

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

BURO STAIRS MILITARY 1913-21

No. W.S. 601

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 601

Witness

Captain Henry S. Murray,  
1 Eaton Square,  
Terenure,  
Dublin.

Identity.

Lieutenant 'A' Company 4th Battalion,  
Dublin Brigade, 1916;

Adjutant same Battalion, 1919-1920.

Subject.

Fourth Battalion Dublin Brigade, 1916-1921;  
Formation of Battalion Intelligence Unit, 1917;  
Formation of A.S.U. 1920;  
Escape of F. Carty from Derry Prison, 15/2/1921.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil

File No. ...S:912.....

Form B.S.M. 2

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**ORIGINAL**

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21  
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Bureau of Military History  
1913 - 1921.

Statement of Henry S. Murray.

Part II.

Covering the period from the first general release of the Irish prisoners from Frongoch Internment Camp in 1916 up to the Truce in July, 1921.

Note: I am writing this statement in 1950, over thirty years after the events mentioned and I find it extremely difficult to preserve a satisfactory order and to recall to my recollection many persons and incidents which I feel I should have included. My effort is, I fear, a poor one but it is the best that I can offer.

During the period covered by this statement I was Captain of "A" Company, Fourth Battalion, Dublin Brigade, up to sometime in 1919; in 1919 and for portion of 1920 I was employed as Battalion Adjutant; I was also employed as Battalion Training Officer in 1920 and as Organising Officer for short periods in North Meath and South Tyrone. Until I left Dublin in October, 1920 I was in constant close touch with "A" Company and for that reason this statement deals very largely with the activities of that unit.

I was released from Frongoch Internment Camp early in September, 1916. About 20 other prisoners were released on the same day; these were all young men who, though they had fought in the Rising, had not been prominently identified with advanced politics before that event and would not, therefore, have been regarded at the time by the British Authorities as potentially dangerous enough to keep in custody. The releases from internment at this period were obviously in pursuance of a policy of appeasement and some hundreds of the younger and less well-known prisoners were discharged. The policy changed about the end of September and there were no further releases from internment until the end of the year when the general release from Frongoch occurred.

On my return to Dublin on discharge from Frongoch I sought employment and when this pressing necessity had been achieved I turned to the assembling of the available members of "A" Company. At the end of September, 1916, I called these men together and about 20 attended the meeting when it was decided that those present would meet at regular intervals and that in the absence of Seamus Murphy still interned in Frongoch I, as senior officer available, should take charge. It was also decided that efforts should be made to link up with members of the other Companies of the Fourth Battalion who might have taken similar action.

From the first calling together of the available members of "A" Company until the end of the year 1916 beyond a weekly drill carried on in a plastering contractor's yard at Portobello Harbour, South Richmond Street, under conditions of great secrecy there was no

notable activity on the part of "A" Company. I acted as Company Captain and the number attending the weekly parades averaged 20 though the nominal strength was about 35. The original organisation of 4 Sections was retained and acting appointments to vacancies as Section Commanders and Squad Commanders were made by me where necessary. During this period a small supply of arms and ammunition was recovered; this consisted of 1 shotgun, 1 revolver, 1. 22 bore rifle and an assortment of rifle, revolver and shotgun ammunition. A miscellaneous assortment of equipment such as belts, water-bottles and haversacks was also secured. This effort at rehabilitation compared with the efforts made by the other Companies of the Fourth Battalion at that stage.

Sometime towards the end of 1916 (it may have been in October) I received a message from Cathal Brugha, then a patient in Richmond Hospital recovering from the severe wounds which he received in Easter Week, asking me to call to see him. I did so and was questioned by Cathal Brugha as to the position of "A" Company and the Fourth Battalion generally. He revealed to me that arrangements were in hand for re-organising Oglagh-na-hEireann throughout the country and he commended the members of "A" Company for the steps that had already been taken and for their willingness to give further service. Cathal Brugha directed me to co-operate with Douglas ffrench-Mullen, then Captain of "D" Company, Fourth Battalion, and told me to regard this officer as acting Battalion Commandant. He indicated that recruiting was not to be resumed for the time being and that no action was to be taken in the cases

of men who had failed to participate in the Rising beyond removing their names from the roll of the Company. Though bed-ridden and by no means recovered from his wounds I found Cathal Brugha in very good spirits and full of enthusiasm for the work in hand; he never even hinted at the discomfort and suffering which he had endured and discussed the position and prospects with me in a cheerful, even boisterous, manner.

