

W.S. 1,275

DUPLICATE

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
BURO STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21
No. W.S. 1275

ROINN  COSANTA.

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 1,275

Witness

Timothy J. Warren,
Ballineen,
Co. Cork.

Identity.

Captain Ballineen Company
Irish Volunteers, Co. Cork;
Member Brigade Column 3rd Cork Brigade;
Captain i/c. Brigade Dispatch Routes.
Subject.

Ballineen Company Irish Volunteers,
Co. Cork, 1917-1921.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil

File No. 8.2579

Form B.S.M. 2

DUPLICATE

N.S. 1, 275

STATEMENT BY THOMAS WARREN

Ballincora, Co. Cork.

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1813-21
BURO STAIRÉ MILEATA 1813-21

No. W.S. 1275

I joined the Irish Volunteers on 13th March 1917, when the movement was organised in my area. I lived in the village of Ballincora which is on the road between Bandon and Durrus. My father was a master tailor and I was then employed as an auxiliary postman.

I helped to get the company going, but it was not easy. The village, by reason of its large Protestant and loyalist population, being known as the little Derry of the south.

During the years 1917 and 1918 we were engaged in organising and training which was carried on at that time without active R.I.C. interference.

When the battalions were formed, our company became A/Company, 3rd Battalion, 3rd Cork Brigade.

Our first operation against the R.I.C. was the destruction of Kenneigh R.I.C. Barracks in May 1919. The R.I.C. had started to leave some of their smaller posts and to concentrate in the bigger barracks. The boycott of the R.I.C. then commenced and as there were a number of Protestant traders in our area we had to be very stiff about the boycott. We posted notices calling for the boycott of the R.I.C. and delivered notices to the individual traders. One trader (Cottor) kept in touch with the R.I.C. and, as he had a bakery, he supplied them with bread. I reported the case to Sean Murphy, O/C. 3rd Battalion, and we discussed the case at several Battalion Council meetings. It was decided to impose a boycott on Cottor himself and notices were posted around the village warning the people against trading with Cottor. As company O/C. I was responsible

for enforcing the boycott and I was assisted by my adjutant, Jack Hennessy. Things got hot and, in order to give protection to Cotter, a party of 80 of the Essex Regiment was brought to Ballineen and took up quarters in the local R.I.C. barracks and in the house of Dr. Fehily, which they commandeered.

On the 13th July 1920, myself and Jack Hennessy posted up notices against Cotter and on the next morning at 1 o'clock (which was a Sunday) I was awakened by an N.C.O. and four men of the Essex Regiment in my bedroom. The N.C.O. had a revolver and the men rifles. There were two beds in the room; my brother James and a crippled brother slept in one. I slept in the other with my brother John. The Corporal asked James for his name and when he gave it they asked my name. I said 'Tim'. He ordered me to get out and come with them. I started to dress. I had put on my trousers and was getting my coat when I was told I would not need it. I was told to lead on. When I got downstairs I saw an officer and about seven men in our shop behind the counter packing goods off the shelves into bags. The officer's name was Davies. I was pushed out into the street and four soldiers were placed in charge of me. I was waiting for a chance to make a dash for a place called the Bog Lane when a soldier doing duty at the lane let his rifle fall. The Corporal shouted to him "You windy , hold it".

The night was inky dark and a cold south east wind was blowing. I was standing in my bare feet with only my shirt and trousers on. The Corporal advanced towards me and, in soldier's language, told me to lead on. I led on in my bare feet, with the Corporal and about 25 soldiers marching behind. The Corporal gave the order 'Left turn'. I took no notice. He hit me in the back of the neck with his revolver, saying:

"Show me some of your Republican army drill". I at once turned to my left down to Ballineen Bridge and was ordered to halt. The Corporal told me that I knew my fate and I was then hit from behind. Every one of the party was trying to get a blow at me. I got a blow behind the ear which brought me down on one knee. I jumped up and ran to the centre of the bridge to avoid them. I got a blow of a gun in the mouth which smashed my teeth and cut my lips. Blood was flowing into my mouth and down my shirt. I made a dash to get away and knocked down two soldiers. I then got a kick behind the knee and at the same time two shots rang out. I found myself caught by the neck of the shirt by Captain Davis. He took his hand off my shirt and shook it; it was covered with blood. He caught me again and forced me back against the bridge hitting my head against the parapet. While he held me by the shirt he told me that I was captain of 30 men and that I was in charge of Cotter's boycott, and my father was as bad as myself. I was then ordered to walk forward and, taking my chance, I dashed to one side and escaped.

