

W.S. 1203

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
BURO STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21
No. W.S. 1203

ROINN  COSANTA.

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

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 1,203.....

Witness

Patrick Coy,
 Moore Street,
 Loughrea,
 Co. Galway.

Identity.

Lieutenant and later Captain Loughrea
 Company Irish Volunteers, Co. Galway.

Subject.

Loughrea Company Irish Volunteers,
 Co. Galway, 1914-1922.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil

File No. S.2508.....

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STATEMENT BY MR. PATRICK COY,
Moore Street, Loughrea, Co. Galway.

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I was born on the 4th March, 1892, in Loughrea and was educated at Loughrea Boys' National School.

I joined the Irish Volunteers in Loughrea in March, 1914. The Company Captain was Charles Coughlan and the strength of the Company was sixteen to eighteen men. They were all very young lads. We drilled in a field close to the town and there was no secrecy in regard to drilling or parades. I cannot remember any route marches but I remember being present at a rally of Volunteers in Athenry. Our Company went to Athenry by two-horse brake. I have now only a slight recollection of the journey but I can remember that the brake was followed by two members of the R.I.C. on bicycles. That would have been about the end of 1915.

I remember Easter Week, 1916. As far as I know, the Loughrea Company was not mobilised and they received no instructions whatever. I remember that a dispatch came from Dublin to Loughrea, brought by Volunteer John Fahy of Bride Street, Loughrea. He delivered it either to Father O'Meehan or Father Feeney at Moyode Castle. During the week, about Wednesday or Thursday, British forces arrived in Loughrea by train from Dublin. They belonged to an Infantry Regiment, the Notts. and Derbys, and their strength was roughly two hundred. They had horse-drawn artillery, about three guns, I think. They billeted in the Old Brewery, Barrack Street. They stayed one night in the town and moved off the next morning in the direction of Moyode Castle.

I was arrested on the 4th May, 1916, and taken to

Galway Jail where I was kept about a week. I remember that the civilian population in Galway were very hostile and would have assaulted me and my fellow prisoners only for the intervention of the British forces. There were nineteen other prisoners from Loughrea with me. Those I remember were:-

Joseph O'Flaherty
Joseph Gilchrish
Peter Sweeney
James Flynn
Christopher Kelleher
Edward Roche
Richard Wilson
Michael Delahunty
Joseph Fahy
Thomas Fahy
Patrick Fahy
Martin Greene
Patrick McTigue
John Kearns
Patrick Martyn
Charles Coughlan
Patrick Sweeney
Bernard Fallon
Patrick Cunniffe.

From Galway Jail I was taken to Richmond Barracks, Dublin, and held there for a week before being deported to Perth. I was transferred to Frongoch and, while there, was brought before the Advisory Committee. I was kept in Wandsworth Prison while being interrogated by the Advisory Committee. They questioned me about my part in the Rising. I was accused of being a Recruiting Sergeant for the Republican Army contrary to the provisions of section so-and-so and so-and-so of the Defence of the Realm Act. I was also accused of carrying a prayer book for the purpose of swearing in Volunteers. I was amazed to learn that they knew of an incident which occurred on the Loughrea-Woodford road, close to Loughrea. I had jokingly one day pulled a book out of my pocket and said to a friend, "You might as well join us". I have no idea of how they came to know of that incident. I was returned to Frongoch

and released in August, 1916.

The Loughrea Company was reorganised in 1917. The strength was about eighteen. The officers were:-

Captain - Charles Coughlan
1st Lieutenant - Patrick Coy (myself)
2nd Lieutenant - Patrick O'Regan.

During that year, we did simple foot drill one night a week in fields adjoining the town. We had no arms drill or no target practice.

In 1918 we continued the same simple exercises and, during that year, there was nothing exciting that I remember except the general election in December. There was a Sinn Féin Club in the town of which I was a member. The Company co-operated with Sinn Féin in helping the Sinn Féin candidate - the late Mr. Frank Fahy - in his election campaign. He needed a good deal of assistance as the local people were very hostile. Loughrea was the home town of the sitting member of Parliament at the time, the late Mr. William Duffy. He had a big following in the town, composed of a mixture of the well-to-do and the stone and bottle-throwing element. The latter type were mainly ex British soldiers and their families. In addition to the local (Loughrea) Company of the Volunteers, the outside Company of the Loughrea Brigade, as it was then called, assisted in keeping order during the election. They were drafted into the town of Loughrea and I would say that, only for their assistance, it is very doubtful if Mr. Fahy would have been elected at all, as it would not have been a free election.

There was a change of Company officers shortly after the election. This was very early in 1919. The

Company Captain, Patrick Coughlan, took no further part in the national movement. The officers then were:-

Captain - Patrick Coy (myself)
1st Lieutenant- Patrick O'Regan
2nd Lieutenant- Christopher Kelleher

The Company collected a small amount of money (about £20) for the purchase of arms in the Company area. My Company also assisted in the collection of the Dáil Éireann Loan. I myself spent about three weeks at that job. About seven hundred pounds (£700) were collected in the Loughrea parish. This sum was handed over to Messrs. Joseph O'Flaherty and Peter Sweeney, who were the principal officers of the Sinn Féin Club in Loughrea.

