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W.S. 1520
DUPLICATE

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
BURO STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21
No. W.S. 1520

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 1520.

Witness

William Lannin,
Schull,
Co. Cork.

Identity.

Adj. Schull Coy., Schull Battn.,
Cork 111 Bgde., I.R.A.
Secy. Schull Parish Court.
Secy. West Cork Ex., Sinn Féin.

Subject.

Sinn Féin and I.R.A. activities
Schull, Co. Cork, 1917-1921.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil.

File No S.2842.

Form B.S.M. 2

DUPLICATE

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1813-21

BURO STAIRÉ MILEATA 1813-21

No. W.S. 1,520

STATEMENT BY WILLIAM LANNIN,
Schull, County Cork.

I was born in Schull in January 1885. My father was the proprietor of a coaching business. I was educated at Schull National School and when I left school I worked for about a year at home. I then went to serve my time as a shoemaker for four years. Having completed my apprenticeship, I worked for some time as a journeyman shoemaker. Eventually I started in business on my own in Schull in 1904.

When Sinn Féin was first organised in the area in 1917 I became one of the founder members. Other members at this time were :- Jeremiah McCarthy, Jim Hayes, James P., Michael and Dan Sullivan, Michael Dempsey, Edward Goggin. These were the members of the committee of the first Sinn Féin Club formed in Schull. The membership of the club was about fifty. Shortly after its establishment I was appointed Hon. Secretary.

There was no activity in the area in connection with the General Election held in December, 1918 as the Sinn Féin candidate - Seán Hayes - was returned unopposed.

When the Irish Volunteers were formed in Schull in early 1918, I joined up. The strength in the early stages was 25/30, but as conscription scare threatened we had a membership of about eighty. The only arms we had were about twenty shotguns and nearly all were the property of Volunteers or members of their families. The officers of the Company were as far as I can recollect :- O/C., Jeremiah McCarthy; 1st Lieutenant Michael McCarthy; 2nd Lieutenant Paddy O'Neill; Adjutant William Lannin (witness); Quartermaster Tom Griffin.

There was no activity beyond ordinary parades and training in close order drill. I was now Adjutant of the Volunteer unit and Secretary of the Sinn Féin Club in Schull.

Normal training and parades continued throughout the spring of 1919, but during the summer of that year I was engaged in organising the area in connection with Dáil Éireann Loan. This was the first occasion on which Seán Lehane, who was later to organise and become O/C. of Schull Battalion, I.R.A., came into the area. He was engaged in organising the Dáil Loan. As a result of our efforts we collected £640 for the Loan in the district. This money was handed over to Rev. Father Hurley, who was Hon. Treasurer of Sinn Féin for the area.

Seán Lehane was again in the area in the early part of 1920 when he organised Schull Battalion I.R.A. He established units in Schull, Goleen, Dunmanus, Skehanore, Lisagriffin, Glauin, Leamcon, Ballydehob. The first officers of this battalion were :-

O/C. Seán Lehane,
 Vice O/C. Gibbs Ross,
 Adjutant Sean McCarthy,
 Quartermaster Jim Hayes.

At the end of May, 1920, Mizen Head Fog Station, which is at the western end of the battalion area, was raided by some men from Bantry Battalion acting in co-operation with Seán Lehane and some locals. A considerable quantity of gun cotton and other war material was obtained in this raid. I did not take part in this operation.

I was appointed Secretary, Sinn Féin Parish Court, Schull, in June 1920. The members of the Court were :- Patrick O'Brien, Schull; Jeremiah Mahoney, Skehanore, Patrick Moynihan, Shantullig; Mount Gabriel.

Our Court dealt only with minor cases such as petty larceny, breaches of licensing laws, dog licences. All cases which came before the Court were dealt with on their merits. Fines or other penalties imposed were usually paid without demur.

The officers and members of the District ^{COURT} were as far as I can recollect :-

Registrar	- Michael Healy, Bantry,
Sub "	- William Lannin, Schull (Witness),
Chairman	- Robert Kelly, Bantry,
Members	- John J. Hurley, Bircentra, Schull, Frank Goggin, Caheragh.

