

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
BURO STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21
NO. W.S. 1051

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 1,051

Witness

Timothy D. Crimmins,
Kilbolane
Milford,
Charleville,
Co. Cork.

Identity.

O/C. Engineers, Charleville Batt'n.
Cork II Brigade.

Battalion O.C. First Aid.

Subject.

Irish Volunteers, North-East Cork,
1916-1921.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil

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STATEMENT BY TIMOTHY D. CRIMMINS,

Kilbolane, Milford, Charleville, Co. Cork.

I was born in New York City in the year 1896. My father was head foreman for the contracting firm of Thomas E. Crimmins. When he retired he came back to Ireland to live. My father (like most of the people of the district - Kilbolane, Milford) was a supporter of John E. Redmond. He was also a member of the A.O.H.

My first connection with any national organisation was with the Irish Volunteers, which I joined in Milford in 1916. The Volunteers were formed by Jim Brislane, Seán O'Dea and Larry Hedivan. Also in the unit were Jerry Falvey, John Manahan, Denis Noonan, Jim Coughlan and Patrick Fitzgibbon. The strength of the unit was about 14 at this time. Foot drill and parades were held in the fields about two nights each week, and occasionally on Sundays the unit would go on a route march to neighbouring units. Drill instruction was carried out by John Drew - an ex British soldier. He was only with us for a few weeks when Jerry Falvey was elected to take charge. He was the only officer at this time.

The Milford unit was attached to the Galtee Battalion, which was, I think, in charge of Liam Manahan, a creamery manager at Ardpatrick, Kilfinane, Co. Limerick. The battalion was mainly made up of units in East Limerick area but there were also some units from inside the Cork border, e.g., Milford, Charleville and Mitchelstown.

On Easter Sunday, 1916, the unit paraded at Glenquin Castle, Co. Limerick, where arms were expected to

arrive after the landing of Roger Casement in Kerry. I did not go with the unit but was left behind to do Intelligence Officer. The only information I got was from the postmaster, who told me that the lines to Dublin were broken down and that news was after leaking out that firing was going on in Dublin. The members of the unit who went to Glenquin Castle returned on Easter Sunday night.

Following the events of Easter Week the unit still continued to carry out regular drills and parades. This continued in the years 1917 and 1918. In 1918 there was a large increase in the membership of the unit owing to the threat of conscription. The strength rose to about 85 and the following new officers were appointed:

1st Lieutenant - Denis Noonan
2nd Lieutenant - Patrick Sheehan.

Large numbers of shotguns with ammunition for same were collected about this time. They were kept in dumps in the Company area and stored under the floors of outhouses on farms. The guns were collected mainly at night by, amongst others, Jerry Falvey, John Manahan, Denis Noonan, John Crimmins, Patrick Sheehan, Jim Coughlan, Patrick Fitzgibbon, Maurice Noonan, James Fox, Ned Fox and Timothy D. Crimmins (witness). I think it was at this time that Seán O'Sullivan, Cork City, arrived in the district. He was engaged in giving drill instruction to the officers of the units in the area. These drill parades were held mainly in the Dromina and Newtown area. When the conscription scare passed all the new recruits dropped away and the unit returned to its old strength of about 14.

A unit of the Cumann na mBan was also formed about

this time and had a membership of about 10 or 12. It was trained in first aid by the local medical officer - Dr. James McCarthy. Some of the members were: Alice Falvey, May Hennigan, Josephine Murphy, Margaret Crimmins and Margaret Sheehan.

During the general election in December 1918 there was no activity in the district as the Sinn Féin candidate for the area was returned unopposed. All members were active in supporting all the other national organisations, including Gaelic League, and G.A.A., during the years 1917 and 1918.

When Cork 11 Brigade was formed in January 1919 Milford unit was detached from the Galtee Battalion, as were all the other units inside the borders of Cork County. We then became 'B' Company, 4th Battalion (Charleville), Cork 11 Brigade. The other units in the battalion were: Effin, Charleville, Ballyhea, Buttevant, Lisgriffin, Liscarrol, Churchtown, Dromina, Newtown-Shandrum. The first officers of the battalion were, I think,

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

The usual drilling and training activities went on during 1919. The success of Sinn Féin in the 1918 general election gave a boost to Volunteer activities, and sometime towards the end of 1919 the Milford unit was reorganised by Paddy O'Brien, who was now Vice O/C Charleville Battalion. He appointed the following officers:

O/C - Patrick Sheehan
 Adjt. - Maurice Noonan
 Q/M - John Crimmins.

On this occasion he also gave the oath to the Republic to these officers, including Jerry Falvey (late O/C) who now returned to the ranks.

During 1919 the Dáil Loan was floated and as no move had been made to collect same in the area I was visited by Seán Noonan, creamery manager, Freemount, and Charles Reilly, Newmarket. They asked me to try to get something for the loan as Milford was the only area from which they had received nothing. I took on this job and got the sum of £312, which can be vouched for by documents in my possession.

