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COSANTA.

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 1639.

Witness

Capt. Laurence Morrough Neville,
"Marie Therese",
Beaumont Park,
Blackrock,
Cork.
Identity.

Capt. 'D' Coy., 2nd Battn., Cork No. 1 Bde.

Subject.

D' Coy., 2nd Battn., Cork No. 1 Bde., I.R.A., 1916-121.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

N11.

File No 8. 2962.

Form B.S.M. 2



BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21 BURO STAIRE MILEATA 1913-21

No. W.S. 1.639

STATEMENT BY CAPTAIN LAURENCE MORROUGH NEVILLE,

"Marie-Therese", Beaumont Park, Blackrock, GORK.

I was born in Ballinlough, a suburb of Cork City on the South side. My father was a market gardener.

On Good Friday, 1916, I joined the Cork City Battalion, Irish Volunteers, and participated in a parade held in the Volunteer Hall, Sheares' Street, Cork, on that day. At that period, there was only one battalion of Irish Volunteers in Cork City. parade in question I remember seeing Terry McSwiney, then Vice-Brigadier. So far as I can remember, none of the Volunteers carried arms on that occasion. I was not mobilised for Easter Sunday, 1916, when the Cork City Battalion left the city under arms, for Macroom; consequently, I cannot give any details of the events of that day, or, of the week which followed. I am, however, aware that by arrangement between His Lordship, Host Reverend Doctor Cohalan, Bishop of Cork, the Volunteer leaders Tomás McCurtain and Terry McSwiney and the British Military authorities, it was agreed that the Volunteers should hand over their arms for safe-keeping to the Lord Mayor of Cork - Butterfield. I do know that quite a big number of the Cork Volunteers refused to hand over their weapons. As a matter of fact, one of the guns, a heavy ferman single-loading one, was brought to my home in Windmill Road, Ballinlough, Cork, for safe-keeping by Michael Kurphy .. The latter was, at that time, a Volunteer without officer rank. He, subsequently, became Commandant of the 2nd Battalion. Cork No. 1. Brigade (City), I.R.A., in which I served as one of his Company officers. Hurphy took this gun from our house about five years later when he left the city with a Flying Column, for the Ballyvourney district of West Cork.

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The period from 1916 to 1918 was comparatively quiet in Cork as far as Volunteer activities were concerned.

A reorganisation took place, which resulted in the formation of two battalions for Cork City. Roughly speaking, the 1st Battalion 'covered' an area north of the Tiver Lee. The 2nd Battalion area 'lay' south of the River. At this period the Battalions were divided into four Companies with four Sections in each Company. The latter numbered approximately, one hundred men at least so far as my particular Company was concerned, viz: "D" Company, 2nd Battalion. I was appointed a Section Commander some time in 1917. Our Company area lay south of the River Lee, and comprised the districts - "ouglas, Ballinlough and Blackrock. By brother Patrick was also a member of "D" Company from its inception.

mainly of a training nature. We drilled in the district of Black Ash, which was open hilly country and gave cover from the prying eyes of the R.I.C. who were then taking an active interest in the movements of Volunteers. Close order and extended order drill was the general routine and we were lectured on guerilla warfare and the use of revolver, rifle and bomb. I lectured on the rifle, using Mick Murphy's 1916 gan for the purpose.

Pollowing the threat of conscription by the British Covernment in 1918, a very large number of Volunteer recruite joined up. Hany of these left the Volunteers when the threat passed, but the numbers of Volunteer in Cork City had so increased at this period that it became necessary to split the Battalions into eight Companies.

This, occurred, so far as I can remember, early in 1919.

In addition to general training, our Company took part in many public parates of Volunteers. These parades were a feature of the latter part of 1918 when a General Flection was in progress in December of that year. Volunteer units systematically canvassed their districts, acted as stowards at election meetings and helped generally the cause of the Sinn Féin candidates for Cork City, viz., Liam de Roiste and J.J.Walsh. Both these men were 'returned' with large majorities over their opponents of the Parliamentary Party, then led by John Redwond.

