ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
BURO STAIRE MILEATA 1913-21
RO. W.S. 960

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 950

Witness

David O'Callaghan,
The Hill,
Castletownroche,
Co. Cork.

Identity.

Second-Lieutenant, Castletownroche Company I.R.A. (Co. Cork.)

Subject.

Castletownroche Company Irish volunteers (Co. Cork) 1914-1923.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil

File No. S. 448

Form B.S.M. 2

ORIGINAL

STATEMENT by: David O'Callaghan,
The Hill,

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
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Castletownroche.

I was born in Graunachole, Killavullan in July 1899.

A company of the Irish National Volunteers was started in Castletownroche sometime early in 1914. I don't remember that there was any Committee in charge, nor were there any officers. The Company was drilled by two ex-soldiers - Tom Sullivan and ... Jones. Marching and foot-drill was the usual training. I joined this company sometime about Easter 1914. The numbers present at parades varied from twenty to thirty at one parade to eighty or ninety at another.

There was a Volunteer review in Mitchelstown in July 1914 and sometime before this J. J. Walsh and Captain Talbot-Crosbie visited the company and spoke to the members. Captain Crosbie referred to the Curragh mutiny and said the Volunteers should be prepared to defend the country I went to Mitchelstown to the Review with themselves. Sean Butler, James O'Neill and John O'Sullivan (TheClose) but the Company did not take part in the parade. were no arms in the Company but a number of the Volunteers Political opinion in the area at the owned shotguns. time was about equally divided between Redmond and O'Brien and supporters of both parties supplied about an equal Sullivan and Jones - the drill number of Volunteers. instructors - were British Army reservists and were called up in August 1914. This and the difference of opinion on the question of Redmond's recruiting campaign finished any organisation that existed and the Company faded out.

About the end of 1914 Denis Hannigan, who was then employed as a gardener by Mrs. Coughlan, The Close,

were about 16 members. Denis Hannigan was Captain and Dan Shinnick was Secretary or Adjutant. I don't think we had any other officers at that time. Meetings were held in the Hall in Chapel Street where training in footdrill and signalling was carried out. We had direct contact with Dublin at the time - I remember that Dan Shinnick had contacts with Bulmer Hobson. Denis Hannigan was later better known as Donnacadh Hannigan, O/C East Limerick Brigade, I.R.A.

were held twice weekly - usually Tuesday night and Sunday afternoon. The Sunday parades usually took the form of route marches to some neighbouring districts in an effort to recruit volunteers or to organise new units. Among the places visited were Kildorrery and Shanballymore - no recruits were obtained. We marched to Killavullen one night and met Tomás McCurtain there. There was no increase in the strength of the Company. The only arms held were some shotguns owned by the members and a Lee Enfield rifle on loan from Castlelyons Company of National Volunteers.

There was a Volunteer parade in Cork on Patrick's Day 1916 and all available members of the Company attended. Nearly all carried shotguns. No members of the Company had uniforms but practically all had belts, bandoliers, haversacks and green hats turned up at the side. Most of this equipment was obtained through the Company Fund to which members contributed 2d. per week.

Denis Hannigan left the district shortly before
Easter 1916. James O'Neill was then elected Captain
and Dan Shinnick continued as Adjutant.

On the Monday before Easter Sunday 1916 Fred

Murray came from Cork with the mobilisation orders for Easter Sunday. These were issued to the Company at the parade on Tuesday night and were:-

- (a) all members to assemble at Railway Station, Castletownroche, at 10 a.m. on Easter Sunday;
- (b) arms, ammunition and 3 days' rations to be carried:
- (c) Unit then to proceed by train to Mallow and march from there to Beeing Cross.

The members did not know that this was other than an ordinary parade and exercise.

The following members of the Company paraded at Castletownroche Railway Station and went to Beeing: - James O'Neill, John O'Sullivan (The Close), Sean Butler, James Palmer, Thomas Palmer, Eugene O'Neill, Tim Bulman and witness. This was about half the strength of the Unit. I do not know why the other members did not parade.

The arms carried were: -

Four or five shotguns - no ammunition One .45 Bulldog revolver and 5 rounds One .45 Webley revolver and 6/7 rounds.

