

W.S. 1,166  
ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

BURO STAIRE MILEATA 1913 21

NO. W.S. 1,166

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 1,166

Witness

Patrick Lyons,  
Ballintogher,  
Lixnaw,  
Co. Kerry.

Identity.

O/C. Lixnaw Coy. Irish Volunteers,  
Co. Kerry, 1914 - ;

Subject.

Lixnaw Company Irish Volunteers,  
Co. Kerry, 1914-1921.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil

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STATEMENT OF PATRICK LYONS,  
Ballintogher, Lixnaw, Co. Kerry.

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21  
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I was born in the year, 1890, and was educated in Lixnaw Boys' National School. On reaching the age of fifteen years, I went to work on my father's farm.

In the year, 1914, I became a member of the Irish Republican Brotherhood, together with Eugene Horgan, Stephen Grady, Tom Quille and others of this locality. We were sworn in by the late Michael Griffin, National Teacher of Listowel. About the same year, a Company of Volunteers was formed in Lixnaw. I joined the Company on its formation. We were instructed by a couple of ex British army men. The strength of the Company was sixty-four men. After the famous speech of John Redmond at Woodenbridge, Co. Wicklow, there was great resentment among the Volunteers of the Company at the suggestion of Redmond that they should join the British army. The result was that there was a split in the Company which, soon after, ceased to exist.

There were no further activities until March, 1917, when the Company was re-formed at a meeting which was addressed by Austin Stack and Father Tom Curtayne. After the meeting, an election for officers took place by ballot, when the following officers were elected:

Patrick Lyons - Captain  
John McElligott - 1st Lieutenant.  
Stephen Grady - 2nd Lieutenant.

Between sixty and seventy men were enrolled and, from then to the end of the year, the Company met at least twice

a week for parades, drills and route marches. Our drill instructor was an ex British army man, named Patrick Stack. In April, 1917, on the orders of the Battalion O/C, Listowel - James Sugrue - the tricolour was hoisted on an old monument in the village. The monument had been erected several years earlier to the Earl of Kerry. The R.I.C. made several unsuccessful attempts to take down the tricolour but it remained in position for about twelve months. Recruits came in from time to time and, by the end of the year, our strength was eighty-four.

A Sinn Féin Club was formed in Lixnaw about the summer of 1917. The first President was Fr. Tom Curtayne, C.C., and a man named Tom Silles became Secretary. The Committee was, for the most part, drawn from among the members of the Volunteers.

Early in 1918 an agitation was started by the townspeople of Listowel for the use of The Lawn, Listowel, as a cow park. The Lawn consisted of about thirty acres of land and was owned by Lord Listowel, who had it let to two local farmers. Many of the local Volunteers took part in the agitation and eventually, when repeated requests to the agent of Lord Listowel for the use of The Lawn were turned down, the Battalion O/C and staff decided that their only hope of obtaining the use of The Lawn was to take it over, by entering on the lands and ploughing it up.

On a certain day, the local Company, as well as members of this Company and a couple of men from other Companies adjacent to Listowel, were mobilised in the town of Listowel. We were equipped with between thirty and forty ploughs, with a pair of horses for each.

Led by the local band, we proceeded to The Lawn and discovered that the military had got there before us. They were posted all around the walls and gate of the Lawn. The two farmers, who held the land on the eleven months' system, were also there. After some consultation between our officers and the two farmers, the farmers agreed to give up possession there and then. The farmers approached the officer in charge of the military and explained the situation. The officer immediately withdrew his men from the gate and walls. and assembled them just inside The Lawn.

Immediately the military withdrew from the gate, we marched in and proceeded to plough up the land. Having finished the job, we returned to Lixnaw. The same Lawn is still being used by the townspeople of Listowel for tillage plots and a cow park to the present day.

During the conscription scare around this time, the strength of the Company increased to two hundred and sixty. When the danger had subsided, nearly all of the new recruits left and eventually our strength was about one hundred. While the scare lasted, drilling was intensified and shotguns in the area were collected. We subsequently paraded with these shotguns in the presence of the R.I.C. Our drill instructor at this time was an ex R.I.C. man named James Horgan of Moybellow. He had resigned some time previously and was later arrested and sentenced to three months' imprisonment for drilling the Volunteers. A collection for the anti-conscription fund was made in the area around this time.

A Volunteer pipers' band was formed within the Company in the same year. A Féis was held in Listowel in the summer of 1918. The band and Company paraded to

to Listowel on the day fixed for the Féis and returned to Lixnaw in the evening. At least one thousand, five hundred Volunteers from the different Companies around Listowel attended the Féis that day. A force of about fifty R.I.C. was present while it lasted.

The year 1919 was a continuation of drilling and parading. All arms in the area, which had not been previously collected in 1918, were collected at the end of the year.

With the help of the Sinn Féin Committee and the Volunteers, I was responsible for the collection of the 1st Dáil Éireann loan in the Company area. The amount collected was £628, every penny of which was accounted for and subsequently repaid with interest to the subscribers.

