

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

BURO STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21

No. **W.S.** 1,607

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21

STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

DOCUMENT NO. **W.S.** 1607.

Witness

Charles O'Donoghue,
Western Villas,
Clonakilty,
Co. Cork.

Identity.

Q/M, Bandon Battn., Cork ^{III}~~IV~~ Bgde.,
I. R. A.

Subject.

Activities of Farnivane Coy., I. Vols.,
Bandon Battn., Cork IV Bgde.,
1919 - 1921.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil.

File No **S.** 2933.

Form B S M. 2

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BURO STAIRS MILITA 1913-21

STATEMENT BY CHARLES O'DONOGHUE,

Western Villas, Clonakilty, Co. Cork.

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I had no family connections with any movement prior to 1918. While still an Altar Boy, the late Bishop Kelly of Ross advised me that I was then nearly big enough to join up the army (British, of course). The schoolmaster always made a point of telling us that Ireland could be only set free by "Constitutional means".

I had my own ideas after 1916, and helped to make up shotgun cartridges with buckshot during the conscription scare of 1918.

I joined Farnivane Company, 1st Battalion (Bandon), Cork 111 Brigade, in August 1919. Frank Hurley was Company Captain, Con O'Brien, 1st Lieut., John Shea, 2nd Lieut. Strength was about 40 men. This area, which was small, was made up of a part of Newcestown parish and part of Bandon parish. Arms were - one American .300 rifle, one old .22 rifle and about 12 shotguns, with a very limited supply of ammunition for all of them.

Company parades were held weekly, usually in the late evening or night and occasionally on Sunday afternoon. Training varied according to time and place. We got a certain amount of close and extended order drill, which was usually followed by a discussion and exchange of information on enemy activity and the possibility of obtaining arms, explosives, etc. This was the weekly routine for the period August-December, 1919.

Company Volunteers under Capt. Frank Hurley raided a number of houses for arms in December, 1919, and a quantity of shotgun cartridges were collected.

Tim Fitzgerald and myself raided for and secured a shotgun in Kilmeen district in January, 1920. We were armed with one revolver.

An attack was made on Farnivane Barracks in February, 1920. Liam Deasy, Brigade Adjutant, was in charge. I was in a section under Frank Hurley and armed with a shotgun in defence of a road block of about 300 yards from the barracks on the road leading northwards from the barracks to Mosgrove. ^{Amongst} Other Volunteers in this section were T. Fitzgerald and J. Long. Grenades, rifles, and shotguns were used in the attack, which was called off after an hour's exchange of fire.

Tim Fitzgerald and myself assisted Volunteers in Kilmeen Company area in rounding up and warning hostile individuals giving trouble there to the company officers.

In March, 1920, I was sworn in to the I.R.B., Farnivane Circle, by Liam Deasy. Frank Hurley was Centre, and other members were T. Fitzgerald, Con O'Brien and about two others.

About April, 1920, a party of Volunteers from Farnivane Company lay in ambush on the road near Mallowgaton Bridge for a police patrol. The patrol did not turn up.

In May, 1920, a policeman was fired at whilst travelling from Farnivane Barracks to Farnivane Cross. He escaped with slight wounds.

I was arrested on 11th May, 1920, by a British cycling patrol. A group of us were chatting on the roadside when we were held up by the patrol and searched. As the patrol was moving off, ^{Liam} Tim Fitzgerald ^{- later killed at Brunny -} cycled into it. They called on him to halt, but he did not do so. He knocked down two soldiers who tried to stop him, then ran

right through the patrol, cleared a fence and escaped through the fields. I then moved off and about fifty yards away was attacked from behind by three soldiers, who knocked me down and while on the ground ~~and while on the ground~~ was kicked and beaten with rifle butts. I was then pulled to my feet and had my watch taken. I had then my hands tied and held by two soldiers, I was marched to Bandon barracks. A Lieut. Hotblack, afterwards killed at Crossbarry, was in charge of the patrol. I was tried by courtmartial at the Military Barracks, Cork. I refused to recognise the court and was sentenced to three months' imprisonment for having seditious literature. I was detained in Cork Jail as a political prisoner until the night of August 11th or 12th (night that Terry MacSweeney was arrested in the City Hall). On that night, we were taken to Queenstown, as it was then called, put aboard a destroyer and taken to Pembroke Harbour, and from there on to Wormwood Scrubbs. In this party transferred (about 25) were Thomas L. Mullins, his father, ^{and} Tadhg Manley of East Cork. In Wormwood Scrubbs we were treated as ordinary convicts and refused to wear prison clothes for about eight hours. We gave in when we were satisfied that Tom Hales and others already in England were wearing them. Transferred to Pentonville Prison and released from there at the end of August, 1920.

