

W. S. 1, 120.
ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
BURO STAIRE MILITA 1913-21
No. W.S. 1,120

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.
STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 1,120

Witness

Patrick Brennan,
The Stag's Head,
Carnew,
Co. Wicklow.

Identity.

Adjutant 4th Battalion
North Wexford Brigade, 1918 - .

Subject.

Carnew Company 4th Battalion,
North Wexford Brigade, 1914-1923.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil

File No. S. 2440

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1917-21
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STATEMENT OF MR. PATRICK BRENNAN

The Stag's Head, Carnew, Co. Wicklow.

A company of the Irish Volunteers was started in Carnew, Co. Wicklow, early in 1914. There were about 40 men in the company. We held parades once a week, usually on Sunday mornings, and were drilled by ex-members or reservists of the British army. We had no guns. The late Mr. Tom Brennan (who represented the Wicklow constituency in Dáil Éireann for a number of years until his death in 1952) was in charge of the company.

When the split occurred in the Volunteer movement, the vast majority of our company followed John Redmond. Only about six - including Tom Brennan, Tom Kenny, ^{John and} William Grainger, Denis O'Sullivan, // Michael Gregan and myself remained loyal to the original executive. I was not present at the actual meeting when the split took place as I was suffering from an attack of rheumatic fever and was confined to bed for a period of over three months.

As a result of the split the Carnew Company of the Irish Volunteers for all practical purposes ceased to exist. However, the six of us kept in close association with each other, discussed national affairs and continued to do any little propaganda work we could. A large number of the original company who followed Redmond at the split did, in fact, take his advice and joined the British army.

When the Rising took place in Dublin and elsewhere our company was practically non-existent and as we had no arms, and had not received any instructions, there was nothing we could do.

The Carnew Company was reorganised late in 1917. Tom Brennan was again elected captain. Parades were held every Sunday morning at Coolafancy. Volunteers from the Enniscorthy area who had taken part in the Rising came out to drill us and

to instruct us in the use of arms, etc. We had only a few shotguns. We received great encouragement from Rev. Fr. Walsh, C.C., Coolafancy. He was a most enthusiastic supporter. After the Rising he had been transferred to Coolafancy.

In the early Spring of 1918 parts of South Wicklow and North Wexford were organised into a battalion. This later became known as the 4th Battalion, North Wexford Brigade. The Battalion officers were:-

Battalion O/C.	Thomas Brennan	Carnew, Co. Wicklow.
" V.O/C.	James Kavanagh	Ballynamanoge, Tinahely, Co. Wicklow.
" Q.M.	John McGrath	Askamore, Co. Wexford.
" Adjt.	Patrick Brennan	(myself) Carnew, Co. Wicklow.

Tom Brennan, John McGrath and I held these positions up to the Truce. James Kavanagh was Vice O/C. of the battalion until April 1921, when he was arrested by the British and sentenced to a term of imprisonment. He was succeeded by Michael Deegan, Brideswell.

At first we had four companies in the battalion and, later, the Cranford Company. They were:-

A/Company	Carnew
B "	Askamore and Brideswell
C "	Crossbridge & Tinahely
D "	Coolboy
E "	Cranford

Cranford Company was originally attached to the 3rd Battalion. About September 1920, it was transferred to the 4th Battalion. After the Truce, three other companies were organised in our battalion. They were:-

F. Company	Monaseed
G. "	Shillelagh
H. "	Annacurra

The following were the officers of the companies:-

A. Company	Captain	Denis O'Sullivan	Carnew
A/Company.	1st Lt.	Michael Cregan	Tombreane
"	2nd Lt.	Patrick Allen	do.

Afterwards Michael Hregan became captain; Patrick Allen 1st Lieutenant and James Brennan, Carnew, 2nd Lieutenant.

B/Coy.	Captain	Michael Deegan
	1st Lt.	Patrick Corcoran
	2nd Lt.	Michael O'Toole

Afterwards Thomas Kenny, Brideswell, became captain.

C/Coy.	Captain	Joseph Kavanagh, Ballynamanoge
	Lieut.	Thomas McDonald

Joseph Kavanagh is at present in the Detective Branch, Dublin Castle.

