

DUPLICATE

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

BURO STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21

No. W.S. 1740

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 1740.  
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Witness

Cornelius O'Sullivan,  
Dromkeen,  
Innishannon,  
Co. Cork.

Identity.

O/C, Innishannon Company, Bandon Battalion,  
Cork III Brigade.  
Member, Cork III Brigade Column.

Subject.

Innishannon Company, Bandon Battalion,  
Cork III Brigade, I.R.A., 1917-1921.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil.

3027.

File No .....

Form B.S.M. 2

DUPLICATE

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
EURO STAIRS MILEATA 1918-21
NO. W.S. 1,740

STATEMENT BY CORNELIUS O'SULLIVAN,  
Dromkeen, Innishannon, County Cork.

I was born at Ballyvolane, Ballinadee, in February 1898. My parents were farmers. I was educated at Innishannon National School until I reached the age of fourteen when I went to work on my parents' farm.

I joined the Irish Volunteers when they were organised in the area about November 1917. The prime mover in the organisation of the Volunteers in the area (Innishannon) was Liam Deasy. The strength of the unit in the early stages was about fifty; but before the end of the year 1917 the membership had reached about seventy.

The first officers of the Company were :-

O/C.	Liam Deasy,
1st Lieut.	Batt Russell,
2nd Lieut.	Tom Kiely,
2nd Lieut.	Dan Crowley.

As the Company area was divided by the Bandon River there were two 2nd Lieutenants appointed. Tom Kiely took the half Company on the left bank of the river and Dan Crowley that on the right.

Early in 1918 the area was organised on a battalion basis. At this time there were Companies in Bandon, Ballinadee, Kilbrittain, Innishannon, Clogagh, Barryroe, Timoleague, Newcestown, Tinker's Cross, Kilpatrick, Crosspound and Quarry's Cross. These Companies were now organised as Bandon Battalion, Cork Brigade. The first officers of this unit were, I think :-

O/C.	Seán Hales,
Vice O/C.	Hugh Thornton,
Adjutant	Liam Deasy,
Quartermaster	Pat Harte.

The appointment of Liam Deasy as Adjutant of Bandon Battalion led to a change in the officers of the Company (Innishannon).  
The officers now were :-

O/C.	Batt Russell,
1st. Lieut.	Tom Kiely,
2nd Lieut.	Dan Crowley,
2nd Lieut.	Jeremiah Deasy.

The only type of training carried on in the early stage was close order foot drill in the fields in the area. Parades were held twice weekly and occasionally we went on route marches on Sunday evenings to neighbouring Company areas.

When the British threatened to enforce Conscription in the spring of 1918 we were all busily engaged in organising the general public, making buckshot, canister bombs and collecting all available arms. As far as I can recollect we had about twenty-five shotguns with a good supply of ammunition about this time. There was a very small increase in the strength of the Company (Innishannon) at this period, but all the new recruits faded out later on.

The Innishannon Company was represented on <sup>a</sup> party of men sent down from Bandon Battalion to Waterford City to duty there during a bye-election in March 1918, by Dan Crowley and John Riordan. At this time Waterford City was a stronghold of the Irish Parliamentary Party and ~~had been represented in the British~~

~~Party~~ had been represented in the British Parliament by its leader - John E. Redmond. The seat was now being contested by Dr. Vincent White on behalf of Sinn Féin. The Irish Parliamentary Party candidate was Captain William Redmond. The Sinn Féin supporters were being subjected to a lot of intimidation; so the Volunteers were called in from a number of areas in order to assist the local Volunteers to protect the Sinn Féin workers and supporters. The Sinn Féin candidate was defeated.

Normal training continued throughout 1918. There was <sup>no</sup> unusual activity in the area. Training, however, was beginning to develop and during the summer and autumn of 1918 several week-end manoeuvres, in which combined units of the Battalion (Bandon) took part, were held.

