

W.S. 796
ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

BURÓ STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21

No. W.S. 796

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 796.....

Witness

Daniel Doody,
Balliniska,
Castlemahon,
Newcastle West,
Co. Limerick.

Identity.

Member of Feohanagh Company, Newcastle-West
Battalion, 1914 - ;

O/C. same Company and member 3rd Batt'n. A.S.U.
West Limerick Brigade, later.

Subject.

- (a) National activities, West Limerick, 1914-1921;
- (b) Execution of - Daly, spy, by I.R.A. in
Newcastle-West, Co. Limerick, June 1920.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil

File No. S. 2084.....

Form B.S.M. 2

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STATEMENT

BY

DANIEL DOODY, BALLINISKA, CASTLEMAHON,

NEWCASTLE WEST, CO., LIMERICK.

O.C. 'C' COMPANY (FECHANAGH), 3RD BATTALION

AND BATTALION A.S.U.,

WEST LIMERICK BRIGADE.

I was a member of the Gaelic League Branch in Feohanagh from 1910 on and continued in it until all Irish-Ireland organisation came under the ban. I joined the Irish Volunteers on their formation locally early in 1914 - about April. I was 23 years of age then. We had an ex-Army man training us. We carried out drills and parades principally. There must have been up to about sixty in the Company. At the time of the split in the Autumn of 1914 most of the chaps dropped out, only about a dozen remaining active.

We held on through 1915 without much increase in strength and so into 1916. On Easter Sunday the whole Newcastle West Battalion paraded at Glenquin Castle about four miles to the Abbeyfeale side. In our Company we had a couple of the Howth rifles but principally shot-guns were the arms. Charles Wall of the Square, Drumcollogher was in command.

On receiving word of the demobilisation order by Eoin MacNeill we disbanded and remained quiet during Easter Week as there were no orders coming. The police did not interfere with us after the Rising, but Charlie Wall was arrested and interned. Our arms were safe.

At the end of 1916 the Company was reorganised and

continued training as before. I was appointed Company Captain then and continued in this appointment for the rest of the period up to the Truce in 1921. We had a Sinn Féin Club in the district and this helped on the political side. There was a Sinn Féin Court established, too, when these Courts were set. I was Clerk of the local Court and Secretary of the Sinn Féin Club, too. I also continued organising and training the Company. During the General Election in 1918 about four of us went to assist at the election in Waterford. There were 40 altogether under Seán Finn. We were armed with batons and had many encounters with the famous Ballybricken pig-buyers, strong supporters of the Redmondite party. After a fight with these tough men on one occasion we were charged by the R.I.C. with fixed bayonets. Any injuries received during these tussels were slight, however, mostly from blows of stones.

In 1919 we were trying to increase our stock of arms by taking up all the shot-guns in the district. Before this, in 1918, we spent a couple of days in the local blacksmith's forge making pikes. During the threat of conscription in 1918 our Company strength doubled to over 100, but most of these sudden recruits fell away. The Company of approximately 60 strong stayed firm. The R.I.C. did not trouble us much. Our parades were held on the quiet, though there were no barracks actually in our area, the nearest being three or four miles away at Broadford on one side and another about the same distance at Kilmeedy.

We still had our two Howth rifles and the rest of our armament consisted of shot-guns and a couple of revolvers.

Our 1st Lieutenant was Michael Dwane and the second was William Long. The latter became Battalion Police Officer later and James Leahy replaced him. Our ammunition was scarce and we made buckshot in a mould and filled cartridges. We had about 40 rounds of rifle ammunition and only about a dozen rounds for the revolvers.

In 1920 some of our Company took part in the burning of Drumcollogher Courthouse. An unfortunate accident happened here when the petrol sprinkled around was exploded prematurely, one man being killed inside the building and two others so seriously burned that they died afterwards. The R.I.C. Barracks was only about 100 yards away and before preparations were made to destroy the Courthouse, Ben Sullivan, Vice O.C. Drumcollogher Battalion, Mick Dwane and myself covered the Barracks with two rifles and a shot-gun. The R.I.C., however, did not make a move then or even later. We were not followed up and no arrests were made.

In May, 1920, after the rescue of J.J. Hogan at Knocklong, himself, Seán Tracy, Dan Breen and Seamus Robinson stayed in our area for about a fortnight. Seán Finn, O.C. West Limerick, brought them from East Limerick in cars. They stayed at Keanes of Feohanagh, at least the two wounded men, Seán Tracy and Dan Breen, did, and had their wounds dressed by Dr. Hartnett of Abbeyfeale. Dick Woulfe, a chemist in the same place, used come with him on a motor bike and side-car. The other two - Hogan and Robinson - stayed at Longs of Feohanagh. The four men were moved out of the area to Tournafulla when we got word of a raid. I was in charge of the arrangements for guarding

them during their stay in the Company area and also for moving them when the time came. They went into the Abbeyfeale Battalion area from us. Long was raided by 21 police a few nights after we had removed the four men to safety. We did see them occasionally before they went across the Shannon into Clare eventually.

In May, 1920, we attempted an ambush of a R.I.C. patrol near Clonmore about two miles on the main road from Feohanagh towards Drumcollogher. The R.I.C. used number about half a dozen armed with rifles and sometimes on bicycles. Our party numbered about twelve drawn from different Companies, and under Mick Keane, O.C. Battalion at the time. We had two rifles and the remainder had shot-guns. We waited about two hours in the daylight but the patrol did not come. However, it was training for us. We attempted this ambush later in the year when there were Black and Tans among the R.I.C., but this fell through, as the patrol did not show up.

