

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

BURO STAIRE MILEATA 1913-21

No. W.S. 57



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ROINN COSANTA.

BURO STAIRE MILEATA 1913-21

(Bureau of Military History 1913-21),

26 RAEDH NA NIARTHARACH,
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BAILE ÁTHA CLIATH.
(Dublin).

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Statement by:

Thomas O'Donovan,
Behagh, Dunmanway,
Co. Cork.

Dated: 10th October, 1947.

On: Dunmanway 1908-1916.
I.R.B. and I.V. Coy.

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STATEMENT OF THOMAS O'DONOVAN, BEHAGH,
DUNMANWAY, CO. CORK.

PERIOD: 1908 to MAY, 1916.

UNIT: DUNMANWAY COMPANY, I.V.

There was a small group of old I.R.B. men in Dunmanway who kept together, were always sound on the national position, and encouraged and supported anything that looked like being helpful to the national cause. They started a Sinn Fein Club in Dunmanway, which I joined in 1908, before I left school. There were only seven or eight in it. Dan McCarthy was Chairman. I was in the Gaelic League also.

When the Volunteers were started in the town early in 1914 none of this group joined them. Dan McCarthy, who was our advisor, said, "They are the collar and tie men; they don't mean to fight". I was anxious to have some drill anyway, and after some difficulty got his permission to join them for this purpose, which I did in 1914. There were then about 120 men in the Company and they were being drilled by an ex-soldier named Shanley. Florence Crowley, Clerk of the Union, was, I think, Chairman. After the big parade in Dublin in April, 1915, they dissolved.

In the same month, Tadhg O'Shea, an Irish Teacher, Liam Duggan, an Insurance Agent, Michael McCarthy and Con Aherne tried to start a Company of Irish Volunteers in the town. The most they could get was eight or nine; Dick O'Neill, Timothy O'Brien, Con Hickey, Paddy O'Neill and themselves. They held some meetings and carried on for a while, and then Tadhg O'Shea came to me and said the effort to form a Company in the town was a failure, and that it all depended on me whether enough men could be got in the country round to form a Company with the Dunmanway men.

I started to organise in Behagh in May, 1915, and got about 20 men. The people generally took no interest, even men who turned out good afterwards. They said we were only leading the boys into trouble. Some were hostile and set the dogs at us when we went collecting. The clergy took no strong line against us. From that on we held parades two nights a week, in which we used to go half way to meet the eight or nine Dunmanway men. We were drilled by Seán Mackey, a baker, and a native to Tipperary. He knew some drill. Tadhg O'Shea used to drill us also, in Irish. On Sundays we held parades to Gloun, Togher, Kilnadeer, Enniskeane and other places in the neighbourhood. We were at the parade at Bealhablath in 1915 at which the Cork City Companies attended.

In the Winter of 1915 we made a house to house collection for arms, which realised about £30. They had a fund in Dunmanway, a legacy from the Fenian movement. Dan McCarthy and two others were the trustees. They agreed that the purpose for which the fund was intended was being realised in the Volunteers, and they agreed to draw out a sum equal to what we had, put the two together and purchase arms. We were to get an even number of rifles in each Section, Dunmanway and Behagh. They drew out the money, we put our £30 with it and the whole lot was sent to Dublin for rifles. The Behagh Section never got any rifles, but the Dunmanway Section got four or

also include ~~on the~~ ~~of~~ ~~these~~ in the list of
Boats Sunday near the home of John Lee
Boakley + Jimmie & Corley —
with all the rest

Yours & sincerely

Thomas B. Anderson

five. We had about twenty shot guns, owned by the men themselves, at the end of 1915. We had also an old Fenian rifle which had belonged to a man named Coakley. We used to take it on parades, but it was useless as a weapon; there was no ammunition for it.

The men paid 2d or 3d a week into a fund for the purchase of equipment. Out of this we bought haversacks, bandoliers and belts.

Twenty men from the Behagh Section, and seven or eight from Dunmanway, were at the Manchester Martyrs' parade in Cork in November, 1915. We had no arms that day. About the same numbers attended the St. Patrick's Day parade in Cork in 1916, armed with shot guns and a few rifles. We had no pikes in the Company.

Con Ahern and Michael McCarthy attended the Course for Officers carried out at the Hall in Sheares Street, Cork, in January, 1916.

The usual parades were carried out up to Easter, 1916, and numbers remained unchanged. Terence MacSwiney came to a meeting of Officers in the Hall in Dunmanway about a week before Easter. Those present were:- Con Ahern, Tadhg O'Shea, Tom O'Donovan and Liam Duggan. MacSwiney gave instructions that we were to meet the Lyre Company at Dunmanway on Easter Sunday at 10 o'clock and march with them to Inchigeela. We were to bring all arms and equipment and three days' rations. He gave us no idea of what was intended, or of where we were to go beyond Inchigeela, only that we were to march there.

A meeting of the Behagh Section was held on Saturday night, and we arranged to meet at Behagh at 7 o'clock on Sunday morning. We mobilised everybody. The following members of the Behagh Section paraded on Easter Sunday morning:-

Thomas O'Donovan.
Denis O'Donovan.
Michael Murphy.
Pat Corcoran.
Tim Corcoran.
John Hennessy.
Dan Kelleher.
Paddy Coakley.
Jim Donovan.
James Coakley.
Jeremiah Deasy.
Tim Coakley.

With Lyre Company we mobilised in the Market Square, Dunmanway after Mass. Con Ahern, who was riding a horse, was put in charge of both Companies by Jim Walsh.

Peadar O'Hourihan, on a motor bicycle, met us about 3½ miles on the Dunmanway side of Inchigeela. I do not know what message he brought, but he went back before us into Inchigeela. We had a halt at Johnstown and had a bit of lunch. From about a quarter of a mile outside the Village Michael McCarthy played national airs on the bagpipes. We marched into the village, turned to the left about 100 yards and halted. Tomás MacCurtain

and Terence MacSwiney were waiting. They had a consultation with Tadhg O'Shea and Con Ahern and soon afterwards we were told we were to return home, that whatever was on was put off for the time being.

The arms we had in the Behagh Section that day were twelve shot guns and about 100 rounds of ammunition, none slug loaded. We had no pikes, revolvers or explosives. We had bayonets on the shot guns.

The Officers of the Company at Easter, 1916, were:-

Captain: Con Ahern.
2nd i/c: Michael McCarthy.

There were no other Officers, but I was in charge of Behagh Section. It was agreed to call it the Dunmanway Company, although I had the largest number of men.

The police were always with us on our parades. Two of them marched from Dunmanway to Inchigeela with us on Easter Sunday, and two more came out to meet us from Inchigeela. Coming back to Dunmanway that night one of the policemen got played out, and Liam Duggan gave him a drop of whiskey.

On the Tuesday or Wednesday of Easter Week Liam Duggan wanted to take some action. He wanted to cut the wires at Dunmanway.

On Wednesday night of Easter Week I got a message from Dunmanway to keep all my Section ready under arms. We mobilised and stayed together for that night. We remained in readiness all the week but no further order came to us. When the arrests started we all went on the run for five or six weeks.

Some members of the Company were raided for. Con Ahern was arrested, so was Dan McCarthy although he was not in the Volunteers. Tadhg O'Shea was arrested in Macroom about a week later. No arms were lost in the raids and none were surrendered.

There were no I.R.B. or Fianna organisations in the area before 1916.

After 1916 a query came out to us from Cork to know if we would be satisfied with the same Brigade Officers as before 1916. We replied that we would.

SIGNED: Thomas O'Donovan

DATE: 10th October 1949.

WITNESS: Florence O'Donoghue.

