BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21 BURO STAIRE MILEATA 1913-21

No. W.S. 102

ROINN COSANTA.

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 1,027

Witness

Michael Motherway, Ballysally, Charleville, Co. Cork.

Identity.

Member of I.R.B. Charleville, Co. Cork, 1911 -;

Member of Irish Volunteers, Charleville, Co. Cork, 1914 - .
Subject.

National activities, Charleville, Co. Cork, 1911-1921.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil

File No. 8.2276

Form B.S.M. 2



BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
BURO STAIRE MILEATA 1913-21

No. W.S. 102

## Statement by Michael Motherway, Ballysally, Charleville.

I was born at Ballysally, Charleville, in 1893.
My father was a gardener.

My earliest recollection of politics was of the later portion of the Redmond and O'Brien period. family were supporters of O'Brien whose party was in a minority throughout the country). The people of the Charleville district at the time - about 1909-1910 up to 1914 - were more or less equally divided between these two parties - the O'Brienite section were sometimes in the majority and elections - parliamentary or local - were On the occasion of election meetings by stormy affairs. either party there were usually brawls and fights between the opposing sections. The O'Brienites elected Paddy Guiney as M.P. (Member of Parliament) and later John This party also elected Langley Brazier Creagh to the Cork County Council. He was a Protestant and the standard bearer for the policy of "Conference Conciliation and Consent". Another successful candidate for the party was Edmond Lynan. The Redmondite party had, however, control of the Charleville Rural District Council, having seven members thereon as against two O'Brienite members. This was the position in Charleville in my early days.

My first connection with a really non-political national organisation arose when I joined the Gaelic League about 1909. These classes did not survive very long but they were revived in late 1913. At the time, the Gaelic League had about 40 members and those in charge

were: Dr. Dineen, C.C., Seán O'Dea, Lce. Hedivan, Tom
Barry. Irish classes were held regularly once a week
and there was also Irish dancing and songs. The teachers
were Seán O'Dea, Tom Barry and Lawrence Hedivan. Seán
Ó Muirthuile and Terence MacSwiney visited the classes on a
number of occasions. I think they were acting as
organisers.

Early in 1911 I was invited to join the I.R.B. by Paddy O'Connell, Senr., a neighbour of mine at Ballysally. I was sworn in by a man named Murphy from Cork. He was later drowned during the 1914-18 war when a cattle boat on which he was working was lost on a trip from Cork to Liverpool (I think). The other members of the Circle, as far as I can now remember, were Thade Begley and his son, Patrick: Pat Daly, Dave Sullivan, Paddy O'Connell, Junn., Paddy O'Connell, Senr., Edmond Leeney, John McCarthy, Ml. Kennedy and John O'Callaghan (The Glen). The total number of members would be father of the group. I was the youngest member at the time about a dozen. and am now the sole survivor of the group.

As far as I can recollect, during the first couple of years of my membership we were not very active.

We usually endeavoured to push the Irish aspect of things in every possible way. Through the Gaelic League and G.A.A. we tried to create a more national outlook amongst the younger people. We usually received pamphlets, "Trish Freedom, Eire and other papers, with an Irish outlook mainly from Cork and we pushed the reading of such where it was likely to create most interest. We printed anti-British slogans and posted them around the town. They were mostly always taken down by the R.I.C.

We continued to work through the organisations already mentioned until the formation of the Volunteers presented us with an opportunity to take more effective action towards achieving our aims.

In November 1913 Padraig Pearse addressed a meeting in Charleville in an endeavour to organise a Volunteer unit but there was no response to his appeals. This was a Manchester Martyrs celebration and was organised by the Young Ireland Society. I remember that most of his address covered the necessity for being fitted to handle arms just as \*\*Carson had done in the North. Drilling and the use of arms was, of course, not looked on with favour by the ordinary people at that time or with the O'Brienite leaders locally.

The first unit of Irish National Volunteers was formed in Charleville by the A.O.H. (Ancient Order of Hibernians), party in the Spring of 1914. Before the formation of this unit a meeting was held in the A.O.H. Hall. It was addressed by Thomas McDonagh. The first parade of this company took place in the Market Yard. The strength of the unit was about 100. This body was controlled by a Committee composed of Pat Haugh, Pat Lyons, Dr. Hayes, J.J. O'Donnell and about 2 others whose names I cannot remember. It is not too easy to remember names as political party committees change nearly every year.

