

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
BURO STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21

NO. W.S. 1298

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

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 1,298

Witness

Patrick Doyle,
The Piers,
Co. Wexford,
Ballindaggin,

Enniscorthy, Co. Wexford

Identity.

Quartermaster North Wexford Brigade,
1920 - Truce.

Subject.

Irish Volunteer activities
Ballindaggin, Co. Wexford, 1914-1921.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil

File No S: 2641

Form B.S.M. 2

MS. S. 1, 298

ORIGINAL

STATEMENT BY PATRICK DOYLE,

"The Piers", Coolree, Ballindaggin, Enniscorthy,
County Wexford.

About May, 1914, my brothers Tom and Jim, Jack Larkin, Dan Kelly and I started a Company of the Irish Volunteers in Ballindaggin area. There were about fifteen men in the Company, and we were drilled by an ex-British soldier named Tom Conners.

There was a crowd of about twenty young men in Coolree who refused to join the Company. We talked the matter over and we came to the conclusion that they were more English than Irish. We then got a banner with the inscription "Coolree Irish Volunteers" printed on it. We used to train in the evenings, and about the end of autumn 1914 we held a parade in Ballindaggin where we had some clashes with the National Volunteers. As time went on our Company, as it was not an official one, fell through. We then gave our time to Sinn Féin.

Sometime later I went to Enniscorthy and joined the Enniscorthy Battalion of the Irish Volunteers. My brothers Tom and Jim, Jack Larkin, George Stafford, Pat Kelly, Joe Forrestal and Tom Rafter who was a brother of Seamus Rafter, Battalion O/C., also joined. All were from the Ballindaggin area. As we lived so far from Enniscorthy and were, therefore, unable to attend the parade, or take part in the normal activities of the Battalion, we became Irish Volunteer Auxiliaries and were issued with membership cards. I have presented my card to the Bureau of Military History. But we had no arms.

Early in 1916 I was approached by Jim Cullen, a printer of Enniscorthy, who, having explained to me the aims, objects and rules of an organisation called the Irish Republican Brotherhood, asked me to become a member of it. I agreed to do so and Cullen swore me in.

Late on Wednesday of Easter Week 1916 we got word to report without delay to the Battalion in Enniscorthy. I cycled to Enniscorthy and went to Simmott's, Slaney Street.

Other Auxiliary Volunteers from Ballindaggin, who went to Enniscorthy and took part in the Rising, included my brothers Tom and Jim, Jack Larkin, George Stafford, Pat Kelly, Joe Forrestal and Tom Rafter.

On Thursday and Friday I did outpost duty on roads leading to Enniscorthy, and also police duty in the town itself.

On Saturday Commandant Seamus Rafter instructed me, my brother Tom and Jack Larkin to go to Newtownbarry (now Bunclody) and find out if there was any enemy activity there. It was rumoured in Enniscorthy that British troops had arrived in Newtownbarry and were preparing to advance on Enniscorthy. Commandant Rafter put my brother Tom in charge of our party. We cycled to Newtownbarry and called on Jim Curran who was Captain of the Newtownbarry Company. We discovered that no British troops had arrived there but that the R.I.C. garrison had been reinforced from other R.I.C. barracks which had been evacuated. We reported back to Commandant Rafter and told him the information we had obtained.

That night (Saturday) Commandant Paul Galligan gave us (Tom, Jack Larkin and I) wire cutters and told us to go to Ballindaggin and to cut all telephones wires, to close all the public houses, to take over the parish hall, and to call on the young men of the district to join the Volunteers and to take part in the Rising. Tom was again in charge of us. We went to Ballindaggin and carried out our instructions. A meeting was held outside Ballindaggin Church after Evening Devotions (held about 2 p.m.) on Sunday. The Parish Priest, Canon Meehan, advised the young men to join, and about 100 did so.

They were told to go home and to be ready at a moment's notice to report for service. I went home. Tom went to Enniscorthy to report and get fresh instructions. He was to come back that night, but he did not do so until Monday, when he told us the Rising was over - that the Volunteers in Dublin had surrendered, and that Seán Etchingham and Seamus Doyle had gone to Dublin and had an interview with Pearse in Arbour Hill Prison, who instructed them to surrender.

During the Rising, Killanure R.I.C. Barrack was evacuated and I heard the garrison went to Newtownbarry. After the surrender, when the police reoccupied the barrack, Sergeant Peter McGlynn found an anonymous letter in the barrack advising him to arrest my two brothers, myself, George Stafford, Tom Rafter and Mike Jordan. Sergeant McGlynn showed the letter to Canon Meehan, P.P., Ballindaggin, who advised him not to take any action in the matter, and therefore we were not arrested.

