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ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
BURO STAIRE MILITAI 1913-21
No. W.S. 1098

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 1,098

Witness

Maurice Noonan,
Milford,
Charleville,
Co. Cork.

Identity.

Adjutant Milford Company I.R.A., Co. Cork,
1910-1921.

Subject.

National activities, Milford, Co. Cork,
1910-1921.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil

File No. S. 2396

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STATEMENT BY MAURICE NOONAN,
Milford, Charleville, Co. Cork.

I was born at Milford, Charleville, in June, 1895.
My father was a carpenter.

In my boyhood days, the people of the district were about evenly divided between the two main political parties of the time - O'Brienites and Redmondites. As far as I can recollect, my father was a supporter of the O'Brienite party, but I don't think that he ever bothered very much with politics.

My first recollection of any connection with a national organisation is about the year 1910 when I joined the Gaelic League in Milford. The pioneers in the language movement in this area at the time were Tom Buckley, N.T., and Matt Murphy, and there were about fifteen members in Milford branch. Irish classes were held twice a week and there were also Irish dancing and songs. The teacher was Micheál Ó Foghludha.

When the Irish Volunteers were formed in Milford in February, 191~~2~~⁴, by Jim Brislane, Seán O'Dea and Larry Hedican, I joined up. Other pioneer members were Jerry Falvey, John Manahan, Denis Nunan, Jim Coughlan and Patrick Fitzgibbon. The strength of the unit at this time was about fourteen. The usual foot drill and parades were held about twice a week, and at week-ends we sometimes went on a route march to meet some of the neighbouring units. The drill was usually carried out in the fields and was, in the initial stages, in charge of John Drew, an ex British soldier. He was only with us for a few weeks when the drilling and control of the

unit was taken over by Jerry Falvey who was elected Captain. There were no other officers at this time.

The unit was at this time attached to the Galtee Battalion as were all the other units in the area. The Battalion O/C was, I think, Liam Manahan who was a creamery manager at Ardpatrick, Kilfinnane, Co. Limerick.

On Easter Sunday, 1916, the full Company paraded at Glenquin Castle, Co. Limerick, where a supply of arms was expected to be available. I think the arms were to be some of those due to be landed in Kerry with Roger Casement. The only arms carried on this parade were a few shotguns which were the property of the members. Our unit was in charge of Jerry Falvey. Several units within a radius of fifteen or sixteen miles were represented, and the parade was in charge of Charley P. Wall, Drumcollogher. As the arms did not arrive, we returned home.

Following the events of Easter Week, the Company still continued to carry out regular parades and drills. This continued throughout 1917 and 1918. During the early part of 1918, there was a large increase in the membership of the unit, due to the British threat to impose conscription. The strength of the Company was now about eighty-five, and a large number of shotguns, which were held in the area, were collected. The collection of arms was carried out mainly by Jerry Falvey, John Manahan, Denis Nunan, Jim Coughlan, Pat Fitzgibbon, Maurice Nunan, John Cremmins, Tim Cremmins, Patrick Sheehan, James Fox, Ned Fox and John O'Regan. These arms were kept in a number of dumps in the area. The dumps were mainly made under the floors of outhouses

on farms. When the conscription scare passed, all the new members dropped out and the strength of the unit returned to normal (about fourteen).

A unit of Cumann na mBan was formed in the area about this time. It had a membership of about ten and was trained in First-Aid by Dr. James McCarthy, M.O., Milford. Some of the members of this unit were May Hennigan, Alice Falvey, Margaret Cremin, Josephine Murphy and Margaret Sheehan.

During the general election in December, 1918, there was no political activity in the area, as the Sinn Féin candidate for the area was returned unopposed. I should have mentioned earlier that all Volunteers took a very active part in organising Sinn Féin and in supporting all other national organisations, e.g., Gaelic League, G.A.A., during the years 1917 and 1918.

When Cork II Brigade was formed in January, 1919, Milford Company was detached, with all other units inside the borders of Cork county, from the Galtee Battalion. We then became "C" Company, 4th Battalion (Charleville), Cork II Brigade. The other companies in the battalion were Effin, Charleville, Ballyhea, Buttevant, Lisgriffin, Liscarroll, Churchtown, Dromina and Newtownshandrum.

