

W.S. 1310

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
BURO STAIRÉ MILÉATA 1913-21
No. W.S. 1310

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 1310.....

Witness

James Moloney,
Rock Cottage,
Lislevane,
Timoleague,
Co. Cork.

Identity.

O/C. Barryroe Company
Bandon Battalion, Cork III Brigade;
Q/M. do.

Subject.

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

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil

File No. S. 2635.....

Form B.S.M. 2

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
BURO STAIRÉ MILEATA 1919-21
No. W.S. 1,310

1310

STATEMENT BY JAMES MOLONEY,

Rock Cottage, Lislevane, Timoleague,
Co. Cork.

I was born at Grange, Lislevane, in April 1894. My parents were publicans. My father died when I was three years of age.

I joined the Irish Volunteers at Grange in the autumn of 1917. The Grange unit was a section of Barryroe Company which was attached to Bandon Battalion, Cork Brigade. Pioneer members of the section were: John Hayes, James Hayes, Dan and Jerh. McCarthy, John White, Jack Hurley, Wm. Barry, Tim Crowley, Patrick Moloney and Jim Moloney (witness). The other sections in the Barryroe Company were based on the following districts:- Lislevane, Butlerstown and Augha. The first O/C. of Barryroe Company was Michael O'Sullivan. The strength of the company was about forty. I cannot recollect the names of the other officers. I think that, at this time, I was section commander, Grange section. The other companies in Bandon Battalion were, as far as I can recollect, Timoleague, Kilbritten, Ballinadee, Clogagh, Newcestown, Innishannon, Bandon. Tom Hales was O/C. of Bandon Battalion at this time, and I think that Hugh Thornton was adjutant.

Weekly parades, at which close order footdrill was carried out, were held by the sections while, occasionally, on Sunday evenings the whole company were assembled.

I think that the first public appearance of the Barryroe Company took place on the occasion of a big Sinn Féin demonstration in Bandon in the early part of December 1917. All the other companies in the Bandon Battalion were represented on this occasion and the parade was in charge of

Tom Hales. Amongst the speakers at this meeting were Eamon de Valera and J.J. Walsh.

There was an increase in the strength of the company in the spring of 1918 when the British threatened to enforce conscription. The membership was in the region of about 80 at this time. The vast majority of the new recruits continued to serve after the conscription scare had passed. During this period all arms not already held by Volunteers or members of their families were collected by the various sections. In practically all cases the arms - mainly shotguns - were surrendered voluntarily. About 20/25 shotguns were collected in these raids.

The first Service rifle to reach the Barryroe Company was obtained by me from Frank Scully, Ardfield, Clonakilty, about the end of 1918. He had collected the rifle off a ship - "The Norwegian" - which had been torpedoed off Clonakilty. The ship did not sink, but was beached close to Ardfield where Frank Scully resided. Later on two or three rifles were also got from Ballincollig Barracks through the activities of Mick Murphy and Bill O'Brien, Ballincollig.

In July 1918 I attended a Feis and Aeriocht at Barryroe. The gathering was raided by a force of R.I.C. and the crowd was dispersed. I should have mentioned that the holding of Irish Ireland functions of this nature was banned by the British at the time. About a month later I was arrested by the R.I.C. and charged with attending the Feis. I was sentenced to two months imprisonment which I served in Belfast Jail. Others who were arrested and sentenced in connection with the holding of the function were:- Tom Beechinor, Con Murphy, Sean O'Brien, Frank O'Sullivan. All refused to recognise the right of the Court to try them - this was the recognised policy

of the Volunteers. One of the men arrested, Andrew Walsh, was a married man. He defended the case and was 'bound to the peace'. I was released with the others from Belfast Jail about the end of November 1918 on completion of my sentence.

