

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
BURO STAIRE MILEATA 1913-21
No. W.S. 1575

ROINN



COSANTA.

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 1575.

Witness

Ted Hayes,
18 Ashe Street,
Clonakilty,
Co. Cork.

Identity.

Intelligence Officer, Clonakilty Battalion,
Cork III Brigade, I.R.A.

Subject.

Activities of Clonakilty Company,
Clonakilty Battalion, Cork III
Brigade, I.R.A., 1917-1921.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil.

File NoS.1629.

Form B.S.M. 2

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
BURO STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21
No. W.S. 1575

STATEMENT BY TED HAYES,

18, Ashe St., Clonakilty, Co. Cork.

I was born in Clonakilty on October 23rd, 1901. I was educated at Clonakilty National School. When I left school in 1916 I entered the employment of Messrs. Spiller & Co. Ltd., Hardware and General Merchants, where I am still employed.

I joined the Clonakilty Company of the Irish Volunteers in June, 1917, and was appointed a Section Commander. The strength of the unit was about twenty. The chief organisers of the unit were Michael Ahearne, who was O/C, Pat Harte, John Nyhan, nicknamed "Flyer", Jim Murphy, Jim Hurley, now Secretary, University College, Cork, and Stephen O'Neill. The company was at the time an independent unit of Cork Brigade, as the area had not been organised on a battalion basis.

The only type of training carried on in the early stages was ordinary close order foot drill, with occasional route marches to neighbouring areas on Sundays. We had no arms.

The company was slowly increasing in strength as the year 1917 progressed. New recruits were only accepted after they had been vetted by officers. When the British threatened to enforce conscription early in 1918, there was a big increase in membership which reached about 70. The officers of the company at this period were: -

O/C - Michael Ahearne
1st Lt.)
2nd Lt.) Cannot recollect.

The Volunteers were now engaged in collecting all arms - mainly shotguns - in the area, organising the general public to fight conscription, collecting for the anti-conscription fund, obtaining signatures to the anti-conscription pledge. We had now about a dozen shotguns with a supply of ammunition. Normal training still continued, parades being held twice weekly, and, in addition, we were engaged in making buckshot and reloading our supply of cartridges with it in lieu of the ordinary shot with which they were charged. The conscription crisis passed and the Volunteers reverted to their normal routine training.

About this time, Cork Brigade was organised on a battalion basis. Clonakilty Battalion was formed and included the following companies: Clonakilty, Lyre, Ring, Timoleague, Ardfield, Roscarbery, Reenascreena, Sam's Cross, Ahiohill and Kilmeen. As far as I can recollect, the first officers of the battalion were: -

O/C - Jim Walsh
 Vice O/C - Pat Harte
 Adj. -
 Q/M - Joe Flynn.

All companies continued their normal routine training throughout 1918, but the establishment of the battalions lead to closer co-operation between the units. It was customary at this period to assemble a few neighbouring companies at week-ends to undergo field training. The main idea was to train the men in the use of cover and to accustom them to moving across country under cover of darkness. Arms were now becoming more plentiful and there were, I think, a few rifles in the area which were used for training purposes.

There was no activity in the area in connection with the general election in December, 1918, as the Sinn Féin candidate - Seán Hayes, I think - was returned unopposed.

Early in 1919, Cork Brigade, which embraced the area of the whole county, was divided into three brigades. Clonakilty Battalion now became a unit of Cork 111 Brigade, which controlled West Cork area. The battalions in this brigade were: - Bandon (1st), Clonakilty (2nd), Dunmanway (3rd), Skibbereen (4th), Bantry (5th), and Castletownbere (6th). Another battalion (Schull, 7th) was organised early in 1920. As far as I can recollect, the first officers of Cork 111 Brigade were:

O/C - Tom Hales
 Vice O/C - Seán Hayes
 Adjt. - Michael McCarthy
 Q/M - Pat Harte.

A brigade training camp was held at Glandore in August, 1919. It was attended by representatives from all battalions in the brigade and by officers from G.H.Q. As far as I can remember, Dick McKee, O/C Dublin Brigade at the time, was in charge. I was not present at this camp.

At a Brigade Council meeting following the camp at Glandore, Liam Deasy was appointed Brigade Adjutant, and Michael McCarthy returned to his own area as Vice O/C, Dunmanway Battalion.

About this time I was appointed Battalion I/O, Clonakilty Battalion. This job involved the organisation of an intelligence system throughout the area and the linking up of same with similar systems in the other battalions in the brigade. It necessitated visits to each

company area to discuss with the officers the organisation of the intelligence system and the appointment of intelligence officers in each company area. The Company I/Os furnished reports to me each week, or, if circumstances demanded, at shorter intervals. The reports covered the activities of all enemy personnel - R.I.C., military and loyalist families - in the area. The information contained in these reports was, in turn, condensed by me and transmitted in my report on battalion activities to the Brigade I/O (Seán Buckley, Bandon).

