

ORIGINAL

W.S. 136

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
BURO STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21
No. W.S. 136

ROINN  COSANTA.

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 136

Witness

Patrick Crowley

Identity

Member of Gurteen & Tinkers Cross Coy. I.V.

Subject

Gurteen and Tinkers Cross Coy. I.V.
1913-1916.

Conditions, if any, stipulated by Witness

File No. S.782

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STATEMENT OF PATRICK CROWLEY, GURTEEN,
BANDON, CO. CORK.

PERIOD: OCTOBER, 1913, TO EASTER, 1916.

UNIT: GURTEEN AND TINKERS' CROSS COMPANY, I.V.

The Gurteen and Tinkers' Cross Company of the Irish Volunteers started at the end of September or early October, 1913, and we were in existence before the organisation was started in Dublin. Three brothers of mine, myself, and about eight other local men were members at the start. Our incentive was opposition to the Ulster Volunteers, and we had no policy apart from this until we fell into line with the all Ireland organisation when it was started. My family had been evicted out of our land in 1890 and were out of it for seventeen years. We were hostile to everything British and the police were always watching us.

We had a family tradition reaching back to 1798. My mother, whose maiden name was Mary Desmond, was born in 1857. When she was nine years of age her Grandfather, John Desmond, died at the age of 94. A brother of his, Denis Desmond, went to Wexford to fight in '98. Denis was married at the time. His wife was a Joyce, who became a convert. While he was away in Wexford she wore her husband's clothes working about the land and the neighbours thought it was himself. That saved him when he returned. John Desmond had been baptised in a chapel on the farm which was burned down in 1798. 93

About 1880 my father and a first cousin of my mother, Humphrey Desmond, went to England to stop the sale of cattle that had been seized for the non-payment of rent. These cattle were brought back to Dublin and sold there. Bandon and its neighbourhood were strongly Protestant and they were very much against the Catholics. The landlord, Frank Beamish, served a notice to quit on my father, Jeremiah Crowley, in 1886. Public meetings were held. After four years of law the case went to the House of Lords where my father was defeated and the eviction was carried out on 7th April, 1890.

The parish priest took an active part in the agitation which followed and after a while we got part of the land back. In 1904 I was bound to the peace for two years for knocking down the man who was minding the land for the landlord; the only defence that was made was that I was under 14 years of age at the time. My father had died in April, 1903, leaving thirteen children, the youngest a year old.

About 1907 there were many seizures and attempted seizures of cattle by the bailiffs. The day Hales' cattle were in the Pound in Bandon we took part in breaking the gate and freeing the cattle. John Hales and Patrick McCarthy got imprisonment afterwards. We started the "no rent" campaign and from about 1905 on the farmers were brought to Court and decrees got against them. We broke up most of the efforts of the bailiffs to seize cattle. Some of the farmers were in poor circumstances and were forced to make terms, though anyone who paid rent was boycotted. Some got up to five years' remission of rent when terms were made.

We attended Manchester Martyrs' Commemoration meetings in Bandon for years before the Volunteers were started, and were often broken up by the R.I.C.

The police paid special attention to us when we started marching, and we thought it likely that whoever we put in charge would be arrested. We decided, therefore, to make my brother, Francis (now a Doctor in England) Captain, although he was only a schoolboy, thirteen years of age, at the time. We thought they would hardly be likely to arrest him, and he was not arrested. He took charge and drilled us in all public parades. Another brother, William Crowley, was the organiser and held the money.

We had done a march to Kilpatrick before the start of the Volunteers in Dublin; about twenty took part in the march, though only twelve were members at this time. The police followed us as they did on all our marches. Later we held marches to Farnivane and Newcestown. We got little support at Newcestown at first. Farnivane was better and we took a club room there and held meetings. Farnivane became the most central point in the Company as we had more men from that side.