Later on the Sunday I met my adjutant, Jack Hennessy, and he told me of his experience. He had been arrested and beaten in the same way.

The boycott of Cotter was continued. I ordered his workmen to leave which they did, with the exception of one man, an ex-British soldier. They carried on the bakery with their own labour and continued to deal with the R.I.C. I ordered the porter at the railway station not to handle flour for Cotter and issued an order forbidding any person to keep or sell any of Cotter's bread.

On 14th August 1920, I captured a load of Cotter's bread on the Ballineen-Dunmanway main road. The bread was in the

National Archives Act, 1986, Regulations, 1988

ABSTRACTION OF PART(S) PURSUANT TO REGULATION 8

**Form to be completed and inserted in the original record
in place of each part abstracted**

- (i) Reference number of the separate cover under which the abstracted part has been filed: WS 1275/A
- (ii) How many documents have been abstracted: 2
- (iii) The date of each such document: 11 October 1955
- (iv) The description of each document:
WS 1275 Witness Statement Timothy J Warren p485.
indiv. made named

(Where appropriate, a composite description may be entered in respect of two or more related documents).

- (v) Reason(s) why the part has been abstracted for retention:
(c) Would or might cause distress or danger to living persons on the ground that they contain information about individuals, or would or might be likely to lead to an action for damages for defamation.
(These will be the reasons given on the certificate under Section 8(4).)

Name: (J. Moloney.)

Grade: Col.

Department/Office/Court:

Date: 7 March 2003.

possession of a man named McCombs who was a steward employed at H.D. O'Connor's, K.C. March House, Ballineen.

I had been in trouble with the postal authorities since the previous April. The R.I.C. Barracks at Ballygurteen had been destroyed and in the destruction the local post box had also been destroyed. I had been postman on the route, relieving the regular man on leave, and had cleared the box at 4 o'clock on the Saturday. I handed the keys of the box to the receiving clerk at Ballineen. The regular man took up duty on the Monday and, when he went to the Ballygurteen box, he found it destroyed. The postmaster at Bandon lodged a claim for compensation, and Crowley and myself were warned to attend at Clonakilty Quarter Session where the case was heard by a Judge Hynes. I refused to attend as I could not give evidence before a Court set up by the British law in Ireland. Crowley attended and the claim (£10) was granted in full.

Three days after the Court (29th June 1920), an R.I.C. man named Chapman called to the post office and informed the postmaster that he had received orders from the District Inspector at Clonakilty that the town postman, Timothy Warren, should not be allowed to deliver their mail and, in future, the mail was to be held by the postmaster until called for by the R.I.C.

At this period the boycott of the R.I.C. and the British Courts was in full swing. Our company was ordered to keep order in the area and Parish Courts were set up. I assisted the clerk of the Parish Court in getting things organised. The clerk was Patrick O'Mahony, Ahichill Company, 2nd Battalion (later an Inspector in the Garda).

One of the cases which came for hearing before the Court, which consisted of

The hearing was at Keelacconnagh, Enniskeane, and, as some important witnesses were not present, the case was adjourned for eight days. When the Court resumed, all the evidence was gone into and the verdict was

On 29th July 1920, members of my company met the mail train at Ballineen station at 5.30 a.m. and removed the mails for Ballineen and Enniskeane post offices. I remained outside the station as I was still a serving postman. I assisted Sean Murphy, Battalion O/C. and David Crowley, Captain, Kenneigh Company, in censoring the mails which were left at the rear of Enniskeane post office on 31st July 1920.

On August 4th 1920, my house was raided by a party of the Essex Regiment under a Sergeant Tilly. On August 7th, 9th and 10th my house was raided looking for my postman's uniform, which they did not get.

