

W. S. 1,170
ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
BURO STAIRE MILEATA 1913-21
No. W.S. 1,170

ROINN  COSANTA.

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21
STATEMENT BY WITNESS
DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 1,170

Witness

Edmond J. Walsh,
Tullamore,
Listowel,
Co. Kerry.

Identity.

Captain Tullamore Company Irish Volunteers,
Listowel, Co. Kerry;
Later - 1921 - Comd't. Lixnaw Battalion.

Subject.

Irish Volunteers, Tullamore, Listowel,
Co. Kerry, 1914-1921.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil

File No S. 2456

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STATEMENT BY EDWARD JOSEPH WALSH,

Tullamore, Listowel, Co. Kerry.

I was born in Tullamore, Listowel, in the month of March, 1892. I was sent to the local National School until I was 15 years of age. When I left school I went to work on my father's farm.

I joined the Volunteers when they were first formed here in Tullamore in early 1914. We formed part of the Ballydonohoe Company and were always known as the Ballydonohoe Company. The strength of the company was 80 men. Our drill instructor was an ex-British soldier named Jack Somers. We drilled with wooden rifles at the time. The company ceased to exist after Redmond's speech at Woodenbridge in Co. Wicklow when he called on the Volunteers to join the British Army.

The company was reorganised early in 1917. The first officers were Paddy Walsh, Company Captain, (later killed in Gortaglana by the Black and Tans) and Mick Kissane, Lieutenant. They were elected by ballot. The strength at first was about 70 but after a short time it increased to over 80. We drilled, paraded and had route marches up to the end of the year. An ex-R.I.C. man named Tom Kennelly was our drill instructor. Kennelly was one of the first men to resign from the R.I.C. after Easter Week, 1916, as a protest against the occupation of Ireland by British troops. He later became O/C of North Kerry Flying Column when it was formed in January, 1921.

During the conscription scare early in 1918 we got into the company a few extra Volunteers, all of whom remained faithful to the company when the scare was over. Drilling was intensified during the period and continued to the end of the year.

In the same year the local company paraded to Listowel and took part in a demonstration with the Volunteers of Listowel, Lixnaw and other companies, for the use of the 'Lawn', Listowel, as a cow park. The 'Lawn' was the property of Lord Listowel and comprised about thirty acres. It was required by the people of Listowel, many of whom were Volunteers, for tillage plots and a cow park. On the day of the demonstration agreement was reached between the Volunteers and tenants of the 'Lawn' - two local farmers - after which the Volunteers, with a number of horses and ploughs, entered on the 'Lawn' and ploughed it up. A strong force of military was present on the occasion, but they did not interfere when informed that the tenants had agreed to forego their claim to the land.

In the summer of 1918 a feis was to have been held in Listowel but it was proclaimed by the authorities at the time. This company paraded to Listowel on the date fixed for the feis and returned to Ballydcnohoe in the evening. The feis was later held near Asdee but notice of it was not published beforehand. Volunteers informed the public of the time and place. It was over before the R.I.C. were aware of it.

Drilling continued during the year 1919. In this year Paddy Walsh resigned as Captain of the Company, with the result that I was appointed Captain.

Mick Kissane remained 1st Lieutenant and Patrick Walsh became 2nd Lieutenant. About the autumn of this year an order was received from the Battalion Commandant, James Sugrue, to collect all arms in the company area. With the help of the men of the company, I collected approximately 100 shotguns, 2 miniature rifles and a few old revolvers. During the year a Sinn Féin Court was established in the area. Members of the court included Gerry Kennelly, Tom O'Donohoe, Danny Flavin and T.D. O'Sullivan. Members of the company collected funds for the Dáil Éireann loan around the same time.

In March, 1920, the Battalion Staff, under James Sugrue and Tom Kennelly, decided to attack, and capture if possible, Ballyunion R.I.C. barracks. The attacking party consisted of about 50 men armed with about two rifles, shotguns and revolvers. Members of the local companies of Ballydonohoe, Ballylongford, Ballydaff, Asdee, Listowel and Ballyunion trenched and blocked roads for the occasion.

When the attacking party reached Ballyunion Sugrue divided the men into four sections. I was in charge of a section of ten men who occupied the public-house of James Clarke directly opposite the barracks. Other sections occupied positions to the north and south of the barracks, while the fourth section occupied a position at the rear.

The section on the south side was located in a house adjoining the barracks. They had to remove an old couple from the house to a place of safety before they occupied it. This section had a home-made mine with which it was intended to blow up the dividing wall

between the barracks and the house in the first instance. The mine was, I believe, made from the wheel-box of a donkey's cart with the use of gelignite and fuse. I don't remember who was in charge of the section. The mine failed to explode, so Sugrue gave the order "open fire". We immediately opened fire from all directions, to which the R.I.C. replied with rifle fire. Firing had lasted for about 45 minutes when we decided to withdraw, having used up nearly all of our ammunition.

About a month after the attack on Ballybunion R.I.C. barracks, with the permission of Paddy Landers and James Sugrue of the Battalion Staff five members of this company - Paddy Walsh, Mick Galvin, Patrick Corridan, John Walsh and a man named Ahern - whilst armed with shotguns, ambushed a party of three R.I.C. at Gale Bridge, Listowel. The R.I.C. were returning from a court in Listowel to their barracks in Ballylongford. The five men took up positions at the side of the road. When the R.I.C. reached the ambush position they were called on to halt. One of the R.I.C. drew his revolver to fire, with the result that our men opened fire with shotguns. A Sergeant, whose name was McKenna, was shot dead and one R.I.C. man was wounded. The third R.I.C. man crossed a ditch and escaped. Two revolvers were captured.

