

W. S. 1.224

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

BUREAU STAIR MILITARY HISTORY

No. **W.S.** 1224

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

DOCUMENT NO. **W.S.**.....1,224.....

Witness

Thomas Delarue,
Cloonlough,
Mitchelstown,
Co. Cork.

Identity.

Second Lieut. Mitchelstown Company
Castletownroche Batt'n. Cork II Bgde.

Subject.

Mitchelstown Company Irish Volunteers,
Castletownroche Battalion, Cork II Bgde.
1914-1921.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil

File No. **S.2517**.....

Form B.S.M. 2

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STATEMENT BY THOMAS DE LA RUE,

Cloonlough, Mitchelstown, Co. Cork.

I was born at Cloonlough, Mitchelstown - my present home - on May 23rd, 1895. My parents were farmers. I was educated at the Christian Brothers' Schools, Mitchelstown, where I obtained Junior Grade Intermediate Certificate and then returned to the land to work on my parents' farm.

When the Irish Volunteers were formed in Mitchelstown in April, 1914, there were two political organisations in the town - O'Brienites (All for Ireland League) and Redmondites (Ancient Order of Hibernians). The first meeting was held in the Town Hall. About forty people attended. The meeting was convened by Paddy Coughlan, C.E., Seamus Hannigan and Wm. Casey. The A.O.H. section was not represented at this meeting. It was decided to form a company of the Irish Volunteers and the following committee were elected to control the unit: Paddy Coughlan, C.E., Wm. Casey, Tim Devane, David Walsh, John Connors, Seamus Hannigan, Wm. J. Ryan, Richard W. Barry, James O'Neill, Michael O'Sullivan and Patrick Rice. Other members of the unit were: Thomas Walsh, Seán Kane, Mick Casey, Dan O'Keefe, John J. O'Brien, Wm. Hoare, Tom de la Rue (witness), Jim Burke, Bob Noonan, Thos. O'Sullivan, Mick Dunne, John Condon, Patrick O'Sullivan, Thos. Roche, Tom O'Brien, Patrick Walsh, Wm. Coughlan, Con Dwyer, John Clifford, Dick Carroll, Paddy Roche, Patrick Clifford, Ned Hoare, Wm. Roche, Mick Geary, Jos. O'Keefe, John Curtin, Mick Rouse, Dr. Michael Walsh.

The members of the unit were taught close-order footdrill by men who were British Army reservists. Sergt.

Major Patrick Gleeson was chief instructor, while his assistants were Mick Noonan, John King and James Connors. Parades were held one night each week and on Sunday evenings.

Just before Easter Sunday, 1914, an organiser arrived in Mitchelstown from General Headquarters, Dublin. He was Sergeant Major Ward (Dublin Fusiliers). When he arrived Mitchelstown Company was used as a base from which the surrounding districts were organised. Companies of the Irish Volunteers were now formed in Anglesboro, Ballylanders, Galbally, Kilfinane, Knocklong, Ardpatrick. These units, with Mitchelstown, later formed the Galtee Battalion. In addition to these companies, units were also organised at this time in Fermoy, Glanworth, Kilworth and Kildorrery areas.

About this time (Easter 1914) the strength of Mitchelstown increased to about 80 as the A.O.H. section decided to join the Irish Volunteers. The company was divided into squads and sections, and under the command of James O'Neill went into hard training in preparation for a big review which was to be held in Mitchelstown in June or July, 1914. Sir Roger Casement was to take the salute at this review but he had gone to Germany before it was held.

The review was held on The Square, Mitchelstown, and the Volunteers on parade were addressed by Colonel Maurice Moore, who took the salute at the march past. He was accompanied by Capt. Talbot-Crosbie. There were about 2,000 men on parade for the review. They were drawn from the surrounding areas in the counties

of Cork, Limerick and Tipperary. Following the review an air rifle was received by the company from Sir Roger Casement. It was used in training at target practice in the local hall during the winter nights.

