

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21  
BURO STAIRE MILIATA 1913 21  
No. W.S. 787

W.S. 787

ROINN  COSANTA.

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 787

Witness

Con Meany,  
Rathroe House,  
Derrinagree,  
Banteer,  
Co. Cork.

Identity.

Captain Musherá (Co. Cork) Coy. Irish Vol's.  
1916;  
O/C. 7th Batt'n. Cork II Brigade post 1916;  
O/C. 1st Batt'n. Cork IV. Brigade, later.

Subject.

Activities of Irish Volunteers,  
North Cork, 1916-1921.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil

File No S.449

Form B S M 2

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ORIGINAL

|                                    |
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| BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21 |
| BORO STAIRS MILEATA 1913-21        |
| NO. W.S. 787                       |

STATEMENT

BY

MR. CON MEANY, M.C.C.,

RATHROE HOUSE, DERRINAGREE, BANTEER, CO. CORK.

O/C. 'I' COMPANY AND O/C. BATTALION POLICE, 1ST

BATTALION, CORK IV BRIGADE.

We who were on the run got home some time prior to Christmas, 1916, as interned prisoners were being released from Frongoch and then with the general release it was felt safe to show ourselves once more without fear of arrest. We had been on the run since Easter Week.

Then in the early Spring of 1917 re-organisation of the Volunteers commenced. This took the same form as before the Rising and was started when a number of us met under cover of night and decided to reorganise. The result was that that phase of reorganisation was complete by the early Summer of that year. Gradually the original four Companies were developed as the movement spread out and the formation of a Battalion with Staff completed the organisation.

The 17th Battalion was organised in the early Summer of 1917 as a Unit of Cork Brigade I.R.A. It originally consisted of eight Companies, with number increased to ten in 1920 and to eleven in 1921 during the Truce period. This organisation of the men of Millstreet Area into a Battalion of the I.R.A. at this period was merely a resuscitation of Companies moribund as a result of arrests and raids in the Area after the 1916 Rising.

The Battalion was originally organised as a Unit of the Irish Volunteers in 1914, after the disintegration of the Irish

National Volunteers. It was so painstakingly organised that it was considered by the Volunteer Executive as an Area ripe for development as a nucleus of organisation for the Areas of Duhallow and Muskerry. As a result of this, the Executive decided to send Patrick Pearse to Millstreet in 1915 to address a meeting of the public and a Convention of Volunteers. It is a significant fact that all those Volunteers attending that Convention, as well as others associated with them, were interned after 1916 and had to go on the run until the release of the internees at Christmas, 1916.

Herewith are the names of those interned and of those who escaped by going on the run:-

|                            |                                  |
|----------------------------|----------------------------------|
| <u>Jeremiah O'Reardon,</u> | <u>Corner House, Millstreet.</u> |
| <u>Michael O'Reardon,</u>  | " " "                            |
| <u>Jim Buckley,</u>        | <u>Church Street,</u> "          |
| <u>Pat Carmody,</u>        | <u>Main Street,</u> "            |
| <u>Jerry Twomey,</u>       | <u>Main Street,</u> "            |
| <u>Con Murphy,</u>         | <u>Ballydaly, Rathmore.</u>      |
| <u>Tim Murphy,</u>         | " "                              |
| <u>Liam Buckley,</u>       | <u>Kilcorney, Banteer.</u>       |
| <u>Con O'Callaghan,</u>    | <u>Mill Lane, Millstreet.</u>    |

Men on the Run.

|                          |                                 |
|--------------------------|---------------------------------|
| <u>C.J. Meany,</u>       | <u>Coolinaree, Millstreet.</u>  |
| <u>William Kelleher,</u> | <u>Drishanebeg, Millstreet.</u> |
| <u>James Hickey,</u>     | <u>Main Street, Millstreet.</u> |
| <u>Con Meany,</u>        | <u>Gurraneduff, Millstreet.</u> |

Jeremiah Reardon and Mr. Reardon were father and son. Jeremiah Reardon and James Buckley were old men and members of the Fenian Brotherhood.

When Cork 2nd Brigade was formed in 1919, the 17th Battalion became the seventh Battalion of the new Brigade. Owing to the loss of despatches in 1921 its number was changed to the first, which number it retained after the formation of the Cork 4th Brigade.

The 'lost' despatches contained the names of all the Battalion Officers, as well as the names of all the Officers of each Company in the Battalion. They were actually lost to the enemy as they were captured in a raid.

It will be realised that as a result of the post-1916 internments and raids, the difficulties of reorganisation in 1917 were greater than those in areas which had not been so forward nationally. Nevertheless, men were found in every Company Area to carry on the work and the names of those to whom credit must be given for the work of organisation are set down here.

LIST OF MEN WHO HELPED IN ORGANISATION  
OF THEIR RESPECTIVE COMPANIES.

(A)

Michael Reardon.  
Con Healy.  
Jack Regan.  
Matt Twomey.

James Hickey.  
Tim Healy.  
John O'Keefe.  
James Lucey.

Jerry Twomey.  
William Reardon.  
John Riordan.

(B)

Seán Buckley.  
John J. Hickey.

Con Rahilly.  
Daniel Hickey.

Jeremiah Corkery.

(C)

William Kelleher.  
Jeremiah Crowley.

Daniel W. Murphy.  
Michael Murphy.

Thomas Crowley.  
John Lehane.

(D)

William Fitzgerald.  
Daniel Barrett.

Daniel Kelleher.  
James Twohig.

John Buckley.  
John Moriarty.

