

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

BURO STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21

No. W.S. 1,325

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 1.325

Witness

Hugh McKay,
Main Street,
Letterkenny,
Co. Donegal.

Identity.

O/C. 4th Battalion, 2nd Brigade,
1st Northern Division.

Subject.

Churchill Company Irish Volunteers,
Co. Donegal, 1919-1923.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil

File No. 8.2645

Form B.S.M. 2

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STATEMENT BY MR. HUGH McKAY,
Main Street, Letterkenny, Co. Donegal.

I joined the National Volunteers in Churchill in 1913 or 1914. Afterwards, I went to Belfast where I remained until 1919. While in Belfast, I joined Sinn Féin and, on my return to Churchill, Letterkenny, I formed a company of the Irish Volunteers, receiving instructions from Dr. J.P. McGinley who was organising the area.

My company carried out parades for drilling and training. About the end of 1919, along with another member of the Volunteers, I fired a few shots at the local R.I.C. barracks in Churchill where six or eight R.I.C. were stationed. A few weeks later, this barracks was evacuated, and the R.I.C. garrison was transferred to Letterkenny. We burned the Churchill barracks and courthouse in 1920.

In the spring of 1920, I was appointed O/C of the 4th Battalion, No. 2 Brigade, 2nd Northern Division. The Battalion consisted of five companies, as follows:

- | | |
|----------------------------|------------------------|
| A. (Letterkenny) | - O/C, Hugh McGrath. |
| B. (Breenagh & Glenswilly) | - O/C, John Gallagher. |
| C. (Churchill) | - O/C, Geo. Delap. |
| D. (Drumkeen) | - O/C, James Brown. |
| E. (Ramelton) | - O/C, Joseph Jordan. |

In the period 1919-1920, there was much land agitation in the area, and I organised all the tenants of Mrs. Adair of Glenveigh and Mrs. Johnston of Loughveigh.

The tenants commenced a no-rent campaign and agreed not to take any land which was let yearly on the estate of Mrs. Johnston. Auctioneering of land took place under the protection of the R.I.C. When the people interested in the auction were assembled, along with one Volunteer, I opened fire over the heads of the police and people, with two revolvers. The people and police dispersed. The steps taken were the only ones we could take at the time, because the Dáil land courts were not operating in our area at that time.

During this time, I was engaged in training the different companies. We repaired many guns and collected gelignite.

The area had been completely reorganised. The Brigade O/C was Peadar O'Donnell. He arrived in the area with a small column.

I received a despatch from Letterkenny to say that foodstuffs and petrol were going by the Swilly Railway Company to British forces in West Donegal. Along with one Volunteer, I succeeded in removing all the stuff off the train.

We raided some Unionist houses for arms. On orders from the Brigade O/C, we blocked all roads leading to Letterkenny. We also blocked the railway and kept watch to ensure that they remained blocked.

In the spring of 1921, two members of the Churchill Company went into Letterkenny where they met an R.I.C. man, from whom they captured a Webley

revolver.

A big round-up on Divisional Headquarters, then located in West Donegal, was rumoured about May, 1921. We took to the mountains, and early one morning several British lorries came along. The British began to lay iron bridges to get over our obstructions. They were attempting to reinforce their forces in West Donegal. We opened fire on the British from the mountain top and delayed the lorries until late in the evening. We came back by Letterkenny and got the Letterkenny Company to ambush a patrol of R.I.C. on the Main Street, Letterkenny, to draw the pressure from West Donegal.

Kilmacrennan R.I.C. barracks, which had been evacuated, was burned.

In 1921, rifles and ammunition were collected from the dumps in my battalion area and transferred to Derry City to help in the fighting which became known as the Derry riots.

Brigade Headquarters was located in my area from the time Peadar O'Donnell took over the Brigade, and our house was continually raided for arms and wanted men.

We captured a spy named Collins, who was sent to No. 1 Brigade to be imprisoned.

The Battalion were continually engaged in guarding and scouting for the Column, and the blocking of roads put a great strain on every Company.

I attended Divisional meetings in Derry under Owen O'Duffy and Dick Mulcahy, and went into a Brigade Training Camp under Todd Andrews, Dublin.

Some time after this, we were on the Lifford and Belleek border, most of our time in billets, until the Split of 1922.

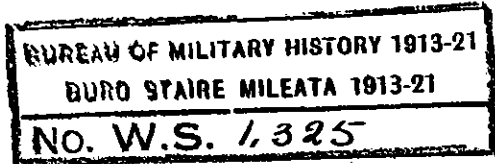
On the night of the 29th June or morning of the 30th June, 1922, our billets were attacked by Free State forces. We held on until our ammunition was running out. We then retreated to the hills where I contacted Charlie Daly. All the I.R.A. forces came to my area and remained there to see if agreement could be reached between Charlie Daly and Joseph Sweeney (Major General). The effort failed, and we formed, and remained in, Columns until we were captured about November, 1922.

We were interned in Newbridge, Co. Kildare, for about one and a half years, during which time we did a hunger-strike after which we were released.

SIGNED: Hugh McKay
(Hugh McKay)

DATE: December 16th 1955

December 16th, 1955.



WITNESS James J. O'Connor
(James J. O'Connor)