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ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

BURO STAIRE MILEATA 1913-21

No. W.S. 1446

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 1446

Witness

Thomas Markey,
North Road,
Finglas,
Co. Dublin.

Identity.

Commandant, 3rd Battalion, Fingal Brigade,

1st Eastern Division.

Subject.

Activities of Finglas Company, 3rd Battalion,

Finglas Brigade, 1st Eastern Division.

1917-1921.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil.

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ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

BURO STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21

No. W.S. 1,446

STATEMENT BY THOMAS MARKEY,
North Road, Finglas, Co. Dublin.

I was born and reared in Finglas, Co. Dublin, where I now reside. I received my education at the O'Connell Schools, North Richmond Street, Dublin, which was run by the Christian Brothers. There was nothing in the subjects then taught at school which would develop any pupil's patriotic sense.

Prior to the 1916 rebellion, there was no company or unit of the Irish Volunteers organised in the Finglas area. On Easter Monday evening when Tom Ashe and his men from the Fingal area arrived in Finglas, they caused a great air of curiosity and excitement amongst the local residents. Finglas at that time was only a small village, a few miles out from the centre of Dublin city, and nothing like what it is to-day, with its big housing schemes and factories. I felt very sympathetic towards Tom Ashe and his men, and I helped them in every way I could, by bringing them food and flour from our house, and procuring other foodstuffs and requirements for them. I remember seeing Tom Ashe, whom I knew previously, and Dr. Hayes and Frank Lawless of Saucerstown with their men in Finglas then.

In 1917, I started to organise a company of Volunteers in Finglas and was able to get about eighteen men to join. We affiliated the company with the Volunteer headquarters in the city. Headquarters sent out Michael Lynch to help us out. Mick Lynch, as he was better known to us, had taken part in the rebellion,

having fought in the South Dublin union, and was superintendent of the abattoir under the Dublin Corporation. P.J. Corless and Austin Stack were also frequent visitors to us. When it came to the point of electing a company captain, all three of these men were contenders for the position. Lynch was elected by popular vote.

We were now attached to the 1st battalion, Dublin brigade. Tom (Boer) Byrne was commandant of this battalion. Mick Lynch, our captain, now acted as instructor. We had no arms of any type whatsoever, and generally we held our training parades openly. The R.I.C., who occupied a barracks in Finglas at this time, did not interfere with us then. Somehow, they gave us the impression that they were afraid of us. They had developed a certain respect for the Volunteers consequent on their own defeat at Ashbourne during the rebellion the previous year, and also the splendid fight put up by the Volunteers in the city during Easter Week. Previous to the 1916 rebellion, the R.I.C. were wont to scoff and sneer at the Volunteers as playing at soldiers. They never believed that the Volunteers would tackle the mighty forces of the British Empire.

Early in 1918, we organised an aeriocht in Finglas. The R.I.C. had this proclaimed, and brought in reinforcements of police until a big force was assembled to enforce this ban. When the people began assembling for this event, the police dispersed them and fired several shots in doing so. Nobody was hit, however, and no arrests were made. Shortly before this, Dick Mulcahy, who was I think then chief of staff of the Volunteers, ordered Michael Lynch to reorganise the Fingal area. Lynch and I travelled

extensively around the area, and succeeded in getting companies of Volunteers started in several places. No attempt had been made by the men who had taken part in the rebellion to get things moving again, previous to this. We found that these men were not very enthusiastic about the matter, and their general attitude was something like - we did our duty, now let the other men and young men do theirs. However, when the Volunteers did get going in the area, most of those rejoined and rendered good service.

In March 1918, the country was threatened with conscription, and everywhere steps were taken to combat this menace. Men now flocked into the Volunteers, and practically overnight our company in Finglas went up to a strength of about eighty. When the crisis was over, nearly all those men left us again. Other than drilling, little was done to meet the threat of conscription. There were, of course, numerous protest meetings, and nearly everyone subscribed by signing their names to an anti-conscription pledge. Monies were also collected for a national anti-conscription fund. The Volunteers were instrumental in having the anti-conscription pledge signed and in collecting for the national fund. All our parading and drilling were done openly and under the eyes of the R.I.C. I think the policy was to demonstrate to the British government the determination of the country to resist conscription. I imagine that the R.I.C. were not at all in favour of it either.