(E)

Denis O'Brien.  
Denis O'Keefe.  
Denis Murphy.

Con Murphy.  
Bernie O'Sullivan.

John Noonan.  
Michael Lehane.

(F)

Daniel T. O'Riordan.  
Tim Condon.  
William Tarrant.  
Matthew Murphy.

Humphrey O'Donohoe.  
Batt Cronin.  
P.J. Murphy.  
Martin Dennehy.

Dan Moynihan.  
Michael Carey.  
Peter Lucey.

(G)

Denis Galvin.

Daniel Shine.

Pat Kelly.  
John Justice.

(H)

Jeremiah Long.  
Michael Sheehan.  
John Taaffe.  
Eugene O'Sullivan.

Denis Long.  
Denis Murphy.  
Denis Bride.  
Pat O'Sullivan.

Jeremiah Philpott.  
Jerh. D. O'Keefe.  
Tim O'Callaghan.  
Tim Riordan.

(I)

Con Meany.  
Tim C. Buckley.  
John Kelleher.  
Denis Buckley.

Denis C. Kelleher.  
John C. Buckley.  
John Kelleher.

Clement Kelleher.  
William Aherne.  
John D. Kelleher.

(J)

Patrick Healy.  
Pat O'Shea.  
John Pat Burke.  
Jer. Sheehan.  
Pat McSweeney.  
Tim Herlihy.  
Con Buckley.

Matt Kelleher.  
Con Barrett.  
Edward Twohig.  
Tim J. Kelleher.  
John McSweeney.  
Denis Barrett.

John T. O'Shea.  
Maurice Burke.  
Daniel P. Sheehan.  
Humphrey O'Sullivan.  
Michael Healy.  
Garrett Burke.

The strength of the Battalion was about 800 men on July 11th, 1921. The Battalion Staff on this date consisted of:-

COMMANDANT  
VICE COMMANDANT

C.J. Meany.  
Pat Healy.

|                |                   |
|----------------|-------------------|
| ADJUTANT       | Jeremiah Crowley. |
| QUARTERMASTER  | Tim Condon.       |
| COLUMN LEADER. | Jeremiah Long.    |

Company Staffs (and strengths) were :-

A. COMPANY. - as on 11/7/1921. On Roll 102.

|                |                    |
|----------------|--------------------|
| CAPTAIN        | Michael O'Reardon. |
| 1ST LIEUT.     | James Hickey.      |
| 2ND LIEUT.     | Jackie Regan.      |
| ADJUTANT.      | Jerome O'Connor.   |
| QUARTERMASTER. | Denis O'Riordan.   |

'B' COMPANY. - as on 11th July, 1921. On Roll 60.

|                |                   |
|----------------|-------------------|
| CAPTAIN.       | Seán Buckley.     |
| 1ST LIEUT.     | John J. Hickey.   |
| 2ND LIEUT.     | Jerh. Corkery.    |
| QUARTERMASTER. | Denis O'Sullivan. |
| ADJUTANT.      | John J. Hickey.   |

'C' COMPANY. - as on 11th July, 1921. On Roll 29.

|                |                   |
|----------------|-------------------|
| CAPTAIN.       | William Kelleher. |
| 1ST LIEUT.     | Dan W. Murphy.    |
| 2ND LIEUT.     | Seán Reid.        |
| QUARTERMASTER. | Philip McSweeney. |
| ADJUTANT.      | Mick Galvin.      |

'D' COMPANY. - as on 11th July, 1921. On Roll 84.

|                |                       |
|----------------|-----------------------|
| CAPTAIN.       | William Fitzgerald.   |
| 1ST LIEUT.     | Dan Kelleher.         |
| 2ND LIEUT.     | Tim O'Shea.           |
| QUARTERMASTER. | Jeremiah O'Callaghan. |
| ADJUTANT.      | Jeremiah O'Donoghue.  |

'E' COMPANY. - as on 11th July, 1921. On Roll 104.

|                |                    |
|----------------|--------------------|
| CAPTAIN.       | Denis O'Brien.     |
| 1ST LIEUT.     | John Noonan.       |
| 2ND LIEUT.     | Denis O'Keefe.     |
| QUARTERMASTER. | Bernie O'Sullivan. |
| ADJUTANT.      | Michael Lehane.    |

'F' COMPANY. - as on 11th July, 1921. On Roll 133.

|                |                   |
|----------------|-------------------|
| CAPTAIN.       | Daniel O'Riordan. |
| 1ST LIEUT.     | Daniel Moynihan.  |
| 2ND LIEUT.     | Matty Murphy.     |
| QUARTERMASTER. | Peter Lucey.      |
| ADJUTANT.      | Daniel McSweeney. |

'G' COMPANY. - as on 11th July, 1921. On Roll 74.

|                |                 |
|----------------|-----------------|
| CAPTAIN.       | Dan Shine.      |
| 1ST LIEUT.     | James O'Connor. |
| 2ND LIEUT.     | Patrick Kelly.  |
| QUARTERMASTER. | John Justice.   |
| ADJUTANT.      | Patrick Cronin. |

'H' COMPANY. - as on 11th July, 1921. On Roll 93.

|                |                    |
|----------------|--------------------|
| CAPTAIN.       | Jeremiah Philpott. |
| 1ST LIEUT.     | Michael Sheehan.   |
| 2ND LIEUT.     | Tim Riordan.       |
| QUARTERMASTER. | Denis Murphy.      |
| ADJUTANT.      | Jerh. D. O'Keefe.  |