At the time of our release West Cork was under martial law and permits from the British military were necessary in order to move around the area. When leaving Belfast Jail the Governor there gave our party a note to indicate that we had been released from Belfast Jail on a certain date. When we arrived at Cork railway station, this permit would not be accepted by the police guard on duty there. However, we forced our way into the station and boarded the train. In the meantime, the detective on duty at the station informed the guard that the matter would be seen to at Bandon. When the train reached Bandon there was a large force of R.I.C. on the platform. The officer in charge approached our carriage and asked for our permit. We again produced the note from the Governor of Belfast Jail, but it would not be accepted as a permit. The R.I.C. then sent for a party of military and when they arrived, the officer in charge accepted the note as fulfilling the permit regulations. This, in our view, was a victory over the R.I.C.

There was no activity in the area in connection with the General Election in December 1918, as the Sinn Fein candidate, Diarmuid Lynch, I think, was returned unopposed.

About this time, Cork Brigade, which embraced the whole of Cork County and included some 20 battalions, was divided into three brigades. Bandon Battalion, to which Barryroe Company was attached, became 1st Battalion, Cork III Brigade. Barryroe Company was D/Company in the battalion. The first O/C. of Cork III Brigade was Tom Hales who had been O/C.

Bandon Battalion. I cannot remember the names of the other brigade officers.

The officers of Bandon Battalion following the promotion of Tom Hales were, as far as I can recollect:- O/C. Tom Hales, Vice O/C. John Lordan or Charlie Hurley; Adjutant, Hugh Thornton; Q.M., William Walsh.

There was no unusual activity in the area during the early part of 1919. Normal training and parades were held but we had occasional bouts of target practice with .22 rifle. This rifle was passed to the company by the Battalion O/C. (Sean Hales).

During the summer of 1919 there was a change in the officers of the Barryroe Company. I was elected O/C. The officers at this stage were: O/C. Jim Moloney (witness); 1st Lieut. Michael O'Sullivan; 2nd Lieut. Michael Coleman.

In August 1919 a training camp for selected officers of Cork III Brigade was held at Shorecliffe House, Glandore. Dick McKee (O/C. Dublin Brigade) was in charge of the camp. Amongst those present were:- Gearoid O'Sullivan, Peadar McMahon (I think), Ted O'Sullivan, Liam Deasy, Ralph Keyes, Pat Harte, Dan Santry, Tim O'Donoghue, 'Mossie' Donegan, Stephen O'Neill, 'Flyer' Nyhan, Sean Lehane, Mick McCarthy, Paddy O'Brien (Girclough), Mick Herlihy, Jim Moloney (witness). The number in the camp was in the region of sixty. The camp was carried on for about a week during which time those present underwent ^{an} intensive course in close order and extended order drill. There were, in addition, lectures on all aspects of military operations. Towards the end of the week the camp was raided by a large force of R.I.C. All present were rounded up and scrutinized closely - apparently for future reference. When the raiding party had withdrawn, the camp was dispersed.

There was very little activity beyond normal training until the end of February 1920. On the night of February 25th 1920, Timoleague R.I.C. Barracks was attacked. This operation was carried out under Sean Hales (Battalion O/C). A mine was laid at the front wall of the barracks and parties were placed in position in houses opposite the barracks as well as on high ground to the rear. I was in position with Sean Hales within about 10 yards of the barracks. I was armed with two Mills bombs which were to be thrown through the breach in the wall of the barracks should the mine be effective. When the mine failed to explode, fire was opened on the barracks by the parties at the opposite side of the road and to the rear. Firing then continued intermittently for about three hours and, as there was no prospect of capturing the building, the attack was called off. Amongst those who took part in this operation were:- Sean Hales, Charlie Hurley with men from Kilbrittain, Barryroe and Timoleague companies. Following this operation I went 'on the run' and moved about the area.

When Courtmacsherry R.I.C. Barracks (evacuated) was destroyed at Easter 1920, I was engaged as a member of the demolition party. The work was performed with crowbars and pickaxes. The job was carried out under Sean Hales by the members of the Barryroe and Timoleague Companies.