Amongst the arrangements operated in the area was one by which copies of all telegrams to and from R.I.C. and military personnel in Clonakilty were transmitted to me before the originals were actually despatched to the addressees. These messages were usually in code, the key of which was forwarded to me by the Brigade I/O. Private letters addressed to members of the R.I.C. and military, and in many cases to their associates, were also submitted for examination before delivery. These letters were steamed open, examined and any items of importance noted and transmitted to Brigade H.Q. All letters were then resealed and returned to the post office for delivery in the normal way. The mails and other messages were usually delivered to me by - Heaphy, who was a sorter in the local post office and who collected all items due for delivery from me each evening. He was working in co-operation with C. Allcock, who was an assistant in the post office.

When the attack on Timoleague R.I.C. barracks was being planned in February, 1920, I was responsible for the collection and transmission to Brigade H.Q. of reports on the strength, movements and disposition of R.I.C. and

military forces in the area. On the night of the actual attack (25th February, 1920), I was engaged on maintaining contact between the various outposts which were holding the roads leading from Clonakilty to Timoleague. The party holding these roads was in charge of Seán O'Donovan (Cash), now Veterinary Inspector in Dublin Corporation.

During April and May, 1920, I took part, with several other members of the Clonakilty Company, in a number of raids on the local and provincial mails, as well as in the hold-up of a train at Ballinascorthy in which we destroyed a stock of the "Skibbereen Eagle", a newspaper published in West Cork which was hostile to the national movement.

When the Local Government Elections were held in June, 1920, the Volunteers were engaged on guarding polling stations and escorting the ballot boxes to Cork for the count.

About this time instructions to ascertain details of all arms held in the area by people other than members of the I.R.A. or their families were issued. The survey operated through my intelligence service, which revealed that about 20 shotguns, 2 revolvers, with a supply of ammunition for each type of weapon, were held in the area. All these arms were collected in a number of raids in which nearly all members of Clonakilty unit took part.

The Republican Courts were established about this time and took over the administration of justice in the area. The members of Clonakilty Parish Court were: -Tom Bennet, Pearse St., James Murphy, Pearse St., and - O'Keefe.

I joined the I.R.B. early in 1920. I was sworn in by Jim Hurley. Other members of the circle were: - Dan

Harte, Joe O'Donoghue, Dan Kingston, Stephen O'Neill,
 - O'Keefe (member of Republican Court referred to
 previously)).

The Brigade O/C (Tom Hales) and Brigade Q/M (Pat Harte) were taken prisoner by enemy forces towards the end of July, 1920. They were tortured in an endeavour to extract information and, as a result, Pat Harte became insane. The arrest of these officers led to changes in the personnel of the Brigade Staff, which now became: -

O/C - Charlie Hurley
 Vice O/C - Ted O'Sullivan
 Adjt.- Liam Deasy
 Q/M - Dick Barrett.

A member of the R.I.C. - Constable Murray - was very active in seeking out I.R.A. men and was generally making himself very obnoxious. He was shot at the corner of Pearse St. and Rossa St. on the night of July 27th 1920 by Stephen O'Neill, John Nyhan ("Flyer") and, I think, Dan Harte.

As a result of information secured by me from correspondence, it was discovered that District Inspector O'Connor, R.I.C., proposed to travel to Cork by the mail train from Clonakilty one morning in August, 1920. It was decided to hold up the train and take the inspector prisoner. Accompanied by a number of other men from Clonakilty and the neighbouring companies, we held up the train at Kilnagross, Shannonvale. We searched the train from end to end but there was no trace of the inspector. However, a search of a goods wagon attached to the train revealed that the District Inspector's car was in it. We removed the car and then allowed the train to proceed. On this occasion I was armed with a revolver.

In addition to my duties as I/O, I was engaged about this time in the manufacture of buckshot, the making of dumps, as well as assisting in the training of the members of the various companies. Towards the end of October, 1920, I attended a battalion training camp at Kilbree, Clonakilty. This camp was attended by two or three representatives from each company in the battalion. The camp continued over a week-end and Dan Harte (Battalion O/C) was in charge. The training officers were Stephen O'Neill, John Nyhan ("Flyer") and Jim Murphy (Spud). All present at the camp underwent a course of training in the use of the rifle and small arms, as well as instructing in scouting and the use of cover.

Dan Harte now retired from his position as Battalion O/C and was replaced by Jim Hurley. The officers of Clonakilty Battalion now were: -

O/C - Jim Hurley
 Vice O/C - Tim O'Donoghue
 Adj. - Batt Murphy
 Q/M - Paddy O'Keefe
 I/O - Ted Hayes
 Engrs. - Jim Lane
 Signals - Joe O'Donoghue
 Transp. - Jim Hurley (Sonny)
 First Aid - Mick Dineen
 Police - Con Fitzpatrick.

