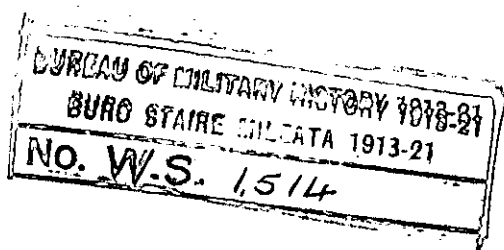


1514
DUPLICATE



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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 1514.

Witness

Edward Brennan, P.C.,
Cuddagh,
Mountrath,
Co. Laois.

Identity.

O/C, 6th Battn., Laois Brigade.

Subject.

I.R.A. activities, Laois,
1920 - Truce.

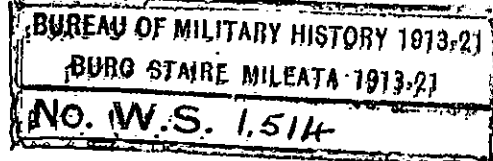
Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil.

File No S. 2817.

Form B.S.M. 2

DUPLICATE



STATEMENT BY EDWARD BRENNAN, P.C.,

Cuddagh, Mountrath, Laois.

I joined the Castletown Company, I.R.A., early in 1920.

I was appointed Adjutant. The other officers were :-

Company Captain Thomas Delaney, 1st Lieutenant William Butler and

Quartermaster Edward Tarrant. Weekly meetings were held, training

carried out and regular activities of a military nature were also

carried out. The 6th Battalion, Laois Brigade, was then formed.

It was comprised of the following Companies :- "A" Company -

Mountrath, "B" Company - Castletown, "C" Company - Camross,

"D" Company - Borris in Ossory, "E" Company - Coolrain, "F" Company -

Killerure. At a meeting held in Camross, which was attended by an

officer from each Company and was presided over by Lar. Brady,

Lalors Mills, who was at that time Brigade Organiser, the following

officers were appointed :- Battalion O/C - Edward Brennan (myself),

Rushall, Mountrath; Battalion Vice O/C - Patrick Morrin, Mountrath;

Battalion Adjutant - James Dempsey, Main Street, Mountrath;

Battalion Quartermaster - John Delaney, Marymount, Camross.

Battalion meetings were held monthly; organisation and training and all matters reported from Company areas dealt with.

G.H.Q. and Brigade orders were strictly attended to. Seizure of arms, raids on mails and road blocks were continuously carried out, causing considerable trouble for the enemy.

In 1921, about April, a Battalion meeting was held in Marnell's house, Springhill, Borris-in-Ossory. A dance was organised to cover the objects of the meeting, on a Sunday night. The Brigade Adjutant, (the later Chief Superintendent Martin Lynch, Garda Síochána), was

present; also the Battalion O/C, Battalion Quartermaster and I.R.A. men from Morris-in-Ossory, Carrross and Coolrain areas. At daybreak all visitors left with the exception of Martin Lynch, Brigade Adjutant; Frank Fitzpatrick, O/C. local Company and Denis O'Riordan. The latter two were cleaning up the house when suddenly a raid was made on the place by Black and Tans. Lynch, Fitzpatrick, O'Riordan and Michael Marnell owner of the house, were arrested and taken to the Curragh. After some days Marnell was released, but the other three men were interned until the general amnesty.

During the Fight, Dáil Éireann issued an order to all public bodies, not to recognise the British Courts, as the Sinn Féin Courts were then functioning. I was given one of those documents to have it brought before a meeting of the Roscrea No. 3, Rural District Council. It was known that I would be attending the meeting in my official capacity as Assistant County Surveyor for the area. I knew the Clerk to the Council, Mr. Thomas Dooley, Roscrea, was not partial to the I.R.A. I considered the best way to bring the document before the meeting was to hand it to a member of the Council named John Cleere, a Railway Official at Ballybrophy. When I called on Cleere he informed me he could not attend the meeting, as his duties prevent^{ED} him, on that day. Cleere, I may mention, was an active member of the I.R.A. I proceeded to the meeting place, the Old Workhouse, Donaghmore. When I got there I found the Clerk had arrived and one other Council member.

I examined the situation and found the Clerk had his Form 22 and correspondence on a table which he used during the progress of the meeting. I kept watch as the other Council members were slow to arrive. The Clerk and the Housing Engineer left the room, and I slipped the document into the correspondence to be dealt with at the meeting.

