

W. S. 1,245

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

BURÓ STAIRÉ MILEANTA 1913-21

No. W.S. 1245

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 1,245.....

Witness

Declan F. Slattery,
Scrahan,
Old Parish,
Dungarvan,
Co. Waterford.

Identity.

Quartermaster Third Battalion
West Waterford Brigade.

Subject.

Irish Volunteer activities,
West Waterford, 1917-1921.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil

File No. S. 2548.....

Form B.S.M. 2

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STATEMENT BY DECLAN F. SLATTERY,

Scrahan, Old Parish, Dungarvan, Co. Waterford.

I was born in Scrahan, Old Parish, in the year 1898.
My parents were farmers and I was educated at the local National Schools.

When a Company of Irish Volunteers was organised in Old Parish, in late 1917, I joined up.

We had only about eight or nine lads in the Company at the start but when Jim Mansfield, also of Old Parish, took over charge of the 3rd Battalion in which area Old Parish is situated, the number began to increase to about twenty.

Most of us, being farmers, had shot guns, but our supply of ammunition was small. This was added to by home-made stuff. We made our own buckshot and powder and filled our own cartridges. Any old guns we picked up, which needed repairing, we brought to Dick Mooney, our Battalion Quartermaster. Patrick Whelan of Dungarvan, father of Pax Whelan, the Brigade O/C., also helped in this work. He was a locksmith and gunsmith by trade. Sean Boyle, a chemist in Dungarvan, supplied the ingredients for making explosive.

During the parliamentary bye-election in Waterford City in March, 1918, between Doctor White representing Sinn Fein, and Captain Redmond representing the Irish Party, I, with four or five others from the Old Parish Company, linked up with contingents of Volunteers from County Waterford and other counties in the Volunteer Hall in Thomas Street, Waterford. There we were attacked with stones

and bottles by supporters of Redmond.. A rifle shot fired from a house across the street wounded one of the Volunteers in the hall.

We carried hurleys and sticks when acting as stewards at Sinn Féin meetings in Waterford City and we had to use them often against the ex-British soldiers and the Ballybricken pig-buyers, who were constantly trying to break up our meetings and beat up our supporters and ourselves.

Early in the year 1918, I was appointed Battalion Quartermaster. Jim Mansfield was Battalion Commandant. During that year my activities were mostly confined to training and organisation and by the time 1919 was over we had eight Companies in the 3rd Battalion, with about fifty men on the strength of each Company.

Roughly, 40% of our lads were armed with shot guns. There were also a few Lee Enfield rifles, about a half dozen revolvers and a poor supply of ammunition.

A local blacksmith named Patrick Roche made about four dozen 'Croppy' pikes, but these were never used.

Attack on Ardmore R.I.C. Barracks.

In January, 1920, I was one of a party of thirty men who attacked Ardmore R.I.C. barracks which is about four miles from Youghal.

Previous to the attack, twenty men or so were placed on outpost duty on the roads leading to Ardmore. These men were armed with shot guns, their job being to hold up any enemy reinforcements coming to relieve Ardmore.

On the night of the attack, I took up a position (with others) in houses opposite the barracks. I had a shot gun with me.

The intention was to explode a land-mine near the barracks and then rush it. Our job was to cover the men making the assault.

The land-mine turned out to be a dud one: it never exploded. We all then opened fire at the windows which were steel-shuttered with loop-holes for firing. The R.I.C. were called on to surrender. They replied with rifles and machine guns. After about an hour of this we got the order to withdraw without suffering any casualties. I cannot say whether any of the R.I.C. were hit in the firing. We suffered no casualties.

The day after the Ardmore attack, military and police raided the house of Commandant Jim Mansfield at Corbally, Old Parish. The three Mansfield brothers Jim, Mike and Charlie were all well-known I.R.A. men and badly wanted by the British. When the raiders arrived at the house, the Mansfield brothers were gone.

Ambush at Piltown Cross.

Seeing we were not successful in taking Ardmore Barracks, we decided to use it luring the British out of Youghal into the country, when we could attack them.

On 1st November, 1920, we sent six men into Ardmore about 8 o'clock for a feint attack on the barracks. They were not to 'open up' on Ardmore until a certain time when they knew we would be in the ambush position at Piltown Cross three miles north of Ardmore.

I reached Piltown Cross about 8 o'clock that night. The Piltown and Clashmore Companies were there to block roads. Scouts were posted on the neighbouring roads to warn us of any enemy approaching.

On the north side of Piltown Cross the ground is somewhat high. Here were stationed twelve to fourteen shot gun men of whom I was one. The riflemen were about forty yards east of the ambush point, directing a frontal fire on the crossroads from slightly high ground.

A party of Cumann na mBan served refreshments.

About an hour before the action began a trench was dug across the road, into which a lorry approaching from Youghal would run and stop. Everything was in readiness about 10-30 or 11 o'clock. The night was very dark, but there was no mist about.

It would be about 11 o'clock, or so, when our scouts flashed a warning that the enemy were approaching us from Youghal and, very shortly afterwards, the lights of a military lorry could be seen. As the lorry reached the trench on the road, we opened fire with our shot guns. The riflemen also 'opened up'.

At the first burst of our fire the soldiers seemed to panic and tried to get out of the lorry and take shelter behind the hedge on the road. The British Officer in charge of the military party did succeed in getting out on to the road and in over a fence. Unfortunately for him, he found himself in amongst our shotgun men who promptly disarmed him.

The lorry driver was killed outright and upwards of six soldiers wounded.

We then got out on to the road where we held up the 'Tommies' and collected their rifles and equipment. We took the lorry and captured stuff with us into Clashmore where the guns were distributed amongst the men.

First aid was rendered by us to the wounded British soldiers and we procured a dray for them to take their dead and wounded men back to their barracks in Youghal. I then returned by bike to my home in Old Parish, bringing with me one of the captured rifles.

Three police carbines were captured in the fight, together with eighteen rifles, two revolvers and a thousand rounds of ammunition. We suffered no casualties.

Following the Piltown ambush, my home was raided by military several times, but I was never there when they came.

In the month preceding Piltown, the Clashmore R.I.C. barracks was burned by a few of our lads. The barracks had been evacuated a short time previously and the garrison transferred to Ardmore, five miles away.

At a date I cannot remember I lay in ambush with about twenty others on the Old Parish road when a landing of arms at Helvick was expected. We were there to attack any enemy troops who might approach Helvick by that route. I don't think that any arms ship came in on that occasion. We did not meet any military that particular night.

I took part on several occasions in sniping at the Marine post in Ardmore from high ground west of the village. I do not know what casualties were inflicted. They used reply to our fire with rifles and machine guns, but we escaped unhurt.

During the first six months of 1921, I was engaged in blocking roads, cutting telephone and telegraph wires and generally obstructing enemy lines of communication. I was also engaged building dumps for arms expected to be landed at Helvick. Some of these dumps were situated in Lonelyglens. We burrowed into the sides of the glen and lined the cavity with timber.

I was also busily engaged collecting a levy for arms. This levy was made by orders of the Brigade on all the farmers around and was based on the valuation of each farm. It took three or four months to collect. I remember handing over to the Brigade Quartermaster the sum of two ~~thousand eight~~ ^{and eighty} hundred pounds, being the receipts from the 3rd Battalion area.

I continued my active connection with the Battalion up to the date of the Truce in July, 1921.

Signed: Declan F. Slattery
(Declan F. Slattery)

Date: 16 - 9 - 55
16.9.55

Witness: T. O'Gorman
(T. O'Gorman)