During 1914 we became better organised and appointed Officers. My brother, Francis Crowley, remained Captain, Frank Hurley was 1st Lieutenant, and Con O'Brien 2nd Lieutenant. I was the Company delegate to meetings, and I attended meetings in Cork regularly after the formation of the Cork Brigade. An ex-British Army man, Joe Lally, gave us some training. We had about 40 members at the end of 1914. The Redmond Split did not affect us at all; no one left the Company as a result of it.

The men paid a subscription of 2d or 3d a week into a Company fund for the purchase of arms and equipment. There were no funds for any other purpose and I had to pay my own expenses going to meetings. Men from the Company took part in the St. Patrick's Day and Manchester Martyrs' parades in Cork in 1915 and in the St. Patrick's Day parade in 1916.

After Ballinadee Company started in 1915 they got in touch with us and John Halesc came over to us. During 1915 parades were held three times a week and we had a march every fourth Sunday. On these marches we went to Killeady, Knockavilla, Newcestown, Kilpatrick, Crosspound, Crossbarry and Innishannon. One object of them was recruiting for the Volunteers. We did not get much support - an odd man here and there. There was no Company between here and Crookstown, but we had a few men scattered over a wide area. The people generally were against us; they had a very bad understanding of the situation. At the end of 1915 we had about sixty-four men.

We were at the parade and exercises at Ardfield early in 1916. In Clonakilty stones and bottles were thrown at us that day. On the first Sunday in April we broke up a recruiting meeting at Farnivane of which Lord Bandon was Chairman and which was attended by leading men of the town.

We bought twelve S.B. shot guns in Clonakilty at 27/6d each. Any man who was able to pay 10/- or more towards the cost was given a gun. We took two carbines from two R.I.C. men at Tinkers' Cross. They were on their way back to Farnivane from Bantry where they had been on duty at some big Redmondite or O'Brienite demonstration.

This was before 1916. Raids and searches followed. Police raided my house, searched hay ricks and turned oats in a loft. The D.I. apologised when they found nothing. The men of the Company were naturally anxious to see the carbines and fire a few shots. Tadg O'Brien used to get us a few rounds of ammunition out of Bandon Barracks, and we fired a few practice shots, though we had to be careful as the sound carried a long way. We raided some houses before 1916 and got a few shot guns.

At Easter, 1916, we had the following arms:-

Five rifles (including the two police carbines which we did not carry openly but kept concealed).

Forty-five shot guns, fourteen of which we had on loan from farmers in the area.

Four or five .22 revolvers.

We had about two dozen bayonets for the shot guns which had been made by a local smith.

We had no pikes or explosives.

We had between two and three dozen rounds for the rifles, and had a plentiful supply of shotgun ammunition, a good lot of which had been loaded with slug. All the men had belts of leather, made locally, with straps over each shoulder, and haversacks. We had no uniforms, no caps, puttees or bandoliers.

There was a meeting in Bandon about a week before Easter, 1916, at which the final arrangements were made for the Easter exercises. I think Pat Higgins was at that meeting. He had been here several times with us and used to stay overnight after attending one of our week night parades. He was here a short time before Easter. The orders for Easter Sunday were that we were to parade with all arms and equipment, good boots and socks, and be prepared for a week's journey. It was arranged that this Company would meet Ballinadee at Gurteen Cross Roads. We had no definite information that this was anything more than a week-end exercise, but as it was the first time we got an order of this kind we suspected there was something on. We understood that we were to march to somewhere beyond Macroom.

The following is a list of the Officers and men of the Company who paraded on Easter Sunday, 1916:-

Francis Crowley,	Gurteen.
Patrick Crowley,	do
William Crowley,	do
Michael Crowley,	do
Matt Healy.	
Joe Hyde.	
Dan Lordan,	Farnalough.
Jeremiah Mahony,	Farnivane.
Denis Harte,	Roughgra.
Tom Russell,	Mount Pleasant.
Denis Russell,	Farnivane.
Batt Russell.	
David Hurley.	
John Mahony.	
Humphrey Hurley.	
James Horan.	
Denis Hurley.	
Tim Hurley.	
Con O'Brien.	
Jeremiah Hyde.	
John Hyde.	
John O'Brien.	
Jerry Mahony.	