The Clerk was now about to proceed to other business when the meeting was suddenly raided by Black and Tans. The leader went to the Clerk's desk to examine the correspondence. When he found the document referred to he got very enraged and made several inquiries as to its origin. The Clerk told him he found it in the correspondence but did not know where it came from. The leader of the Tans then gave an order to all present to stand up and put up their hands. We were then marched to another room and closely searched. When nothing incriminating was found the Tans left, taking the document with them.

In the spring of 1921, I was cycling towards Rathdowney, adjacent to Rallybrophy railway station, when I met Daniel Guidera, Borris-in-Ossory. We were talking for a couple of minutes when, suddenly, a Black and Tan lorry approached over the railway bridge. I was about to move away when another lorry came along with a District Inspector named Nooney in charge. Immediately he saw us he called a halt, ordered us to put up our hands and be searched closely. When the searchers found nothing in our pockets, the District Inspector, who all this time was moving around us with a revolver in his hand, ordered our clothes to be taken off and searched. We were now standing naked on the road. Again they found nothing, but previous to this I had a document from G.H.Q. about increased attacks on Black and Tans etc. This document was to be read at Company meetings by me as Battalion O/C, but it was not to be given to any other Company or Battalion officer, and it was to be returned to Headquarters when it had been read to each Company in the Battalion. I had this document pinned inside my shirt for some time whilst I was attending all Company meetings.

On the night previous to the above hold-up, I dreamt I was

raided and the document found, with the usual terrible consequences. Owing to my dream I hid the document before starting that morning and so escaped punishment.

I received an order from the District Inspector of the R.I.C. to leave the country in one week or be shot at sight.

Daniel Guidera was under suspicion as a dispatch carrier for the I.R.A. although he had no connection with the Movement.

Previous to the Truce I had six Companies operating and all men carried out their orders faithfully.

After a Battalion meeting in Coolrain in the end of 1920, the house of John Delaney, Vice O/C. of Battalion, was raided. Delaney was arrested and also a man named Howie from Tipperary town who was also an I.R.A. man. Delaney was courtmartialled and imprisoned in England until the Truce. Howie was interned in the Curragh. The following I.R.A. men were arrested and interned :- Seamus Miller and Joseph Deegan, Mountrath; John Carroll and Thomas Phelan, Killanure; Edward Tarrant, Castletown; Denis Riordan and Frank Fitzpatrick, Borris-in-Ossory; James Kelly, Borris-in-Ossory, John Carroll, Killanure, Mountrath.

On the arrest of the Battalion Quartermaster, John Delaney, Ballinrally, was appointed Quartermaster and held the position until the Truce.

Early in 1921 it was evident that "spies" were active in the area. In Mountrath one particular man was openly collaborating with the enemy. A meeting was held in Peafield attended by the Brigade Vice O/C., Thomas Brady; Lar Brady, Adjutant; myself and the Battalion Adjutant; also I.R.A. men from Killanure and Mountrath

with reports against the spy. After consideration of the reports it was ordered to have the spy executed. The order was duly carried out. (The name of the spy was Peter Keyes, Rushin Road, Mountrath, but it is not for publication).

I.R.A. men in this area could always billet at the house of Mr. Michael Tynan, Peafield, and were always well looked after by Mrs. Tynan and her sister Mrs. Ialor. Wounded I.R.A. men from Dublin were nursed here until fit to resume activities. During the I.R.A. campaign the Tynans did everything possible to help the Movement.

Early in 1921 I had a visit from the Divisional O/C., and Quartermaster, Colonel McCormack and Colonel-Commandant McCurtain. They informed me that a Divisional Training Camp was about to be started for the 3rd Southern Division and they asked me to make the necessary arrangements. The Camp was to be situated on the Slieve Bloom Mountain overlying Camross.

The 3rd Southern Division was made up by North Tipperary, Laois and Offaly Brigades.

Orders were received to proceed to Camp in June, 1921. I, in company with I.R.A. men, was proceeding as ordered. On our route we got an order to return as the Camp was not to proceed at the time. Shortly after this the Truce was called.

The training was again put in operation, not in the mountain this time, but in a disguised house at Darrylehan owned by Martin Carey.

The North Tipperary Flying Column had billets and food in this house whilst the Laois-Offaly men had food with the people in the district and slept in the houses also. Bedding was supplied by local people.

Intensive training was carried out for two weeks. Addressing the troops before dispersal, the Divisional O/C. expressed his appreciation of the excellent manner in which the men trained, and their very good conduct on and off duty. He also thanked the local people for their great reception of the men attending the training camp.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Witness: _____

