

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

BURO STAIRE MILEATA 1913-21

No. **W.S. 1,709**

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

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Witness

Michael F. Ryan,
71, Raphoe Road,
Dublin.

Identity.

Brigade Engineer, East Waterford Bde.

Subject.

1st Battn., East Waterford Brigade, I.R.A.,
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BURO STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21

No. **W.S.** 1.709

STATEMENT BY MICHAEL F. RYAN,

71 Raphoe Road, DUBLIN.

I was brought up in what some people would describe as a rebel household - why this was so I cannot say - as my father died when I was about four years of age and my mother had to take up the profession of nurse: I lived with her unmarried brothers and sister. My maternal grandfather was an R.I.C. man - whether the rebel attitude was a throwback against the discipline imposed on an R.I.C. man's family or due to the fact that three of my uncles were National Teachers, a class noted for producing rebels, I cannot hazard a guess.

My first participation in any National organisation was as a member of a boy scout or youth organisation started by the A.O.H. in Waterford. At this stage it is as well to make it clear that I realize that one's memory is not infallible and because of the number of years that have passed my recollections may not be altogether correct and that ^{they} may have, in fact, become "rose tinted". This body held its meetings in the A.O.H. Hall in O'Connell Street, which, during the later stages of the 1914-1918 war, was used by the British as a recruiting centre and in later times was an Employment Exchange. I cannot say when the organisation was brought into being but I think it must have been in the 1912-1913 period probably about the time when The Ulster and the National Volunteers were formed.. Of its programme and personnel I can remember little (I was about nine years of age at the time) except that there were first aid lectures and route marches. I did not ever have a uniform and I don't think that many of its members had uniforms; to the best of my knowledge the blouse was grey and something similar to that worn by certain present-day scouts.

As far as I can remember a Mr. Bob Kelly, who had a business establishment in Georges Street and who was afterwards a Rate Collector, was the driving force behind the local organisation. I think that researches in the local papers of the day would show that the Hibernian Scouts did not survive for very long and that after some time Fianna Éireann took its place. It is not to be inferred that all or indeed any of the Hibernians joined the Fianna - there was a little social snobbery - and anyway the Fianna was a little advanced in outlook for the Nationalists of that day.

With the formation of the Irish National Volunteers there was a different outlook - there was another weapon besides constitutionalism. There was a very strong unit of the Volunteers in Waterford, probably Battalion strength. Its colours were lost in a fire at the premises of Hearne & Co., The Quay, in 1915 or 1916. The unit used an arrangement of Brian Boru's march made by William Hodge, bandmaster of 'The Erin's Hope Fife and Drum Band', as its regimental march. Only very few names come back to me of the officers of the force - W. J. Smith, a master baker whose establishment was in Georges Street - Thomas Fitzgerald (bearded) a member of the Corporation who had a monumental mason's yard in Parnell Street - one Murphy, a fine looking man, nicknamed "Swagger". Another dim memory tells me that the "Leader" published an article attacking some of the officers in Waterford. With the advent of gun-running the coast of County Waterford was patrolled by a British naval vessel. There were very few British troops in Waterford in these years: my recollection is that the garrison consisted of an artillery unit.

The outbreak of war in August 1914 brought changes - the first event of note was the calling up of the local reservists - then the

British Army commandeering whatever horses they found suitable - the Peoples Park being used as a remount depot. Of course the "county" and little England faction swung into action with various efforts to help the Empire. A cartoon in one of the National newspapers showed an Ulster and an National Volunteer shaking hands and making a pledge to defend Ireland. Soon walls and hoardings were covered with eye-catching posters showing ruined homes and shrines in Belgium and asking Irishmen to come to the aid of the gallant little ally. Cardinal Mercier's appeal and pictures of helpless Belgian mothers and children were on every dead wall. Then there was Mr. J. E. Redmond's call to Irishmen to help the allies. Recruiting meetings and speeches became the order of the day. The band of the Irish Guards complete with wolfhound paraded the streets of Waterford playing ragtime ditties such as the "Robert E. Lee" in an effort to attract recruits. In the first years of the war the recruiting office was in the premises of the Waterford Shipping Company on the Mall. Recruits were forthcoming - the Royal Irish Regiment being the choice of a big number. Books and literature to aid recruiting were delivered by post to each house, special emphasis was, of course, laid on the atrocities of the savage Huns. No member of my family or any of my relations joined up but many of their friends did. I cannot remember if there was an active anti-recruiting campaign in the city but my impression is that Fianna Éireann appeared to be the only active anti-British organisation. This view may be unfair, because of my age I could only judge matters then from a schoolboy's point of view.

Shortly after the outbreak of war a Signals detachment of the Royal Engineers was drafted into the Infantry Barracks. Training was carried out in the various aspects of signals - cycle and motor cycle despatch riding and flag and lamp signalling. Many young

Waterford men attracted by the glamour of the despatch riders joined up. I remember how critical some of us were of the action of a fairly prominent officer of the Flanina who joined up at that time. The Signals unit appeared to be very popular as when they were leaving the city they were played out by the local barrack Street Brass and Reed Band. Following their departure, Waterford became the depot for the 5th., 9th., 12th., 16th., 17th and 21st Lancers. It was still shown as the Regimental Depot in the discharge books of men of some of these regiments on the completion of their period of service at the end of World War 1. As far as I can remember the garrison was not very big and consisted of a few officers, depot N.C.O's and staff. The band of the 5th Lancers was attached to the Depot but I cannot recollect having seen any sizeable troops of cavalry.

It was only natural that the families and relatives of those who joined up should, to a certain extent, become "ally-backers" - there were, of course, the "out and out" loyalists and then there were those who by reason of separation allowances enjoyed a financial windfall greater than they had ever dreamed of. These last were but a small proportion of the whole but they were a noisy lot, loud in their protestations of loyalty. As Waterford was a port, a considerable number of men were in the Merchant Service and their relations too were pro-ally. It was plain that the majority of the people of the town were drifting into the position that it was their war and the country's war, and it was not unusual to hear the charge of having a "slacker" in the family being hurled in some direction when neighbours fell out.

