

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

BURO STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21

NO. W.S. 1,644.

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 1644.

Witness

Edward Horgan,  
13, Sheare's Park,  
Glasheen Road,  
Cork.

Identity.

1st Lieut., 'H' Coy., 1st Battn, Cork No. 1 Bde.

Subject.

'H' Coy., 1st Battn., Cork No. 1 Bde., I.R.A.,  
1917-1921.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil.

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STATEMENT BY EDWARD HORGAN,

13 Sheares' Park, Glasheen Road, Cork.

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I am a native of Cork City where I joined Fianna Éireann in 1917.

During my service with the Fianna up to late 1918, we drilled in the Volunteer Hall in Sheares' Street, Cork, and held public parades from time to time. There was, at that time, only one Fianna Sluagh in Cork City, so far as I can remember. A man named O'Callaghan of Blarney Street, Cork, was the officer-in-charge. There were, to the best of my recollection, about sixty members in the Sluagh. So far as I am aware, the Fianna had no guns then. There may, possibly, have been a few revolvers owned by individuals; but I cannot state this with any certainty.

When I joined the Volunteers in the latter part of 1918, there was only one Battalion in Cork City. My Company was known as "H" Company and when, in early 1919, the Battalion was divided into the 1st and 2nd Battalions, Cork No. 1. Brigade, I was still attached to the same Company.

When the Cork City Battalion was divided, the 1st Battalion covered the area north of the River Lee. The territory of the 2nd Battalion lay south of the river. Although "H" Company comprised districts south of the Lee, we still were attached to the 1st Battalion. The districts covered by our Company could, generally speaking, be outlined as follows :- Glasheen Road, Magazine Road, College Road, part of Western Road, Bishopstown, Model Farm Road, and as far as Ballincollig village. The latter is, approximately, five miles south-west of Cork City.

When I joined "H" Company the officers were :- Captain - Seán O'Sullivan; 1st Lieutenant - Joe Murphy; 2nd Lieutenant - Seán Hurley. We had about sixty to eighty men in the Company, which was divided into four sections under Section Commanders. We drilled in an old slaughter-house in a yard at Dennehy's Cross and, when the weather permitted, in a quarry at Sandy Hill in the Bishopstown area west of the City.

When the General Election of December, 1918, was held, our Company, in common with other Volunteer Companies, was actively engaged, canvassing votes, stewarding election meetings and helping generally to further the cause of the two Sinn Féin candidates for Cork City, viz. Liam de Roiste and J.J. Walsh. Both these men were elected by large majorities over their opponents representing (1) the loyalists in Cork and (2) the Irish Parliamentary Party under the leadership of John Redmond.

On 11th November, 1918, a sensation was created in the City and indeed, all over the country, when news was received of the daring escape from Cork gaol of Donnchadha MacNeilus, a Cork Volunteer who had been arrested and charged with shooting an R.I.C. man, who took part in the arrest. MacNeilus was assisted in his unsuccessful attempt to escape by picked Volunteers from the City Battalions, some of whom actually entered the gaol on that occasion. My reference to this particular episode is, mainly, for the purpose of placing on record the fact that two men of "H" Company, 1st Battalion, named Denis Coghlan and Jack Allard, were amongst those Volunteers who took part in the rescue of MacNeilus.

Our main activities during 1919 consisted of regular weekly drills and occasional parades. Our arms consisted of a few

revolvers and shotguns. With a view to improving the general arms position the Brigade gave instructions that the Companies should undertake the raiding of private houses in our district where we had reason to believe there might be a gun or ammunition. The occupants of these houses were, in practically every instance, of the so-called gentry class. They were all pro-British in their sympathies and many were ex-officers of the British Army or Navy.

Small parties of three or four of us carried out these raids at night. One member of our party would, invariably, carry a revolver; the remainder would be unarmed. I know that in thirteen of these raids we succeeded in getting about twelve shotguns and a couple of revolvers. The latter were taken from the house of a man named Footer who was employed as a water bailiff. Another revolver was got in the house of a man named Norcott in the Bishopstown district.

So far as our Company was concerned it would be correct to state that the arms position showed only a little improvement as but, a result of these raids/in view of the fact that we had about eighty men in the Company, generally speaking the results were, in my opinion, out of all proportion to the risks involved.

Early in January, 1919, in company with Jer Flaherty, Owen Jackson, Peter Young, Bill Barry and Tadg Murphy, all from "H" Company, I went about 8 p.m. one night to raid the house of a British Army Captain home on leave, at The Lough, Cork. I was armed with a revolver. The others were unarmed. Our faces were blackened to avoid identification, as some of us, at least, were known to the occupants. We knocked at the door of the house and gained admission. The British Army Officer's father, who was an R.I.C. man, was inside. We told him what we had come for.