A party of Volunteers from 1st Battalion (Bandon) lay in ambush for a cycling patrol at Brinny Bridge on the last Sunday in August, 1920. The position was given away by a spy, and British troops came across country from Bandon and surprised Volunteers from the rear. Lieut. Tim Fitzgerald was killed. He was given a Volunteer funeral to Kilbrogan Cemetery, where Charlie Hurley, Brigade O/C, gave an oration. Tim Fitzgerald was a fine Volunteer officer, young (18 years), athletic, fearless. His death was all the more tragic as he was an only son.

Immediately on my return from prison I rejoined Farnivane Company, and was shortly afterwards appointed Asst. Battalion Adjutant, Bandon Battalion. The officers of the battalion at this time were: -

	Battn.	O/C	-	Seán Hales
	"	V."	-	John Lordan
	"	Adj.	-	Jim Mahoney
Asst.	"	"	-	Chas. O'Donoghue (witness)
	"	Q/M	-	Tadhg Sullivan.

The companies of the battalion were: -

	<u>South Side</u>	<u>Centre</u>	<u>North Side</u>
A.	Ballinadee	F. Bandon	H. Crosspound
B. & 1	Kilbrittain	G. Innishannon	I. Kilpatrick
B. 2	Ballinspittal		K. Farnivane
C.	Timoleague		L. Newcestown
D.	Barryroe		M. Quarries Cross.
E.	Clogagh.		

My duties as Assistant Adjutant were: - (a) establish a communication centre north of Baxter's Bridge; (b) assist Battalion Adjutant in organisation of northern half of battalion; (c) Maintain night and day communication through centre mentioned at (a) to and from Battalion H.Q.

On the formation of the Brigade Column in September, 1920, all companies were instructed to put down elm timber dumps of a size 6 x 3 x 3 to provide apparently for the possibility of the column disbanding in any area. The first column training camp was at Clounbuig, Kilbrittain. It is only fair to this company to mention that they had by their own efforts captured over thirty service rifles. It was the best company in the 1st Battalion and indeed probably in Ireland. The second attack by this unit on Howes Strand Coastguard Station on July 22nd 1920 was a commando raid at its best. Whilst the door was being forced in with a heavy sledge, Volunteers were firing in through loopholes and in a matter of minutes had the garrison overpowered.

When it was decided to march the column out of the Clounbuing Camp to Newcestown area early in October, 1920, the Battalion Adjutant, Jim Mahoney, travelled in advance to arrange for local scouts to cover the column route. I was detailed to arrange for scouts for Baxter's Bridge and its approaches. Liam Deasy was in charge of the column on the night that it marched. The column had its own scouts in front of the advance guard; ^{the} ~~the~~ main body marched in sections in extended order. The procedure adopted that night for the column's safety became standard for the column movement during the entire period up to the Truce. In my opinion, surprise either in movement or in billets was impossible.

A collection was made throughout the battalion area about this time - October/November, 1920 - by way of a levy on farmers and others to raise money for the purchase of arms. Farmers who refused to subscribe had cattle seized from them and sold.

On the Monday following Kilmichael fight (28th November, 1920) a party of about 40 men drawn from the northern half of the Bandon Battalion lay in ambush at Quinn's farmhouse, Brinny, to intercept British lorries travelling from Bandon to Cork. Liam Deasy was in charge and a mine was laid on the roadway. I was in Tom Kelleher's section and armed with a shotgun. No enemy troops passed and we withdrew from the position about 12 noon. On the way to billets we heard of the Kilmichael fight.

In January, 1921, a Brigade Column under Tom Barry lay in ambush near Daly's farmhouse at Mawbeg on the Bandon-Ballineen main road. A mine was laid on the roadway but no enemy troops passed. I was on staff work between column H.Q. and the road-blocks which were set up from Hurley's forge to

Mallowgaten. When the column withdrew from the Mawbeg position they billeted at Tullyglas and Mallowgaten.

Michael Dwyer, Castletownkinneigh, was under arrest that night (22nd or 23rd January, 1921) with the column. He was courtmartialled and sentenced to death. Capt. Con O'Brien and myself were detailed to bring him to a priest for Confession. This we did, and he was executed on the following morning at Farnalough Cross.