When Mick Lynch was ordered to organise Fingal, he insisted on including the Finglas company of Volunteers in the Fingal area, and we parted company with the Dublin brigade. In the end of 1918, a general election was held

throughout the country, and Sinn Féin, which was pretty well organised by now, decided to contest all seats in the country against the Irish Parliamentary Party of which John Redmond was leader. In this election, the Volunteers took a very active part, and performed a huge amount of work. It was really a matter for Sinn Féin, but the Volunteers were the better organised and capable of co-ordinated action and, at any rate, the dividing line between them was very slight, as the keymen in Sinn Féin were also members of the Irish Volunteers. The Volunteers were engaged in keeping order at the meetings organised by Sinn Féin and in canvassing voters, checking registers, collecting for the election fund and, on the day of polling, getting their supporters conveyed to the polling stations. The election went off quietly in this area, there being no untoward incidents. The Sinn Féin candidate, Mr. Frank Lawless of Saucerstown, won by a big majority.

By this time, a battalion organisation had come into being in our area, and was known as the 3rd battalion, Fingal brigade. The companies comprising the battalion were A. company (St. Margaret's area), B. (Finglas area), C. (Kinsealy area) and D. (Santry). Thomas Duke was company captain in St. Margaret's. I was captain of Finglas company, and also acted as battalion commandant. In Kinsealy, a man called McKenna was captain. I can't remember now who was captain in Santry then.

Early in January 1919, the newly elected Dáil met for the first time and set itself up as the government of the Irish Republic. One of the first acts of the Dáil was to float a national loan to finance its undertakings, and although this was for some millions of pounds and floated under such peculiar circumstances, it was quickly

subscribed. Needless to relate, none of the big business concerns or financial undertakings subscribed to it. It was the small and numerous amounts of the ordinary people that made up the bulk of it. In our area as elsewhere, the Volunteers again did the major amount of the work in connection with the loan, by going round from house to house and individual to individual, and collecting for it. Everyone subscribing was given a temporary receipt for the amount, and later all subscribers received an official receipt from the Department of Finance of the Dáil. Every penny given to the Volunteers was accounted for, and it was really wonderful the way the people gave of their money to the loan. I am sure, at the time, none of them ever expected to have it returned to them.

The Dáil now took over responsibility for the Volunteers, and each officer and man had to take an oath of allegiance to that body as the government of the Irish Republic. We had now a properly constituted army - the Irish Republican Army - and a properly constituted government in the country. It was not long until the British government decreed the Dáil illegal, and it had to go on the run. By now, many of the leading men of the army were also on the run.

There is nothing like success to make success, and, after the general election, our strength in the Volunteers began to increase again although, after some time, a number of these also dropped off again. Some members of our Finglas company attended lectures and classes at centres in the city, such as, rifle, bombing, intelligence and engineering courses. These courses were sometimes discovered by the detectives and police, and raided.

In one such raid, my brother, William, William Malone and P. Delaney were amongst a number arrested and sentenced to periods of imprisonment. Generally, however, throughout the summer of 1919, things were on the whole quiet, with occasional raids and arrests by the British forces. I would like to point out here that, were it not for the information supplied by the R.I.C. and the Dublin detective branch of the Metropolitan police, the other British forces would have been absolutely at sea and of no value to their government.

In the winter of 1919 and in conjunction with the Dublin brigade, we raided the G.P.O. in the city and removed therefrom about seventy cycles which were used by postmen and telegraph boys. These cycles were sent to the various units in the Fingal area, the cycles being ridden out of the city by the Volunteers. They were a very heavy type of cycle and very conspicuous, and I think that most of them were destroyed, their parts being used by the Volunteers to repair their own private cycles.