Following my interview with Cathal Brugha I contacted Douglas French-Mullen and together we resurrected the dormant Thomas Davis Branch of the Gaelic League in Rathmines which we used as a cover for re-organising the Fourth Battalion. This subterfuge served its purpose well for the winter months of 1916-1917 particularly so far as "A" Company was concerned for the reason that Rathmines was the area in which the majority of the members of that Company resided.

In consequence of the general release of the Irish prisoners from Frongoch Internment Camp which occurred at the end of 1916 "A" Company and other Companies of the Fourth Battalion were strengthened by the return of some of the older and more prominent members including Seamus Murphy who had commanded at Marrowbone Lane Distillery. The Battalion received further strengthening in June, 1917 when the prisoners who had been sentenced to death by British Courts Martial, later commuted to penal servitude, for participating in the Easter Week Rising were released; these prisoners released included two members of "A" Company - James Morrissey and James J. Burke.

In January, 1917 "A" Company resumed out-door training concentrating mainly on field work at night. Modest funds were gathered from weekly subscriptions of 3d. from members and the proceeds of social functions including a Christmas Drawing of Prizes. The funds were utilised to make occasional purchases of arms and ammunition from British soldiers located in Portobello Barracks or home on leave from France or some other war front.

Early in 1917 Seamus Murphy was appointed Commandant of the Fourth Battalion and the work of re-organising the Battalion was placed on a firm basis. The Battalion Council consisting of the Battalion Commandant, Vice-Commandant, Adjutant, Quarter-master and the Captains of "A", "B", "C", "D", "E" and "F" Companies met each week. At these meetings the Company Captains reported on the actual strength, armament and activities of their Companies to the Battalion Commandant and received orders. Paper work was discouraged and written orders and records were reduced to the minimum consistent with the best possible efficiency.

During the period of re-organisation of the Fourth Battalion I had given some thought to the desirability of resuming membership of the Irish Republican Brotherhood. I discussed the matter with a number of Volunteers with whom I was on a friendly footing and who had also been members of that organisation. The almost unanimous opinion of the younger men, which I shared, was that the 1916 Rising had put an end to the period of usefulness of the Brotherhood. This opinion had some roots in prejudice



arising from the knowledge that a number of well known members of the Irish Republican Brotherhood failed to participate in the Rising. The attitude of the older Volunteers was non-committal though one or two expressed the view that as the situation developed the resurrection of the secret organisation as an inner cicle of the Volunteers might become desirable. I did not agree with the latter view and never resumed membership of the organisation in question.

Seamus Murphy was transferred to Galway about the autumn of 1917 and was succeeded as Commandant of the Fourth Battalion by Liam Clarke (acting), Joseph McGrath (acting), Doctor Ted Kelly (who was dismissed in 1920) and, finally, by John Dowling who held that position up to the Truce of July, 1921 and subsequently. A list of the other Battalion Officers and of Company Officers is contained in the appendix to this statement.

In October, 1917 I attended the Convention of the Irish Volunteers at Jones's Road, Dublin, as a delegate from "A" Company. This was a very well organised affair and there was great enthusiasm amongst the delegates. The holding of this Convention re-acted in a remarkable manner on the morale of the Volunteers as it was the first definite indication of the successful re-organisation of the Irish Volunteers as the national Army. From that time forward the work of organising, training and equipping the Volunteers to the best possible extent from the slender resources available was tackled with great energy.

Following the re-organisation of the General Headquarters of Oglaiġ-na-hEireann in 1917 which arose from the Convention held at Jones's Road, Dublin, the importance of an efficient intelligence service in the conditions that obtained was recognised. In consequence a Battalion Intelligence Officer and Company Intelligence Section-Commanders (or sergeants) were appointed and formed the Intelligence Unit in the Fourth Battalion and other Battalions throughout the Army up to the Truce of July, 1921 and subsequently. The Fourth Battalion Intelligence Officer during this period was Joseph Kinsella and his staff consisted of 10 Intelligence Officers with the rank of Section Commander one drawn from each Company; each such Section Commander had the assistance of 2 men from each of the 4 Sections of his Company.

An important improvement in the organisation of Oglaiġ-na-hEireann was the allocation in 1917 of a definite area to each Battalion and to each Company within the Battalion area. In 1919 the Fourth Battalion area extended from Portobello Bridge along the canal to Clondalkin, across country to Tallaght and Glencree, thence to Rathfarnham, along the Dodder river to Milltown and back to Portobello Bridge by Rathmines. This allocation suffered substantial alterations from time to time as new units came into operation, notably the 6th Battalion, and subsequently the 2nd Dublin Brigade, which took over part of the original Fourth Battalion area

extending from Tallaght to Glencree and thence to Milltown excluding Rathfarnham which remained in the Fourth Battalion area; in 1920 the Fourth Battalion area was adjusted and from then was restricted to the area bounded by and including Portobello Bridge, Camden Street, Eustace Street, South Quays to Kingsbridge, thence via the Phoenix Park to Blanchardstown continuing to Chapelizod then to Tallaght and Rockbrook returning to Portobello Bridge by Rathfarnham, Terenure, Rathgar, Highfield Road, Oakley Road and Mountpleasant Avenue.

