

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

DURO STAIRE MILEATA 1913-21

No. **W.S. 1620**

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

DOCUMENT NO. **W.S.** 1620:.....

Witness

John Timony,  
James Connolly St.,  
Ballina,  
Co. Mayo.

Identity.

Capt., Crossmolina Coy., Irish Volunteers,  
Co. Mayo.

Subject.

Crossmolina Company, Irish Volunteers, Co. Mayo,  
1917 - 21.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil.

File No **S. 2944.**.....

Form B.S.M. 2

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No. W.S. 1,620

STATEMENT BY MR. JOHN TIMONY+

James Connolly St., Ballina.

I was born and reared in Crossmolina in the Co. Mayo. My father was a farmer and my mother's maiden name was Keating.

I remember my grandfather, who was a Fenian, telling us all about the French landing at Kilcummin in Killala Bay. He then lived at Lahardane where a number of the local Irish joined the French army. I don't think it is generally known that Humbert split his army shortly after landing, sending one force to Castlebar via Crossmolina and Lahardane and the Windy Gap, and the other body went through Ballina and Foxford to Castlebar.

Two granduncles of mine joined up with Humbert at Lahardane and a large number of local people, under Father Conroy, C.C. of Lahardane, who was later captured by the English and hanged in Castlebar.

The English suffered defeat all along the way of both forces and at Castlebar were completely routed, and it is still called the Castlebar Races.

Humbert then moved his complete army through Swinford to Collooney where he met and defeated a large English army outside the town. He afterwards moved on to Dromohair by-passing Sligo, which is hard to explain, as there was an English garrison there which did not come out. He rested at Dromohair and later moved on to Dromkeerin and Drumshanbo where he again swung his army after resting at the Furnace Hill and proceeded through Keshcarrigan on to the vicinity of Mohill and Cloone where he himself was entertained by a parson. The following morning it was discovered that the chains for hauling his cannon were stolen; they were found inside the past few years in Keeldragh Lake.

His intentions then were to meet a supporting force at Granard, Co. Longford, but on his way he was confronted with a large English army at Ballinamuck, Co. Longford, where he was defeated.

Our teacher was a Tipperary man named Ryan who had a good rebel outlook and taught us the Irish language, history and songs.

The two priests were Father O'Hara and Father Doherty, who did not say much. The parish priest was later replaced by a Father McHale who was a Chancellor of the Church; he was a rebel in his heart; he couldn't help it, coming from Lahardane.

When I left school I worked with my father on the farm until I learned how to drive a lorry, when I went to work in Browne's of Crossmolina. Martin McAndrew, a comrade of mine in the Volunteers, also worked with me on the same job.

The first time I was approached about the Volunteers was around August 1917, when Paddy Hegarty of Lahardane came to meet a few of us by arrangement. There was a company formed in Cawley's Lane, Crossmolina, about 2 o'clock in the morning when seven members joined up - <sup>PATK</sup>~~Martin~~ Loftus and his brother Pat, James O'Hara, Ned O'Boyle, Ned Murphy and myself and, later, two shop assistants whose names I cannot remember; they worked in Davis's shop. This small party formed the nucleus of the first company of the Irish Volunteers in Crossmolina.

Later on the same year, our numbers increased to about 20 men and early in 1918 we were properly organised. Martin Loftus was the first captain and I was appointed Lieutenant. I was later on company captain and then battalion adjutant.

Our first activities consisted of drilling at the parades which were held twice weekly; some of us gave lectures on military matters.

We gathered together about 66 double-barreled shotguns on different raids , some of which were given to us by the owners. I kept them in a store of Cawley's where I then worked; it was at the end of the town on the Lahardane road. After cleaning the guns on one night, on our way home we met a man whom I knew to be friendly with some members of the R.I.C. He saw us leaving the store where we had the guns concealed in bags and tied to the ceiling, and, as we suspected him of giving information and to be on the safe side, we thought it better to remove the guns in case of a raid, so Martin McAndrew and myself stole an ass and tied the guns in the bran bags along his back and set out for Enniscoe. As the load was heavy, we nearly had to carry ass and all ourselves until we were met by another Volunteer, Tom Dwyer, who helped us to store the guns in a loft at Major Pratt's place near Enniscoe, about two miles out the Lahardane road. Major Pratt was an ex-British officer and we decided his place was the safest one we could get. It is unnecessary to say he didn't know anything about them and they were safely there all the time until we wanted them.

