

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

BURO STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21

NO. W.S. 1263

ROINN



COSANTA.

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 1,263

Witness

Charles Pinkman,
Keshcarrigan,
Co. Leitrim.

Identity.

Second Lieut. Kiltubrid South Coy. I.R.A.
South Leitrim Brigade;

I.O. South Leitrim Brigade, I.R.A.

Subject.

Kiltubrid South Company I.R.A.
South Leitrim Brigade,
1920-1921.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil

File No. S.2569

Form B.S.M. 2

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
BURO STAIRE MILÉTA 1913-21
NO. W.S. 1263

STATEMENT BY CHARLES PINKMAN,

Corrick, Keshcarrigan, Co. Leitrim.

I was born in Keshcarrigan, Co. Leitrim, and went to school at different schools in the County. One of the teachers - Master Horan - was a real patriot. He specialised in Irish history and in teaching us drill. He was of fairly advanced age but, despite this, he took a very active part in the Sinn Féin organisation and its work.

I joined the Volunteers or I.R.A. in 1920. I joined the local company, which was Kiltubrid South as distinct from Kiltubrid North which also had a company. The company had been in existence for some years previous to my joining it. Harry McKeon, who was appointed Vice O/C of the South Leitrim Brigade after the Seltan Hill affair in which Connolly and the other members of the Brigade Staff were killed, was then the Company Commander. The strength of the company was something between sixty and eighty men. The armament of the company consisted of a certain amount of shotguns and a few old type bulldog revolvers. There was very little ammunition for the revolvers but a fair supply of cartridges for the shotguns. Kiltubrid South Company was one of the companies comprising the 2nd Battalion, South Leitrim Brigade area. The Officer Commanding the 2nd Battalion was Bernard McGowan; the Adjutant was Francis McGovern, the Vice Commandant of the battalion was Michael Bohan, and the Quartermaster was Terence Boyle.

Most of the raiding for arms was finished in the area before I joined, and our work at that time, apart from training parades, was in running dispatches, police work and in connection with the Sinn Féin courts. All parades

of the company were held in secret. For instructor we had an ex British Army soldier named Ambrose Conway. This man was a deserter from the British Army, in which he had served with the rank of Sergeant Major. We had no service weapons to train with and used sticks and dummy guns for parade purposes. We never got any firing practice, even with a .22 rifle.

At a later period we got instruction in the loading, aiming and firing of a service rifle from Capt. McKeon who was now "on the run". This instruction was given to us in a house on Shebeg Hill - a very out-of-the-way place. During the time the Volunteers were doing police duty we had to make about six arrests in the area. The charges against these men were pretty serious. They had taken advantage of the times and were generally acting the blackguard and raiding people's houses under the guise of being Black and Tans. This was about October or November, 1920. They were detained in what was then called "an unknown destination" - a place where such people were held, usually an uninhabited house, and guarded by Volunteers. They were to be courtmartialled, but on the night fixed for the court to sit enemy activity was so great that the court could not assemble and the prisoners had to be released temporarily. They were never dealt with afterwards as enemy activity became so hot that the matter had to be abandoned.

When Capt. McKeon had to go "on the run" he was succeeded as Company Commander by Patrick Pinkman, but he was arrested a few mornings later. I was now left in charge of the company in this section area, while Patrick Gannon was in charge of the other half company.

Around the beginning of 1921 orders were received from headquarters to block all roads in the area by trenching them or blocking them with fallen trees or boulders. This was an attempt to curtain enemy activity. We carried out this order and blocked all the roads in the area. The enemy came out and commandeered the local people and compelled them to clear the blocks again. There were no shootings during those operations.

After the shootings at Gorva or Seltan Hill in March, 1921, the South Leitrim Brigade was reorganised by Paddy Morrissey, who was sent down by G.H.Q., Dublin, for this purpose. Seán Mitchell, now became Brigade O/C; Harry McKeon was appointed Vice Brigade O/C; Eugene Kilkenny was appointed Brigade Adjutant, and Pat Tiernan continued as Brigade Quartermaster. Previous to this the companies in our battalion were reorganised and Pat Gannon was appointed Company Commander, Kiltubrid South. The 1st Lieutenant was Thomas Reynolds and I was 2nd Lieutenant.