At the start of the Irish Volunteers in 1914 a few local girls volunteered to help. They collected money for the arms' fund, made haversacks and first-aid dressings. Amongst these were Mrs. Jim Hannigan, Lena Burke, Alice Bailey and Lizzie Clifford (now Mrs. de la Rue). At a later stage they were the pioneer members of Cumann na mBan in early 1917. Other members of this organisation were: Julia Ryan, Kathleen McCrohan and Mary O'Donoghue. After 1916 these girls did herculean work in collecting funds, selling flags and helping the Volunteers in every way. They looked after the prisoners at Kilworth Camp, sending them parcels of food, cigarettes and other necessities. They also visited the prisoners at Kilworth Camp regularly, and in the course of these visits often got information re the movements of the enemy forces at the camp.

The Company O/C (Jim O'Neill) went to Birmingham about this time to buy arms. He secured 30 Mark IV Lee Enfield and two miniature rifles, together with a supply of suitable ammunition. Apparently the authorities in England were of the opinion that the arms would be used to fight England's battles in the coming war, because every facility was afforded him to get the arms to Ireland. When the guns arrived in Mitchelstown they were distributed to selected men who were considered certain to remain faithful to the Irish Volunteers no matter what happened. The funds to buy these guns were subscribed by the members -

some paying in full for their own rifles - while the balance required to make up the full amount of the cost of the rifles was supplied by William Casey, King St., Mitchelstown - one of the pioneer members.

When John Redmond appealed for recruits for the British Army in September, 1914, the company split up into supporters of Redmond's policy and those opposing it. About thirty-five men remained faithful to the Irish Volunteers. The remainder left and founded a unit of the Irish National Volunteers. All the rifles were at this time in the hands of the Irish Volunteer section. The rifles were collected at this stage and were divided up into groups of from three to five and given to certain members for safe keeping. This was found necessary as some Volunteers were working in shops - living indoor - and were doubtful about being able to keep the rifles safely in the circumstances, more especially as in some cases the employers were supporters of the Irish National Volunteer section. The Irish Volunteers were now refused the use of the Town Hall for training purposes, but they secured alternative accommodation in a hall with a large yard attached which adjoined the Clonmel road. Here parades were held one night each week, and on nearly every Sunday there were long route marches and field work. I should have mentioned that with one exception - John King - all our instructors had now been recalled to the British Army. We continued to train under Jim O'Neill, with John King as instructor.

Towards the end of 1914 or early 1915, training courses were started by Captain Robt. Monteith at Ballylanders. These courses were for N.C.Os and

officers from the companies in the Galtee Battalion. A number of members of our company attended these courses, amongst them Mick O'Sullivan, Bob Noonan, Dave Walsh and Jim O'Neill. As far as I can recollect, Capt. Monteith had been deported from the Dublin area and had been sent to Limerick, where he carried on his work as instructor and organiser.

The Mitchelstown Company attended the Irish Volunteer parade which was held in Cork on St. Patrick's Day, 1915. About thirty-five members travelled by rail to Cork. All were armed with rifles. We were met at Glanmire rail terminus by Tomás McCurtain, Terry MacSwiney and Dave Barry, with other officers of Cork City Regiment. Our company (Mitchelstown) was granted the privilege of leading the parade that day. On our return to Mitchelstown that night we received a hostile reception from the local "separation women" (wives of soldiers serving with the British Army) and their followers, but despite the greatest provocation our men showed the same discipline and morale as they later displayed at Limerick under somewhat similar circumstances. The men who took part in the Cork parade were those listed on the opening page of this statement as forming the original membership and committee of the Irish Volunteer organisation in Mitchelstown.