In addition to the British military stationed at the Infantry Barracks and the Cavalry Barracks, a fairly considerable number of the Royal Irish Constabulary were stationed in Waterford, their stations or barracks being situated at :-

Lady Lane. (Headquarters also had stables for mounted police - this force went out of existence during war years).

Peter Street (Lock-up)

Manor Street,

Mary Street,

Shortcourse and

Sallypark.

To the best of my knowledge the Irish National Volunteers had, to all intents, dissolved by the beginning of 1916; there were no parades and no public mention of the force. The Headquarters of the local unit was at Hennessy's Road in a building which has served many purposes. I cannot give any information on the following points as I have no direct knowledge nor did I ever hear any discussion on them:

- (a) What effect the split, which came shortly after the war had started, had on the local battalion.
- (b) The personnel and numbers who transferred to the Irish Volunteers.
- (c) What happened to the arms and equipment of the Battalion.

Waterford being a Redmondite stronghold, it is doubtful if any great number transferred their allegiance to the Irish Volunteers.

The first news of the Easter Rising in 1916 to reach Waterford came in the form of rumours. As none of the Dublin dailies appeared during the week the only news was given in the local evening paper, the English papers and the official communique (war news which was

displayed in the windows of all Post Offices). Needless to say, D.O.R.A. (Defence of the Realm Act) ensured that any published news was censored. A few of the local events which remain in my memory are the arrival of a gunboat, a military guard on the G.P.O. and Custom House (there were rumours that the National Volunteers had offered to do guard duties.) A semi-armoured train arrived at Waterford station, I remember climbing the railway bridge at Sallypark to see it. There was an 18-pounder gun on one of the waggons, a few others had armour plate and sandbags and a group of "Tommys" were washing on the station platform. At the time the train was supposed to have come from Enniscorthy where Seán Etchingham and his men had "come out". I can also remember reading the official news bulletin which contained the news that the rebellion had been crushed. It also said that Kut had fallen to the Turkish-German forces, Another recollection is that Mickey Bambrick, the local detective (who lived in Bolton Street and whom everybody knew) was supposed to be watching the local Sinn Féiners and that he was shadowing Paddy Brazil who was "on the run". Paddy went to the U.S.A. shortly after.

In spite of the wave of feeling caused by the execution of the 1916 leaders, Sinn Féiners were not popular in Waterford city. I remember seeing J. D. Walsh, Paddy Brazil and others being beaten and evicted from a meeting held in the Large Room of the Town Hall at which J. E. Redmond spoke. I saw and heard Mr. Redmond and one phrase which he used sticks in my memory "When would be scurrying like rats to their holes" in a reference to his opponents. The older people were not changing their opinions; some of the younger ones, where family tradition was not too strong, were coming round to the new ideas. By the time of Roger Casement's trial and death there was a pro-Irish feeling and I remember the disgust

expressed at the action of Mary ^{Byrman} Bailey and the others who gave evidence against him. They were looked on as informers. The first person I saw displaying the present National flag in Waterford was a Mrs. Roche who was being evicted from premises in Parnell Street round about that period.

By the time the prisoners were released from the jails and internment camps there was a Sinn Féin group in Waterford City very, very small in relation to the population. Sometime in 1917 the Aireachtas was held in the city at which Mr. De Valera was present. There were various competitions and exhibitions; I was a member of the De La Salle school choir which secured a few prizes.

There were a number of shops which catered for the new minority group - Ned Cannon's in O'Connell Street - Mrs. Clancy's, Colbeck Street and Mrs. O'Reilly's, Parnell Street. At these shops one could obtain copies of "Nationality", "Young Ireland" and the other papers which had long or short lives before being banned by the British. One could get photographs of the 1916 leaders, patriotic greeting cards, songs, badges etc. in these shops. There was a local magazine something on the lines of "Scissors and Paste" which, as far as I can remember, was published by a George Bishop of Johnstown.

In the meantime things were not going too well for England on the various war fronts and in spite of a very vigorous recruiting campaign not enough Irishmen were joining the forces. There were threats "come or be fetched". I heard Captain Michael O'Leary, V.C., at a recruiting meeting say that it would be better to come voluntarily rather than be conscripted. Lloyd George, the British Prime Minister, threatened Ireland that if enough recruits were not forthcoming conscription would be applied. Targets were set for

the numbers which should join from each county or district. A clock affair was erected outside the recruiting office, the former A.O.H. hall, in O'Connell Street which purported to show the numbers joining up and how far they fell short of the desired target.

Just before Christmas 1917 two ships belonging to the Clyde Shipping Company^{both} containing a high proportion of Waterford people amongst their crews, sailed from Waterford for England. They were never heard of again as they disappeared without trace. No wreckage was ever found and only one body, that of a stewardess which was washed up on the coast of Wales, was recovered. It never became known what happened to the ships, whether they were torpedoed, mined or lost in stress of weather. The disaster cast a gloom over the city for many months and added to the feeling against Sinn Féiners who were regarded as pro-German.

The by-election caused by the death of Mr. J. E. Redmond, M.P., Leader of the Irish Party, early in March 1918, brought Sinn Féin and the Volunteers into the limelight in Waterford. Dr. Vincent White was chosen as the standard bearer of Sinn Féin against Captain William Archer Redmond, D.S.O., son of the late Member. Because of the weak state of the local organisation and the small number of members it was necessary to bring in Sinn Féin speakers and workers from outside the constituency. Amongst these I remember Dan McCarthy, Sean Milroy and Darrel Figgis. Michael Boland of Carrick-on-Suir, who was employed in a local business house, was one of the principal workers for Dr. White as were members of the Quinlan family. The first meeting of the Sinn Féin campaign was held on the Mall. I remember a very small muster of Volunteers led by Tim Driscoll (a native of Ballydehob and a carpenter employed at John Hearne & Son, Builders)

heading the parade to the Mall. They were hooted and jeered at by the Redmondite faction a large proportion of which consisted of what had come to be known as "separation women".

When the meeting started it brought forth a train of interruptions and noise from the Redmondites sheltering behind a cordon of R.I.C. men and the mob kept up an almost continual chant of current war ditties or parodies on them. We had "Keep the home fires burning", "Are we downhearted", and two of the parodies were something like as follows :-

"Some soldiers like the leg of a duck
The old Sinn Féiners can't get half enough
When you are in the trenches you'll hear the
sergeant say
Left - Right - Wheel about turn Duck for dinner
today."