Immediately following the formation of the Volunteers by the A.O.H. the younger members of the I.R.B. formed another section of about the same strength from the O'Brienite supporters and were styled the O'Brienite Volunteers. The local leader of the O'Brien party had no

knowledge who started it. They fell in and took on.

That was all that mattered to the I.R.B. The prime movers behind the organisation of this unit were the members of the I.R.B. associated with O'Brien's party. The Committee in charge were Mick Cahill, John Barry, Dave Sullivan, Pat Daly, Mick Motherway (witness), Mick Kennedy and Pat Begley.

The position as outlined in preceding paragraphs continued for some weeks although H.Q. had notified us that In any event, J.J. Walsh and it could not be allowed. P.S. O'Hegarty arrived in Charleville shortly afterwards They found that our Company had on a Sunday evening. They followed gone on a route march to Newtownshandrum. and made contact with our party in the vicinity of the They informed us that they had come to latter village. arrange for an amicable settlement of the differences between the Redmondite and O'Brienite sections. long discussion took place on the roadside and it was finally agreed that we would consider what should be done at a full committee meeting during the week. We later agreed to unity on the following terms:

The terms of the agreement were that -

- (1) a new Committee representative of both sections should be set up;
- (2) the Committee to be composed of 6 0'Brienites, 6 A.O.H. (Redmondites) and 3 representatives of the Protestant community. Two of the 0'Brienite representatives were members of the I.R.B. viz. Patk. Daly and Mick Motherway (witness

Following this arrangement the two Companies paraded at opposite ends of the town (Charleville) on the following Sunday evening and marched towards each other to meet in the centre of the Main Street. Each company marched in double file so that when they met they

marched through between the files to form sections of fours.

The new committee established to control the unified body was: - Pat Haugh, Pat Lyons, Dr. Hayes, John O'Donnell and two others whose names I don't remember representing A.O.H., Mr. Sanders, Mr. Harrison and Revd. Mr. Harvey (Protestant Party), Mick Cahill, Ned Lynan, John Barry, Pat Daly and witness (Mick Motherway), representing O'Brienite section. I remember well some members of this Committee were never very enthusiastic about the business. We did not always have a full meeting. The Company was getting smaller week by week.

The Volunteers continued to train throughout the summer of 1914 under Wm. Deasy, Mick Tynan, Wm. Gore and "The Rat" Collins. Drilling was carried out in the open - foot drill and arms drill with wooden guns. Usually the Company went on a route march into some adjoining district each Sunday. After some time a couple of .22 rifles were obtained and the members had some target practice at Sander's Park.

This was the position in Charleville when war broke out in August 1914. When the training officers (Deasy, Gore, Tynan and Collins), who were British Army reservists, were called up for service about the end of August difficulty was found in getting instructors. The usual parades were, however, carried on until October when the Irish Volunteer Convention was held. In the meantime John Redmond had made his appeal for recruits for the British Army, causing a split at the Dublin Headquarters and our Committee held divided views on the matter.

However, when following the Convention, the

Committee received a circular and discussed the question of the split - i.e. as to whether we should follow Redmond's programme, support the recruiting drive, and join the National Volunteers; or continue to serve with the Irish Volunteers under P.H. Pearse who were opposed to the British - the members who were present, except Pat Daly, Pat Lyons and witness (Mick Motherway) voted This ended the activities of the against P.H. Pearse. Irish Volunteers as a body for the time being but the majority who joined the National Volunteers continued to carry on for a short time when they gradually faded out. About this time William O'Brien, M.P. for Cork City and leader of O'Brienite Party, delivered a speech that no man was worth his salt who would not fight for the This finished the "All for freedom of small nations. I left the local Ireland League" (O'Brien's party). Committee and ceased to be an O'Brienite.

Sometime about the end of 1914 I had a communication from Bulmer Hobson inviting me to make a fresh effort to reorganise a unit of the Irish Volunteers. This was followed early in January, I think, by a circular letter from P.H. Pearse and the Committee in Dublin asking for a special effort to increase membership. As members of the I.R.B. Patk. and Denis Begley and witness were continually endeavouring to select suitable members.