On August 17th an ambush was prepared by the brigade adjutant, Liam Deasy. It was usual for the Essex stationed in Ballineen to send out cycle patrols on the different roads out of Ballineen. Liam Deasy set the ambush on the Ballineen-Clonakilty road at a place known as the one-eyed bridge two miles from Ballineen. My company were assigned the job of providing a line of scouts between Ballineen and the ambush position to warn Liam Deasy of the approach and strength of the patrol. The party lay in ambush for three nights, but no patrol took that road.

On 4th September 1920, I received orders from the battalion commandant, Sean Murphy, to send two of my company to join a column being formed by Liam Deasy. I took Jack

Hennessy with me and paraded at Togher Chapel yard at 4 o'clock on Sunday, 5th September 1920. On Sunday evening, each man fired a course of 5 rounds of miniature at a target 25 yards distant. We rested in Togher that night and on the next day, the 6th, we moved off on cycles, armed, to Connagh Company area. We remained at Connagh for two days. On the morning of the 8th September we marched from our headquarters, Brady's farmyard to Manch.

Liam Deasy had prepared an ambush at Manch near Manch Bridge. The position was on the main Ballineen-Dunmanway road, two miles from Ballineen and five miles from Dunmanway. Both towns held heavy military garrisons and it was their practice to maintain cycle patrols, about 30 strong, between the two towns.

Liam Deasy did not want to become involved with any lorry borne troops. We had strict orders to let lorries pass through the position. We waited in ambush all day and, as evening was falling, Liam Deasy gave us orders to retire in sections. No. 1 section had just moved off and had entered the road when a lorry of military rounded the Blackwater Bridge about 200 yards from our position. The military dismounted and opened fire. The column returned the fire at the same time Liam Deasy ordered the retreat to continue as there was a danger of British reinforcements coming from Ballineen. One of the column (since dead) was captured.

On that night my house was raided and more goods taken.

On 1st October 1920, I was in the village of Ballineen, having gone in by the backs of the houses, when the Black and Tans raided for me. They appeared to have been kept well informed of my movements as they had associated me with the fight at Manch. I got away to the back of the post office

and escaped in the darkness. Cotter's, the bakers, were keeping the British informed of our movements. I had to remain away from Ballineen, on the run, and a man named Cullinane was appointed to take charge of the company.

On 21st September, a Battalion Council meeting was held at James Coakley's at which I was appointed to organise dispatch routes in the 3rd (Dummanway) Battalion area. This was looked upon as an important branch of the organisation, as any delay in getting dispatches through might endanger the lives of our officers. The brigade and battalion officers were constantly on the move and it was important that we should be able to keep in touch. The dispatch routes were organised through the companies, men being kept available at all times. It was necessary also to have cycles in readiness and, where necessary, horses.

In November 1920, I was called to join a column in training at Clogher. We continued training for a week, under the column O/C. Tom Barry, moving from place to place, finishing at Ahilina. On 27th November 1920, Liam Deasy, brigade adjutant, came to the area and withdrew me from the column. He instructed me to organise the dispatch routes for the whole 3rd Cork Brigade area.

The area extended from Kinsale along the coast to Castletown Berehaven and on to the Kerry border. There were seven battalions in the brigade. I was given the rank of brigade captain. Each battalion was to appoint a lieutenant in charge of communications, and each company would have men appointed specially for communications.

The dispatch routes for the whole brigade were divided into three, north, south and centre. The routes were not

fixed, being changed as circumstances required. The brigade officers constantly moving, often with the column, and the column being constantly on the move required that the routes be organised so as to have dispatches delivered without delay.

We were also up against a very strong British force. Major Percival adopted tactics in West Cork which made it difficult for dispatch riders to move. Percival did not keep to the roads; he brought his troops across country, lay in ambush at crossroads during darkness and occupied groups of farmhouses. He copied our column methods. There was the constant danger of a dispatch rider going to a house during darkness and finding it occupied by the Essex.

We held frequent meetings of battalion communications officers, planning new routes as the old ones became dangerous. My work on dispatches did not interfere with my column work because, as the column moved, I was able to check dispatch routes. It was important to see that the service of dispatch routes and riders was not abused. On one occasion I intercepted a dispatch rider who had been sent with a 'dispatch through a very dangerous area. The dispatch was a letter to a lady friend. It was not repeated.

