

W.S. 1,265

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 1,265

Witness

Paul J. Mulvey,
Attifinlay,
Carrick-on-Shannon,
Co. Leitrim.

Identity.

Member of

Jamestown Company I.R.A. Co. Lei trim,
1919 - .

Subject.

Jamestown Company I.R.A. Co. Leitrim,
1919-1921.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil

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ORIGINAL

STATEMENT BY MR. PAUL MULVEY,

Attifinlay, Carrick-on-Shannon, Co. Leitrim.

I was born near Carrick-on-Shannon and educated at the Presentation Brothers' schools there. I was taken into the Volunteers at Jamestown in the autumn of 1919 or the spring of 1920 by Jim Higgins. John Gaffney was the Company Commander in Jamestown Company at this time. The strength of Jamestown Company was about twenty-four all ranks. The only armament the company possessed at this time was a few shotguns. For instruction we had a man named McNabola. This man had served as an officer in the British Army and later as an officer in the Irish Army. As an instructor he was very good. During the period of the raiding for arms I took part in three such raids, one of which was on the house of County Inspector Rainsford of the R.I.C. There were no arms in the house. At William Morton's there were no arms either. At Morrison's of Cortown House we got a revolver. I can't remember what type of weapon it was.

George McManus and I acted as a kind of intelligence officers to the company, unofficially of course. A detachment of the East Yorkshire Regiment was stationed in the Courthouse at this time. There was an iron railing around the balcony of the Courthouse at this time and the soldiers stacked their rifles against this, to which they were tied when not in use by them. I reported about this to Seán Quinn, a member of our company, and to Terry McMullen and Paddy McMahon also, and it was planned to raid the Courthouse and seize the rifles. I found out the time

the soldiers would have their breakfast and also reconnoitred the best route for the raiding party to approach the Courthouse so that they would not be seen, and it was planned to carry out the raid while the troops were having breakfast. The raid was a failure. I do not know really what happened except that the raiders came in to the Courthouse by the wrong route and failed to catch the garrison by surprise. The raiding party all succeeded in making good their escape. One of the party nearly got caught, but seeing that he was hemmed in, he picked up an old piece of horse's harness and by stating that he had come in to get a loan of this, succeeded in bluffing his way out of the place.

I was working as a clerk in the County Council office at this time and it was because of this I was able to get the information about the garrison and the rifles in the Courthouse. This attempt took place in September, 1920.

A battalion organisation existed in the area at this time. Peter Murray was the Battalion O/C, but I don't know who the other battalion officers were. The companies comprising the battalion, which was the 3rd Battalion, South Leitrim Brigade, were Jamestown, Drumsna, Annaduff, Leitrim Town, Eslin, Gorragh, Gowel, Mohill and Barnacolla. I have no idea of what the exact strength of the battalion was but would say it was roughly about four hundred. I have no idea of what armaments the battalion held.

When the different police barracks were evacuated and destroyed by the Volunteers in the early part of 1920, Drumsna barracks was not destroyed as far as I can remember.

By October, 1920, our principal members officers were "on the run" and Volunteer activities in this area practically ceased. I had nothing to do with Volunteer police work prior to the Truce.

I joined the staff of the Leitrim County Council in March, 1919. I was then only 16 years' old. When the Councils were taken over by the new boards elected on the Sinn Féin ticket, a circular was sent around by the then Minister for Local Government instructing us to remain in our jobs and be loyal to the then secret Local Government Board. I was on the County Council staff when the first Sinn Féin council met in June, 1920. Peadar Kenny was elected Chairman, and the other members were: Eugene Deane, Malachy Fenning, Francis Maguire, Michael F. Beirne, John Costello, Francis Dolan, Andrew Mooney, Cornelius Reynolds, John Harte, William Murphy, James O'Rourke, John Henry Dolan, Michael Fox, Hugh McPartland, Patrick Fergus, Francis J. Fox, Thomas Gilgunn, Patrick McDermott, Patrick Tiernan, James O'Beirne, James Connolly, B.J. Maguire, Timothy Ward, James Rynne (who was shot at Selton Hill) and Tom Ward who was Vice Chairman. I compiled the minutes of this their first meeting.

The first resolution passed by the new council was one acknowledging the authority of the Dáil. Timothy Ward then proposed and Frank Dolan seconded the next resolution, which read as follows: "That we, the members of the 1st Republican Council of Leitrim, congratulate the forces of the I.R.A. on their many successes during the past year and the many fortresses and seats of oppression destroyed, and we earnestly hope that they may continue their successes until victory crowns their arms". This

resolution was passed unanimously. Various other resolutions dealt with the council's loyalty to the Dáil and the use of the Irish language in conducting the business of the council.