The British, having failed in their efforts to enforce the Conscription of Brishmen into their armed forces to fill the gaps in their regiments which were suffering heavy losses in the 1914-1918 war, now intensified their recruiting campaign. Meetings were frequently held in Cork City exhorting the young men to join up and fight for the freedom of small nations. These meetings were, invariably, broken up by units of Volunteers all over the City and every effort made to counter the British recruiting campaign, by tearing down recruiting posters, holding anti-recruiting meetings and suchlike. We often came into conflict with the R.I.C. who were on duty "to preserve law and order" at these recruiting meetings, sticks and hurleys being used against the batons of the police.

The year 1919 found us still drilling and training but, as the end of that year approached, our activities increased as our organisation improved. It was at this period that I was appointed Captain of "D" Company, 2nd Battalion.

Our greatest problem now was the securing of arms and ammunition with which to carry the fight to the enemy, who was beginning to step up his raiding activities on the homes of Volunteers. This involved the arrest of many of our members and compelled others to leave their homes and go 'on the run'

to avoid arrest. Here I might mention that, when a Volunteer officer was arrested, his rank was immediately filled by another Volunteer. Such elections, so far as they applied to the Companies, were made by votes of the members.

To augment our very meagre supply of arms which, at that time (late 1919) in "D" Conrany, consisted of a few revolvers and shotgums, raids on houses of well-known loyalists were carried out by instructions of the Brigade. These raids were made at night-time by three or four Volunteers. Very often none of us was armed on these occasions, but, invariably, one of us carried a revolver more with the ideal of intimidation than with the In our Company area there lived a very intention of using it. strong loyalist element, particularly in the Douglas-Blackrock districts. Many of the 'big' business men resided there, as did many retired British army officers. None of these people could be regarded as sympathisers of ours; indeed, almost without excention, they were bitterly antagonistic to our cause, if not always openly so.

our point of view. We succeeded in getting up to twenty shotgums and gums of a sporting type, a few revolvers (some rather antique models), swords, books on military tactics, field-glasses and some equipment. A quantity of shotgum ammunition was also secured. In no instance did we encounter any active opposition, although - as can well be understood - none of the gums was handed over with good grace.. The captured 'stuff' was taken to the premises of the Gork Show Grounds at the Marina, Gork, where my brother Paddy was employed as charge—hand at the time. (I, too, was on the staff). The Show premises was, from late 1919, used as a battalion

dump for any captures made from the enemy.

increasing visilance by the enemy police and military, we now formed special sections to cater for engineering and intelligence work. The engineering section was engaged in the manufacture of bombs, repairing guns and the like. The intelligence section was under the control of a Company Intelligence Officer to whom the movements of enemy troops, police, agents, enemy stores, were reported. These reports were, when deemed necessary, passed on to the Sattalian Intelligence Officer and from him to the Brigade.

I was particularly concerned with the manufacture of bombs, inasmuch as my home in Ballinlough was the place in which they were made. We were helped in this work by my sisters. method of making these bombs was rather ingenious and was suggested by Mick Murphy, our Battalian O/C., who was a carpenter by trade. A shallow box was made of timber and secured with screws. Inside the box were sections somewhat in the style of the modern: The sections were also of timber. egg boxes. These sections were thoroughly greased and cement poured into each to a depth of about four inches. A well-greased stick was then inscrted into the centre of each compartment and into the cement were also put pieces of scrap iron or bolts and nuts. covered by an eight-inch plate with an opening in the centre. After about forty-eight hours, when the cement was set, the screws holding the box were removed when it was a simple matter to tap away the timber surrounds and remove the central stick, leaving the cement bombs intact. A stick of gelignite was then inserted in the centre and a detonator and fuse attached. We made quite

a large number of these crude bombs which we put into barrels and buried in our garden. We tested a few before storing them but did not find them satisfactory. I remember well that when one of our lads had his hand almost blown off/trying out one of these bombs. To the best of my recollection they were never used against the enemy. 'e also made, what we called a 'canister bomb', somewhat similar in principle to that which I have described, except that in this instance we used tin came as a container for the cement and gelignite. This, too, proved to be unsatisfactory when used and we ceased making them after some time.

In the early part of the year 1920, instructions were received from the Battalion that raids on energy stores in our area were to be undertaken at every nossible opportunity, enemy transport was to be destroyed when possible and every effort made to hamper the movements of enemy forces. In addition, raids on Post Office mails were to be undertaken, with a view to capturing correspondence which might contain information of value to the British authorities.