The second effort was not so decent:

"White fell into a basket of eggs, Parlez vous
White fell into a basket of eggs, Parlezvous
White fell into a basket of eggs, the green
white and yellow ran down his legs.
Inky pinky Parlez vous".

Not content with making noise they threw stones and bottles and woe betide any Sinn Féiner who was foolish enough to go amongst them. It was made plain that Sinn Féin was not going to be allowed to conduct meetings without considerable opposition, and in a few days it became very apparent that its canvassers and workers were not going to be tolerated as they were beaten up in certain parts of the city. To counter this mob violence, Volunteer units were drafted in from other counties, principally Clare and Cork. Austin Brennan was, I remember,

in charge of a Clare party. One officer of the time, George Lennon of Dungarvan, I will always remember as being the personification of my boyish ideal of a Volunteer Officer. In spite of the entry of the Volunteers the mob became more violent and attacks on Sinn Féiners were frequent. One officer from Dublin (Christy Murphy) was attacked in the vicinity of O'Connell Street and had to draw a revolver in his defence; one of his attackers known locally as the "Badger" Thompson was wounded and Murphy, who was badly beaten, was arrested, charged and sentenced.

St. Patrick's Day came in the middle of the election campaign; the customary parade was held but Sinn Féiners and Redmondites were allotted places in it well removed from one another. There was a statue of the saint at the end of the procession: by some chance the vestments in which it was attired were of green, white and yellow: some people were heard to say they would never pray to the "ould Sinn Féiner" again. After the parade fights were frequent and the Tramore Fife and Drum Band was attacked in Manor Street on its way home by a howling Redmondite mob.

Polling day saw attacks on Volunteers and Sinn Féin supporters - while acting as guide to a party of Clare Volunteers going to the polling booth at Green Street I got a few clouts in an attack on the party.

For portion of polling day I was employed as a runner at the polling booth in Manor Street; it was at either Ryan's or Heylin's house near the corner of Henry Street. I have a memory of seeing and speaking to Arthur Griffith who visited the house. In spite of all the work Dr. White was defeated and Captain Redmond was elected M.P. for Waterford. An English Sunday paper came out with the caption "Another British Victory".

A month later in April 1918, the extension of conscription to Ireland was announced and the country became united in opposition to it, the members of the Irish Party withdrawing from Westminster. Protest meetings were held and a great campaign of resistance was organised. There was a rush to join the Volunteers. A general strike was called for one day in late April and the anti-conscription pledge was signed by practically everyone. I can still remember the crowds which signed the pledge, most appropriately, at the Temperance Hall which was one of the centres. The threat of conscription passed and membership of the Volunteers declined. In a year or two officers and officers were to deplore the wastage of a lot of fine material. As far as I know I was a member of the Fianna at this period but to be truthful I am not at all sure of the date on which I joined the organisation. I was a member and attending parades at Thomas's Hill at the time the Countess Markievicz visited the unit in Waterford.

One reason why I think I was in the Fianna at this time is that it was hardly likely that a youngster of my age would have been accepted for election work or as a guide for Volunteers if I had not been a member of a bona fide organisation. At the time the following were officers or prominent members of the Fianna :-

T. MacDonald,	Packey Hearne,	Jimmie O'Connor,
Sean Coakley,	James Nolan,	Tim Galvin,
Walter Pender and the Lawlors or Daniels.		

The end of World War 1. came more or less unexpectedly on the 11th November, 1918, and almost immediately a general (victory) election was held. As far as Waterford was concerned it was almost a replica of the March election. There were the usual attempts to break up Sinn Féin meetings and to intimidate supporters, but this time there was stiffer resistance. However, Sinn Féin was again defeated.

The following were the more prominent members of the local Sinn Féin organisation at the period :- Dr. White, P. W. Kenny, Seán Gallagher, Matthew Butler, T.D. Connolly, T. Colbert, Pierce Durand, Kieran Corbett, George Bishop, W. Jones, Miss Stafford, H. Jacob, Milo Hennessy, Jack Hennessy, Denis Madden, Tom Walsh, B.A., Nicholas Whittle, Robert Phelan, and the Quinlans, Maurice (senior), Patrick, Nicholas and Charles. Apart from these there was the Volunteer group and the following may have been members of the I.R.B. :- J. D. Walsh, Willie Walsh, Paddy Brazil, Seán Matthews, Mike Ryan, J.K. Walsh, Liam Raftis, Tim Driscoll, Peadar Woods and Twomey (a tinsmith who had a shop in Georges Street).

In after years I often wondered why those supporters of the Redmond family who had always been good Irishmen (I refer to the old school of Nationalists from Ballybricken) and whose ancestors had been Young Irelanders and later staunch supporters of Parnell, should be such violent opponents of Sinn Féin. The explanation may be that because of their intense loyalty to the "Chief" and J.E. Redmond they could see no good or merit in any organisation or party which had anti-Parnellites (or as they termed them the "Bantry gang") as members or supporters.

Early in 1920 a sensation was caused in Waterford by the news of the shooting of Quinlisk as a British spy. His family resided in the city. The execution took place in another brigade area. Quinlisk's father, a young brother and two sisters lived at Lombard Street. The father was a Port Watcher (he was either an ex-R.I.C. or an ex-service man) and the family, as I remember them, could be described as a quiet and very decent lower middle class family.

In the spring of 1920 the tempo of Volunteer activities all over Ireland was speeded but Waterford was not affected to any great extent. In April (Easter week-end) the Income Tax Office in Parnell Street was raided, books and documents were removed and destroyed (this was part of the nation wide attack on such offices). In or about the same time Callaghane and Holy Cross Butlerstown R.I.C. stations, which had been evacuated, were destroyed by burning. Members of "D" Company were engaged in the operations at the Income Tax Office and Callaghane R.I.C. station.

