

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
BURO STAGE MILITARY 1913-21
No. **W.S. 1608**

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21

STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

DOCUMENT NO. **W.S.** 1608. . . .

Witness

Daniel Donovan,
Burrane,
Timoleague,
Co. Cork.

Identity.

O/C Clogagh Coy., Bandon Battn., Cork 111 Bgde.
Member of Brigade Column, Cork 111 Bgde., I.R.A.

Subject.

Activities of Bandon Battn., Cork 111 Bgde., I.R.A.,
& Brigade Flying Column 1917-21.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil.

File No .. **S. 2929.** .. .

Form B.S.M. 2

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
BURO STAIRÉ MILITÁ 1913-21
No. W.S. 1,608

STATEMENT BY DANIEL DONOVAN,

Burrane, Timoleague, Co. Cork.

I was born at Burrane, Timoleague, in September 1890. My parents were farmers. I was educated at Clogagh National School. After leaving school I went to work on my parents' farm.

I joined the Clogagh Company of the Irish Volunteers when they were organised in the early part of 1917. Clogagh Company was at this time 'E' Company, Bandon Battalion, Cork Brigade. The O/C of the battalion was Tom Hales. I cannot recollect the names of the other officers. The strength of Clogagh Company was about 40. The officers of the unit, which was organised mainly by Eugene and Michael Walsh, were: -

O/C	-	Eugene Walsh
1st Lt.	-	Tim Sexton
2nd Lt.	-	Jerome Harte.

The only type of training carried on was close order foot drill. Parades were usually held in the fields in the area. All training was carried out under our own officers.

During 1917 all members of the Volunteers were busy organising Sinn Féin - the political wing of the Republican movement. This organisation was composed mainly of Volunteers and the members of their families, and in many cases the officer posts in it were held by Volunteers. At this time I was Chairman, and Tim Sexton (1st Lieut. of the local company) was Secretary of Clogagh Sinn Féin Club.

When the British threatened to enforce conscription in the spring of 1918, there was a substantial increase in

the membership of the Clogagh Company. The strength of the unit now reached about 60. There was no change in the officers. At this time, all arms - mainly shotguns - which were not already held by members of the Volunteers were collected in raids in which the majority of the members took part. The total armament held by the company now was about 15 shotguns, with a small supply of shotgun cartridges. In addition to collecting arms, making buckshot and refilling cartridges, the members of the unit were engaged in organising the general public to resist conscription and in collecting subscriptions for the anti-conscription fund. When the conscription scare had passed, towards mid-summer, the majority of the new recruits who had joined up in the early part of the year dropped out.

Normal training continued throughout 1918, and occasionally during the summer and early autumn three or four neighbouring companies took part in combined operations on Sunday evenings. The object of these manoeuvres was to train the men to move across country utilising available cover.

The next event of importance was the general election which was held in December, 1918. There was very little activity in our area in connection with the event, as the Sinn Féin candidate was returned unopposed.

Early in 1919, Cork Brigade, which covered the whole county and had been organised mainly by Terry MacSwiney, Tomás MacCurtain and Liam Deasy into about twenty battalions, was divided into three brigades. Our battalion (Bandon) now became a unit of the new Cork 111 Brigade, which embraced the West Cork area. There were five other battalions in this brigade - Clonakilty, Dunmanway, Skibbereen, Bantry, and Castletownbere. The first O/C of the new brigade was Tom Hales (O/C Bandon

Battalion). I cannot recollect the names of the other officers.

Normal training continued throughout 1919. In August a training camp, which was in charge of Dick McKee (O/C Dublin Brigade), was set up in Glandore. All battalions in the brigade were, I think, represented at this camp; but, as far as I can recollect, Clogagh Company did not have a representative there. Following this camp, training was intensified throughout the area. The representatives of the various battalions visited the companies in their battalions and gave a boost to training. We were all beginning to realise that there was a fight in prospect and the intensive training continued until the end of the year.

The first major activity undertaken in the area took place on the night of February 25th 1920, when Timoleague R.I.C. barracks was attacked. This was a battalion job and Seán Hales, who had replaced his brother Tom as Battalion O/C (Bandon), was in charge. Representatives from the following companies, viz. Ballinadee, Clogagh, Timoleague, Kilbrittain and Barryroe, took part in this operation. I was in charge of a party of eight men who were engaged on blocking the main Timoleague-Bandon road at Knockbrown, about 3 miles from Timoleague. I was armed with a shotgun. I cannot recollect the names of my party. We blocked the road with a barricade of farm carts, gates and some branches of trees. This road was also trenched by another party about $\frac{1}{2}$ mile nearer to Timoleague. In addition, there was a rifle party of 5 or 6 under Eugene and Mick Walsh in position behind a fence about 100 yards from the road at the Knockbrown barricade. The attack was opened about midnight and continued until

