

W. S. 953

**ORIGINAL**

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21  
BURO STAIRÉ MILITAIRÉ 1913-21  
No. W.S. 953

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21

STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 953

**Witness**

Timothy O'Mara,  
37 a High St.,  
Killarney,  
Co. Kerry.

**Identity.**

Section Commander Irish Volunteers,  
Killarney, 1917 - ;

Member of I.R.B. Killarney, 1917 - ;

Brigade O/C. Signals, Kerry No. 2 Bgde. 1920 - .

**Subject.**

Killarney Battalion Irish Volunteers,  
1917-1921.

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

Nil

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37A, High Street,

Killarney, Co. Kerry.

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I joined the Volunteers (my age being 19 years) when they were reorganised in 1917, and took part in the All-Ireland communications test in the late winter of that year, which was organised by G.H.Q. Another Volunteer, Pat Riordan, and myself received orders from Vice O/C. - Maurice Horgan - to take test despatch to Farranfore, but on arrival there we could not contact any Volunteer in the area and so we carried on to Tralee where despatch was handed to Brigade O/C Patrick Cahill and Adjutant William Mullins. I toured the battalion (Killarney) area with Maurice Horgan reorganising Listry, Ballyhar, Muckcross, Black Valley and Lissivigeen Companies, etc.

I was promoted Section Commander of "F" (Killarney) Company. I was sworn into I.R.B. by Maurice Horgan. As Section Commander I took part in parades, drilling. I transferred to Dublin in 1918 and joined B. Company, 3rd Battn. there. Seán Quinn was Company Captain of this Company and the Battn. O/C. was Comdt. Joe O'Connor. I took part in manoeuvres in the Dublin Mountains and mapping operations in Company area - Mount Street-Denzille Street. The mapping consisted of tracing side streets and back lanes. I was promoted Section Commander in B/Coy. 3rd Battn. and attended Battalion N.C.O. training classes - number attending about 25. Lieut. Seán Guilfoyle was instructor. As member of this Company I took part in emergency call-up to Harcourt St. Station under arms, when full muster of those to attend (except two) paraded there about 1918.

I attended special battalion training (engineering) class at Parnell Square, Dublin, learning how to make and use hand grenades, destruction of bridges and use of explosives. The late Noel Lemass and Hugh Houlihan were in charge of those classes. I was arrested at 43 York St., Dublin, in June 1918 whilst at a battalion parade and sentenced to three months in Mountjoy and Belfast Jails. (I lost employment then). Dr. Andy Cooney was O/C. prisoners in Mountjoy and the late Austin Stack of Kerry was O/C. prisoners in Belfast Jail.

I returned home to Killarney after release from Belfast Jail and rejoined "F" (Killarney) Company. To the Killarney Company I acted as instructor on home-made grenades, explosives, and general engineering and took part as well in the usual company activities, parades, drilling, despatch carrying - 1919/1920.

During the latter period of 1920 I toured the Killarney battalion area with Comdt. Tom Daly and Dr. Andy Cooney of Dublin, organising for formation of flying column. This tour entailed at the time checking of arms, ammunition, personnel in each company in Killarney battalion area. During the year 1920 I seized and raided for arms, rate books. During this period (1920) I became company signal instructor. I attended Brigade Council meetings at the end of 1920 with the late Padraig Devane, the late Humphrey Murphy was the Brigade O/C of Kerry No.2 Brigade, at which the Brigade A. S. U. was formed.

At the formation and mobilisation of the Kerry No.2 Brigade A. S. U. I joined same. Nelius McCarthy and I were selected from the Killarney F/Company 4th (Killarney) Battalion to be members of this Brigade A. S. U. { This Brigade A. S. U. assembled at the Gap of Dunloe where

a course of training in use of rifles and bombs, also drill, was carried out. This A.S.U. were in training there for about three weeks. Dan Allman, Rockfield, Faha, Beaufort, (R.I.P.) - who was killed at Headford Junction Ambush on British military on 21st March 1921, when this A.S.U. ambushed them - was Brigade Flying Column O/C. Thomas McEllistrim (now T.D.) was Vice O/C. and Jack Flynn of Bonane, Kenmare, was its training officer. It numbered about 30 strong.