I joined the Volunteers in late 1919 or early 1920. My memory will not let me be definite about the date. I became a member of "D" Company of the city Battalion. The Company Commander at the time was Michael O'Neill of Michael Street whose occupation was Railway clerk. Indoor parades were held in a room in the Sinn Féin Club in Colbeck Street, outdoor parades took place at the "four walls" otherwise known as Mickey the Deafey's in Williamstown on the John's Hill to Callaghane road. In winter time there were indoor parades on some week-day evenings with an outdoor parade on Sunday mornings; in summer practically all parades were held out of doors. In Colbeck Street we had lectures and weapon training: the weapons were few and usually only one was available, that being used by the lecturer. I remember one lecture on the Mills grenade being given by John Burke (this man was a member of the Burke family who were saddlers and had a shop at the Apple Market in John Street). At the time John Burke was either still in the British Army or only just demobilised. This man was afterwards General Secretary of the Clerical Officers Association (Civil Service) in the 1927-1929 period. The outdoor parades included close order and extended order drill and I am afraid our Company Commander took a keen delight in getting

us into the prone position in our Sunday suits where cattle had decorated the landscape. We also did some physical drill: Pa Walsh, an ex-British army instructor, took us over for this. The usual procedure at parades was roll call, payment of subscriptions, reading of orders, reading of extracts from Ant-Oglach, a lecture or drill. Parades lasted for an hour and a half or two hours. It was usual to detail men for outpost duty so that the Company would not be surprised by a sudden British raid. The following is a list of the members of "D" Company whose names I can remember. (It will be appreciated that with the lapse of time, it cannot be exhaustive - there must have been others).

Michael O'Neill,	Michael Street,	Railway Clerk	O/C.
James D. McGrath,	St. Alphonsus Road,	Loco Driver	O/C.
Michael McGrath,	Poleberry, Killed in action.	Carpenter	S/Ldr.
John O'Rourke,	John's Hill, Killed in action.	Plumber ?	
Thomas Brenman,	Ballytruckle,	Clerk	A.S.U.
Michael Cahill,	do.	do.	do.
James Heylin,		Cabinet-Maker	do.
Frank O'Connor,	Poleberry,	Carpenter	do.
Jack Edwards,	John Street,	Loco Driver	do.
James Power,		Mental Hospital Attendant	do.
Myley Fanning,	Johnstown,	Mason	do.
Michael Wyley,	Parnell Street, Wounded in action.	Clerk	do.
Thomas Kiely		Mental Hospital Attendant, wounded in action.	
Nicholas Whittle,	Patrick Street, Wounded in action.		
Edward O'Brien,	Johnstown	Clerk	Q.M.
Frank Heylin,	Thomas's Hill,	Secretary	Adjutant

David Kenneally,	Parnell Street,	Motor Mechanic
Michael Kelly,	William Street.	
Sean Brett,	Cork Road,	Railway employee
Patrick Quinn,	John's Hill,	Cabinet-maker
John Cleary,	John Street,	Tailor.
Michael Stafford,	Spring Gardens,	Coach-painter.
Michael Power,	John's Avenue,	Mechanic.
Thomas Gallagher,	Mental Hospital Attendant.	
William Gallagher,	do.	
Bergin,	Ballytruckle,	Mason.
William Moran,	Parnell Street,	Mason.
P. Doonican,	St. Alphonsus Road,	
Michael Veale,	Michael Street,	Railway clerk.
Laurence Veale,	do.	University student.
William Doran,	Ballytruckle,	Stonecutter.
William Reid,		Labourer.
James Smith,	Castle Street,	Painter (Intelligence Staff)
Pa Walsh		Creamery worker.
Moloney,	Lower Newtown.	
Michael Ryan,	William Street,	Builders apprentice.

About this time the various Brigade and Battalion areas were beginning to assume the shape and status they were to hold up to the Truce and after. The East Waterford Brigade consisted of three Battalions and covered the area east of a line Portlaw-Kilmacthomas (via the River Mahon to the sea) - Knockmahon to the River Suir. The city battalion was called the first and was based on the city area and part of its environs. The second Battalion was based on that part of the brigade area west of the line Mount Congreve-Tramore, and the third Battalion covered the remainder of the Brigade area which coincided roughly with the barony of Gaultier. Towards the end of

1920 the principal officers of the Brigade Staff were :-

Willie Walsh,	Brigadier.
Michael O'Neill,	Adjutant.
Sean Lane,	Quartermaster.

Willie Walsh was a well known hurling referee, Michael O'Neill had been Captain of "D" Company and Sean Lane, a Bachelor of Arts, was a teacher of commercial subjects at the Central Technical Institute.

The first battalion consisted of the following Companies:

"A", "B", "C", "D" and "F". Companies were generally based on parish areas but this was not a hard and fast rule. "A" Company had for its area the Cathedral parish and its personnel were for the most part drawn from shop assistants of the various business establishments in that parish. "B" and "C" Companies covered the parishes of St. Patrick's and Ballybricken and the western environs of the city. "D" Company belonged to St. John's parish whilst the members of "F" Company came from Ferrybank and Sallypark on the Kilkenny side of the river.

By the autumn of 1920 there were signs of greater earnestness amongst the Volunteers in Waterford and the majority of members had come to realise that it was not just enough to be passive members of the Volunteer organisation and the attack on Kill R.I.C. Barracks in the second Battalion area in mid-September marked the beginning of a more militant outlook. The term "inferiority complex" had not been coined in these days but I am afraid that up to this time the local Volunteers had it. There seemed to be a lack of trust or faith in the ability of Waterford men to be leaders; a man from any other part of Ireland was accepted and looked on as being better than a local. As a result there seemed to be a lack of direction and drive and too much waiting for the heaven-sent leader who was going to get things moving. This phase was now passing and young men, anxious for more active roles, were coming to the front. One of the weaknesses was

perhaps the fact that up to this time Company officers were elected by the personnel of the Companies. It did produce a very high proportion of good officers but it also threw up indifferent ones. This method of selection was dropped and appointments were made by the Battalion or Brigade staffs.