Parades and training went on as usual, but all in secret, of course. We now started to make buckshot by smelting down old scrap lead and running it through a gauge. This was used to refill the shotgun cartridges we had collected. In the autumn of 1919, G.H.Q. in the city ordered a general raid for arms in all areas. They apparently had information that the British were going to collect or take up all the arms in the country, and our task was to get them before the British forces did so. The operation was carried out successfully by the Volunteers, but only just in time as the R.I.C. and British military were only a few hours behind us on the job. However, we cleared up everywhere before they got there. We

collected a large number of shotguns, both single and double barrel types, but no service weapons whatsoever. We had over ninety shotguns as a result of this operation. In the greater number of cases, it was only a matter of asking the people for them, but in a few cases - particularly the loyalist or pro British element - a display of force had to be gone through to convince them to part with the weapons. There was no cause, however, to resort to shooting anywhere in the area. The cartridges we collected were now filled with buckshot. The guns were dumped in hay barns throughout the area. We shortened a number of the barrels of the shotguns by sawing lengths off them with hacksaws. This made them handy for carrying or concealing under an overcoat, and at the same time, it gave an enormous spread to the shot or buckshot when they were fired. It did, of course, decrease the range considerable, but then they were only a close-quarter weapon at any time.

During the winter of 1919 and spring of 1920, the R.I.C. realised that they could no longer hold on to all their outlying small stations. Some of them throughout the country had already been attacked and a few captured. It was the policy of our headquarters to destroy or drive in all these outlying stations, the garrisons of which acted as the eyes and ears of the British forces holding this country, and were the chief sources of intelligence for the enemy. The local barracks in Finglas was evacuated on a Monday night, and we destroyed it by burning it on the Wednesday night following. It was a detached building. We saturated it with paraffin and then set it alight, totally destroying it. I was also ordered to burn the barracks at the Ward. This barracks had been evacuated many years earlier during a

reorganisation of the R.I.C. It was now occupied by a man called May who, at this time, was very ill. I considered that headquarters had made a mistake in selecting this place, and I did not destroy it.

Santry barracks, which was in our area, was also evacuated. This barrack was destroyed by us on Easter Saturday night 1920. A Sergeant Murray of the R.I.C. was still living in it. We held him up and put him into the house next door where he was kept under guard. While we were preparing to destroy the place, a number of soldiers, returning to Collinstown aerodrome from local leave in the city, had also to be intercepted and held as prisoners until the place was destroyed. Collinstown aerodrome, where there was a strong party of military, was only a short distance away. The barracks was well soaked in paraffin and was totally destroyed. Colm Lawless and Thomas Taylor from the Swords area and a few others assisted in this operation.

The Volunteers had now to take over the police work of the country consequent on the withdrawal of the R.I.C. They could only devote their spare time to this work, and yet they did it with wonderful success. They had more perfect information about evilly disposed persons, and received more co-operation from the people than ever the R.I.C. did. On the whole, our area was a law-abiding one and, with the exception of an occasional small robbery, there was little trouble. We had to establish prison centres, or unknown destinations as they were generally called, in our area and accept prisoners from other areas. It was customary never to keep prisoners in their own districts or have them guarded by Volunteers who were known to them. We had such places established

at Hunstown House which is west of the main Dublin-Ashbourne road, and another at Mr. Michael Maher's farmyard, between Finglas and Ballymun. The holding of prisoners in such places was a great nuisance, as we had to provide guards for them and to feed both guards and prisoners. We often had to hold prisoners for weeks before they were court martialled and finally disposed of. Some of these prisoners were deported to England. We had only occasion to arrest a few individuals in our area for robberies. The British forces, including the R.I.C., made many attempts to locate our temporary prisons but never succeeded in doing so.

The Sinn Féin courts were now organised and operating successfully. The people generally were bringing their disputes or troubles to them and abiding loyally by their decisions. The judge for our local courts was Mr. McEntee, who was secretary of the Bakers' Union and lived on the North Circular Road, Dublin. The courts had to be held secretly, as the British forces were raiding everywhere in an effort to locate them, and again they seldom succeeded.