'I' COMPANY. - as on 11th July, 1921. On Roll 69.

|                |                      |
|----------------|----------------------|
| CAPTAIN.       | Con Meany.           |
| 1ST LIEUT.     | Denis C. Kelleher.   |
| 2ND LIEUT.     | Jerome O'Sullivan.   |
| QUARTERMASTER. | Patrick D. Kelleher. |
| ADJUTANT.      | Maurice Finnegan.    |

'J' COMPANY. - as on 11th July, 1921. On Roll 67.

|                |                      |
|----------------|----------------------|
| CAPTAIN.       | Matthew Kelleher.    |
| 1ST LIEUT.     | Michael Healy.       |
| 2ND LIEUT.     | Humphrey O'Sullivan. |
| QUARTERMASTER. | Denis Twomey.        |
| ADJUTANT.      | Tim Kiely.           |

In explanation of the term 'On Roll' as shown with strengths for the Companies, it may be stated that each Company has a register of the names of all its members and the Battalion Staff had a copy of such register from all Companies. This register was referred to as a Roll, because a roll was called of all Sections, Half Companies or Companies when on parade.

From 1917 on bi-weekly parades were held by all Companies when men were drilled and trained in the use of firearms.

Equipment was made, arms and ammunition were collected and purchased. The Conscription threat of 1918 brought an influx of recruits to the ranks.

The year 1919 was slack and attendance at parades showed a falling off but the men whose names are on the foregoing list, and many of Volunteer rank, carried on through the period of apathy and finally succeeded in bringing the Battalion to such strength and efficiency as to make it a successful and thrustful fighting unit.

On the eve of Easter Monday, 1920, in compliance with a General Order to all Battalions, the vacated R.I.C. Barracks at Rathcoole was destroyed by Battalion Forces and the owner of a vacated R.I.C. Barracks at Cullen was compelled to personally occupy the building.

The following took part in the destruction of Rathcoole Barracks :-

'H' COMPANY.

O.C. J. Long, J. Philpott, Mick Sheehan, Jerh. D. O'Keefe, Denis Murphy, Tim O'Callaghan, John Taaffe, Eugene O'Sullivan, Pat O'Sullivan, Dan Coakley, Jack O'Keefe, Tim Riordan, Sylvester Murphy.

'I' COMPANY.

O.C. Con Meany, Denis C. Kelleher, William Aherne, Tim C. Buckley, Corns. O'Callaghan, William Fitzgerald, Clement Kelleher, Pat D. Kelleher, John C. Buckley, Dan Cashman, John J. Kelleher.

The whole of 'F' Company and a section from 'C' Company took part in compelling the owner to reside in Cullen Barracks and installing him there.

The success of the Dáil Éireann Loan 1919/20 in this district was largely due to the able assistance given by Battalion and Company Officers and men. Also the whole question of the



preservation of order, the protection of Republican Courts and the carrying out of Court Orders fell on them.

Owing to I.R.A. activities all R.I.C. from outlying Barracks were withdrawn and this left the "policing" of the whole area in the hands of I.R.A. forces.

The lawless element of the population, believing that the time was ripe for acts of lawlessness, tried to indulge in thefts and robberies. The peak point of this development resulted in the Ballydaly bank robbery, which occurred as follows :

On the 20th November, 1919, the officials of two Banks, the Munster and Leinster and the National Bank, Ltd., while on their way from Millstreet to Knocknagree fair were held up by masked and armed men at Ballydaly (which was in 'E' Company Area) and robbed of over £18,000.

The only arrest effected by the R.I.C. in connection with the robbery was the then Battalion Quartermaster but after a few days' detention he was released. The public believed that the Quartermaster's arrest was meant to bring discredit on the I.R.A. Organisation.

Acting on the instructions of the Brigade O.C., the Intelligence Section of the Battalion set itself to procure information which, being secured, eventually led to the arrest by the Battalion Forces of six men on April 24th, 1920. Two others wanted in connection with this crime were not at home when other forces of the Brigade called to their homes on that date. The Brigade O.C. was in charge of the party who carried out the arrests and presided at the I.R.A. Court which found five of the prisoners guilty of Armed Robbery.

Those convicted admitted their part in the robbery and at the interrogation which preceded the trial some also admitted that they were part of an armed gang who contemplated further robberies as well as murder. The whole gang, taking confederates into account, numbered about twenty.

The convicted prisoners were sentenced to deportation and about £10,000 of the money which was robbed was surrendered by the prisoners and handed over to the Banks. During the five days that the prisoners were in custody, three of them were spent approximately a mile from Millstreet R.I.C. Barracks.

Regarding the other men mentioned, one was captured in the September of that year by the Brigade Column, with the assistance of members of 'H' Company, while the other was never taken. Although it was known that these men had the bulk of the balance of the missing money, it was not recovered.

Prior to these arrests, the Brigade O.C. had several conferences with a small staff of Officers specially detailed for investigation work. The following comprised those who were on that Staff :

Comdt. C.J. Meany, Vice Comdt. P.J. Healy, Battalion Adjutant J. Crowley, Captain M. Reardon (A. Company) and C.T. Meany, O.C. I. Company.

Some of the deportees repeatedly disobeyed the sentence of the Court and returned to the district. This developed into a struggle between I.R.A. forces on one side and the criminal element of the population on the other and put a heavy strain on the Officers and men of the Battalion.