It was, I think, about this time that the British Courts of Justice were not functioning and the Sinn Féin Courts were set up. Milford Parish Court dealt with cases from Milford, Freemount and Tullylease districts and the following were appointed to the new Sinn Féin Court: Timothy D. Crimmins, (witness) - President; Charles O'Flynn and Augustine O'Callaghan. Our instructions were not to be too harsh and to try and give our decisions without doing harm to the organisation. One of our first cases was an assault case at Milford. It was settled to the satisfaction of both parties. I also heard cases at Freemount and Tullylease on my own as the other members of the court were old and we did not ask them to travel away from home. In both places all parties seemed to be satisfied, and we never had any appeals from our decisions. There was one case in the area which we could not try as the amount involved (£300) was too large to be dealt with by the parish court. This was a case of a dispute between the mother and son of an Imperialist family. The mother brought the case

to the Sinn Féin Court. The case was heard by the District Court at Freemount. The members of the Court were: Chairman - Con Sullivan, Drouminarrigle, M.B. McAuliffe, Paddy McCarthy, Paddy Clancy and Seán Moylan. The Court gave a decree for £300 to the mother.

Early in 1920 the mails were being raided regularly and one raid for same took place at Ballyhea at a place called Mooney's Gates. In this case the Dublin - Cork mail train was boarded at Charleville by I.R.A. and the train was stopped by means of the signals at Mooney's Gates. The mails were transferred to a motor car belonging to my father - David Crimmins. The car was driven by Frank Lyons, Charleville, so that I might stay at home in case I'd arouse suspicion by my absence. The car had only just been returned to the garage by Frank Lyons when a cycle patrol of military passed by the house. The driver stayed with me that night and returned to Charleville next day. The mails in this case were dropped at Dwane's, Ballinea near Freemount.

In August 1920 an ambush at Gibbonsgrove on the Charleville-Milford road was called off by Paddy O'Brien owing to the position being thought unsafe. The arms for this proposed action were left at my home at Kilbolane, Milford, on the previous day.

At the end of October 1920 the combined columns of the Charleville and Newmarket battalions took up a position at Doona, Milford, about 400 yards from Milford R.I.C. barracks to ambush some Tans who would come out the main Drumcollogher - Eiscarrol road nearly every day. They did not arrive on this occasion. On another occasion about this time while some of the members of the column were in the area news was received that two

R.I.C. men were only a short distance from their barracks at Drumcollogher. The column men were only able to fire a few shots at long range as the enemy party ran for their barracks. Following this attack I scouted the attackers to Bunmona, in the Milford area, to safety, and we were hardly clear of the ambush position when the houses in the district were raided by the enemy forces.

Within a few days of the foregoing activities I got a note by messenger from the postmaster of Milford (Patrick Murphy). He asked me in the note to call on him without delay. I immediately went to the Post Office and I was informed by the postmaster that he had tapped a call to the R.I.C. at Milford which informed them that lorries would arrive in Milford to take them away about 11 a.m. As I knew that the Battalion Staff were at Callaghan's, Curryglass, Dromina, I went there at once. I met the Battalion O/C (Jim Brislane) and he told me to get another man with myself and get under cover to see if all the R.I.C. went in the lorries. The man I got was James Riordan of the Milford unit, and I gave him the instructions as I had received them. I posted him in the old ruin of Kilbolane Castle overlooking the main Milford-Charleville road of which he had a good view. I went myself to the Cross of the Lane and got into the back room of a cottage where I could see the main road Liscarrol - Drumcollogher. My instructions to Riordan were to report to me when the enemy party crossed his position as the Battalion O/C told me that if everything was O.K. I was to contact him at O'Donnell's, Aughrim, and he would arrange to have the barrack burned. Riordan did not report to me until dusk (about 6 p.m.) that the enemy party had passed his position at 2 p.m.

I made for O'Donnell's, Aughrim, but when I reached there the Battalion O/C (Jim Brislane) and his party had left for Milford. On my way back I met the members of the Milford unit at Kilbolane Cross. They were waiting for the column. I said to the O/C that I would want a bit to eat as I was fasting all day (it was now about 7.30 p.m.), so he said that I could go home for a meal. As the distance was less than half a mile to my home it did not take long and I did not delay at the meal, but when I got back to the Cross they had left for the barrack as the Battalion O/C and party had arrived while I was away. I knew where to proceed as the O/C (Jim Brislane) made his plans known to me when I contacted him earlier in the day with the information I had obtained from the postmaster. I may mention that no one could get any information from the postmaster only myself.