Amongst those whom I had approached were Sean O'Dea, Tom Barry, Lawrence Hedivan (3 secondary teachers in C.B. Schools).

The Irish Volunteer movement at this time was not very popular in Charleville. In fact, anyone connected with any of the National organisations was subject to continual interference and abuse from the "separation"

allowance" women (British soldiers' wives), while the response of many of our school pals to Redmond's appeal was helping to increase the strength of the true blue Imperialists. At this period there was a big rally of Irish Volunteers at Limerick. Drumcollogher Volunteers marched to Charleville to attend the rally. Stones and bottles were thrown at them when they arrived in Limerick.

Sometime in the Spring of 1915 (I think) arrangements were made to hold a big recruiting meeting for the British Army in Charleville. Practically all parties were The principal local represented on the platform. representatives were John Barry and Michael Cahill (O'Brienites), John O'Donnell, John Cronin, J.P., Ned Wallace, Dr. Hayes, Mr. Sanders (Redmondites). meeting, which was attended by Sgt. Michael O'Leary, V.C., was held at the hotel in the Main St. - the speakers addressing the public from a wagonette. However, on the night prior to the meeting, accompanied by Denis Begley, I tarred the walls of the hotel with anti-recruiting When doing the job we wore socks over our shoes and hands and the only marks found by the R.I.C. when they were investigating the outrage (as it was called at the time) were the fingerprints of the hotel porter on the handle of the door.

On the evening of the day on which the meeting was held the R.I.C. arrested Seán O'Dea, Tom Barry and Lce. Hedivan - the three teachers at C.B. Schools referred to previously. They were questioned about the tarring but had no knowledge of it. They were released after about 24 hours - on Monday - and on the following Friday the Volunteers were reorganised at a meeting in the ballalley. The pioneers in the reorganisation were Seán O'Dea, Tom

Barry, Lawrence Hedivan, Mick Sheehy, Jim Brislane, Eugene McCarthy, Denny O'Driscoll, Mick Mahoney, Patrick Begley, Denis Begley, Joe and Dick Nagle, Wm. Delea and witness (Mick Motherway). The strength of the company within a couple of weeks had reached about 50. The first officers who were elected were:

Captain Sean O'Dea lst Lieut. Lce. Hedivan 2nd Lieut. Tom Barry.

The company was attached to the Galtee Battalion which, at the time, included East Limerick and portions of North Cork on the Limerick border, e.g. Charleville and Mitchelstown. I think that the O/C of the Galtee Battalion at the time was Liam P. Manahan who was a creamery manager at Ardpatrick.

As an indication of the feeling in the town at the time of the big recruiting meeting I should mention that the majority of the people signed a petition to the superior of the local Christian Brothers (Brother Lysaght) asking him to dispense with the services of the three teachers who had been arrested in connection with the This was done despite the fact tarring of the hotel. that the men had never been charged with any offence. However, Brother Lysaght refused to take any action and the teachers continued at the schools. At this time the Christian Brothers were not receiving salaries from the They had to depend on the fees paid by the pupils State. and on a collection from the public of the parish.

Drilling and parades continued as usual throughout the remainder of 1915 and into 1916. On St. Patrick's Day 1916 the company took part in a parade of the Galtee Battalion held at Ardpatrick. Several other units from the bordering districts in East Limerick took part and

the parade was under the command of Liam Manahan.

Early in Holy Week 1916 the O/C of the Battalion attended a parade of the Company at Smiths Lane (Ballalley) when the order to parade on Easter Sunday was given by the officer in charge, Sean O'Dea. The venue of the parade was the Convent Gate and all members attended on Sunday evening about 2 p.m. but when the particulars of the countermanding order were read in the Sunday Independent the parade disbanded. We had no arms at this time except a couple of revolvers owned by the officers and a We were, I understood, to get some of the few shotguns. rifles which were expected to be landed in Kerry, with Following the dismissal of the Easter Sunday parade, I think that the Company officers left the district for the weekend.