D/Coy.	Captain	James Mulhall
	Lieut.	Thomas St. Ledger

E/Coy.	Captain	Patrick Kenny, Ballydarrag
	1st Lt.	John Higgins
	2nd Lt.	James Kavanagh

F/Coy.	Captain	Patrick Doyle
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G/Coy.	Captain	James McCrea
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H/Coy.	Captain	Luke Mulhall
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When the organising of the battalion was completed, training was intensified. In addition to the usual drill and arms instruction, we held field exercises and classes for signalling, scouting, etc. were started.

During the 1918 General Election, campaign, the Volunteers took an active part on behalf of the Sinn Fein candidate, Mr. Robert Barton. He was opposed by The O'Mahony. On polling day Fr. Walsh, Coolafancy, assembled his parishioners and marched with them about four miles to the polling station to vote for Bob Barton.

Following the establishing of Dáil Eireann, Sinn Fein Courts were set up. Members of the Court for our area were Wm. Grainger, Tombreane, Dr. Connolly/and Patrick Doyle, Coolboy. The Volunteers made all arrangements for sittings of the Court and supplied guards for it while it was in session. The cases brought before the Court were mainly of a civil nature.

Early in 1920, the battalion O/C. ordered a general raid for arms in the battalion area. We got some shotguns. About April the same year the Battalion O/C. selected Michael Hregan

O/C., A/Company, and myself to take part in an attack on Clonroche R.I.C. Barracks. On arrival at the assembly point which was Knocknatour, we were informed that, owing to a breakdown in the transport plans, only the battalion O/C., Thomas Brennan, could travel.

In July 1920, we burned Carnew R.I.C. Barracks which had been vacated by the R.I.C. The battalion officers attended Brigade Council meetings which were usually held at Ballindaggin or Enniscorthy. Battalion Council meetings were held at Battalion O/C.'s house. The meetings were attended by the battalion staff and the captains of the different companies. At these meetings, organisation, training etc. were discussed, and instructions were issued by the O/C. for the carrying out of various activities such as blocking roads, cutting communications, raiding mails and generally harassing the enemy. From the middle of 1920 to the Truce these activities were constantly carried out in the battalion area.

About December 1920, a brigade flying column was started. After some time this column was disbanded and another column established. Soon after the second column was organised, it was brought to Corrigeen on the White Mountain for a course of training. When the column had completed its training, with other officers of the brigade, I attended the camp and underwent a week's training. The Brigade O/C., Joseph Cummins, was O/C. of the camp.

The closest co-operation existed between the column and the battalion. Whenever the column entered our area, the battalion was notified and we made arrangements for local Volunteers to act as guides. We also arranged for accommodation and food supplies. The local companies were also instructed to supply guards and scouts while the column was resting.

On two occasions the column took up ambush positions in our area, one at Cobbler's Lane near Tinahely in April, and

another at Ballyraheen in June. On both occasions, after lying in position for a day, the column had to withdraw as the R.I.C. patrol did not come out.

The approximate strength of the battalion at the Truce was around 110 or 120 men. The strength of each company was between 20 and 25 men. The arms were mostly shotguns, with a few Mauser rifles and revolvers.

During the Truce the strength of the battalion increased. As I mentioned before, three new companies were formed. We started company and battalion training camps and detailed officers to attend the brigade training camp. Special Services in the battalion were perfected as far as possible.

On the outbreak of the civil war all available men in the battalion were mobilised to proceed to Ferns to attack the Free State troops stationed there. The attack was called off and did not take place until some time afterwards when Ferns and Enniscorthy were taken by the I.R.A. Both towns were later re-taken by a convoy of Free State troops from Dublin.

Along with five others I was taken prisoner on 21st July 1922 and sent to Maryboro' Prison. We were later transferred to the Curragh where I took part in the general hunger-strike, doing 23 days. I was released in May 1924.

Signed: Patrick Brennan
(Patrick Brennan)

Date: 7/3/55

Witness: Sean Brennan Lieut.-Col.
(Sean Brennan) Lieut.-Col.

