

W.S. 602

**ORIGINAL**

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

BURO STAGE MILITA 1913-21

No. W.S. 602

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

**STATEMENT BY WITNESS**

**DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 602** .....

**Witness**

Cornelius Connolly,  
Lissenhuig,  
Skibbereen,  
Co. Cork.

**Identity.**

V/O.C. and O.C. 4th (Skibbereen) Battalion;  
Member, Cork Brigade Flying Column.

**Subject.**

- (a) National activities, Skibbereen, 1916-1921;
- (b) Formation of Sinn Fein Branch, Skibbereen,  
1917.

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

Nil

File No. **S.1882** .....

Form B.S.M. 2

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CORNELIUS CONNOLLY, LISSENHUIG, SKIBBEREEN,  
CO., CORK, O.C., 4TH (SKIBBEREEN) BATTALION,  
CORK III BRIGADE.

Following on Easter Week, 1916, the four months from June to September were spent mostly on Sundays by myself and eleven others collecting for the National Aid Fund. Among these were James, John and Jerh. Duggan, Diarmuid Lynch and Sonny Goggin.

About June, 1917, we started a Sinn Féin Branch and we had about thirty members who all belonged to the Skibbereen Company of the Volunteers.

Michael Collins came to the town in August, 1917, and Count Plunkett came on the same day. There was a big parade and about 3,000 came to view it. This was the first day the Volunteers marched through Skibbereen. Barney O'Driscoll, now the owner of Killaloe Slate Quarries and then a farmer at Skibbereen, was the first Commanding Officer of the district. Tadgh O'Sullivan was the first Company Captain. By the time the Truce came Skibbereen Company numbered 70.

In December, 1917, Mr. De Valera came to the town. The organisation was going on all the time and parades through the town were taking place.

At both the Collins' and De Valera meetings there were mounted as well as marching men on the parade. I was in charge of the mounted parade on each occasion. These meetings were the biggest asset to Skibbereen as far as the military and political sides were concerned.

In 1917, too, we destroyed the printing plant of the "Skibbereen Eagle".

In April and May, 1918, we commenced raiding for arms. With Tadgh O'Sullivan and Paddy O'Sullivan (no relations), the latter of whom was Battalion Quartermaster, we carried out raids principally on loyalist homes. We got some shot-guns and no ammunition. I was arrested on the 4th July, 1918, and was held, respectively, in Cork Gaol, Mountjoy Prison, Belfast Prison and Manchester Prison. On the 25th October, 1919, I escaped from Manchester along with Austin Stack, Piaras Beasley, Paddy McCarthy of Charleville, D.P. Walsh, Fethard, and Sean Doran, Co. Down. The full account of this escape is given in the "Southern Star" for 12th December, 1936. I arrived home in time for Christmas, 1919.

In July, 1920, we carried out an unsuccessful ambush, near Brade, one mile west of Leap; in West Cork. I attended a Flying Column Training Camp at Kealkil in November, 1920, and at Schull a week after. Tom Barry was in charge of each.

From October to December, 1920, we were collecting for the arms fund and the levy was 4/- per cow. Where the money was refused the cattle were seized. When that happened in a couple of cases it very soon made the others pay up.

Altogether from about the end of 1919 my house was raided about twenty times by British forces and finally on the 9th March,

1921, it was burnt down by Auxiliaries and Black and Tans. We had several unsuccessful ambushes at Leap. Also, we laid in wait for Jasper Wolfe, the Crown Prosecutor in Skibbereen. However, he is still alive.

I took part in the West Cork Column attack on Rosscarbery Barracks, the details of which are given in Tom Barry's book.

I remember lying in wait at Ahichill for a troop train and for enemy lorries at Culloghboy, west of Drimoleague. In neither case did anything happen. However, to make up for that I remember we had an ambush at Hollybrook - about one mile out of Skibbereen - where one Tan was killed and another was wounded.

In the early Summer of 1921 we burned down both Skibbereen Courthouse and Workhouse to prevent their occupation by enemy troops. The last skirmish we had with the British before the Truce was at Rosscarbery on the last Saturday of June, 1921, where about four or five Auxiliaries were killed. The Column at this fight consisted of about 50. There was an ambush in Skibbereen, however, where a policeman was shot. He was Chief Intelligence man to the British and was very much wanted by us. Tadgh O'Sullivan and myself were on this job and I think these were the last shots fired in Skibbereen before the Truce as distinct from the bigger fight just mentioned.

Signed: *Seamus Connolly*

Witnessed: *A. J. Quinn, Lt Col.*

Date: *30th October 1951*