Having reached Mallow by train we marched to O'Donovan's Hall in Fair Street, next door to the R.I.C. barracks, where we joined the Mallow Company and marched with them to Beeing. We met the Mourne Abbey Company on the way. The parade from Mallow was followed by two detectives - Fallon and Dwyer. They travelled in a motor-cycle and side-car. Sean Butler and I had bicycles with us but we marched with the others.

In addition to Mallow, Mourne Abbey and ourselves, Companies from Donoughmore, Whitechurch and Kilmona also assembled at Beeing Cross. Footdrill and exercises were carried out by the assembled Volunteers. Sometime that evening, about four or five o'clock, Tomás McCurtain and Terence McSweeney accompanied by, I think, Seán Hales

arrived. Tomás McCurtain addressed the assembled parade from a fence at the roadside. He said that as the enemy had not stopped our parade that day, it showed that he was afraid. He also said that there would be another day and that men should be better prepared. He told us to return to our districts, keep alert and await further orders. It was beginning to rain when the parade was dismissed and the car with the Brigade officers left.

With James O'Neill. John O'Sullivan and Sean Butler I remained with the Mourne Abbey Company. The other Castletownroche men marched home direct. Some of the Mourne Abbey men with the four of us stopped at Ahadillane for refreshments. Everybody was then drenched to the skin as it had been raining heavily all the evening. Nevertheless, all were in good spirits and many national songs were There was an old Fenian in the shop at Ahadillane (I don't remember his name). He was inclined to be critical of the rising generation - he thought they were only "playacting" with guns, but when he looked at our saturated clothes he said that "the weather was always on the side of England". Sean Butler cycled home from Ahadillane and I went with Jim O'Neill, John O'Sullivan and Mahony to the latter's home at Burnfoot where

we got a meal. After having had the meal I started for home on my bicycle. On the way, I took a wrong turning near Beanskeha and went astray. After cycling some miles I reached the main Ballymagoomley-Mallow road and met a lorry on the road. The driver of the lorry stopped me and told me that the military were on Mallow Bridge. I then turned back and came home through Killavullen. I got home about 7 a.m. I went to bed immediately and when I woke up that night about 10 p.m. I heard some neighbours talking in the kitchen of my home - they were saying that there was terrible fighting in Dublin so I knew then that the fight

There were no newspapers on Monday. No orders came to the Company during Easter Week. There were no arrests in the area and no arms were surrendered.

As far as I know, there was no I.R.B., Fianna or Cumann na mBan organisation in the area at Easter 1916.

Sean Butler attended a meeting in the City Hall, Cork, early in 1917 at which the failure of the Brigade Officers to fight at Easter 1916 was criticised by the representatives of some units. When he returned from the meeting he reported that all parted on good terms and that Terence McSwiney remarked during the course of the debate - "We are all young men yet - there is plenty of time to fight".

After Easter 1916 the Castletownroche Company carried on as usual, holding parades in the village hall. When the re-organisation of the Volunteers was undertaken in 1917 the members visited the surrounding districts on organising tours. Units were organised in Kildorrery, Shanballymore, Killavullen and Ballyhopley. The area was also visited by Seán O'Sullivan as Volunteer Organiser. Normal parades and training (foot drill, signalling, etc.) were carried on during this period, but the strength of the Unit remained constant at 16/17. At this time also the members took an active part in organising the Gaelic League and Sinn Féin Clubs in the district.

During 1918 the Volunteers took a very active part in the organisation of the political wing. At the same time, their own military activities wer being "stepped up" as instructions were received to carry out raids for arms. I took part in several raids in the area and we collected a number of shotguns and some ammunition for same. I must say that in this area the vast majority of the

holders surrendered the arms, etc., on request. Of course, at this time, the membership of the Company increased slightly to about 25/30, due to the Conscription scare. However, there was no abnormal increase in membership and I think that all the new recruits remained on to serve to, at least, the Truce.

About six members of the Company travelled to Waterford both for the bye-election in March and the General Election in December 1918. They remained on duty in Waterford for 3 days on each occasion and were billeted in Durand's Coach Factory. Our duties consisted of patrolling the various streets - particularly those in which Republican supporters resided - to guard them from attacks by the opposition, escorting voters to the polling booths and remaining on guard outside the booths to prevent intimidation of Sinn Fein voters. Volunteers went to Waterford unarmed but having regard to the tactics employed by the opposition, it was necessary for self-protection - to arm themselves with weapons of In the circumstances the Volunteers billeted some kind. in the Coach factory were in a more favourable position than most others because they had plenty material at hand to make handy batons, etc. spokes of wheels, broken shafts, etc. Each Volunteer fashioned the weapon to his own liking and, needless to say, they proved very effective when dealing with the mobs.