About a month after this reorganisation took place I was transferred to the Brigade Staff as Brigade Intelligence Officer with the rank of Staff Captain. I was not 'on the run' and was quite unknown to the British authorities. My place in the company was taken by Peter O'Connell, who was made 2nd Lt.

I had no previous experience of intelligence work and had to start right out of the blue. Each battalion had an Intelligence Officer and intelligence section and there was also an Intelligence Officer in each company. Company I.O.s sent weekly reports to Battalion I.O., who then made his report to me, and I condensed such reports and submitted them weekly to G.H.Q. intelligence. A copy of my

report was given to the Brigade O/C and I retained a copy for myself. The active service unit or column had always to keep me notified about their intended movements from one area to another so that I could contact them and give them any information such as friendly or hostilely disposed persons in the new area they were moving into. Generally my duties as Intelligence Officer were to furnish reports to my O/C and G.H.Q. on the following matters: enemy posts and strengths in the area of all types, including military, R.I.C., Auxies and Tans; the places they occupied; the number or strength of each such post or garrison; the type of troops or force in each such post, whether military, Tans or Auxiliary forces, and in the case of military forces whether mounted or not, or if they had artillery, and their means of transport or conveyance; the names of officers of the enemy forces with bad records towards our side; the distance of one enemy post to the others; the names of persons in the area suspected of espionage work for the enemy and their record. The condition of roads in the area was also a requirement in my reports, also the history of operations carried out by both sides. Details of any failures by our forces in carrying out operations against the enemy, sniping possibilities against enemy posts and enemy dispatch system and how they were carried were also covered.

Regarding post offices, my reports had to cover such things as location, friendly officials, possibilities of tapping, number of wires, telephone and telegraph; telephone exchanges, friendly operators and number of lines etc. Other matters covered were wireless stations and how staffed and whether friendly and co-operative or otherwise; bogs, causeways and details as far as possible; our own H.Q. place, where located, name of owner and if he was a Volunteer;

his or her employment and the best means of getting in touch with our H.Q.; enemy activities at present; the conditions of railways in the area and transport generally; the railway staffs and their particular branch of employment, such as guards, drivers, porters, station masters; workshop facilities on the railway; where railway employees were inclined to be friendly they were to be induced to join the Volunteers, if possible, and at least to be kept in touch with transport by water, such as canal barge crews, motor boats, etc., and if personnel of crews on such vessels were hostile or friendly disposed towards us and, generally, as for the railways.

Regarding hotels: reports were required on the owners, staffs and porters, whether friendly or otherwise; also to be investigated were important bridges in the area and their construction and possible means of destruction; fords and ferries on the rivers in the area; friendly disposed officials in the enemy service apart from their military forces, such as court clerks etc. The list was a pretty comprehensive one and as I had no staff to assist me it was certainly a full-time job.

At the time when McKeon was Company Captain of Kiltubrid South and had to go 'on the run', Peter McGee was the Company Police Sergeant and had two other men - Joseph Carty and Patrick Rourke - as policemen under him. There were at this time twelve shotguns and a rook rifle in a dump belonging to the company. The guns had not been cleaned for a long time and I got McGee to mobilise some men one night and have them cleaned. I advised them to change the location of the dump as I considered it was too long in the same place. While we were proceeding to the dump a shot was fired some distance away and there was a flash

of light. We had no men out and we thought it was some enemy force which had come into the area. At this time the enemy were using very silent motor tenders and were using Verrey lights. Two of our men took fright and ran away but subsequently came back. McGee decided he would not clean the guns that night and we dispersed. The following Sunday McGee came to me for advice and I advised him to have the dump changed immediately. That night six of us assembled and we changed the guns to another location. The following morning the place where the guns had been was raided by an enemy force and again on the following Wednesday.

There were no enemy forces around on the first night that the shot was fired. We discovered that the shot was fired by an ex British soldier; what the weapon used or the type of missile was we could not discover. This man's brother through a slip-up of Capt. McKeon was an unsworn member of the Volunteers and had a "spleen" and was on bad terms with some of his neighbours who were Volunteers, and he apparently wanted to give them a fright. The Volunteer brother was courtmartialled for this after the Truce but did not admit the charge. He was dismissed from the I.R.A.