Finglas village, on account of its location near the city, was a favourite place for soldiers from the British garrisons in the city, to come out to, to do their courting with their girls. It was quite a regular operation of ours to hold up these soldiers and strip them of their boots and underclothing. The articles taken from the British soldiers were given, for their personal use, to our men who were on the run. Soon, no soldier would dare to come into the area when not on duty and fully armed. On one occasion, a military ambulance, carrying seven soldiers and a driver, pulled up in the village, and the occupants went into a public house. I quickly assembled

a small party of Volunteers and held up the soldiers, and took the ambulance from them. We drove the vehicle to Molloy's of Cappagh where we dumped it. The military now scoured the area with large forces in an effort to locate it, but failed to do so. With the help of a carpenter, we changed the body of the ambulance and painted it over. We also changed the registration numbers on it. We used that vehicle many times afterwards. It was used to carry petrol into the Custom House on the day that building was burned, and I think was captured by British forces there.

It was decided by the brigade O/C that Collinstown aerodrome should be raided and all the arms in it collected. Before planning this, the brigade O/C, Mick Lynch, decided to make certain preliminary investigations. Lynch instructed me to report to Fleming's in the city on a certain date, and on going there, I was told to get dressed in the uniform of a sergeant of the British army, which was awaiting me. Mick Lynch and Joe Lawless, now a colonel in the Army, were also there. Lynch was dressed in the uniform of a British officer, and Lawless in that of a private. We three now got into a motor car, driven by Joe Lawless, and proceeded via Cloghran. We approached the aerodrome at Collinstown from the north side, and turned in at the entrance gate. We were halted by the sentry on duty. Lynch answered to his challenge, and we were admitted - Lynch and I - while Lawless waited in the car. We entered the guard room where Lynch inquired for a certain officer of the garrison, and, fortunately, was informed that this officer had left for Baldonnell camp. Having received this information, we left the guardroom and returned to the car. We drove back to the city and disrobed from our uniforms. Lynch was satisfied that he could raid the place and secure

all the arms, using his own men from the Fingal area only.

We now went to Volunteer headquarters which was somewhere in Parnell Street, and Lynch informed Dick Mulcahy and Mick Collins that he was going to raid Collinstown on a certain night. Collins said, "By - you are not! The long fellow" - meaning de Valera - "will be moving into your area on that night, and we can't risk having the place honeycombed with British forces". De Valera was after escaping from jail in England at this time. So our raid on Collinstown had to indefinitely postponed.

The place was subsequently raided, but not by us. The Dublin brigade carried out the operation, and with the exception of Mick Lynch, Joe Lawless and a few others, none of our men took part in the actual raid. Our men were engaged that night in holding various roads in the vicinity of the aerodrome and in getting the captured rifles and ammunition away to safety. All of the booty was dumped in the Fingal area. Three car loads of the stuff were dumped in a house at Dunsoghly, near St. Margaret's. The late Dick McKee, who was O/C, Dublin brigade, sent for me and asked me to have this material removed as it was none too safe where it was. Joe Lawless came out with a car, and took away some of the rifles and ammunition and most of the machine gun belts, and brought them to somewhere in the city. I took the remainder of the rifles and material, concealed in loads of cabbage, into the city where members of the Dublin brigade took them over from me. The transfer took place in a slaughterhouse in Fitzpatrick's yard. I kept one rifle for myself. In this way, all the rifles were taken into Dublin and disposed of, and eventually found their way to Cork and other places.

We were ordered to raid the rate collector's offices in our area, and take the monies, in collected rates, from them. Quite a few of the rate collectors had refused to hand over the money to the new county council which only recognised the local government department of the Dail. I and a party of Volunteers raided Mr. Harford's place at Swords, and secured about £800, which we dumped in Collins' premises in Drumcondra, as instructed, for collection. Swords was not in our area, but it was usual to bring in strangers from other areas to do such raiding. This was to safeguard the local Volunteers from being identified by the persons raided.