An R.I.C. patrol was operating in the Timoleague-Ballyroe area about May 1920. It was mainly engaged on protection duty in connection with agrarian trouble about a small piece of grazing land. I was O/C. Barryroe Company at the time and it was decided to ambush the patrol. I reported accordingly to the Battalion Vice O/C. (Charlie Hurley) who moved into the area on the same night with Jack Fitzgerald and Jim O'Mahoney of Kilbrittain Company. All three were armed with rifles. Next

morning, accompanied by John Hayes, Mick Coleman, Denis O'Brien, Dan Santry, Jerome O'Hea and Tim Crowley, I reported to Charlie Hurley. We were all armed with shotguns. The whole party then moved to Ahawadda on the Timoleague-Clonakilty road where we took up positions behind the roadside fence about two miles from Timoleague about 7 a.m. on the morning of May 10th, 1920. There was no appearance by the enemy patrol until about 3 p.m. When the patrol arrived it consisted of four R.I.C. men armed with revolvers. I think one member of the party also carried a rifle. When the patrol moved into the centre of our position fire was opened on them. Three were killed and one escaped. We got three revolvers and a supply of ammunition. The men from Kilbrittain (Charlie Hurley, Jack Fitzgerald and Jim O'Mahoney) then withdrew across country to their own area. The local men returned to their home district but not to their homes.

During August 1920, a military cycle patrol operated at irregular intervals on Courtmacsherry-Timoleague road via Barryroe. The patrol usually consisted of one or two officers and 12 to 15 soldiers armed with rifles. The officers of the Barryroe Company, of which I was O/C., decided to ambush the patrol. We assembled about 30 members of the company and took up a position behind the roadside fence north of the Courtmacsherry-Barryroe Road about one mile from Barryroe Creamery on the road to Courtmacsherry. Nearly all were armed with shotguns. I was with a party of three or four others at the western end of the ambush position where it was proposed to hold up the officers leading the patrol. Although we took up the same position on three successive nights, there was no appearance by the enemy patrol.

All members of the Barryroe Company were engaged on the collection of the levy for I.R.A. Arms Fund about September and

October 1920. The levy was based on the Poor Law Valuation of the holding or premises occupied. In nearly all cases the landholders paid up the levy on request. There were, however, one or two cases in which it was necessary to threaten to seize stock to the value of the amount of the levy before the occupiers concerned agreed to contribute.

There was no activity of note in the area until the destruction of Timoleague Castle, Timoleague R.I.C. Barracks (evacuated) and the house of a loyalist - Colonel Travers - early in December 1920. These premises were destroyed as it was anticipated that they would be occupied by enemy forces.

About this time I met with an accident while travelling across country at night. As a result my right leg got septic and, despite available medical attention, failed to react to treatment. This prevented me from taking a really active part in the military activities in the area until close to the Truce. During this period I was, however, unable to come home and had to be moved around the area from place to place, as enemy activities compelled. However, about the beginning of June 1921, I was able to move about reasonably well. It was about this time that Con Minihane, Jack O'Driscoll and William Daly of the Clonakilty Battalion were arrested and sentenced to death. As a counter-stroke, the I.R.A. in the area kidnapped Lord Bandon and a number of other loyalists and held them as hostages. A communication signed by Lord Bandon was sent to the British Prime Minister - David Lloyd George - asking to have the lives of the I.R.A. prisoners spared. I saw this communication before it was dispatched by the Battalion O/C. (Sean Hales).

While Lord Bandon was a prisoner, he was held for

practically the whole period in Barryroe Company area.
 Amongst the houses at which he was detained were:- Jerh.
 Whelton's, Currihy; Denis O'Driscoll's, Dunworley, and
 Dan O'Leary's, Currahevern. On the day following the
 Truce he was released from the latter house.

Rank at Truce: Q.M., D/Company (Barryroe), Bandon
 Battalion, Cork III Brigade, I.R.A.

Strength of company at Truce - about 120.

Signed: James Moloney
 (James Moloney)
 Date: 8th December 1955
 8th December 1955.

Witness: P O'Donnell
 (P. O'Donnell)

