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ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
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No. W.S. 1508

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21

STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 1508.

Witness

Michael Doorley,
Cloneen,
Nurney,
Muine Beag,
Co. Carlow.

Identity.

Captain, E. Company (Nurney), 1st Battalion,
Carlow Brigade.
O/C, 1st Battalion, Carlow Brigade.

Subject.

Activities of Bagenalstown Company, Irish
Volunteers, Co. Carlow, 1917-Truce.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil.

File No .. S.2810. ...

Form B.S.M 2

ORIGINAL

STATEMENT BY MR. MICHAEL DOORLEY

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

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NO. W.S. 1508

Cloneen, Nurney, Muinebeag, Co. Carlow.

I joined the Bagenalstown Company of the Irish Volunteers about the end of 1917. There were about 35 men in the company. Peter Jones was company captain, Pat Burke was 1st Lieutenant and William Flood was quartermaster.

Early in 1918 I organised a section of Volunteers at Nurney. This section was attached to the Bagenalstown Company until about April 1918, when the membership of the section had increased so much that we became a separate company. It was known as E. Company, 1st Battalion, Carlow Brigade.

Apart from drilling and training, our principal activity was organising resistance to conscription. We made a large number of pikes in the local forge. We also filled hundreds of shotgun cartridges with buckshot. Skilled men from the Bagenalstown company took a major part in this work, and they also took the greater part of the finished material for their company.

When the threat of conscription passed, the strength of the company dropped from 40 to 20. I am glad to say we had about 20 in the company at the Truce. When the conscription menace passed we got an opportunity to do some training. Sean O'Farrell, Carlow, who, at the time was, I think, Brigade O/C., came out once and sometimes twice a week to assist at the training. Gearoid O'Sullivan also visited the company several times.

At a meeting of the Comhairle Ceanntair of Sinn Féin held early in August 1918, I was appointed to read the Sinn Féin Manifesto at Royal Oak on August 15th. This venue was to serve the areas of Bagenalstown, Leighlinbridge and Royal

Oak. I read the Manifesto and, the following evening, I got a message from Mr. Sean O'Leary, shop assistant at Mr. M. Shiels, Bagenalstown, and a very active Volunteer, that I was to be arrested that night. He advised me to take precautions to avoid capture until I got further instructions.

About 12 midnight, four R.I.C. men arrived and thoroughly searched the house; on the following morning I got word from Sinn Féin Headquarters not to allow myself to be arrested and to await orders. On the afternoon of that date (17th August) an Irish Volunteer officer called on me and he also told me to evade arrest. After a very lengthy discussion as to the best way of doing so, he gave me a letter of introduction to Seamus Rafter of Enniscorthy. When I went to Enniscorthy, Rafter gave me another letter of introduction to Pat Doyle, "The Piers", Coolree, Ballindaggin. I remained in that area until December 1919, when I got a message to return to Carlow. I resumed charge of the Nurney Company. We continued training the company and always had two or three of our members ready for dispatch work day or night. We continued making buckshot and filling cartridges.

Early in 1920 we raided the houses of loyalists in the company area for arms. We got some shotguns. About April 1920, Fenagh R.I.C. barrack was evacuated and we burned it a night or two afterwards. The petrol and paraffin oil used for the job was brought out from Carlow by Paddy McDermott who, at that time, was, I think, an officer on the battalion staff.

About August or September 1920, we carried out a general raid for arms throughout the area. I divided the company into several sections, putting an officer or section commander in charge of each section, and allotted an area for each section to raid. I arranged for an assembly point where all sections

would report when they had completed the job. One section commander, Michael Regan, reported to me that one man had refused to hand over his gun. I then went to this man's house and, after threatening to burn his house, he handed over his gun to me. We got about 40 shotguns that night.

From this on we intensified our activities. We blocked roads by felling trees across them, cut the telegraph wires, destroyed bridges, and tried to harass the enemy in every way we could. We also seized the mails and censored them. Any information we got in them which we thought might be useful we sent on to the Brigade O/C., Eamon Malone, who had his headquarters in Murrey at this time.

The military, who were stationed in Carlow Military Barracks, used travel the back road to Bagenalstown (Muine Beag) via the Harrow Cross. The brigade planned to ambush them on this road at a spot known as the long mile. We lay in position for several hours but the enemy did not come.

On another occasion when a job was being carried out in another area, we sniped Bagenalstown R.I.C. Barracks so as to prevent the R.I.C. from leaving the barracks.

Early in 1921 the brigade planned an all-out attack on Bagenalstown R.I.C. Barracks. The attack was to be carried out by the brigade active service unit, assisted by units from the 1st and 3rd Battalions. Instructions were issued to block all roads leading to Bagenalstown. The byroads were to be blocked early and the main roads were not to be blocked until near the time the attack was to commence, which was 10 p.m. The reason for this was to avoid arousing suspicion that anything was to take place that night. Having completed the blocking of the roads in my area, and having placed armed outposts at each road block, I

proceeded with a party of men to Bagenalstown to take part in the actual attack. On the way we saw the lights of several enemy Crossley tenders going into Bagenalstown from the direction of Carlow. When we arrived at the position allotted to us - KilcARRIGY Railway Bridge - which was about 250 yards from the barrack, I sent a Volunteer to report to Tommy O'Connell, who was Vice O/C. Brigade, that we were in position. O'Connell sent word to me to withdraw as quietly and quickly as possible as the attack had to be called off on account of a large number of enemy troops having arrived in Bagenalstown.

There is no doubt that the enemy had information that the attack was to take place that night. The brigade staff made every effort to find out how the leakage occurred, but failed to do so. They came to the conclusion that in all probability it was due to loose talk on the part of some Volunteer.

Early in April 1921, Michael Byrne, our battalion O/C., was arrested. The Brigade O/C., Eamon Malone, sent for me and told me he had appointed me O/C. of the battalion. Other members of my staff were:- Eugene Brennan, adjutant; William Flood, Q.M., and James Byrne, I.O. There was no further change in the staff and it remained the same up to the Truce.

There were six companies in the battalion, viz:

A/Coy.	Carlow Town	Jim Rice,	Captain
B/Coy.	Bagenalstown	Peter Hayes	"
C/Coy.	Leighlinbridge	Wm. Farrell	"
D/Coy.	Killeshin	Thos. Malone	"
E/Coy.	Ballinabranna	Ned Costigan	"
F/Coy.	Nurney	Michael Regan	"

Meetings of the Brigade Council were held frequently. They were presided over by the Brigade O/C. and were attended by the commandant and another officer of each battalion and

all members of the brigade staff. At first, the meetings were usually held at Nurney. After a while, owing to the difficulty and risk involved of travelling long distances, full Brigade Council meetings were discontinued. Council meetings of the 1st, 3rd and 4th Battalions continued to be held at Nurney, and the meetings of the 2nd, 5th and 6th Battalions were held at Athy.

The brigade staff at the Truce were:

Eamon Malone	Brigade O/C.
Thomas O'Connell	Brigade Vice O/C.
Patrick Keane	Adjutant
William Brennan	Q.M.
William Stack	I.O.

Signed: Michael Doolan
Date: 3rd October 1956

Witness: Sean Brennan. Lieut. Col.

