

**ORIGINAL**

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

BURO STAIRÉ MILÉATA 1913-21

No. W.S. 649

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 649

**Witness**

Stephen Holland,  
Adrigole,  
Skibbereen,  
Co. Cork.

**Identity.**

Member of Leap Company, 4th (Skibbereen) Battalion,  
Cork III Brigade, 1918 - ;

Later, Adjutant do.  
Subject.

National activities, West Cork,  
1918-1921.

**Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.**

Nil

File No. S.1941

Form B.S.M. 2

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STEPHEN HOLLAND, ADRIGOLE, SKIBBEREEN, CO. CORK,  
ADJUTANT, LEAP COMPANY, 4TH (SKIBBEREEN)  
BATTALION, CORK III BRIGADE.

In 1916 I was fifteen years of age having been born on the 25th December, 1901. I joined the Volunteers in the big days of 1918. Michael Collins was there that day and addressed the crowd in Leap. Leap Company then comprised Leap, Corran and Glandore, being divided up later into separate companies. Batt McCarthy was first Company Captain. After the conscription scare died out and for a good part of 1919, too, there was not much activity. Eight or nine of us used to meet together and Patrick Minihane was made Company Captain about the Winter of 1919. I was at a training camp in Glandore in August, 1919. There were the usual raids for arms, shot-guns and revolvers and there was even a rifle taken in the Company area and a "Peter-the-Painter", too.

I was in Brade Ambush on 2nd July, 1920. Each company was ordered to supply one man. Instead of this three men each came from eight of the Companies and seven or eight from the Leap Company. I brought my shot-gun but had no ammunition. I was served out with but two rounds as were the others. Three R.I.C. men and a Tan were ambushed, but our ammunition was hopeless. They had plenty and having got under cover they opened fire and all we could do was retire as best we could. Except for Pat Harte, it was our baptism of fire. It was an experience anyway. One R.I.C. man was hit but was only very slightly wounded owing to the type of ammunition we had.

On the 24th October, 1920, I got word to be at the house of Dan O'Donovan, better known as "Danl O." I was to be there at 9 o'clock and then myself and Danl O set out for Leap. We were late for the beginning of the ambush there but unlike the previous one this was successful. Four Tans were fired on and one was killed and two wounded, one of whom died afterwards. The ambush party consisted of five men and they had shot-guns with better ammunition than on the previous occasion. The Tans were under the impression that the attackers had come from Glandore and the next morning they went there from Leap with the object of carrying out reprisals. One, who was drunk, threw a grenade at a house, but so bad was his aim that it rebounded off the wall, burst and killed him. After this they desisted and went away.

There were three men of the Company went to the Brigade Training Camp at Kealkil during the first week of November, 1920. The Brigade Column was formed there. From then on Danl O was our Company Captain. Mick O'Donovan, Danl O's brother, fought at Kilmichael a couple of weeks after.

There was another ambush in the village of Leap on the 21st November, 1920, the Sunday before the Kilmichael ambush. There were only two Tans in the party ambushed and one was killed and the other wounded. We had about eight or nine with double barrelled shot-guns and one "Peter the Painter". The wounded Tan got into a concealed position and kept firing at us. It was as bright as the day and we could not go out to get the dead man's weapon so we had to leave our position by degrees.

On the following Wednesday the Tans evacuated Leap Barracks and we burned it that night and there was no enemy post in the Company area from that on until the Truce. However, we supplied men to the Column and provided security and billets for the Column when it entered our area.

There was a spy executed in Leap. He was an ex-British Army man who was sentenced in another area and sent into our area to be disposed of.

Danl O and myself were away with the Column from mid May, 1921, until the Truce. We had a fight with the Auxiliaries in Rosscarbery when one of our men was wounded while five or six of the enemy were killed. This was about the 28th June, 1921. There were up to ninety Auxiliaries altogether and they filled up to nine lorries or tenders and had a couple of armoured cars as well. We had four sections, our total being about forty-five men, that is, half the Column. The fight started on the outskirts of Rosscarbery when we met the Auxiliary scouts and the firing warned the enemy in the town. They had been there from the day before and had been raiding around Reenascreena and Barry intended to engage them. We had assembled in Donoghue's Yard, the nearest farm to the town, and Barry instructed the Column to waste no ammunition and reserve five rounds per man. Four of the Leap Company were with the Column in this fight - Mick and Dan O'Donovan, Batt McCarthy and myself.

Corran Company, which was part of Leap Company, originally supplied men for the Column also. Crosbie, 1st Lieutenant of the Company, organised the ambush at Leap on the 21st November, 1920. He was the driving force in the Company. Hegarty was at Kilmichael; Connolly was at Gaggin; Crosbie and Din Mahoney were at Ross. These latter were definitely the two "gunmen" of the Company, though this is not to take away from what the other members of the Company did. Jerh. Leary, another member of the Company, was killed at Crossbarry.

Glandore Company, originally part of Leap Company, also supplied its quota of men to the Column, too. Michael McCarthy and John Keane, Company Captain, were two of them. McCarthy joined the R.I.C. in his young days, went to France in the British Army and was wounded there. He came back to the R.I.C. and when Lord Mayor McCurtain was murdered in Cork he threw up his job in the R.I.C. and joined the Column. Keane had served with Cork I Brigade in the City before he came to West Cork and became O.C. Glandore Company. Breadagh Company area had men prepared to use arms and who did use arms generations before the period we are dealing with and their sons and grandsons followed in their footsteps and proved themselves worthy successors. One member of this Company shot the first spy in the Battalion area. This spy was not a native. He came from the Innishannon district, remote from Skibbereen.

There were two men of the Breadagh Company at Kilmichael - Jack McCarthy and Jack Hourihan. Tim McCarthy - brother of Jack - was with that portion of the Column that fought at Ross. Timmy

Minihane and Patrick J. Hourihan and Patrick C. Hourihan  
(cousins) were as active.

Signed: STEPHEN HOLLAND

Witnessed: [Signature], 1st Col

Date February 21<sup>st</sup> 1952

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No. W.S. <u>649</u>