Company I.O.s through the Battalion I.O.s reported all enemy movements in the area such as patrols, their strength, the arms carried and so forth. The I.O.s in the towns reported on the movements of enemy forces into and out of the town and premises, such as publichouses, frequented by the enemy. I had a few private agents as well: Miss Nangle in the post office in Mohill and Jim Sheerin in the post office in Carrick-on-Shannon. They kept us informed of phone messages to the enemy posts and supplied me with copies of code messages passing to the

enemy posts in those towns. We did not decipher the code messages locally as we were not supplied with a key. The code messages were sent by special despatch to the Director of Intelligence, G.H.Q. Such messages were sent by ordinary post to a covering address in Little Mary St., Dublin. The covering envelope was addressed to a girl at this address. I cannot remember her name now. The Brigade O/C would be informed by Michael Collins of anything of importance affecting our brigade in such messages. If we had been supplied with a key and deciphered the messages locally, they would have been of more value to us. I also had a few contacts in the R.I.C. - one in Mohill, one in Ballinamore and one in Carrick-on-Shannon. They were not in a position to give information of great value but gave us information when possible about impending raids and rounds-up by enemy forces on the nights previous to the days planned for such raids. This gave us a chance to warn our men, especially men 'on the run', to get out of the area or go into hiding.

After the shooting of Seán Connolly and the others at Gorva and when I was appointed to the Brigade Staff, it was my duty to enquire into the matter and find out how they were given away. The information I gathered was that Mr. Lattimer was going into Mohill to make arrangements about his mother's funeral and wake. His mother had just died. En route to Mohill he met Dr. Pentland who was on his way to his dispensary at Gorva. Pentland stopped Lattimer to enquire about the latter's mother. Whatever Lattimer told Pentland, the doctor only stayed for a very brief period at the dispensary and then returned to Mohill and contacted the District Inspector of the R.I.C. - D.I. Gore Hickman - personally. Immediately a mobilisation of

police and Tans took place in Mohill, and as soon as Lattimer arrived in the town he was contacted by both police and military officers, who then proceeded to Gorva. I did not contact Lattimer before he was shot. That would have shown me up and it was my duty to lie low and keep above suspicion of having anything to do with the I.R.A. I was unknown to the vast majority of our men and quite unknown to the enemy, who did not even want me at this stage.

After the affair at Gorva, according to my intelligence reports Lattimer's house was guarded by R.I.C., Tans and soldiers. This guard would come out and be around the place during the night. They would not be there in the daytime. After some few weeks when nothing apparently was going to happen they stopped sending out a guard altogether and two of our men were detailed to execute Lattimer. The two men detailed to carry out the execution were to be supplied with rifles by the local Battalion Commandant, but apparently he did not like the idea of shooting a man and did not give them the rifles and the matter was postponed for the time being. Some nights afterwards two different men were detailed to do the job. They went to Lattimer's house and knocked on the door and called on him to come out. Lattimer replied: "No, you come in". One of our men then proceeded to talk to some other men who were inside the house, while standing clear of the door in doing so. Lattimer now fired through the closed door with a revolver. One of our men who was in front of the house replied to this fire while the other man went to the rear of the house. Lattimer now made an attempt to get out of the house by the back door, but was immediately challenged and ordered to put up his hands by our man at the back. He retreated

back into the house. He now fired out through the sitting-room window. One of our men threw a hand grenade into this room through the window, but it failed to explode. Lattimer now made another attempt to get away by the back but was again challenged and retreated again into the house. He continued to fire from a revolver. He was now ordered to come out by our men, who said they would get him out dead or alive. A second grenade was now thrown into the room. This one exploded all right and Lattimer now shouted out that he would surrender to save his wife and family. He was ordered to come out with his hands over his head, which he did. Our men took him about three hundred yards from the house and shot him dead and put the usual label on him.

