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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21  
BUIÓ-STAIRÉ-MILEATA 1913-21  
No. W.S. 60



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ROINN COSANTA.

BUIÓ STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21

(Bureau of Military History 1913-21)

26 RAEDH NA NIARTHARACH,  
(26 Westland Row),

BALÍP ÁTHA CIATH  
(Dublin)

DOCUMENT W.S. 60

Joint Statement by

- A. Denis O'Brien,  
Ballydaly, Millstreet,  
Co. Cork.
- B. Denis O'Keeffe,  
Knockagullane, Rathmore,  
Co. Kerry,

Dated: 3rd November, 1947.

On: Rathduane Coy. I.V., Co. Cork.  
1915-1916.

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BUREAU STAIRS MILE T. 1013-21

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JOINT STATEMENT OF DENIS O'BRIEN, BALLYDALY MILSTREET,  
CO. CORK, and  
DENIS O'KEEFFE, KNOCKNAGULLANE, RATHMORE,  
CO. KERRY.

PERIOD: NOVEMBER, 1915, TO MAY, 1916.

UNIT: RATHDUANE COMPANY, I.V.

The Rathduane Company of the Irish Volunteers was started on 1st November, 1915. There was not at any time a Company of National Volunteers in the district, though they had a strong Company in the town of Millstreet. We heard of a public meeting to be held in Millstreet, and we understood its purpose was to recruit for the Irish Volunteers. Nine or ten of us from this parish went to the meeting, which was addressed by Terence MacSwiney. We had no discussion with him that day, but we decided to form a Company for the parish of Rathduane.

Two nights later we held the first meeting at Ballydaly. The following twelve men attended:-

Denis O'Brien.  
Con Murphy.  
Michael Lehane.  
Timothy Murphy.  
Denis Murphy.  
Eugene O'Sullivan.  
Timothy Collins.  
Denis Ring.  
Patrick Twohig.  
John Noonan.  
Denis O'Keeffe.  
Edmund Murphy.

The following officers were elected:-

Captain:	Denis O'Brien.
1st Lieut.:	Con Murphy.
2nd Lieut.:	John Noonan, Knocknaloman.
Adjutant:	Michael Lehane.
Q.M.:	Eugene O'Sullivan.

After the first meeting we went out for organisation. In a short time we had 24 men in the Company and at Easter, 1916, we had 29. Public feeling was not hostile in this parish, which was substantially O'Brienite in political sympathies. All the early Volunteers were O'Brienites; none of the Redmond followers joined us before Easter, 1916. The town of Millstreet was very hostile.

Parades were held on one night each week and every Sunday. The usual training was close order drill and route marches. Jimmy Hickey and Jerry Twomey of Millstreet gave us the initial training. They had had training in the Millstreet Company. We were on several parades in Millstreet between the start and Easter, 1916. These were all in conjunction with the Companies at Millstreet, Musherah, Drishanebeg and Dernagree. These Companies, with ours, formed the 4th Battalion of which Con J. Meaney, Millstreet, was the O/C.

Denis O'Brien attended the course for Officers' training carried out at the Hall in Sheares' Street, Cork, in January, 1916.

Four of us from the Company were in the St. Patrick's Day parade in Cork in 1916, armed with shot guns. That was the first time we carried arms openly. An attempt was made to disarm us by some soldiers and ex-soldiers in Millstreet when we were coming home. Although they outnumbered us the attempt did not succeed.

At the end of 1915 we had one shot gun, the property of the Company, which we had purchased, and an air rifle with which we had some practice.

The men paid 3d. a week into a Company fund for the purchase of equipment. We also made a house to house collection for the same purpose, but we did not get very much. About 12 of the Company were equipped with belts, caps, haversacks and puttees by Easter, 1916. We had no uniforms in the Company.

The orders for the parade on Easter Sunday, 1916, came to us from the Battalion O.C., C.J. Meaney, about the Friday before. They were to the effect that we were to parade in Millstreet at 1.30 p.m. on Sunday and meet the other Companies of the Battalion there. We were to bring all arms, ammunition and equipment. Nothing was said to us about rations.

We mobilised the whole Company, and the following paraded on Easter Sunday morning:- (29).

Denis O'Brien.  
Con. Murphy.  
Denis O'Keeffe.  
Tim Murphy.  
Hugh O'Brien.  
Denis Murphy.  
Daniel Murphy.  
John Noonan.  
Eugene O'Sullivan.  
Denis Cronin.  
Edmund Murphy.  
Denis Ring.  
Dan Healy.  
Tim Collins.  
Michael Murphy.  
Francis Hickey.  
Denis O'Connor.  
Edward Tucker.  
Patrick Buckley.  
Patrick Twohig.  
Michael Leahane.  
Thomas Clifford.  
Bernard Sullivan.  
John White.  
Patrick White.  
William Collins.  
Dan Scannell.  
Denis Long.  
Mortimer O'Callaghan.

