

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

BURO STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21

No. W.S. 1.624

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 1624.

Witness

Patrick Loughran,
3, Cannon Row,
Navan,
Co. Meath.

Identity.

Capt., Navan Company.
Battn. O/C, 6th Battn., Meath Bgde.

Subject.

Navan Company, Irish Volunteers, Co. Meath,
1917 - '21.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil.

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STATEMENT BY PATRICK LOUGHRAN

3 Cannon Row, Navan, Co. Meath.

I was born in Shambo, Navan, in the year 1894. I attended the local school in Robinstown until I was 14 years. I then went to Navan National School until I was 16 years. In 1911 I went to Tralee, Co. Kerry, to serve my apprenticeship to the drapery trade. I worked in Tralee for two years and, in the meantime, joined the local company of Irish National Volunteers.

When I left Tralee in 1914, I went to work in Dublin until April 1916. I joined the Irish Volunteers in Dublin in 1915 at Kimmage under the late Commandant Kent, with William Cosgrave, company captain. On the Tuesday previous to the Rising the company was addressed by Comdt. Kent who instructed the Volunteers to be ready to fight for Ireland at the weekend. He also told us to remain in our homes on Good Friday. That night at 10 o'clock the first shot was fired in the rebellion. Detectives arrived to raid the building in which we were located. It was an old mill owned by Count Plunkett and was used as a drill hall and meeting place. At the time, it housed about 100 men who had come from England to take part in the rebellion. The detectives withdrew when fired on by one of the Volunteers guards as they approached the building.

I was mobilised on Good Friday at 11 a.m. and reported at the Weavers' Hall, Donore Avenue, where I met the rest of the company. We waited for about an hour and were then dismissed without further instructions. On Good Friday evening I went to Captain William Cosgrave's house in James's Street and from his home I carried a dispatch to Kimmage. There I received another dispatch which I took back to Captain Cosgrave. On Good Friday night, with other Volunteers, I was instructed

to distribute revolvers and ammunition to various houses around Islandbridge. Nothing further happened until Easter Sunday morning when a notice appeared in the Sunday papers signed by Eoin MacNeill cancelling all Volunteer mobilisations for that day. I came home to Navan that day and took no further part in the events of Easter 1916.

The Navan Company of the Irish Volunteers was formed early in 1917 and numbered 20 men at the start. The first captain was a man named Seamus Ryan, a Tipperary man employed in a local furniture factory. In the month of July, I succeeded Seamus Ryan as captain in Navan. Our early activities consisted of drilling and general training in the use of arms. In general, practically all our members were active in the formation of Sinn Féin Clubs and Gaelic League Branches over a wide area.

In early 1918, during the conscription crisis, we organised public meetings and public parades of the Volunteers. At these parades a number of new recruits joined. When the crisis abated, however, very few of our new recruits persevered. In July 1918, a by-election took place in East Cavan in which practically all our members took an active part around the town of Bailisboro, working for the success of ^{the} Sinn Féin candidate.

Around this time there was a strike of farm workers on the big estates in the county. On the instructions of the Brigade O/C., Sean Boylan, a goods train was derailed at Farganstown, Navan, by members of Navan Company in charge of Lieut. C. McMahon. This action was taken following representations by the strike leaders to the Brigade Staff.

During the general parliamentary election in December 1918, all our members again took a leading part, canvassing, supplying personation agents and tallymen. Other activities by the Navan Company at the latter end of the year included the organisation and formation of Volunteer companies at Bohermeen, Johnstown,

Stackallen, Castletown and other areas. I was sworn in a member of the I.R.B. at this time.

The year 1919 saw the formation of the various companies in Co. Meath into battalion areas. Navan became the H.Q. of the 6th Battalion which comprised companies in Navan, Stackallen, Johnstown, Bohermeen and Castletown. A short time later, when companies were formed in Clongill, Kilbarry and Yellow Furze, they were incorporated into the battalion. I became Battalion O/C., A. Levins vice-O/C., Kieran O'Connell adjutant, and Joe Hughes engineer.

Company training in the area was now intensified. Rifles and revolvers were purchased secretly from members of British armed forces. At the end of the year, shotguns and other arms were collected from civilians, resulting in the securing of a goodly store of weapons, chiefly shotguns. In some cases we raided the homes of loyalists and seized the guns. In a couple of these raids we were attacked by the owners with shotguns. Another Volunteer and myself received a number of pellets in the legs. The arms obtained in the raids were dumped in a house in Curraghtown.

In November, the police barracks at Lismullen - or Dillon's Bridge as it is often called - four miles from Navan, was attacked by selected members of the Navan Battalion. The attacking party numbered 20. A ruse to gain admission to the barracks failed, after which the attack opened and lasted about 45 minutes. Unfortunately, the arms were not good enough; they were mostly shotguns and a few .22 rifles, so the capture of the barracks was not effected. A police sergeant was wounded in the attack. A considerable amount of preparation was made previously, including instruction in the use of bombs, scouting and reconnoitring the position. The Navan company took part in preparing for similar attacks on R.I.C. barracks in George's Cross and Bohermeen, but before the attacks matured, they were vacated by the R.I.C.

The Meath Hunt (Foxhounds), then almost the preserve of British officers, their families and British supporters, were debarred from hunting over Meath lands as another protest against British rule. Where necessary, active measures were taken to order off the lands the huntsmen and huntswomen with very effective and lasting results. A hunger strike by Volunteers detained in Mountjoy was in progress at the time. During this period fairs were held up and live stock was not allowed to entrain.