The morning following Mawbeg ambush attempt the column laid an ambush at Leary's farm, two hundred yards south of Mallowgaten Bridge on the Bandon-Newcestown road. I was detailed to guard the occupants of a house overlooking the position. I was armed with a revolver. The column withdrew from the position about 4.30 p.m., and about twenty minutes later two tenders of Black and Tans passed from the north towards Bandon. An unusual incident occurred whilst the column were in this position. A reliable farmer was told to call to the Military Barracks in Bandon, three miles away, and to tell the officer in charge that he saw a man dead on the road with a label marked "spy" on him. This he did, and the officer's reply was, "Yes, I know, but what about the 300 men that are in ambush out there?".

When the column withdrew to billets from the Laragh position, one section was mistaken by a Protestant farmer as Auxiliaries. After giving information about the I.R.A. to his supposed friends, he was courtmartialled and shot. Another Protestant farmer, who attacked a Volunteer sent to guard his house, was ordered out of the country. A third Protestant, who was mentioned by the spy, was given the benefit of the doubt and got away with a warning.

I think it was in February, 1921, that the Battalion O/C (Seán Hales) gave orders for the cutting of roads. Each Company was to cut all roads along a line indicated by the Batt. O/C according to a pre-arranged plan on one particular night. The line on the northern half of the Bandon Battalion ran from Mallowgaten Bridge eastwards to Castlelack, eastwards and westwards to Kilineer, thereby cutting all roads running north to south. This section almost confined enemy lorries to the main roads. These were later cut when it suited the I.R.A.

Sometime in the spring of 1921, Capt. Frank Hurley and myself held up a postman conveying mails from Farnivane to Bandon; on the same day mails were seized throughout the entire battalion area. Nothing of importance was found in the mails we censored at Farnivane.

After Crossbarry, about, I think, the end of April, 1921, the British garrison in Bandon, led by Major Percival, organised a raiding column of considerable strength. This column moved into the country on foot and camped in a district for two or three days at a time. From this camp they raided across country and used patrols in various directions and often lying in ambush across a line of country by night. The location of this column was always known to the battalion and company staffs of the area, and all active Volunteers just kept out of its reach until it moved on to another district. Only once did I see an aircraft used in conjunction with it.

Capt. Frank Hurley, Farnivane Company, was killed on the night of 9th May, 1921. With two other Volunteers, O'Leary and Donovan, he ran into a British column patrol in Scott's farmyard at Carhoo. He was taken by the patrol through the park towards Bandon, and while moving through same he made an attempt to escape and was shot while doing so.

A general order to shoot up all enemy personnel to be seen in the area on May 14th 1921 as a reprisal for the execution of I.R.A. prisoners of war led to a raid on Bandon on this date. It was carried out in a motor car under Tom Barry. The occupants of the motor car were armed with rifles, revolvers and a Lewis gun. The original plan was to drive past the Military Barracks and through the town, firing on any troops they met on the way. For some reason this plan had to be changed, and after firing at some armed British troops on the Dunmanway road side of the town they returned by the main Bandon-Carhoo main road to Mallowgaten. I was in charge of scouting and billeting at Corcoran's farmhouse, Tinker's Cross, where they billeted the night before the raid.

After Dan Holland's (Battn. Q/M) arrest I was appointed Q/M and reported for duty at Battn. H.Q. on June 21st 1921.

Information was received at Battalion H.Q. at the end of June that the British intended to occupy some houses in the vicinity of Baxter's Bridge. As occupation of these houses would be a serious matter for battalion communications, it was decided to burn them. John Lordan, Battalion Vice O/C, myself and a party of Volunteers burned the houses at the end of June.

Up to the time of the Truce, the 1st Battalion (Bandon) had its headquarters in one house only, namely Murphy's, Skeaf. It was remarkable that British intelligence never located it, although only about six miles from Bandon.

A special check after the Truce revealed that only 37 rounds of .303 rifle ammunition were left on that date. The strength of the 1st Battalion at that time was 1,023 officers and men. Morale, training and organisation were never better. Were it not for the ammunition position, the fight, in my opinion,

could go on indefinitely. No arms were being lost to the enemy and arrests were being offset by young Volunteers coming in. The battalion organisation had stood up to everything the British had put up. The fight at Crossbarry seemed to have been the turning point.