This searching and recapturing and deportation of the

sentenced men and others of the original gang who persisted in wrong-doing went on until late in the Summer of 1920. Even then the vigilance of the I.R.A. had to be increased, as hay, the property of some of the Battalion Officers, was maliciously burned and armed guards were posted to protect other haysheds likely to be attacked in this manner. The activities of the I.R.A. in this matter were, curiously enough, resented by a great number of people. This was due to the fact that the criminals had a wide circle of relatives. The work of the I.R.A. was difficult, dangerous and unpopular, but it was justified by its success and the final winning over of the people to the right point of view. The following is a list of those who took part in the arrest and guarding of the men who were arrested:-

'A' COMPANY: Captain M. O'Reardon, Wm. Reardon, James Riordan, Corn. Healy, James Hickey.

'C' COMPANY: Wm. Kelleher, Michael Murphy, Seán Reid, Tom Crowley, Danl. W. Murphy.

'E' COMPANY: Con. Murphy, Hugh O'Brien, James O'Sullivan, Bernie O'Sullivan, D. O'Keefe.

'F' COMPANY: Captain D. O'Riordan, H. O'Donoghue, Peter Lacey.

'H' COMPANY: Captain Jer. Long, Jer. Philpott, J. Callaghan.

'I' COMPANY: Captain Con Meany, Denis Kelleher, Con Callaghan, Tim Riordan, Con Riordan, John J. Kelleher, John D. Kelleher, Wm. Aherne, John Kelleher.

'J' COMPANY: Captain Matt Kelleher, Seán Healy, Ed. Walsh, Michael Healy.

All members of the Battalion Staff participated and practically all members of the Battalion shared in the searches for these prisoners and in the ambushes laid for enemy forces afterwards. Owing to the fact that the R.I.C. dare not venture more than a few hundred yards from their Barracks, and even the military who were stationed at the Carnegie Hall never ventured out except in strength, it was some time before any real fighting took place, but some members of the Battalion took part in operations outside the area.

The following took part in an attack on Rathmore R.I.C. Barracks in June, 1920 :

'E' COMPANY: Hugh O'Brien, Bernie O'Sullivan, John Noonan.

'F' COMPANY: H. O'Donoghue, R. Kiely.

'G' COMPANY: Denis Galvin.

The men of 'E' Company cut trenches to delay possible reinforcements.

Drominagh ambush occurred in 'G' Company Area on August 14th, 1920, when a British aeroplane made a forced landing at Drominagh. The Captain of 'G' Company, on hearing of the occurrence from his 2nd Lieutenant, sent a Volunteer of his Company to inform the Battalion Commandant, who got a cycling section of men from 'A' and 'I' Companies and came into 'G' Company. In the meantime, the O.C. of the Fourth Battalion arrived in 'G' Company Area and attacked the British protection party at 2 a.m. on the 15th August. The I.R.A. being then armed only with shotguns were unable to get close enough to the British. They killed the British sentry but were then driven to retreat, a number being wounded. Twelve members of 'G' Company took part in the fight :

Pat Kelly, John Justice, James O'Connor, John Kelly, Thomas Kelleher, Con. Hartnett, Con. Horgan, Denis Herlihy, Tim Riordan, Jer. Cronin, Con Cunningham, Denis Galvin, and four felled trees to barricade the roads :

Jer. O'Connell, Daniel J. Kelleher, Daniel Cunningham, Peter Ambrose.

In the attack on Mallow Barracks, September 28th, 1920, Vice Comdt. P.J. Healy and Seán Healy of J. Company took part.

At Ballydrocane ambush, October, 1920, Denis Galvin and the above-mentioned sixteen men of 'G' Company took part.

At Millstreet town, November 22nd, 1920, the military stationed there were withdrawn early in October, 1920, and the R.I.C. were strengthened by a number of Black-and-Tans . The latter tried on their arrival to start a campaign of terror. Civilians were held up often and beaten and any spare cash which they had on their persons was forcibly taken from them. As a result, the members of 'A' Company were constantly under arms and on protection duty each night during October and November, 1920.

On the night of the 20th November, as a result of a message received from the O.C. 'A' Company, the Brigade Column and a section of 'I' Company proceeded to Millstreet where the scouts of 'A' Company reported that a number of Tans, who had partly smashed up the contents of a shop in the Main Street, had retired to Barracks. After spending a few hours outside the town the Column and the Section from 'I' Company withdrew, the former to billet and the latter to their respective homes. However, it transpired that early on the morning of the 21st November the

Black-and-Tans returned to their work of destruction and tried to fire the house but the fire did not catch.

On the night of the 21st the Column and a number of men from the Battalion took up positions in the town but as none of the R.I.C. or Tans were visible on the streets the I.R.A. troops were withdrawn in the early hours of the morning of the 22nd.

The Column and men from the Battalion took up positions early on the night of the 22nd and a number of men armed with revolvers went into the Main Street and opened fire on some Black-and-Tans and R.I.C. A fight followed and the Column Quartermaster, Paddy McCarthy, was killed while one Tan was wounded.

The whole Battalion Staff and a large number of men (33) from 'A', 'B', 'C', 'E' and 'I' Companies took part.

On the night of November 23rd, the Brigade Column and a large number of men from 'E' Company took up positions to cope with any attempt at reprisals by the Tans, while 'I' Company in full strength were within a few hundred yards of the town to render assistance if required but the night passed quietly.

After the Millstreet fight a small Battalion Active Service Unit was formed, consisting of the Commandant Adjutant, Michael Riordan, Wm. Reardon, Con Healy, Denis Hickey, Jerome O'Connor, Con Meany and James Hickey. The strength of this Unit was subsequently increased by 32 more.