Bundon and Macroom railway and on the Cork and Muskerry Light
Railway. These were, what might be called "clearing stations"
for enemy stores being sent out to military barracks at Ballincollig,
Macroom and other centres in the South and Yest of the County.

Often, at very short notice, about six of us made our way to the
railways and on lorries or cars commandeered en route, removed
whatever military stores we could lay hands on. Invariably, we
were advised beforehand by employees on the railway who were,
themselves, members of the I.R.A. It would be almost impossible

to give details of our captures on these occasions: they included clothing, boots, bicycle parts and provisions of all kinds. were removed to our hide-out at the Show-grounds on the Marina, Quite a quantity was sent on later to the Flying Columns Cork. in the County. So frequently did these raids occur that the .. British tried to outwit us by forwarding, for instance, bicycles with the wheels missing, or, as happened on one occasion, a large consignment of boots, all of which fitted the left foot only. remember on one raid we captured two dosen revolvers consigned to Auxiliaries in Facroom, but the cylinders and hammers of the guns In practically all of these raids we carried were missing. revolvers, particularly from the late 1920 period onwards, when, in some mysterious fashion, revolvers in greater numbers made their appearance in "D" Company. It must not, however, be understood from this that we had a plentiful supply of these guns. contrary, they were still far too few to arm even ten per cent of our members, which, at this time were, approximately, eightyto a hundred men.

In late 1920 and early 1921, as the firsting intensified, it became more difficult for prominent I.R.A. officers and men to live in their homes because of the imminent danger of arrest and execution by the British. For this reason I, too, had to remain away from home at night when enemy raiding in our area was stepped up and, at the same time, I changed my name to "Charlie Ross", which name appeared on the list of occupants in houses where I chanced to pass the night. It should be explained that the British had ordered that all householders should keep a list of the names of those in their houses each night, so that each one present could be identified by any British raiding party.

Shooting of William O'Sullivan, Spv.

On 15th February, 1921, the first British spy was executed by men of "D" Company. This man's name was William O'Sullivan from Cork City. He was a British ex-soldier.

On the evening of the day in question, O'Sullivan was picked up by members of "D" Commany and taken to a place called Tory
Top Lane, a quiet locality off the main Kinsale road in the southern outskirts of the city. He was there shot and killed by revolver fire. A label, on which was written "Spies and informers beware", was pinned to his body. This man's execution was carried out on the instructions of the Battalian O/C.,
Mick Murphy. It may be of interest to record that William
O'Sullivan had a brother who was then a member of my Company.

Shooting of Finbar O'Sullivan, Spy.

On 22nd February, 1921, occurred the shooting of a second sny in our district. His name was Pinbar O'Sullivan, a man in his early twenties. He was, to the best of my recollection, unemployed at the time, and was not a member of the I.R.A. He lived in "D" Company area and was well-known to me from boyhood.

Orders were received from the Battalion O/C. to apprehend this man and shoot him as a spy. He was taken into custody by William ("Sailor") Barry, a member of "D" Company and brought at night to my home in Pallinlough. He was then taken down to the riverside and shot by a revolver party comprising three men and myrelf.

Shooting of D. McDonald, Spy.

On 23rd February, 1921, a civilian named D. McDonald, (known to us as "Monkey" KcDonald) who lived in the Company area,

was waylaid on his way one night and shot by men of "D" Company.

WcDonald was badly wounded but recovered from his wounds. It was
allesed that he, subsequently, accompanied British troops and Black &
Tars in an armoured car to point out members of the I.R.A. in Cork
City, and to identify I.R.A. prisoners. Further efforts to apprehend
and shoot this spy failed. To the best of my knowledge, McDonald
left Treland before the British evacuation. He has not been heard
of since.

It would be quite impossible to give details of all the varied activities of the Company with which I was associated during the 'hottest' period of the struggle from early 1921 to the Truce of 11th July, 1921. A few examples of what was, in effect, wholetime I.R.A. service will suffice.

On 15th April, 1921, I received instructions from the Battalion to proceed with a small party of men from "D" Company to the premises of Mesers. Lunham, Bacon Manufacturers in Komp Street, Cork. The time was about 3 p.m. The party consisted of William Barry,

Jeremiah Coughlan, his brother Patrick and James Gearons. All of us were armed with revolvers. We were informed beforehand, that a large quantity of bacon, consigned to the Military at Victoria Barracks, Cork, was being loaded and we were instructed to capture the consignment and destroy the lorry.