On Whit Sunday, 1915, (May 23rd) Mitchelstown Company travelled to Galbally by sidecars and wagonette. Here they joined up with men from the Anglesboro, Ballylanders and Galbally Companies. The combined body marched to Emly railway station, where they entrained for Limerick where a big parade of Irish Volunteers was to take place. The parade formed up in Limerick - 1,000 strong. Amongst

those who marched that day were Padraig Pearse, Tom Clarke, Ned Daly, Thomas McCurtain, Terry MacSwiney, Seán MacDiarmada and Eamon de Valera. The men on parade represented units from the counties of Cork, Tipperary, Limerick and Dublin. The march through parts of the city was through a barrage of abuse from thousands of excited women - British soldiers wives and their supporters. Bottles, stones and missiles of all kinds were hurled at the parade as it passed through Irishtown district. (This area was inhabited mainly by the relatives of those serving or who had served in the British Army.) "Pro German Sinn Féiners" we were called by this crowd as they showered abuse on us. When returning after the parade, the members of the Cork, Dublin and Galtee contingents had to fight their way to the railway station. The bearing and conduct of the men on parade in Limerick that day - under great provocation - could not be better.

The I.R.B. was formed in Mitchelstown area about this time by Donnchadh Hannigan. The members of the first circle were Paddy Coughlan, Mick O'Sullivan, Bob Noonan, Tom de la Rue (witness) and William Casey. Donnchadh Hannigan was Centre. Amongst those who joined later were Mick Dunne, Tom Roche, Wm. J. Regan and Dan O'Keeffe.

In the summer of 1915 a Volunteer training camp was held in the Galtee Battalion area. This camp was in charge of Col. J. J. O'Connell (Ginger). The camp Q.M. was James J. Burke, Dublin. There were also representatives from Cork City, including Tadhg Barry. The camp moved about from company area to company area, exercises in attack and defence being carried out at night. This training went on for about ten days and all companies in the Galtee Battalion were visited. The following members

of the Mitchelstown unit attended this course: Mick O'Sullivan, Dave Walsh and Bob Noonan. The other companies in the battalion were similarly represented.

Early in 1916 Ernest Blythe was in Mitchelstown area organising the Volunteers in the Galtee area. While here he held an election of officers for Mitchelstown Company which resulted as follows:

O/C - James O'Neill
 1st Lt. - Tom Walsh
 2nd Lt. - Dan O'Keefe.

Training went on as usual up to Easter 1916.

During Holy Week 1916 the units of the Galtee Battalion were instructed by their O/C (Liam Manahan) that manoeuvres would take place in Galbally area on Easter Sunday. As a Section Commander of Mitchelstown Company, I was instructed on Good Friday night to mobilise my section to full strength for that date. I got confidential instructions from Paddy Coughlan that the rifles in possession of the section were to be distributed to the best men and that all men were to carry any field kit possessed by them with 48 hours' rations. I was informed that the operation was only a blind to the actual purpose - that operations were to commence on the following Monday, the duties to devolve on the units being:

- (a) attack and disarm all R.I.C. units in the area.
- (b) dislocate railway service on main Cork-Dublin line.

The mobilisation point was Lios-o-graun - about 2 miles from Mitchelstown on the Limerick road.

The only officers of the Galtee Battalion at this time whose names I can recollect were:

O/C - Liam P. Manahan.
Adjnt. - Seumas Hannigan.

I have an idea that the actual work of Adjutant was being carried out by Paddy Coughlan, C.E., who was on the engineering staff of Cork County Council, but that Seumas Hannigan was generally recognised as holding the position.