The following Column members were interned some weeks prior to the 12th July, 1921 :

H. O'Donoghue and John O'Leary.

The small A.S.U. referred to had constant touch with the

Volunteers in Millstreet until well in December but as the aggressive attitude of the Tans in regard to the civilian population ceased with the fight in November 22nd, nothing of note happened.

In January of 1921 the following bridges were destroyed: Keale Bridge over the Blackwater, Kilmeedy Bridge, Glantane Bridge, which was in Cork I Area, ~~Incheley~~ Bridge, Hollymount, Shamrock, Ahane, Small Keale Bridge, Sandpit House, Clonbanin, Drominagh, Rathcoole (2), Knockbrack, Kilmacurrane, and all bridges on G.S. Railway Line in Battalion Area were demolished in April, 1921. The Kerry Branch of the G.S.R. runs from East to West for a distance of 12 miles through the Battalion Area.

In January, 1921, the Officers of 'B' and 'E' Companies planned to attack and disarm one of the small parties of British military whom their I.Os. reported as travelling by train through the area. As this was an operation of major importance, the Battalion Column took charge and after lying in ambush each evening for about a week a train containing a party of military was held up and ambushed near Drishane on the night of February 11th, 1921. After a short fight, the military, who had some dead and almost the remainder wounded, surrendered. Fourteen rifles were captured, 500 rounds of .303 rifle ammunition and 14 sets of military equipment. To carry out this operation, a number of Volunteers armed with revolvers waited at Millstreet Station to board any East bound train on which a certain number of armed military might be travelling and get the engine driver to signal and stop at the appointed place. Other Volunteers, all armed, had positions taken up at Rathcoole Station to deal with any west bound train.

Two of the men from Rathcoole travelled each evening to the

next station, Banteer, in order to make observations and then return in the train to Rathcoole. It was a West-bound train which was eventually boarded and ambushed.

The train, or to be correct its engine was boarded by two Volunteers - Jack O'Keeffe and Dan Coakley - at Rathcoole Station which is about 3 miles East of the selected ambush position. These men, with drawn revolvers, informed the engine driver that he was to carry out their instructions or his life was forfeit.

Acting on those instructions the driver blew a whistle blast about a mile from the ambush position and the ambush party then placed a lighted carbide cycle lamp between the rails at the point selected to have the engine stopped. The engine overshot this mark by about 10 yards and the ambushes on each side of the embankments (the position was in what is known as a cutting) had to readjust their positions accordingly. Torches made from dry sacking and kerosine oil were then lighted and thrown down the slopes of the embankment, thus giving the attackers a clear view of the interior of the train. An N.C.O. and 13 military were together in one compartment. The Volunteer Battalion Commandant called on the military to surrender but the answer was a rifle shot from the train, which was immediately replied to by slug loaded shot-guns and limited rifle fire from the Volunteers. The Volunteers had only 4 regular Magazine .303 rifles and two single shot .303 rifles. The firing lasted about seven or eight minutes when the ambushed party shouted "We surrender". The Commandant then ordered "Stop firing". Firing then ceased but after an interval of about 30 seconds another shot was fired from the train and the Volunteers immediately resumed their fire. In less than a minute, in response to another shout of "We surrender" from the train the Commandant again ordered the Volunteers to stop firing



and the military were ordered to come out of the train and leave their arms. They then opened the door and those not seriously wounded came out as ordered on the Southern side of the train. A number were dying and one, at least, a Sergeant, was dead. While the troops were emerging from their compartment, a Lieutenant, who was apparently in hiding near the rear of the train, fired a revolver shot at the Eastern end of the ambushers' position, opened the door of his carriage and leaped out to the ground. He was fired at but although a diligent search was made under the train he managed to escape in the darkness.

The Volunteers then collected the arms, baggage, equipment and ammunition, administered first aid to the wounded military, helped them back on the train and departed to the accompanying shouts from civilian passengers of "Up the Republic".

There were not any Volunteer casualties.

The ambush at Clonbanin, March 5th, 1921, was a Brigade operation and took place in 'G' Company Area. All members of the 1st Battalion Column took part in the firing line.

All members of 'G' Company were on duty acting as guides, etc., for the various units in the fight. The total casualties of the ambushed force were 13 dead (including a Brigadier General) and 15 wounded, while the attackers had not one hit.

It appears that Active Service Units from Newmarket and Charleville Battalions, as well as a Kerry Brigade Column, in the early days of March, 1921, lay in ambush for a few days at a spot called the "Bower", three or four miles West of Rathmore, Co. Kerry. The object of this operation was to ambush and, if possible, capture some high ranking British Officer and his escort who were expected to return by that route from Co. Kerry.

In the early hours of the morning of March 5th, 1921, the O.C. of the 1st Battalion, A.S.U. received a message from Seán Moylan, who was then O/C. of the Newmarket Battalion, requesting to have as many as possible of the 1st Battalion Column proceed to Clonbanin with all due haste to help the other Columns in any engagement likely to arise.

The 1st Battalion Column was that morning quartered at Lackadotia which is about two miles South East of Millstreet town and roughly about eight or nine miles South of Clonbanin. Luckily the Column were already out of bed and at Battalion Column Headquarters when the message arrived at about 5.30 or 6.30 a.m. Horses and traps were immediately procured, and, still under cover of darkness, the Column, consisting of about 20 men, was driven to within three miles of Clonbanin where they arrived at about 8.30 a.m.

The Newmarket, Charleville and the Kerry men were already in position.