Secretary

In addition to being appointed of Parish Court I was appointed, about the same time, as Sub-Registrar of the District Court for Schull area. I think that I was also appointed Secretary, West Cork Executive of Sinn Féin, about this period. The meeting at which this appointment was made was presided over by Seán Lehane and was attended by a large number of I.R.A. officers as well as members and officers of Sinn Féin clubs. In addition to holding the posts with the Sinn Féin Courts and Sinn Féin Executive I still continued to carry on my duties as Adjutant, Schull Company, I.R.A.

All members of Sinn Féin and the I.R.A. were active in support of the Sinn Féin candidates - many of them were I.R.A. men - in the Local Government elections in, I think, June 1920. Amongst the candidates successful in the elections were Jeremiah McCarthy (O/C., Schull Company) and Tom Hickey (O/C., Skehanore Company) who were both elected to Schull Rural District Council.

The first Parish Court held in the area was held in Schull on 4th October, 1920. When returning from the Court I got instructions

to report for outpost duty with Jim Sullivan at a point just beyond Meenvane Bridge on Rentry Road. This was the evening of the date on which the R.I.C. barracks was captured. I was to await the arrival of a car driven by Patsy Collins, Ballydehob, and to escort it to the vicinity of the R.I.C. barracks about 8 p.m. About 7.30 p.m. or a little later we (Jim Sullivan and I) saw the lights of a car some distance from the bridge (Meenvane). The car had obviously stopped; so as it did not move towards us we decided to investigate. We moved to where the car was halted to find that the driver was Patsy Collins. He had very little experience of driving and the engine of the car had stopped. He was unable to get it going. I sent for Jack Driscoll - an I.R.A. man and an experienced driver - and he drove the car to the appointed spot. When the R.I.C. barracks was captured, assisted by several members of the Schull Company, we loaded the rifles and other captured material into the cars - Duggan's and Patsy Collins' - and they drove off to dump the booty in Kilocrohan area.

When the cars had gone and the R.I.C. barracks had been burned the garrison, who had been held prisoners by the attacking party in a neighbouring farmyard, were escorted to Duggan's Hotel where they were billeted. The I.R.A. then withdrew, but during the course of the day I learned that some of ^{R.I.C.} ~~them~~ were searching the town for me so I went "on the run".

A Battalion Training Camp was set up at Dunmanus in November, 1920. Tom Barry (Brigade O/C., Training) was in charge of the Camp. I did not actually take part in the training at this Camp, but when the Camp was moved during the week to Drealomane area I was in charge of the guard at night and on fatigue work during the day. Paddy O'Neill (2nd Lieutenant, Schull Company) did not attend this Camp and as a

result he was replaced by Denis Whooley. About the same time, Michael McCarthy (1st Lieutenant, Schull Company) was appointed Battalion Lieutenant of Police. These changes left the officers of the Company as follows :-

O/C. - Jeremiah McCarthy,
 1st Lieutenant- Tim Murphy,
 2nd Lieutenant- Denis Whooley.

As I was rather busy dealing with my duties with the Sinn Féin Courts and the West Cork Executive of Sinn Féin I did not have much to do with the collection of the Arms Fund Levy in the area.

A suspected spy, named Robert Lenihan, was arrested in Schull. I learned that he was in a public house in the town and was inquiring for me. I visited the public house and, without disclosing my identity, got into conversation with the suspect. When we left the public house my friend was taken prisoner by some waiting members of Schull Company and handed over to Charlie Cotter in Ardmanagh area. When searched, a number of envelopes addressed to W. E. Crowe, O/C., Auxiliary Force, Eccles Hotel, Glengarriff, - each containing a supply of blank paper - were found on the prisoner. He was interviewed by the Battalion O/C. (Seán Lehane) and other officers. Pending further investigation the prisoner was moved round the area and eventually to the Calf Islands off the coast - by John Regan and Dan Regan, Schull. He was later removed back to the mainland at Tranawade and then to Hayes', Coosheen. Here he managed to escape and reach the Marine Station. A Marine officer went to the Post Office and sent a wire to the Auxiliaries at Glengarriff. Within a few hours three lorries of Auxiliaries arrived in Schull. They raided my home and that of Michael McCarthy (Battalion Lieutenant of Police). They remained all night and then moved out. However,

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 1520/4

(ii) How many documents have been abstracted: 10

(iii) The date of each such document: 24/10/56

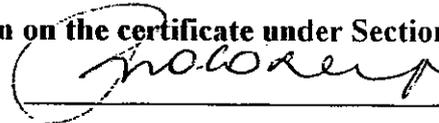
(iv) The description of each document:
WS 1520 Witness Statement William Langer P 6
names of individuals

(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.

