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ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
BURO STAIRE MILEATA 1913-21
No. W.S. 1173

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 1,173

Witness

Michael Hynes,
Dungora,
Kinvara,
Co. Galway.

Identity.

Member of Kinvara Company Irish Volunteers,
Co. Galway, 1915 - .

Subject.

Kinvara Company Irish Volunteers,
Co. Galway, 1915-1921.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil

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STATEMENT BY MICHAEL HYNESDungora, Kinvara, Co. Galway.

I was born in Dungora in the parish of Kinvara on 28th August 1896. I went to Northampton N.S. until I reached the age of 15. Neither the Irish language nor the Irish history was taught in the school. My grandfather was a native Irish speaker. He was prosecuted and fined for having his name in Irish on a common cart. The fine was one penny and it was never paid. My father was a member of the Land League and later of the United Irish League. He was very keen on the Irish language and on Irish history. He often spoke to us about Emmet, Wolfe Tone, Mitchel and other Irish patriots and always hoped that eventually we would be free from English tyranny. He was very keen on the fight put up by the Boers and watched the progress of their struggle day by day. One night in the Spring of 1920 he got two ribs broken by members of the R.I.C. in Kinvara. It was through the teaching of my father in my own house that I learned something of the history of Ireland and my interest was sustained by the national newspapers which he was always purchasing and bringing home to the family.

I joined the Kinvara company of the Irish Volunteers in 1915. The company captain was John Burke of Cahermore. I was recruited into the company by Rev. Father O'Meehan, C.C., Kinvara. The strength was about 40. We did foot-drill on Sundays, and sometimes we went on route marches, with two members of the R.I.C. always in close attendance. Our instructors were the late Eamon Corbett, afterwards a member of Dáil Éireann, and Patrick "Hare" Callanan of Craughwell. We had no arms nor had we any instruction in the use of fire-arms. Father O'Meehan was our inspiration. He supplied us every week with papers like "Scissors and Paste" and

"Nationality" free of charge. He also supplied green uniform hats at his own expense. I remember that he told us that there was to be a big parade of Volunteers in Gort on St. Patrick's Day, 1916, but it did not materialise.

Our company knew nothing of the coming Rising, but Father O'Meehan advised us all to go to confession and Communion for Easter 1916. He also told us to wear our Volunteer hats on the occasion. On Easter Sunday morning, about half the company turned out for Mass and Holy Communion at Kinvara Church. The other half of the company did the same in Dooras Church, which was the second Church in the parish of Kinvara. I attended the parade of the company that Sunday evening as usual, at Cartron near Kinvara. It was not until Wednesday morning that I heard of the Rising in Dublin. It was Volunteer Pdraig Kilkelly who brought me word and at the same time told me to go at once to Clonasee where our company was mobilising. When I got to Clonasee, most of the company had already assembled there.

Father O'Meehan addressed the company, saying that the Rising was on in Dublin and that our company would very soon be engaged in the fight and that very likely some of us would be going to our deaths. He then said that if any Volunteer wished to leave he could do so and that nobody would think bad of him for doing so. "Any man who now wants to leave", said Fr. O'Meehan, "let him step out of the ranks". Nobody stepped out of the ranks. Fr. O'Meehan then gave us General Absolution and told us to collect all the arms and ammunition we could in the town of Kinvara and neighbourhood.

We marched into the town of Kinvara and collected all the shotguns in the town. Most of the owners gave them up willingly and Mr. Johnson, a hardware merchant, gave us all the guns and ammunition he had in his shop - about half a dozen guns. In all, we collected from 20 to 30 shotguns and

a good share of ammunition. We were on our way to Northampton to collect more guns when we saw a cycle patrol of R.I.C. coming towards us from the Gort direction. The R.I.C. party saw us about the same time and dismounted from their bicycles. We got orders from Captain Burke to take cover and open fire on the R.I.C. There was an exchange of shots which lasted only about a minute or two. The R.I.C. mounted their bicycles and retreated in the direction of Gort as fast as they could. There was nobody killed or wounded on our side. We heard that one member of the R.I.C. was wounded. That was about three o'clock on Wednesday evening on the Kinvara/Gort road about a quarter of a mile from Kinvara, which the R.I.C. had evacuated the day before.