His son (the officer) happened to be upstairs and, apparently, overheard what we had said. He came down the stairs with a rifle pointed menacingly at us. I produced my revolver and pounced on him and discovered, luckily enough for us, that the rifle was unloaded. In the struggle, our caps fell off and we were, apparently, recognised by the ex-R.I.C. man. However, we left the house with the captured rifle.

Two nights following the raid in question my home at Glasheen Road, Cork, was raided by police and military and I was arrested and taken to the Bridewell, Cork. When I got there, I found that three others of my comrades, who had taken part in the raid with me, were also in custody. We were charged with complicity in the raid on the ex-R.I.C. man's house and remanded to Cork gaol.

In the gaol at the time were a number of Volunteer prisoners from Fermoy who were charged as being members of a party of Volunteers who had attacked and disarmed British soldiers, en route to Sunday Church Service, in the streets of Fermoy some time previously. So far as I can remember, things were getting hot for the Fermoy prisoners at this time and they were in danger of being found guilty. Possibly the British had evidence of identification in their case. To counteract any move by the British it was decided on instructions (conveyed by some means to the prisoners) from the Brigade that we should all go on hunger strike. This we duly did.

After about eleven days on hunger strike, I was removed to the hospital of the Sisters of Mercy, Cork, where I was to undergo an operation for the removal of tonsils. While I was in the hospital I was guarded day and night by armed R.I.C. men. I was only a few

days in hospital when one of the house Doctors named Leo Aherne, himself a Cork Volunteer (better known as "Stetto") told me to hold myself in readiness to attempt an escape. Owing to the presence of the police the project fell through on the first occasion. It was then decided that the Reverend Mother should lodge an objection to the police being constantly in the ward where there were other patients besides myself. Eventually, the police agreed to withdraw on the condition that they would be allowed to enter the ward every half hour to ensure that I was still there. This was agreed to by the Reverend Mother who, doubtless, was quite well aware of my intention to escape at the first opportunity.

One night (13th January, 1920) I was told by Leo Aherne that arrangements were being made to help me to get away. When the police were absent from the ward I was brought to one of the toilet rooms where I was given a nurse's cap and gown and a revolver and told to leave the hospital by a side exit, where some Volunteers were waiting to escort me to safety. When I left the toilet disguised as a nurse, I met an R.I.C. man in the passage. I turned hurriedly away from him and, eventually, found myself in the hospital mortuary. I came out the mortuary door on to the street; but, as it had been arranged that I should leave by another door, I found nobody to meet me. Leo Aherne did, in fact, inform the waiting Volunteers shortly afterwards that I had left the hospital. I proceeded to the house of the Misses Wallis, St. Augustine Street, Cork, where I met Seán Hegarty, O/C. of the Cork No. 1, Brigade. He arranged to have me supplied with suitable clothes.

I remained in the City for about three months sleeping in different houses at night and then got out to the country to the 6th Battalion area at Donoughmore, a few miles south-west of Cork, where I stayed with a friendly farmer named Dinny Lucey, and linked up with the local Courtbrack Company of Volunteers. While with this Company I helped to burn down a few evacuated police barracks in the district. One such burning was at Bannow Bridge near Leemount, Cork, where in April, 1920, we used petrol and straw to destroy the barracks. About thirty men took part in this operation.

Attack on military and police convoy at  
Ballinacarriga Bridge.

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In the month of May, 1920, during which period I was in and out of the City at various times and in touch with my own "H" Company, it was learned that a party of armed R.I.C. escorted, at regular periods, supplies of blasting powder to Jennings' quarries near Victoria Cross, Cork, and also supplies of food to the military on duty at the viaduct in the Bishopstown district of Cork. Tom Dennehy, the Captain of "H" Company, decided we should attack and disarm this convoy at Ballinacarriga Bridge which is situated on the old Cork-Ballincollig road and about two miles south-west of the City. Our party consisted of the following :- Tom Dennehy (Company Captain), James O'Donoghue, Jack O'Regan, Patrick Murphy, Denis O'Sullivan and myself. We were all armed with revolvers.

We were moving to the ambush position (in the forenoon) when, to our surprise, we heard lorries approaching from the Ballincollig direction earlier than we had anticipated. We hurriedly took cover behind ditches and discovered that, not alone did the expected police

party arrive, but also two lorryloads of armed military. This unexpected development put paid to our plans. We could not hope to take on this much superior enemy force with the numbers and weapons at our disposal. However, as the convoy passed, we emptied our revolvers into it and then had no option but to beat a hurried retreat. I cannot say what casualties (if any) we inflicted on the enemy who, I might add, replied vigorously to our fire.