I paraded with my section at Lios-o-Graun on Easter Sunday morning at 7 a.m. All other sections paraded at the same time and place. All were armed with rifles. Sentries were posted round the Lios, when a Major O'Reilly arrived with a dispatch from Eoin McNeill which cancelled the mobilisation order and suspended all operations. Despite the instructions in the dispatch received per Major O'Reilly, our company proceeded to Galbally via Anglesboro and carried out our original exercise as planned. We returned from Galbally that evening about 9 p.m., dumped our guns and awaited further instructions. The men on parade on Easter Sunday were:

Patk. Coughlan, C.E., Bn. Staff.	Wm. Coughlan
James O'Neill, Capt.	Richard Carroll
Thomas Walsh, 1st Lt.	Seumas O'Hannigan
Dan O'Keefe, 2nd Lt.	Michael Casey
David Walsh	Ned Hoare
Mick O'Sullivan	Wm. Hoare
Tom de la Rue	Wm. J. Ryan
Wm. Casey	Robt. Noonan
Thos. O'Sullivan	John Condon
Patk. O'Sullivan	Tom O'Brien
Patrick Walsh	Con Dwyer
John Clifford	Wm. Dwyer
Patrick Clifford	Paddy Roche
Seán Keane	Wm. Roche
David Dwane	Jos. O'Keefe (Ballylough)
X John Joe O'Brien	John Curtin "
James Burke	Mick Rouse "
Michael Dunne	Michael Geary
Thomas Roche	(Ballindangan)
	Dr. Michael Walsh.

X From Galbally but working in Mitchelstown.

On Wednesday evening of Easter Week a mobilisation order signed by Pierce McCann was received through the Battalion O/C (Liam Manahan). That night arrangements were made with Rev. Fr. David O'Connell, C.C., (later P.P. Mitchelstown and Archdeacon of Diocese of Cloyne) to hear the confessions of the Volunteers due to parade in his own home. In response to the mobilisation order, about 25 members of the company, armed with rifles, paraded at Lios-o-Graun on Thursday morning in Easter Week. Telegraph wires were cut on Kilbehenny road and we proceeded to Anglesboro, where all operations were again cancelled by the Battalion O/C. The men who paraded on this occasion were: Thos. Walsh, 1st Lt.; Michael O'Sullivan, Tom de la Rue, Wm. Casey, Thos. O'Sullivan, Patrick O'Sullivan, Robt. Noonan, John Clifford, Patk. Walsh, Richard Carroll, Wm. Clancy, Michael Dunne, Thomas Roche, David Walsh, Seumas O'Hannigan, Paddy Roche, Wm. Roche, Dr. Michael Walsh, Joseph O'Brien, Dan O'Keefe, Jim Burke, (X) Patk. Coughlan, (X) Mrs. Seumas O'Hannigan. (X) Travelled to Ballylanders in a horse and trap.

During the week following the surrender of the Republican forces in Dublin, instructions were received from Comdt. Michael Colivet, Limerick, to surrender all arms. These arms were, with the exception of six or seven rifles, dumped by Mick O'Sullivan and myself, collected by the R.I.C. within a few days. The rifles retained by us were later to form the armaments of the Flying Column formed in Castletownroche Battalion of Cork 11 Brigade.

Following the surrender of arms a number of arrests were made in the area. Amongst those arrested were Tom de la Rue (witness), Mick O'Sullivan, Wm. Casey, Jim

Hannigan, Paddy Roche and nearly all those who were active during Easter Week. With the exception of Wm. Casey, Mick O'Sullivan, Jim Hannigan and Paddy Roche, who were sent to Frongoch, all the others were released within 24 hours.

The members of the company who were still free continued to meet and discuss matters. They helped to collect funds for the Volunteers' Dependant Fund and generally to organise public opinion in a quiet way. When the prisoners were released about Christmas 1916, the work of reorganising the Volunteers went on. Early in 1917 Mitchelstown Company was back to normal strength of about 35 and the officers were:

O/C - Michael O'Sullivan

1st Lt.- Thomas Walsh

2nd Lt.- Tom de la Rue.

In March, 1917, a meeting was held at Kilclooney Wood to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Fenian Rising in March, 1867. I was in charge of a platoon of the Mitchelstown Company whose duty was to prevent the R.I.C. from approaching the meeting while the oration was being delivered by Tadhg Barry. The full company -- to the number of about 50 -- was in charge of Mick O'Sullivan.