In June, 1920, we located a spy. He was a native of Rathmore in the County Kerry and worked around our district. His name was Daly. Fancying himself badly treated by his employer, a farmer, over wages, he wrote a letter of complaint to the D.I. and said in it he could give information about Sinn Féin. The D.I. replied referring him to the local R.I.C. about the wages question, but added he would find a better employer for him who would pay good money for information and to address his letters, not to the Barracks but to Ryan, c/o Post Office in Newcastle West.

As it happened, an ex-Army man named Ryan went into the

Post Office one day to draw his pension and asked as usual was there any letter for him and was handed Daly's. He walked out and opened the letter and was amazed at what he read. Daly was offering to give the names of all the I.R.A. Company Captains in the district and also of those who had taken part in the attack on Kilmallock Barracks. The ex-Army man sealed up the letter, handed it back in the Post Office and said it was not for him.

Ryan was greatly troubled and brought the information to the local Company. Daly was arrested and tried as a spy. Seán Finn presided at the Courtmartial; Tadg Collins was prosecutor and I had the doubtful honour of defending him. I pointed out he was young and irresponsible and did not realise the seriousness of what he was doing and all the lives he was endangering. The prosecutor's reply to this was to point to the end of Daly's letter where he had written to the D.I. - 'If this is found out I won't live twenty-four hours'. There could be no further defence and he was found guilty and executed.

I had Daly's letter, which had been taken out of the Post Office in time, but eventually it was lost or destroyed. A previous letter of Daly's, the one offering information, had, of course, reached the D.I. In the one we got he had asked for £250 and wanted the cheque post dated for after the time the information would reach the D.I.

In June, 1920, also, the Company took part in the burning of the vacated Castletown R.I.C. Barracks.

In February, 1921, I took part in an attempted ambush of

R.I.C. and Tans at Whitegate, Lord Muskerry's place. We had about a dozen on this job, too, but the patrol did not turn up.

When the Battalion A.S.U. was formed at the end of March, 1921, I joined it, and so did Mick Dwane, Jem Doody, John Mulcaire and Mick Sheehy. The Column was under the command of Con Foley, the O.C. Battalion, and the Vice O.C. Ben Sullivan was in it, too. The strength was about twenty and we had two rifles, some revolvers and the bulk of the men had shot-guns.

On 14th May, 1921, we carried out an ambush at Drumcollogher. This was on a mixed patrol of R.I.C., Tans and Auxiliaries and which numbered sixteen, some armed with rifles, some with repeating shot-guns and some with revolvers.

The I.R.A. were drawn from nine Companies of the Battalion and, while the actual ambush party did not number more than about twenty, security patrols, scouts and road blocking parties were provided from the Battalion also.

The fight was carried out in the town and, from positions in occupied buildings, we watched in broad daylight, the British advancing in extended formation as if aware there was danger about.

The first pair were fired on and one of them was killed instantly, the other escaping through a doorway. The remainder of the patrol retreated towards the Barracks. Two Volunteers, our riflemen Mick Sheehy and Mick Dwane of my own Company, were ordered to fire on the retreating patrol.

The main body of the I.R.A. then moved to Egans' across the Square so as to entice the enemy to return. In the meantime the revolver had been taken by us from the dead man. A R.I.C. Sergeant returned and searched the body. He probably heard or saw some suspicious movement for he signalled to the patrol (which had by now followed him up) to retreat. Instantly the Volunteers opened fire wounding the Sergeant and two other members of the patrol. They all cleared and then a machine gun was brought into action from the R.I.C. Barracks. This had no effect and the I.R.A. retired without suffering any casualties.

The whole affair lasted about two hours - from 6 to 8 p.m.

A big force of military came from Newcastle West that night when the R.I.C. in Drumcollogher sent up Verey lights, but the roads were all trenched and blocked and it took them till nearly morning to get there. The usual reprisals took place, four houses being burned, all belonging to prominent supporters of ours.

We carried out a counter reprisal in the same month, burning Springfield Castle, belonging to Lord Muskerry, and all its contents. The Feohanagh Company supplied an armed guard for the outskirts of the Castle to cover the burning party.

The Barna ambush, which did not come off as the British only appeared after 12 o'clock on the day of the Truce, had a big number of men from the Battalion, our Company supplying three men - Mick Sheehy, Jem Doody and Owen Sullivan. The

North Cork Column under Paddy O'Brien of Liscarroll was on this job, with our Brigade Column under Garrett McAuliffe.

When the Clonbannin ambush took place in March, 1921, some of our Company went to take part in it (Mick Sheehy was one), but they were not in time for the actual fight.

At the time of the Truce our Company was still intact, a few who had been arrested from time to time having got out in a couple of months. Willie Long had been brought around as a hostage for about a fortnight in enemy lorries and had then been released. We suffered no casualties either in killed or wounded.

During pre-Truce times the Company took over police work in the area acting as guards on the Sinn Féin Courts and doing normal police duties in such cases as arose. Also they carried out Court decrees in agrarian cases and made certain that such decisions were enforced.

SIGNED:

Daniel Doody
(Daniel Doody)

WITNESSED:

C. Saurin
(C. Saurin)

LT.-COL.

DATE: 3rd February 1953

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