

W. S. 1,328
ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
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NO. W.S. 1,328

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 1,328.....

Witness

Philip Boyle,
Maramelin,
Dungloe,
Co. Donegal.
Identity.

O/C. 'A' (Dungloe) Company, 1st Battalion,
1st Northern Division.

O/C. 1st Battalion, 1st Brigade, 1st Northern
Division.
Subject.

Dungloe Company Irish Volunteers,
Co. Donegal, 1918-1921.

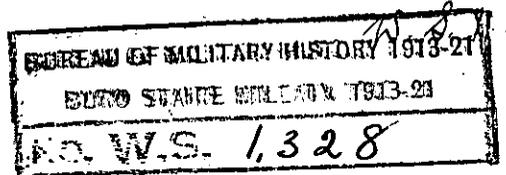
Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil

File No. S. 2644.....

Form B.S.M. 2

ORIGINAL



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STATEMENT BY PHILIP BOYLE,
Marameelan, Dungloe, Co. Donegal.

I joined the Irish Volunteers in November, 1918. At that time a company was organised in my area. It was known as C. Company, 1st Battalion, West Donegal Brigade. Ernie O'Malley came to the area as organiser. The first Captain of the Company was Joe Carr. He was an ex soldier of the British army. Carr remained as Captain until January, 1919. When orders were received from the Brigade to enforce a boycott of the R.I.C. and their friends, Carr was not prepared to go through with it and he was released from his post. I was appointed Captain to replace Carr. The Company strength at that time was twenty-four.

Late in 1920 - it may have been August - our Company collected any shotguns held by civilians in the area. At the time, the Ancient Order of Hibernians was fairly strong, and they resisted the taking up of guns, but we had not to use force when they realised that we were determined to get the guns.

The main work of the Volunteers in our area in 1918, 1919 and early 1920 was concerned with drilling and training. We also helped Sinn Fenn in the elections.

Brian Sweeney, who had been Battalion O/C, was arrested in July, 1920, and I was appointed to succeed him. The Battalion Staff consisted of -

Philip Boyle (Witness) - O/C.
Murry O'Donnell - Vice O/C.
Edward Gallagher - Adjutant.
Charles Coll - Quartermaster.

There were ten Companies in the Battalion, which covered a very wide area as will be seen from the location of the Companies. The Companies were as follows:-

- | | |
|-------------------------|---------------------------|
| A. (Dungloe) | - O/C, Patrick McColl. |
| B. (Burtonport) | - O/C, Charles Ward. |
| C. (Meenacross) | - O/C, James Boyle. |
| D. (Dooghary) | - O/C, Patrick McMonagle. |
| E. (Lettermacward) | - O/C, John O'Donnell. |
| F. (Mulladuff) | - O/C, Charles McGinley. |
| G. (Annagry) | - O/C, Charles McBride. |
| H. (Kincasslagh) | - O/C, Owen H. O'Donnell. |
| I. (Either & Innisgree) | - O/C, Charles Doogan. |
| J. (Ranafast) | - O/C, Dan Green. |

The strength of the companies varied over the year. The Battalion area covered some of the poorest land in Ireland. Holdings were small, and it was the custom for the men to go to Scotland for the potato harvest and to return before Christmas.

I was responsible for the training of the companies over the whole area. Late in 1920 and up to the Truce, the blocking of roads was carried out over the whole area, and it was necessary to pair companies for the work. Dungloe was Battalion Headquarters as it was fairly central.

Our arms mostly consisted of shotguns, with a few revolvers. My only purchase of arms was a deal I made for nine rifles. One of our men - John O'Donnell of Elendry, Dungloe, - had a cousin, a native of Fintona, who was working as a shopboy in Belfast. He had purchased the rifles, and John O'Donnell told me they

could be bought from his cousin. I approached Joseph Sweeney (later Major-General) and he approved the purchase.

When I became O/C of the Battalion, the R.I.C. and military posts in my area were:-

Dungloe R.I.C. barracks - Head Sergeant in charge.

Lettermacward R.I.C. barracks.

Dooghary R.I.C. barracks.

Annagry R.I.C. barracks.

Kincasslagh R.I.C. barracks.

Burtonport R.I.C. barracks.

There were no coastguards in the area.

During 1920 the R.I.C. commenced evacuating their outlying barracks and concentrating in Dungloe. As the R.I.C. vacated the barracks, the local companies, acting on orders, burned them. The strengthened garrison in Dungloe was reinforced by a party of Black and Tans.

The first activity in our area was an attack on a party of R.I.C. who were returning to Dungloe from Derry. I was not present, but Pat O'Donnell (Kit) of Sheskenarone should know all about it.