Before the 1st Battalion had time to occupy positions three British troop laden lorries, Westward or Kerry bound, drove through the ambush position which is on the Mallow-Killarney road.

Due to failure to explode some land mines which were laid on the road and also failure to fire a signal shot, the enemy went unmolested and apparently unaware that anything out of the ordinary was afoot.

At about 3 p.m. Signallers posted on an elevated observation point reported a convoy of five vehicles approaching from the Kerry direction. A few minutes later a troop laden military lorry drove into <sup>the</sup> position and when midway a Hotchkiss gun manned

by I.R.A. men opened fire on the men in the lorry. The lorry was put out of action and after a few rifle shots were exchanged all firing ceased. This lorry was apparently about thirteen or fourteen hundred yards ahead of the others who, unaware of the fate of their comrades, drove right in to the position in the following order: a lorry seventy yards behind a touring car with an armoured car within fifteen yards to the rear, and then another lorry 80 to 100 yards behind the armoured car. Lorry No. 2 was attacked by the Hotchkiss gun and the touring car attacked by rifle fire. Lorry No. 3 was also attacked by rifle fire. The Hotchkiss put lorry No. 2 out of commission, while the first two rifle shots put the tourer out of action. The last or No. 3 lorry coming under rifle fire was also put out of action. When the touring car was disabled the armoured car crashed into its rear and in an endeavour to get clear sank in the soft margin of the road. In the meantime, I.R.A. forces from both sides of the road kept firing on all vehicles. After a delay of some minutes the Vickers Gun in the armoured car got into action but the gunner failed to find accurate range and did not succeed in doing any damage, while the car remained stationary, apparently unable to move. After attack on lorry No. 2, the I.R.A. Hotchkiss got jammed and except for a few single shots did not take any further part in the engagement.

After about an hour's fighting the Hotchkiss and crew were ordered to retire: this was followed by a general withdrawal of all I.R.A. troops South of the road. This movement was not carried out until all enemy fire ceased and it was found that the armoured car, although stationary at a bend in the road, dominated the road along the whole length of the ambush position.

After the I.R.A. forces withdrew on the South side a small

party of enemy survivors, an Officer and six men, attempted to flank the I.R.A. forces still in position in the North side. After a sharp and short exchange of fire the attempt was broken up.

All enemy vehicles were put out of action, while the I.R.A. forces had not any casualties.

The Brigade had its Headquarters in the Battalion Area for several weeks during the Spring and early Summer of 1921, and for some weeks during the previous year. This threw a heavy strain on the Volunteers of 'E' Company, but a still heavier strain on 'H', 'I' and 'J' Companies as owing to intensive enemy activity a constant armed guard was on duty protecting the Headquarters Staff from surprise raids.

During the early portion of 1921 every Company had a number of damp proof dumps made for the storage of arms and ammunition, and 'H' Company had a large dug-out capable of accommodating over 20 men. This latter entailed a considerable amount of work for the men of that Company as they worked in shifts until the work was completed.

Dumps or Arms dumps were rectangular cases made of wood, covered with damp proof felt. They were about five feet long, two feet wide and two feet high with a shutter door on one end. These cases were usually built into a rough stone faced fence, shutter end outmost. The stones in the fence were so placed as not to attract attention.

The dug-out was made by excavating earth from a natural rise in the ground. This excavating was done by tunnelling. The floor, sides and roof were lined with timber, provision being

made for ventilation. The entrance and ventilation opes were camouflaged to prevent discovery. When completed the dug-out was a large underground room, capable of accommodating troops.

In May, 1921, a strong force of military was engaged in searching operations near the locality in which 'H' Company's dug-out was situated. As a result, however, of an attack with rifles by the then O.C., Jerh. Long, J.D. O'Keeffe and Jackie Taaffe from the rear, the search party broke up the whole encirclement of the dug-out and the search was abandoned.

On Whit Saturday and Whit Sunday, 1921, an unsuccessful attempt was made by the Column to attack either the R.I.C. at Millstreet or a detachment of military stationed at Millstreet Workhouse. It meant failure to make direct contact with the enemy due to the fact that both enemy parties kept to their respective Barracks.

About mid-May, 1921, 120 members of the R.I.C. Auxiliary forces took over and made Mount Leader House their Headquarters. This was an unoccupied mansion situated on its own grounds on a hill and was within half a mile of Millstreet R.I.C. Barracks.

This enemy force arrived by rail, the rail bridges being recently repaired. A large quantity of stores was left unguarded by them at Millstreet Railway Station on the night of their arrival.

The O.C. and 11 men of 'B' Company set fire to the wagons during the night and the whole quantity of stores was destroyed.

#### Burning of Millstreet Workhouse.

On the night of June 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1921, a number of men from 'A'

and 'B' Companies, acting on a general order, destroyed by fire the major portion of Millstreet Workhouse. The patients were transferred to the remaining portion before the fires were lighted. This building was only about half a mile from the Auxiliary Headquarters.

Rathcoole Ambush - June 16th, 1921.

This was a Brigade operation but being the 1st Battalion Area a large number of men from this Battalion took part both in the actual fight, which extended over a mile of the road, and also in the erection of barricades of types varying from felled trees to upturned farm carts and implements which were bound together with wire. Each section on barricade work was close to its position and under cover from dawn on that morning until about 6 p.m. that afternoon, when the fight started. As there was very intense enemy activity in the area at this period the men on the barricades were in as much personal danger as those in the actual ambush.