The next event of importance was the General Election in December 1918 at which the Sinn Féin candidates were elected in the vast majority of the constituencies throughout the country. The successful Sinn Féin candidates met in Dublin in January 1919 and established a Government for the Irish Republic - Dáil Éireann.

Cork Brigade of the Irish Volunteers, which included units throughout the county, was divided into three Brigades in January 1919. Bandon Battalion, to which Innishannon Company was attached, now became a unit of a new Brigade - Cork No. 3. This Brigade embraced the area of West Cork and included the following battalions :-  
Bandon, Clonakilty, Dunmanway, Skibbereen, Bantry, Castletownbere.  
As far as I can recollect the first officers of this brigade were :-

O/C.	Tom Hales,
Vice O/C.	I cannot remember.
Adjutant	Liam Deasy,
Quartermaster	Pat Harte.

Normal training continued throughout 1919. We were all becoming more interested in procuring guns of any kind. Every man felt that it was up to him to provide himself with a weapon and no opportunity to procure arms, either by purchase or through raids, was lost.

During the summer of 1919 the first Dáil Éireann loan was floated. The work of organising and collecting the Loan fell mainly on the shoulders of the members of the Volunteer units, the majority of whom were also members of Sinn Féin.

A Brigade training camp was held at Glandore in August 1919; but, beyond Liam Deasy, who was now Brigade Adjutant, there was no representative from Innishannon Company area at this camp.

It was about this time that selected men from each Company were trained in the Special Services - Scouting, Engineering, Intelligence, Transport. The establishment of these special sections created great interest and the selected men entered wholeheartedly into the organisation and training of their particular sections in each area.

At this stage the Volunteers elected to come under the control of Dáil Éireann, Department of Defence, instead of being controlled as up to now by their own Executive. We now became the I.R.A. (Irish Republican Army) and all members took an oath to support and defend the Irish Republic against all enemies, foreign and domestic.

As far as I can recollect, the first engagement with an enemy force in the district took place on 25th April, 1920, when some men from Crosspound Company with the Battalion Vice O/C., (Charlie Hurley) attacked a patrol of three R.I.C. men on the road between Upton and Innishannon. Two members of the enemy patrol were

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- (i) Reference number of the separate cover under which the abstracted part has been filed: WS 1740/A
- (ii) How many documents have been abstracted: 1p
- (iii) The date of each such document: 1/8/58
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WS 1740 Witness Statement Cornelius O' Sullivan p5.  
names of individuals

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J. Moloney  
Name: (J. Moloney.)

Grade: Col.

Department/Office/Court:

Date: 7 March 2003.

killed. Although this operation took place on the border of our Company (Innishannon) area I don't think any member of the Company took part.

About the end of April or early in March 1920, a sum of money - about £200 - was stolen from two old men living in Innishannon area. When the R.I.C. had failed to trace the robbers, the case was reported to the officers of Innishannon Company. After some days two young men - and - were arrested by our men. They were removed to Crosspound area where they were detained for about two weeks during which they were questioned regarding the robbery on several occasions. They refused to admit having anything to do with the robbery. It was now decided to arrest two younger members of the family. This was done; and, while the younger members were being removed to the place selected for their detention, they admitted that they knew of the robbery. It transpired that the money had been taken by one of the younger and that his brother, who had been arrested originally, had taken the money from him. They then disclosed where the money had been hidden and the amount, which had not been already spent, was recovered. The prisoners were now placed on trial before a Republican Court and were found guilty of robbery. Having regard to their previous good conduct it was decided that, if the missing money was refunded, the prisoners would be released.. This information was conveyed to the father of the and he paid up. The prisoners were then released. The majority of the members of the Company (Innishannon) were engaged in the arrest and detention of these prisoners at one time or another as all activities had to be carried out under armed guards owing to the close proximity of the strong military post at Randon - four miles.

Several houses in the area were raided for arms during the summer of 1920. The majority of the members of the unit took part in these raids in which about a half dozen shotguns and two miniature rifles were captured.

