

W.S. 1,171  
**ORIGINAL**

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21  
BURO STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21  
No. W.S. 1,171

ROINN  COSANTA.

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 1,171

**Witness**

Michael J. Cronin,  
Knockeenacurragh,  
Kiskeam,  
Co. Cork.

**Identity.**

Clerk, Kiskeam Parish Court, Co. Cork,  
1920-1921.

**Subject.**

Kiskeam Parish Court, Co. Cork,  
1920-1921.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil

File No. S. 2474

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## STATEMENT BY MICHAEL J. CRONIN

Knockeenacurragh, Kiskeam, Co. Cork.

I was born at my present address on January 1st 1890. My parents were farmers. I was educated at Kiskeam National School until I reached the age of 16 when I went to work on my parents' farm.

I joined the Irish Volunteers in March 1917 at Kiskeam. The strength of the company was about 40. This was, I think, the first occasion on which a Volunteer organisation was formed in Kiskeam. The chief organiser was Sean Moylan. Other members of the original company were: Jim Riordan, Nicholas Fitzgerald, Paddy J. Dennehy, Dan Kiely, Dan Guiney, Tim Cronin (my brother), Mick Riordan, Jerry Scannell and Con T. Murphy. At the first election of officers the following were successful:

O/C.	Con T. Murphy
1st Lt.	Jerry Scannell
2nd Lt.	Dan Guiney.

The only form of drilling carried out at this time was ordinary footdrill. The parades were usually under the control of the company officers.

I think that when the Volunteers were first formed in the area the company was an independent unit of the Cork Brigade. However, when the brigade was organised on a battalion basis our company became a unit in the Newmarket Battalion (19th) Cork Brigade. The companies in the battalion were:- Newmarket, Kiskeam, Umeraboy, Knocknagree, Kingwilliamstown, Taur, Meelin, Tullylease, Freemount, Rockchapel. As far as I can recollect, the first officers elected to the battalion staff were:-

O/C.	Sean Moylan
Vice O/C.	Paddy Murphy
Adjutant	William Barrett
Q.M.	Paddy McCarthy

During 1917 and 1918 I took part in all normal training activities of the company. The membership increased to about 200 during the conscription period in the Spring and Summer of 1918. At this time all Volunteers were engaged in helping to organise Sinn Fein in the district.

Beyond the normal training, I did not have much active service with the militant side. When columns or brigade officers were billeted in the area I always took my turn of guard duty or scouting as required.

When the Republican Courts were established in June 1920, I was appointed Clerk to the Kiskeam Parish Court. The Court was usually composed of representatives of the business, labour and farming communities. Occasionally the clergy were represented on the Bench. The members of the Court were selected by the I.R.A. as being men who would give an honest decision on any case submitted to them.

Immediately following the establishment of the Republican Courts, the people of the district appeared to develop an extra keen taste for litigation. As a result, there was a large volume of work to be done in connection with Court activities. Courts were held at fortnightly intervals. They were usually held in a barn at Kiskeam owned by John Casey. The first members of the Parish Court were:-

Chairman: Maurice Murphy, Glash, Newmarket.

Members: Michael Cronin, Droumscarragh.  
Michael P. Casey, Kiskeam.  
John Breen, Doon.

As far as I can recollect, the authority of the Parish Court did not extend beyond dealing with cases of trespass, petty larceny, brawls, abusive language, breaches of licensing laws, collection of debts.

One of the first cases heard by the Court related to the ownership of a field adjacent to the village of Kiskeam about which there was considerable trouble at the time. During her

lifetime the field was sold by Mrs. O'Sullivan to Bartholomew Hickey. When Mrs. O'Sullivan died, her sons endeavoured to secure the return of the field from the purchaser by threats. There were adherents on both sides who fomented the trouble and, eventually for the sake of the peace of the district, the members of the Court had to take a hand in the affair. Both parties were summoned to a meeting of the Court and the case was examined in detail in their presence. As a question of title arose, the case had to be referred to the District Court for the area. This Court decided that the ownership of the land rested with the purchaser.

In order to convince the public that the authority of the Courts would be upheld, the Battalion O/C. (Sean Moylan) paraded a strong force of I.R.A. outside the Parish Church on the Sunday morning following the hearing of the above-mentioned case when the people were leaving after Mass. The congregation were held up by the I.R.A. and were addressed by Sean Moylan regarding the authority of the Courts and the outcome of the proceedings in the particular case under review. He told those present that the decision of the Court would be upheld by the I.R.A. and that anybody taking the law into their own hands would be punished. Sean Moylan's address and the display by the I.R.A. apparently convinced the litigants in the land case that the law would be upheld and there was no further trouble.

Other cases dealt with related to the ownership of cups and saucers left to the members of a family by their deceased parents, while a considerable number of hearings were found necessary to dispose of a dispute between a father and his son regarding certain rights and privileges which the father claimed when assigning the ownership of his farm to the son. I recollect that the final hearing of this case was dealt with in the old chapel and that the father opened his appeal

to the Court with the words: "Men, let ye take a look at the dying man". This was apparently intended to appeal to the sympathies of the members of the Court. The case was eventually settled to the satisfaction of both parties.

The Courts were, in the early stages, operated under the protection of the I.R.A. whose members arranged for the notification of litigants, witnesses and the members of the Court. As a matter of fact, the venue of the Court was usually decided on by the local O/C. of the I.R.A. who always arranged for the protection of the Court by posting scouts to report on any enemy movements in the district. Decrees of the Court were carried out and fines and costs collected by the I.R.A. unit in whose area the litigants resided. This latter work was later performed by the republican police, but the work of protecting the Courts continued to fall to the I.R.A. up to the Truce.

Originally there were separate Courts in Kiskeam and Boherbuoy, although both villages are in the same parish. Some time in the Spring of 1921, these Courts were amalgamated under the chairmanship of Michael Casey, Kiskeam. The other members of the new Court were:-

Richard Sheehan    Knocklaugh    ) both from  
James O'Keeffe    Ruhillmore    ) Boherbuoy area

Philip O'Sullivan, Tureenavouscane.

I was clerk to the joint Court and this work required my full-time attention up to June 1922.

Signed: Michael J. Cronin  
(Michael J. Cronin)  
Date: 26<sup>th</sup> May 1955.  
26th May 1955.

Witness: P. O'Donnell  
(P. O'Donnell)

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