The activities of "A" Company, and the other Companies of the Fourth Battalion during 1917 might be

summarised as follows:-

Protective duties at Elections:

Raids for arms and military material:

Purchase of arms and military material:

Field training including musketry.

The protective duties mentioned were on the occasions of the Roscommon, Longford and Clare Elections. The raids for arms produced a miscellaneous assortment of weapons some of which were of a sporting or souvenir nature and of little practical military value. The arms purchased were obtained from British soldiers but the quantity was relatively negligible. The field training was usually carried out at night and was mainly for the purpose of accustoming the officers and N.C.O.'s to command and the men to discipline and the handling of arms.

During 1918 "A" Company continued its training activities and furnished its quota of service in connection with the Armagh, Waterford and Cavan elections and the General Election held at the end of that year. In the spring of that year the British threatened to extend conscription for their Army to Ireland and in consequence open recruitment for the Irish Volunteers was resumed. As a result the nominal roll of "A" Company was trebled in common with the other Companies of the Fourth Battalion and with the organisation generally. Many of these recruits were concerned only with resisting the conscription threat and when that threat was removed their membership of the Irish Volunteers lapsed. But a very substantial proportion of the recruits were young men of an excellent type who had not previously appreciated the strength and purpose

of the Irish Volunteers and these men became in a short time a valuable addition to the force.

In May, 1918 in accordance with orders issued by General Headquarters Volunteer officers in the Dublin area were obliged to leave their homes as a general round-up of active Volunteers by the British following the discovery of an alleged plot with Germany was feared. This commenced the period of intensive activity by the British against the Volunteer officers as distinct from people who were prominent on the political side whether or not they were Volunteers. In fact the arrests by the British following the alleged German plot were largely confined to prominent politicians and prominent Volunteer leaders who were also active on the political side and the efforts to apprehend any appreciable number of active Volunteer officers were fruitless because of the anticipation of General Headquarters. This incident is significant to me as also indicating the first evidence of the efficient operation of the Irish Volunteers' intelligence service.

In July, 1918 the British authorities issued a Proclamation suppressing the Irish Volunteers, the Sinn Fein party and kindred organisations. The immediate effect of this Proclamation was to intensify the activities of these organisations and on the 15th August public meetings of the "suppressed" Sinn Fein organisation were held in Dublin under the protection of armed Volunteers. "A" Company provided armed protection for a meeting held in Townsend Street on that date; the Company had between 10 and 12 men on duty for the occasion all armed with revolvers but no attempt

was made by the police and military who were patrolling the city in military lorries to interfere with the meeting.

Late in September, 1918 the British threat to impose conscription reached a critical stage and the Dublin Brigade of the Irish Volunteers was regarded as on an active service footing. At this stage the nominal strength of "A" Company was in the region of 120 of which about 70 had received only nominal training. The other 50 had received a fair measure of training, including target practice with .22 rifles, and could have given, and did give later, a very good account of themselves. The armament of the Company at that time consisted of about 10 serviceable rifles, 5 shotguns, 3 .22 rifles, 20 revolvers and some hundreds of rounds of serviceable ammunition. These arms were the product of various raids on private houses, purchases from British soldiers and the small residue remaining in the possession of the Company after the 1916 Rising. At this period the Company paraded weekly in a hall at 34, Lower Camden Street and these parades were protected by patrols usually of one Section Leader and 3 Volunteers armed with revolvers but no incidents worth recording occurred.

In October, 1918 members of "A" Company and "C" Company, Fourth Battalion were detailed for a street attack on Lord French, then Lord Lieutenant, and his escort, on their way to Dublin Castle. This operation had the approval of General Headquarters but was abortive.

The occasion of the Armistice of the 11th November, 1918 terminating hostilities in France and other theatres of the first World War was taken by the pro-British element

in Dublin to stage anti-national disturbances and units of the Dublin Brigade, including "A" Company, Fourth Battalion, were detailed to provide armed protection for citizens and private property likely to be the victims of these disturbances. This was the first occasion on which it became necessary for the Company to undertake police duties in the sense of preserving public order and preventing crime but at a later stage the failure of the police forces maintained by the British to function in the discharge of normal police duties rendered it necessary for the Irish Volunteers to take over such duties.