About the end of 1916 I was called to an I.R.B. meeting in Enniscorthy. The business of the meeting was to organise new centres and establish lines of communication. ^{Bob} Liam Price from Dublin presided at the meeting. I was instructed to form a circle in the Ballindaggin area and I was appointed Centre. Other members were appointed Centres and instructed to form Circles in other areas.

I was very careful who I selected, and asked only those whom I believed were the best men in each area. I swore in about seven men in Kiltale, fifteen in Ballindaggin and seven in Ballymurphy, County Carlow, and so had a line formed between Enniscorthy and Carlow for running dispatches. When Seamus Rafter came home from prison he swore in more members from Ballymurphy against my advice.

Early in 1917, John Murphy, 4, Main Street, Enniscorthy, came out to Ballindaggin to help me to form a Company of Volunteers. Murphy was Battalion Adjutant at the time. We formed a Company and had over fifty members - all good workers. Bernard Doyle was elected Captain. Shortly afterwards my brother Tom became Captain, Henry Larkin and Ned Doyle were Lieutenants. Tom remained Company Captain until May 1919 when he went as Vice-O/C. of the 1st Battalion. I was Company Adjutant. We became "A" Company, 1st Battalion, Wexford Brigade. Seamus Rafter was Battalion O/C., T.D. Sinnott, Vice O/C., John Murphy, Adjutant, and Pat Keegan, Quartermaster.

When the British Government threatened to impose Conscription on Irishmen, we built a forge in our yard to make pikes with which to fight against it. We had two smiths in the Company. They worked in turns at night making pike heads. The smiths were Cullen and Reddy. We also had two carpenters, one whose name was Kavanagh. They, too, worked in turn fitting the handles. Other members of the Company did the rough work such as sawing the timber and grinding the pike heads. This work went on every night except Sundays. When finished, the pikes were sent to the different Companies in the 1st Battalion. The steel from which the pikes were made was collected everywhere and anywhere.

During the spring of 1918 three members of our Company, including my brother Tom and two men from the Enniscorthy Company, held up the County Surveyor's car which was bringing a load of gelignite to Ryland Quarry. The occupants were held prisoner, the car was driven away and the gelignite dumped. The car was brought back and the prisoners were released having been warned not to identify any of the hold-up party. The R.I.C. did not find the gelignite although they searched the countryside. No one was arrested in connection with this incident. Company training parades were held on Sundays, and

up to the time of his death Commandant Seamus Rafter visited the Company every week and helped and advised us in every way he could.

About the end of August, 1918, while Commandant Seamus Rafter was engaged making gunpowder in his business premises in Enniscorthy, an explosion occurred and Rafter received injuries from which he died about two weeks later. His funeral to Ballindaggin Cemetery was one of the largest ever seen in County Wexford. Most of the Volunteers in North Wexford marched in the funeral procession, many wearing Volunteer uniform. Later, those who wore uniform were arrested by the R.I.C. and charged with wearing uniform and sentenced to terms of imprisonment. Although Tom and I wore our uniforms and actually brought the guns openly to the firing party we were not arrested. For this we can thank Sergeant Peter McGlynn whom I have already mentioned. He was in charge of the local R.I.C. barrack (Kilbarne). Sometime later McGlynn resigned from the R.I.C. He told me that he was not going to fight against his own countrymen.

All the members of our Company worked on behalf of the Sinn Féin candidate - Roger Mary Sweetman - in the General Election 1918. We canvassed the electors, distributed literature, attended Sinn Féin public meetings so as to swell the crowd. On polling day the Volunteers acted as personation agents and assisted in bringing the voters to the polling stations.

During 1919 we continued to make pikes and to run buckshot and fill cartridges at my place. We were raided by a large force of R.I.C.. The raid started at 12 midnight and lasted until 8 a.m., but nothing was found. I had been warned seven hours previously by an R.I.C. man from Enniscorthy that the raid was coming off.

The same night that our house was raided by the R.I.C. the houses of the District Inspector and a Constable of the R.I.C. near Enniscorthy were raided by the I.R.A. Some shotguns, a rifle and ammunition were captured. This stuff was brought to our house three hours after the R.I.C. raiding party had left.

We raided the houses of people hostile to the Cause and got a good amount of arms, mostly shotguns.

District Inspector Lee Wilson was the first of the enemy to be shot in County Wexford. He was shot in Gorey by five men who, after the shooting; drove to my place a distance of about twenty miles. The five men were Frank Thornton, Liam Tobin, both from Dublin, Jack Whelan, Enniscorthy, Joe McMahon, a native of Clare but who was working in Enniscorthy at the time, and Mick Sinnott, Enniscorthy, who drove the car. They put the car in a corner of our yard and we supplied them with refreshments.

