

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
BURO STAIRE MILEATA 1913-21
No. W.S. 1537

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 1537.

Witness

Eugene Dunne,
Adrigole,
Bantry,
Co. Cork.

Identity.

I/O Adrigole Company,
Castletownbere. Battalion,
Cork 111 Bgde.

Subject.

Activities of Adrigole Coy.,
I. Vols., Co. Cork, 1917-1921.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil.

File No S.2824.

Form B.S.M. 2

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STATEMENT BY EUGENE DUNNE,
Adrigole, Bantry, Co. Cork.

I was born at Cappaleagh, Adrigole, Bantry, on January 1st 1888. My parents were farmers. I was educated at Adrigole National School until I reached the age of 15. When I left school I went to work as a clerk with Bantry Bay Steamship Company.

I joined the Adrigole Company of the Irish Volunteers in February, 1917. The strength of the unit at the time was about fourteen. As a matter of fact, we were known locally as "The Twelve Apostles". The pioneers were : - Eugene Sullivan, Florence Sullivan (Droumlave), Dick Doyle (Cappanaparka), James Dunne (Gortnarea), Eugene Dunne (Gortnarea), James B. Sullivan (Droumlave), Matthew Sullivan (Curragh), Richard Nicholson (Adrigole), Patk. F. Sullivan (Derrincorrin), Con Sullivan (Lackavane), Jerome Kelly (Crooha), James Leary (Faha), Eugene Dunne (witness). The officers of the unit were : -

- O/C - Eugene Sullivan
- 1st Lt.- Florence Sullivan.

The only type of training carried on was close order foot drill. This was carried out under our own officers. Parades were held on a couple of nights each week.

We were all members of the local Sinn Féin Club and of the Gaelic League. Both of these organisations were composed mainly of Volunteers and the members of their families.

The prime mover in Gaelic League activities was Mort O'Shea. He taught Irish in the classes which were held twice weekly.

The strength of Adrigole grew slowly as 1917 advanced. Selected men in the district were invited to join and by the end of the year there were about thirty on the rolls.

The threat of the British to impose conscription in the early portion of 1918 led to a further increase in strength and the majority of the new recruits continued to serve after the threat had passed. At this time - about March, 1918 - the officers of the company were: -

O/C - Florence Sullivan
 1st Lt. - Eugene Sullivan
 2nd Lt. - Matt Sullivan
 Q/M - Richard Nicholson
 I/O - Eugene Dunne (witness).

In the year 1918 I was employed as agent for Bantry Bay Steamship Company at Bere Island. My duties included the checking of inward and outward goods carried by the company. In this capacity I had access to the military stores on the island for the checking of goods carried for the military authorities.

During visits to the Royal Engineer's stores at Rerrin - adjacent to Royal Engineer Barracks - I discovered a large quantity of gun-cotton, primers, detonators and other explosives. I reported the matter to Michael Crowley, O/C Castletownbere Battalion, and also to the O/Cs of Bere Island and Adrigole Companies.

It was decided to capture and remove the stock of explosives to Adrigole Company area and dump it in Eugene Sullivan's land at Inchintaglin, Adrigole. He was then O/C Adrigole Company.

On the morning of June 5th 1918 the operation started at 12.30 a.m. It was a dangerous operation as the Royal Engineers' Barracks was only about fifty yards from the store.

The job at Bere Island was carried out by the members of Bere Island Company under Con Lowney, O/C. Each box of gun-cotton weighed about 56 lbs and had to be carried by hand from the store to the pier on the island a distance of about yards. It was then loaded on to Volunteer Tim Moriarty's boat - fifty-two boxes in all - comprising gun-cotton, primers and detonators. Six boxes of gun-cotton, two exploders, 2 coils of electric cable and one large bag of black powder had to be left behind on the island as the boat was fully loaded. This material was dumped in John Houlihan's store which was close to the pier. The six boxes of gun-cotton were later removed to a dump at Battalion H.Q. and were used in connection with the attack on Allihies R.I.C. Barracks in February, 1920.

While the removal of the gun-cotton from the Royal Engineers' store to the pier was being carried out I was on duty as a sentry between the R.E. Barracks and the store.

I heard a person walking from the direction of the barracks. I passed the signal to the scout on duty near the store and lay down on the side of the road. I recognised the person passing by as Staff Sergt. Herbert,

Royal Engineers. He passed on by the store and did not observe any activity by our men.

When Tim Moriarty's boat had been loaded at Bere Island Pier the crew of men from the Bere Island Company rowed across the harbour to Burrow^{NN}, where the men from Adrigole and Rosmacowen Companies were waiting and ready to remove the captured materials to a prepared dump in Adrigole Company area. The Battalion O/C (Michael Crowley) and O/C Castletownbere Company (Wm. O'Neill) met the boat and helped to transfer the cargo to Adrigole Company transport.

The crossing of the harbour was a very dangerous operation during the early hours of the morning as several destroyers and other boats from the Royal Navy were anchored in the harbour.

The cox of the boat which transferred the captured explosives was Jim Houlihan, Rerrin.

This stock of gun-cotton was removed from the dump in Adrigole area to Brigade H.Q. in small quantities at a time. It was used in the manufacture of mines and bombs which were used at Crossbarry, Drimoleague, Roscarbery, as well as on the attack on King St. Barracks, Cork, by the men of Cork 1 Brigade. With the exception of the supply, which was collected by car by the men from Cork 1 Brigade for the attack on King St. Barracks, the remainder of the stock was removed as required by boat across Bantry Bay from Trafask to Carbery shore - often under the searchlights of British destroyers in the bay.