We mobilised at Gurteen Cross early on Easter Sunday morning, with the exception of a few men who were at Farnivane Mass and whom we picked up there. The Companies from Ballinadee, Bandon, Kilbrittan and Clogough met us at Gurteen Cross. All marched to Farnivane where we met the Kilpatrick Company and the remainder of our own men. The whole party went on to Bealnablath where we met the Ballinhassig Company. After a rest of about half an hour at Bealnablath we moved on to Kilmurray where we met the Cork City Companies. The whole force then marched to Macroom. It was somewhere on this road - about Lissarda, I think - that it became known to us that we were not going beyond Macroom. About twelve men of this Company were on bicycles. There were some horses and carts with the column and I remember the Hydes of Ballinhassig had a horse and van with provisions. Gurteen and Tinkers' Cross was as good a Company as there was on the road that day.

We returned to our own areas from Macroom on Monday. It was on Tuesday morning that we first heard of the fighting in Dublin. None of us had seen a paper on Sunday and we knew nothing about the countermanding orders of Eoin McNeill or about the loss of the arms ship.

I do not remember that we got any orders until towards the end of Easter Week. We had put all the Company arms in places of safety and on Friday or Saturday I handed back to the owners the fourteen shot guns we had on loan from local farmers. Towards the end of the week I got an order to go into Cork with a horse and cart to bring out the arms. As soon as the police who were watching us left outside my house at 12 or 1 o'clock in the morning I tackled the horse and started off. At the Half-way I was stopped by police, who told me I would be put under arrest if I did not return home. I had to come back. I believe some horses and carts did get in from this area.

No arms were surrendered in this Company although considerable pressure was put on us. The priest came from Farnivane to me to persuade me to surrender the arms. For some reason or other he thought we had Casement guns. I would not agree to surrender. He said we were a pack of fools, and that I had run all those boys into this trouble, that I could go aside now and they would all be arrested. There was a lot of confusion and no definite orders from anywhere. I called the men together, and, in view of all that had been said, and all the blame the neighbours were putting on us, I told the men that we would not surrender the arms but that we would stand our ground and if we were arrested it would save the rest of the Company. I said we would not resist arrest, but that if the men wanted to evade arrest they were free to do so if they thought it necessary.

I was in Bandon pig fair the day the attempt was made to arrest Seán Hales. I was arrested on the following Monday, 8th April. My brothers, Michael and William, were also arrested, and Matt Healy, Dan Lordan, Jeremiah Mahony and Joe Hyde. The military officer who was in charge of the raiding party asked who was Captain of the Company. I said my brother Francis was and that he was at School in Cork. They raided the Christian Brothers' College for him, but could not identify him, and the school authorities did not give him away.

I was at a meeting in the City Hall some time after our release in 1917. There was a dance on as cover for the meeting, and we were called away from the dance to a room upstairs.

There were 126 delegates at the meeting from all over the County Cork. The question of the action of the Brigade Officers at Easter, 1916, came up in the discussion, and the Hales were very strong against MacCurtain and MacSwiney. There was little support for the Hales, and the general feeling was that the leaders had acted on the orders they got from Eoin MacNeill and could not have done any more. The meeting was in favour of trying to build up the organisation again under the same leaders.

On Easter Saturday night, 1917, William Buckley, Michael Herlihy and myself hoisted the tricolour over the Town Hall in Bandon. It took until after 12 o'clock Mass on Sunday to get it down. Great numbers of people collected and there was great cheering before it was taken down. Michael Herlihy made an attempt to capture the flag but did not succeed.

SIGNED: Patrick Crowley

DATE: 4 . 5 . 1948

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WITNESS: Florence Donoghue