The Battalion Column, consisting of 56 men from 'B', 'C', 'D', 'E', 'F', 'G', 'H', 'I' and 'J' Companies took part in the actual ambush.

'B', 'C', 'D', 'G', 'H', 'I' and 'J' Companies supplied 76 men for the barricades.

At the site of the Rathcoole ambush the road runs almost directly East-West.

All I.R.A. Units to take part in the actual attack on enemy forces were mobilised before dawn in a wood overlooking the road from the South. This wood's Northern end was less than

400 yards from the proposed ambush position.

Five or six 5 to 7 lb. land mines were laid at different points during darkness on the road over which the Auxiliary R.I.C. used to proceed to Banteer Railway Station once or twice daily for supplies. The G.S.R. West of Banteer Station had previously been rendered impassable by the destruction by fire of the rail bridge over the river Finnow, which is about  $1\frac{1}{4}$  miles East of Millstreet Station. This demolition was carried out by I.R.A. forces some weeks prior to June 16th.

The Auxiliary convoy passed to and from Banteer twice on that day, but it was only after it went on the second journey to Banteer that the I.R.A. forces took up their positions for the actual attack. The attackers were divided into seven or eight sections, plus a number of small groups in positions selected to prevent outflanking of any section.

The enemy convoy consisted of four Crossley tenders.

On the return from Banteer late in the evening, all four tenders travelling from 200 to 400 yards apart entered the ambush position. Just as the rear tender entered the position a land mine was exploded under it and the section covering this position were about to rush it when Lewis Gun fire was opened on them by the crew of No. 3 tender which was about 300 yards ahead of the rear tender.

When the fight started all the Auxiliary forces leaped from their tenders and under cover of the road fence opened rifle and rifle grenade fire on the I.R.A. positions. The I.R.A. forces opened shot-gun and rifle fire from their positions behind fences which were from 50 to 70 yards South of the road and about 300

yards from the wood where they had been under cover all that day. Some of the occupants of No. 3 tender, about five in number, started to proceed in a Westerly direction along the road until they came in front of an I.R.A. section about a quarter of a mile West of the position of the mine damaged tender when a mine was exploded between three of their number, putting them out of action: the other two kept replying to the I.R.A. fire until both were eventually silenced. Further West a ding dong exchange of fire went on.

Due to some confusion on the Western flank of the I.R.A. forces and the fact that there were hardly any bends on the road capable of being enfiladed by the I.R.A., the I.R.A. forces retired after about half an hour's fight. The I.R.A. had not any casualties but the Auxiliaries had their complete transport put out of action as well as an undefined number of killed and wounded.

During the fight an enemy plane was seen flying in an Eastern direction and appeared to be not more than a mile distant from the scene of the fighting, but apparently the occupants were unaware that anything like a fight was on.

Mails were captured twice during the Anglo-Irish War - August, 1920, and March, 1921. The former operation was carried out by members of 'E' Company and the latter by the Column A.S.U., while members of 'A' and 'B' Companies took part in scouting operations.

From March, 1921, until the Truce, all Companies took part in organised signalling when enemy forces appeared in their respective areas. Horn blasts were used by day and lighted torches by night.



The principal dispatch riders up to the 12th July, 1921, were :-

- (i) From 1917 to 1920 - Con Healy and Wm. Reardon of 'A' Company.
- (ii) 1921 - Con Cremin of 'J' Company.
- (iii) John Kiely of 'A' Company was special dispatch carrier to the Column.
- (iv) Joe Kelly of 'B' Company delivered and took dispatches from trains.
- (v) From end of 1920 to Truce, Denis O'Riordan and Denis Kiely of 'A' Company.

All enemy posts in the area were situated in 'A' Company Area, that is, directly in or close to Millstreet town.

During the Truce period training camps were organised in each Company area. Each Company had the benefit of two weeks' continuous training and was mobilised four nights weekly for drills and special instruction.

A specially picked Unit of selected men from each Company got, in addition, seven weeks' continuous training and when the Barracks were taken over in February, 1922, all these men were drafted to various stations:- Mallow Divisional Headquarters, Buttevant and Ballyvonaire Brigade Headquarters and Millstreet Battalion Headquarters.

The following is a list of activities and events - 7th Battalion, Cork II Brigade, subsequently 1st Battalion, Cork IV Brigade :-

Spring, 1919: Lynch called to meet in conference Officers, Battalion and Company, at Jim Buckley's, Church Street, Millstreet.

April 3rd, 1920: General burning of evacuated R.I.C. Barracks.

" Lynch in Battalion Area end of March and early April.

May 21st, 1920: Tour of inspection.

June 20th, 1920: Lucas captured.

August 14th, 1920: Drominagh fight.

" 16th, 1920: Clancy and O'Connell killed.

" 18th, 1920: Funeral - Lynch and Moylan present.

October 4th, 1920: Capture of Mallow Barracks.

" 8th, 1920: Keim incident.

November 22nd, 1920: Paddy McCarthy killed in Millstreet.

February 11th, 1921: Train ambush.

March 5th, 1921: Clonbanin ambush.

March 14th, 1921: Nadd Round-up.

April 15th, 1921: Round-up of Musherá Area.

" 16th, 1921: Lynch and McNeilus arriving in Battalion Area.

" 17th, 1921: Troops fired on at Mauma Pass.

" 26th, 1921: Meeting for formation of Division at Kippagh.

June 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1921: Millstreet Workhouse burned by I.R.A.  
4-5 Movement of troops to Clydagh).  
6<sup>th</sup> Clydagh round-up.

