

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

BURO STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21

No. W.S. 1471

ROINN



COSANTA.

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 1471.

Witness

Mr. Andrew Kavanagh,  
2, Sea Bank Terrace,  
Arklow,  
Co. Wicklow.

Identity.

Adjutant, East Wicklow Brigade.  
(Nov.-Dec., 1920.)

Subject.

Activities of Arklow Company, Irish Volunteers,  
Wicklow Brigade, 1917 - July, 1922.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil.

File No S. 2811.

Form B.S.M. 2

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

BURO STAIRE MILEATA 1913-21.

No. W.S. 1,471

STATEMENT BY Mr. ANDREW KAVANAGH,

2, Sea Bank Terrace, Arklow, County Wicklow.

Sometime in the latter part of 1917 I joined the Arklow Company of the Irish Volunteers. I was then only 16½ years of age. For some time afterwards, being one of the youngest members, I only took part in activities of a minor nature. Naturally, of course, I was considered by the older members as being too young to take part in any of the things that happened. There were three or four of us of the same age, all eager to take part in anything that was going on. In the beginning, we put in most of our time at training in the various military exercises.

I would say our first performance was in respect of raids for shotguns, and we were successful in many places, preventing these guns from falling into the hands of the R.I.C.

There was a lot of activity at that time in connection with the seizing and burning of British newspapers, and we had several spectacular stunts in that respect. Whilst the R.I.C. watched one station we used to raid one a dozen or so miles away. When the R.I.C. were at Arklow station we seized and burned the papers at Woodenbridge or Avoca station, which, of course, annoyed and confused the R.I.C. In some of the raids for arms we barely succeeded in getting them before the R.I.C. arrived. We got a number of shotguns. These turned out to be useful afterwards.

In 1918, I left my employment in Arklow and went to Newbridge to work. While there, I was not connected with any organisation. I went to another job in Nenagh and remained there until March, 1919, when I had to return home on account of my health.

Some months afterwards I became active again in Arklow, and took

part in various different operations that were carried out. In the main, it was more or less an effort to agitate the R.I.C. in big and small ways - in any way we could think of. It was not easy to operate in this area. All the ex-policemen, ex-servicemen, ex-officers, both naval and military, and their families were a constant source of worry to us. We could not operate without being known, with the result that usually our officers were snapped up, tried and sentenced. Others had to take their places. We were very short of members to carry out operations.

I left Arklow in January, 1920, and went to Liverpool. I was attached to the I.R.A. there. While I was in Liverpool, preparations were being made for the operations which were carried out there, such as the burning of the timber yards. Commandant Hugh Early was our O/C. at the time.

I left Liverpool and came back to Arklow again, in June 1920. During my absence a raid had been made on Kynoch's Factory, in which the Arklow Company seized 50 cwt. of gelignite. When I came back I took part in operations for the purpose of getting this gelignite into the hands of Dublin I.R.A. It had to be raised from the dump and, because of it having become frozen, it was doubly dangerous. We packed it in fish boxes camouflaged with fish on top and put it in charge of the guard on the mail train who conveyed it to Dublin, to our headquarters, where it was diverted to different parts of Ireland. I understand it turned out to be very useful. The guard on the train was Ted Crowley; he lived at Barton Street, Tinahely.

During July and August, 1920, on a couple of occasions - twice - we made attacks on a barracks at Naas. It was just a case of firing a few revolver shots - not to capture the barracks, but for the purpose of harassing and annoying the R.I.C.

We also burned a couple of outlying abandoned R.I.C. barracks. There were in Arklow at that time eighty R.I.C. men in the barracks and half a Company of the Sussex Regiment, increasing the garrison there. We also destroyed Aughrim R.I.C. barracks which had previously been evacuated. We burned huts belonging to Kynoch's which had been occupied by British troops. We made sure they would not be reoccupied. We <sup>set</sup> fire to them and burned them out completely.

