

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

BURO STAIRE MIL' TA 1913 21

No. W.S. 961

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21

STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 961

Witness

Michael Teehan,  
Lomanagh,  
Sneem,  
Co. Kerry.

Identity.

Member of Irish Volunteers, Sneem, Co. Kerry,  
1914 - ;  
Lieut. same Company, 1918 - ;  
Vice-Comd't. 4th Batt'n. Kerry No. 3 Bgde. 1921 -

Subject.

Sneem Company Irish Volunteers, Co. Kerry,  
1914-1923.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil

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Statement by Michael Teehan,  
Lomanagh, Sneem, Co. Kerry.

I was born in the year 189<sup>6</sup>~~8~~ and I attended the local national school. My parents were small farmers.

I joined the National Volunteers when they were formed in the Sneem area in 1913 or 1914. I cannot remember who started the organisation in Sneem but a man named Patrick Sullivan (Paddy the Smith) drilled us. There would have been about 100 members in Sneem and the surrounding area.

When the Redmondite split occurred the Volunteers in Sneem broke up and were not reformed until 1917. There was no organisation in the Sneem area in 1916 and consequently we took no part in preparing for the rising.

In 1917 or early 1918 Fionán Lynch came to the area and we started a Company of Volunteers. The Sinn Féin Club was started at the same time. When the Company was organised Michael J. Cahalane was elected Captain. I was made a Section Commander and we were attached to the Kenmare Battalion, South Kerry Brigade (Kerry 11). Michael J. Cahalane died on the 10th August, 1918, and John Teehan, Sneem, became Captain and I became 1st Lieutenant

During 1918-19 we were drilling and training. The Republican Courts were organised in the area and Republican Justices were appointed. Amongst the justices were John D. Sullivan (decd.), John Teehan and Patrick

*CAHALANE* At the end of 1919 we received orders from the Battalion to arrange that all shotguns in the Company area be collected for the use of the Volunteers. Some Volunteers had already got shotguns of their own. When we started collecting the guns we asked the Parish Priest of Sneem for his gun. He denied having one but we raided his house and found it. I was on the raid. The priest made no complaint in public about the raid but he was unfriendly afterwards. Some of the local people who had guns did not give them up to us and we raided their houses. I was on a raid on the coastguard station at Blackwater near Sneem where we got some shotguns and a .22 rifle. The coastguards had been withdrawn and a caretaking party had been left behind.

In 1920 the Sneem Company were preparing an attack on the local R.I.C. barracks but when we got to the barracks we found that the R.I.C. had left. We burned the barracks and the courthouse which adjoined it. Before the burning of the barracks we had organised a boycott of the R.I.C. The local people co-operated in the boycott.

When the R.I.C. left Sneem barracks they went into occupation of a private house at Oyster Beds, about two miles on the Kenmare side of Sneem. The house was the property of Colonel Walden, the local landlord. The R.I.C. remained in occupation of the house for a short time and they were then removed by boat.

The principal work of the Company when the R.I.C. had left was the cutting and blocking of roads, making

blackpowder and buckshot and making mines. We made the mines under a man named Denis Delahunty who was Company Engineer. The mines were used in the destruction of bridges. The bridge on the main road between Sneem and Waterville was destroyed by one of our mines.

British convoys used to travel the roads clearing as they went. The convoys were always strong and were usually accompanied by an armoured car. We always considered that we were too weak in the Company to attack such strong convoys. A party of which I was one did fire on a convoy in May, 1921. We were supported by some members of a neighbouring Company (Castlecove) and had the roads blocked but we had only shotguns and a couple of bad old rifles. The convoy was stronger than we had expected so we just fired a few shots and made off.

In 1920 or 1921, I am not sure of the date, two R.I.C. men came home on what was supposed to be ordinary leave. We held them up in the village of Sneem and as they did not put up their hands when ordered we fired on them. Both of them were slightly wounded. One of the R.I.C. men was named James Sullivan and he is now living near Kenmare.

