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ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
BURO STAIRE MIL
No. W.S. 1210

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 1,210

Witness

Michael Carroll,
12 St. Alphonsus Ave.,
Drumcondra,
Dublin.

Identity.

Section Commander,
"A" Company, Third Battalion,
Dublin Brigade, 1918 - .

Subject.

"A" Company, Third Battalion,
Dublin Brigade, 1917-1921.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil

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STATEMENT BY MR. MICHAEL CARROLL,

12, St. Alphonsus Avenue, Drumcondra, Dublin.

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In the summer of 1917 I joined the Irish Volunteers at 41, York St.; Unit - A. Company, 3rd Battalion, Dublin Brigade. Seán Guilfoyle was O/C, Seán Goulding 1st Lt., Peadar O'Meara 2nd Lt., and Paddy Byrne and Leo O'Brien were Section Commanders. The activities included drilling, musketry classes, signalling classes and first-aid.

1918:

Activities as above continued until the D.M. Police made repeated raids and 41, York St. had to be abandoned. New headquarters for the company was established at 144, Brunswick St., Dublin, and the usual activities continued there except the drilling. On the 11th November, 1918, the Sinn Féin Bank at No. 6 Harcourt St. was attacked by ^a pro-British mob who were celebrating the armistice. Owing to the attack on No. 6, A. Company was ordered to take up armed duty there and armed patrols were formed and sent out at intervals to cope with further attacks that arose. This was my first armed patrol, also my first experience in handling small firearms, or arms of any kind for that matter. About the same time several members of the company had been arrested at Rathfarnham while on manoeuvres. Being on outpost duty I avoided arrest. The company were on duty during the 1918 Sinn Féin election.

1919:

The year 1919 was more or less uneventful for

most members of the company. The activities such as classes continued. We also cycled to Bodenstown for the Wolfe Tone Commemoration, and marched at Thomas Ashe's funeral.

1920:

The residences of ex British Army officers in the area were raided for arms by special squads from the unit. In company with Lt. Seán Goulding and Frank O'Grady, we raided and searched a house at the corner of Nassau St. and South Frederick St. People on the premises were held up and kept away from all telephones in the building. The search lasted about an hour.

At the Fianna Hall in Camden St. all members, with the exception of three, took the Oath of Allegiance to the Republic in the presence of Brig. Dick McKee, Comdt. Jos. O'Connor and Capt. Seán Guilfoyle.

In September, 1920, the area allocated to A. Company was as follows: starting at Kelly's Corner, S.C.Rd., Camden St., Wexford St., Redmond's Hill, Aungier St., Sth. Gt. George's St., Dame St., Parliament St., Grattan Bridge.

November 1920:

After Bloody Sunday many members were arrested and the remainder of the company were ordered 'on the run'. In connection with some arrests, it may be well to mention here that the following members of the company were members of a soccer football team: Joseph Lynch, Stephen Keys, myself Hon. Sec., Tom Kelly, Andy Edgeworth (a member of B. Coy., 3rd Battalion). We trained with another club-Windsor A.F.C. - at 16, Usher's Quay, Dublin. For

months previous to J. Lynch's arrest, a man by the name of Byrne, of the labouring class, wearing shabby clothes, cap and muffler, frequented the club at above address. Arriving at about 7 o'clock p.m. each evening with army boots, socks and shirts (which he had obtained at Ship St. barracks), he offered them for sale to those present. Byrne was a quiet unassuming fellow, who appeared to be keenly interested in card games and the last man in the world one could suspect as a spy. It came as a great surprise when I learned that he had been shot by a party of armed men at a publichouse in Queen St., Dublin. Byrne was known to conduct the raid on Usher's Quay the night J. Lynch and many others were arrested. Joseph Lynch recognised him.

Before the arrest of Capt. Paddy Byrne an armed patrol operated in Grafton St., South King St. and St. Stephen's Green area. I was one of the members who participated in that patrol.