On the occasion of the General Election in December, 1918/January, 1919 "A" Company participated in the general duties of protecting the electorate, candidates, polling booths and ballot boxes. On this occasion the Company formally paraded in public in the Company area for the first time since 1916 and operated from a local Headquarters which became known to the local police and to the British Intelligence Service. Undoubtedly in consequence the British Intelligence Service learned a good deal about the personnel, organisation and discipline of the Irish Volunteers in the Dublin Brigade area which was turned to account at a later stage but this was more than counter-balanced by the very good affect that this emergence into the open had on the morale of the citizens and the Volunteers themselves. From this stage onwards the Irish Volunteers were regarded much more in the nature of a National Army in the eyes of the public and less of a secret military organisation.

In May, 1919 I attended on invitation a Reception in the Dublin Mansion House arranged in honour of Messrs. Frank P. Walsh, Edward G. Dunne, and Michael K. Ryan, delegates appointed by an Irish Race Convention held in the previous February in Philadelphia, U.S.A., to claim a hearing for Ireland at the Peace Conference following the 1914-1918 world war. The proceedings were most enthusiastic and were attended, amongst others, by a number of Volunteer officers in uniform which had survived from the Easter Week Rising. Australian and other British colonial soldiers were keenly interested participants in the proceedings. Although a large number of British detectives were in the immediate vicinity on the occasion the Reception passed off without any noteworthy incident.

In the Summer of 1919 I received orders from Dublin Brigade Headquarters to test experimental hand grenades. I received two of these articles which were segmented metal cases, of approximately the same size as the standard Mills hand grenade in use at that time by the British Army; these cases were charged with gelignite and were fitted with standard detonators. The grenades were of the fusee type, i.e. instead of being detonated by a spring and internal striker device, as was the Mills grenade, they were detonated by igniting an external fuse by applying a lighted match or cigarette. I carried out the test at Glencree, Co. Wicklow, at dawn on a Sunday having spent the previous night in bivouac at that place accompanied by the officers and N.C.O.'s of "A" Company numbering about 15.



The test was satisfactory; each grenade was ignited and held until the fuse had caught and when thrown at the target exploded almost immediately. The test demonstrated that this type of hand grenade was an effective weapon within the limits imposed by the method of detonation. This type of grenade was the fore-runner of the hand grenade subsequently provided by General Headquarters which was similar in all respects to the standard Mills type including the spring and internal striking device for detonation and which was used so effectively in the street fighting and ambushes of 1920 and 1921. The experimental hand grenade deserves mention as, apart from the rather crude tin can grenade available during Easter Week, 1916, it represented, so far as my knowledge goes, the first effort to manufacture in this country an effective weapon of this nature.

Sometime in the Summer of 1919 (I cannot recollect the exact period) it became necessary for all members of the Irish Volunteers to take the Oath of Allegiance to the Irish Republic and to Dáil Éireann. The Oath was administered to me, at a meeting of Fourth Battalion officers, by Brigade Commandant Dick McKee and, in turn I administered it to the members of "A" Company. Only two members of the Company refused to take the Oath their grounds being that they objected to be bound by oath to what they stated they regarded as capitalist institutions. These two men were struck off the strength of the Company and one of them transferred to the organisation known as the Irish Citizen Army. The vast majority of Volunteers welcomed the development of the compulsory oath as giving them the status of soldiers of the Government of the Irish Republic.

The period from April, 1919 to the end of that year witnessed intensification of the intelligence organisation in the Irish Volunteers. The Fourth Battalion Intelligence Officer (Joseph Kinsella) held frequent meetings at regular intervals with the various Company Intelligence Officers and sifted the intelligence so collected before passing it on to the Battalion Commandant or to the Dublin Brigade Headquarters. During this period arms dumps were located in suitable places in each Company area, officers and prominent Volunteers evaded capture by remaining away from their homes and a Volunteer police force, as distinct from the intelligence service, was established in each Company area. This police force was a necessary development as the British police force, the Dublin Metropolitan Police, with the exception of some members of the Detective Branch, had become largely inactive and the Royal Irish Constabulary were rapidly becoming useless for ordinary criminal work.

During 1919 the training of "A" Company continued and the collection of arms and equipment by way of raids and purchase proceeded. Recruits were accepted but only men who were known personally to trustworthy members of the Company were enlisted. This practice of restricting recruitment was that followed generally by the other Companies in the Fourth Battalion and Dublin Brigade at the time and was in accordance with G.H.Q. policy. During this year "A" Company supplied its quota of armed patrols and carried out protective duties including the premises in which the Fourth Battalion Council met each week.