I assisted with the arrangement and safety of sick and wounded Volunteers after the ambush at Skerdagh; the North Mayo flying column was resting near Skerdagh when they were seen by a spy who informed the R.I.C. in Ballycastle. About 4 or 5 R.I.C. left Ballycastle and walked to where the column was resting. They succeeded in surprising the column which, after an exchange of shots, had one man shot and three captured by the R.I.C. My brother Patrick was a member of the column. I was engaged as the go-between for orders and dispatches between the brigade, our own battalion and the column, and as it was not the policy to take more than one member from each household, I was kept back for the above-mentioned duties.

Some of the survivors of the column after the ambush

were quartered all over the county where I was in constant touch with them. As the result of a dispatch from the brigade we were ordered to gather the survivors at Toureen and take them to Gortinor Abbey on the shores of Lough Conn and from there across the lake to Knockmore.

Leading up to the attack on Bellacorick R.I.C. barracks, it was the first talked of in the house of Andrew McNeely, a tailor and a member of the Volunteers. After a lengthy discussion, it was decided to use the two companies of Lahardane and Crossmolina. Paddy Hegarty was in charge of the operation.

After the usual blocking of all roads and cutting of telephone wires, the barracks was approached from two sides; lights were flashed on the windows and Hegarty and Corcoran called on them to surrender. Hegarty succeeded in having a conversation with the sergeant's wife and, shortly afterwards, the sergeant ~~and his two R.I.C. men~~ surrendered to Hegarty who promised them he would hold his fire and save their furniture and valuables as well as themselves. They agreed and came out with their hands up and were placed in a vacant house, also some furniture. We then soaked the place in paraffin which was carried up in a tub by McAndrew and myself and it was set ablaze - a terrible sight to see.

On our return to Crossmolina we passed a number of second-hand clothes dealers returning from a fair in Belmullet and some of us were recognised by one of them named Corcoran who mentioned it in a publichouse a day or two later; so we decided to raid his house, which we did and took him out. He declared his innocence and, as we were satisfied there were no bad intentions, we just gave him a warning as to his future behaviour and released him. Our warning had the necessary effect.

In accordance with instructions from G.H.Q. in connection

with raids on Customs and Excise and Rates offices, we raided the local office without opposition and destroyed all records and documents.

About this time it had been decided to set up republican Courts which were successfully operated in every district. There were several minor clashes with the R.I.C. who resented our activities and it was surprising that we were not arrested. For example, a lunatic had been committed to the asylum by our Courts and I was responsible for leaving him in Castlebar and, on our return, we went into Durkan's publichouse in Lahardane where we saw three members of the R.I.C. drinking at the bar. They kept looking at us in a suspicious manner and, as we learned afterwards through our Intelligence Officer, they were there to arrest us but did not make any move even to question us.

On another occasion I investigated a family dispute between husband and wife by the name of Connor for the neglect of their children. I summoned them to attend a Court next day in the old Hall at Crossmolina. Very early the next morning she left Crossmolina and travelled to Ballina where she visited the R.I.C. barracks and evidently informed them of my action, because she travelled back with the Tans and R.I.C. in their lorries of which there were three. I was with a party on guard on the bridge when I saw the lorries stop at the R.I.C. barracks. I rushed to the Hall and informed the Court (which consisted of the late Minister for Justice, Paddy Ruttledge and Mr. O'Malley of Crossmolina) that Tans and R.I.C. were after arriving at the barracks. The Court immediately left the building and, just as the Hall was surrounded in a few minutes, we all got away with the books of the Court and not even one document was got in the raid by the R.I.C.

While still with the Volunteers, I was made responsible for the new republican police force and, as such, I took over the R.I.C. barracks in Crossmolina after the Truce.

Early in 1921 the shotguns were distributed to the different companies and, after the Truce, they were collected and taken to Keenagh Lodge where the first training camp was formed.

I finished my service as battalion adjutant with the rank of captain which rank I held until I joined the Civic Guards at the Curragh Camp in Kildare in 1923.

Signed: John Timoney

Date: 27<sup>th</sup> May 1927

Witness: [Signature]

Captn

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