We returned immediately to Kinvara and set about destroying the R.I.C. Barracks. We were on the point of breaking in the door with a sledge hammer when Fr. O'Meehan sent word to leave it as it was. We then marched to Dungora, a short distance from Kinvara, and had a meal which was prepared in a disused house. The meal consisted of bread, soup and beef which we ate with relish as we had nothing whatever to eat since morning and it was then well after 4 p.m. The bread and beef were given to us by shopkeepers in Kinvara; the bread by Mrs. Tyrrell and Mrs. O'Dea, who had bakery shops, and the beef by Mr. Michael Leach, butcher. After the meal we marched under Captain Burke in the direction of Moyode about 14 miles away, but when we got as far as Ballinderreen a dispatch rider met us and handed a dispatch to Captain Burke.

When Captain Burke had read the dispatch he marched the company back to Kinvara. He addressed us there and instructed us to hold our arms and to be ready for mobilisation early the following morning when he said he hoped to have definite instructions as to the further movements of the company. That night (Wednesday) we put up in houses round about the town but we got no further mobilisation on the following day

(Thursday). On Thursday night some of the Volunteers went home as they did not wish to impose on their neighbours. The next thing we heard was that the Rising was over in Dublin.

I was arrested the first week in May 1916, together with many others from the Kinvara Company. I was brought to Galway Jail by the R.I.C. and kept there for three days. I was then brought to Dublin by soldiers of the Notts and Derby Regiment with about 200 other Galway Volunteers. We were kept in Richmond Barracks in Dublin for about a week. There were 20 to 30 prisoners in the same room with me. We got no food except a few hard biscuits each day. We got no tea, but I think we got cocoa. There were no beds or bed clothes and we had to lie on the floor in the clothes we were wearing. There were Dublin and Wexford Volunteers in the room with me. I remember De Lacey and Michael Jordan from Enniscorthy. The Dublin Volunteers were very young and they told us a good deal about the fight in Dublin.

I was released after a week. Volunteer James Picker of our company was released with me. All the prisoners in the room I was in were released, because, as far as I know, we were all under 18 years of age, or the British military thought we were. I came home via Limerick to Dungora and worked away on my father's farm. Other members of our company were released in June or July 1916 and the remainder in December 1916. I did not re-join the company in 1917, as I had never ceased to be a member. I and a few others kept the company alive. We made collections of money for the prisoners and held meetings now and then.

The company was re-organised in 1917. John Burke, who was released at Christmas 1916, was elected captain. Padraig Kilkelly and William Quinn were the two lieutenants. The strength was about 20; later the membership increased to about 40. We attended a meeting in Ballyvaughan, Co. Clare,

in support of Eamon de Valera's election campaign. We marched through the streets in military formation preceded by the Kinvara Fife and Drum Band. During the General Election of 1918, I canvassed the greater part of the Kinvara Parish on behalf of the Sinn Fein candidates - the late Mr. Frank Fahy, who afterwards became Ceann Comhairle, Dáil Éireann. Volunteers Thomas Reidy of Towna, and Christopher Greene of the town of Kinvara were with me at this work.

When the Republican Police Force was set up I was appointed sergeant and had three or four men under my charge. They belonged to Kinvara Company. I did not hold the position of sergeant very long as I preferred the army to the police force. The Sinn Fein Parish Court often met in our house in Dungora. The Justices were Padraig Kilkelly, Lieutenant, Kinvara Company; Padraig Fahey of Ballycahalan, and Thomas MacInerney of Cahermore. The cases were mainly land disputes and some small cases of theft. The parties to disputes usually settled their differences on the advice of the Court. There was a case of a man named Connors from Dooras who stole money. The money was recovered, but I cannot remember the sentence on the case. A man was found guilty of maiming a cow. He was sentenced to a term of imprisonment and served his sentence in the Kilbeacanty Company area.