When going to Mass one morning while in Waterford I noticed an injured man lying in a laneway off Bridge Street. As he was wearing a white armlet I knew he was one of the Volunteers - all Volunteers on duty wore white armlets - so before entering the Church I dashed to the laneway to discover that the injured man was a member of the University College, Cork, Company, Irish Volunteers. His name was Dave Reynolds. He was bleeding profusely

from a wound in the head. I took him into the Church and his wound was dressed.

Training in a more advanced stage continued during 1919 but much of it under more secret conditions e.g. target practice with .22 rifle usually held each Sunday evening. Raids for arms continued but very few guns were outstanding with private individuals in this area at this stage.

Following the Wesleyan Raid (an attack on a British church party of troops returning from the Wesleyan Church) at Fermoy in September 1919 the R.I.C. became very active in the area. They were continually raiding the homes of Volunteers for some months after the raid. They failed, however, to capture any arms, documents or wanted men.

In November 1919 Cork II Brigade was formed. Liam Lynch was appointed O/G. Castletownroche Battalion was formed about the same time and was composed of the following Companies:-

Castletownroche, Killavullen, Doneraile, Shanballymore, Ballyhooley, Glanworth, Kildorrery, Mitchelstown, Ballindangan and Ballygiblin. The Battalion O/C. was Tom Barry, Glanworth.

Early in April 1920 two British officers were held up at Close, Castletownroche. They were disarmed and the motor-cycle combination in which they were travelling was burned. One revolver and about 20 rounds of ammunition were taken from them. This operation was carried out by Dave O'Callaghan (witness), James O'Neill, Dan Shinnick, Maurice J. Madden, John O'Sullivan, Michael O'Sullivan, James Ryan and two others whose names I cannot recollect.

Miss Webb's house in Castletownroche was taken over by a detachment of the East Kent Regiment ("Buffs"), numbering about 50, on the 24th June 1920. This party broke up an Aerideacht which was being held at Ballinvoher on July 11th, 1920. Members of the party tried to remove the Tricolour from the flagpole in the field but they were hampered by the crowd. During the disturbance Jim O'Neill and Dan Shinnick attempted to disarm the officer in charge of the military, but the attempt failed. As a result, Shinnick and O'Neill had to go "on the run". Day and night raids by the military and R.I.C. became very frequent after this and all Volunteers had to constantly be on the alert.

A patrol of R.I.C. and "Tans" was ambushed at Scart, Kildorrery on the 7th August, 1920. One R. I. C. man was killed and four other members of the patrol were wounded. The patrol surrendered and all arms were captured (eight short carbines and eight revolvers). Nurse O'Sullivan, who was with the column, attended to the wounded. column had no casualties. This ambush was carried out by the East Limerick column under Donnacadh Hannigan and Tadhg Crowley. It was arranged by the Column O/C, who, prior to the date of the operation, contacted the officers of Castletownroche Company and requested them to arrange billets, etc., for the column following the operation. With D. J. O'Sullivan, Ballinvillick, I was on outpost duty when the attack took place. I afterwards guided the column to billets and took charge of the guard arrangements. There were also some Volunteers from Glanworth on this job.

After the engagement the column withdrew to Lisnagourneen, Castletownroche and later to D.J.O'Sullivan's farmhouse at Ballinvillick where the column O/C and Tadg Crowley stayed themselves. The other members of the column were distributed over different houses in the district. All arms were dumped in a hayfield and were guarded by the local Volunteer officers, including witness. The column, which numbered about 20, remained in the area for

about 2 days before returning to their own district.

About the end of September 1920 the East Limerick column returned to Castletownroche area and planned an ambush at Carrig on the main Castletownroche-Mallow road about 4 miles from Mallow. The intention was to attack any party of military which would pass along this road on The column took up position the way to or from Fermoy. in the early morning on two successive days, but no enemy showed up. The following members of Castletownroche Company were on duty with the column on this occasion: -Dave O'Callaghan (witness), D.J.O'Sullivan, John O'Sullivan and Michael O'Sullivan (Close). In addition, Killavullen Company was represented by Michael Nagle, Tim Collins and John Hogan.