The bag of black powder, exploders and electric cable were sent by me on one of the Bantry Bay Company's boats - "Lady Elsie" - to Adrigole later in the year.

Being engaged on Intelligence work in the area I did not make it too obvious that I was associated with the Volunteers. However, I attended parades and took part in all training activities which were usually carried on at night.

Beyond normal training there was no unusual activity in the area during 1919. However, I took part with the other members of Sinn Féin and the Volunteers in the collection and organisation of the first Dáil Éireann loan during the summer of 1919.

About this time I arranged for the transfer of two rifles (which had been obtained by the O/C Bere Island Company, Jim Sullivan) to Adrigole area for dumping. In addition, I obtained 2,000 rounds of .22 ammunition and a revolver from a sympathiser on Bere Island. As far as I can recollect, the armament of Adrigole Company was now increased by about eight shotguns which were obtained in raids in the area.

There was no change in the officers of Adrigole unit, nor was there any unusual activity in the area until Easter, 1920, when Adrigole R.I.C. Barracks, which had been evacuated, was destroyed. All members of the company were engaged either on the destruction of the building or as scouts. We tried to set the building on fire but the attempt was not a success, so it was blown up by a couple of charges of gun-cotton.

During the summer of 1920 I lay in ambush at night on three or four occasions with other members of the company (Adrigole) for enemy patrols, but we failed to make contact with the enemy.

Towards the end of August, 1920, I went with Jim Sullivan (O/C Bere Island) & Micheál Óg O'Sullivan (Adrigole) to the vicinity of Glengariff where we were to meet some men from Bantry Battalion to take part in an ambush of a military convoy travelling between Bantry and Castletownbere. We were armed with rifles and travelled by cycle. The ambush did not take place as the convoy did not travel and we returned home. In this case it later transpired that the Bantry men had a skirmish with the R.I.C. in Glengariff as they moved towards their home area. Two R.I.C. men were killed as far as I can recollect.

When it was decided to establish a Brigade Column on a permanent basis, the Brigade Council, Cork III Brigade decided to make a levy on all landholders and property owners to finance the equipment and clothing of the column. The duty of arranging for the collection of this levy - called Arms Fund Levy - was delegated to the officers in each area. I took part in this work in Adrigole Company, where the amount of the levy was paid willingly by the farmers and householders. This collection was carried out during the months of October and November, 1920.

It was now approaching Christmas, 1920, and there was very little activity in the area. The men from the battalion (Castletownbere) who had been with the Brigade Column returned home. Their return created an interest in activities in general.

The column was reassembled about mid January, 1921, and about six men from Castletownbere Battalion area were called up. I don't think that there was any representative from Adrigole area in this call up. However, early in March Micheál Óg O'Sullivan reported to the column with, I think, Christy O'Connell, Dick Spencer and five or six others. These men took part in Crossbarry engagement on March 19th 1921.

At this period the members of our company (Adrigole), as well as the members of all other units, were regularly engaged in cutting trenches, blocking roads, demolishing bridges and doing everything possible to hinder enemy administration. The road cutting parties usually operated in conjunction with armed scouts who held key positions while the work of trenching or demolition went on. During the spring and summer of 1921 I was regularly engaged on guard duty for these operations.

In the spring of 1921 the British military authorities ordered the masters of the ships of Bantry Bay Steamship Company to cease calling at any piers in Bantry Bay. The boats were now ordered to operate direct between Castletownbere-Bere Island and Cork. As they were not now touching at Adrigole, my services were no longer required and I was dismissed. I then operated as a wholetime officer on I.R.A. activities until I was arrested on July 3rd 1921.

In March, 1921, the Mate of the Bantry Steamship Company's boat - "Lady Elsie" - reported to me on his arrival at Adrigole that some British military on board were armed with revolvers. I immediately informed the Adrigole Company O/C (Florence O'Sullivan), and with some

other members of the unit he held up three British officers on board, finding only one revolver.

When the members of Rossmacowen Company took part in the shoot-up of British forces at Furious Pier on May 14th 1921 I was acting as an armed scout on the Adrigole-Glengariff road. In this engagement the enemy casualties were: - three dead, two wounded. This operation was carried out in response to an order from H.Q., 1st Southern Division, and as a reprisal for the execution of I.R.A. prisoners in Cork.

On May 25th 1921 I commandeered a motor car (mail car) for the Brigade Vice O/C who had been attending a Brigade Council meeting in the area. About this time also all cycles in the district were commandeered and held in readiness as a means of transport for the men of the column or other officers and men operating in, or passing through the area.

As Intelligence Officer my main activities were underground. All messages were transmitted to Battalion H.Q. by dispatch riders - mainly members of Cumann na mBan.

I was arrested on July 3rd 1921 when, on my way to Glengariff, I ran into an enemy round-up. I was taken to Bantry where I was detained for a week before being removed on my own in a destroyer to Furious Pier. After some weeks at Furious Pier I was removed to Bere Island Internment Camp at the end of August, 1921. I was later removed to Spike Island, thence to Maryborough Prison (now Portlaoise), from where I was released on December 8th 1921.

Signed:

Eugene A. A. A.

Date:

1st December 1921

Witness:

P. O'Donnell
(Investigator)