Towards the end of October 1920, the long hunger strike of Terence McSweeney, Lord Mayor of Cork, ended with his death in Brixton prison and Dáil Éireann ordered a day of mourning on the 30th October, 1920. There was a certain amount of opposition to this order in Waterford, and Volunteers had to visit some establishments to enforce the decree. In the afternoon of that day a detachment of Volunteers under "Bismark" Power had to clear Broad Street of a mob who threatened Dr. White's premises. When darkness fell Volunteers and Sinn Féin supporters were attacked and beaten and certain shopkeepers lit up their windows in spite of the ban with the intention, it is alleged, of facilitating the mob in identifying Sinn Féiners. I was in the Sinn Féin club that night when word was received that Dr. White's shop had been attacked and that the mob was threatening to burn the shop and house. It was also reported that a well known local character was amusing the mob by lying on a plank and caricaturing the death agony of Lord Mayor McSweeney. Michael (Bunkey) Cahill asked for volunteers to deal with the mob and some twenty or more of us stepped forward out of a fairly large crowd in the club. We 'fell in' outside the club and as we moved off a number of those who were in the club started to follow us, whereupon Bunkey produced a revolver and told them that as they were not men enough to take part in the action they were not going to see it. On the way to Broad Street via Cathedral Square and High Street we halted while we tied handkerchiefs or something white around our left arms.

On arrival in Broad Street we formed a cordon across the road; we were carrying home-made batons or sticks. We were instructed to stand fast until the order to charge was given and when the order was received to let everyone who had not something white on the arm "have it" and to put out the lights in the windows. On our arrival the mob ran but when they saw we were not moving they came back again jeering and throwing stones. There was a crash as more of Dr. White's windows were broken and the mob got more bold and threatening. Bunkey gave the order to charge and with a wild whoop we rushed up Broad Street: there was little resistance; we dealt effectively with the lighted windows and caused terror in the streets and lanes where members of the mob resided as we sought them out. It was our turn to threaten to burn and destroy. We ended mob opposition for good that night. Our hour of triumph had a very undignified ending for me as during our march back to the Sinn Féin club I was taken out of the ranks by my mother in the time honoured method of dealing with unruly boys.

As far as I can remember it was round about this period that the special services such as Intelligence, Signals etc. were formed. Towards the end of 1920 I was attached to Intelligence. Why I was selected I had no idea; it may have been because I was so young and perhaps not considered suitable for combat duties. The officers of this service with whom I came into contact were Seán Quilter (now of Tralee), Denis Madden and Bobby Phelan. The unit's principal job was to keep its eyes and ears open and speedily to relay worthwhile information re enemy movements or habits to Battalion or Brigade Headquarters. Part of the unit's task was the interception of enemy communications. In this task very great help was given by at least

two officials of the local G.P.O., Mr. John Harris Slattery (uncle of General R. Mulcahy) and Mr. Neiland whose family came from Dunmore East.

At the beginning of the winter of 1920 the British authorities made a "swoop" and a considerable number of local officers were taken into custody. Practically all of the Brigade staff and a number of other officers were arrested. Whether the British had good information or just moved blindly I cannot say. They certainly achieved results but these had not the effect of disorganising or disrupting the local Volunteer organisation. Within a short time a new Brigade Staff was functioning and no member of this or the Battalion staffs was arrested between this time and the Truce. This gives colour to the view that the British were not working on information supplied by an informer in making the earlier arrests. The arrests may have been the result of loose talk or an indiscretion.

On the 5th December, 1920 there was an ambush in the 2nd Battalion area at Ballyduff Lower; the Brigade O/C., P. Paul, the O/C. of the Battalion, Jimmie Power, and others had a brush with a party of the Devonshire Regiment who were conveying a number of prisoners (the I.R.A. officers referred to in the previous paragraph) to Cork. A Lieutenant MacNamara, who was Transport Officer with the Devons, was wounded in that part of his anatomy on which he sat. The attacking party was not aware that there were prisoners in the convoy. After an exchange of fire, the I.R.A. withdrew. On the 13th of the month a party of troops travelling by lorry were attacked near Kilmacthomas and, as far as I know, this was a West Waterford job.

I think that it was during this month that a mystery lady named Joyce arrived in Waterford. She stayed at the house of J. Walsh,

a shoemaker, at the corner of John's Avenue and Parnell Street. She had no occupation so we made enquiries about her. One of the Intelligence section, a married man, put his reputation in jeopardy by acting as squire and taking her for walks in an effort to get some information as to her past. We then got news which alleged she had given information to the British that led to the arrest of a Volunteer or Volunteers in County Wexford. Being reasonably certain that she was not "desirable" from a national point of view it was decided to warn the public against her. With the permission of Thomas Wyley, then acting as Town Clerk, David Kenneally and I used a typewriter and duplicating machine in his office and ran off copies of a warning notice. We pasted these up all over town and used the gates of the military barracks and the jail as notice boards late on a Saturday night. By nine o'clock on Sunday morning police and military had removed Miss Joyce from her digs in Parnell Street.

During this period and for some time before it the various Companies of the 1st Battalion were providing a nightly guard for Dr. White who was Mayor of the city. This duty rotated between the Companies and was in consequence of warning notices and the murders of public representatives in other towns.

The Tramore ambush, as it came to be called, took place on the night of 7th January 1921. As far as I can remember it was a Friday night. I was not there so I cannot say anything about it. I was aware about a week beforehand that there was something coming off, but I did not know what the something was. There was an all night ceillidhe on the previous week-end at which I noticed that some of the officers had a meeting. I suppose my Intelligence training made me try to put two and two together. Most of the officers of "D" Company and a

number of the senior members of the Company used to frequent the house of John Cleary, a tailor, at John Street. It was a clearing house and one was always sure of meeting or being speedily put in touch with officers through John, his sister May or his mother, who described herself as an "old Fenian". In the days before the ambush some of us younger ones sensed we were not too welcome at the house so it was a case of my two and two making six. As it happened "D" Company was heavily involved; Section Leader Michael McGrath was killed, Michael Wyley, Nicholas Whittle and Tom Kiely were wounded. There have been comments in the years since that plans for the ambush were more or less broadcast before it took place and criticism of the way in which it was planned and carried out. I suppose I was as close and near to things as any Volunteer in that period. Michael McGrath's family were such close friends of mine that they reared my younger brother who was living with them at the time, yet I did not know anything of the Tramore ambush until after it happened. Hindsight is easily acquired. If the ambush had been successful the critics would have little to say. Most military officers know that when a tactical problem is set for consideration there is rarely an ideal solution; the ideal solution is only found by success in battle and such success is dependent on many factors. It is easy to be wise after the event so any comment from me now would be very unfair.