The East Limerick column engaged in the above operations included Donnacadh Hannigan O/C, Tadg Crowley, David Tobin (Bomber), Edward Tobin, Dave Clancy and Peter Steep (snipers), Tom Howard, Denis Noonan, Dave Quann, Justin McCarthy, Jack McCarthy and about 9 others whose names I cannot recall.

It may seem unusual that the East Limerick column should operate like this in the Cork II Brigade area, but I think the arrangement may be attributed to the fact that prior to 1916 Donnacadh Hannigan was O/C Castletown-roche Company and so knew all the local officers and volunteers intimately. This column was one of the first Flying Columns to be formed.

During October 1920 we carried out two raids on the mails at Carrig, Mallow. The mails seized were taken to Anakisha Wood and dumped in the woodranger's house (M. Ducey). The mails were afterwards censored by other members of the Company and, I believe, revealed valuable information which was later relayed to the Brigade I.O.

This job was carried out by Michael O'Neill, John .
O'Sullivan. W.J.Griffin and Dave O'Callaghan.

I attended a meeting at Magner's, Shanballymore, about the end of October 1920. Tom Barry, Battalion O/C and other members of the Battalion staff were present. The meeting was called to arrange for an attack on a party of R.I.C. at Doneraile. The operation did not, however, take place and I was instructed not to travel to Doneraile as had been arranged at the meeting.

About this time plans were made to form a Battalion column and I was under orders to report to the Column O/C. I was, however, arrested on the 22nd November 1920 - being, unfortunately, one of the first active volunteers to be arrested in the area. I was confined in various barracks (Fermoy, Kilworth, Cork) until I was finally transferred - as an internee - to Ballykinlar in December 1920.

At the date of my arrest I was Second-Lieutenant, Castletownroche Company, Irish Republican Army.

<u> 1921.</u>

I was not present at any of the following operations as I was in gaol, but can vouch for the facts as ascertained subsequently from reliable participants who are now deceased:-

On 21.2.1921 the Battalion column, under William ("Downey") Regan and James O'Neill, in association with members of the Castletownroche, Killavullen and Shanballymore Companies, arranged an attack on the enemy posts (military and R. I.C.) at Castletownroche. In this connection Glanworth and Ballyhopley Companies were in position on the main Fermoy-Mallow road at Renny, Ballyhopley, to impede any enemy forces coming from Fermoy.

The operation had, however, to be called off owing to the accidental discharge of a shot by a member of one of the sections taking up a position in the vicinity of the R.I.C. post before the other sections were in position. This attack was planned to take place at 3 a.m. Approximately 200 men would have been engaged.

A party of R. I.C. and Tans were ambushed at Close, Castletownroche, on 18.3.1921. In this case, a party of Volunteers were in ambush - awaiting the patrol and news from I.R.A. scouts. The scouts were, however, caught "napping" as they walked into the patrol at a bend in the road and were unable to give the agreed signal to the The scouts attempted to escape and were ambush party. about to be fired on by the enemy party when the O/C of the I.R.A. (James O'Neill, deceased) saw what was happening and opened fire. One Tan was killed, one R. I. C. man wounded and the remainder of the party retreated to the barracks.

On 13th April 1921 Captain Stafford, who was attached to the British Army unit at Fermoy, gave orders for the burning of the houses of the following I.R.A. men as reprisals for an attack on a party of enemy forces near Kildorrery on the 10th of the same month:-

Jeremiah Magner, Shanballymore
David Daly, do.
Seán Creed, do.
Seán Noonan, Kildorrery
Seán Cronin, Currabeha, Fermoy
William Shinnick, Rathnadorrhy, Castletownroche (home of Dan Shinnick, later
Bde. Adjt.)

The houses were destroyed and as a counter-reprisal the I.R.A. destroyed Lord Listowel's house at Ballyhooley and Pemrose Welstead's at Shanballymore.

Another engagement took place at Pall on the main Castletownroche-Mallow road on June 21st 1921. On this occasion six British military were wounded. The I.R.A.

suffered no casualties. This was a sniping operation at about 200 yards range by about six I.R.A. armed with rifles on 3 lorries of military. The military dismounted from the lorries and took up positions on the roadside. The engagement lasted about 30 minutes and took place in the late afternoon. The I.R.A. party retreated across the River Blackwater to the mountainside. James O'Neill (deceased) was in charge of the operation. I cannot remember definitely the names of the other members of the party.