I was a member of the staff of the council continuously. The rate collectors were exceptionally loyal to the new council and handed up the rates collected. On the 21st July, 1920, a special meeting of the council was convened to receive a delegation from a commission of inquiry set up by the Dáil to enquire into the resources, industries and undeveloped mineral deposits of the country. Colonel M. Moore and Darrel Figgis represented the commission, and also present were: James Dolan, T.D., Mr. Ryan and Mr. Leyden from Arigna, Rev. E. Ryan of Aughavas, Mr. J. Confery of Drumshambo, Capt. Mackey and Mr. Pearson. During the course of the meeting a British Army officer named Crowther entered the council room and arrested the Chairman, Peadar Kenny, and Darrel Figgis and proceeded to hold a drumhead courtmartial on them. He actually ordered that a rope be procured to hang them. This was averted through the local Clerk of the Crown and Peace, a Mr. Lonsdale, who came into the council chamber and interfered in the matter, which finally ended when Crowther left the chamber. Crowther, I would say, was rather the worst of drink at the time, and as he had a loaded revolver in his hand which he was swinging around in all directions, the position was none too comfortable for a while.

To safeguard the funds of the council the accounts were transferred from the Northern Bank to the Provincial Bank and a paymaster was appointed, the first being Mr.

J. Confrey of Drumshambo. The accounts were in the name of the paymaster in the bank as a private account. Subsequently the account was put in the name of J.J. Mahon who took it over. Paying orders were issued to all employers, which each ~~each~~ one signed, and the paymaster drew the required amount of cash from the bank or from the rate collectors and he then cashed the payable orders for the different individuals.

I was working in my office in the council rooms in the springtime of 1920. Four R.I.C. entered the office and informed me that the inspector wanted to see me in the barracks and that I was to bring my coat and scarf as I would not be coming back. They marched me to the police barracks and put me, actually kicked me, into a cell and then informed me I was for Ballykinlar. That evening at six-thirty I was released. I believe the secretary of the County Council went to the County Inspector of the R.I.C. and succeeded in having me released. I returned to my work in the office the following day. On my release the police warned me that I was not on any account to leave the vicinity of the town. I was not allowed to cross over the bridge to the Roscommon side of the Shannon. From that on I was practically, one might say, interned in my own town until the advent of the Truce. I was held up regularly and searched by the R.I.C. and Tans, but only on two occasions was I abused in any way.

After the attempted raid on the Courthouse I was not allowed to enter there anymore by the troops who occupied it, although the offices of the County Council were still there, and this continued for some short time. The British Army subsequently took over all the building and the council offices were moved to and established in the Town Hall. Here we were free from military patronage and I could

enter the office freely again.

In August, 1920, the Jamestown Company seized one thousand four hundred gallons of petrol from a barge on the Shannon at Jamestown Bridge. The petrol was being consigned to Roddens of Carrick-on-Shannon. Roddens were shopkeepers and sold petrol. Petrol pumps and petrol tankers as we know them to-day did not then exist, and petrol was consigned in cans by rail or canal or river barge. The seized petrol was in cans and it was taken away and hidden in bogs and such places. What became of it finally I do not know; there is some of it probably concealed in bogholes still.

On the 14th September, 1920, James Connolly, a member of the County Council, was shot dead at Kinlough by British forces. I do not know the circumstances of the shooting. In that month also Confrey's house at Drumshambo was burned down by Black and Tans and R.I.C. forces and Confrey had to go "on the run". He was our paymaster and, as a result, could not operate the accounts and J.J. Mahon was appointed in his place. In Carrick-on-Shannon they put bombs in the doorways of Jim O'Beirne's and McGrath's houses and blew in the doors, damaging both houses extensively. This was the start of a reign of terror by the Crown forces in an attempt to frighten the people and turn them against the I.R.A. and the elected government - the Dáil. This attempt failed miserably.

In November, 1920, the R.I.C. and Tans tried to wreck the offices and printing works of the "Leitrim Observer" which was near the Courthouse in Carrick-on-Shannon. The "Observer" had openly supported the cause of Sinn Féin. They arrested Mr. Dunne, the proprietor,

and interned him and smashed up all the machinery in the printing works.

In that same month also they burned the local halls at Drumsna and Johnstown Bridge. There was no particular reason why they should have done this. Possibly Sinn Féin meetings had been held in these places some years previously when Sinn Féin was organising and fighting the general election, but then that happened in all areas as well as this.

After the Selton Hill ambush the Tans destroyed the house of Jack Hunt at Attirory, Carrick-on-Shannon. Hunt was wounded and captured at Selton Hill and some time later James Glynn, who was a member of the Drumshambo or Arigna Volunteers, was shot dead by British forces at Drumshambo. I do not know the details of this shooting. Volunteer Patrick Gill, a rather old man, was shot by the R.I.C. while proceeding up the village of Drumsna. It was believed that he was shot in mistake for Michael Feely who was "on the run" and wanted by the R.I.C. He was shot by Constable Scully of the R.I.C. - *at least so I heard rumoured*

Signed: Paul J. Mulvey
Accountant
Date: Leitrim Co Council
6-10-55

Witness: Matthew Barry
(Matthew Barry) C md't.

(Paul J. Mulvey)
Accountant, Leitrim
Co. Council.
6.10.55