Brigade council meetings were held regularly in the Naul and Swords areas, and later, when the column or active service unit was established, at Mooretown, near Oldtown, where the column was billeted. Mick Lynch was still brigade O/C. I can't remember who was the brigade adjutant, but Jim Crennigan was adjutant for some time before the Truce. Vincent Purfield was quartermaster of the brigade, and previous to this, this position was held by William Rooney. Michael Rock was O/C of the 1st battalion which was the Naul area. Jack Shields, now deceased, was O/C of the 2nd battalion which was the Swords area. I was O/C of the 3rd battalion which comprised the Finglas area. A 4th battalion had been organised in the Garristown, Oldtown, Duleek area, and this was commanded by Walter Brown of Spring Hill, Oldtown. The companies comprising our battalion, the 3rd, remained the same, but there were changes in the command of the companies on account of arrests and other causes. McKenna was replaced in Kinsealy by a man named Larnon, while the captain of St. Margaret's, Thomas Duke, was arrested, and he was replaced by one of the McNally

brothers. In Finglas there were several changes owing to arrests, and it finally ended with a man called McKenna, as captain.

There were no military or Black and Tan posts established in our area which was close to the city boundary. The city abounded with such forces, and they were continually passing through our area. We blocked the roads with trees and cut telegraph and telephone communications, in an effort to restrict their movements, but our efforts in this respect had only a very temporary effect on their activities. They raided extensively around the area, but had very little success. Our area was absolutely unsuitable for guerilla warfare, being flat, open country, with an enormous network of roads. Had we service rifles, we could perhaps have done something in the way of ambushing. Shotguns, with their short range, were of no value here, and this was all the armament we had available. In addition, on account of our proximity to the city, large forces of enemy could be quickly thrown against us and our chances of survival would be very small.

In March 1920, the I.R.A. were organisat^{ed}~~ion~~ into divisions, and our brigade area - Fingal - was incorporated in the 1st eastern division, with Sean Boylan of Dunboyne as divisional O/C. Headquarters of the division was established in a house at Dunboyne. Shortly after the division was formed, a column or active service unit was started in the Fingal area. The column was mostly composed of men who were on the run, and was around twenty strong. It was well armed with rifles, which had been got in the Collinstown raid, and were retained in the northern portion of the brigade area. Paddy Mooney from Trim acted as O/C and training officer for the column.

It was decided, at the outset, to concentrate on training the column, and also to train a number of men from each battalion who could be called on to reinforce the column and to act as a reserve for it. We sent two men to the column for whole time duty, and sent batches of men at regular intervals for training which took a couple of weeks. We never got any rifles supplied to us from headquarters. I had one which I had kept from the Collinstown swag, and some of our men, who worked on the railways, had picked up a couple more belonging to British soldiers who had left them carelessly in a carriage or other place around the stations while they were in the bar or public convenience. We had men working at Broadstone, Liffey Junction and Kingsbridge stations. We had practically no ammunition for these weapons.

When headquarters decided on destroying the coastguard stations along the coast between Dublin and Laytown in Co. Meath, I was given the task of destroying the station at Portmarnock. I had ten men from the Finglas company, seven or eight from Santry, and the whole of, or all that could be mobilised from the Kinsealy company. We carried the few rifles we had, and the remainder of the party were armed with shotguns. It was expected that we would meet with resistance, as the coastguards were believed to be armed, although they had never been seen in public with rifles. We collected some dozen or so tins of petrol from a garage in Malahide. We actually bought the petrol there. We had no trouble in getting into the coastguard station, and met with no resistance. The station comprised married quarters for the men, and some out-offices used as stores. The different families in the houses were given a short period of time, to remove any articles they required, and they

were then herded into a safe place. All the premises were sprinkled with petrol and, when all was clear, the place was set alight. It was totally burned out. Previous to the place being burned, we hauled down the flag, flying on the flagstaff, and hoisted the tricolour in its place. No arms of any nature were found in the place. This operation had to be carefully timed, as each coastguard station was in view of each other and could give the alarm if all were not entered at the same moment. All our party got away back to their areas safely.