On my release from Ballykinlar in December 1921 I rejoined my unit in Castletownroche. I was one of the party who took over Close House from the British in February 1922 - James O'Neill was in charge. I served at this post until it was evacuated in March 1922, when I was transferred to New Barracks, Fermoy. At a later stage I took over Doneraile R. I. C. Barracks where I served with Con Clear, Denis Flynn, John Sheehan and James Palmer as I.R.A. Police for the Battalion area. I was recalled from Doneraile in early June 1922 and was instructed by Battalion O/C (John Lane) to return to Castletownroche where I was appointed Company O/C.

I was engaged full time on the organisation of the area until the Free State Army infiltrated into the district.

I had then to go "on the run". With a number of commades

I was engaged in making things difficult for the enemy by sniping posts, blocking roads, railways, etc., and carrying out any orders issued to me by my superior officer. I did not return home until after the "Cease Fire" Order in May 1923

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

BURO STAIRS MILETTER AND 1913-21

NO. W.S. 950

Signed Savid O Callaghan

Date 29-5-54

(David O'Callaghan)

(Phil O'Donnell)

The following appendices are allected:

- (1). Instruction from Jo. 6th Balton. Corte 2 Brigade re completion of Intelligence Reports (Divisional Order)
- (2) Divisional Intelligence Memo. No. 2. dated 2/6/21
- (3) G.H. Q. instruction (Ref C/5.) dated May 10th 1920 me proper training of Volunties officers.
- (4) Instruction from Jc. 6th Batter. Cock 2 No. 2 Bought
 re attack row randowny destruction of railway
 line between Wallers of fromore on right.

 9 5th July 1921.
- (5) Intelligence report for w/ 8/7/21 from H. Coy. 6th Batton. book No. 2. Brigads.

Copies of any documents whered as appendies required

100.0 W.S. 950

OGLAIGH NA H-EIREANN.

HEADQUARTERS.

6th BATTN.

CORK 2nd BDE.

INTELLIGENCE

DIVISIONAL ORDER.

30.5.21.

to:-

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HUANJUARTERS

6th BATTH.

COEN HO. 2. PRICADE.

To:-

1.7.21.

0/0.10.1. St - Beltelion,

- 1. Find cottobled copy of Instructions to O/C's, but -Battn's.
- 2. There is to be an organised attack on the tailway line actwoon, Mallow and hismore, on next tucaday night, 5th inst.

You will see that your command, will be in action that night. It would be better for you to meet the O/C's of F. and G. Coys. and commange your plans to gether.

All inside the Signal-boxes, must be broken, and the boxes then set fire to. The poles must be cut, as many as possible, all along the line. The chairs also, must be broken, as many as possible. On the bridges and embankments, you will detach as many rails, as possible, and lever them over the sides.

You will first conture all the tools belonging to the railway, that are in your area, as I can sure you will need a lot of them. Those are only niner points, and I am sure there is no need in detailing them to you, but just to go through the programme.

Com'd'nt.

OGLAIGH NA H-EIREANN.

Headquarters,

6th.Battn.,

Cork No.2Brigade.

7/6/21.

To:-

0/0,

H Coy.,

- 1. You are to get down down that Railway Bridge, immediately.
- 2. There was no attempt at the NEW GENERAL INTELLIGENCE REPORT for the WEEK ENDING 2/6/21.

Signed:-

ACT. ADJUTANT.

I enclose GENERAL &DIVISIONAL ORDERS.

ADJ.

OGLAIGH NA H-EIREANN.

Headquarters,

6th.Battn.,

Cork No.2 Brigade.

4/6/21.

To:-

0/0,

H COY,

Have some responsible Officer, of your Company, at Battn.H.Q. to-morrow evening, that will be able to inform us of everything concerning those Uniforms.

Send him along pretty early if possible.

Signed:-

Act. Adjutant.

P.S.

This is SATURDAM and your Weekly Intelligence Report, which should have reached so last evening, has not as yet arrived.

I know you areas not to blame for this, but, please nake

the person who is responsible for delay BUCK UP!

Signed

Act.Adj.

XELAIGH NA H-FIRE

Sortelligence Department,

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