

W.S. 1,158

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

BURO STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21

No. W.S. 1,158

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 1,158

Witness

Michael O'Brien,
4, Killoggy,
Ferns,
Co. Wexford.

Identity.

Member of North Wexford Flying Column,
1921.

Subject.

North Wexford Irish Volunteers,
1916-1921.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil

File No. S.2468

Form B.S.M. 2

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STATEMENT BY MICHAEL O'BRIEN,

L. Killoogy, Ferns, Co. Wexford.

I joined the Irish Volunteers in Easter Week 1916. I remember it was on a Wednesday evening I met Dan Carton, and he told me all about the Rising in Dublin and that the Ferns Volunteers were marching to take up arms in Enniscorthy. We both decided to join up and be with the boys. We marched to Enniscorthy on a Thursday night. When we arrived there we were taken to the Athenaeum. Phil Murphy met us there and took down our names. We then got refreshments and were told to rest. We were called up at daybreak on the Friday morning and put on sentry on the outskirts of the town. We were relieved in four hours and reported back to the Athenaeum. About 3 p.m. we were paraded. Seán Etchingham addressed us and told us to go home as he thought they had surrendered in Dublin. That ended my service for 1916.

All the leaders were arrested and were sent to prison in England. When they were released I was sworn in to the I.R.B. about the end of 1917 by Tom Roche who was Centre of the Ferns Circle. From that until the truce I had unbroken service with the Volunteers.

Early in 1921 I joined the Flying Column which at that time was under the command of Tom Roche of Enniscorthy. Soon afterwards Mylie Breen became O/C and he was succeeded as O/C by Paddy Kenny of Ballycarney. During my service with them we had several engagements

with the Black and Tans. Once at Inch we were lying in ambush for two lorry loads of Black and Tans. We had a mine ready to put in the road and at 5 a.m. we began to dig up the road to conceal the mine. Just as we were about to put it down two men came along with a drove of cattle and we had to hide until they passed by. Now it dawned on us that it was fair day in Gorey and we could not proceed with our job in case word would be sent to Gorey, so we decided to attack with our rifles and leave the mine so. Lucky for us the lorries did not come. Just as we were about to march away one of the look-out party passed the word along that there were four Tans coming on bicycles. There were about 200 yards between each two Tans. We opened fire on the first two and they fell. The other two had not come around the bend so we did not see them at all. Our Captain, Myles Breen, ordered us to withdraw, and we marched all day through woods and by-ways until we reached Bill Murphy's, "The Bleach", Monasootha. We were very tired and hungry. We were 16 hours without food and had marched about 25 miles. We rested for a couple of days and then the Column was divided into threes; each three were sent somewhere to do a job. Jim Kenny, Pat Fitzpatrick and I were sent to Gorey. We were told there was an R.I.C. man there that they wanted out of the way. He was a married man and lived in a house on the outskirts of the town. Pat Fitzpatrick knew the house well. It was about 20 yards in from the roadside, with a nice hedge from the road to the front door. We took up positions under cover of darkness about 9 p.m. We expected him home between 9.30 and 10 o'clock. We were there for about

ten minutes when a small terrier dog came from the back of the house and saw us. He immediately gave the alarm, barking furiously. We heard someone go out backwards and we were afraid they might be gone to give warning. We withdrew from our positions and we had not gone very far when we heard the military lorries coming. They surrounded the house and made a thorough search. We had just escaped. During my time with the Flying Column I would like to pay a tribute to the people of Ballindaggin and Kilttealy. They were always ready to give us food and shelter, especially the Coadys of Corrigeen. (it was in their house we had our headquarters), also the people of Monasootha, Camolin, the Murphys and Byrnes always had a warm welcome for us.

Signed:

Michael O'Brien

(Michael O'Brien)

Date:

14th April 1955.

14th April 1955.

Witness:

Sean Brennan. Lieut.-Col.

(Investigator)

(Sean Brennan) Lieut.-Col.