All units were engaged at this period on the collection of the arms' fund levy, which was enforced in order to raise funds to keep a column or columns of men on permanent active service. The amount of the levy was fixed in the case of the farming community at so much per head of stock carried on the farm. In the case of shopkeepers and others, it was based on the estimated means of the people concerned. The vast majority of the people contributed generously and voluntarily, and only in exceptional cases was it found necessary to seize goods or stock. I can only

recollect one case in Clonakilty Company area where it was found necessary to take punitive action. This was in the case of Wesley Bateman, a shopkeeper and extensive farmer, who refused to contribute. However, the seizure of 3 bullocks from his lands and their sale for £80 at Ballineen fair next day solved the problem.

About this time I procured copies of all available photographs of R.I.C., Black and Tans and military in the area, so that they would be available for identification purposes should these men be transferred to another area.

During the months of December, 1920, and January, 1921, I was engaged with other members of the intelligence staff in covering the activities of a suspected spy in the area. Eventually we succeeded in confirming that he was supplying information to the R.I.C. He actually visited the R.I.C. barracks dressed up as a woman in a hooded cloak. He was arrested in February, 1921, tried by courtmartial, found guilty and executed as a spy. This man's name was Robert Eady. He resided at Clogheen, Clonakilty.

During the spring of 1921 all units were engaged in the destruction of enemy lines of communication. Bridges were demolished, roads trenched, trees felled and railway lines lifted. This work kept the members of the local companies, not serving with the column, fully occupied, as enemy forces moving in strength were compelling the civilian population to re-open the lines of communication from day to day. However, the obstructions were no sooner cleared at one spot then fresh road blocks were made at another site on the same road.

All bicycles in the area were seized about this time, as information had come to hand that the enemy forces proposed to take them up. These machines were later used by our dispatch riders and members of the column in the course of their activities.

One of those unfortunate accidents, which happen occasionally when inexperienced men are dealing with firearms, occurred on 23rd February, 1921. Tim Woolly - a member of Clonakilty Company - was on duty at Shannonvale Cross on the Bandon road. He was armed with a "Peter the Painter", which he placed on the ground. The gun was picked up by one of his colleagues, who knew little of the intricacies of the weapon, and before anyone could realise what was happening, Tim Woolly was shot through the head and died almost immediately. The enemy forces learned of the occurrence within a short time. They searched every house in the area but failed to find the body. They arrested the man who fired the shot, but in the absence of the body, or apparently any definite information, they were unable to charge him.

The intelligence system in the area was now working very satisfactorily and we were generally able to keep a step ahead of the enemy. Towards the end of March, 1921, information came to hand that the enemy proposed to occupy Clonakilty Courthouse, so having passed the information to the Battalion O/C (Jim Hurley), I received instructions to arrange for the immediate destruction of the building. Accompanied by Sam Collins, Tom Collins, Jim Crowley, Jerh. Crowley and Joe Murray, I entered the courthouse and set the building on fire. The building was situated about 400 yards from the R.I.C. barrack, and immediately the fire was

observed the garrison of the barrack opened fire. In endeavouring to escape under cover from the fusilade, Joe Murray got trapped in the burning building. However, I succeeded in getting him away, and, as he was badly burned, I had him removed to a place of safety where he was able to receive medical attention. On my way home after this incident, I was fired on by a party of military in Barrack St. and returned the fire. I eventually reached home safely.

There was no unusual activity between the end of March and May 14th 1921, when a section of the Brigade Column, about twenty strong, entered Clonakilty to shoot up any enemy troops or police they might see. This operation, which was a general order throughout the 1st Southern Division, was carried out as a reprisal against the enemy who were executing I.R.A. prisoners taken under arms. The column entered Clonakilty on May 14th 1921, but failed to find any enemy personnel on the streets. They then sniped the R.I.C. and military posts for about twenty minutes before withdrawing.

Being engaged on intelligence work, I had been instructed after the burning of the courthouse at the end of March, 1921, to lie low and not to make it apparent that I had any connection with the I.R.A. Despite my best endeavours, the enemy apparently had some suspicions, as some days following the visit of the men from the column to the town, my home was raided and I was forced to go "on the run". I continued to operate and control the intelligence service throughout the battalion up to the Truce on July 11th 1921.

A reorganisation of Cork 111 Brigade took place just prior to the Truce and the area was divided into two brigades. The battalions at the western end of the brigade - Bantry, Castletownbere, Schull, Skibbereen, with a new battalion organised on Drimoleague - were formed into a new brigade - Cork V. The other battalions in the old brigade - Bandon, Clonakilty and Dunmanway, with a new battalion in the Kinsale area, now comprised the new Cork 111 Brigade. As far as I can recollect, this new scheme of organisation did not come into effect until the end of July or early August, 1921.

My rank at the Truce - Intelligence Officer,
Clonakilty Battalion, Cork 111 Brigade.

The strength of the battalion at the time was about
600.

Signed:

Jed Hayes

Date:

12th Feb. 1957.

Witness:

P. Lonnell

(Investigator).

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

No. W.S. 1575