5 a.m. A mine was laid against the door of the barracks, but it failed to explode. Fire was then opened on the building by the I.R.A. covering parties, who were in position in houses across the street from the barrack and behind fences at the rear. When the mine failed to explode, a load of hay was pushed up to the door and set on fire in the hope that this would explode the mine, but it was no use. Intermittent firing, which we could hear quite clearly in our position at Knockbrown, continued throughout the night. Approaching daybreak I went towards Timoleague to ascertain how the attack was progressing. I met Seán Hales, who was in charge of the operation, within about 200 yards of the village, and he informed me that the attack was being called off. I then returned to the party at Knockbrown and all sections withdrew to their home areas. The following companies of Bandon Battalion were represented in this operation - Ballinadee, Clogagh, Timoleague, Kilbrittain, and Barryroe.

When the evacuated R.I.C. barracks at Courtmacsherry was destroyed in accordance with a general order for the destruction of such posts from G.H.Q. at Easter, 1920, I was engaged in the demolition of the building with crowbars. Other members of Clogagh Company/^{who}were similarly engaged were: Tim Sexton, John O'Donovan (brother), Mick Walsh, "Neilus" and Paddy Canniffe, Paddy O'Neill. Several other members of the unit were engaged on scouting and outpost duty. Representatives from Barryroe and Timoleague units also took part in this operation.

Republican courts were set up in June, 1920, on the instructions of the Government of the Irish Republic - Dáil Éireann. A parish court was established in Clogagh - the members being Tim Sexton, Ned Dalton and myself (Dan O'Donovan

Our court dealt with minor cases, such as breaches of the licensing laws, petty larceny and such like. The more serious cases were considered by the District Court, which dealt mainly with questions of title to land, claims for damages. I cannot recollect the names of the members of the District Court for the area. In the early stages the work of enforcing the orders of the courts fell on the shoulders of the I.R.A., who were also responsible for the protection of the courts. This work was at a later stage taken over by the Republican Police force on its formation.

When the Local Government elections took place in June, 1920, Tim Sexton (1st Lieut., Clogagh Company) was elected to membership of Bandon Rural District Council for our area. It was a regular policy throughout the country at the time to elect members of the I.R.A. to such bodies.

Early in July, 1920, Eugene Walsh (O/C Clogagh Company) retired from the I.R.A. He was replaced as O/C by Tim Sexton. The officers of Clogagh unit now were: -

O/C - Tim Sexton
 1st Lt. - Ned Dalton
 2nd Lt. - Dan O'Donovan (witness).

About this time the following members of our company (Clogagh) - Dan O'Donovan (witness), John O'Donovan (brother), Tim Sexton(O/C), John Murphy, in conjunction with five or six men from Kilbriittain unit and seven or eight from Timoleague lay in ambush for a military cycle patrol at Killavarig on the Timoleague-Ballinascarty road about 2 miles from Timoleague. The men from Kilbriittain were armed with rifles, while all the others were armed with shotguns. We took up positions behind the roadside fence at both sides of the road about 12 noon on a Sunday. We remained in position until about 3.30 p.m., but the patrol,

which normally travelled within this period, did not put in an appearance. Seán Hales (O/C Bandon Battalion) was in charge, and we were extended over a distance of about 120 yards.

Towards the end of July or early August, 1920, a Feis was organised in Ballinadee. It was anticipated that, as was customary at this period, the gathering would be visited by an enemy patrol, as all Irish Ireland activities of this nature were banned by the British authorities and the military were usually used to reinforce the R.I.C. to enforce the ban. The Battalion O/C (Seán Hales) arranged for the attendance of a strong force of I.R.A., representative of all companies in Bandon Battalion, at the Feis. It was proposed to jump the patrol as it moved through the crowded village street and seize their arms. I was a member of the main body which mixed with the crowd and whose duty it was to carry out the seizure of the arms. In addition to this main party, an armed covering party were in position behind the wall of the graveyard at the end of the village street (Ballinadee). The enemy patrol did not put in an appearance, so the men of all units returned to their home areas. Amongst the men from Clogagh unit who took part in this operation were: - Eugene Walsh, Mike Walsh, Jack Flynn, Thos. Flynn, Paddy and "Neilus" Canniffe, John O'Donovan, Dan O'Donovan (witness), Tom Sexton, John Murphy, Bob Walsh and Ned Dalton.