Early on the Thursday morning of Easter Week the Battalion O/C, (Liam P. Manahan), came to town. I met him and directed him to where Jim Brislane lived. As far as I can recollect we were then instructed to mobilise at Newtownshandrum Cross at 11 a.m. that day and to bring a I left my work as Clerk of the Church supply of rations. I proceeded to the and went home to change my clothes. meeting place and was met by Denny Driscoll, who informed me not to go as orders were again cancelled. Dick Geary had brought a message from Jim Brislane. He had obtained this message from Lce. Hedivan the previous night in Cork, where he had been doing an examination, with instructions to deliver it to Jim Brislane. The latter was contacted immediately and as the message cancelled the mobilisation I was absent due that morning, I returned to my job. about 2 hours at the time. My employer - Canon O'Callaghan, P.P., was not aware of my absence.

The officers of the Company were arrested about the end of April or early in May (the week of the Rebellion). They were interned in Frongoch. Joe and Dick Nagle were also arrested. They were taken to Cork and released after 3 or 4 days. On May 17th 1916 seventeen other members of the company were arrested, amongst them Jim Brislane, Bob Joyce, Eugene McCarthy, Dick Nagle, Joe Nagle, Tim, Paddy and Denis Begley, Jerome Lynch and Mick Motherway (witness). This party was detained until the following day and were accused of shooting at Constable Prendergast, R.I.C.

After Easter Week the members of the company still continued to meet and when Seán O'Dea, Laurence Hedivan and Tom Barry were released from Frongoch early in 1917 their homecoming was made the occasion for a big demonstration. The Volunteers were joined in this demonstration by large numbers of the public as well as by the members of Sinn Féin, G.A.A. and Gaelic League. The demeanour of the people in general towards the Volunteers and Easter Week appeared to be slowly changing and we availed of the change to push on with our recruiting campaign.

After Easter Week we also made a very successful church gate collection for the Prisoners Dependants' Fund. Priests and people who were at first opposed to the Rising subscribed generously.

When Sean O'Dea and Laurence Hedivan were released they were not reinstated in their jobs as school teachers but Tom Barry, who was married to a local girl, got his job back. At this time Jim Brislane was Company O/C and he undertook the organisation of the Volunteers in the

surrounding districts. When he had organised units in Milford, Newtownshandrum, Churchtown, Ballyhea, Dromina, Liscarrol and Effin these units, together with Charleville Company, were formed into a battalion which became attached to Cork Brigade. This was about May 1917. The membership of the units varied from 20 to 70.

The officers of this Battalion were: -

O/C James Brislane, Charleville. Vice O/C Denis O'Driscoll, Newtownshandrum. Adjt. Robt. Joyce, Charleville. Q/M James Winters, Churchtown.

During the week following the return of the prisoners the following members of the Volunteers were arrested and charged with "unlawful assembly" - Denis Begley, Dick and Noe Nagle, John Grady and Mick Motherway(witness). They were tried by General Courtmartial at Cork and were defended by Patk. Lynch, K.C. They were each sentenced to six months imprisonment but the sentences were quashed on representations of Captain Harrison, Ballyhea, and Revd. Mr. Harvey, Protestant Minister, who represented to the authorities that confirmation of the sentence would only lead to further trouble in the area.

During 1917 and early 1918 parades, route marches and drilling continued as usual. The Volunteers were, however, doing a lot of work in the organisation of the political wing - organising Sinn Féin Clubs. The pioneer work in this section fell on the shoulders of the Volunteers and members of their families.

When Conscription was threatened in 1918 there was a big influx of new recruits to the Company. Nearly every adult of military age in the town joined up, bringing the strength of the unit up to about 300/350. However, when

the scare had passed the new recruits disappeared and the Company returned to the normal strength of 50/60. At this time several raids for arms took place but the majority of the shotguns held in the area were surrendered voluntarily. These raids were carried out by the Company officers who, at this date, were -

O/C Denis Begley 1st Lieut. Jack Cronin 2nd Lieut. Mick Scully.

They were assisted by witness (Mick Motherway), Tim Begley, Dick Nagle, Ned and Con McCarthy and Michael Kingston.

About twenty shotguns and 200 rounds of ammunition were obtained from these raids. In addition, the Company had two Lee Enfield rifles which had been purchased from soldiers home on leave from France. These rifles had been purchased by the Company officers with their own money.