In October, 1917, I was selected to attend the Sinn Féin Árd Fheis and the Irish Volunteer Convention in Dublin. Mick O'Sullivan was also a delegate. The Irish Volunteer Convention was held in Croke Park but I cannot recollect at the moment any details of what transpired there. We were also present at the Sinn Féin Árd Fheis at which de Valera was returned unopposed as President of Sinn Féin.

About twenty members of the Mitchelstown Company, under Tom Walsh, marched to Fermoy, where they entrained for Waterford City, in March, 1918, to carry out protection duty during the by-election there. The candidates were Dr. Vincent White (Sinn Féin) and Major Wm. Redmond (Irish Parliamentary Party). At this time Waterford City was a stronghold of British imperialism and the Redmond family were in control of the political position there. The Sinn Féin canvassers and workers were subjected to much abuse and were being constantly assaulted, so the Volunteers on protection duty had a tough time. We remained in Waterford nearly a week, and during that time two members of our party - Christy Ryan and Michael Casey - were injured and were detained in hospital when our party were leaving for home at the end of the campaign.

Conscription was threatened at this time and there was a big influx of recruits to the Volunteers. The strength of the company reached about 150. There was no change in officers at this time. A number of raids for arms were carried out in the area and about 600 rounds of shotgun ammunition, in addition to a quantity of gelignite, fuse and detonators, were obtained at Cusack's Stores. We also got four new shotguns in a raid on O'Neill's, Hardware Merchants. There were no raids for arms on private houses, as practically all arms in the area were held by Volunteers. The cartridges taken at Cusack's were reloaded with buckshot at Mick O'Sullivan's home.

During the conscription period armed guards of about 6 men were mounted each night in Mitchelstown. They were engaged in scouting duties - watching R.I.C. and all enemy movements to ensure that no arrests were made at night.

About this time Seán McLaughlin - an organiser from Dublin - came into the area. He remained about two weeks. When the conscription scare had passed the strength of the unit fell to about 40.

About this time a bitter internal dispute developed in the Galtee Battalion in which both the officers and rank and file took sides. The contending sides were supporters of Liam Manahan on the one side and Donnchadha O'Hannigan on the other. As a result of this dispute M.W. O'Reilly was sent from G.H.Q. to hold an inquiry into the position. The inquiry was held at Dan Moloney's, Knocklong. Amongst those present were Mick O'Sullivan and Tom de la Rue (Mitchelstown), Bill Quirke and Jim Scanlan (Galbally), Tadhg Crowley and Tom Murphy (Ballylanders), Wm. Howard and Ned Quann (Anglesboro). The other companies in the battalion were also represented. The enquiry resulted in the disbandment of the old Galtee Battalion and the suspension of many officers and men whose names subsequently figured in the war of independence. In an effort to bring the situation under control, G.H.Q. appointed Seán Wall, Bruff, as O/C of the newly formed East Limerick Brigade, while Seán T. Riordan (Kilmallock) was appointed O/C 1st Battalion of this brigade. This battalion embraced the companies of the old Galtee Battalion, with the exception of Mitchelstown which was transferred to Cork Brigade (Castletownroche Battalion - Tom Barry, Galnworth, was O/C). The officers of the Mitchelstown Company now were:

O/C - Dan O'Keefe
 1st Lt. - Patk. J. Luddy
 2nd Lt. - Mossie Walsh.

Cork 11 Brigade was formed in January, 1919, when Cork Brigade was divided into three brigades. The new brigade comprised the area of North Cork extending from Fermoy on the Waterford border to the Kerry border in Millstreet area. Castletownroche Battalion, to which our company was now attached, was a unit of this brigade. The other companies in the battalion at this time were, I think, Castletownroche, Glanworth, Kildorrery, Doneraile, Shanballymore, Killavullen, Ballindangan. The officers of the new brigade were:

O/C - Liam Lynch, Fermoy.

Vice O/C - Dan Hegarty, Mallow.