On the 11th January, 1921, I received a despatch from Peadar O'Donnell to bring any armed men I could contact, to the Meenbanad area as quickly as possible. This was in connection with what became known as the "fish train ambush". The Derry I.R.A. Intelligence Officer (Dan Kelly) in Derry had ascertained that a special train was due to leave Derry for Burtonport.

It was said that the train was to collect a load of fish at Burtonport, but as it was known that there was no fish for loading there, it was suspected that the train was for the carriage of troops.

The despatch reached me at 1 a.m., and I had to call my men out of bed. I ran them nearly all the way, arriving at Meenbanad at 5 a.m. The train was then about due, and I was picked up at the cross-roads near the station by a scout who led us into position on the railway embankment.

The site selected was about one mile from Meenbanad station where the line travels between two high embankments. The attacking party were positioned in parties on both sides of the line, staggered, so that they would avoid cross-fire. The line was blocked with stones. We were not long in position when scouts signalled the approach of the train. The train crashed into the stones and was partly derailed. We opened up on the carriages which were carrying British military. Our fire was directed downwards on the train. Fire was kept up for about twenty minutes when we got orders to withdraw. We suffered no loss. It was reported that up to fifty of the British were wounded.

I don't know the total number of I.R.A. who were engaged. Peadar O'Donnell had a small column, but I do know that all the local company men were out either in the attack or blocking roads. After the attack, I returned to Dungloe area. I was not on the run all the time. We were in a backward place and could get plenty of warning when a round-up was starting.

In February I was mobilised for an attack . . .

on Glenties R.I.C. barracks. The barracks was the building now occupied by the Garda Siochana. It is at the end of the village, facing down the main street. The building is of stone, two-storeyed, and at the time was protected by steel window shutters, sandbags and barbed wire. I was assigned with a party to the workhouse yard which faced towards the barracks. I was armed with a rifle, and one of our party (McSweeney) had a machine-gun. The only thing I know about the attack is that we were ordered to open fire at the barracks, the garrison replied, and this went on for some time; we then got orders to withdraw. There was no loss on either side.

Parties of R.I.C. and Tans raided round the district for some time. On one occasion, they took some prisoners to Derry but released them after a short time.

A man named McNelius, who had escaped from Cork gaol, was in our area for some time. He made many land-mines which did not work. I heard that he was an engineer.

We were keeping the road blocked on one occasion when McNelius took a party of us to blow up a stone bridge at Crobly. This time the explosive worked, and the bridge was destroyed.

By reason of its isolated position, my area was selected for keeping prisoners. Prisoners were sent to us from all parts of the brigade area. We held them in disused houses and moved them frequently. The guards were supplied by the local companies, and it entailed twenty-four hour guards.

One of the prisoners sent to us was named Collins. This man came to Dungloe when the Tans arrived. He stayed with a man named McDonagh, who was of the tinker class. After staying with McDonagh for some time, Collins moved to Ramelton where he had lived previously, and resumed his occupation of travelling round, selling apples. He was under suspicion, and Peadar O'Donnell ordered his arrest. Collins was taken to Dungloe and questioned. He confessed that he was working with the Tans. He said that he had come to Dungloe in the first instance to deliver £60 to McDonagh, the tinker, who was an agent for the Tans. McDonagh was arrested the same night and held prisoner until after the Truce. Collins was also held, and, on his release, he went home to Ramelton where somebody shot him dead.

Another of my prisoner was an English colonel, named Walter Lindsay Lutet. He had been in Canada prior to the 1914-18 war. He was an engineer. He joined the British army but, according to his own story, he refused to fight, on conscientious grounds, and after being tried three times, he was discharged from the British army. We held him as a suspected spy, on Brigade orders. We held him, fed him and guarded him for ten months, and released him after the Truce, with orders to leave the country.

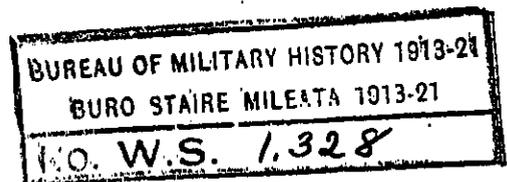
We held many other prisoners, all suspected of spying, but there was not sufficient evidence

against them.

I remained in my battalion area, keeping the organisation intact. Battalion and, at times, Brigade Headquarters were in my area (Marameelin). A fish-curing station was used. The local people did not know we were using the station. We entered and left the station during darkness and kept quiet during daylight.

SIGNED: Phil. Boyle
(Phil Boyle)

DATE: 19.12.1955
19.12.55



WITNESS Charles O'Donnell
(Charles O'Donnell)