

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
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NO. W.S. 969

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21

STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 969

Witness

Timothy Heulihan (Ted),
Ballybunion,
Co. Kerry.

Identity.

Member of Irish Volunteers,
Ballybunion, Co. Kerry, 1914 - ;

Captain of same Coy. 1917 - .

Subject.

National activities, Ballybunion, Co. Kerry,
1914-1921.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil

File No .S. 2288

Form B S M 2

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STATEMENT OF TIMOTHY (Ted) HOUJHAN,

Ballybunion, County Kerry.

I was born in May, 1888 in Ballybunion and was sent to the National School for a few years. After leaving school I was sent to Greystones in County Wicklow to serve as apprentice to the carpentry trade. I returned to Ballybunion after a couple of years and have worked and lived here ever since. When the Volunteers were formed here in the summer of 1914 I joined. A man named Fitzmaurice was the organiser and a man named Jack Miniman, a Donegal man and a British ex-soldier, became the Drill Instructor.

We drilled and paraded for a while up to the time of John Redmond's speech pledging the Volunteers to help guard the shores of Ireland. The Sunday after this speech we had a meeting of the Volunteers. This meeting was attended by all the Unionists around Ballybunion as they all wanted to join up. The Instructor, Jack Miniman, made a speech and told the Volunteers that they were now to be real soldiers and would be given uniforms and would get proper training so that they could defend the shores of Ireland. A man next to me said "Here is one that is not going to wear John Bull's uniform". I said, "Here is another". We both walked out of the ranks and the majority of the Volunteers followed us. This finished the Volunteers for good and they ceased to exist.

There was no Company in Ballybunion in 1916, but after the Easter Week Rebellion, when the Order came to surrender all arms in the country, a man named Paddy Landers, who was in charge of a Company in Listowel before Easter Week, sent out to Ballybunion two B.S.A. rifles and 500 rounds of ammunition and a lot of cartridge cases and wads by a man named Joe Mahony, a native of Ballybunion.

The stuff was dumped at Eddie Horagan's, a farmer who lived near the town. Horagan looked after the stuff. He was never under suspicion as he was regarded as pro-British. The only men in Ballybunion aware of this stuff were myself, Mahony and Horagan.

It was not until the spring of 1917 that the Volunteers were reorganised in Ballybunion. The Company was reorganised locally, but later that year two Brigade officers named Paddy J. Cahill and Billy Mullens from Tralee came to appoint officers. I was appointed Company Captain, a rank which I held up to the time I joined the Flying Column in January, 1921. A man named Moss Beazley was appointed 1st Lieutenant and a John Stack 2nd Lieutenant. The strength of the Company at this time was 110 men. We held meetings, drilled and had parades. It was at one of these parades on the 11th July, 1917 on the occasion of De Valera's election in Clare when we were passing the R.I.C. Barracks that a man named Mick Downey, a British soldier home on leave, but not in uniform at the time and standing on the path looking at the parade, threw a stone through the Barracks window. As we were returning past the barracks the R.I.C. inside opened fire on the parade with ~~revolvers~~ ^{carbines}. The parade scattered but returned later and attacked the Barracks with stones and one of our men named Dan Scanlan was shot dead. At the inquest the police swore that they were fired on with revolvers but the Jury brought in a verdict of Murder against Constable Lyons. At a subsequent Inquiry held in Listowel the police still held that they were attacked by the Volunteers with revolvers which, of course, was false. At a Court of Inquiry later held by police officers, Constable Lyons was found not guilty of any offence.

In 1918 we continued drills and parades and were ready for any trouble that came along. The majority of the men were in possession

-x- Mick Downey later joined I.R.A. at an ambush in Co. Limerick.

of shotguns or could have obtained shotguns from the neighbouring farmers, if required. We had, of course, the two rifles and ammunition sent from Listowel after Easter Week, 1916 and another rifle which was got from a Tom Hawney, a Ballybunion man, who had been a member of Sean McBride's Brigade in the Boer War. This man, after the Boer War, had to go to the U.S.A. but later returned to Ballybunion bringing this particular rifle with him. During the Conscription threat we got in about another dozen men into the Ballybunion Company. These men continued in the Company up to the end. At the end of the year the General Election took place but as the Sinn Fein candidate, Austin Stack, was returned unopposed and the Redmondite candidate, Mick Flavin, stood down, the Ballybunion Company had nothing to do with the election.

There was not much doing in the year 1919 except the collection of arms, such as shotguns, in the late autumn from the local farmers. The R.I.C. were about to collect them but we got in before them.