On Monday, 29th November 1920, I rejoined the column who were resting after the Kilmichael fight. They were at a disused cottage at Granure, Ballinacarriga Company area, known today in song: "The far away camp at Granure". We stopped for three nights at Granure and then moved to Coxtown (Ahiohill Company) remaining in that townland two nights and finally rested at Cahir (Lyre Company).

We left Cahir on 8th December 1920, for Gaggin where we went into ambush. The object of the ambush was to attack

two lorries travelling from Clonakilty to Bandon. I was in a section below the road under Comdt. Dan Harte. The idea was not to fire until both lorries were in the ambush position but one of our men fired accidentally. The lorry swerved, throwing out the occupants who deployed along a quarry and engaged our men on the Clonakilty side of the ambush position. Our section, seeing the situation, were moved to the position where the engagement was on. I was one of the eight men to take part in the fight against the Tans at Gaggin.

The lorry on which the Tans had been travelling continued on to Bandon. There was a danger of reinforcements coming out and we were retired. Our section got safely away. We halted at O'Neill's house of Maryboro' (Kilbrittain Company) where we rested for the night, and next day we moved to Larravoulta. Commandant Sean Lehane joined us and took charge of the column until it was disbanded at Kildee for Christmas 1920.

I left the column at Larravoulta and took up duty checking the dispatch routes. The British military were raiding for me at my home in Ballineen and the surrounding district. My home was burned on 29th December 1920. I was in the vicinity of Ballineen in this period with Mick Dwyer and Sonny Dave Crowley when the area was surrounded by the British military seeking us, but we got away. On St. Stephen's Day 1920, two lorries of Tans sighted myself and Jack Hennessy and opened fire on us, but we got away.

I rejoined the column at Clubhouse on 6th January 1921. The column was then under Commandant Sean Lehane. We were unable to procure arms from the dump owing to British military activities. We moved through Knockawaddra, Kippock and Drinagh. Commandants Charlie Hurley and Tom Barry joined us at Bealad and we moved to Rossmore where we secured arms and returned to

Bealad. A party of our men was picked to shoot police at Rosscarbery and Clonakilty. The party was divided into two sections. Commandant Hurley took one and Tom Barry the other. Comdt. Hurley placed me in charge of the remainder of the column during their absence.

The whole column later left Bealad and, after resting at Ballinard, proceeded to Mawbey where we lay in ambush without result. We abandoned the position at Mawbey and went through Scrahan and took up ambush positions at Laragh. On our approach to Laragh and while still half a mile away, two lorries of Tans passed through the position. We waited at Laragh for some time but no British came our way.

On 25th January 1921, we went into Bandon and fired at the military barracks. This was intended as a big operation including an attack on a curfew patrol, but as the patrol did not come out after waiting until the early hours of the morning, we fired at the barracks and withdrew.

A day or so later we moved towards Innishannon on the main Bandon-Cork road. The column was divided, parties being sent to hold the roads leading to Innishannon. I went with the main body to attack Innishannon R.I.C. Barracks. The barracks was a two-storey structure well protected with barbed wire and steel shutters. It was planned to explode a mine against the barracks and rush the breach. I volunteered to join the party rushing the breach, but Comdt. Barry placed me at the back of the barrack with a party to keep the garrison from breaking out in that direction. We were ordered to hold our fire until the garrison commenced to break out. The mine failed to explode and after the party in front of the barracks had fired some shots we withdrew. On that day we lay in billets and the next night we moved to Newcestown on the other

side of Bandon and, on the following night, we went into Bandon and fired on the military barracks. We rested next day and at night we went towards Clonakilty. We remained in the area for some days and then went towards Rosscarbery. We occupied Burgatia House near Rosscarbery. This was the house of a British loyalist suspected of spying on our men. When we took over the house the owner and his family were placed under arrest and sentries were posted near the house. We were ordered not to show ourselves as we wanted to lie quietly in the house all day and move out to attack Rosscarbery R.I.C. Barracks on the following night. We got plenty to eat and a good sleep. While we held the house, the owner was tried by courtmartial and ordered to leave the country, his property to be confiscated.