When the first training camp was established at Clonbuig in Kilbrittain area at the end of September, 1920, it was attended by Tim Sexton (O/C), Ned Dalton (1st Lieut.), and myself (2nd Lt.) from Clogagh Company. The other companies represented at this camp were Ballinadee, Ballinspittal, Kilbrittain, Timoleague, Ballinacorney, and Innishannon. The total number at the camp, including

Brigade and Battalion Officers, was about 30. Tom Barry, who had just been appointed Brigade O/C Training, was in charge of training. All present were put through an intensive course in arms drill, close and extended order training, with lectures on various subjects of a military nature. At the conclusion of the course, each man fired 3 rounds from a service rifle. The camp was carried on for one week, beginning on Sunday and ending on the following Saturday evening. All present were now ordered to return to their own areas and to return at the end of 3 days.

With Tim Sexton (O/C) I reported back to Clonbuig on the evening of the third day. The representatives of the other companies who had taken part in the camp reported at the same time. When the whole party had assembled, we were paraded under Liam Deasy (Brigade Adjutant) and moved across the Bandon river to Newcestown where we billeted. Next night we marched to Dunmanway Battalion area, where we took up an ambush position at Fanlobbus on Friday to await a military convoy. The convoy did not turn up and we were withdrawn from our position about 6 p.m. We then moved into billets in the area.

Next evening (Saturday) we travelled in horses and traps back to the vicinity of Newcestown village, where we went into billets. Seán Hales, who was now in charge, went into Newcestown. While he was in the village, two lorries of military arrived there. He (Seán Hales) immediately sent word back to the billets to assemble the column and to move into position to attack the convoy. The column was assembled in small units with three or four men in each, and moved back towards Newcestown village. As we approached the village the lights of the oncoming lorries were observed, and the men with me - about five - took up positions on high

ground behind the roadside fence south of the road. This fence provided little cover, but we overlooked the road from our position. While the party with me were moving into their positions, the other sections were occupying positions on the opposite side of the road. It was now dark. Within a matter of minutes the leading lorry reached our position.. We allowed it to pass through and then opened fire on it. The second lorry now halted and did not reach our position. The men on the opposite side of the road opened fire on this lorry. Intermittent firing continued for about half an hour and my section then withdrew towards Newcestown, where we made contact with the other members of the column. We had no casualties. British casualties were two officers killed and a number of men wounded.

The column now moved into billets in Newcestown area, remaining there until Monday morning when we moved to Crosspound. We moved across the Bandon river to Ballinadee that night. We were now disbanded and instructed to return to our home areas.

During the first days of December, 1920, I was sent by the Battalion O/C (Seán Hales) to the Brigade Q/M (Dick Barrett) to collect explosives required for the demolition of Timoleague Castle which, it was rumoured, was about to be occupied by enemy forces. I collected the explosives in Crosspound area and took them by a roundabout route to Clogagh, taking them later in the same week to Timoleague area where preparations for the operation were being made. On the same occasion the evacuated R.I.C. post at Timoleague, and the house of Colonel Travers, which was also due for occupation by the enemy, were due to be destroyed. The combined operation was carried out by representatives from Clogagh, Barryroe, Timoleague and Kilbrittain Companies. All buildings were completely destroyed.

On the night of January 2nd 1921 I took part in an attack on Kilbrittain R.I.C. post. I was accompanied by Tim Sexton, Tom Flynn, Dan Flynn and Con Lehane of Clogagh unit. Representatives from Kilbrittain, Ballinadee, Timoleague, Barryroe, and Ballinspittal Companies also took part. The combined party, which, as far as I can recollect, was in charge of Seán Hales, assembled in the vicinity of Kilbrittain about 11 p.m. A mine which was mounted on a trestle was taken into the village and placed against the wall of the barracks, which was an isolated building. I was one of the party who placed the mine in position beside the door of the barrack. Other sections, armed with rifles, revolvers and shotguns, were in position around the building under cover of fences at a distance of about 60 yards. The mine failed to explode. Fire was then opened on the building by the rifle and shotgunmen, and continued intermittently for about an hour. As there was no prospect of capturing the post, all sections were ordered to withdraw and return to their home areas.

The Kilbrittain post was again attacked towards mid January, 1921. Liam Deasy (Brigade Adjutant) was in charge of the operation on this occasion. The attacking party was drawn from the units which took part in the attack on January 2nd. The plan of attack was much the same as on the previous occasion. The covering parties moved into position round the building, and the mine, which consisted of an attaché case filled with gelignite suitably detonated and fused, was taken into the barrack grounds, and when the fuse had been lighted it was thrown on to the barbed wire entanglements in front of the building. This mine again failed to explode. On this occasion a party of seven men armed with revolvers were to rush the building should the mine breach the wall. They were to be followed by a party of about a dozen with rifles and fixed bayonets. I was a member of the latter party.