I think it was about this period that a Feis was held in Ballinadee. It was customary for the British to send a force of military and R.I.C. to all such gatherings. The majority of the people attending such Irish Ireland functions at this time were either members of the I.R.A. or supporters. In anticipation of the arrival of the usual patrol, the Battalion O/C. (Seán Hales) arranged that a strong force drawn from all Companies in Bandon battalion should go to Ballinadee. A supply of arms and ammunition was taken to Ballinadee on the night before the Feis and dumped in the area. The arms were to be used by a section which was to take up position behind the wall of the graveyard in the village to cover off the street. The remainder of the I.R.A. were to mingle with the crowd in the street and at a given signal were to pounce on the patrol and seize their arms. I was one of several men from Innishannon and the other Companies who were detailed to rush the patrol. However, all our plans came to nought as the enemy patrol did not put in an appearance. The representatives of the various units returned to their home areas that night.

At this period it was usual for a patrol of four R.I.C. men - armed with rifles and revolvers - to travel each Saturday from Innishannon to Bandon and back. It was decided to attack this patrol on 21st August, 1920, and the new Brigade O/C. (Charlie Hurley) mobilised nine men from Innishannon Company at Curranure about three miles from Bandon on the main road to Innishannon and Cork. The



The men were :- Jeremiah Kearney, Pat. Dempsey, Dan Falvey, Dan Crowley, Jeremiah Deasy, Richard Twomey, Con Kearney, Con O'Sullivan (witness) and another. Charlie Hurley was in charge. With the exception of Dan Falvey and the O/C. (Charlie Hurley), who were armed with rifles, all the others carried shotguns. We took up our positions behind the roadside fence at a sharp bend in the road where it ran under a railway bridge, about 8.30 p.m. We were divided into two sections. Charlie Hurley and Jeremiah Deasy were on the Bandon side of the bend ~~at~~<sup>to</sup> the west with the Bandon River to their rear. They had a view of the road to Bandon for a distance of about 100 yards. With the other members of the party I was at the Innishannon side of the bridge on the opposite side of the road. We were above the level of the road. The whole party were extended over a distance of about 150 yards. This was the estimated maximum distance between the two sections of the patrol which usually travelled in pairs.

Sometime after 11 a.m. the leading pair in the patrol were observed approaching from Bandon by the Brigade O/C. (Charlie Hurley) and Jeremiah Deasy. This pair were to be allowed to pass by the O/C's position to be dealt with by my party at the Innishannon side of the bridge. We were not, however, to fire until Charlie and his comrade opened fire on the second pair in the patrol. As the second pair in the patrol were moving round the bend under the railway bridge they were fired on by Charlie Hurley and Jeremiah Deasy. At this stage, the leading pair and a girl, who had been cycling between the two sections of the patrol, had passed outside the eastern end of the ambush position. They immediately jumped from their bicycles and dashed for cover at both sides of the road. When the second pair were fired on they also jumped from their cycles - one dashing

for each side of the road. I fired on the man who dashed to the right side of the road where I was in position and he immediately surrendered his rifle which I collected. The man who had been allowed to pass through the ambush position now opened fire and after an exchange lasting about twenty minutes our sections withdrew towards Ballymountain. We then dumped our guns, including the captured rifle, and returned to our homes. We had no casualties. One of the R.I.C. patrol was wounded.

While this engagement was in progress a train travelling towards Bandon passed along the railway line overlooking our position. Some passenger on this train was later reported to have telephoned the military in Bandon when he reached the station there. As a result a lorry load of military arrived in the district within a short time of our withdrawal. They travelled along the old Bandon road across our line of retreat when we were within a few fields of the road, but did not see us. During their activities in the area following this engagement they captured Ted Deasy - a member of our Company (Innishannon) who was employed in Bandon.