Early in 1920, members of Navan Company resident in The Commons and Ardraccon formed themselves into a separate company known as the "Commons and Ardraccon" company. By this time, the R.I.C. barracks at Lismullen, Robinstown, George's Cross and Bohermeen had been vacated. On the orders of the Brigade O/C., Sean Boylan, they were all burned down. In addition to continued training exercises, scouting, intelligence service, arms raids, dispatch carrying, road-cutting and road blocking, dislocation of the telephone service and raids on mails, the year 1920 was marked by (1) arrests, detention and trial by Volunteers officers of criminals; (2) organisation of Republican Courts and police work in conjunction therewith pending the formation of Republican police; (3) Co. Council activities including Co. Council or local elections; (4) collection of funds and raising of funds by aeriochts for the purchase of arms.

In connection with No. 1 above, many members of Navan Company participated in what became known as the arrest of the "Cormeen prisoners". This action arose from an agrarian dispute in North Meath in which a young Volunteer named Clinton was shot dead. In charge of ten men, I left Navan on a Thursday night and went to Cormeen where we were joined by Volunteers from Trim in charge of Sean Boylan, Brigade O/C. We had a list of the men who organised the shooting; they numbered ten in all. The man who did the actual shooting had already been arrested by the R.I.C. and military. That night, we arrested seven of

the gang. On the following Sunday, the other three were arrested. The arrested men were detained in an "unknown destination" near Navan and members of Navan Company did long spells of guard duty before the prisoners were transferred to Brigade H.Q. at Dunboyne for trial. They had been detained for two months.

In the meantime, the man detained by the British - whose name was Gordon - was brought from Dublin to Navan for trial. His trial lasted only a few minutes when he was acquitted. As he left the Courthouse he was handed a 10/- note to buy himself a few drinks. On my instructions, a local Volunteer attended the trial. As the prisoner left the Courthouse, the Volunteer accompanied him to a nearby publichouse. In about half an hour we arrested him and had him conveyed to an "unknown destination" near Dunboyne. At his trial, presided over by a High Court Judge, with I.R.A. officers for the prosecution and defence, he was found guilty and paid the extreme penalty.

Following the trial of the ten men about one month later, they were sentenced to deportation, being escorted to the North Wall, Dublin, and placed on board a boat for Liverpool.

A series of robberies from private houses, business premises and churches occurred around the same time resulting in the investigation and arrest by the Navan Company of the culprits and the receivers of the stolen property. Quantities of the stolen goods were recovered. The detention and guarding of the prisoners in an "unknown destination" followed.

Another series of robberies, known as the "Carlanstown robberies" were investigated and most of the stolen goods recovered. Four culprits were arrested, detained and guarded for a long period and eventually tried by I.R.A. officers.

These detentions and trials were fairly and efficiently conducted. The verdicts of the Court of Officers were just and

practical - that is to say, that, reduced to a Cash Account, the verdicts would read as follows:

Date	Matter		References
<u>1920</u>	<u>Cash A/C.</u>		
	<u>Dr.</u>	<u>Cr.</u>	
	To:	By:	
	Value of goods stolen and damaged £	Value of goods recovered and restored £	
	Expenses of Investigation & arrests £	Balance levied as fines to recoup losses £	
	Expenses - feeding of prisoners £		
	Expenses - feeding of guards £		
	Incidental expenses £		
	£	£	

Some culprits received the added penalty of deportation, being escorted to the North Wall and placed on a boat for Liverpool.

Until the Republican Courts and the Republican police force got into their stride, the Volunteers enforced law and order, as the British police force at this time had become a para-military force.

In regard to No. 2 above, the organisation and direction of North Meath constituency republican courts was undertaken by Volunteer Tom Duffy of the Navan Company, who became local Court Registrar. Here it may be said briefly that many of the Judges and Justices were themselves Volunteers or the parents of Volunteers. Most of the Court Registrars were active Volunteers and the Court Orders were enforced when necessary by Volunteers. This latter duty was, in due course, assumed by the Republican police force which was constituted by the Volunteers.

Coming to No. 3 above, the Local or County Council elections of 1920 completed the work begun by the general election of 1918. In Meath, as elsewhere, Sinn Féin candidates were elected by a large majority and Local Government administration was now in republican hands under the National Ministry of Local Government. Both as successful candidates and as active election workers, Volunteers were actively engaged in the local elections.

The new Meath Co. Council immediately cancelled allegiance to British Local Government. The secretary of the Council, however, declined to co-operate and he was dismissed from office. Volunteers recovered Co. Council books and records from his control. Meetings of the Co. Council were held 'on the run' and secretarial duties were discharged by Volunteers until the Truce.

In relation to No. 4 above. Throughout the summer and autumn of 1920, collections in aid of funds for the purchase of arms and Volunteer expenses were widely held and feiseanna and Aeriochts were held for a similar purpose.

Navan was a very important centre for communications, i.e., Dublin to Cavan and Cavan to Dublin. We had certain houses for the receipt and issue of dispatches and Navan Company did its share in keeping lines of communication open.

During the Belfast boycott several shops were raided for Belfast goods,; railway stores were also visited and travellers were warned not to supply Belfast goods.

I was arrested by British military on 1st December 1920, and taken to the Co. Home, Navan, where I was held for four days. I was then transferred to Collinstown aerodrome where I spent a fortnight and was later taken to Arbour Hill barracks, Dublin, until mid-February, when I was brought by boat to Belfast and on to Ballykinlar where I was interned until after the Truce.

After my arrest Patrick Fitzsimons succeeded me as battalion O/C. Patrick Keating subsequently succeeded Pat Fitzsimons. For the events after my arrest up to the Truce, including a big reorganisation of I.R.A. battalions in Co. Meath and surrounding counties, I would recommend that statements be obtained from Mr. Michael Hilliard, T.D., or Mr. James Byrne, Dunmoe, Navan.

Signed: Patrick Loughran

Date: 3rd June 1957.

Witness: John J. Saly