Arising from the failure of the British police forces to maintain law and order and in pursuance of the policy for the forces at the disposal of Dáil Éireann to take over the functions of government as far as possible it became necessary from 1919 onwards for the I.R.A. to engage in ordinary police duties and to establish summary tribunals to keep the criminal element in check. At first these police duties were carried out in the Fourth Battalion area by the Battalion Intelligence Officer (Joseph Kinsella) with the assistance of the members in each Company specially detailed for intelligence work. But as the situation developed volunteers were specially detailed for police duties. In the Fourth Battalion area the principal criminal activities were in the nature of armed robbery and the stealing of cattle. Persons arrested by the Volunteer police for such serious offences were lodged in premises in the Tallaght area and kept under armed guard pending trial. The trials were carried out by Battalion officers and, as imprisonment was out of the question, punishment for very serious offences usually consisted of flogging or deportation. I acted as prosecutor in several cases which were disposed of by flogging or deportation which were found to be the only effective means of keeping serious crime in check.

On the 26th January, 1920 a fire occurred at Rathmines Catholic Church which left only the shell of the building standing. The Clerk of this Church was at that time a member of "A" Company and he acted as assistant to the Company Quarter-master. In pursuance of his military duties he utilised some of the vaults in the Church as a "dump" for the major portion of the Company's

arms and equipment. When the fire occurred there was a miscellaneous assortment of rifles, revolvers, ammunition, hand grenades and military equipment in the vaults. When I arrived at the scene of the fire shortly before 9 o'clock in the morning the Dublin Fire Brigade had not yet succeeded in getting the fire under control and I found that several members of the Company, who were aware of the position, had entered the building at great personal risk, made their way to the vaults and were engaged in removing the dumped arms and ammunition to places of safety. Apart from the considerable danger arising from the fire there was the hazard that military and police cordons had to be negotiated. It is significant that though many members of "A" Company were aware of this incident and the particulars had to be reported through Battalion and Brigade Headquarters to General Headquarters there was no leakage of information which, in the circumstances, might have had embarrassing re-actions. The cause of the fire was the fusing of electric wires and it was entirely accidental the dumped arms and ammunition having nothing whatever to do with the fire. I should also mention that I and other officers of "A" Company frequently slept in Rathmines Catholic Church when ordered to remain away from home to evade arrest.

Early in 1920 (it may have been late in 1919) orders were issued by the Headquarters, Dublin Brigade, to the effect that each Company Commander was to nominate two efficient Volunteers to be posted to an Active Service Unit for whole-time employment in the Dublin area on a paid basis. "A" Company, Fourth Battalion duly

sent forward two Volunteers (Patrick Collins and George Nolan) who were accepted and served in the Active Service Unit of the Dublin Brigade until the Truce of July, 1921. It seems to me to be desirable to record this development as it establishes that the men who formed the Active Service Unit were generally representative of the Volunteers serving in the Dublin Brigade, that they were selected because they were good soldiers who had proved themselves as Volunteers and not because they were "gun-bullies" or particularly tough characters as the more imaginative fiction writers have assumed. I also record this incident because it represented the birth of a paid military organisation which later developed into permanent Army and is, therefore, of special historical significance.

In March, 1920 I was arrested by British Military in my home at 31, Effra Road, Rathmines. The Military party arrived in a motor lorry about 1.00 a.m. and consisted of an officer of junior rank, a sergeant and 6 or 7 privates. The officer asked for me by name and made a thorough but ineffective search of the house. I was taken in the lorry to Rathmines Police Station and from there to Portobello Barracks. After remaining for an hour or so in Portobello Barracks I was taken out as a hostage on a military lorry patrol and was warned by the officer-in-charge as to my fate in the event of the lorry being attacked. The patrol eventually deposited me at the Bridewell where I was left for three days without food. I was then removed by the British Military by motor lorry to Mountjoy Prison and was again warned that I was regarded as a hostage.

On these occasions the attitude of the British military officers towards me was threatening and insulting though the N.C.O.'s and privates were disposed to be friendly; in general my experience at this time was that the British junior officers were extremely prejudiced against the Irish people and accepted without question the vicious British political propaganda while the "other ranks" gave the impression that they were carrying out a distasteful duty with the least personal effort possible.