#### Attack on Blarney R.I.C. Barracks.

On the night of 3rd June, 1920, an attack was made on the R.I.C. barracks at Blarney, County Cork, in which a large number of men from the Cork No. 1, Brigade took part.

At that time, I was in the City and left with "H" Company for outpost duty on the night of the attack.

Our party numbered, approximately, thirty. Most of us were armed with shotguns, the remainder with revolvers. We were instructed to take up positions at Healy's Bridge, which is about two miles on the City side of Blarney (on its south side) and our instructions were to engage any enemy relieving force which might come along while the barrack attack was in progress. This force was expected to come from Ballincollig four miles to the southwest where there was a very strong military garrison in barracks.

After the attack on Blarney barracks had concluded and before we left our position, several lorryloads of Cameron Highlanders approached Healy's Bridge, coming from Ballincollig. We poured volleys from shotguns and revolvers into the Camerons but failed to halt their progress. They replied vigorously to our fire, but,

as I have stated, were able to continue on in the direction of Blarney. I understand that they were held up further on by road-blocks set up by others of our party, with the result that all of our men engaged in the barrack attack got safely away. We pulled out of our position when the Camerons had gone out of sight and we withdrew to Courtbrack, six or seven miles to the west.

Shortly afterwards, I again returned to the City because of intensive raiding by military in the Courtbrack district.

Attack on R.I.C. barracks at King Street, Cork.

On 1st July, 1920, at about 6 p.m. an attack was made on the R.I.C. Barracks, King Street (now MacCurtain Street), Cork, by men of the 1st Battalion. The barracks was situated in one of the main City thoroughfares and was only about a quarter of a mile from Victoria (now Collins) barracks, which was the headquarters of the British Military Command in the South of Ireland. The plan of attack, as I now remember it, was that a charge of gelignite be exploded against the sidewall of the barracks from the inside of an adjoining house; the barracks was then to be rushed and captured by a party of Volunteers spread here and there in King Street in the immediate vicinity of the barracks. The plan miscarried, by reason of the fact that before the explosion occurred a Volunteer fired with a revolver at an R.I.C. man outside the barracks. This alerted the garrison and, although the gelignite was exploded, causing great damage to the barracks, it was decided not to proceed with the original plan as the element of surprise, so necessary to success, was gone.

With about six to eight men of "H" Company, I was stationed down near Patrick's Bridge (a few others were in King Street),

which is about two hundred yards from King Street barracks and covered the approach to that street by enemy relieving forces coming from the (South) centre of the city, e.g. Union Quay Barracks. We were all armed with revolvers. When the assault plan proved abortive for the reasons stated those men who were to take part were instructed to get away from the district. As they left, word was conveyed to us to do likewise.

Military dispatch rider captured at  
Carrigrohane Road.

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Early in the month of July, 1920, five members of "H" Company, armed with revolvers, with Tom Dennehy, the Company Captain, in charge, lay in wait along the Carrigrohane Road to capture a military dispatch rider conveying dispatches from Ballincollig military barracks to Cork. It was previously observed that this dispatch carrier passed this way at regular periods.

The soldier came along on a motor-bicycle one evening as expected. The boys fired a few shots across him, whereupon he crashed into the side of the road. His dispatches, revolver and motor-cycle were then taken away. He was unhurt. A short while after this particular incident Tom Dennehy was arrested and charged with having taken part in the occurrence. He was sentenced to a term of penal servitude which he served in a gaol in England.

Raids on Military Stores and Mails.

During the year 1920, "H" Company carried out many daylight raids on the premises of the Cork-Bandon and Cork-Macroom railway.

Provisions and equipment (coats, boots, shirts) for the British forces in the South and West of the county were continually passing through the Cork termini. Whenever a consignment arrived at a railway station, information to the effect was passed on by I.R.A. men employed on the railway. The raids were usually carried out by from six to ten men armed with revolvers; the captured goods were taken away by horse and car or by motor lorry commandeered by us for the purpose. These captures were safely stored and eventually sent on to the country for the use of our Flying Columns.

Mails consigned to military and police barracks were also taken from trains very frequently during 1920 and 1921. All such correspondence was passed to the Battalion Intelligence Service for scrutiny.

#### Destruction of military lorries at Dennehy's Cross.

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On 15th July, 1920, word was received that two military lorries had stopped at Dennehy's Cross, apparently having broken down. Two armed soldiers remained to keep a watch on the lorries. Four of our lads armed with revolvers were hurriedly mobilised and proceeded to the scene. They held up the soldiers, disarmed them and then set the lorries on fire. All of the boys got safely away. Dennehy's Cross is about one and a half miles from the City centre and on the main Cork-Ballincollig road.