The General Election in December 1918 demanded a lot of work from the Volunteers on behalf of the Sinn Féin candidate for the area - Paudeen O'Keeffe. The Volunteers were engaged in canvassing, checking voters lists, guarding ballot boxes and polling stations.

The usual drilling and other activities in connection with the work of the other Irish Ireland bodies continued throughout 1919. The success of Sinn Féin in the General Election gave a general boost to our activities. It was, I think, about this time that the R.I.C. began to arrest Volunteers for "illegal" drilling. The first to be arrested was Jim Brislane, who was sentenced to six months imprisonment which he served in Belfast Gaol. The R.I.C. then arrested the Company O/C (Denis Begley) at his home, but he dashed away from the party of R.I.C.

as they entered the town. (He resided outside the town). He headed for the Catholic Church where I was trimming the grass in front of the Church (I was employed at this time as Clerk of the Church). When he dashed in - calling the police were after him - he asked me where he would go. I told him to hide behind the bushes in the grounds while, at the same time, I ran off around the Church. The R.I.C., seeing me running round the Church, followed and Denis Begley was able to move away while the police were searching the grounds at the rere of the church. this, Denis Begley left the district and he was replaced by Sean Cronin as O/C. Denis Begley now resides at 16, Grace Park Road, Griffith Avenue, Dublin, and is a Captain in the Free State Army. Several attempts were made to arrest Sean Cronin but they all failed. eventually left Charleville and was replaced by Tom Coughlan who succeeded in evading all attempts to arrest him.

About the end of 1919 the Battalion Vice-Comdt.

(Denis O'Driscoll) and the Battalion Adjt. (Robt. Joyce)

left the district and they were replaced by Paddy O'Brien

(Liscarrol) and Jeremiah Moran (Charleville), respectively.

In the Spring of 1920 the R.I.C. force in Charleville was reinforced by about 20 Black and Tans while a party of about 30 military took over the house next to the R.I.C. barracks.

The usual drilling activities took place round this time while we also raided the local mails on a few occasions. The General Order issued by G.H.Q. regarding the destruction of vacated R.I.C. posts and Income Tax papers did not lead to any activity in the area as there was no vacated post or Income Tax officer in our area.

In April 1920 instructions were received from

Battalion O/C that East Eimerick Brigade required the

co-operation of the Company in an attack on Ballylanders

R.I.C. barrack. The co-operation sought took the form of

blocking roads and cutting rail communications in the

company area with a view to delaying or preventing the enemy

forces at Ballyvonare Camp and Buttevant barracks from

reaching Ballylanders while the attack was in progress.

All members of the Company were engaged on the night of the

attack and remained on duty till dawn on the following day.

This operation took place on 27th April, 1920. The

activities were carried out under the direction of the

Company officers (Seán Cronin and Mick Scully and Tom

Crighlan).

Similar activities to those outlined in the previous paragraph were carried out by all members of the Company on the occasion of the attack on Kilmallock R.I.C. Barracks by East Limerick column, assisted by some members of the Charleville battalion on May 28th 1920. Members of the Charleville Company who took part in the actual attack on Kilmallock were Sean Cronin and Con McCarthy. All the other members were engaged in road blocking and rail-cutting, not alone in their own area, but in the area of some of the This was necessary as all roads neighbouring companies. between Kilmallock and Charleville, Charleville and Buttevant, Kilmallock-Effin and Effin-Ballymac roads leading to Buttevant and Ballyvonare had to be blocked. This work was so thoroughly performed that the troops from Buttevant and Ballyvonare did not reach Kilmallock until noon next day (29th May 1920).

At the Local Government Elections in May 1920 witness (Mick Motherway) was elected a member of the Charleville

Rural District Council. Sean O'Brien (he was later murdered by Black and Tans in March 1920) was elected Chairman, witness Vice Chairman, while other members co-opted on the Sinn Féin ticket were Jim Hedigan, Sean Cronin, Denis Reedy and Jim Walsh. The Sinn Féin pledge was signed by all the members. This declaration pledged the members to do their best to overthrow the British Local Government system and to deal only with the Dail Department of Home Affairs. The Council and officials co-operated in every way in the effort to overthrow the enemy system of administration.