All was quiet until next morning when three workmen came to the house; they were made prisoners. Later, the postman from Rosscarbery arrived with letters. He was made prisoner and brought into the house. He was interviewed by Tom Barry and, after a short while, he was released. We heard that he had sworn not to reveal our presence in the house. In the afternoon Black and Tans were seen approaching towards the house up the front avenue. We were alerted and a section of our men were sent to man the upper windows with orders not to fire on the Tans until the order was given. The remainder of the garrison were paraded by the column O/C. who told us we might be surrounded and would have to fight our way out.

Captain Bob Brennan of Drimoleague, under Comdt. James Hurley, Clonakilty Battalion, held a position near the car drive from the main road. The Tans were sure we were in the house as they opened fire as they came up the avenue. Captain Brennan was wounded in the calf of the leg. Our men in the

house held their fire. Comdt. Barry detailed eight of us to move towards the front of the house, Captain 'Spud' Murphy in charge; if Captain Murphy was knocked out, I was to take charge. Our orders were that when the party in the house opened fire on the advancing Tans we were to move in short rounds to south of the house, and, moving towards Castlefreke, cross the main Clonakilty-Rosscarbery road to take up position on the high ground so that we could give covering fire to the remainder of the column as they retired from the house. The remainder of the column moved out and we lost touch with them, but rejoined them next day at Kilbree. We remained at Kilbree next day as the British searched for us.

We next moved to the west side of the brigade area through Drinagh, Leap and on to Mohorna. While at Mohorna, one of our sentries, Paddy O'Driscoll, was accidentally shot dead and we had to move out quickly to Crosshouse.

The column then moved to Skibbereen in the hope of attacking a patrol. The column O/C. with a party entered the town and fired on the British posts, but he could not get them out. Three British soldiers who were captured without arms were released and we withdrew. We moved to Durrus Road area and then on to Drimoleague. On 11th February 1921, we attacked Drimoleague R.I.C. Barracks, but our mine failed to explode and, after firing on the barracks for half an hour we withdrew to Castledonovan. Information came to us that the British were moving to surround us. We moved to Kealkil via Keimeneigh Pass and retired into Gougane Barra; after resting there we went to Shanacrane. Comdt. Liam Deasy was then in charge. Comdt. Tom Barry had gone to Ballydehob for a rest. Volunteer Tim Allen went as guard with Tom Barry.

We left Shanacrane on 16th February 1921, and halted at Droumfeigh where Tom Barry rejoined us. The column was disbanded except for the 1st Battalion men, but as I was the only man on the column from the 3rd Battalion, I was allowed to remain. We moved from Droumfeigh to Mountpleasant where we rested and received orders for our next operation. The column was divided. Tom Barry took one part and John Lordan the other. I was under John Lordan whose section had been ordered to enter Bandon from the Dunmanway road and shoot every man in the uniform of the Essex Regiment we met, whether armed or unarmed. Tom Barry was entering the town from the Cork Road end to do the same.

We moved down the Dunmanway Road and near the barracks we first met a naval wireless operator whom we took prisoner. Next, two of the Essex were found in conversation with a girl. The girl was ordered in behind the ditch and the two soldiers were taken up the Dunmanway Road where they were shot.

The wireless operator was released later with a letter to the O/C. of the Essex in Bandon informing him that as he had murdered some of our men while they were prisoners every man of the Essex seen in our area was to be shot at sight whether armed or unarmed.

Tom Barry's men had run into Tans at their end of the town and had shot one and wounded another. We retired to Newcestown where we dumped our arms.