We were in position about 30 yards from the barrack awaiting the result of the explosion. When there was no explosion the covering parties fired a few shots, and after a few minutes all sections were instructed to return to their home areas.

Some days following the attack on Kilbrittain I received instructions to stand by to block the roads in Clogagh area should an attack which the Brigade Column under Tom Barry were planning for Mawbeg, on the Bandon-Ballineen road, develop. The column took up positions, but although they remained in them from daylight to dusk there was no appearance by the enemy.

The Brigade Column, under Tom Barry (Column O/C) was billeted in my company area (Clogagh) on January 24th 1921, before it moved into Bandon that night to attack Bandon Military barracks. While the column was in the area I was responsible for posting guards, outposts, and the dumping of surplus stores (arms and ammunition). In this attack Dan O'Reilly - a member of the column and Kilbrittain Company - was killed. After this attack the column moved into Clonakilty Battalion area, where they escaped encirclement at Burgatia House in the early days of February. I should have mentioned that Clogagh Company was represented on the regular column at this time by my brother, John ~~V~~ Donovan, and Tim Sexton.

The Company O/C (Tim Sexton) and 1st Lieut. (Ned Dalton) were arrested during February, 1921, and I was now appointed O/C. The officers of the Clogagh Company now were: -

O/C - Dan ~~V~~ Donovan (witness)
 1st Lt. - Michael Donovan
 2nd Lt. - Patk. Dempsey.

I joined the Brigade Column at Castletownkenneigh on the second Sunday in March, 1921. Other representatives from my company (Clogagh) who joined at the same time were: Michael Donóvan, Patk. Dempsey, and Dan Donovan. Another member of the unit - Cornelius Daly - had reported to the column about two days before. The strength of the column at this time was, I think, about 80. The column now moved round the area for a few days, and on the night of March 16th 1921 was in the vicinity of Shippool in Innishannon Company area. We were now informed that we were to take up a position at Shippool on the Innishannon-Kinsale road about $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles from Innishannon. On the morning of March 17th we moved into position behind a stone wall adjoining the road. All were armed with rifles. We were extended over a distance of about 300 yards. We took up our positions before daybreak, by which time three mines had been laid on the road along our frontage by the members of the local company. Although we remained in position until darkness set in, the expected enemy convoy from Kinsale did not travel, so we were all withdrawn to billets in the area where we remained next day.

During the night of March 18th the column moved across the main Cork - Bandon road to Ballyhandle in Crossbarry area. I was billeted with a number of others in Beasley's farmhouse. Christy O'Connell was in charge of my section. Sentries were posted and scouts were sent out. It was now well after midnight. All sections of the column were alerted about 2.30 a.m. We were paraded before the O/C (Tom Barry), who informed us that large enemy forces were raiding in the area and that we were taking up ambush positions on the old Cork-Bandon road at Crossbarry. The column was divided into seven sections under the following section leaders Chris. O'Connell, Seán Hales, John Lordan, Mick Crowley,

Pete Kearney, Denis Lordan, and Tom Kelleher. All sections were allocated to positions north of the Cork-Bandon road where the road ran east to west. for a distance of approximately seven hundred yards. The sections under Seán Hales, John Lordan, Pete Kearney, Mick Crowley took up positions behind the roadside fence and in the farmyards of the Harold and Beasley families. The sections under Christy O'Connell and Denis Lordan were allocated to positions on the western and eastern flanks respectively. The strength of each section was about a dozen. All were armed with rifles. Two mines were laid in the road - one at each end of the main position occupied by the four sections extended along the roadside fence and the two farmyards. I should have mentioned that the seventh section, under Tommie Kelleher, took up a position on high ground to the rear of the main position to cover any chance of surprise from that direction.

When Christy O'Connell's section, to which I was attached, reported to column H.Q. I was sent with another man, whose name I cannot recollect, to take up a position on high ground about 200 yards west of Beasley's farmyard, where we were to act as outposts until the sections had taken up their positions. We then returned to Christy O'Connell's section which was holding a position on high ground about 100 yards west and a little to the rear of the section occupying the western end of the main position. We were under cover of a low fence and were facing west.

