

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

BURO STAIRÉ MILÉATA 1913-21

No. W.S. 1258

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 1,258.....

Witness

John Carroll,
26, St. Aidan's Villas,
Enniscorthy,
Co. Wexford.

Identity.

O/C. 'A' Company (Enniscorthy) 1st Battalion
North Wexford Brigade, 1920 - .

Subject.

'A' Company Irish Volunteers, Enniscorthy,
Co. Wexford, 1914-1923.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil

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STATEMENT BY MR. JOHN CARROLL,

26, St. Aidan's Villas, Enniscorthy, Co. Wexford.

I joined the Enniscorthy Company of the Irish Volunteers when it was formed early in 1914. There were about sixty men in the company. The officers were Seamus Rafter, Captain, and Pat Keegan, Lieutenant. We were drilled by an ex British soldier named Paddy Tyrrell. We had no arms whatever for a long time. After the gun-runnings at Howth and Kilcoole a small number of rifles were sent to the company. Each Volunteer paid a weekly subscription to company funds and, in addition, anyone who could afford to do so subscribed weekly for the purchase of his rifle and uniform. In the case of the poorer members who could not afford to buy their rifles and uniforms, the Company Captain, Seamus Rafter, bought them for them out of his own pocket.

Our company was known as "A" Company. A second company was formed in Enniscorthy. It was known as 'B' Company; it was also called the Shannon Company. It was under the command of Alex Doyle, Drumgold. Other companies were started in Ferns, Oulart, Oylegate and Davistown.

Parades were held twice weekly. The training included foot drill, arms drill, musketry and scouting. Occasionally on Sundays we had route marches, field exercises and manoeuvres. The company took over the Club Rooms in Mary St. as headquarters ^{WHICH} and later became known as "Antwerp".

The split which took place in the Volunteer movement following Mr. John Redmond's appeal to join the British Army

did not affect our company as all our members remained loyal to the original executive. We continued training and collecting any arms we could. A large number of pikes were made in Enniscorthy and distributed to other companies. When the Rising took place every man in the company was armed with either a rifle, shotgun or pike.

At a parade held during Holy Week, 1916, we were instructed to parade at Company Headquarters at 12 o'clock noon on Easter Sunday. We were also instructed to bring our arms and ammunition and rations for 24 hours. The company paraded as instructed and went for a march round the town. On our return to headquarters we were dismissed and told to be ready for another mobilisation at short notice. On Monday night we heard that the Volunteers in Dublin had risen and declared a Republic.

Early on Thursday morning of Easter Week I was mobilised. For the rest of the week I was engaged on the usual military duties. Our principal duty consisted of sentry duty at important points within the town and outpost duty at strategic points on roads leading out of town. After the surrender practically all the Volunteers were arrested by the R.I.C. and military and deported. I evaded arrest.

When the company was reformed in 1917 I again became a member of 'A' Company, 1st Battalion, North Wexford Brigade, and served with that unit all through the ensuing years until my arrest in March, 1921, when I was Company O/C. During 1917 and 1918 our principal duties were concerned with organisation, manufacture of munitions and the preparations for dealing with the conscription threat.

Drilling and training in the use of arms went on regularly and picked men were constantly preparing munitions in Company Headquarters (known as Antwerp) at Mary St., Enniscorthy.

One night towards the end of August, 1918, while Seamus Rafter, who at the time was Vice Commandant of the brigade, was engaged at the manufacture of munitions at his own premises an explosion occurred and Rafter received severe injuries, from which he died some seventeen days later. His death was a severe blow to the Volunteer movement in Wexford. His funeral from Enniscorthy to Ballindaggin churchyard was one of the largest ever seen. It was a fitting tribute to a man who had served his country so well.

During the 1918 general election all Volunteers took an active part in the campaign on behalf of the Sinn Féin candidate. Things were quiet in 1919, but during 1920 Volunteer activities increased and raids for arms were constantly carried out. We also burned customs and excise books and other records in various places. R.I.C. barracks which had been evacuated were also burned. I was also engaged preparing bombs for the attack on Clonroche R.I.C. barrack. Some of the material used in that attack was made at Breen's coach factory, Enniscorthy, and at Albert Smith's, Tomalosset. Albert was Brigade Quartermaster at the time.

The attack on Clonroche R.I.C. barrack took place on a Sunday night in April, 1920. For some time before the attack with other picked men I practised bomb throwing. These practices were held at an old ruined

house near Kilcannon. It was known locally as the "Haunted House". The bombs were home-made and were called "Tailer Bombs". They had a tail like a kite, so that the nose of the bomb, in which the exploding mechanism was placed, would first strike the object at which it had been thrown. We soon became very accurate at bomb throwing and could from a distance of thirty yards always hit our target.