The first officers of this battalion were:-

O/C - Jim Brislane, Charleville.
Vice O/C - Denis O'Driscoll, Newtownshandrum.
Adjutant - Robert Joyce, Charleville.
Q.M. - James Winters, Churchtown.

The usual drilling and general activities in connection with the work of the other Irish-Ireland organisations went on throughout 1919. The success of

Sinn Féin in the general election in December gave a general boost to Volunteer activities. Sometime towards the end of the year, the Company was reorganised by Paddy O'Brien who at this time was Vice O/C of Charleville Battalion. He appointed the following officers:-

O/C	-	Patrick Sheehan
Adjutant	-	Maurice Noonan
Q.M.	-	John Crémmins.

On the same occasion, he administered the oath to the Republic to these officers and also to Jerry Falvey. Early in 1920, the oath was administered by Liam Lynch to the full Company on parade at Callaghan's, Curryglass. At this time, Battalion Council meetings were held every two weeks while weekly reports were furnished by the Intelligence officers of each Company.

Arising out of the general order for the destruction of evacuated enemy posts at Easter, 1920, the following members of the unit took part in the demolition of Liscarroll R.I.C. barracks: Denis Nunan, Paddy Sheehan, Maurice Noonan (witness). This operation was under the control of Jim Brislane (Battalion O/C).

With Patrick Sheehan, O/C, and John Crémmins, I was on outpost duty at Kelly's, Pike Cross, on the Charleville-Buttevant road on the occasion of the attack on Kilmallock R.I.C. barracks in May, 1920. We were armed with revolvers and were accompanied by about twenty-five members of the Ballyhea Company under Ned Ryan. The road had been blocked a mile nearer to Buttevant to impede the approach of enemy forces to Kilmallock. We had instructions to hold up anybody passing through our position. The password on this occasion was "Wolfe Tone". We withdrew at 1 a.m.

Since the R.I.C. were withdrawn from their outlying posts, they were not doing much duty in the country. In July, 1920, a family dispute occurred between the mother and son of an imperialist family, named Sheehy, from Fortwilliam. The mother sought the protection of the Milford Company and took proceedings against her son in the Republican courts. As the sum involved was too large, the local parish court could not hear the case and it was transferred for hearing to the district court at Freemount. The members of the latter court, on the occasion of the trial, were Con Sullivan, Druminarrigle, (Chairman), M.B. McAuliffe, Paddy McCarthy, Paddy Clancy and Seán Moylan. The court decided that the son should pay the mother £300.

During the summer and autumn of 1920, systematic raiding of the local mails took place throughout the area, but nothing of military interest was discovered. All members of the unit took part in these activities. The members were also engaged from October onwards in doing scouting and outpost work for the battalion column when billeted in the district.

At the end of October, 1920, some members of the battalion columns from Charleville and Newmarket took up a position at Doona, Milford, about four hundred yards from the local R.I.C. barracks. The arms for this job were taken to Crémmins', Kilbolane, Milford, on the day prior to the proposed job. However, when the position was later inspected by Paddy O'Brien, he decided that it was not safe, so the ambush party withdrew. The site selected for this ambush was known locally as Gibbonsgrove. The intelligence work for this job was carried out by Milford unit, but the site was selected for ambush position

by members of the Newmarket battalion column.