Arriving near Lunhams we hid in a store until we saw the lorry loaded up and ready to leave with two civilians in the driving cab. When the engine was started I rushed out on to the street followed by my comrades and ordered the two civilians, at revolver point, to get out. Pearons and I then sat into the driving cab and Rearons drove the lorry through the city up to the Rallindough district,

where we dummed the bacon into a store owned by a butcher named Bresnan. He then drove the empty lorry to the Douglas Road area where we set it on fire. Some short time afterwards we sent about three tons of this bacon to Donaghmore, County Cork, to the I.R.A. Flying Column. Commandwering a horse and car, we took the bacon from Bresnan's across the city to the Cork and Buskerry Light Railway where we consigned it to a Kr. Eurphy at Donaghmore. Reedless to add, we paid no freightage:

Shooting of Black & Tan - Sterland.

On 9th May, 1921, instructions were received from the Battalion to proceed to the Pob Roy Motel, Gook Street, Cork, to shoot a Black & Tan Intelligence Officer named Sterland.

Accompanied by 'Sailor' Barry, Jerome Couchlan and Bob Aherne, all armed with revolvers, I went to the Rob Roy Hotel which, incidentally, was in the city centre. I, too, was armed with a revolver. The day was Sunday and the time about 5 p.m. On arriving at the hotel, I posted one of the men at the corner of Cook Street and the South Mall, and another at the corner of Cook Street and Oliver Plunkett Street. These men were to give warning of the approach of enemy troops down Cook Street, as I found, on arrival there, that there was a British armoured car less than a hundred yards from up on the South Mall and there was also an armed foot patrol of soldiers in the vicinity of Cook Street.

Accompanied by Aherne I entered the hotel and discovered that Sterland was upstairs in the bar having a drink with two I.R.A. Intelligence Officers named Frank Hahony and Charles Cogan. These two men had lured the unsuspecting Sterland to the Rob Roy to have a drink and then sent word to our Battalion O/C of his (Sterland's)

National Archives Act, 1986, Regulations, 1988

ABSTRACTION OF PART(S) PURSUANT TO REGULATION 8

Form to be completed and inserted in the original record in place of each part abstracted

(v) Reason(s) why the part has been abstracted for retention:	(i)	Reference number of the separate cover under
(iii) The date of each such document: 17 June 1957		which the abstracted part has been filed: W.S. 1637 A
(iv) The description of each document: US 1639 WS Cape Lawrence Morning! New III. Where appropriate, a composite description may be entered in respect of two or more related documents). (v) Reason(s) why the part has been abstracted for retention: (c) Would or might cause distress or danger to living persons on the ground that they contain information about individuals, or would or might be likely to lead to an action for damages for defamation. (These will be the reasons given on the certificate under Section 8(4).) Name: (J. Moloney.) Grade: Col. Department/Office/Court:	(ii)	
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Name: (J. Moloney.) Grade: Col. Department/Office/Court	٠	and a street and
Grade: Col. Department/Office/Court:		(These will be the reasons given on the certificate under section 6(4).)
Department/Office/Court:		Name: (J. Moloney.)
-		Grade: Col.
Date: 7 March 2003.		Department/Office/Court:
		Date: 7 March 2003.

Having allowed ourselves to be seen by Mahony, whereabouts. I took up position at the door of the hotel and Aherne at the foot of the stairs leading up to the bar. At length Sterland appeared coming down the stairs and when he reached the bottom Aherne drew a revolver and shouted, "Hands up!" whereupon Sterland hit Aherne with his fist and rushed for the door where I was standing. my gun. faced him and ordered him to put his hands up. I searched him, taking from his hip pocket an unloaded .45 Webley revolver, together with all the papers in his possession. this was proceeding a knock came to the door. Aherne opened it and found three Pritish soldiers who were, apparently, calling for Seeing the revolver in Aherne's hand they ran for their lives. I then told Sterland to get in front of me and get out of the hotel.

he died. We made our escape over Parnell Bridge at the eastern end of the South Mall: there we jumped on a passing side-car and ordered the driver to go to Evergreen Road. (in our Battalion area). Next morning I reported the facts to Connie Neenan, a battalion officer, to whom I handed over the captured revolver and papers.