We marched into Millstreet and met the other Companies of the Battalion in the town.

The arms of Rathduane Company on that day were:-

Six shot guns, with about 600 rounds of which  
about 200 had been loaded with slug.

Twelve pikes.

One .45 revolver and 12 rounds.

Twelve sticks of gelignite, which Denis O'Brien  
had got when leaving the Course in Cork in January.

We had no rifles.

The Battalion O/C., C.J. Meany, took charge in Millstreet and marched the whole Battalion to Con Rahilly's field at Mount Leader, South of the town. Some exercises were carried out there and some efforts at digging trenches were made. We do not know if these were for training purposes or were intended as part of the preparation of a defensive position. We were there for a few hours. As far as we know, no message of any kind came to us, and no one visited us from the Brigade or elsewhere. We had no knowledge of a parade of Volunteers at Carriganimma. If the Battalion O/C. knew, he did not tell us. We knew nothing of an intended Rising or of a landing of arms. The whole Battalion marched back to the town and was dismissed on the square about 6 o'clock. We marched back to our own area and dismissed.

Denis O'Brien was very much puzzled by this parade and the fact that nothing had happened on Sunday, because he had got information about ten days before from Dan Dennehy, Adjutant of the Rathmore Company, that an important job was timed for Easter Sunday and to be in readiness. When he got that information special efforts were made in the Company to have everything in the best order possible for Easter Sunday. Cartridges were loaded with slugs, and all the shot guns it was possible to get were secured. Con Murphy may have had that information also; he worked as if he knew something was on. We do not know where Dan Dennehy would have got the information, unless it was from Pat. O'Connor who was in Rathmore on holidays at the time and who returned to Dublin that week and was killed in the Rising.

No order came to the Company on Easter Monday. On Tuesday morning Jerry Twomey of Millstreet came to Murphy's and said the Rising was on since early on Monday. He said the Companies of the Battalion were mobilising, that we should take what men we could and take up a position South of the R.I.C. Barracks in Millstreet. When this order was conveyed to Denis O'Brien, the Company Captain, he assumed, because Twomey was one of the earliest men in the Volunteer movement and because O'Brien thought he was possibly an I.R.B. man, that he knew more than the Battalion O/C., and, in view of the information Denis O'Brien had earlier from Rathmore, he decided to carry out this order. The order was brought to him verbally by Timothy Murphy. Whether it came from the Battalion O/C. or not, Denis O'Brien accepted it as genuine and decided to obey it. He thought after Sunday's failure that nothing was going to happen, but, although he had no

further information on Tuesday morning when Murphy came to him, Twomey's message revived the possibility that a general Rising was taking place.

There were only four serviceable shot guns in the Company. Denis O'Brien had a Mauser rifle and 20 rounds, which he had got from Jerry Twomey in Millstreet on Sunday. He also had the .45 revolver. Five men were mobilised, viz., Denis O'Brien, Tim Murphy, Pat Twohig, Denis O'Keeffe and Tim Collins. We took 200 or 300 rounds of shot gun ammunition, 4 shot guns, the rifle and revolver, with what ammunition we had for them.

We went by the Southern road to Mount Leader, South of Millstreet, and took up a position covering the R.I.C. Barracks at a distance of 600 yards. We arrived in the position at about 12 noon and waited for a considerable time for someone to get in touch with us. No one did, except someone who brought us tea and had no information. About 5 or 6 o'clock, when no one had made contact with us, Denis O'Brien decided he would go into the town and seek information, leaving the other men in position. He went in from the East, saw the Barracks shut up and barred, and no sign of a policeman anywhere. He went to Radley's forge, as he believed him to be connected with the Volunteers, but was unable to get any information. He went back to his party. They remained in position till nightfall, and then, as no one had made contact with them, they returned to their own area.

Before going to Millstreet on Tuesday, Denis O'Brien had left orders that the remainder of the Company be mobilised to await any further order. On his return he found that this had been done. The men were then dismissed, after arrangements had been made to mobilise them quickly if any further message came. They were available at short notice during the remainder of the week, but no order came to the Company. Denis O'Brien never questioned Twomey afterwards as to the circumstances in which he gave the order on Tuesday. He assumed Twomey was in the I.R.B. There was no I.R.B. organisation in the Company area.

On the 10th May Murphy's and O'Brien's were raided. Tim and Con Murphy were arrested, but Denis O'Brien was not at home. A policeman named Sullivan, on the raiding party at O'Brien's, was asked by Mrs. O'Brien (Denis's Mother) what they wanted Denis for and replied, "To give him the lead". Denis O'Brien and other members of the Company were on the run for some time afterwards.

No order for the surrender of arms came to the Company. No arms were surrendered or lost in the raids.

There were no Fianna or Cuman-na-mBhan organisations in the Company area before Easter, 1916.

SIGNED:

Denis O'Brien  
Denis O'Keeffe

DATE:

3<sup>rd</sup> of November 1947

WITNESS:

Florence O'Donoghue

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