Within a few days of the aforementioned activities - on November 2nd, 1920, I think - the R.I.C. were evacuated from Milford barracks. Word was immediately sent to Paddy O'Brien (at this time Brigade Q.M.) who was in charge of the columns in the area. He came to Milford with some members of the column to assist us to destroy the barracks. He was accompanied by Jim Brislane (Battalion O/C). All members of the local unit were on duty, mainly engaged in collecting paraffin oil, hay, straw and other materials, in order to set the barracks on fire. While I was engaged with the others in these activities, Paddy O'Brien and Jim Brislane entered the barracks to inspect it and ensure that no traps had been laid by the enemy. When they were on their way out of the barracks, fire was opened on them and Paddy O'Brien was wounded. Two Tans from Drumcollogher post had returned unexpectedly to the barracks and were not noticed in the dark. Paddy O'Brien managed to close the barrack door and the Tans failed to get in. Tim Cremins, who had gone to the village for paraffin, returned to the barracks at this stage and he was captured by the Tans who tried to compel him to force the barrack door. He was protesting, and Paddy O'Brien heard his voice; so he opened the door a little bit and fired a shot. Tim Cremins shouted that he was wounded and that the Tans allowed him to dash away. He immediately contacted the Battalion O/C and outlined the position to him. The column then opened fire on the position where the Tans were, when Tim Cremins escaped. After a few bursts, they closed in on the barracks but the Tans had gone. Paddy O'Brien, who had been wounded in the face, was removed from the barracks to a nearby house where he was attended by the

local doctor. He was removed next day to a Cork hospital. Owing to this incident, the barracks was not burned that night but it was destroyed about three nights later.

Between November, 1920, and January, 1921, the members of the company raided the local mails on several occasions and, in addition, all members spent much time, as occasion demanded, on scouting and outpost duty for the column which was continually moving around the battalion area in search of enemy patrols.

During January, 1921, nearly all members of the company took part in the engagement, known as Shininagh ambush, on the Charleville-Buttevant road. This ambush arose out of a trench-cutting job which had been ordered by Brigade Headquarters. The main Charleville-Buttevant road was to be trenched in the Ballyhea Company area. As the trench was to be ten feet wide, and three feet deep, and the full width of the road, at the selected spot, was thirty-five feet, the Battalion O/C, Jim Brislane, ordered the mobilisation of representatives from all the local companies. This was necessary, in view of the proximity of the enemy at Ballyvonare Camp (two and a half miles away) and the necessity for speed in completing the operation.

With the other members of Milford Company and representatives from Ballyhea, Newtownshandrum and Charleville, I was engaged on the cutting of the trench. Barricades, manned by armed members of the column, were erected about a quarter of a mile on either side of the site of the trench. When the job of cutting the trench was nearly complete - after about three hours' work - the men at the barricade on the Charleville side noticed

the headlights of a car coming from the Charleville direction. When the car drew near the barricade, the guards there opened fire but the car broke through and later crashed into the trench. Immediately we (the party in the trench) heard the firing, we dashed for cover and had only got clear when the car crashed into the trench. The occupants immediately left the car and took to the fields. They were pursued by the column men but were lost in the dark. It later transpired that one of the occupants of the car was Colonel Hope, O/C, British forces stationed at Ballyvonare. With the other members of the Milford Company, I returned home immediately the shooting ceased.

During February, 1921, the members of the Company took part in the destruction of Madigan's Bridge on the Charleville-Buttevant road and also one on a bye-road in the same area, known as Miller's Bridge. These operations were carried out in conjunction with the members of the Charleville and Newmarket columns who were in ambush positions awaiting enemy forces on these roads.

The trenching and blocking of roads in the battalion area was intensified during March, and all roads in the Company area were blocked several times during this month. In fact, I would say that every member of the unit was on continuous night duty at this time.

I was arrested at Crémín's, Kilbolane, Charleville, on April 1st, 1921, when the house was surrounded by a large party of military. John and Tim Crémíns were captured at the same time. We were removed to Buttevant military barracks where we were held for some days. While there, we saw a man, named Sullivan, from

Charleville associating with the enemy. We sent word to the Battalion I.O., by a Mallow prisoner who was being released, that Sullivan was apparently in touch with the enemy. Sullivan was later taken prisoner by the I.R.A. and was held a prisoner in the Milford Company area until his execution, together with his fellow conspirator - P.J. Sheehan - as spies sometime in June, ~~1912~~¹⁹²¹, I think.

I was transferred from Buttevant to Cork and later to Spike Island internment camp. I was released in December, 1921, following the signing of the Treaty.

My rank at the Truce was Adjutant, Milford Company. The strength of the Milford unit then was about fifteen.

SIGNED:

Maurice Noonan
(Maurice Noonan)

DATE:

23rd February 1955

WITNESS:

P. O'Donnell

(P. O'Donnell)

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