In the springtime of 1921, the Black and Tans were raiding extensively in our area. They shot a man named McEntee who was not from our area and who, I think, belonged to the city and dumped his body at Dubber Cross Roads. This man I think belonged to the Dublin brigade. The Tans then came into Finglas and went into a public house there. We observed that their lorries or tenders were faced towards Cardiff's Bridge Road. I quickly mobilised a party of our Volunteers, and, armed with five rifles and the remainder with shotguns, we quickly rushed across via Kildonan to a place on the road known as Fort William, and took up a hastily organised position along the road there. When the Tans came along, we opened fire on them. They did not stop but increased speed, and it was only when they were well clear of our position that they fired back in return to our fire. They made no attempt to halt, or come back to try and get at close quarters with us. We never heard what casualties we inflicted on them, but I am satisfied that a number of them must have been hit. We had no one injured, and all got back safely. There was intense enemy activity in the area after that.

On another occasion in the early part of 1921, I was detailed to have a man, who lived in Malahide, shot. This man was paymaster to the Tans, I think, in Gormanston camp. I took a party of three men with me to do the job, all four of us being armed with revolvers. We proceeded to Malahide on cycles. We dismounted at the bridge near Malahide and left one man guarding the cycles there. The other two men and I proceeded to the man's house. When we went to the door, we were fired on, and it was immediately perceived that the man had armed companions in the house. We fired back through the door and windows. Apparently, the man we wanted, or some one of his companions, was behind the door and was hit and fell against the door. We tried to push in the door, but could not do so owing to the body of someone being against it at the bottom. One of our men received a bullet wound in the arm - Patrick Mason was his name. So we had to retreat, bringing him with us. We made off along the railway and, after some time, we got into an old shed. Here, I attended to Mason's arm and succeeded in stopping the bleeding. After some time, he was able to travel, and we got back on foot to Finglas, having abandoned any attempt to get back to our cycles. We had Mason attended to in Finglas by the local doctor, and he got alright. All four of us got back safely.

We raided the local mails on several occasions. There was not very much to be obtained from them. We did pick up letters from girls to soldiers which were giving information about us. We usually cut off the hair of such girls and, as this marked them out as informers or girls who kept company with the enemy troops, the practice of giving information in their letters soon ceased.

There were no spies or informers shot in our area, and I doubt if there were any such individuals operating there. There were, of course, a few people under suspicion, and we arrested a few of them and held them prisoners for a while. We could not get evidence sufficient to warrant their execution.

Other than making slugs to refill shotgun cartridges, no attempt was made to produce any munitions in the area. We were aware that bombs and other material were being produced in the city and that we could have got our requirements there if we needed such material. As far as I could see, it was not the policy of G.H.Q. to make war in ~~any~~ ANY of the areas immediately surrounding the city, and we were discouraged in anything we had in mind in that respect. It would have been bad for communications to the country if this had been done.

We had an intelligence section organised in the battalion with men from each company area. As there were no enemy posts in our area, the work of this section was confined to keeping watch on persons suspected of collaborating with the enemy, and at this work, they were very good. The personnel of the post offices in the area were no good, and not in sympathy with us, especially the one in Finglas. We

had a girl, however, in the Finglas branch who kept us informed of anything suspicious that went on there.

Communication throughout the battalion area and with the brigade was maintained by despatch runners on cycles or on foot, and we handled a lot of despatches coming through from units in the northern part of the country. This was a precarious task, owing to our close proximity to the city and the intense enemy activity in the area.

I was never a member of the I.R.B. prior to the Truce and know nothing of the activities or objects of that organisation.

Thomas Moran
SIGNED: _____

DATE: 21-6-56

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
BURO STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21
NO. W.S. 1446

Matthew Day
WITNESSED BY _____ COMDT.