In March, 1920, the Battalion Adjutant, James Sugrue, took charge of an attack on Ballybunion R.I.C. Barracks. The attack was planned by the Brigade and Battalion staffs. A man named Tom Clifford of the Brigade Staff manufactured home-made grenades for the job. The grenades had been made from the wheel boxes of donkeys' carts. The boxes, about six in all, were filled with gelignite into which the ends of lengths of fuse were inserted. As well as these grenades we had the three rifles mentioned earlier and another rifle from the Lixnaw Company as well as a large number of shotguns and two revolvers. In all about 200 men were concerned in the attack, most of them cutting roads and falling trees. Although planned for 8.30 p.m. the attack did not start until 9.30 p.m. The reason was that Jim Sugrue on his way from Listowel had a puncture in his bicycle. There were 40 men in the actual attack. James Sugrue and myself had a revolver each.

Thomas Kennelly, Paddy Walsh, Paddy Kennelly and Tom Shanahan of Lixnaw had a rifle each. The rest of the men had the shotguns. I was told by James Sugrue to take charge of Beazley's shop on the west side of the barracks about 100 yards from the barracks. I occupied the shop with 10 men. A second party occupied Clarke's shop nearly opposite the barracks and the third party with the home-made grenades occupied a house attached to the back portion of the barracks. This house at one time formed part of the barracks but had been converted into a separate house some time earlier and was let to a school teacher named Galvin. It was still connected to the barracks by an upstairs door which had been sealed up at this time. A fourth party took cover behind a fence alongside the road from Beazley's shop for a distance of 50 yards. Before the men took over the house at the back of the barracks they sent Galvin ^{and} his wife ~~away~~ ~~to~~ away to safety. Sugrue gave the order to open fire which lasted for about an hour, while the men at the back of the barracks proceeded to demolish the sealed doorway leading to the barracks proper, but this was found to be a brick construction and they did not succeed in making an opening and could not use the home-made grenades to test their efficacy as intended in this part of the house.

After an hour it was discovered we were running out of ammunition and the order was given to withdraw. Galvin and his ^{wife} ~~returned~~ returned next day to the house but a few days afterwards he was evicted and this house was demolished by the R.I.C.

After the attack on Ballybunion barracks my home and other houses in the area were raided and searched by the R.I.C. I had just left home and gone on the run. I was staying in Ballydonohoe with friends by the name of Walsh.

In April, 1920, myself, Bertie Hawney, William Shortis, Paddy Kennelly, John Allen and other men of the Ballybunion Company who acted as scouts, were selected to prevent the Ballybunion R.I.C. from going to the aid of the guards at the Coast Guards Station in the townland of Cashin. This station was being attacked by men of the Ballyduff and Ballydonohoe Companies. This attack was successful and the station was burned down. Ballybunion Barracks was about $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles from the Coast Guards Station at Cashin. The only rifles we had were the three rifles belonging to the Company and the shotguns. I had one of the rifles. The other men had either rifles or shotguns. We took up positions in the sandhills along the Cashin River and were in positions for about an hour until the station at Cashin was destroyed. The Ballybunion R.I.C. were not, it seems, called on for help and after a while we went home.

Soon after the attack on Cashin Station a General Tudor of the British Army arrived in Ballybunion apparently on the invitation of the R.I.C. Sergeant. A meeting of the townspeople was called by the P.I.C. at which the General spoke. I came into the town to find out what was going on and it seems he wanted a guarantee from the people of the town that no further action would be taken by the I.R.A. against the R.I.C. but he did not get the guarantee from the people present.

There was no event of any importance this year after the Cashin attack except for the searches and raids by the R.I.C. and that the Company from time to time warned the local shopkeepers by posters not to supply the R.I.C. with groceries as we knew they (R.I.C.) were getting a lot of information in these shops about the movements of the local I.R.A.

Early in the year 1921 the Black & Tans arrived in Ballybunion - six in all - which brought the strength in the barracks to 18 men.

The Company now became very active cutting trees, trenching roads and demolishing bridges to prevent the passage of lorryloads of military from Listowel and Tralee to Ballybunion.

In January of this year a flying column was formed for the North Kerry area. I was the only one from the Ballybunion Company selected for the column. The column numbered thirty men and was in charge of Denis Quille from Listowel.

