and the rest of the Company acted as a protective party and also blocked the roads in the Company area leading from the City out towards Blarney.

In June, 'D' Company supplied four men as covering party for the Engineers for the blowing up of King Street Barracks. This Barracks was the Superintendent's Headquarters and supplied the party that shot Tomas MacCurtain. In case of enemy reprisals the Company occupied four houses as armed guards at opposite points at Church Avenue in the centre of which was the residence of Donal O'Callaghan, Deputy Lord Mayor. The Guards from the Company were armed with revolvers and bombs and were on duty from 11 p.m. to 6 a.m. Military patrols used go through

the City and these were watched for, as well as incendiaries who might be disguised as civilians. Sunday morning parades were still held but there was not much activity except when Company members were detailed for Battalion jobs.

Coming on to the Winter of 1920 the Black and Tans appeared in Cork and the Company provided armed patrols in their own area to frustrate any Tans who might penetrate there for their usual hold up tactics combined with robbery and assault.

1921.

In January, Seán Lucey and Michael McAuliffe went to the Brigade A.S.U. and the Officers then were: Captain Liam Og O'Callaghan, 1st Lieutenant P. O'Sullivan, 2nd Lieut. Charles O'Connell. In January, also, the Company supplied one man for the Parnell Bridge Ambush on the Black and Tans, when two Tans were hit.

In February, the Company was engaged in the shooting of military on the streets as reprisals for the Dripsey Ambush executions. 'D' Company members were posted at the end of St. Patrick's Hill to carry out their share of this job. During this month, too, a spy was shot at St. Mary's Road. This was a Company job and was carried out on information from Brigade. This spy died subsequently from his wound.

In March, Liam Óg O'Callaghan went to the City A.S.U., and from then until the Truce the Company Officers were: Captain Charles O'Connell, 1st Lieut. P. O'Sullivan, 2nd Lieut. Stephen Harrington. This month, also, on further information from Brigade another spy was shot. This happened in 'C' Company area though the job was carried out by 'D' Company.

In April, the Company supplied members to participate in a Battalion job to seize military mails at the G.P.O. This job was spoiled by an enemy party arriving unexpectedly and opening fire on the waiting raiders.

'C' and 'D' Companies combined to take part in the O'Connell Street ambush at Blackpool in May. They bombed and fired on a combined Black and Tan and Regular Police Patrol. One Tan and two R.I.C. were killed.

On 24th June, the City A.S.U. attacked all police barracks in Cork City from cars. They drove past the barracks and, when opposite, threw bombs at the building and any enemy in the vicinity. Shandon Barracks was attacked in this way and a covering party from 'D' Company, consisting of twelve revolvermen, was posted in the area and opened fire to make sure of the car with the bombers getting away.

The principal activities during the month of July up to the 11th (day of the Truce) consisted in sending out armed patrols watching for British Staff cars which might traverse the streets in the Company area.

SIGNED: Charles O'Connell

WITNESSED: [Signature] Lt Col.

31st August, 1951.