Shortly after the ambush the British raided the De La Salle College and the Mental Hospital presumably looking for wounded men. This was not surprising in view of the many rumours circulating at the time regarding casualties. In fact one of the wounded, Nicholas Whittle, was publicly prayed for as dead and his people went into mourning in order to keep the British from searching for him.

It was about this time that I was appointed Brigade Engineer Officer, why I cannot say. It was the worst possible choice; I was not yet 18 years of age, I had little or no knowledge of explosives and certainly none of leadership. It may have been that because of my employment with Messrs. John Hearne & Son, Builders, I was presumed to know a little about Building and Civil Engineering. At any rate I was a member of the Brigade Staff which was made up as follows :-

P.J. Paul, Officer in Command,	Michael Bishop, V/O.C.
Thomas Wyley, Adjutant,	Matthew Knox, Quartermaster,
Denis Madden, I.O.	M. Ryan, E.O.

Brigade Headquarters was at Miss Kathleen Murphy's Private Hotel and Restaurant, in Gladstone Street. Shortly after my appointment a small consignment of grenades and revolvers was received (presumably from G.H.Q.). I went with the Brigade O/C. to collect them. They were held by a lady who lived over either Crokers shop or an adjacent one on the Quay (I cannot remember her name). I do remember meeting a Mrs. McSweeney there: her son was afterwards first O/C. of the Irish Army Air Force.

The following are some names of Battalion staff or Company officers with whom I came in contact at that time and in the period up to the Truce:

1st Battalion:	G. Cronin,	O/C.
	J. Hetherington,	O/C.
	Baker Morrissey,	V/O.C.
	T. Marshall,	V/O.C.
	H. Munns,	Adjutant
	E. O'Brien,	Quartermaster
	R. Phelan,	I.O.

Company Commanders:

"A"	G. Cronin.	S. Ambrose,	D. Ennis
"B"	W. Cullen,	"C" Michael Cooper.	"D" J.D. McGrath
		"F" Sullivan.	

2nd Battalion	James Power, Ballycraddock,	O/C.
3rd Battalion	Bobby Nugent, Ballinkina,	O/C.
	Mick Coffey, John's Hill,	Adjutant.

The first task following on my appointment as E.O. was the organising and training of Engineer units in each Battalion area. The Engineer unit was made up by the allocation of a number of men from each Company. Naturally Company Commanders did not wish to part with any of their men and it was sometimes difficult to persuade them. The idea was that these specially selected men would parade with their Companies and act as advisers and workers when road or rail communications in the Company area had to be cut or disrupted. The Battalion Engineer officers were :-

James Howlett,	1st Battalion.
Cuddihy,	Tramore, 2nd Battalion.
Ivan White,	Ballymacaw, 3rd Battalion.

These officers visited the various Company areas during the week to train personnel and tried to arrange for all Engineers in the Battalion to parade on one or two Sundays per month. Training usually consisted of talks or lectures on the various methods of road obstruction, railway demolition, explosives and very elementary electricity. Of explosives we had practically none; there were a few sticks of gelnite and some detonators both for firing by fuse and electricity, and there was one electric exploder (magneto system). It will be appreciated that, as these were the days before broadcasting and the advent of a radio set in every home, when motor cars were uncommon and the Shannon Scheme was not even a dream, electricity was one of the mysteries of life. Up to the time of the issue of Engineering Circulars from G.H.Q. our sole source of instruction and information was the British Army's Manual of Engineering (and perhaps an old edition at that). This publication gave lots of data on

bridging, emergency and otherwise, the construction of trenches and redoubts but very little of use to us Volunteers about explosives, road obstruction or railway demolition. The only explosive substance mentioned in the Manual, beyond sacks of gunpowder, was gun-cotton and its primers - to this day I have not seen or handled this material. We tried to make the best use of what knowledge we had or could obtain. At the time I was very anxious to obtain quarry workers because of their knowledge and experience in handling explosives and was always on the lookout for the leaflets issued by Imperial Chemical Industries giving instructions on the use of gelignite. From this time until the Truce I visited as many units as I could manage each week and attended one of the Battalion parades every Sunday.

Sometime about February, roads in the Brigade area were blocked either by felling trees or the cutting of trenches: this I think was part of a general scheme of obstructions. Early in March there was to be an attack on the express train travelling from Cork to Rosslare. This train usually carried a fairly large complement of British forces on their way to England. As far as I can remember the attack was to be mounted in the second Battalion area probably at Kilmeaden. My memory may be at fault and the job may have been arranged as a joint venture in the West Waterford area. As part of the arrangements to prevent the British garrison at Waterford going to the scene of the attack by rail the lifting portions of the city bridge were to be raised. At that time a man named Joe Grace was employed by the Waterford Corporation as the engineer in charge of the bridge lifting machinery. Grace was held up and forced to operate the lifting machinery. When the arms of the bridge had been raised we took away some of the vital equipment so that they could not be lowered again. I can only remember the names of two of my

companions in that episode, Dan Ennis who was an officer of "A" Company and Michael O'Neill of Sallypark. Dan Ennis and I dumped the piece of machinery we had taken from the bridge in the river at Bilberry and then returned to the city.

Shortly after this there was an attack on the R.I.C. station at Dunmore East in the 3rd Battalion area. Two members of the Battalion Staff, Bob Nugent and Michael Coffey were amongst those who took part. The month of April saw a real quickening in the activities of the Brigade. Early in the month there was a raid on the G.P.O., carried out, if I remember correctly, by members of "A" Company. Shops and stores were visited in connection with "the Belfast Boycott" which was then being strictly enforced. There was a raid on the County Club in which County Inspector Maunsell of the R.I.C. was relieved of documents and a revolver. This was a mixed job in which members of various Companies took part; J.D. McGrath, O/C. "D" Company was in charge of the arrangements. Seán Brett, Myley Fanning, Jack Edwards, Frank O'Connor and other members of the same Company took part in the raid. This job was particularly daring in that the Imperial Hotel, not twenty yards away, was under strong police and military guard as a British Judge for the Spring Assizes was staying there.