About a month after the formation of the column, it was decided to ambush an R.I.C. patrol in the town of Ballybunion. The patrol usually consisted of eight men. There was no detailed plan for the attack except that a couple of men were told to cover the barracks to prevent any of the R.I.C. getting out. All told, the attacking party consisted of 25 men including men of the Ballybunion Company who were not attached to the column. The men were located in doorways and laneways on each side of the street and two men were located in Shortise's shop. The patrol usually left barracks at 8 p.m. and patrolled from the barracks to the Castle Green (a distance of a quarter of a mile) up and down for about two hours. The officer in charge was Tom Kennelly. Besides myself other Ballybunion men present were Paddy Kennelly, John Walsh, John Collins, John Stack, Maurice Lynch and Paddy Walsh, Michael Kissane and Michael Purtill of Ballydonohoe Company. Our arms consisted of four rifles, three revolvers and a number of shotguns. When everything was ready for the attack sometime before 8 p.m. one of our men accidentally discharged a shotgun and the patrol never left the barracks that night, so we decided to give up until some other time. But before we left we fired a few shots at the barracks. This attack lasted about ten minutes.

In the month of March, 1921, myself, Thomas Kennelly and Mick Purtill and another man (I don't remember his name) were told by Denis Quille to go into Ballybunion to shoot three particular Tans who

were "out on their own" in doing the blackguard in the town. We had received several complaints about these three Tans. We arrived in the town and a scout informed us that our three Tans and another were in their usual pub. We crossed from the opposite side of the street armed with three rifles and three revolvers towards the closed door of the pub. About half way across, fire was opened on us by machine gun from the window of the barracks which seems to show that the police in the barracks had been informed of our movements. Of course, we immediately ran for it. None of us was hit so we set off for Lahara and arrived there at about 3 o'clock in the morning. Two hours after, while we were in bed, a lorryload of Tans appeared outside the farmer's house where we were sleeping with the arms we had the night before. They called on the man of the house - a man named Walsh - and demanded the way to Ballylongford. It appears that they had lost their way and took Walsh with them to show the way.

The following morning the Tans from Listowel and Tralee arrived in Ballybunion and with the Tans there started to shoot up the town, burning down the Cinema. The Listowel and Tralee Tans remained in the town for about an hour and then went to Ballylongford where they looted and burned down twenty-four houses including some business premises in the village.

About this time (February or March) the original column of 30 men was divided, the 3rd Battalion forming one column and the 6th Battalion forming the second column. Denis Quille remained O.C. of the 6th Battalion column and Tom Kennelly got charge of the 3rd Battalion Column. Each had 30 men. The reason for the division was that the area was too large for one column.

At about the end of March the column, under Tom Kennelly to which I belonged, decided to hold up a train at Lixnaw. The train was the

usual passenger train from Tralee to Limerick. Information had been received by Tom Kennelly that a party of military were travelling on this train. Our idea was to capture their arms. In the station proper two lengths of rails were removed and positions taken up on each side of the railway itself. When the train (which was travelling very slowly) came near the station the driver brought it to a standstill before it arrived at the section where the rails had been removed. When the train was boarded by our men it was discovered that the military had ^{not} got on at Tralee. All of the 30 men in the column were on this job and, as well as myself, included Tom Kennelly, Tom Shanahan (Captain), Paddy Corridan, Mick Purtill and Paddy Deane.

About early June we were told that an attack had been planned on Causeway R.I.C. Barracks by Paddy Connor, Battalion O.C. in Causeway and our column was asked to prevent reinforcements being sent from Listowel to Causeway. We took positions at Finuge Cross behind fences on each side of the road and in two disused houses near the Cross. We were on duty from about 10 p.m. to 4 a.m., but there was nothing doing and we went home. We heard next day that the attack on Causeway was not a success.

At the end of June the column held up a train at Lixnaw and removed the mails. The train was on its way from Tralee to Limerick. We had suspicions that information was being sent to the R.I.C. about the movements of the I.R.A. in the locality, but when we examined the mails up in the Stacks Mountains we found no evidence of any leakage.

At this time a large-scale round up by military and Tans took place through Duagh, Stacks Mountains, Lixnaw, Abbeydorney etc. into Listowel but our men escaped the net by about ten minutes.

Just a week before the Truce we mined the main road Lixnaw to Listowel in the townland of Mountcole. This road was the main road used by Crown Forces. We spent the week before the Truce in the

Mountcole area waiting for a couple of military lorries which usually passed along the road each day, but they never travelled that week.

On the morning of the Truce we removed the mines - they had been manufactured locally. They were made of metal casings of shells used in the 1914/18 war and were filled with powder, the mines being connected to an electric battery. The man in charge of the plunger was Tom Shanahan of Libmaw. During the Truce I attended camps at Ballyheigue and Ballyconry.

(Signed) Ted Houlihan
(Ted Houlihan)

Date: 9.7.54

9.7.54.

Witness: John J. Daly
(John J. Daly)