#### Shooting of Michael Walsh, Spy.

Early in the year, 1921, instructions were received from the Battalion that a civilian named Michael Walsh was to be located and shot. Walsh was an ex-British soldier, and, according to

information received by our Intelligence Service, was giving information about I.R.A. men to the enemy.

We knew Walsh quite well and on many occasions we watched for him, armed with revolvers. To the best of my recollection this man took refuge in the military barracks, Cork, because we failed to find him in his usual haunts. Eventually he was located in the hospital wing of the Cork Union from where he was taken on 19th February, 1921, by a party of I.R.A. men - not from "H" Company - and duly executed.

#### Shooting of Black and Tan at College Road, Cork.

Following an ambush of Black and Tans at Dripsey, County Cork, in February, 1921, after which a number of I.R.A. prisoners were brutally done to death by the 'Tans', an order was issued by the Cork Brigade O/C. that men from every Company of the two Cork City battalions should patrol the streets under arms on the night of 1st March, 1921, and shoot every member of the British forces to be met with whether they were armed or not. This was to be done by way of a reprisal for the brutal murder of our comrades captured at Dripsey.

Armed patrols went out in our Company area that night. Only one of these patrols met any of the enemy. This happened at, what is known as, the Gaol Cross on College Road, very close to the heavily guarded Cork gaol. Here, four of our lads contacted a group of Black and Tans coming out of the gaol. Fire was opened on the 'Tans' who replied with revolvers and then hastily withdrew to the safety of the gaol. One of them was wounded and later died. In the exchange of fire a member of "H" Company named Augustine O'Shea was also wounded, but recovered subsequently.

Burning of Victoria Cross Police Barracks.

The R.I.C. barracks at Victoria Cross, Cork, was one of the strategic points in the enemy's posts covering the entrance to the City on the south-west side. It was in close proximity to the City and on a route very frequently used by enemy forces leaving and entering Cork. Sometime in March, 1921 (I am not at all certain of this date) the barracks was evacuated. Immediately we were instructed to destroy it to prevent its reoccupation by the British and, on the day following the evacuation, a party of seven armed men from "G" Company entered the building during daylight, sprinkled it with petrol and set it alight. Particular care had to be taken on this occasion because it was feared that the premises had been mined before being evacuated and there was every danger too that the I.R.A. party would be surprised by passing soldiers or 'Tans' before the destruction of the barracks was accomplished. However, all went well; the job was completed to our satisfaction, our lads getting away safely just before a strong force of military arrived on the scene.

Burning of Pike's Mansion at Leemount, Cork.

At about the latter end of May, 1921, the Company was instructed to destroy a large mansion then occupied by people named Pike at Leemount about a mile from Cork. This was a well-known rendezvous for British officers, the Pikes being strong loyalists. A party of about thirty of us proceeded to Leemount one night. We carried tins of petrol for the job. Arriving at Pike's we ordered all the occupants (about twenty) out of the building at the point of the revolver, and set fire to the place, completely destroying it. There were no British Army personnel there that evening.

Attempt to shoot British Intelligence Officers.

On various occasions in 1921 we lay in ambush to shoot British Intelligence Officers who frequented the house of a loyalist in the Inchagaggin district, not far from Ballincollig. There was one particular officer, whose name I have forgotten, whom we were particularly anxious to meet. Unfortunately, we missed the fellow on the many occasions we lay in wait for him. He was, however, eventually shot and killed by Leo Murphy, Commandant of the 3rd Battalion (Ballincollig area).

A feature of "H" Company's activities in 1921 was the frequent blocking of roads in our area by digging trenches and felling trees. This was done to obstruct military operations which were then being carried out on a large scale and were directed mainly against our Flying Columns in the south-west of the county. As an instance, I would refer to the successful ambush by the West Cork Flying Column under Tom Barry which took place at Crossbarry on 19th March, 1921. Immediately before this ambush took place we were busily engaged blocking the roads in our area leading south-westwards to the ambush position. I am sure that our efforts on that occasion helped in some measure to foil the British attempt to surround and capture Barry's Column after the fight at Crossbarry had concluded.

In the months preceding the Truce of July, 1921, our activities, in general, concerned the disruption of enemy lines of communication to the south and west of the county. Telephone and telegraph wires were cut, trains held up and searched for enemy mails and goods, parties of enemy troops were sniped and

every effort made to obstruct and confuse the British Military Authorities in their efforts to wage more intensive warfare. I was engaged in this work with "H" Company when the Truce called a halt to hostilities.

During the period of the Truce I attended an officers' training camp at Bishopstown, County Cork, and, on the outbreak of the Civil War fought on the anti-Treaty side until the 'Cease Fire' Order in 1923.

SIGNED: Edward Hogan

DATE: 26. 6. 57.

WITNESS: [Signature]