About October, 1920, we raided the old site of Kynoch's and got 25 cwt. of T.N.T. in an incomplete form - this, despite the fact that the military had patrols all over the town. We put it on a car, and it was conveyed to Dublin.

Also around about this time, I was wholetime engaged on Volunteer work - going with despatches to the Captains of the various Companies in the battalion and also acting as courier to a guard on the railway who brought despatches to and from G.H.Q. He was on the Shillelagh line and did not come to Arklow at all. I was constantly engaged on that.

During a raid on Avoca Manor House we captured some obsolete revolvers and a small keg of blasting powder which we seized and dumped nearby. We arrived home early in the morning. Next day we returned and commandeered a car at the Valley Hotel. The driver, Mr. Jackson, Carlow, drove us back into town with our booty - the keg of blasting powder which we dumped.

About November, 1920, there was a reorganisation of the I.R.A. units in East Wicklow. The North Wicklow Battalion and the South Wicklow Battalion were merged together and became known as the Wicklow Brigade. Matthew Kavanagh, who had been O/C. of the South Wicklow Battalion, was appointed O/C. I was informed by the Commandant that at a meeting of the officers of the Brigade I had been appointed

Brigade Adjutant.

At this time there were ten Companies in the Brigade. They were Arklow, Avoca, Glenealy, Barndarrig, Rathdrum and Johnstown, which were formerly in the South Wicklow Battalion, and Wicklow town, Ashford, Laragh, Delgany and Togher which had formed the North Wicklow Battalion.

One night shortly after my appointment the Brigade Commandant, Matthew Kavanagh; the Adjutant of the Arklow Company, Paddy Kelly, who was to assist me, and I were at Brigade Headquarters in Arklow engaged transcribing orders for a meeting of the officers of the Brigade when the place was surrounded by soldiers of the Sussex Regiment and we were captured and also the mobilisation orders. These orders bore no names: they were addressed to the O/C. of each Company, i.e. O/C., Arklow, O/C., Barndarrig etc. The meeting place was not designated.

As a result of the capture of the mobilisation orders the British tried to use them to trap the Company Officers. British agents posing as headquarters officers gave the mobilisation orders to people whom they knew to be prominent in the Movement and requested them to give the order to the local Company O/C., and stated that Barndarrig Hall was the meeting place. Our people apparently realised that it was a trap. The ruse failed as the British captured only one Company Officer, Paddy Curran and his Adjutant, Gerry Morrissey. Most of the Company officers did not attempt to go to the meeting; others who did try to attend were stopped on the way and told not to do so.

While I was a prisoner of the military in their barracks in Arklow, Captain Curran, his Adjutant Gerry Morrissey and another man who stated that he was a headquarters officer were brought in and put into our room. I spotted him as being a spy and I warned the other prisoners against him. I told them not to have anything to do with him. I was

immediately moved to Arklow R.I.C. Barracks and kept there for over a week when I was transferred to Wicklow Jail.

Our capture took place on the 14th December, 1920. We were held in Wicklow Jail over Christmas, and about 6th or 7th January, 1921, we were brought up to the North Dublin Union for courtmartial. Our cases were investigated there, and we were put back for field general courtmartial. During the interval, we were confined to Kilmainham Jail. We were eventually tried in Kilmainham Jail - in the old courthouse - and sentenced to five years penal servitude. While we were awaiting to start our sentence in Mountjoy, we were constantly sent out as hostages. Somebody pointed out that, as political prisoners, they should not do so, as our bodies were due to be handed over to the prison authorities because we were sentenced prisoners.

I was in Mountjoy Prison until 19th December, 1921, when I was released. There was not any activity until sometime in March or April, 1922, when I took over the R.I.C. barracks from the R.I.C. in Arklow. In July 1922, we blew up the barracks, and left the town, as the opposing forces were too strong for us.

Signed: Andrew Kavanagh

Date: 9. August 1956

Witness: Dean Brennan Lieut. Col.