Some couple of months later the Listowel Battalion, to which this company was attached, was divided and a new battalion, which became known as the Lixnaw Battalion, was formed. This company then became attached to the Lixnaw Battalion. The first

O/C of the Lixnaw Battalion was Steve Grady. He ceased to be active and was relieved of his post after a short while. Tom Kennelly, who had been Battalion O/C of Listowel before the battalion was divided, was appointed Battalion Commandant in place of Steve Grady. Bob McElligott then became Battalion O/C of Listowel Battalion.

In August of this year Tom Kennelly decided to attack and capture the Coastguard Station at Cashin. Selected members of this company, as well as members of Ballyduff and Ballybunion, took part. A couple of the men had rifles. I and the others had shotguns. Having surrounded the building Kennelly and I approached a guard on duty near the building and ordered "hands up". He was not armed. We then called on the men inside to surrender. They refused at first. We fired a few shots, after which they shouted out that they would surrender. When they came out we went in and removed a couple of women, as well as the personal furniture of a couple of the guards, to a private house nearby. We then set the building on fire with the use of petrol. We got no arms. They had been removed by the guards some time earlier.

At the end of October an order was received by the Battalion Staff from P.J. Cahill, Brigade O/C, to carry out an attack on enemy forces in the battalion area on November Eve. Selected men of this company met a number of men of the Ballybunion Company at the sandhills, Ballybunion, where we decided to attack a police patrol who usually paraded up and down the Main St. of Ballybunion every night from about

10 p.m. to 12 midnight. Tom Kennelly was in charge.

Members of the attacking party took up positions on each side of the street near side streets and lanes. I, with four other men, was allocated a position in the shop of a man named Shortiss on the corner of one of the side streets and Main Street. I was armed with a revolver and shotgun. My instructions were to open fire in the first instance when the patrol, which usually numbered six or seven, came into the ambush position.

One of our men in a section which had been placed in a position to cover the barracks, accidentally discharged a shot just before 10 o'clock. The result was that the patrol remained indoors and did not come out that night. The police, on hearing the shot, opened fire from the barracks. We had to retire back to our company areas.

About the month of December an order was received from P.J. Cahill, Brigade O/C Kerry No. 1 Brigade, of which this battalion formed part, to shoot a District Inspector O'Sullivan who had just arrived in Listowel. Tom Kennelly asked for Volunteers at a Battalion Council meeting one night. I volunteered to do the job, as well as Mick Galvin and T.P. O'Shea of this company. By arrangement with Con Brosnan and Dan Grady of Newtownsandes Company, we decided to meet in Listowel one night around the end of December and shoot O'Sullivan on his way home to tea from the barracks in Listowel.

We met in Listowel as arranged. After waiting around near the barracks for a while, a local scout

informed us that O'Sullivan had ceased to go home to his tea and was probably having it in the barracks. We then withdrew. He was eventually shot in daylight on the 20th January, 1921, by Con Brosnan, Dan Grady and Jack Ahern, while a man named Jack Sheehan acted as scout.

Early in the month of January a Flying Column for North Kerry was formed. Tom Kennelly became O/C, while Denis Quille became Vice O/C. I was appointed Battalion O/C in Kennelly's place. My house became the headquarters of the column. All dispatches from the Brigade O/C were received and transmitted from my house. The strength of the column was 30 men and included, apart from Tom Kennelly, Mick Galvin, Tim Hayes, Paddy Corridan, Michael Purtall and T.P. O'Shea of this company.

On the 22nd February, 1921, attacks were carried out by the column on police patrols in Ballybunion and Ballylongford. The column was divided for the purpose, half going to Ballybunion and the other half to Ballylongford. I took charge of the attack in Ballylongford, while Tom Kennelly took charge of the attack in Ballybunion.

When we arrived on the outskirts of Ballylongford village a local scout met us and took us into the village, while members of the local company acted as scouts for the occasion. I was armed with a shotgun. There were a few rifles among some of the other men. The remainder had shotguns.

We took up positions in side streets and waited

for the patrol to appear. The patrol usually consisted of three Black and Tans. We were in positions for about an hour. In the meantime single policemen passed up and down the street, but we let them go about their business as we wanted to get a few of them together. Eventually three appeared. One left the party and turned into a nearby house. The other two approached my position. When they came within range I ordered "fire". In my position I had six men. They opened fire at once. One policeman dropped dead, the other was wounded. The one who had gone into the house appeared when he heard the shooting. I ordered him to surrender. He refused. I fired at him and wounded him. We subsequently collected two Colt revolvers. The Black and Tan who emerged from the house was not armed. Having collected the revolvers we retreated to Newtownsandes area.

The following day several lorry loads of Black and Tans arrived in Ballylongford and burned down several shops, a creamery and a number of private houses. They took out several residents and severely ill-treated them.

About the month of June I, with several members of the column, decided to ambush two policemen who usually visited a Protestant Church at Rathoo, Ballyduff, on Sunday mornings. We had made up our minds to let them attend church first and ambush them on their return. We were armed with shotguns and took up positions some distance from the church. It so happened that they did not attend church that morning, so we withdrew.

After this the column was disbanded for some weeks. It reassembled early in July, and from then to the Truce activities were few. During the Truce I attended training camps at Lisnaw and Ballyconry.

Signed: Edmond J. Walsh

(Edmond J. Walsh)

Date:

21/5/55

21/5/55

Witness:

John J. Daly

(John J. Daly)