Some days after my arrival in Mountjoy Prison the political prisoners, of which there were about 80, decided to go on hunger strike. None of these prisoners had been charged with any offence, though charges were pending against some, and many had been imprisoned for several weeks. There were two schools of thought among the prisoners; one considered that the strike should be for the purpose of enforcing unconditional release while the other considered that the declared aim should be treatment as prisoners-of-war. The view of the latter section, which was composed entirely of volunteers, prevailed and a demand for prisoner-of-war treatment made on the Governor of the Prison by the Senior Volunteer Officer - Peadar Clancy - being refused the prisoners went on hunger strike. The strike was successful and after 11 days abstention from food I, and the other prisoners concerned, were released. I spent 7 or 8 days in the Richmond Hospital, Dublin, recuperating and left there when an order was received from Dublin Brigade Headquarters indicating the risk of immediate re-arrest by the British military authorities.

Peadar Clancy, the officer commanding the prisoners during the 1920 hunger strike in Mountjoy Prison, was a man of outstanding character who inspired feelings of confidence and loyalty in the prisoners. Subsequently he became Vice-Brigadier of the Dublin Brigade and on the 21st November, 1920 with Brigade Commandant Dick McKee and Conor Clune he was murdered by British forces while a prisoner in Dublin Castle.

In April, 1920 following my discharge from the Richmond Hospital I was sent by Dublin Brigade Headquarters to Oldcastle, Co. Meath, for the dual purpose of completing my restoration to health and to re-organise the Irish Volunteers in that area. I found a general apathy in the area; the Volunteer officers were inactive and as there was no British military post and the local Royal Irish Constabulary were relatively inoffensive there was no incentive to the bulk of the Volunteers to attend parades and press on with training. I also found, however, a small core of determined men of the very best type amongst the Volunteers and it was around this small nucleus that the re-organised North Meath Battalion was eventually built. This small core took heart from the interest shown by General Headquarters in Dublin and quickly got the Volunteer organisation in the area into operation again. One of this small body was a Volunteer Officer named Keoghegan who constantly expressed himself as strongly dissatisfied with the poor efforts being made by North Meath in the national struggle. In order to revive the fighting spirit of the men in the area Keoghegan organised an ambush of a British military lorry patrol on the road

to Kells which was not successful and he lost his life in the effort. It was this sacrifice which was the main factor in resurrecting the Irish Volunteers in the Oldcastle area and not the small assistance on my part which, in the circumstances, had to be restricted to drill and lectures. Another of this small body was an ex-clerical student who from over-strain developed a nervous affliction which rendered it impossible for him to be ordained; this young man took an intense interest in the national struggle and also suffered a tragic fate. At a later stage when the Auxiliaries and Black and Tans were operating in the area this clerical student hearing a drunken party in military lorries passing along the road in the vicinity of his home one night, singing and firing indiscriminately, became alarmed and left the house in his night attire to escape across the fields only to be riddled with bullets and to die in a ditch where his remains were found next day.

Oldcastle is a centre of some importance but the British could not establish a military post there in 1920 for the reason that there was no suitable accommodation available. Such accommodation had been available in the Workhouse buildings which were in fact used as an internment Camp for German civilians during the 1914-1918 war but these premises were deliberately destroyed by fire before they could be re-occupied by the British. This action was taken by Charles Fox, a local merchant, on his own initiative. Mr. Fox, though not a member of the Irish Volunteers, was an associate of the pioneers of the Sinn Fein political party notably Arthur Griffith and James Dolan and possessed the full confidence of the local Volunteers.



I spent a fortnight in Oldcastle and on my return to Dublin reported back to the Fourth Battalion and was re-employed as Battalion Adjutant and later as Battalion Training Officer.

Since my arrest at 31, Effra Road, Rathmines, in March, 1920 I was unable to return home being "on the run" or in prison from that time onwards.

In the summer of 1920 the Fourth Battalion organised a raid on the Customs House, Dublin, which was approved by Dublin Brigade Headquarters. The operation was in charge of John Joyce, the Captain of "C" Company. The object of the raid was to dis-arm the British military guard. I was present when the raiding party gathered in the vicinity but the action had to be called off as there had been a radical change in the disposition of the British troops protecting the building which rendered the operation impracticable.

In the early summer of 1920 orders were received from G.H.Q. of the I.R.A. to the effect that serviceable rifles in the possession of the various Companies in the Fourth Battalion were to be handed up for transfer to the flying columns operating in country areas. The rifles in the possession of "A" Company were brought to a central dump in Rathmines and transferred in daylight to a depôt in the vicinity of Cork Street from whence they were removed to the country. The transfer to Cork Street was carried out by an armed party provided by "A" Company travelling in a motor car and, as the area was patrolled by British military, there was considerable risk in the operation. About 12 rifles and some ammunition were handed up by "A" Company for the purpose mentioned and the transfer, of which I was in charge, was completed without incident.