All sections were in position about 5.30 a.m. and we settled down to wait for some evidence of activity by the enemy forces which were reported to be closing in on the area. It must have been close on 8 a.m. when we saw a long line of lorries moving along the road from the west. When the three leading lorries in this convoy had passed into the main ambush position, they were fired on by the men in the

main position. The other lorries in the convoy halted immediately. I should have mentioned that, from our position on the western flank, we could not see what was happening in the main position. Our section (Christy O'Connell's) now opened fire on three or four lorries which we could see on the road, but in order to do so we had to leave the cover of the fence and move into the open field. The enemy returned our fire for about ten minutes and then withdrew from our view. At this stage all firing ceased. The main body now burned the three lorries which were within the main position, as all the occupants who had not been killed or wounded had now retired to the south. Amongst the booty captured was a Lewis gun with a good supply of ammunition, and about a dozen rifles. Our section still remained in position on the western flank.

The collection of the spoils and the destruction of the enemy transport had only been completed when there was an outburst of fire on the eastern flank where Denis Lordan's section were stationed. When the engagement on this flank - with an enemy party south of the road - had gone on for some minutes the enemy withdrew.

At this stage an enemy party to the number of about twenty were observed in the fields about 200 yards away on our front. On the instructions of the Section Commander (Christy O'Connell) we opened fire on this party, which withdrew hurriedly without replying to our fire.

The next enemy attack came from the north where Tom Kelleher's section were holding the covering position to the rear. Reinforcements were despatched to this section by the O/C (Tom Barry), but the enemy had been driven off before the reinforcements reached the position.

With the exception of our section and Tom Kelleher's, all others were now called in and the main body withdrew in a north westerly direction. When Tom Kelleher's men, who had been the last in action, had been withdrawn from their position we joined the main body.

I forgot to mention earlier that when the attack opened there was a burst of music on the bagpipes, played by Florrie Begley, from the rear of the main position. He continued to play until the cease fire. He was, I think, in position in Harold's farmyard where the Column O/C (Tom Barry) had set up his headquarters.

The column was now formed into column of sections, flankers were thrown out, and we began a march across country. Shortly after we had begun to move away from Crossbarry area a small body of enemy troops was observed in the distance. We were now halted and ordered to fire three rounds per man at this party. The enemy now scattered and the column again formed into column of route and marched away to Gurraneigh - a distance of about sixteen miles - where we billeted that night.

The enemy casualties in the engagement at Crossbarry were never known. We lost three men killed (Peter Monahan, Jerh. O'Leary, Con Daly) and two wounded (Dan Corcoran and Jim Crowley).

Next day while in Gurraneigh we heard that Charlie Hurley (Brigade O/C) had been killed on the morning of Crossbarry (March 19th 1921) in an effort to break through a party of military which surrounded the house in which he was billeted at Ballymurphy. The column remained in Gurraneigh area until the night of March 21st, when we moved to Anichill. We billeted here until the night of the 22nd, when we travelled to Mounteen. We then moved to Clogagh where the body of

Charlie Hurley lay in the local parish church. We buried Charlie about 2 a.m. on March 23rd, and the Column O/C (Tom Barry) having fired a shot over his grave we returned to billets in Mounteen. As the men with the column from Clogagh Company were now in their home area we were instructed to remain there. These men were: Daniel O'Donovan (witness), Michael Donovan, Patk. Dempsey and Dan Donovan.

In addition to these activities with the column I was engaged more or less full time - as were all available members of Clogagh Company - on the cutting of enemy lines of communication, digging trenches, demolishing bridges, raising railway lines during the spring of 1921.

Towards the end of April, 1921, a section of the Brigade Column under Seán Hales was billeted in the Clogagh area. Information was received that a party of military were to travel by train between Courtmacsherry and Ballinascarthy. It was decided to endeavour to ambush this force. Positions were taken up on the railway embankment a short distance from Timoleague Railway Station by the men of the column reinforced by men from Ballinadee, Timoleague, and Clogagh Companies. I was one of a party of six to the rear of the main attacking party. We were on high ground and were to act as a covering party in the event of a forced withdrawal by the main body. When the train arrived at the ambush position there were no military on board, so the men from the column withdrew to billets and the men from the local units returned to their home areas.

On May 10th 1921 I paid a short visit to my home. I had only left and was on my way into the adjoining company area when I ran into a section of Major Percival's column and was taken prisoner. After short periods of detention in Bandon, Kinsale, Victoria Barracks, Cork, and Cork Gaol, I was eventually removed to Spike Island Internment Camp where I was detained until July 11th

1921. I was now transferred to the Internment Camp at Bere Island, where I was held until the general release of prisoners following the signing of the Treaty on December 6th 1921.

My rank at the Truce - O/C Clogagh Company, Bandon Battalion, Cork 111 Brigade, I.R.A. The strength of the company at the Truce was about 80.

Signed: Sam Donovan

Date: 30th April 1954

Witness: P. Lonnell
(Investigator).