During the attack on Ballybunion R.I.C. barracks in March, 1920, organised by the Battalion Staff, Listowel, the members of this Company trenched and blocked all roads in this area. A number of our men were on outpost duty, while Lieutenant Grady and Terry Brosnan took part in the actual attack which was in charge of James Sugrue, Battalion O/C.

About a month after the attack on Ballybunion R.I.C. Barracks, the Battalion Staff decided to attack and burn down an R.I.C. post at Lixnaw. The post was a low brick building and was manned by six R.I.C. Our plan was to occupy the Parish Hall (which was next door to the barracks) on a Saturday night and to rush the R.I.C. post on the following Sunday morning when most of the garrison had gone to church.

Steve Grady was in charge. He and I, with about twenty selected men of the Lixnaw and Lean Companies,

assembled in the Parish Hall, as arranged, on a Saturday night. We were armed with a few revolvers. On the following Sunday, we saw three of the garrison leave for Mass. Steve Grady and a couple of men, followed by the other Volunteers, proceeded to the door of the barracks. As we approached the door, we were observed by the R.I.C. man on duty in the dayroom. He immediately rushed for the door and had it securely bolted before we got there. We withdrew after this set-back. A couple of days later, the post was evacuated after which it was burned down by members of the Lixnaw Company. Among those taking part in the unsuccessful attack, apart from Lieutenant Grady and I, were John McElligott of Lixnaw Company, Tom Shanahan and Paddy Mangan of Lean Company. After the evacuation of Lixnaw barracks, the nearest R.I.C. barracks to Lixnaw was at Ahabeg, three miles from Lixnaw.

The strength of the garrison in Ahabeg barracks was about six R.I.C. Some time about July of 1920, this garrison was reinforced by four or five Tans. A patrol of about six or seven of the enemy from Ahabeg barracks visited Lixnaw regularly to collect mail from the Post Office, returning to Ahabeg after a couple of hours' stay in the village.

With the permission of the Battalion Staff, the Company Staff of Lixnaw decided to attack and disarm this patrol one day about the end of July. The usual practice of the patrol, when they reached the village, was for three of their party to go to the Post Office and collect the mail, while the others went into one of the public houses in the village and waited there for their comrades to return with the mail.

Our plan was for some of the biggest and strongest Volunteers to occupy the public house some time prior to the arrival of the enemy, overpower them as soon as they had settled down to a drink and await the arrival of the three Tans collecting the mail and, when they entered, to treat them in a similar fashion. About ten or twelve I.R.A. men under Tom Shanahan, Company O/C, occupied the public house while I, in charge of another section of eight or nine I.R.A. men, occupied a public house opposite. My instructions to this section were to attack the enemy only if they attempted to rush out or leave the public house in which they assembled. All of our men were armed with either shotguns or revolvers.

As the first party of Tans were about to enter the public house after parting with the three Tans who had gone to collect the mail, one of the I.R.A. men in the public house with me accidentally discharged one of the shotguns. On the spur of the moment, I and the men with me opened fire on the party of Tans entering the public house. Seeing the situation, the I.R.A. party in the other public house awaiting the arrival of the Tan party, decided to make good their escape. As they were doing so, they were fired on by the other three Tans who, by this time, had collected the mail and were on their way to join their comrades. Two Tans were wounded in the first volley. They all collected in the public house subsequently and got into conversation with some of our men who had not succeeded in escaping after the shooting started. The Tans later returned to Ahabeg, having first sent one of their men to the Post Office to report the incident to Listowel R.I.C. barracks.

Among those taking part in this incident, apart from Tom Shanahan, Steve Grady and myself, were John McElligott, T. Brosnan, J. Reidy, Mick King (Lixnaw Company), P. Mangan, M. McElligott and Jack Lynch (Lean Company).

Other incidents around this period were the threatening by members of the Company of young men intending to join the R.I.C. and a raid by British military on the house of Steve Grady for the band instruments which, luckily, had been stored in a place of safety some time previously. However, they seized a set of hurling jerseys which were in the national colours. Several raids by Crown forces on my home and homes of other prominent men in the I.R.A. and Sinn Féin movement also took place, with the result that I and other prominent I.R.A. had to go on the run. Around this time I (with the help of other Volunteers) collected over £200 in the area for the families and dependents of railway men who had been dismissed for their refusal to man trains carrying armed enemy forces.

Some time around the month of September, 1920, the Battalion, which was known as the Listowel Battalion, was divided for administrative reasons, with the result that another Battalion, which became known as the Lixnaw Battalion, was formed. Steve Grady, our 2nd Lieutenant, became O/C of the newly formed Battalion, while Maurice McElligott became 2nd Lieutenant of Lixnaw Company in place of Steve Grady.