The assembly point for those who were to attack the barrack was at the crossroad near Darcy's forge. We proceeded there in twos and threes. T.D. Sinnott was in charge of the attack. The riflemen, who included T.D. Sinnott, Jack Byrne, Ballymurphy, and John Maguire, Ballinakill, were to take up position behind a wall in front of the barrack. The bombers were to attack from the rear. Michael McMahon was in charge of this party, which included Albert Smith, Jack Whelan, Irish St., Michael Kirwan, Island Road, Liam O'Leary, Main St., Michael Neill, Irish St., Edward Balfe, The Shannon, Thos. Roche, Templeshannon, John Moran, Church St. (who was later murdered by British Forces in Drogheda), and myself. All the men on the actual attack were from the two Enniscorthy Companies.

It was arranged that all roads leading to Clonroche would be blocked and covering parties placed on them so as to prevent reinforcements reaching the R.I.C. garrison. A party from the Wexford district under Thos. Traynor held the Adamstown Road. Joseph Cummins with men from the Oylegate district held the main road from Enniscorthy, and men from New Ross under Phil Lennon held the road from New Ross. A mine was to be placed against the wall of the

barrack, but the car bringing it did not arrive at Clonroche until after the attack had started and, therefore, it could not be used. All telephone wires to Clonroche were also cut.

Shortly before midnight we moved quietly into position and when the signal to attack was given we threw our bombs on to the roof of the barrack and at the same time our riflemen commenced firing. The R.I.C. replied through the loop holes of the steel shuttered windows. They also sent up Verey lights. The fight continued for about three-quarters of an hour. It was then quite obvious that the R.I.C. were not going to surrender and the order to retire was given. The garrison, which included Black and Tans as well as R.I.C., numbered seventeen. We had a good supply of "Tailor Bombs". They were not very effective and many of them failed to explode. Unfortunately, on the way home a Volunteer accidentally struck the nose of a bomb against the ground and it exploded, wounding himself and two other Volunteers. These were the only casualties we suffered.

During the summer of 1920 I took part in many raids for arms. In May of the same year we raided Enniscorthy railway station and seized a large amount of petrol.

A general raid for arms in the brigade area took place about the autumn of 1920, when every house suspected of containing arms of any kind was visited. A large number of arms - mainly shotguns - were got in these raids. Late in 1920 the North Wexford Brigade Flying Column was established and I was very often in contact

with it in various places in the 1st Battalion area.

Towards the end of 1920 a man named Frederick Newsome was tried in his absence by courtmartial on a charge of being a British spy. He was found guilty and sentenced to be executed. I do not know what evidence was preferred against him. During December, 1920, an attempt was made in the Market Square, Enniscorthy, to shoot him. When Newsome saw the Volunteers approach him, apparently suspecting what was going to happen, he dashed into a crowd of people and made good his escape.

About this time I was appointed O/C of 'A' Company, 1st Battalion, North Wexford Brigade, in succession to Thomas Roche who had joined the Flying Column. In February, 1921, I received orders from Joseph Cummins, who at that time was Brigade O/C, to execute Newsome. I decided to do the job myself. One night soon afterwards when in company with James Leary, John St., both of us being armed (I had a .38), we carried out the execution order on Newsome when we met him at Slaney Place, Enniscorthy.

About this time, in company with John Dwyer, Tomnalosset, we rescued a Volunteer from the Enniscorthy Hospital. The Volunteer had been a member of the Flying Column up to the time of his arrest. While he was a prisoner at the British Military Headquarters in the Courthouse he was so badly beaten up that he was transferred to the hospital for treatment.

Seán Moran, Church St., Enniscorthy, a former member of 'A' Company, was murdered in Drogheda by

Black and Tans for his services to the Irish Republic. His remains were brought back to Enniscorthy for burial. I paraded 'A' Company at his funeral. After the funeral I was arrested and charged with unlawful assembly. I was sentenced to three months' imprisonment, which I served in Waterford Jail.

On my release I joined the Brigade Flying Column and served with it in a full-time capacity until the Truce on 11th July, 1921.

During the Truce I was attached to the Brigade Training Camp. I remained on the Republican side in the Civil War. I was captured by Free State Forces after the hostilities in Enniscorthy. I was interned in Gormanston Camp and later in Newbridge until my release at Christmas, 1923.

Signed:

John Carroll
(John Carroll)

Date:

20-9-55

20.9.55

Witness:

Sean Brennan Lieut. Col.

(Sean Brennan)
(Investigator)

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