When I arrived at Doona Cross, which is in Milford village and on the by-road leading to the R.I.C. barracks, I met a scout who said that everything was O.K. I carried on towards the barracks and when about ten yards from same I got the command "Halt, put them up". Thinking it was one of our own (I.R.A.) party I said it was all right and continued to advance. I was again ordered to put them up and advance to be recognised. When I did so I found myself covered by two Tans, who asked me where I was going. I said "to see a friend of mine who is sick and who lives above the barrack". I was told I could not go just yet and they ordered me into the barrack. The barrack had a porch at the front door and I went to the door. I said that there was no one there so they (the Tans) told me to shove in

the door. When I put my hand to the door a shot was fired at me from close range. I put my hands to my head and gave the impression that I was wounded by shouting to this effect and rushing back towards the roadway. On my way to the road, which was about 30 feet away, I had to pass through a wicket-gate, and here on the road, crouched one at each pier, were the two Tans. They said nothing to me then and I continued on my way up the road towards the home of my allegedly sick friend and they^{then} started to fire after me. About 50 yards from the barrack I met my brother John and the Battalion O/C (Jim Brislane) and reported what had happened. The O/C instructed me to go across the ditch of the road and back to the Cross in the village to see if anyone would pass. I remained at the Cross where I found no scout for about an hour, and then started for home along the main Charleville road. On my way I had to pass the doctor's house, and seeing light in the dispensary I went in. My brother John was there. He had come for the doctor to attend to Paddy O'Brien who had been wounded in the cheek. I went with my brother and the doctor to Riordan's house at Kilbolane where my brother and Jim Brislane had brought Paddy O'Brien from the barrack across the river Deel. When the wound was dressed the doctor said he should go to hospital to have the bullet removed. When the doctor left for home, accompanied by my brother John, the Battalion O/C (Jim Brislane) and I set out with Paddy O'Brien (the wounded man) for Dromina, but before we reached there we had to put him to bed at Callaghan's, High Field, as he was getting tired and the wound stiff. We took him to O'Connell's of The Strand the following day where a car

and escort removed him to a Cork hospital. The barrack was not destroyed that night.

Within a week of the wounding of Paddy O'Brien I was appointed Battalion O/C Engineers. I did not hold this position long as the staff made me Battalion O/C First Aid as I lived so near to Dr. McCarthy ($\frac{1}{4}$ mile) where I could be instructed in this aspect of the work and have advice available at all times.

The barrack was burned some days afterwards, I think it was on the Sunday following the wounding of Paddy O'Brien. It was burned by the members of the local unit with one or two members of the column. Amongst those who took part were: Maurice Noonan, Pat Sheehan, Pat Keating, Denis McAuliffe, Jack Regan, John Crimmins, Jim Riordan, Jim Crowley, Bill Keating, Ned Fox, Ned McCarthy and Tom Culhane of the column, and myself. Following the destruction of the barrack the members of the Milford unit were on duty every night for over a week guarding the Co-Operative Creamery in case the enemy might destroy it as a reprisal.

During the period November 1920 to January or February 1921 all members of the unit were engaged at one time or another in raiding the local mails. Nothing of military interest was discovered. The members also spent much time on scouting and outpost duty for the column, which was very often in the area. On these occasions I always stayed with the Column O/C and inspected the guards twice nightly.

About this time my home was being continually raided by enemy forces and I was compelled to go 'on the

run". I went home on April 1st 1921 and while there the house was raided and I was captured. I was shaving at the window facing the road when I saw two soldiers coming towards the house. I dashed out the back door and across a ditch while the raiding party opened fire. I still kept going until I found that I was surrounded and had to surrender. I was rather unlucky as a message had been sent from one of the I.R.A. Intelligence Officers in Buttevant to say that my home was to be raided, but the messenger did not know where we lived and went to Milford where he gave the message to James Noonan who only arrived at my home just as I was captured. As a matter of fact he only evaded capture by hiding in a ditch when he was forewarned of the presence of the enemy by the sound of the firing when I was trying to escape. My brother John and Maurice Noonan, who had been approaching the home from another direction, were also caught inside the ring and were taken prisoners. The raiding party was comprised of three lorry loads of military scouted by a Constable McKenna who was stationed in Milford at the time the barrack was evacuated.

We were taken to Ballyvonare Camp, Buttevant, Cork Gaol, Spike Island Internment Camp and, finally, to Bere Island Camp where we were interned until December 10th 1921 when we were released.

One evening while a prisoner in Buttevant Military Barracks I was on my way with other prisoners from the compound, where we had been at exercise, to the Guard Room when a soldier named "Slag" Sullivan from Charleville walked up to me. I asked him what brought

him to Buttevant Barracks and he told me he was after joining up and was waiting for a draft to India. As a prisoner from Mallow area was being released I sent word to the Charleville Battalion I.O. that Sullivan was in Buttevant. He was later taken prisoner by the I.R.A. and was, I believe, held in the Milford area until he was shot with his pal, Patrick J. Sheehan, as spies in, I think, June 1921.

While a prisoner in Bere Island I received a notice that I was co-opted a member of the Kanturk Rural District Council and also a form to sign if accepting the post. As I could not take an active part in the work of the Council - being a prisoner - and as all these positions were being taken over by I.R.A. men I thought that our people outside should get a man who could take active part in the work to take on the job. For this reason I discussed the matter with the I.R.A. Camp Staff at Bere Island and they advised me to sign the form of acceptance. I remained a member of the Rural District Council until these Councils were dissolved.

My rank at the Truce was Battalion O/C, First Aid Charleville Battalion; rank 1st Lieutenant. The strength of the battalion was about 650.

Signed: Timothy D. CrimminsDate: 20th December 1954(Timothy D. Crimmins)
20th December 1954.Witness: P. O'Donnell(P. O'Donnell)
Investigator.

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