At 11 a.m. one day in May, 1921, Bob Aherne and I waited at the bottom of Pigh Street to shoot a local R.I.C. Sergeant by the name of Cook from Blackrock barracks. While we waited for him to come along word reached us that an I.R.A. arms dump in the immediate vicinity was being cleared as a raid by the Hilitary was anticipated. We were then instructed to call off the shooting of Cook in case we should draw the British to the district before the dump was safely cleared.

On 28th May, 1921, a civilian spy named O'Sullivan, who lived in Blarney Street, Cork, was shot by our lads at Model Farm Road. His funeral the following day was attended by, amongst others, a particularly active R.I.C. Sergeant named Hollywood. He went to the funeral with another R.I.C. man, both in mufti and riding bicycles. Five of us were hurriedly mobilised to shoot Hollywood on his return to the city. Nonal O'Donoghue, Battalion Vice-Commandant at the time, was in charge of our party. All of us carried revolvers.

Of our group only Bob Aherne knew Hollywood, so it was arranged that Aherne should go to the graveyard and (after the burial of O'Sullivan) cycle a short distance in front of Hollywood and his companion on their return journey. He would then give an agreed signal when passing us. As the time drew near when our quarry was expected to come along, O'Donoghue noticed that the position he had selected for the attack was very close to the residence of Sean O'Hegarty, then Brigadier of the Cork Ho. 1 Brigade. I do not know whether O'Donoghue had any information that O'Hegarty was at home at the particular time. (I very much doubt that he was as he was a badly-wanted man well known to the British). At any rate O'Donoghue decided, at almost the last moment, to call off the attack.

Sometime afterwards we learned that the same Sergeant Hollywood had gone on a visit to his home at Windmill Road, Cork. Five of us, armed with revolvers, proceeded to the house to shoot Hollywood.

Bob Aherns, - Fitzgibbon and I went to the rear of the house;

Bill O'Brien and another man, whose name I have forgotten, went to the front. All were "D" Company men. Aherns, Fitzgibbon and I rushed in by the backdoor and searched all the rooms. There was no trace of the man, who, we were told, had gone there. His brother,

rather like him in appearance, was, however, in the house.

Possibly our informant had mistaken this man's identity. Once again Hollywood had fortuitously escaped and, so far as I am aware, was never 'got' afterwards by any of our lads. This R.I.C. Sergeant was known to have shot and killed a prominent 2nd Battalion Volunteer, Tadg Sullivan, in Douglas Street, Cork, on 20th April, 1921; hence the repeated efforts to shoot him.

I have referred previously to the Battalion dump in the premises of the Cork Show-grounds at The Marina and I regret to have to record its eventual discovery by the British. The circumstances were as follows:-

On a Saturday evening in early May, 1921, three of our lads from """ Company were down in the Show-grounds packing stuff (clothes, boots, bicycles and provisions) for despatch to the Flying Columns in the country. As a result of the enforcement by the I.R.A. of an order from Páil Tireann to boycott goods from Belfast, many seizures of goods from traders in Cork City were made by the I.R.A. and conveyed for safe-keeping to the Show-grounds. In addition, we had about five hundred tens of petrol there (taken by up on a raid on the Irish-American Oil Company's store in Cork) together with a number of shotzurs, rifles, revolvers and a machine-gum.

Shortly before the Black & Tans raided the place, ten rifles and the machine-gun had been brought to the grounds with the idea of ambushing the British Admiral in charge of Cobh who, it was learned, would be proceeding up the river by motor launch from Cobh to attend a conference at Sidney House, Cork, the headquarters of General Strickland, British Commander-in-Chief in the South. The Show grounds

Rlackrock and the City. Unfortunately, the plans to ambush the Admiral miscarried as he failed to travel by the river route as we anticipated - actually he came up to Cork by motor car.

The rifles were then taken away from the Show-grounds, leaving the machine-gun which was intended for despatch to the Plying Columns.

On the Saturday evening mentioned, 'Sailor' Barry and two of the lads were engaged packing some stuff for the 'Columns' when Barry chanced to go out into the grounds for a moment and, to his amazement, saw a party of Black & Tans outside on a railway bridge adjacent to the grounds, obviously preparing to raid the place.