During June 1920, with about thirty other members of the Company I took part in a raid on the mail train at. Charleville Station. Amongst other members of the company who took part were Mick Sheehy, Dick Smith, John Higgins, Tom Coughlan, James Quirke, Ned McCarthy, Con McCarthy and my brother, Stephen Motherway. In this raid the signal cabin was taken over and the signalman was ordered to stop the train. The engine of the train was boarded by Paddy O'Brien and Tom Coughlan while others entered the The train was then driven about 2 miles from mail van. Charleville in the direction of Buttevant where it was halted and the mails, which had been collected by the Volunteers in the mail van, were removed to a waiting They were later censored by the Brigade Staff motor car. and returned through other Post Offices.

The usual activities of keeping roads blocked and communications cut was continued by the members of Charleville Company up to October when systematic raiding of mails took place throughout the district. The raids in the Charleville area were, I think, very successful as much information regarding enemy activities was obtained by the

Intelligence Staff. Witness, with the officers and other members of the Company, took part in these raids.

At this time I had been "on the run" for about three months, due to information obtained by Patrick Cronin, Clerk of the Rural District Council, from some British soldiers who were drinking in a shop where he was Manager. Cronin gathered from their conversation that it was proposed to carry out an unofficial raid on my home and to shoot me if I was caught. This information was obtained about mid-August and I immediately ceased to sleep at home. Five British soldiers did raid my home and fire shots through the door. I saw these five soldiers myself from a house where I had sheltered that night.

During curfew hours one night in November 1920 I called to my home to get a change of socks. I had only just entered the house when it was surrounded by the military. I was arrested and sent to Limerick Gaol where I was kept until about 20th April, 1921. During my period of detention I was never charged with any offence. I omitted to mention that I was actually released from Limerick Gaol at the end of January 1921 (I think), but on coming outside the gate I was rearrested and taken to William St. R.I.C. barracks. I was asked to sign an undertaking to give up my connection with the I.R.A. or, in the alternative, to do a further period of 3 months. I refused to sign the undertaking and was returned to the Gaol where I was detained until (I think) 20th April, 1921.

From the date of my release I was "on the run".

I reported to my unit on my return to Charleville and took part in all Company's activities up to the Truce. These included numerous raids on the mails, trenching of roads, cutting communications, telegraph wires and such. At this

time the members of the Company carried out several raids in connection with the boycott of Belfast goods.

During the Truce I was appointed a member of the Republican Court for the district to replace Seán O'Brien who was murdered by enemy forces. The other members were Jim Ryan, Ardnageeha, and Timothy Murphy (Sinn Féin), Tom O'Leary (Labour representative) - the court was composed of 3 Sinn Féin representatives with one Labour man. The Court dealt with cases of trespass, collection of debts, breaches of Licensing Eaws, as well as other unlawful activities. In nearly all cases the decisions of the Court were accepted by the litigants while the orders of the Court were enforced by the Republican police.

The Battalion O/C Police was Patk. Galvin, Newtownshandrum
The O/C Police, Charleville area, was Mick Phelan (now in
Clonmel), while John Costello, Charleville, was Sergeant
i/c. the town area.

Our court had, I think, the unique distinction of solving a dispute between husband and wife by ordering them to separate. The husband, Wm. Meskill, was a British ex-soldier. The wife Hannah, nee Healy, complained that the husband had threatened to cut her throat with a razor. The husband was arrested by Republican police and brought before the Court. Having heard the evidence on both sides the Court ordered the parties to live apart - the husband to contribute to the wife's support. The Order of the Court was accepted and they never lived together afterwards.

On another occasion the Court made an order for the seizure of cattle from Michael Fleming, Graigues, Charleville, in respect of the payment of a debt to

Michael Cahill, J.P., Merchant, Charleville. The cattle were seized by the Republican police, sold at Kilmallock Fair and the debt paid. The surplus cash remaining after payment of the debt was sent to the owner of the seized cattle. This case was afterwards contested in the Free State Courts, but the decision of the Sinn Féin Court was upheld.

My rank at the Truce - Volunteer:

The strength of the Charleville Company at this date - about 40.

Signed:

(Michael Mothonway)

Date:

7445 0 4 2 2 2 2 2

14th October 1954.

Witness:

Philo Domell

PHil O'Donnell

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21 BURO STAIRE MILEATA 1913-21

No. W.S.

102