During the year 1920, several ambushes were prepared for the R.I.C. but they did not oblige by turning up at the required time. One of these ambushes was laid at Drimhasna. The R.I.C. were in the habit of going every day from their barracks in Ardrahan to Drimhasna. They were minding a farm of land belonging to Lord Ashtown. Thomas MacInerney, O/C. Ardrahan Battalion, ordered the ambush to be prepared. Captain John Burke, Lieutenant Padraig Kilkelly, Volunteers Seamus Davenport, Peter Burke, William Hynes, Joseph Kilkelly, Thomas Reidy and I took up positions and waited there four hours for

the patrol. Thomas MacInerney, O/C. Ardrahan Battalion, was not there himself. After four hours wait, we sent a man to Commandant MacInerney for further instructions and he sent back instructions to postpone the attack. We then withdrew. I learned after that three men from Ballinderreen Company were also in ambush at the same time for the same patrol. They did not contact our party and we knew nothing of their presence in our vicinity. They knew nothing of our party. They got no word to withdraw and the R.I.C. patrol surprised them in a hazel grove and opened fire on them. They escaped in the direction of Cahermore, leaving their guns behind them. They had no time to get to their guns when the R.I.C. opened fire on them. That night MacInerney's house at Cahermore was burned. A few stacks of corn belonging to a man named Higgins at the bridge near Ardrahan were also burned. The reason given by Commandant MacInerney for calling off the ambush was that several houses might be burned. The three men from Ballinderreen Company were Thomas Gibbons, William Jordan and ... Fahy.

I often did scouting work with Seamus Davenport watching the movements of the R.I.C. stationed in Kinvara. We found that they often went out the Dooras road for a mile or so. Lieutenant Kilkelly, Lieut. Patrick Loughnan of Beagh Company and a few others took up positions on the Dooras road to disarm them. The R.I.C. patrol went to 200 yards of the place we were concealed behind the fence of the road and then stopped and turned about and returned to Kinvara. The patrol was discontinued after that. Lieut. Kilkelly and several others waited in the same positions several nights, but they did not come out. That would be about September or October 1920.

About this time also, ambushes were laid at least twice on the Kinvara/Ballinderreen road and twice on the Kinvara/Ardrahan road for parties of R.I.C. numbering about six who

patrolled the roads between Kilcolgan and Kinvara and Kinvara and Ardrahanon bicycles once a week. The R.I.C. never turned up at the time we had the ambushes prepared and it was never possible to mobilise sufficient Volunteers to attack them on their return journeys from Kinvara. On the occasions that we waited in ambush for them there were 15 to 20 Volunteers armed with shotguns. Captain John Burke and Lieutenant Padraig Kilkelly were in charge of the parties who were drawn from the Kinvara and Ballinderreen Companies.

I cannot remember what incident, if any, occurred to cause the burning of our house by the R.I.C. and Auxiliaries about the end of November 1920. About 10 or 11 o'clock at night two lorry loads of them arrived at the house which they had often raided before then. My father and mother, my sister Mary and a few neighbouring girls were in the house at the time. The R.I.C. put them all out, saying that they were going to burn the house. They allowed them to take nothing out of the house with them. The house was thatched and when it had been burning for a little while a big explosion took place inside. They also burned the outhouses except the barn. Following the burning, my father slept in a hut covered by corrugated iron and my mother and sister slept with neighbours.

About this time, also, Lieut. Patrick Loughnan and his brother Henry of Beagh Company were arrested in their home at Shanaglish and brought in to Gort R.I.C. barracks. I heard that a man named Carroll from the Tubber, Co. Clare, area was arrested at the same time and was a prisoner in Gort. Carroll told Padraig Fahy of Ballycaghan, and now of Tullyra, and Padraig Kilkelly that 12 R.I.C. men dressed only in shirts and pants went into the Day Room in the barracks in Gort and beat the two brothers around the room until blood was running from their ears and noses, and that when the R.I.C. left the Day Room, he heard Patrick say to his brother: "We'd better

say the Rosary as they are going to finish us". Everybody knew at the time that the R.I.C. bought a rope in Coen's shop in Gort and tied the two brothers to the back of a lorry and dragged them along the road to Drimhasna where the Auxiliaries were stationed at the time. I heard of nobody who actually saw them being dragged behind the lorry.