An indication of the activity of the battalion pre-Truce may be gained from the fact that out of 37 officers and men killed in Cork 111 Brigade, 24 of these were in the 1st Battalion. List of Volunteers killed, showing rank and other particulars, is as follows:

<u>Name & Address</u>	<u>Unit</u>	<u>Date killed</u>	<u>Where killed</u>
Vol. John Murphy, Cloghane, Bandon.	Ballinadee Coy.	22/6/1921	Cloghane
Vol. Daniel O'Reilly, Granasig, Kilbrittain.	Kilbrittain Coy.	24/1/1921	Bandon.
1st Lt. Pat. Crowley, Kilbrittain.	1st Battn.	4/2/1921	Maryborough.
Vol. Cors. McCarthy, Kilaneetig, Kilbrittain.	Kilbrittain Coy.	16/2/1921	Crois na Leanbh
Vol. John McGrath, Rathclarin, Kilbrittain.	Kilbrittain Coy.	"	"
Vol. Tim. Connolly, Farnagark, Kilbrittain.	" "	"	"
Vol. Jer. O'Neill, Knockpogue, Kilbrittain.	" "	"	"
Bgde. O/C Char. Hurley, Baurleigh, Kilbrittain.	3rd Cork Bgde.	19/3/1921	Ballinphelig
Vol. Pat. Donovan, Culreigh, Timoleague.	Timoleague Coy.	17/1/1921	Timoleague.
Vol. Den. Hegarty, Clashfluck, Timoleague.	" "	21/1/1921	Courtmacsherry.
1st Lt. Cors. Murphy, Clashfluck, Timoleague.	" "	11/5/1921	Cloundreen.

<u>Name & Address</u>	<u>Unit</u>	<u>Date killed</u>	<u>Where killed</u>
1st Lt. Jn. Connolly, Shannon St., Bandon.	Bandon Coy.	1/10/1920	Bandon
Capt. John Galvin, Main St., Bandon.	" "	3/12/1920	"
1st Lt. Jas. O'Donoghue, Shannon St., Bandon.	" "	"	"
Sec. Comdr. Jos. Begley, Castle Road, Bandon.	" "	"	"
Vol. Peter Monanan, Bandon.	" "	19/3/1920	Crossbarry
1st Lt. Jn. Whelan, late of Liverpool.	Crosspound Coy.	15/2/1921	Upton.
1st Lt. Pat. Sullivan, Raheen.	" "	"	"
Sec. Comdr. Batt. Foley, Ballymurphy.	" "	"	"
Lt. Pat. Deasy, Kilmacsimon Quay.	1st Battalion.	28/11/1920	Kilmichael.
Lt. Tim. Fitzgerald, Killowen, Bandon.	Farnivane Coy.	28/8/1920	Brinny.
Capt. Frank Hurley, Laragh, Bandon.	" "	9/5/1921	Bandon.
Vol. Geoff. Canty, Scrahan, Newcestown.	Newcestown Coy.	"	Murragh.
Vol. Matt. Donovan, Quarries Cross.	Quarries Cross. Coy.	10/6/1921	Quarries Cross.

List of officers & men killed 1st Batt. Post-Truce

Batt. O/C Ml. O'Neill, Maryboro, Timoleague.	1st Battalion.	29/4/1922	Ballygroman.
Vol. Ml. Hayes, Shannon St., Bandon.	Bandon Company.	4/10/1922	Upton.
Vol. Dan. Donovan, Clogagh, Timoleague.	Clogagh.	"	Timoleague.

<u>Name & Address</u>	<u>Unit</u>	<u>Date Killed</u>	<u>Where killed</u>
Vol. Patk. Duggan, Kilbrogan, Bandon.	Bandon Coy.	17/11/1922	Glengarriff.
Vol. Jn. O'Connor, Innishannon.	Innishannon	7/3/1922 ³	Ballyseedy.

The Battalion Staff of Bandon Battalion, Cork 111 Brigade, in the period August, 1919 to July 11th 1921 were: -

1919

O/C - Seán Hales
V.O/C - John Lordan
Adjt. - Jim Mahoney
Q/M - Tadhg Sullivan

Sept., 1920
O/C - Seán Hales
V.O/C - John Lordan
Adjt. - Jim Mahoney
Asst. Adjt. - Charles O'Donoghue
(witness)
Q/M - Tadhg Sullivan
(Brigade Q/M Mar. 1921)

March 1921

O/C - Seán Hales
V." - John Lordan
Adjt. - Jim Mahoney
Q/M - Dan Holland (arrested
June, 1921)

June, 1921

O/C - Seán Hales
V.O/C - John Lordan
Adjt. - Jim Mahoney
Q/M - Charles O'Donoghue (witness)

Signed: Charles O'Donoghue

Date: 29th April 1954.

Witness:

P. J. Donnell
(Investigator).

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