Adjt.- Tom Barry, Glanworth.

Q/M - George Power, Fermoy.

The officers of the Castletownroche Battalion were:

O/C - Tom Barry (he was only a short time Brigade Adjutant, being replaced by Geo. Power. The new Ede. Q/M was Jerh. Buckley).

Vice O/C - Ned Creed

Adjt.- Dan Shinnick

Q/M - Seán Curtin.

The company trained as usual during 1919 under the same officers until mid May, when Seán Hogan, who had been arrested by the R.I.C. in connection with the shooting of two R.I.C. men at Soloheadbeg and was being conveyed under escort to Cork Gaol, was rescued at the railway station at Knocklong on May 13th, 1919. A number of members of the rescue party were wounded, and two of them - Ned O'Brien and Jim Scanlan - were sheltered in the Mitchelstown area under the friendly roof of Wm. Bailey, Ardglare, about two miles from Mitchelstown. Here

they were attended by Dr. Jim Barry, Fermoy, and Nurse McCormack. Dr. Barry travelled across country on horseback to attend the wounded men. On these trips he was escorted by Seán Keane and Patrick Walsh. While in the company area the wounded men were taken care of and guarded by the Volunteers.

From now on the company was becoming more active. Anything in the shape of a gun in the area was picked up. About 300 rounds of .303 ammunition were obtained from a Sergeant in the British military forces stationed at Kilworth Camp. This ammunition, with the rifles saved in Easter Week, was later handed over to Liam Lynch (Brigade O/C) by Mick O'Sullivan to supply armaments for a Battalion Flying Column. I think this transfer took place about the summer of 1920.

At the end of January, 1920, some members of the company (Wm. J. Ryan, Seán Keane, Paddy Buckley, Araglen, Mick O'Sullivan) were arrested. They were sent to Wormwood Scrubbs, where they were detained for some months before being released following a hunger-strike.

At Easter, 1920, all members of the company were engaged in an attempt to destroy portion of the old military barracks at Mitchelstown. The attempt was only partially successful as the fire did not take hold in a number of sections. This was part of a general campaign throughout the country to destroy all posts evacuated by the enemy. The operation was carried out as a result of a G.H.Q. order.

When Ballylanders and Kilmallock R.I.C. barracks were attacked in April and May, 1920, all members of the

unit were engaged in blocking roads, cutting lines of communication and doing outpost duty. These operations were carried out in co-operation with the members of the other companies in the battalion and the men of East Limerick Brigade who carried out the main attacks on the enemy posts.

In August, 1920, a unit of "The Green Howards" - a British Regiment - was stationed at Galbally. A patrol from this unit came into Mitchelstown a couple of times each week. They usually travelled by cycle and in extended order. There was often as great a distance as 50 yards between each member of the patrol, which generally numbered 12. The officer in charge of them was known as "Shaky Head". On the evening of August 15th, 1920, it was arranged that a number of members of the company would lie in ambush at Kilglass - about 2 miles from Mitchelstown on the Limerick road - for this patrol. We took up positions about 6.30 p.m. and remained there for about three to four hours until we received word that the patrol had returned to Galbally by the Kilbehenny road. The party in this case were armed with rifles and numbered eight. As far as I can recollect the members of the party were: Mick O'Sullivan, Wm. Walsh, Jerry Clifford, Paddy Clifford, Wm. Walsh, Dan O'Keefe, Paddy Walsh and myself.

From then until November 22nd, 1920, when I was arrested, I was engaged in the normal training, scouting and other activities of the company, but nothing of importance took place during this time. Following

my arrest I was removed to Fermoy, Kilworth, Detention Barracks, Cork, and finally to Ballykinlar, where I was interned until December 8th, 1921.

My rank at the Truce - Volunteer, Mitchelstown Company, I.R.A. Strength of the company - about 40.

Signed: Thomas Delarue
(Thomas Delarue)

Date: 4th August 1955
4th August 1955.

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

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