On 26th December, 1920, all members of the company were mobilised for Jack Clarke's flat at 66, Aungier St. This was the launching of the operations in the area that would be, (in a few months to follow), known as the Dardanelles. Leo O'Brien was sent from Battalion H.Q. to issue instructions. Section Leaders were told to inspect the area and to show the men quick exits after attack. All previous training in bomb throwing and rifle practice was of very little use at this period, as the whole method of street fighting now adopted changed completely. Leo told us that the area was a very busy one for British military vehicles, and our job from now on was to attack

every one that passed through. A sample of the grenade was then shown to each member present, followed by a short instruction on how to use it. Section Leaders were ordered to carry a .45 and a grenade. The men of the unit could carry grenade only, or .45 or other smaller weapon only. They were not expected to carry both, although the officer carried ^a.45 only. Next came the request: "I want a few men to volunteer as bombers". Strange enough there was no reply and Leo selected the men to do the needful. The training for the coming fight was as follows: The gun - point it and press the trigger; The grenade - hold it in your right hand, lever pressed into palm, pull ring with index finger left hand, all in a few minutes. It looked as if all the previous years had been completely wasted as far as training was concerned.

On the following night it was arranged by Leo that a consignment of grenades be handed over to the company, and John Sliney carried a small canvas bag containing about a dozen grenades to the premises where I worked, Carroll & Co. (trunk suitcase and general woodware manufacturers) at 26-28 Cook St., Dublin. (My father was senior partner of the business Carroll & Co., Carco Works, Cook St., Dublin). The grenades were stored there and handed out to the unit as required. When this lot ran out of stock they were again replenished. Also on the premises were service rifles, shotguns, 22 m/m rifles, sets of web equipment. The Q.M. of the Dublin Brigade, Paddy McGuirk, called to the premises daily in connection with the firm of G. Smith & Co. Ltd., Merchants Quay (only a few yards away). Seán McGarry was also a frequent visitor and Luke Kennedy was employed there in connection with the latter as an electrician.

1921:

Armed patrol of the area commenced immediately the grenades were issued, the whole company participating. I think the first ambush was launched at York St. - near Aungier St. Seán Doyle was in charge. Shortly afterwards he was arrested. Attacks were made on all classes of British manned vehicles along the line up to Montague St. corner. There were many amusing incidents during the spell in the Dardanelles. One was in Wexford St.: an armoured turret car was passing along at a medium speed and James Harcourt lobbed a grenade into the open turret. A few seconds later the same grenade was thrown back on the roadway - it was a dud. Another night at Jacob's, corner of Bishop St. and Diggs St., we prepared to attack a lorry coming towards town direction. James Cluskey, seeing the vehicle approaching, pulled the pin from the grenade, threw the pin away, only to find that the approaching vehicle was a large bread van. There was poor Cluskey holding the grenade in his hand. Even after a lengthy search for ~~the~~ the pin^{it} could not be located. I had my pants held up with the aid of inch nails. I was able to come to the rescue by fixing a nail instead of the missing pin. About the month of March, 1921, the unit became somewhat thinned out and the approaching bright nights made it necessary for the company to operate in half companies. The sections paired off as follows: No. 1 and No. 4 sections; No. 2 and No. 3 sections. Section Leaders at this stage were: No. 1, T. Jones; No. 2, M. Carroll (myself); No. 3, S. Keyes; and No. 4, M. Hoare.

Joe Byrne was Lt. for a short period before being

transferred to the A.S.U., after which Peter McCormack, Lt., took over. The sections concerned with the latter officers were 2 and 3. James Keogh, Lt., had charge of 1 and 4 sections, which operated from Thursday to Saturday each week. No. 2 and 3 operated on Monday to Wednesday each week, each section keeping to the side allotted during the activities. It would not be possible for me to describe all the actions, as they were carried out in a hit and run manner. The main idea was to throw the grenade at the armed vehicle and get away as soon as possible. I can recall the biggest ambush in Camden St., while with the No. 4 section. On a Saturday evening we were tipped off that a lorry with British soldiers was moving along from Portobello Barracks direction, and some of the section were directed into Montague St., also on the opposite side to Camden Row. Jimmy Keogh and I saw some young men loitering outside Sinnott's publichouse and we quietly advised them to move away, explaining the reason. They refused to do so and gave out abuse, so we told them to stay where they were. Jim and I went across the street and stood at the corner of Montague St. The vehicle was now approaching and Jim ordered me to cover him, while proceeding to throw the grenade. From two yards range Jim raised his hand and a soldier at the corner of the vehicle ducked. As he did so, the grenade sailed into it. A couple of seconds later, a second grenade, thrown by Christy Murray, followed in, and both exploded inside, shaking the lorry from side to side as it sped down Wexford St. Jim and I hurried to join the remainder of the patrol in Montague St. As we did so, the men who were loitering at the publichouse could be seen sprinting like hares along Camden Row. This was their last appearance at Sinnott's exterior.