On the night of the 31st October, Steve Grady, with members of Ballyduff Company, assisted by some members of this Company, carried out an attack on a Tan patrol in the village of Ballyduff. In the attack, one Tan was shot dead and two <sup>were</sup> wounded. Previous to the attack, all



roads in our Company area were effectively blocked by members of this Company. Following the attack, several lorry loads of Tans arrived in Ballyduff and shot dead a member of the I.R.A. there, named John Houlihan. They burned down several houses in the area, after which they arrived in Lixnaw and fired shots into houses in the village and terrorised the people for a couple of hours.

About this time, Republican Courts were established in the area for the parishes of Lixnaw, Irramore and Rathea. At a joint meeting of the people of the three parishes called for the purpose, the following justices were elected by ballot, as follows:-

Lixnaw	-	Patrick Lyons
Irramore	-	Andrew Molyneaux
Rathea	-	Patrick J. Carroll.

These Courts functioned during the war right up to the Truce and for some time afterwards. Some time after the formation of the Courts, a new force of Republican police was formed. John McElligott was appointed O/C, Police, for the area. He was assisted by P. Sullivan, J.P. McElligott, M. Sullivan, Jim Harmon and others. Con McAuliffe of Lixnaw was appointed Clerk of the Lixnaw Parish Court. He was responsible for the issue of summonses and other duties attached to the post, such as, the collection of fines. In all these duties he was ably assisted by the new police force. A short time after my appointment as Parish Justice of Lixnaw, I was appointed District Court Justice for North Kerry. A man named Eugene McNamara was appointed Parish Justice in my place.

In the month of December, 1920, two members of the local Company - John Maher and Mick Costello - were arrested and interned in Spike Island.

In January, 1921, a Flying Column for North Kerry was formed. Thomas Kennelly was appointed O/C. The strength of the Column on its formation was thirty men and included Tim Egan and Terry Brosnan of this Company.

Early in March, Tom Clifford, Battalion O/C of Ardfert, with the co-operation of Steve Grady, Battalion O/C of Lixnaw, planned an attack on Causeway R.I.C. barracks. Men from the three Companies of Causeway, Lixnaw, and Ballyduff were selected for the proposed attack. On the night before the morning fixed for the attack, members of this Company trenched and blocked roads in our area to prevent reinforcements reaching the garrison in Causeway. A short time prior to the hour fixed for the attack, the attacking party, while located in a fort a short distance from Causeway, were almost surrounded by a party of military and Tans who arrived in several lorries from Tralee. The attacking party succeeded in making good their escape through the vigilance of their scouts who got word through that the enemy were on their way to Causeway.

On the following day, enemy forces raided Lixnaw village, beat up a number of civilians and Volunteers, seized a young girl and cut her hair, and burned down the local creamery. They returned a few days later and burned down the local parish hall.

During this period, the local Company raided trains running between Tralee and Limerick on several occasions and seized the mails. Letters were censored and later returned to the railway station, Lixnaw.

About the end of March, the Column under Tom Kennelly decided to ambush a party of military who travelled occasionally from Tralee to Listowel and back.

On the day selected for the attack, the Column took up positions in and around the railway station at Lixnaw. Several members of this Company were called on to assist in the proposed ambush. They included Adjutant W. McCarthy, Moss Lovett, J. Reidy and others. They were armed with shotguns. The military failed to travel on the day in question, so the Column had to withdraw.

A short time previous to the proposed ambush at Lixnaw station, the Catholic church at Lixnaw was surrounded one Sunday morning by enemy forces. Several members of the Company were arrested, including Maurice McElligott, Thomas McElligott and Denis O'Connell. They were taken to Cork detention barracks and later interned.

Some time later, a general round-up by the enemy took place in North Kerry. In this round-up, two more of our men were arrested. They were Thomas Silles and Maurice Sullivan. They were sentenced to terms of imprisonment and later interned. On the 26th March, 1921, Adjutant Sonny McCarthy of Lixnaw was arrested while delivering despatches in the town of Tralee. He was taken out that night by the Tans and shot dead in the Green, now the Town Park. He was buried some days later with military honours in Kiltormey cemetery. His house, among others, was later looted and broken up by enemy forces. In 1932, we erected a Celtic Cross over his grave in the Republican Plot.

In May, 1921, a sniping attack was carried out on Ballyduff R.I.C. barracks by members of the Column under Tom Kennelly, assisted by members of the Ballyduff and Lixnaw Companies. Among the members of this Company

who took part in the attack were J. McElligott, D. Byrne, M. King and J. Costello.

Some time in June, 1921, two officers, named Brown and Price, from General Headquarters, Dublin, visited the area on a tour of inspection and enquiry into the strength and equipment of the Battalions in the Brigade area. The two men were later escorted by members of the Company to the Ardfert Battalion area. Two more members of this Company, Tim Egan and Mick King, were arrested about this time.

SIGNED:

Padraig O Leidhin

(Padraig O Leidhin)

DATE:

17th May, 1955

17th May 1955.

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

BURO STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21

No. W.S. 1,166

WITNESS:

John J. Daly (John J. Daly)

(INVESTIGATOR)