After the period of training the Brigade A.S.U. moved from the Gap of Dunloe and travelled different parts of the brigade area. This Brigade A.S.U. took up ambush position at Dysart between Farranfore and Castleisland on March 16th 1921. I was placed in an outpost position between the ambush position and Castleisland. A feint attack was made on Farranfore R.I.C. Barracks, the object being to draw the enemy from Castleisland town to raid Farranfore R.I.C. Barracks, which meant the enemy would have to pass through the ambush position. I was armed and I was ordered to take up position with a signalling lamp near Reidy's house at Dysart - between ambush position and Castleisland and was in contact with a Volunteer of Castleisland Company - the late Dick Shanahan, who was to inform me of the approach of the enemy from Castleisland. Positions were taken up at 11 o'clock p.m. and we remained in ambush position until dawn - the enemy did not come out.

The Brigade A.S.U. proceeded to Scartaglin district (Drumulton) where a spy was arrested and tried and sentenced to leave the country - I believe the spy's name was Boyle. Whilst the Brigade A.S.U. was billeted here, the enemy attempted a round-up, but scouts warned the Column O/C. and the A.S.U. withdrew to other billets.

Later, I was appointed Brigade O/C. Signals of the Kerry No. 2 Brigade with rank of staff captain. As O/C. Signals I toured the brigade area and formed signalling units in each battalion and company area, appointed battalion signalling officers in each battalion.

I was proficient in the use of Morse and Semaphore signalling, and held classes for the training of the men in each Battalion area.

The training in signalling proved useful at an ambush which took place at Blackbanks near Brosna. The method used on that occasion was semaphore and I would place the date of the ambush about June 1921. I was not on the job myself but it was reported to me after the ambush.

Battalion A. S. Units were formed some months prior to the Truce and the members of the Brigade A. S. U. were absorbed in those battalion columns. With the 4th (Killarney) Battalion A. S. U. I proceeded with them from the Gap of Dunloe to travel to the outskirts of Killarney town to engage enemy patrol. This Battalion A. S. U. crossed the lower lake by boats from Tomies to Fossa shore near the Royal Victoria Hotel which was then unoccupied. No attack took place as scouts from Killarney F/Company gave word that the enemy patrol which was to be attacked had withdrawn off the town earlier than usual. The late Jim Coffey of the Gap of Dunloe, who was a member of the Brigade A. S. U., was in charge of this Battalion A. S. U.

During the Truce I attended a brigade training camp which was held at Lickeen, Glencar. The training officers in this camp were Roy O'Donoghue and Jack Flynn, Bonane, Kenmare. The course of training there included

training in night fighting, scouting, etc. I attended the Divisional Training Camp at Lombardstown, Co. Cork, as Brigade O/C. Signals of Kerry 2 Brigade; Liam O'Mahony was Divisional O/C. Signals and he was in charge of this class. While attending this class we were inspected and addressed by Divisional O/C. Liam Lynch (R.I.P.) and Divisional Vice O/C. Liam Deasy.

On return to my brigade area I held a brigade signalling camp at Kilcummin, which was attended by each Battalion O/C. Signals and two others, where a course of Morse, Semaphore, Field Telephone, wire tapping was carried out. Training camps were then formed and held in each battalion area for signallers and the attendance at same comprised the Battalion O/C. Signals and three Volunteers from each company in the battalion. With Divisional O/C. Signals (Liam O'Mahony) I inspected each battalion training signalling camp in the brigade area, when signalling training camp was completed. A company A.S.U. was formed in Killarney F/Company under Battalion O/C. Pat Allman (R.I.P.) which was formed in the event of hostilities reopening with the British forces.

Signed

*Timothy O'Mara*

(Timothy O'Mara)

Date

*3-6-54*

3.6.54

Witness:

*James O'Connor*

James O'Connor

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