The car was owned jointly by Jim Cullen, an I.R.B. man and I.R.A. officer, and a Miss O'Brien. They used it "for hire", but the I.R.A. had commandeered it for this job. I went to Enniscorthy to tell Cullen to send out a driver to take the car and two girls to Ross. This was to cover up the fact that the car had been used for the shooting. When I reached Enniscorthy, Phil Murphy told me that the R.I.C. had been with Cullen and they knew the car was missing. I started for home and when I reached the Wheelagower crossroads about three hundred yards from my home an R.I.C. patrol and soldiers were on the cross. They had, apparently, traced the car that far. I told the "boys" the news and we prepared to fight it out with the police and soldiers should they come to the yard. After a short while the police and soldiers went another road.

My brother Jim then went to Borris, County Carlow, to a Volunteer named Paddy Hogan who had a car for hire to ask him to come to "The Piers" to take Thornton and Tobin out of County Wexford. When Hogan was coming through the Scullogue Gap he was held up by the R.I.C., one of them told him not to come back that way. When Hogan told us that "the Gap was held", Thornton and Tobin decided to go walking. I accompanied them to Kiltaly, and from there they went across the fields to Myshall, County Carlow, and eventually reached Dublin safely.

Jack Whelan, Joe McMahon and Mick Sinnott left for Triniscolthy. They told me later they reached home without incident. That night Tom and I brought the car to the lands of a man named Sinnott about a mile away, while members of the Company acted as Scouts. A few nights later Tom and Henry Larkin brought the car to Graiguenamanagh, County Kilkenny, and left it there.

We constructed an underground dug-out which we used as a dump in a corner of a field on our lands. It was seven feet wide, ten feet long and seven feet high. The side and end walls were built of stone with an opening in one corner. From side-wall to side-wall we placed wooden beams at intervals of a foot or so, and over the beams were spread sheets of corrugated iron. We then covered it with about three feet of soil and on top we replaced the sod which had been carefully skinned when we started the job. The entrance to the dug-out was concealed. In fact, it was so well done that it was never discovered, although our house and lands were constantly searched by R.I.C. and Military. Many times during the course of these searches the enemy actually stood on the roof of the dug-out and failed to find it.

On a Sunday night in April, 1920, Clonroche R.I.C. Barracks was attacked. The night before the attack the arms to be used in it were brought to my place from Marshallstown. When the Volunteers were going to the attack they called to me and I issued the arms to them. I was not present at the attack as I had to remain at home to collect the arms after the attack and put them in the dump.

Three men were wounded in this attack; two of them were of the same name - Paddy Byrne, and the third was Paddy Hoban. They were brought to my place and were attended to by Dr. Kelly, Killanne. On Monday night they were removed to Tuite's, Kilcloney, near Borris. All three recovered.

From the middle of 1920 until the Truce my two brothers and I were "on the run". My mother, who was a widow, had to employ two men to work the farm as well as supplying us with cash for our own needs. There was no one in the house with my mother except a maid, and when things looked dangerous they left the house at night and stayed with neighbours.

A man named Doyle who lived in Ballycarney sent a letter to the British Authorities in Enniscorthy giving information about I.R.A. men. I don't know how the letter came into the possession of the I.R.A.. One night a party of I.R.A. men dressed up in British Army uniforms and called to Doyle's house. Believing they were British soldiers - Doyle came away with them. He brought them to our house and told them to fire on any of us at first sight as we were dangerous. He then brought them to Kehoe's, Curraduff, where the "soldiers" let him know they were I.R.A. men. He was held prisoner here and, after a day or two, he was tried by courtmartial. He was found guilty and sentenced to death. A priest was brought

to hear his confession. The priest was Father McCormack, C.C., Killealy. Doyle was executed in County Carlow just across the Wexford border. A label bearing the words, "Spies and Informers beware" was pinned on him.

Towards the end of October, 1920, the Brigade decided to form an Active Service Unit. Jack Whelan (Waxer) who was O/C. 1st Battalion, was appointed O/C., and Tom, my brother, who was Vice O/C., 1st Battalion, was appointed Vice O/C.

Whelan and Tom started immediately to organise the unit. Some days later and before they had the unit completely organised, Whelan was arrested by British Forces and Tom became O/C. of the unit.

Early in November a reorganisation of the Brigade took place. Up to this time the Wexford Brigade area included all County Wexford and a small part of County Wicklow. It was now decided to divide the area and form two brigades, namely the North Wexford Brigade and the South Wexford Brigade. As a result of this reorganisation the Active Service Unit, which had just been established and which was composed entirely of men from areas now included in the North Wexford Brigade, came under the command of the North Wexford Brigade.

