

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

BURO STAIRE MILEATA 1913-21

No. W.S. 686

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COSANTA.

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 686

Witness

Seán Healy,

Station House,

Blackrock, Co. Dublin.

Identity.

1st Lieutenant, A. Company, 1st Battalion,

No. I Cork Brigade.

Subject.

Dillon's Cross, Co. Cork, Ambush, 1920.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil.

File No S.2703.

Form B.S.M. 2

ORIGINAL

THE BURNING OF CORK.

DUBLIN FIRE BRIGADE TO THE RESCUE.

HISTORY OF THE DILLONS CROSS AMBUSH.

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Cork was in the throes of the Anglo Irish war in December 1920. The Victoria Barracks was the Head Quarters of the Auxiliary Police Force, whose barbarous atrocities will never be forgotten by the Irish people.

The movements of this force were being carefully watched by the ever vigilant Intelligence Department of the Irish Republican Army. It was ascertained that two lorries of these marauders usually left the Victoria Barracks about 8.00 p.m. nightly, on raiding expeditions. Information was received by that several prominent I.R.A. officers were to be shot at sight and that some of the principal business houses were to be burned down, hence it was decided to take quick and determined action against the Auxiliaries.

A position was selected inside the boundary wall at Dillons Cross, situated about 200 yards from the Victoria Barracks, and fifteen picked men, were detailed to take part in the engagement.

At 7.30 p.m. on Friday night, December 10th 1920, the ambushing party took up their positions. A scout was placed on the roadway to signal the approach of the enemy, with instructions to give one blast of a whistle for each lorry of Auxiliaries which passed. After an apparently interminable hour of waiting and listening to the innumerable lorries of British soldiers which passed by, no scout whistle was heard. The expectant enemy did not approach. The Fates had favoured the Auxiliaries on that night. A council of the officers present was held when it was decided to defer action until the following night.

Owing to the close proximity of the position to the British Military Head Quarters, and the ever watchful eyes of the British Intelligence Department, it was subsequently arranged to reduce the strength of the Column to six men.

On the following night, Saturday, December 11th 1920, positions were occupied by the attacking party, who were armed with revolvers and Mills bombs. One man was detailed to act as Road Scout, two to attack the rear lorry, and three to attack the leading lorry.

As on the previous night several lorries of soldiers, passed to and fro, then suddenly a short shrill whistle sounded in the night air, quickly followed by a second blast, to the accompaniment of the droning of Crossley motor engines, and the boisterous voices of the Auxiliaries. These were the signals for action. Two words of command were spoken by the Commanding Officer - "Ready, Fire!". Immediately bombs were hurled at the lorries, followed by revolver shots. When the smoke had cleared away, wrecked lorries and wounded Auxiliaries could be seen on the roadway. Fifteen of the enemy were put out of action, which left an equal number to carry on the fight.

Revolver shots from the I.R.A. men replied to the Auxiliaries rifle fire. The din of the battle quickly reached the ears of the Garrison close by, who rushed to the rescue of their comrades. The small I.R.A. column realised that they could not hold out very long against hundreds of British troops, fully armed.

Under a regular fusillade of bullets from different points a successful retreat was made by the attacking party. The chaotic rattle of machine-gun firing, the flares of the search lights, and the bays of blood hounds, told of the extensive search that was being carried out to try and capture the I.R.A. column, which had disappeared without leaving any trace behind.

Then followed the crowning act of frightfulness; the whole force of Auxiliaries, accompanied by "Black and Tans" and soldiers were let loose in the city. Utterly out of control the military and so called police, sacked plundered and burned the principal shops, the City Hall, and several public buildings. The doors of numerous private dwellings were smashed in, their occupants dragged forth and beaten. Neither old or young were spared. Children were squealing in terror while their parents were being brutally beaten and their homes given over to the flames. Drink was looted from licensed premises, before setting fire to them.

While these orgies were still in progress the "Black and Tans" broke into a dwelling house in Dublin Hill, and murdered two brothers named Delaney in their beds, at the same time wounding their father.

Some extent of the conflagration, the ruin, and destitution, can be judged by the action of the Civic Authorities, who found it necessary to summon assistance from the Dublin Fire Brigade, the local Brigades being unable to subdue the flames. The Metropolitan Brigade heroically responded to the call, and arrived in the Southern Capital, by a special train next day, where there was still hours of strenuous work awaiting them. Finally British War tanks, recently transported from the battlefields

Flanders, were brought into action, and in the name of "official reprisals" several houses of prominent I.R.A. officers, and sympathisers were demolished, including the Boundary Wall, at Dillon's Cross from which the attack was launched.

Thus ended one of the most dreadful yet glorious chapters in the history of the Anglo-Irish War.

Seos Óh Eaduyt

Br. Lieut

A. Co.

1st Btn

6th MI Bde

30/10/1948

Station House
6/2/48

Blackrock
Coblenz

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