In March 1921 I rejoined the column in Kenneigh Company area and we moved eastwards. We lay in ambush at Shippool; the strength of the column had been increased to about 100. We expected a large convoy of British troops to leave Kinsale and move through our position. The British left Kinsale, but turned back and a plane came searching for us. We lay in cover

and then moved to Ballyhandle where we went into billets. The column had been divided into sections. I was in No. 4 section under Thomas Kelleher. We were not long in billets when we were called out and ordered to proceed to Crossbarry Cross. When we arrived at the Cross Tom Barry spoke to us. He told us that the British were coming at us from all sides and we were going to fight them. There was no retreat. An ambush was laid on the Bandon side of Crossbarry crossroads where two farmhouses were close to the road. The sections were told what positions they were to occupy. No. 4 section was to hold high ground at the rear of the ambush position. We were to hold our ground no matter what happened anywhere else. We were in position for some time before anything happened and while we waited we were given the range of different places in front of our position. We heard the hum of lorries on the road from Bandon, and other lorries were coming from other directions. Suddenly, firing broke out on the road; after a while it died away only to re-open again. Next, there was firing to our left and right which died away.

When we thought everything was over masses of British troops were reported in front of our position. They had come in along a breen. We got orders to hold our fire until they got near. I thought they were too near. When they were 50 or 60 yards off, we got orders to open fire. Many of them went down but the fight continued. Reinforcements came to us from the other sections. They were under 'Spud' Murphy. The British tried to close with us. Two of their officers who were leading a rush went down. The British started to retire leaving their dead and wounded. We collected what arms we could and the whole column commenced to move back. Flank guards were thrown out, advance guard and rear guard arranged and we moved off. Shortly after moving off, we were halted

and ordered to line a ditch. Some of the British troops were regrouping. We were ordered to give them a few rounds. They broke up in disorder. We retired to Gurranreigh where we heard that our Brigade O/C., Charlie Hurley, had been killed that morning while fighting his way out of a house in which he had been surrounded. The next night we marched to Clogag where we gave Charlie a military funeral.

We lay in wait to attack a train on the Clonakilty-Skibbereen line, but there was no attack. We moved round a bit and, on 30th March, we were at Benduff, a few miles from Rosscarbery. The weather was very bad. Tom Barry told us we were going to attack Rosscarbery Barracks. About midnight we moved off and when we were near Rosscarbery we got orders to remove our boots. The plan was to explode a mine against the barracks and then rush the breach. It was the old plan we had tried so often, but which didn't succeed. On this occasion we were told that the mine would work.

I was a member of a section selected to stand by to rush the breach made by the mine. Four men carried the mine to the barrack door as we stood in cover round a corner. The mine went up and we rushed forward led by Tom Barry. The breach had been made, but the fallen debris had partly blocked the opening and the rubble was continuing to fall. We were ordered to take cover and open fire on the barracks while Tom Barry threw petrol and oil into the breach. We were not in a position to see everything that went on, but after some time the barracks was alight and it burned itself out. I did not see any prisoner being taken and we captured no arms. We learned afterwards that two of the garrison had been killed and some wounded, but I cannot give details as I did not see them. It was just daylight when we retired from the town and proceeded to Knockawaddra where we rested.

We then went to Newcestown where the column was disbanded.

The Brigade gave orders for the formation of three separate columns - No. 1 column to be drawn from the 1st and 3rd Battalions; No. 2 column from the 2nd and 4th Battalions, and No. 3 from the western end of the brigade.

I went with No. 1 column under Sean Hales. We rested at Skeafe for two days before going into ambush position at Inchy Bridge. The ambush was prepared for a train between Timoleague and Ballinascorthy. The information was that British military were travelling between Courtmacsherry and Ballinascorthy. The job was abortive. The military did not travel by rail. We returned to Ballinadee. Next night we went to Crowhill where we were surprised by British military entering the area and we went to Garland north of Castletown, Kenneigh where we rested for a couple of days before dumping our arms. This finished the active service of No. 1 column. The men were later called back to the brigade column.

During my service with the column I was keeping in touch with the dispatch routes and when the No. 1 column was disbanded I was on duty looking after dispatch routes until the truce. Brigade H.Q., which had been in No. 1 Battalion area up to 1921, was moved to the Coomhola area and this called for a whole new series of routes between Brigade H.Q. and the different battalions. The brigade officers were often with the column which made things difficult for the dispatch riders, but we kept some routes open all the time.

Signed: Timothy J. Warren

Date: 11.10.55

Witness: James J. O'Connor

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
BURO STAIRE MILEATA 1913-21
NO. W.S. 1275