June 16<sup>th</sup>, 1921: Rathcoole Ambush.

" 24<sup>th</sup>, 1921: Kilcorney round-up. M. Dineen murdered.

July 6<sup>th</sup>, 1921: Sniping Mount Leader. Column Mobilise.

" 7<sup>th</sup>, 1921: On way to West Limerick.

" 8<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup>, '21. In ambush in West Limerick.

The following explains the last two items:

As the result of a message from Brigade Headquarters received in the middle of the night, July 6<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup>, about 12 men of the 1st Battalion proceeded by car to Kingwilliamstown, now Ballydesmond, in the early afternoon of July 7<sup>th</sup>, where they joined up with other Brigade Column, Engineering and Signalling Units. After nightfall the whole force in a convoy of about 30 horse sidecars were transported to the Tournafulla area in West Limerick.

In ambush in West Limerick means that the whole Brigade Column and the West Limerick Column were in actual ambush positions on a road between Newcastlewest and Abbeyfeale on the 8<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> July when it was expected a convoy of British Military would pass. The name of the locality is Barnagh.

The Columns rested in billets on the 9<sup>th</sup> and were together less than a mile from the position on the 10<sup>th</sup>. The Columns left the ambush position at noon on the 11<sup>th</sup>, due to the Truce coming into force then.

Signed: Con Meany  
(Con Meany)

Witnessed: [Signature] LT.-COLONEL

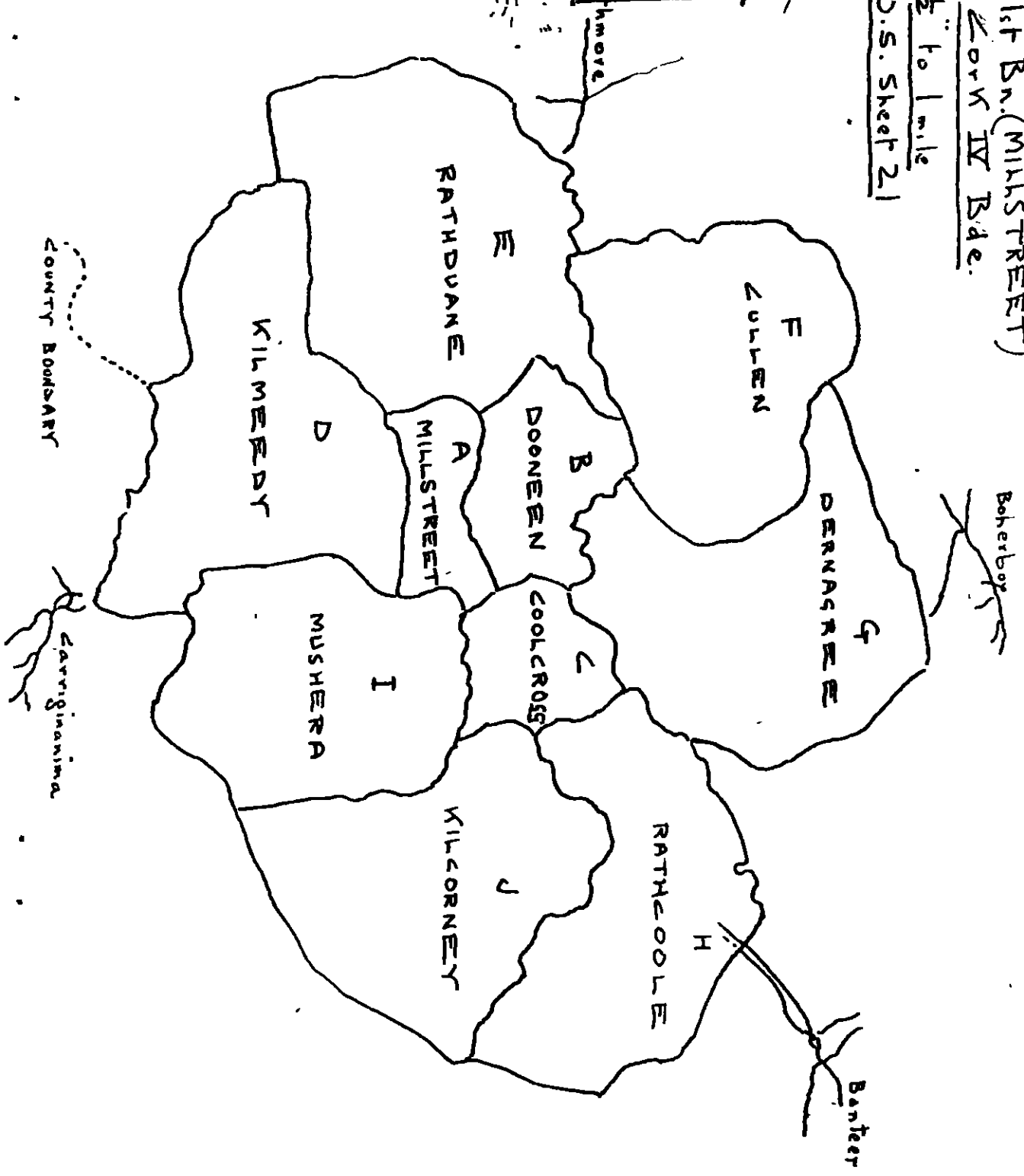
Date: 26<sup>th</sup> January 1953

(C. S. Smith)  
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1st Bn. (MILSTREET)  
CORP IV Bde.

2 to 1 mile  
O.S. Sheet 21



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