Previous to this, typewritten circulars were posted to all the leading Sinn Féiners around Gorva warning them that if anything happened in the area that so many lives would be forfeited and that so many houses in the area would go up in flames. We traced the origin of the circulars to Boyle where they had been typed on a privately owned typewriting machine. They had been posted in Boyle. In a similar manner after the execution of Lattimer we posted notices to all the Protestants around Mohill and Gorva that if anything happened in the area as a result of Lattimer's execution, so many lives would be forfeited and that every Protestant house in the area would be burned. These notices, which had been prepared beforehand, were sent out by our Brigade Headquarters officially. There were no reprisals carried out by the enemy.

The moment Dr. Pentland heard that Lattimer had been shot he took the train at Mohill and disappeared. Some time

after he was traced and found to be living in London and we got his address there. He was practising in Woking Hospital. I was detailed to go to London to ensure that he was executed, although I was told I would have no part in the actual job. I was detailed by the Brigade O/C and I believe that there were others to go also, but I never found out who they were. I believe that this was an I.R.B. operation but worked through the brigade as the O/C was a member of the I.R.B. However, the Truce put a stay on the matter and the doctor was killed in London some time later. I do not know whether his death was deliberate or accidental. Before Lattimer was shot he stated to the men who were about to execute him that Dr. Pentland was far more guilty than he was.

No guard had been placed by the British forces on Dr. Pentland's house but he lived close to the barracks and there was always a patrol on the street outside. When he visited his dispensaries he was always followed by a party of enemy forces, who hung around the area while he was in the dispensary. It would be wrong to say that D.I. Gore Hickman was in the car with Dr. Pentland when he met Lattimer on the road going to Mohill. Lattimer's place would be about a quarter of a mile from Flynn's house where Connolly and the others were staying. According to our information, Lattimer had been out early that morning looking after sheep on his farm and had seen Connolly and his comrades go into the houses owned by Flynn's and Thompson. The Lattimer family received very substantial compensation for the shooting of Mr. Lattimer and they then cleared out of the country. They actually just deserted their farm and it remained derelict for a long time, but was subsequently taken over by the Irish Land Commission and divided up by them.

In the early part of 1920 the R.I.C. evacuated their local barracks at Keshcarrigan and RATHOGUE and both these places were burned and totally destroyed on Easter Saturday night, 1920, as part of the general plan for the destruction of such places throughout the country.

During the enforcement of the Belfast boycott Volunteer James Glynn was accidentally shot dead at Drumshambo. He and some other Volunteers were trying to get admittance to a publichouse in connection with the boycott. Glynn, who was armed with a loaded shotgun which apparently had also the hammer on cock, hit the door of the premises with the butt of the gun, which went off, killing him.

In April, 1921, a man named John Harrison was shot dead at Drumreilly, Ballinamore. Harrison, I understand, was shot by our men for being a spy or intelligence agent for the British forces. I was not in brigade intelligence at this time and I do not know the details.

There was a man named McCabe working on the railway in Ballinamore. This man was going to join the R.I.C. This was discovered through letters to him being intercepted in raids on the mails. He was warned not to proceed in his project but persisted in doing so. One night while proceeding home from his work he was intercepted by a party of Volunteers who were making a further effort - more forcible one this time - to persuade him not to join. He, McCabe, grabbed one of the shotguns with which the Volunteers were armed and in a melee for possession of the weapon the gun went off and McCabe received the contents in the leg. His leg had to be amputated. He was awarded four thousand pounds compensation by the British courts which, I think, was subsequently reduced to three thousand. When his case

came up for hearing in Carrick-on-Shannon he could not get anyone to supply a car to take him there and he walked the twenty miles on his crutches. He is still alive.

In Drumsna Volunteer Patrick Gill was walking up the town with two girls. A party of British military were in the town. They fired on Gill without warning, shooting him dead. The two girls who accompanied him were not hit. Gill was shot through the stomach.

During the Truce we overhauled our intelligence organisation and we made contact with various people who would be useful to us should the fight start again, such as civil servants and post office workers. We also made contacts with men serving inside the British forces. I was taken to Dublin and given a week's course on intelligence work and also on the Thompson sub machine-gun and the rifle, revolver and grenade. With the Brigade O/C, Seán Mitchell, I had an interview with the Director of Intelligence, Michael Collins, in a house in Parnell Square. During the interview Collins told me that if my battalion or company intelligence officers were not satisfactory, to sack them and appoint new ones.