Events were now moving so fast that it is not possible at this distance in years to give an accurate account of them unless one could have kept a diary and this would have been a most foolhardy proceeding for any I.R.A. man. The Brigade Active Service Unit, better known as "the Column", was formed about this time: it was commanded by Jerry Cronin former O/C., "A" Company and O/C., 1st Battalion; and it consisted, to the best of my belief, of the following :-

Michael Wyley, "D" Company.	James Heylin, "D" Company.
Michael Cahill, "D" Company,	Bobby Nugent, 3rd Battalion.
Myles Fanning, "D" Company,	Jim Power.
Jack Edwards, "D" Company,	Pat Carroll.
Frank O'Connor, "D" Company,	Michael Norris.

William O'Donohue

Tom Brennan, "D" Company.

Whether all these were with the unit at its inception is doubtful. Tom Brennan joined the unit on his escape from Kilkenny jail and Willie O'Donohue may have been in the same position: I am sorry I cannot be more accurate with these particulars.

Raids on the mails and Post Offices became more frequent, "D" Company being particularly active in this connection. There was, I think, a raid on the Ulster Bank and there were raids on the premises of the Rudge Whitworth Company and Cordners of Henrietta Street from which a number of bicycles were commandeered. Even at that time of strain it was amusing to see a collection of individuals of all types, ages and sizes, riding "hell for leather" on a miscellaneous assortment of bicycles. Some chemists' shops were raided; Jones of the Quay, was one raided for field glasses and binoculars. This raid may have been carried out by members of Fianna Éireann. Some provisions intended for the British Army lying at Waterford Railway Station were removed and dumped in the river, and a detachment of the Devonshire Regiment visited some of the city drapery premises and "press ganged" male members of the staffs and forced them to wade out in the mud of the river and recover the dumped bacon and flour.

During May a raid was carried out on the G.P.O. at 3 o'clock on a Saturday evening. Volunteers from various Companies were employed and I can recall only one or two names out of all those who took part.

Jimmy Howlett was there, and, whilst Larry Veale, David Kenneally and I were getting as far as possible from the vicinity of the Post Office, the British military racing to the scene in lorries passed us in Broad Street; they had got early news about the raid. The three of us decided that the best place to spend a pleasant summer evening was at Crowwell's Rock across the river from the city. Arrived there we relaxed on the grass, reading. After a little time we were startled to be told "Put them up and keep them up" by a Black & Tan who was accompanied by some of the Devons. We were searched and questioned and, whether it was because our answers were satisfactory or because of the reading material "The Union Jack", and "The Magnet" we had (it was not the type of literature Irish boys of that time should be reading) Kenneally and I were told to carry on but Larry Veale was taken into custody because he admitted being a student at the National University. Waiting just long enough to get our questioners out of sight, we made our way back to the city and to Larry Veale's house where we recovered the revolver he had cached after the raid and took it away in case the British came to search his house. Larry was released after further questioning and returned home safely.

Towards the end of May I was approached by J. Hetherington, O/C. of the 1st Battalion, who asked if I could have a party of Engineers ready to demolish a bridge in connection with a job which was arranged for the week-end. On Saturday night 28th or 29th May, I paraded a party in the vicinity of Butlerstown Cross. On arrival there I discovered that practically all of the 1st Battalion had been mobilised. A belt of obstructions was put down on all roads leading from Waterford to Kilmeaden. At the Holy Cross a stone wall was demolished and the material placed on the road as an obstruction in

addition to a number of trees which were felled. My principal task was to destroy a bridge at Whitefield on the main Waterford-Dungarvan road. I must confess that an unholy mess was made of the job and that, due to lack of knowledge and experience, we only succeeded in blowing a few holes in the bridge. As it happened this was a blessing in disguise: I was not aware then but I learned very shortly afterwards that the water main from Knockaderry reservoir to the city was laid over the bridge. Had the job been successful we would have left the city without water and the consequences would not have been pleasant. During the course of the operation I discovered that the Active Service Unit was posted in the vicinity of Whitefield and that members of the 1st Battalion provided a chain of outposts. As far as I can remember most of the Volunteers were paraded when it became dawn and told to move home in small groups and not to draw attention to themselves. As I went towards the city I heard that shooting had been heard in the vicinity of Holy Cross. A few of us decided to investigate and to inform any men who might still be on outpost duty to get home. On arrival at the lane which ran down by the side of the former R.I.C. station at Holy Cross we found Volunteer John O'Rourke seriously wounded and practically unconscious. We (Ned O'Brien, Michael Power, David Kenneally all of "D" Company and myself) took a door from an outbuilding of the public house at Holy Cross. There was nothing in the line of stimulants in the shop and the only thing we could get was port wine. We gave John a little of this, and, placing him on the door, we brought him to Butlerstown Castle and tried to get aid for him. When we asked him what had happened he told us that officers of the "Devons" in civies had shot him. Having done all that was possible for him at the time, we travelled across country to the Dunmore Road by which we returned to Waterford. In the course of our journey

it was not safe to use the roads as British forces were by this time moving out and actually captured a number of the Volunteers returning to town. A few days after this affair I was challenged by the Brigade O/C. at Brigade headquarters about my part in the operation; he accused me of mutiny and pointed out the dire consequences of having such a charge placed against me. I was dumbfounded and asked what mutinous act I had committed. I was then told that the affair had not had his sanction and that certain officers had usurped their functions. Up to this I was not aware that there were any differences between the O/C. and some of his officers. I had, I must admit, heard criticisms of the O/C., but I had taken little notice as I treated it as the usual soldiers' grouse. Before going to Whitefield I had not consulted any other member of the Brigade Staff. I knew that the Brigade O/C. was in Dublin, and, as the Vice-O/C. was in charge at Whitefield, I had no reason to assume it was not a legitimate operation. There has been some talk during the intervening years that the Brigade O/C. was deposed by his Staff and Battalion Commanders and afterwards reinstated by G.H.Q. To be fair to him and to the other officers I have no recollection of anything of this nature. My view (which of course may be wrong) is that most of the officers and men who took part in the Whitefield affair were in the same position as myself, that is, unaware that the operation had not the sanction of the Brigade O/C. I would not care to say that the Brigade O/C. was popular and it may well be that a number of officers did desire a change; but I can say without doubt that P.J. Paul acted as O/C. of the East Waterford Brigade until it was amalgamated with the West Waterford Brigade shortly after the Truce. This, I think, could be verified by a search through the files of the local papers at the time the Truce was arranged. There were probably public notices regarding liaison arrangements etc. in which he may have been named as O/C.

