

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
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NO. W.S. 1461

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 1461.

Witness

Cornelius Horgan,
Rylane East,
Co. Cork.

Identity.

Member of Donoughmore Battalion Column.

Subject.

Activities of Rylane Company, Donoughmore
Battalion, Cork Brigade, Irish Volunteers,
1917-1921, and Battalion Flying Column,
1920.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil.

File No S.2617.

Form B.S.M. 2

ORIGINAL

STATEMENT BY CORNELIUS HORGAN,

Rylane East, County Cork.

I was born at Rylane East on 25th April, 1894. My parents were small farmers. I was educated at Rylane National School until I reached the age of 13 when I went to work at home and with neighbouring farmers.

I joined Rylane Company of the Irish Volunteers in the summer of 1917. The Company was organised following a public meeting which was addressed by Tomás MacCurtáin and Séan Nolan from Cork City. At the time the former was O/C, Cork Brigade, Irish Volunteers. About twenty joined the unit at the time. Some of the pioneer members were : Dan McCarthy, Jackie O'Leary, Dan Farrell and his brothers Jim and Mick, David Buckley, Con Horgan, Joe Buckley, Jack Riordan, Denis Connell, James Moynihan. All members paid a weekly subscription of 3d. each to help towards arming and equipping the unit. The first officers were appointed by Tomás MacCurtain (Brigade O/C) as follows:-

O/C., Jackie O'Leary,

1st Lieut. Dan Farrell,

2nd Lieut. Denis Kelliher.

A Sinn Féin Club was organised in the district on the occasion of the meeting referred to above and we all joined up. The membership of this club consisted mainly of Volunteers and the members of their families. The chairman of the Sinn Féin Club was John Hinchion. Beyond the Volunteers' names given in the previous paragraph, I cannot recall the names of the other members.

When our Volunteer unit got under way we held parades twice a week in the fields in the district. At these parades we carried

out close order foot drill in easy stages under our own officers. The strength of the Rylane unit grew by slow stages until by the end of 1917 it was about sixty. There was no change in the officers at this stage. We had no arms of any description as far as I can recollect.

The first real activity in the area arose out of a British threat to impose Conscription. As a result there was a big increase in membership and we had over one hundred Volunteers. We then set about collecting all shotguns in the district - there were no other arms to be got. We called on all householders who had shotguns and collected about twenty. All were surrendered voluntarily. We also got a small supply of cartridges from which we removed the ordinary charge of shot and replaced it with buckshot. These activities helped to make us more military minded and we were given the job of reporting on the movements of enemy forces, especially the R.I.C. in the area.

During the summer of 1918 several battalion parades were held in the area. Our Company (Rylane) was attached to Donoughmore Battalion, Cork Brigade. All the Companies used to meet at weekends at some central point in the area and undergo a course of training in advancing and retreating under cover, scouting and such like activities. The Battalion O/C was John Golden, but I do not remember who the other officers were. I think it was about this time that the Company O/C, Jackie O'Leary, left the area and went to Belfast. He was replaced as O/C by Dan Farrell. The officers of Rylane Company now were :-

O/C - Dan Farrell,

1st Lieut. - Denis Kelliher,

2nd Lieut. - Denis Crowley.

When the Conscription scare had passed there was a slow fade-away by the majority of the new recruits who had joined up early in 1918 and the strength of the Company fell to about sixty.

There was nothing beyond normal parades and drills during the remainder of 1918.

The General Election in December, 1918 did not lead to any exceptional activity as the Sinn Féin candidate for the area was returned unopposed.

Normal training continued throughout 1919, becoming more intensive as the year advanced. Selected men in each area were selected for training in Intelligence, Engineering, Signalling, First Aid. Several raids for arms were carried out at this period and all arms not already under the control of the Volunteers were collected.

When Coachford R.I.C. barracks, which had been evacuated, was destroyed at Easter 1920, I was engaged in blocking the Carrigadroichid-Couchford road. Nearly all members of the Rylane unit under the O/C (Dan Farrell) were engaged on this job.

The next activity in which our Company (Rylane) was engaged was the attack on Blarney R.I.C. Barracks, on the night of 1st June, 1920. The main attacking party in this case was drawn from 1st Battalion (Cork City) while the men from Donoughmore Battalion were mainly engaged on outpost duty and blocking roads. I was armed with a shotgun and was engaged guarding a party which was blocking the Ballincollig-Blarney road by felling some trees. We were about one mile from Blarney. Other members of the party were :- Dan Farrell, Jim Farrell, Joseph Buckley, James Moynihan, Patrick Callaghan. We had travelled across country a distance of about six miles and had

taken up our positions about 9.30 p.m. When the attack was called off, due to the failure to breach the gable wall of the barrack, we withdrew to our home area without incident. We reached home sometime after midnight.

I was one of the pioneer members of the Battalion Column which was formed after Christmas 1920. Some other members of the Column were :- George Mulcahy, Dan Farrell, Tim Riordan, Jerome Callaghan, Paddy O'Leary, John Hinchion, Denis Kelliher, 'Mossy' Hinchion, Regan and - McCarthy. The strength of the Column was about twenty. The Column O/C was Jackie O'Leary who was now O/C Donoughmore Battalion. The Column assembled at a vacant house at Cronin's, Rylane East. Each man was armed with a rifle and about fifty rounds. I do not know how these were procured. We underwent a course of training in arms drill, close order drill, instructions in the care and use of arms, the use of cover, for about a fortnight. We then moved out and took up an ambush position at Kilcoleman on the Coachford-Donoughmore road about $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles from Coachford. We were placed in a derelict house beside the road. This house overlooked a bridge, across Dripsey River, which had been demolished before we took up our position. It was intended to ambush any enemy party that might be halted by the broken bridge. We remained in this position for two days, but there was no sign of an enemy patrol so we withdrew to Rylane area.

Some days later we took up a position on the Donoughmore-Rylane road at Kilcullen. We were behind a stone-faced fence on high ground overlooking the road. Although we remained in position from early morning until darkness set in we failed to make contact with any enemy party.

The Column was now disbanded for a few days and I had to go to Macroom area on some business. While I was away the Column was again assembled for Dripsey ambush on the 28th January, 1921, but I did

not receive the message which was sent to me to report for duty.

During the period from March, 1921 to the Truce 11th July, 1921, I was engaged with the other members of the Rylane Company on the destruction of bridges, blocking of roads, cutting enemy lines of communication, digging trenches as well as acting as guard and scout for the men engaged on this work. When on guard duty I was always armed with a rifle. About this time I was also appointed a member of the Republican Police Force. I helped to guard the Republican Courts and to execute the orders of the Courts. The members of the Aghabologue Parish Court were, as far as I can recollect :- John Connors, Turun, Donoughmore, David Herlihy, Knocknagown, Rylane, and Jeremiah Hinchion, Clonmoyle, Aghabologue. Miss Mary Herlihy - daughter of David Herlihy - was Clerk of the Parish Council.

I did not hold any rank at the Truce. The strength of Rylane Company was about sixty.

Signed: Cornelius Horigan

Date: 18th July 1956

Witness: P J Donnell