Section Leader Keys had a flair for doing things in a big way. His chance came when a large convoy of Tans crawled up Wexford St. (I think it was late June, 1921). At the time a funeral was passing towards Whitefriar St. Dave Browne and I stood at the corner sizing up the large force, comprising an armoured car in front, about four or five tenders of caged Tans, and an armoured car at the rear. As the armoured car passed by Montague St., Stephen Keys lashed a grenade at the first tender that came level with Dave and I. It exploded at the radiator, only a yard from where we had just stood. At the sound of the explosion the horse drawing the hearse galloped off with the corpse and the slow-moving mourners scrambled for shelter. Dave Browne and I sprinted along Montague St. and Stephen Keys made for Camden Row. The Tans, who were facing Montague St., immediately opened fire in very rapid succession at Dave and I while making our getaway. While running we noticed two D.M.P. men in uniform crouched in at Gorevan's stores. In the din we thought they had joined in the firing also. (Thinking they could be members of the Igoe Gang, we reported the incident). When we reached the turn at the left side, the second grenade exploded. With .45 in hand, I proceeded with Dave to get out of the place. We took a wrong turning, got into a house over a small wall and finally into a house in Cuffe St. I opened the hall door slowly and saw some Tans on the opposite side of the street near Mercers St. We waited, and soon they retired towards Wexford St. As they did so, we made a run for it towards Mercers St. The Tans saw us run and they charged after us pell-mell. We got into Digges St.

and made for the second house on our left. (While waiting in the house Dave thought he had been hit, so I told him to hold on). We were given refuge in a drawing-room. I looked out into the street from the window and saw the Tans below. Dave sat on a chair and I told him to wait until I dumped my gun. I went down to the back yard and over a cistern in the lavatory I placed my gun and spare ammunition. Immediately I called back to the room and was told that he had gone. I followed but failed to locate him. The affair had to be reported to O/C Grady and I proceeded to "The Cosy" to make my report. On meeting Section Leader M. Hoare in Cornmarket, he explained that he would shake the hand of the man who threw the second grenade. He was referring to the period of time between the first and second grenade explosions. That was a memorable ambush. (Participants: S. Keys, Section Leader; ~~xxxx James Keogh~~, James Harcourt, William Oliver, Christy Murray (on the Camden Row side). M. Carroll, Section Leader, and Dave Browne on the Montague St. side). A report of this action was published in the "Irish Independent" the following morning, stating that two men were fired on while running through Montague St. after an ambush.

On the day of the Custom House attack, the following men were ordered to raid premises in South William St. in connection with the Belfast boycott campaign at 11 a.m. The following men took part in the raids for books etc.:

J. Keogh, T. O'Grady, J. Tumbleton, M. Hoare, J. Cluskey, M. Carroll, Dave Browne, C. Murray, S. Keys.

Outside the area:

Joe Byrne, J. Keogh, T. Jones. S. Keys and myself

were detailed to raid the Rathmines Post Office for telephone equipment at 7.30 a.m. Two attempts were made without success. On the third attempt Stephen Keys and I succeeded in getting the required goods. As the office was manned by military, Stephen and I held up men (with the equipment) outside the Post Office. I proceeded with my bike and telephone gear to the Q.M., Seán Tumbleton, but when I arrived there I was politely told to take the stuff away from the house as the place was being watched, so I could not do any more than take it into my precious collection already in the factory in Cook St.

Dartmouth Square ambush attempt:

All Section Leaders were detailed to select one reliable man each to aid 'C' Company to attack a tender of Tans that passed under the railway bridge at Dartmouth Square each evening between 7 and 8 o'clock. A night was chosen and plans made for 'A' Company. The orders were: "A" Company to hold off any attacking military or Tans that would cross Portobello Bridge from Eissenfield House after the explosion on the tender would be heard. Martin Hoare, J. Tumbleton, J. Cluskey and Breslan actually stood on the bridge; J. Keogh and T. Jones on the side near Mountpleasant; J. Bolger and I stood near the bridge at the side of the canal. Bolger asked permission to go to the gents' toilet in a publichouse at the corner near Portobello Bridge. I accompanied him across the road. The tender to be bombed came up slowly towards the bridge, the Tans glaring at us as we calmly moved along in the opposite direction. The lads on the bridge appeared to attract them most. The tender halted on the bridge and in a few seconds Jim Cluskey, Martin Hoare,