Lenihan - dressed as a "fan" - was back in the area three weeks later with a strong force of enemy troops which carried out wholesale raids in the district without making any arrests.

During the months of February and March, 1921, I was engaged with the other members of Schull Company in cutting enemy lines of communication, blocking roads, demolishing bridges.

Towards the end of March - on Holy Thursday I think - the Manager, Provincial Bank, Schull, was held up on the road to Ballydehob and robbed of £500. He was accompanied by, I think, the Bank porter. The raiders were all masked. Seán Lehane (Battalion O/C.) was in the area at the time and he immediately set about investigating the occurrence. Within a short time the culprits were discovered and with some members of the Battalion Column and men from Schull Company I took part in the round-up of the raiders. The raiders (four) were arrested. They were not members of the I.R.A.. They were removed after arrest to Coolcolougha, Durrus, where they were tried at McCarthy's by a Court consisting of Seán Lehane (Battalion O/C), Seán O'Driscoll (Battalion Vice O/C), Seán McCarthy (Battalion Adjutant), Jim Hayes (Battalion Quartermaster), and Charlie Cotter (O/C. Schull). Three of the raiders were sentenced to deportation

and sent out of the country. The fourth member of the party did not take part in the raid but helped to organise it. He was fined £50 and the fine was remitted to Brigade Headquarters. The money (£500) taken in the raid was recovered and returned to the Provincial Bank.

Several training camps were held in the area in the spring of 1921. There were held, amongst other places, at Dunmanus and Rathoorah. Training at these camps was carried out under Seán Lehane, Jim Hayes and Seán McCarthy.

When Seán Lehane planned the raid on the Fastnet Rock in June 1921, I got instructions to arrange for the boat to take him and the others from the mainland, who took part, to Cape Clear Island. I arranged with John O'Regan to supply the boat and he was only too glad to be asked to take on such a responsible job. He was the first to land on the Fastnet Rock and, with his knowledge of the layout of the Lighthouse, he led Seán Lehane and the other members of the raiding party to the officers' quarters where they (the officers) were held up. A considerable quantity of explosives (gun cotton) was then lowered into the boat provided by John O'Regan, and the raiding party then returned to the mainland with their booty. Amongst the men who took part in this raid were :- Charlie Cotter, Seán Lehane, Seán O'Driscoll, John O'Regan, William Daly, Michael Murphy, Tom Murphy, Jim Hayes, Dan Leonard, Dan O'Driscoll and Dan Daly. With the exception of the last three, who were residents of Cape Clear Island, all the others were from the mainland.

Towards the end of June 1921, Schull ^{WORKHOUSE} Courthouse was burned out on the orders of Brigade Headquarters as it was anticipated that it would be used to billet additional enemy forces in the area. The destruction of this building was carried out by men from Schull and Glauon Companies in co-operation with the members of the Battalion Column under Seán Lehane. While the Courthouse was being destroyed by the men from the local Companies the Column carried out a covering attack on the Marine Station. When the Courthouse had been completely destroyed the Column withdrew to billets, while the majority of the locals returned to their home areas.

Just prior to the Truce on 11th July, 1921, Cork III. Brigade was divided in two Brigades. Schull Battalion became a unit of a new brigade, Cork V. The other Battalions in this Brigade were :- Bantry, Skibbereen, Castletownbere and Drimoleague. I am not sure whether this

arrangement actually came into force before the Truce. The officers of the new Brigade were :- O/C. Gibbs Ross; Vice O/C. Ted O'Sullivan; Adjutant Mick Crowley; Quartermaster Jim Hayes;

When the Brigade was reorganised Seán Lehane was appointed O/C., Dunmanway Battalion, and the officers of Schull Battalion were :- O/C. Seán O'Driscoll; Vice O/C. Tom Hickey; Adjutant Denis O'Mahoney; Quartermaster Edward O'Sullivan.

My rank at the Truce :- Adjutant, ^{Schull Coy} Schull Battalion, Cork 111. Brigade; Secretary, West Cork Executive, Sinn Féin.

Strength of Schull Company - About 80.

SIGNED: _____

DATE: _____

WITNESS: _____

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BURO. STAIRE MILITIA 1913-21
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