Barry hurriedly warned his comrades of the danger. All three of them made their escape under fire from the 'Tans' by knocking out some timber surrounds from the sheep shed which adjoined the Cork Athletic Grounds and allowed the boys to get away east to Blackrock.

As the gates were locked it took the 'Tans' some time to gain admittance, thus helping our boys to escape. The premises were subjected to a thorough search, with the result that about ten tons of clothing, boots and provisions and five tons of bicycle parts, were captured. Yorse still, the machine-gum was discovered together with about two dozen shotguns which were concealed in a large box buried under the floor boards of a telephone kicsk. The five hundred time of petrol were also taken away.

Pollowing the raid, my brother Patrick, who was in charge of the Show-grounds, was instructed by the Battalion O/C. to go 'on the rum', as it was almost certain his home (and mine, incidentally) would be raided. Some weeks later our home was, in fact, surrounded by military one night. In response to whistles my

mother opened a window and to an inquiry in an west-English accent as to whether any of the boys were at home, she replied that there were no men in the house. Very soon afterwards our place was raided again and searched from top to bottom by a party of Black & Tans under the command of Captain Noran. These raids, which proved fruitless, became very frequent and Captain Foran became well-known to my mother and sisters. When hostilities finished he paid us a friendly visit quite often. It is of interest to record that the same Captain subsequently became a priest and is now a Canon of the Catholic Church in Wales.

Late in May, 1921, my brother Paddy was arrested at Old Court, Riverstown, Cork, where he was 'on the run'. He was sentenced to a term of imprisonment which he served in Spike Island, Cobh, and later in Maryboro' gaol. He was detained until the general release of prisoners in January, 1922.

At this time I was sleeping in different houses in various parts of the 2nd Battalion area due to the constant raiding of my own home by the British. Whilst going to a house in Evergreen Street, Cobh, one night not long before the curfew hour (10 p.m.), I met a member of "D" Company named George Burks, who told me that the "Tans" were raiding the home of Wick Murphy (the Battalion O/C) in Douglas Street. The 'Tans' were in civilian attire. Burke gave me a Mills' grenade. He suggested we should have a crack at the 'Tane' He had a revolver. as they left Murphy's house. We watched them leaving and trailed three of them as far as North Main Street when we decided to 'have a It was now close to curfew hour (10 p.m.) and many go' at them. people were rushing to get home before 10 o'clock. It was hopeless to wait until the streets cleared as the place would be swarming with Hilitary and 'Tans' after curiew. As there was very grave danger of

killing innocent passers-by, we, very reluctantly, decided to let the 'Tans' go without attacking them.

Things had now reached the stage when I had great difficulty indeed in avoiding arrest, so I was advised by the Battalion to get out of the City until such time as I was called to the Flying Column. At this time, June, 1921, the Cork City Flying Column, which had been operating in the Ballyvourney district of West Cork, had been disbanded temporarily. I left for Crosshaven, Co. Cork, where I still retained the name Charlie Ross and was in this district when the Truce came in July, 1921.

Before concluding I would like to refer to the conditions under which my Company functioned during the four or five months prior to Due to increasing enemy vigilance it was not possible the Truce. at all times to obtain prior Battalion sanction for our various On many occasions we undertook 'jobs' at very short activities. notice, as opportunity offered. Except in cases of the shooting of spies, where prior instructions came from the Battalion O/C., it could be said, without exaggeration, that the Company acted on the initiative of its officer personnel in the varied activities in which it took part, both by day and night. Here I would like to pay a tribute to those members of "D" Company, 2nd Battalion, Cork No. 1 Brigade, who took a very active part in the strungle without ever firing a shot. These men, some of whom were the back-bone of our Intelligence Service, or who, perhaps, were for long periods and at frequent intervals engaged in the more prosaic work of scouting, or who sought out billets for men 'on the run' or performed duties of a non-spectacular nature, deserve to be specially mentioned in any historical record of the activities of the Company with which I had the honour to be associated.

LUMMANA	DATE: 17-6-57
WITNESS:	BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21 BURO STAIRE MILESTA 1943-21
	No. W.S. 1,63-9