Their naked bodies were found in a pond near Drimhasna Castle. They were badly mutilated and burned. Patrick's back was the only part of his body that was not blackened by burns. He was evidently thrown on his back before being set on fire. Henry's body was scorched all over. Their arms and legs were broken and their faces blown away.

When we heard that the bodies were in the pond, my father got ready to bring them to our barn. (Our house had been burned by this time). He yoked a horse and, with the assistance of most of the Kinvara Company, brought back the two bodies to the barn where they were waked. They were identified by their sister. The remains were confined and brought to Kinvara/^{Parish} Church at midnight, the Kinvara Company forming a guard of honour. They had previously been anointed by Canon Fahy, Kinvara. They were buried next day in Shanaglish. The Kinvara Company again formed a guard of honour and marched in the funeral procession part of the journey to the burial ground at Shanaglish.

A few nights after the funeral of the Loughnan brothers, the R.I.C. paid us another visit and this time burned the barn where the Loughnans had been waked. They also burned our hay and corn and took away all our fowl. They threatened my father night after night. On one of these occasions my sister Mary expressed concern for my father who had been taken out of the house in his bare feet. She thought they were going to shoot him and said so to one of the Auxiliaries. He said earnestly in reply: "Pray to God and the Blessed Virgin.

That's the only hope you have. They are a terrible crowd".

There was a spy executed by shooting in the Winter of 1920. His name was Morris and he was a native of Loughcurra Kinvara. He was an ex-R.I.C. man and tramped about the country like a beggar. I do not know whether he had a pension from the R.I.C. No priest attended him before execution. We thought that if the priest was called he might intercede for him and influence us against our better judgment. We made him say an Act of Contrition before he was executed. We had no doubt of his guilt. One incident in which he was concerned, that I remember, concerned a raid on the house of a family named Gorman of Moy, a mile and a half from Kinvara. Morris was in a crowd of men who were talking after the day's work. A few Volunteers were in the crowd also and Seamus Davenport said to them that a few others and himself were going to sleep in Gorman's that night. Gorman's house was raided early the next morning and it was the only house in that district that was raided.

Before Christmas 1920, Volunteer Seamus Davenport went on a visit to Mid-Clare Brigade. He went to Kilfenora, as well as I can remember. He was back at Christmas in our own company area. His visit to Clare lasted about a month during which time he took part in an ambush of R.I.C. at Inagh. He also told me that he had arranged for me and my brother, William, Lieut. Padraig Kilkelly and his brother Joseph, and Padraig Fahy of Ballycahalan to join a flying column in the Mid Clare Brigade. We were not able to do much at home as we had only shotguns and we were delighted at the thought of whole-time active service in Clare. I went to Mid-Clare in February or early March 1921. Padraig Kilkelly, Padraig Fahy and my brother Willie had gone a few weeks before. Joseph Kilkelly went with me. When we arrived at Tullagha, Kilfenora, we got a very cordial reception from Sean McNamara,

Commandant of the 6th Battalion; Andy Donoghue, Commandant of the 5th Battalion, and Peadar O'Loughlin, Vice O/C. Mid Clare Brigade. They gave us rifles, ammunition and equipment immediately on our arrival. We were well clothed before we left our own area.

The first job I remember doing in Clare was to help to collect the rates in the parishes of Kilfenora and Ballyvaughan. Patrick Ward, Patrick O'Loughlin and Sean McNamara were with me and we were armed with rifles. Ward and O'Loughlin were members of the Mid Clare Flying Column. The 5th and 6th Battalions combined to form a small mobile unit and I was attached to it. The two Kilkelly brothers, Padraig and Joseph, Davenport, my brother Willie and Padraig Fahy were also attached. In fact, the six of us who went to Clare from Galway all belonged to this unit which comprised about 12 men in all. It joined with other units of the same kind for big operations. The ratepayers paid us willingly and we handed over the money and books to a Brigade Officer. I think that the work on the collection of rates was completed by the 1st April 1921.