About the end of 1920, I was appointed Quartermaster of the North Wexford Brigade. The other Brigade officers were :- Joe Cummins, O/C., Nicholas Murphy, Vice O/C., and Liam O'Leary, Adjutant. There were four Battalions in the Brigade and the Battalion Commandants at that time were :- 1st Battalion - Patrick Dillon, 2nd Battalion - Patrick Joseph Murphy, 3rd Battalion - Myles Breen and 4th Battalion - Thomas Brennan.

The 1st Battalion area with headquarters in Enniscorthy included Enniscorthy, Kiltaly, Bunclody, Kilrush, Kilmlyshall, Ballindaggin, Ballycarney, Marshallstown and Blackwater.

The 2nd Battalion included the areas Killanne, Ballindoney, Foulpeasty, Clonroche, Rathnure, Davidstown, Bree, Oilgate, Glenbrien and Kilcotty.

The area covered by the 3rd Battalion included Ferns, Carolin, Killanerin, Castletown, Gorey, Riverchapel, Ballygarrett, Oulart, Boolavogue and Cloogue. Ferns was regarded as the headquarters of the Battalion.

The 4th Battalion included a small part of South West Wicklow, had its headquarters in Carnew, County Wicklow, and included the following areas - Askamore, Craanford, and Morageer, all in County Wexford, and the following areas which are in County Wicklow - Carnew, Shillelagh, Kilquiggan, Crossbridge, Coolboy and Coolafancy.

The first meeting of the Brigade Council which I attended was held at Dranagh which is situated between Caim and Davidstown, in December, 1920. The Brigade O/C., Joe Cummins, presided at all the meetings of the Brigade Council. The officers of the Brigade Staff and the Commandants of the four Battalions constituted the Brigade Council. All matters relating to the Brigade were discussed. They included organisation, training, reports of enemy activity. The Battalion Commandants reported on the operations they had carried out in their own areas. Instructions were issued by the Brigade O/C. for other jobs to be carried out. I attended all Brigade meetings which were held at different places including Ballindaggin, and the "Echo Office", Enniscorthy.

My brother Tom, a few other Volunteers and I decided to go to the 8 o'clock Mass and receive Holy Communion at Ballindaggin Church on New Year's morning, 1921, as we thought it would be quite safe to do so. However, during the Mass the Church was surrounded by British Forces and, with seven other boys including Tom, I was held prisoner. They searched the whole parish but got nothing although a tomb in the graveyard was filled with gelignite. They 'beat up' one boy and then told him to run, and as he ran they fired shots at him but they failed to hit him. He dodged them and got into the priest's house. Upstairs the priest was entertaining the officers. The district was searched all day for him but they did not get him. We were held prisoners until evening when we were released through the Parish Priest's influence.

In April, 1921, the Brigade started a training camp at Carrigeen on the Blackstairs Mountain. The Column was brought there for a week's training, followed by a week's training for as many of the Company Officers in the Brigade who could attend. The Column was kept ^{back} at Carrigeen while the officers were training to do outpost and guard duties, as one morning while the Column was training we heard heavy firing on the Carlow side of the hill. That evening we got word that the Carlow Active Service Unit had been surprised by British Forces and that four of the Carlow A.S.U. had been killed including my uncle Mike Ryan.

While the Camp was in progress I was Camp Quartermaster and was responsible for the feeding arrangements etc.

As Brigade Quartermaster I was responsible for the safe-keeping of arms and ammunition, and for maintaining a supply of buckshot. The Brigade imposed a levy on the farmers in the area. The amount levied was according to the Poor Law Valuation, and it was freely given. We collected between £1,500 and £2,000. This money was used for the purchase of arms or material. It was also used to purchase

clothing, boots etc. for the Column when required. Members of the Column also received a small amount weekly for their own personal needs such as the purchase of shaving requisites, cigarettes etc.

About March, 1921, the Brigade Adjutant, Liam O'Leary, was captured by British Forces when returning from a meeting of the Brigade Council. Jim Daly was then appointed Adjutant. About this time the O/C. of the 1st Battalion was also captured and he was replaced by Henry Larkin.

At the Truce the officers of the Brigade Staff were -

Brigade O/C.	Joe Cummins
Vice Brigade O/C.	Nicholas Murphy
Brigade Adjutant	James Daly
Brigade Quartermaster	Patrick Doyle (myself)
Brigade Intelligence Officer	Tim Larkin
Brigade Engineer	Matt Holbrook.

(Signed) Patrick Doyle

(Patrick Doyle)

Date: 22nd November 1955

22nd November 1955.

Witness: Sean Brennan Lieut.-Col.

(Sean Brennan) Lieut.-Col.

BUR BY 1913-21
BURD STAIRS M. 1913-21
No. W.S. 1298

IRISH VOLUNTEERS'
AUXILIARY.

Membership Card.

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Address _____

EXHIBITION BATTALION.

_____ is an authorized Collector.

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