When Seán Connolly was shot at Seltan the Tans took him into Carrick-on-Shannon and threw him into the washhouse in the barracks there. He was still alive. Dr. Delaney was called in to treat him and Dr. Delaney told me afterwards that when he approached Connolly, who was still conscious, Connolly said to him: "Get away from me; you won't treat me, you dirty Englisher". Connolly apparently thought that Dr. Delaney was a British Army Medical Officer. Dr. Delaney said that Connolly's body was terribly mutilated. It would seem as if Connolly was in the act of

throwing a grenade when he was hit by an enemy bullet. He fell where he was and the grenade, from which the pin had been withdrawn, exploded beside or underneath his body. From the description of the wounds given by Dr. Delaney that was my conclusion.

Prior to Mr. Lattimer's execution he visited the local Catholic priest and asked him for his advice as to what he should do and whether he should leave the country. Lattimer was of the Protestant faith. The priest told him that his conscience must be his guide. The following Sunday at Mass this priest said that he was addressing himself to the leaders of Sinn Féin or the I.R.A. in the area and asked them not to do anything in the area without giving it very serious consideration first.

I joined the I.R.B. early in 1921. I was sworn into the local circle by Michael Geoghegan. Either he or Harry McKeon was head of the circle. I took the I.R.B. oath and paid a small subscription towards the funds. The circle met about twice monthly. A general discussion usually took place on the situation as it then was. Members of the circle whom I now remember were: Eugene Kilkenny, Patrick Gannon, and the Company Captain, Thomas Reynolds. There were others I can't just remember at the moment. The County or District Centre was in Boyle and we had to send delegates to meetings there. Nothing of any importance that I can remember ever took place within our local circle, but it formed a steady foundation, so to speak, for the Volunteers.

In 1921 I organised a branch of the Fianna locally. This would be about April. The O/C was James Kenny and he had about twenty boys in the unit. They drilled weekly,

as did the Volunteers, and did an amount of useful work in the way of carrying dispatches, scouting and so forth for the Volunteers. They often could get through in rounds-up by the enemy where men would not have a chance.

At the same time I organised a branch of the Cumann na mBan in the area. The Captain or President was Bridget McNabola; Kathleen McGee was Secretary and, I think, Bridget Flynn was Treasurer. There were about fifteen girls in the branch and they worked for us much in the same way as the Fianna boys. They studied first-aid work and collected and made first-aid dressings. They collected money from the local people and with this they supplied parcels of comforts to members of the Volunteers who were unfortunate enough to be in jail or in internment camps. They were getting to be extremely useful when the Truce came along. They also housed and fed and generally looked after members of the column and men 'on the run'.

Shortly before the Truce the British summoned a number of local residents to act as jurymen at one of their courts. The night before they were due to sit on the jury we kidnapped everyone of them and brought them to a place of hiding, not detention. This was done by previous arrangements with the men summoned, as none of them were willing or anxious to attend the court. They spent the night in friendly houses, where they remained until the following evening. This saved them from being fined by the court for non-attendance and putting themselves in the way of trouble with the British authorities. Telegrams were sent to the clerk of the British court which stated they were kidnapped.

I acted as clerk of the local Sinn Féin court from

July, 1921, to December, 1921. The judges for this court were: James Moran, Rossay, Keshcarrigan; William McWeeney, Aghercastle; and Patrick Beirne, Lisgarbon, known locally as "Black Paddy". The courts were well availed of by the local people and the British courts were absolutely abandoned. The Volunteer police enforced the decisions of the Sinn Féin courts where necessary, but generally the people abided loyally by the court's decisions or recommendations. Common-sense was more the rule governing the courts than law.

The intelligence officers in the battalions and who worked under me were: 1st Battalion - Patrick J. McGovern, 2nd Battalion - Thomas Bohan, and 3rd Battalion - Jack Bohan.

Signed: Charles Pinkman
 (Charles Pinkman)
 Date: 5-10-55
 5.10.55

Witness: Matthew Barry (Matthew Barry) Comd't.
 (Investigator)