From the end of May on to the 11th July there is little I can recall. During most of the evenings of that summer I was with some engineer unit doing training. By that time Engineering Headquarters was giving a very good service of training circulars and we were making attempts to make up our own explosives and manufacture land mines from axle boxes and such like. We also had some practice in railway demolition. During the same period Company activities became more intense: in the 1st Battalion area special squads of unemployed men were engaged on patrols looking for trouble. I.R.A. police activities also increased. An unsuccessful attempt was made to destroy Tramore Coastguard station. There was a combined operation by the East and West Waterford flying columns at Cappagh early in July and a day or two afterwards there was another attack on the Rosslare express.

To end - the last episode in Waterford - on the eve of the Truce - was a fight not between the I.R.A. and the Devons but between the last named and a group of ex-service men very much opposed to Sinn Féin. On the Saturday night before the 11th July it was common knowledge that a Truce had been arranged to take place with effect from noon on the following Monday. The Devons were celebrating by drinking the wine of the country. As a number of them, in very good humour, were going along Michael Street a member of the party accidentally jostled an ex-member of the 18th Royal Irish Regiment who was standing on the edge of the footpath with some of his friends. The Devon's apologies were not accepted and a row developed, as was the custom of the time in rows between soldiers; belts were taken off and freely used. The honours went to the Royal Irish who paraded the street wearing the belts and caps of the English Regiment. A patrol of the Devons in full war kit cleared the area shortly afterwards.

This is a very long story from one who did very little and the only reason for it is that someone in the future may have a picture, even if imperfect, of the situation in Waterford in the period 1914 to 1921. As I left the Waterford Brigade to join the staff of the 1st Southern Division early in 1922 and never returned to Waterford for any extended period, I have not had any contact with my former comrades or the opportunity of checking my memories with theirs. I can only hope that a check with their stories does not show up too many errors in mine.

POSTSCRIPT:

The question has often been posed in the years since 1921 - why was it Waterford did not do more in the 1919-1921 war of independence? I think the answer can be found in "lack of numbers" but then the question arises why the lack of numbers? History may give the answer to that question - Waterford city and its hinterland was seldom kind to the native Irish. First the city was a Danish settlement and a little while afterwards it became, to all intents, an English city and thus it remained except on isolated occasions (Strongbow razed it), Cromwell laid siege to it, and James II. ran away from it) down the centuries. In all the wars and struggles for independence it is seldom mentioned except for its loyalty to some English monarch. It is only in the 19th century, with the advent of the Young Irelanders, that any number of its citizens were identified with a Nationalist movement. It must, of course, be understood that these remarks only apply to the city and its immediate neighbourhood. There was no '98 or Fenian tradition in the city; there was a Young Ireland tradition in Ballybricken where Thomas Francis Meagher (of the Sword) had a following; they did not lack courage and it is on record that they were dissuaded from rescuing Smith O'Brien and others being conveyed

from Clonmel to Waterford for transportation. It can, I think, be said that there was no continuous tradition favouring a militant nationalist outlook existing in the city. The old nationalists supported Parnell to the very last and took J. E. Redmond to their hearts because he stood by "the Chief". Thus it was that in Waterford in 1914, a city of 27,000 souls, there were two sections - the Loyalists (a strong body) and the Nationalists.

With the declaration of war the loyalists gained strength as I have already explained. The younger nationalists, following the advice of their leader, joined the British forces, leaving the organisation in the hands of older and fervid supporters of J.E. Redmond. It can readily be understood then that when 1916 came there was little support for the Irish Volunteers. I cannot do more than guess at the number of people who were Sinn Féin supporters in the city at that period, but I doubt if there were more than 200 all told.

Coming down to 1918, when the tide of Sinn Féin victories was running strongly elsewhere, Dr. White could only secure 764 votes. Even on a restricted register, this was a small proportion of the population of 27,000 and it shows up the lack of strength in Waterford. It must be pointed out too that only a limited number of the Sinn Féin supporters of that time could really be called natives of Waterford. A very large number of supporters were young men and women working in the various business establishments in Waterford who had come in from the surrounding counties; a number too were students at the De La Salle College.

It was not until 1920 when the schoolboys of 1916, whose imagination had been fired by the ideals of the men "who came out"

and what was happening elsewhere, became of age to join the Volunteers that there was any real accession to the strength of the I.R.A..

It was in 1920 also that a number of those good Irishmen who had served in the British Army gave their services to the Volunteers. Assuming that each Company in the 1st Battalion had 60 members in 1920; this gave a total strength of 300, not all of whom could be described as effectives and very few of whom had any combat experience. The Battalion had to operate in what was, to all intents and purposes, hostile territory as the vast majority of the people were against it and many were prepared to be actively hostile. As a lot of the hostility came from women it did not appear easy at the time to counter it. Men could be beaten up or shot if they stepped out of line or betrayed I.R.A. men to the British - to treat women this way was a different 'kettle of fish'. It was too late to be stopping this type of opposition in 1920; also it was too late to be trying to collect arms and to blood men by minor attacks on the British: this should have been done in 1918 and 1919 but, unfortunately, there was no one to do it. The Volunteers of that period in Waterford were holding the line which was about as much as could be done in the circumstances.

Perhaps these of us who joined up in 1920 could have done more, but the fault is not altogether ours; we had a lot of leeway to make up and we had no experience and many difficulties not faced by other units.

Our town was not big enough to get lost in or not to be known in, nor yet small enough that you could depend on the neighbour's child being defended against the stranger in most circumstances.

The Brigade area did not lend itself too well to guerilla tactics with a wide deep river and the sea for boundaries on three sides there was only one line out and that into another Brigade area. Maybe I have said enough by way of explanation.

SIGNED: Michael Ryan

DATE: 9th December 1954

WITNESS: [Signature]

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