The first noticeable activity of the "Black-and-Tans" in the Fourth Battalion area was a raid on the house of a prominent member of "A" Company who resided in Templeogue. This raid occurred in September, 1920 and the Volunteer concerned was Valentine Forde who had staying with him at the time another prominent member of the same Company named James Morrissey. The raiding party was in charge of the notorious Captain Hardy and though neither Volunteer was subjected to actual physical violence they were threatened with revolvers and shots were fired in an unsuccessful effort to make them divulge information as regards the personnel, organisation and activities of their unit. Captain Hardy knew the rank and Company of each of these Volunteers and in the course of his interrogation revealed to them information which he had in regard to local Volunteer activities which indicated that the British Intelligence Service at the time was very highly organised and dangerously efficient.

Up to October, 1920, when I was transferred to the Tyrone Brigade, the Fourth Battalion was organised into eight Companies, viz:- "A", "B", "C", "D", "E", "F", "G" and "H" Companies. Roughly the districts allotted to each Company within the Battalion area were as follows:-

- "A" Co: Rathmines, Rathgar and Terenure.
- "B" Co: South Circular Road.
- "C" Co: Harold's Cross and Thomas Street.
- "D" Co: Dolphins Barn.

"E" Co: Rathfarnham.  
"F" Co: Inchicore.  
"G" Co: Clondalkin.  
"H" Co: South Circular Road.

The Fourth Battalion was re-organised towards the end of 1920 the areas allocated to each Company (of which there were now 10) being as follows:-

"A" Co: Rathgar, Terenure, Harold's Cross, Crumlin.  
"B" Co: South Circular Road.  
"C" Co: Portion of South Circular Road and Thomas Street.  
"D" Co: Dolphin's Barn.  
"E" Co: Rathfarnham.  
"F" Co: Inchicore.  
"G" Co: Rathmines, Harold's Cross and Kimmage.  
"H" Co: South Circular Road.  
"I" Co: Portion of Inchicore, Bluebell, Fox and Geese, Chapelizod, Blanchardstown.  
"K" Co: Crumlin, Templeogue and Dolphin's Barn.

The Battalion and Company organisation differed very little from that of the period previous to the 1916 Rising except in the very important respect that it provided for an intelligence service.

In October, 1920 I was transferred from Dublin to the Tyrone Brigade with instructions to report to Commandant F. J. Doris, Clogher, Co. Tyrone, and assist in the re-organisation of the I.R.A. in that area. I had taken up employment as Manager of the Fort Co-operative Agricultural Society, Augher, Co. Tyrone, and very shortly after my arrival I contacted Commandant Doris. I found that the local I.R.A. was an organisation in name only and consisted of Commandant Doris and a few equally loyal and devoted soldiers. These men were in a hopeless minority, had no arms of any consequence and very little training. A large local Catholic element seemed as bitterly opposed to these few men as the predominant Protestant element and in consequence the local Royal Irish Constabulary had the situation well in hand. About three weeks after my arrival I was visited by an organiser from G.H.Q. (whose name I cannot recollect) and arising from this visit Commandant Doris set about arranging to ambush a British military and police patrol on the road to Dungannon. I did not take part in the ambush except to the extent of keeping custody in the Store premises of two hand grenades. The ambush took place but there were no casualties nor was any damage caused to the vehicles in which the patrol was travelling.

In December, 1920 I was arrested by the Royal Irish Constabulary and taken to Aucknacloy R.I.C. Barracks and the next day was transferred to Derry Prison via Dungannon.

As was customary at the time I was informed by the District Inspector that I was a hostage to be shot in the event of the R.I.C. party being attacked. This Ferris was involved in the murder of Lord Mayor MacCurtain in Cork and later was executed; beyond the reference to my being a hostage, and that polite enough in the circumstances, my treatment by Ferris was very fair. In Auchnacloy R.I.C. Barracks where I spent one night the garrison consisted of a mixed collection of R.I.C., Black-and-Tans and Auxiliaries and I found them considerate and friendly. I remained in Derry Prison until February or March, 1921, when I was transferred to Ebrington Barracks, Derry, for two or three weeks and then sent to Ballykinlar Camp, Co. Down, for internment.