I remember one Sunday morning we sniped R.I.C. at Ennistymon from a range of 500 yards. They were entering their barrack after second Mass. I cannot say whether we hit any of them. The distance was too far for accurate shooting, but we were not able to get a view of the barrack from any nearer position. Andrew Donoghue, O/C. 5th Battalion, was in charge with Padraig Kilkelly (O/C. Mobile Unit) second in command. Others who took part were Ward, O'Loughlin and the six of us from Kinvara.

I remember it was towards the end of May that we attacked a party of Marines from the Coastguard Station at Ballyvaughan. The station was one mile outside the town. The coastguards had been unarmed up to a few days before the day of the attack.

Their station had been fired at while they were unarmed in the hope that they would be supplied with arms which it was hoped could be captured from them. The first day they got the arms they brought them into the town when they came on foot for provisions. They were shouting: "Where are the Shinners now?" They came into town again next day. The third morning they came we were in ambush positions in the town before they arrived. There were about 30 or 40 of us altogether including the mobile unit. Sean MacNamara, O/C. 6th Battalion, was in charge.

The Marines (about 11 or 12) came marching into the town. They came singly with about three or four paces between them as far as I can remember. They were dressed in khaki. They had taken the precaution of 'phoning the Post Office in Ballyvaughan before leaving their station. Some of our men, including Pdraig Kilkelly, Patrick O'Loughlin and my brother Willie, were in the Post Office at the time. The post-mistress was Miss Molly Grant from Claremorris. She was very sympathetic to the I.R.A. and would have answered "Yes" to the inquiry: "Is everything O.K. in town?", but she was not allowed by our men as they thought that it would injure her in her position if she did so.

We had taken up positions about 4 a.m. I was in a little cabbage garden inside the wall of the road at the right hand side of the Marines as they entered the village. I said to myself that it was very early for white cabbage which was very good in the garden. When the leading Marine came to about 40 yards of the Post Office we were to open fire. They were all then inside the ambush position. Immediately the first shot was fired, all the attacking party opened fire almost simultaneously. The Marines put up very little resistance and ran back the way they had come except for two that were killed, and two that were seriously wounded. I think that

the majority of the remainder were slightly wounded. We captured four rifles and a quantity of ammunition. I do not think there were any reprisals.

In spare time we attended parades of local companies and instructed the Volunteers in the use of the rifle. We did not allow them to fire any rounds as ammunition was too scarce and precious at the time. We gave instruction in aiming, loading and unloading. Shortly after going to Clare I remember we were to go into the town of Lisdoonvarna to attack an R.I.C. town patrol. We heard, however, that the R.I.C. were on the alert and positioned in the town waiting for us so it was decided not to enter the town in the circumstances.

I think it was after the attack on the Marines that we took up ambush positions at Kilnamona about four miles from Ennis on the Ennis/Ennistymon Road. We expected to attack three or four lorries of British forces that passed that way almost every day. We were assembled the night previous at Hegarty's house at Kilnamona where Fr. Hamilton (I think) heard the Confessions of about 100 Volunteers who were to take part in the engagement next day. Positions were taken up at dawn on one side of the road only and right inside the fence. Frank Barrett and Peadar O'Loughlin were in charge. The mobile unit to which I was attached took up positions at the side nearest to Ennis under the command of Peadar O'Loughlin. We were to get on to the road immediately the lorries passed and open fire on them from the rear. We remained in position until 3 p.m. The British forces did not turn up and we withdrew, after releasing many persons who, in passing the way, had seen us and whom we had to hold as a safety measure.

