

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

BURO STAIRE MILC

No. W.S. 1602

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21

STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 1602.

Witness

Martin Mooney,
Main St.,
Kiltimagh,
Co. Mayo.

Identity.

Coy. Capt. and later Vice Comdt.,
3rd Battn., East Mayo Brigade.

Subject.

Activities of Kiltimagh Company,
I. Vols., Co. Mayo, 1916-21.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil.

File No S.2920.

Form B S.M. 2

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

BURO STAIRS MILITARY 1913-21

No. W.S. 1,602

STATEMENT BY MARTIN MOONEY

Main Street, Kiltimagh, Co. Mayo.

(Company Captain, and later Vice-Commandant, 3rd
Battalion, East Mayo Brigade).

I was born in the town of Kiltimagh. My father was a farmer and, during the early period, was a prominent member of the A.O.H. He later associated himself with Sinn Féin and was one of the first judges of the Sinn Féin Courts.

In 1915, I with a few others and the late Brigade Comdt. Sean Corcoran formed the first company of the National Volunteers (Redmond's), but later we broke away from them and organised a company of the Irish Volunteers (McNeill's) and drilled up to 1916, when I took part in the capture of a few rifles from the National Volunteers at Balla with Jim Sheehy and the late Jim Ruane.

Everything was very uncertain after the Rising, and it was not until 1917 that we reorganised and drilled. I helped to organise a number of plays, concerts and dances for the Volunteer Dependants' Fund and raised a fair amount of money.

About the end of 1917 and the beginning of 1918, on instructions from G.H.Q., we drilled in the open and parades were held for the first time after the Rising. As there were a number of evictions on the Toromeen Estate, we paraded to all these to help and resist the proceedings which, after a few scimmages, were held up, and we succeeded in breaking up the British administration in the district. Shortly after this, the town was surrounded by R.I.C. and a parade broken up. We had hurleys and used them and several R.I.C. were wounded and two Volunteers, the company captain - J. Walsh - and two other officers - P. Jordan and P. Sheehy - with Volunteer

McHugh were arrested and taken to Castlebar military barracks. At their trial they refused to recognise the Court and were remanded to Sligo Prison for a week - they were brought back by train round to Claremorris, I suppose in case there was an attempt to release them. In Castlebar, we got instructions from Dick Walsh of Balla, who was brigade adjutant, that instructions had been sent from G.H.Q. that they were to give bail - against their will they did so and went home - they met Michael Collins and George Plunkett while in Sligo Prison.

As a result of the activities over the evictions, Sean Corcoran and T. Ruane, brother of Senator T. Ruane, were arrested and sentenced to three months in Sligo Gaol; they went on hunger strike and were transferred to Dundalk Gaol.

We kept the men together and were as active as we could (owing to the absence of all our leaders). During the threat of conscription the company took in a large number of recruits and carried out a number of raids for arms. Our chief duties were guarding the ballot boxes at the General Election where our candidate was E. de Valera. Although he was a member for Clare, he was specially selected to contest this important constituency and oppose John Dillon, the leader of the Parliamentary Party. Our district was very strong - A.O.H. (Dillon's party) - and the result of the election was a great victory for us which, I think, was chiefly due to the activities of the Volunteers.

Corcoran and Ruane were released and took over from the officers who replaced them (J. Walsh, J. Sheehy and myself). Later on an attempt was made by an R.I.C. sergeant to arrest Sheehy. The sergeant was wounded and Sheehy escaped and, through the assistance of P. Ruane, got away to England on a cargo boat.

Michael Donnelly, a native of Polrroughane, Kiltimagh, a member of the R.I.C. stationed somewhere in the Co. Westmeath,

(I forget where) resigned after some trouble with his sergeant over filling sandbags to defend the barracks. He had been in contact with the local Volunteers previously and the resignation was quickly accepted. He joined the Volunteers in Kiltimagh and acted as a drill instructor until after the Truce, when he went to U.S.A. Incidentally, the local townspeople gave him a great send-off at the railway station where he was an R.I.C. man.

Corcoran and Ruane, having been released from gaol, East Mayo Brigade was formed early in 1920, Sean Corcoran being appointed brigade commandant.

About Easter 1920, raids took place on the Customs and Excise office in Kiltimagh, all books and documents being destroyed. In May, Bohola R.I.C. barracks was evacuated and, during the burning of the building, the brigade commandant, Corcoran, and myself were very severely injured when an explosion took place owing to some of the party using petrol. Having been badly burned, I have a dim recollection of someone saying "We should shoot them to take them out of pain as they can't live". However, we were taken in a cart into the West Mayo Brigade area (Kilroy's) by some of the column under Tom Kitterick and brought to the house of Brigade Commandant Corcoran's brother-in-law (named Kelly). We were attended by Dr. Moran (now deceased) for about a fortnight and, as gangrene was setting in, Dr. Moran decided to move us to a private ward in Castlebar hospital where we were registered under our mothers' maiden names. Hospital records showed us as having been injured in a petrol and battery explosion in a garage. Through the assistance of a friendly R.I.C. man (of whom there were a few) we had to be taken from the hospital. There was a raid on the hospital by military and Tans a few hours after we left. We were taken to an outlying district in Kiltimagh parish where we remained until we recovered.

While we were in hospital some members of the battalion captured two R.I.C. men, who, as it turned out, were not armed, but their bicycles and some documents were taken; also two soldiers were relieved of their bicycles, which were very useful. Jack Brennan and P. Hyland were responsible.

A successful attack (by a ruse) took place on Ballyvarry R.I.C. barracks with the assistance of an R.I.C. man named Breen. Six rifles and 3 revolvers with a quantity of ammunition was captured and, while the raid was on during the last Mass, a lorry of military came into the village and stopped at the Cross a few yards from the barracks. One officer dismounted, walked up the street for a short distance, looked around, went back to his lorry and drove off without calling at the barracks from which he was being watched by the Volunteers.

Later on, in 1920, a goods train was raided and a large quantity of petrol captured which was distributed around the brigade.

Early in 1921, two Tans were captured and their revolvers taken without too much trouble by Volunteers Heavey and Rogers. While Kilroy's column (West Mayo) was being severely pressed we carried out many actions to prevent the military from travelling between Swinford and Castlebar and, in selecting an ambush position on the Ballyhaunis road at Crossard, we were surprised and Commandant Corcoran was killed.

Paddy Mullen was then appointed to take charge of the brigade and did so until the Truce on 11th July 1921.

Signed: Martin Moore

Date: 18/3/57.

Witness:

[Signature]
Capt

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