

W.S. 1.293
ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
BURO STAIRE MILEATA 1913-21
NO. W.S. 1293

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 1,293.....

Witness

John Dwyer,
Tomalossitt,
Enniscorthy,
Co. Wexford.

Identity.

Member of 'A' Company (later 'C' Company)
North Wexford Brigade, 1914-1921.

Subject.

National activities,
Enniscorthy, Co. Wexford, 1914-1921.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil

File No. S. 2640.....

Form B.S.M. 2

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STATEMENT BY MR. JOHN DWYER

Tomalossitt, Enniscorthy, Co. Wexford.

I joined the Irish Volunteers in Enniscorthy in 1914. The company which I joined was later known as A/Company, North Wexford Brigade. Seamus Rafter was Company Captain. At first there were only about 12 members, but by the time the Rising came, the company strength was about 60. The training consisted mainly of drilling, field exercises and a little rifle practice.

In April 1916, I was working at Ballyregan. On Holy Saturday of that year the company officer sent word to me to return to Enniscorthy on Easter Sunday for a special mobilisation. I went to Enniscorthy, but the mobilisation was cancelled, and I returned to Ballyregan.

Early on Thursday morning of Easter Week I received a message for another mobilisation. I walked the 22½ miles from Ballyregan to Enniscorthy and, when I arrived there, I went to the Athenaeum which had been taken over by the Volunteers as headquarters. Commandant P.P. Galligan was in charge. I was given a German Mauser rifle and about ten rounds of ammunition for it.

At about 9 o'clock that night (Thursday) I was instructed to do outpost duty on the main Enniscorthy-New Ross road. I was relieved about 9.30 or 10 o'clock the following morning and returned to the Athenaeum where I rested for the best part of the day. That night, with a party of about 14 others under the command of James Murphy, we took over the St. John's Flour Mills which occupied an important strategic position on the main Enniscorthy-New Ross road. It was rumoured that British forces were advancing on Enniscorthy along that road.

However, they did not come. We were relieved on Saturday morning and we returned to the Athenaeum.

At about 10 o'clock on Saturday night I left headquarters with about 40 others under P.P. Galligan and went to Ferns to attack the R.I.C. Barracks there. On arrival in Ferns we found that the R.I.C. had evacuated the barracks. We occupied it and hoisted the tricolour over it. For a while I did outpost duty on the main road to Gorey.

Early on Sunday morning we were paraded and inspected by P.P. Galligan. He made a general check of arms and ammunition. (I still had my German Mauser and 10 rounds of ammunition). Galligan instructed us to parade at 4 o'clock on Monday morning to proceed to Hollyfort, about 10 miles distant, to attack the R.I.C. barracks there. We understood that some other smaller barracks as well as Ferns had been evacuated and the R.I.C. sent to Hollyfort and Gorey to reinforce the garrisons there. Late that evening (Sunday) we were called back to Enniscorthy. We went by car and were about the last to arrive at the Athenaeum.

The Volunteers were assembled in the Skating Rink and were addressed by Seamus Rafter who told us that the Volunteers in Dublin had surrendered and that Seamus Doyle and Sean Etchingham had gone to Dublin and had interviewed Pearse and had received verification from him of the order to surrender. He also told us of the terms - the officers were to surrender themselves but the Volunteers were to be allowed to go free. He told us to dump our guns, that we would ~~not~~ want them again. JD

Sean Etchingham, Seamus Doyle, Bob Brennan and Dick King also spoke in the same terms. Fr. Pat Murphy of the Mission House, Enniscorthy, now Canon and Parish Priest of Glynn,

Co. Wexford, was also present. Hewas in tears. He did not address us while I was there. He may have addressed the others before I arrived; as I said before, our party was the last to reach the Athenaeum.

Commandant Galligan, who had been our O/C. in Ferns, was not present at this parade. I heard afterwards that the car in which he was travelling back from Ferns met with an accident and that he and some other occupants were injured and had to receive medical attention.

The officers who surrendered themselves to the British were Seamus Rafter, Seamus Doyle, Sean Etchingham, Bob Brennan, Dick King and Larry de Lacy.

A day or two after our officers had surrendered, the British started raiding the homes of Volunteers and a large number of my comrades were arrested and deported. I escaped arrest.

When the boys were released in 1917 the Volunteers were reorganised. I rejoined C/Company, my brother Peter (R.I.P.) was company captain. I attended all parades of the company and spent a great deal of time after work paring buckshot and filling cartridges in Tom Furlong's forge at a place called Bournemouth. I also took part with picked men in raids for arms.

I was working for a while for the Co. Council and, sometime in 1918, the foreman in Bunclody quarry, who was also a Volunteer, told me that a consignment of gelignite would be brought by car to the quarry on a particular day. I passed on this information to Seamus Rafter who at the time was Battalion O/C. He made arrangements to have the car held up and the gelignite seized. This was done successfully and, although intense police activity followed, they failed to get any of the stuff.

I took part in raids for rate books and excise books. These raids were carried out on instruction from headquarters in Dublin.

We had information that a tender of R.I.C. and Black and Tans travelled to Bunclody via Tombrack every Friday morning. It was decided to ambush them at Tombrack. With members of the North Wexford Flying Column, under Paddy Kenny of Ballycarney, we went to Kelly's of Ballycarney and remained there overnight. It was arranged that a tree would be cut, beforehand, and held up by steel cables and when a signal would be given by the lookout man that the enemy was approaching, the tree would be dropped across the road so as to block it and so compel the enemy to halt. The tree was cut and everything was ready. Early on Friday morning we moved into the position. Tom Meagher, Tom Roche, Jim Whelan and Matt Lynham were detailed to drop the tree; a lookout man was placed on high ground; he was to signal the approach of the enemy. The remainder of the party occupied positions on both sides of the road. There were three other men on my side of the road at intervals of about 3 or 4 yards apart. I was on the right side of the position, i.e., the side from which we expected the tender to approach. Ned Murphy was on my left; the other two men were from Ballindaggin, but I did not know their names.

When we were in position for some time, I heard the sound of a car approaching, and soon the signal (which was three blasts of a whistle) was given. I immediately adopted the kneeling position and had my rifle at the shoulder ready to fire. As the car came nearer I saw that it was a private car and, therefore, I did not fire. If it had been the enemy I do not know what would have happened, as the party which was to drop the tree failed to do so. (This occurred in December 1920).

As I said before, this tender always travelled that road on Fridays, and although we lay in ambush for it on four different occasions, it never came. We found it had passed the day before or did not come until the following day.

Volunteer John Carroll and I rescued another Volunteer from Enniscorthy Hospital. He was Bill Kavanagh of Ferns. He had been taken prisoner by the Black and Tans and they beat him up so much that they had to take him to hospital. Although he was under military guard in the hospital, John Carroll and I succeeded in getting him away safely.

On a few occasions I acted as scout for members of the column who had come into Enniscorthy to shoot spies.

I was arrested on 2nd February 1921, and interned in Spike Island and Maryborough Jail. While I was interned I took part in a hunger strike.

I was released on 8th December 1921.

Signed: John Dwyer

(John Dwyer)

Date: 17 - 10 - 55

17.10.55

Witness: Sean Brennan Lieut.-Col.

(Sean Brennan) Lieut.-Col.