Seán Tumbleton and J. Breslan were beaten up and kicked all about the place. Guns were found on Cluskey and Breslan. Hoare and Tumbleton were released on the following day as they proved to be civil servants and, therefore, thought to be law-abiding citizens. Bolger and I went towards the S.C. Road and proceeded to the railway bridge, from which the bomb was to be dropped. The first man of 'A' Company to be seen was Christy Murray, peeping out from behind a hall door not far from the bridge. We were ordered to leave the area as soon as the bomb was dropped. The tender passed under and, on hearing the bang, we left the area in pairs, that is, what was left of us. I believe the bomb when being dropped hit an iron girder on the bridge. The tender passed along without any damage being done to it. In the process, one man on the bridge was injured. That was the first occasion on which 'A' Company members were arrested while participating in any attacks. The whole thing was a complete failure. Two men from 'A' Company or any other Company could have done the job alone, successfully.

About the end of June, 1921, a Company Council was held in the Phoenix Park near the Army sports' ground and the Dog Pond. Larry Ledwidge, Battalion I/O; Jos. O'Connor, Comdt.; Seán Guilfoyle, Vice Comdt.; F. O'Grady, O/C 'A' Company, James Keogh, Lt.; Section Leaders T. Jones, M. Carroll, S. Keys, M. Hoare, S. Tumbleton Adjt., C. Murray, J. Harcourt and P. Bolger were present. The purpose of the meeting was fully explained to all present by the Battalion I/O. He produced a photograph (postcard size) of a fair complexioned young man by the name of O'Neill who was said to be a former member of the company - I remember seeing him at 144, Brunswick St. about 1919. The photograph was shown to each man present,

who was told to examine it thoroughly and remember the face. Being interested in photography, it was suggested that I should take the photo and have a few copies made, which I did. We were instructed that O'Neill frequented a house in Back Lane, off Nicholas St., and got an order to watch the house. When seen, O'Neill was to be shot. The members of the company mentioned above kept vigil on the house in question. In order to take off suspicion, the squad on the job were frequently changed. The truce came but up to that time our man did not put in an appearance.

It is said that O'Neill was responsible for the arrest of Simon Donnelly and other members of the battalion. As a former member of the battalion, O'Neill was a very dangerous man to the I.R.A. here in Dublin and a great asset to the British intelligence, to which department he had been attached.

The general attack on all vehicles and patrols in the city:

The final Company Council was held in a workshop in the Queen's Theatre building. Frank O'Grady announced that a general attack by the Dublin Brigade would be launched on all British vehicles and patrols on the following night at 7 p.m. Sections Leaders were ordered to pick the most suitable men, not exceeding two in number. My selection was Danny Kane (later killed in the Civil War) and his pal, Grogan. They both resided in Ranelagh. All men were advised to take cash with them (10/- or 15/-); it would help some of the lads to go to a hotel for the night as it would be impossible for them to travel far in any part of the city once the attacks started. All was set. As I arrived at Christ Church a few minutes before

7 o'clock, Seán Tumbleton, who was stalling there, called me over and told me the whole thing had been abandoned. Having a bike with me, I raced down to meet Kane and Grogan. They were not at Hely's, where it had been arranged we would meet, so I cycled up George's St., where I met both lads on their way to Dame St. To conclude, it is well to mention that Kane and Grogan looked most disappointed that the attack was called off. They were two great lads.

Members of No. 2 Section, A. Coy., 3rd Batt., D.B.:

Patrick Bolger		Denzil St.
Peter Lynam (First Aid)		Clarendon St.
Pete O'Brien (Scout)		Clarendon St.
Daniel Kane) joined the unit	Ranelagh
) about a month	
Patrick Grogan) before Truce.	Ranelagh
Patrick Devoy		Baggot St.
David Browne		Chatham St.

Signed: Michael Carroll
(Michael Carroll)

Date: 14th July, 1955
14th July, 1955

Witness: Sean Brennan Lieut. Col.
(Investigator) (Sean Brennan) Lieut.-Col.

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