During my term in Derry Prison I was the Senior Officer of the prisoners for a period and during that period I assisted the internal arrangements for the escape of Frank Carty. There was, of course, co-operation from one of the warders and the escape was effected by Carty cutting out the bars of his cell window, dropping to the ground, throwing a string to which a weight was attached over the prison wall which was caught by one of a party of Volunteers outside; a rope was attached to this string which was then drawn back by Carty who then clambered to freedom. A small item in this connection is of interest. When Carty was cutting the bars in his cell window he found it impossible to camouflage the saw cuts and was in constant fear that some prison official would notice the cuts; the fear was a very real one as there was no doubt amongst

the prisoners that if Carty did not escape he would be executed. The solution of this problem was simple but, strange to say, it was the subject of a great deal of deliberation and the attempt to escape was on the point of being abandoned before the inspiration came to some one of the prisoners to suggest using ordinary black boot polish to plug the cuts and this proved successful.

I was released from Ballykinlar Internment Camp in December, 1921 immediately following the signing of the Anglo-Irish Treaty and on my return to Dublin rejoined the Fourth Battalion and was employed as Battalion Training Officer retaining my rank of Captain.

Conclusion.

From the purely military aspect my view was, and is, that far greater use could have been made of the military effectiveness of the Irish Volunteers in the 1916 Insurrection than was the case. In fact outside the immediate area of the General Post Office the Irish Volunteers were an unbeaten force when ordered to surrender, the general morale was high and the surrender was a bitter disappointment. It is true that the same ending was inevitable and that very substantial losses in life and property would have occurred if hostilities had been continued. Though events clearly demonstrated that the decision to surrender was wise and was adequately justified on political and humanitarian grounds the strict military situation alone did not justify that step at the time it was taken.

The military leadership in the 1916 Insurrection did not, in my view, compare with the leadership in the

subsequent period. Outside the Ashbourne and Boland's Mills areas there were no indications that the senior officers possessed any outstanding military ability. In consequence relatively large bodies of Volunteers with substantial supplies of arms and equipment were placed in posts where they could not make a contribution in any way commensurate with their real effectiveness and the British were left with the easy task of reducing these posts at their choice.

The principal faults in the organisation of the Irish Volunteers prior to the 1916 Insurrection were the absence of an Intelligence Service, faulty communications and failure to thoroughly brief junior officers in regard to the tasks allotted them. The organisation did, however, produce a very high standard of discipline and esprit de corps.

In the post 1916 period the military leadership and organisation was of a much higher standard not altogether due to the experience of the 1916 fighting but largely to the emergence into leadership of men who possessed good soldierly qualities. In consequence very full use was made of the effectiveness of the Irish Volunteers during this period and the old standard of discipline and esprit de corps was maintained.

(Signed)

*H.S. Murray*

(H.S. Murray.)

June, 1951.

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
BURO STAIRE MILEATA 1913-21
No. W.S.

Appendix.

(1)

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

BURO STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21

No. W.S.

Names of Irish Volunteer Officers who held the rank indicated in the Fourth Battalion, Dublin Brigade, during some time in the period September, 1916 to July, 1921.

Battalion Commandant.

D. French-Mullen (acting)

Seamus Murphy

Liam Clarke (acting)

Michael Lynch (acting)

Joseph McGrath (acting)

Ted Kelly

John Dowling

Battalion Vice-Commandant.

Liam Clarke

Michael Lynch

Joseph McGrath

Peadar O'Brien

Christopher Byrne

Battalion Adjutant.

Gerald F. Murray

Henry S. Murray

John Dowling

Sean O'Shaughnessy

Battalion Quarter-master.

Thomas Doyle

F. Lambe

R. O'Neill

Battalion Intelligence Officer.

Joseph Kinsella

Vincent Fouvargue



Battalion Staff Officers.

Liam Byrne

Patrick Egan (Cyclists)

James Morrissey

W. White (Signals)

Sean Moore (Transport)

Names of the Irish Volunteer Officers who were Captains of the Companies indicated during some time in the period September, 1916 to July, 1921.

"A" Company.

Seamus Murphy

Henry S. Murray

P. Walsh

Louis McDermott

A. T. Walsh

Sean Tracey

"B" Company.

Sean O'Shaughnessy

James Dempsey (also known as Seamus McDonagh)

Ben Brady.

"C" Company.

Garry Byrne

John Joyce

Pat O'Brien

"D" Company.

D. ffrench-Mullen

Joseph McGrath

Liam O'Brien

T. Doyle

"E" Company.

F. X. Coghlan

"F" Company.

Christopher Byrne

James Donnelly

"G" Company.

Sean McCurtain

Paddy Coughlan

Frank Dowling

"H" Company.

Michael MacCormack

Sean Connolly

Note: Above particulars should not be regarded as complete or accurate. There are obvious omissions and the list represents no more than a best effort to recall the position after a lapse of 30 years.

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
BURO STAIRE MILEATA 1913-21
No. W.S. 601