About the end of 1919 or early 1920, my Company helped in the administration of the Arbitration Courts. The Justices of the Parish Court were:-

Daniel Corry, Loughrea;
Patrick Brogan, Loughrea; and
Laurence Smyth, afterwards O/C, Loughrea Battalion.

Republican police duty was done by members of my Company. The District Court Justices were:-

Rev. Fr. Dunne, Adm., Loughrea, now P.P., Kiltulla;
Peter Sweeney, Loughrea; and
Martin Ryan, Cahertinnagh, Loughrea.

There were several cases of robbery before the Courts. Some of the accused were found guilty and sentenced to terms of imprisonment at "unknown destinations".

Despatches were being carried by members of the Company appointed for the purpose. The despatches were taken by these men in turn except in any case where the

despatch rider whose turn it was happened to be at work, or was not otherwise available. In such a case, there was no difficulty, as far as I can remember, in finding another to carry out the duty.

In the first few months of 1920, there was nothing worthy of note that I can remember. The usual routine duties were carried out. A Company I.O. was appointed, mainly to watch the movements of the R.I.C. We also got information through a member of the Company who was a railway worker. His name was Thomas Temple. Mr. Frank Timony, N.T., was a sympathiser and often helped with information. He was a native of Armagh.

It was about the beginning of June that we got information from Temple that a consignment of petrol had arrived in Loughrea railway station for the R.I.C. I went with 1st Lieutenant Patrick O'Regan to the railway station, verified that the information was correct and got the location of the wagon containing the petrol. As I had arrangements made to go on a raid for arms with some of my Company to the Ballinasloe area, I gave instructions to Lieutenant O'Regan to seize and dispose of the petrol. He carried out the job to my entire satisfaction. This petrol was used all over the Brigade area afterwards, as required.

Some time after the capture of the petrol, maybe a month or so, a few members of my Company took Liam Mellow's motor bicycle from a shed adjoining the temporary R.I.C. barrack in Barrack Street. We took off our boots so as to make no noise and succeeded in removing the bicycle from the possession of the R.I.C. and hiding it in the town until it was removed to Bullaun Company area.

In July, 1920, my Company blocked the road at two points between Loughrea and Bookeen in connection with the attack on Bookeen R.I.C. barrack. We made one road block on the main Loughrea-Galway road on the Loughrea side of Caher Cross, and another a little to the Athenry side of Caher Cross. We cut and felled about fifteen trees for the two road blocks. We also put up barbed wire entanglements at the two road blocks. I was in charge of the six men who did this job and I was the only man who carried arms on the occasion. Battalion Staff Officers Martin O'Regan, James Flynn and Ben Fallon were in charge of the men making three further road blocks in connection with the attack on Bookeen R.I.C. barrack.

I took part in several raids for arms in the year 1920 in the Ballinasloe and Loughrea areas. In some cases, the people raided were very hostile and we had to be armed on all the raids. In addition, my Company carried out all routine duties, including the enforcement of Arbitration Court orders, police duties and despatch riding. I did my utmost to have an ambush of R.I.C. in the town of Loughrea or vicinity, but my superior officers, including Seamus Murphy, O/C, Galway Brigade, Michael O'Keeffe, O/C, Loughrea area, and the majority of the senior officers in the whole Galway Brigade, gave me no co-operation or encouragement.

I was arrested in October, 1920, and charged with having a copy of "An t-Oglach" in my possession. I was tried by British officers in Renmore Barracks, Galway, and sentenced to twelve months imprisonment. I was released about the 1st November, 1921.

I joined the Civic Guards on the 4th March, 1922, and was stationed first at Ballsbridge and later at Kildare.

On the 15th May, 1922, the 1,500 men in the force stationed at the time in Kildare protested against our being trained by ex R.I.C. men. We knew that some of those R.I.C. men had exceedingly bad records in the R.I.C. We presented our protest in writing to Commissioner Michael Staines who said he would consider it. In the meantime, he appointed me to take charge of the armoury in Kildare which had been handed over by the R.I.C. Four of my colleagues, who had been members of Ring's Flying Column, in Co. Mayo were to assist me in looking after and guarding the armoury. In about two months, all the arms in the armoury, including rifles, revolvers, grenades and hundreds of boxes of ammunition were handed over to Rory O'Connor and a detachment of I.R.A. men at Kildare. There was no shot fired in the take-over. I then resigned the position as Sergeant of the Civic Guards.

SIGNED: _____

Patrick Coy

(Patrick Coy)

DATE: _____

29th June 1955

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WITNESS: _____

C. Moynihan

(C. Moynihan)