In the late Spring of 1921 a reorganisation of the Volunteers took place in our area. A new Battalion was formed with the following Companies: - Sneem, Castlecove, Glenlough, Brocaragh and Derrynane. John Teehan, Sneem, was appointed Battalion Commandant. I was appointed Vice Commandant, Denis J. O'Sullivan Adjutant and James Clifford Quartermaster. We were attached to a new Brigade which was being formed, Kerry III, and we were the 4th Battalion.

The new Battalion area contained no British garrison and the only targets were the convoys which were much too strong for our arms.

All the officers in the Sneem Company volunteered for Column service but we were told by the Vice O/C of Kerry No. 11 Brigade (John Joe Rice) that there were not enough arms to take any more men into the Column.

There were no spies or informers discovered in our area all through the Tan war.

I have been asked whether there was an order issued to us that the Sneem area was to be kept quiet. I never heard of any such order before or after the Truce. If such an order was ever issued I must surely have known of it. The only reason why there was no fighting in the Sneem area is that we had no one to fight when the R.I.C. cleared out and we were too weak to attack the convoys which passed through.

When the Truce came in July, 1921, we took every opportunity for training. We held a Battalion training camp for some weeks in August, 1922, and after the Battalion camp we organised camps in each Company area.

In February, 1922, we took over a house belonging to Miss Albina Broderick at Castlecove and established our headquarters there. We had a party of about 10 and we remained in the house until August, 1922. The Civil War had started and we joined up with No. 2 Flying Column of Kerry 111 Brigade.

We started operations when we sniped Free State

troops at Cahirciveen. Seán Ryan was in charge of the Column for a while and we ambushed Free State troops on the road between Waterville and Cahirciveen. Some of the troops were killed and one of our men - Jimmy Connell of Cahirciveen, was wounded.

We attempted another ambush at the same place but the day turned wet and two mines we had laid failed, and we had to retreat to our billets about eight miles away at the top of Eana. We carried out several sniping attacks on Cahirciveen and Waterville until the attempted general round-up in March, 1923. The round-up was planned by the Free State troops against our Column, operating in the area Cahirciveen, Waterville, Sneem and back into the hills.

In March, 1923, Free State troops surrounded No. 1 Flying Column which was at Gurrane. I was with No. 2 Column on the opposite side at the top of Eana. We had established billets in an old house which we had covered over. Early in the morning we heard firing and advanced towards it and saw the position of No. 1 Column. We worked our way round to the rear of one of the parties of Free State troops. The fight lasted from 8 o'clock in the morning until 4 o'clock in the evening, and it was a moving fight without food or rest. We pinned down the Free State forces and they had to bring up an armoured car to cover their retreat. A Captain O'Shea of the Free State Army was shot dead and our Brigade Engineer was caught unarmed in a cowhouse and shot dead.

After the fight the Column got scattered but after a short period we regrouped at a place called Coomyanana

(near Sneem) where we stayed until the 25th April, 1923. On that morning we were coming into our billets after spending the night out when we saw Free State troops coming down the hill. They were also coming in lorries from Sneem on one side and Cahirciveen on the other. We were being surrounded. The Free State forces numbered about 500. We had 25 riflemen and one Lewis gun. We retreated a bit and took up position and the fight started. It lasted from 7 in the morning to 5 in the evening.

Comdt. Griffin who was in charge of the Free State troops, led a section of his men in an advance against our position but we opened fire and drove the Commandant under a bridge. We pinned him there until they brought up five or six machine guns and opened a heavy fire on our position while he retreated. The Free State troops retreated without doing us any damage or taking one prisoner.

Shortly afterwards we got orders to dump our arms. I went on the run and was arrested in Killorglin in August, 1923. After my arrest I was taken to Tralee where I did 21 days' hunger-strike. I was released in December, 1923.

Signed: Michael Teehan  
 (Michael Teehan)  
 Date: 23rd June 1954  
 23rd June, 1954.

Witness:

James J. O'Connor  
 (James J. O'Connor)

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