A few weeks before the Truce, an ambush was laid for a party of British troops and R.I.C. who came out for a supply

of water in two lorries from Corofin to Inchiquin House. They usually came about 11 a.m. every day. Thirty or forty Volunteers took up positions in a wood close to where they obtained the supply of water. The enemy party did not turn up until about 4 p.m. in the evening, when the ambush party had given up hopes of their coming and had scattered about the place. The R.I.C. and British forces were warned of our presence by somebody in or about Inchiquin House and they withdrew in the direction of Corofin as fast as they could go. They returned with reinforcements but we had gone when they arrived. This was only a week or two before the Truce.

I was sworn into the I.R.B. in 1918 by Padraig Fahy at a hurling match at Ardrahan, but I cannot remember attending any meetings of the Brotherhood. I helped in the collection of the Dáil Éireann Loan. It was very well supported in the parish of Kinvara. Some money (maybe £10 or £20) was put into the Loan by the Kinvara Sinn Fein Club. It was put in my name and that of Michael Hanlon. We never heard a word about it since and it was never repaid as far as I know.

Four houses were burned by the enemy in the company area namely, Kilkelly's of Towna, Staunton's of Clonaslee, Quinn's of Cahervonneen, and Hynes's of Dungora (my father's house and barn).

When Quinn's house was burned, a number of men were playing cards in it just when the party arrived to burn it. These men were compelled to strip off all their clothes and throw them into the burning house. They were then compelled to walk along the road bare naked for two miles and to lie naked on the road for some time.

None of the R.I.C. in the area was sympathetic except two named Toolan and McDermott. These two gave a few hints about raids, but in most cases the Auxiliaries gave them no prior warning of impending raids and the information they

passed along through a member of the Cumann na mBan came very seldom. The local people were most loyal to the I.R.A. and I could not find words to do justice to their loyalty and hospitality right through the struggle. Nor can I find words adequate to give an idea of the devotion and loyalty of Cumann na mBan. They did wonderful work as scouts and dispatch riders and were very successful as Intelligence officers. They brought clean clothes to Volunteers on the run. I would say that their most difficult assignment was to have to remain in their own homes and there, along with their parents, meet the masked midnight raiders who came to threaten and bully and burn out their homes.

The names of the members of Cumann na mBan I remember are:

Annie Kilkelly, sister of Lieut. Pdraig Kilkelly, and of Volunteers Joseph and Michael Kilkelly.
She is now Mrs. Duane of Kinvara.

Annie Higgins, Ardrahan.

Katie Fogarty, now in U.S.A.

MH KATIE ~~Nellie~~ Hanbury, now in U.S.A.

Mary Hynes, Dungora, Kinvara, sister of Volunteer William Hynes and myself.

In conclusion, I would like to relate an incident that may give some idea of the marksmanship of the Auxiliaries in our area. One morning, about 10.30 or 11 a.m., in the month of December 1920, Captain Thomas Gibbons of Ballinderreen Company, Pdraig Fahy, Intelligence officer, Lieutenant Pdraig Kilkelly and my brother, Volunteer William Hynes were having a chat in the ruins of our burned house which was about 500 yards from Kinvara on the Kinvara/Ardrahan road. Volunteers Joseph Kilkelly and James Purcell were with me in Hanbury's house a hundred yards nearer to Kinvara. A lorry load of Auxiliaries passed the two houses going in the direction of Kinvara. My sister Mary, a member of Cumann na mBan, told me that the Auxiliaries had got down from the

lorry at a bend on the road between Hanbury's and Kinvara. I ran on to the road to warn Gibbons and the others in the ruins of our house. Fire was opened on me the moment I reached the road and I was called on to surrender. I ran the 100 yards without being hit, although six or seven Auxiliaries were firing all the time from kneeling positions, at a range not more than 200 yards. The Auxiliaries had evidently seen the Volunteers in the ruins but did not pull up to attack them. Instead, they drove on for about 200 yards, then dismounted and stole along the fence of the road on foot towards the ruined house. They followed us through the fields for about half a mile, firing all the time, but we all escaped without being hit. None of the Volunteers was armed except Lieut. Kilkelly, who had a revolver.

Signed: Michael Hynes
(Michael Hynes)

Date: 26th May 1955
26th May 1955.

Witness: Con Moynihan
(Con Moynihan)