Early in the week following this engagement a number of men from Innishannon, including those who took part in the engagement on 21st August, 1920, took up positions on the main Bandon-Innishannon road in the vicinity of the position occupied on the previous occasion. We were accompanied by men from Kilbrittain, Kilpatrick, Ballinadee and Crosspound Companies. The strength of the party was about sixty and Charlie Hurley (Brigade O/C.) was in charge. We were armed mainly with shotguns. We were extended over a distance of about 100 yards. In addition to the flanking parties to the east and west of the main position we had a covering party on the railway bridge overlooking the road.

All positions were occupied about 8 a.m. We had been in position some hours - it was close to mid-day when one of our outposts, who was on duty on top of a quarry, observed a local British loyalist named Stennings chatting to some men who were working in the quarry. When Stennings left the quarry he cycled towards Innishannon. The scout then reported to the O/C (Charlie Hurley) and as he feared that Stennings may have learned of our presence in the vicinity he (Charlie Hurley) decided to withdraw from the district.

All sections were now called in; and, with the exception of Dan Crowley, Jeremiah Deasy, Patrick Dempsey, Richard Twomey and myself, the representatives from Innishannon Company were instructed to return to their homes. We moved with the remainder of the Column to Kilpatrick where we again took up positions. We remained in position until darkness set in and as there was no appearance by the enemy we withdrew to our home areas.

A training camp was set up at Clonbuig in Kilbrittain Company area in September 1920. This camp was established to train representatives from the Companies on the south side of Bandon River in Bandon Battalion. The representatives from Innishannon Company at this camp of which Tom Barry (Brigade Training Officer and later Column O/C.) was in charge, were :- Dan Crowley (O/C), Tom Kiely (1st Lieut.), Con O'Sullivan (witness) and Jeremiah Deasy (2nd Lieut.). At the camp we were trained in the care and use of the rifle and revolver, as well as undergoing a course of drill and physical training. We had lectures on various aspects of military affairs. Training went on for about a week and we were then sent home with instructions to return in three days.

When the men who were at Clonbulg reassembled after the break of three days we moved into Dunmanway Battalion area to seek an engagement with the enemy. We took up a position at Fanlobbus on the Dunmanway-Ballineen road about three miles from Dunmanway. We were accompanied by some men drawn from Dunmanway Battalion. We remained in position all day, but the expected enemy convoy did not turn up. We returned to Newcestown that night. On our return journey the party was under Seán Hales (O/C., Bandon Battalion). The Column O/C. (Tom Barry) had gone off on some other business. We reached Newcestown about 8 p.m. and divided up into billets in a number of houses to obtain some food. Seán Hales (Battalion O/C.) and Jim O'Mahoney (Battalion Adjutant) then left us and went into the village (Newcestown). They had only entered a house in the village when two lorries of enemy troops drove into the village street. Seán Hales and O'Mahoney dashed back immediately to advise us of the presence of the enemy. The members of the Column were mobilised hurriedly and we moved back towards Newcestown. In the vicinity of Newcestown Cross we saw the lights of the lorries approaching so we were instructed to take cover. All section took up cover behind the roadside fence. We were extended over a distance of about 100 yards. As the leading lorry entered the position, fire was opened on it. The lorry ran along by the fence for a short distance and then collided with fence. It was all the time under fire. When the lorry ran into the fence any of the occupants, who had not been killed or wounded, threw themselves from the lorry and took cover across the fence from us.

The second lorry in the enemy convoy halted at the opening burst of fire and the occupants left the lorry. During a lull in the firing I heard sounds in the fields at the Newcestown side

of our position and I realised that the men in the second lorry had entered the fields and were trying to outflank us. I passed word along the line and moved with a number of others under cover of a cross fence back from the road. Our party eventually ascertained the position of the outflanking enemy force and opened fire on it. After a short interchange of fire the enemy withdrew. As there was no hope of concluding the engagement satisfactorily in the prevailing darkness, the I.R.A. forces were ordered to withdraw. The main body withdrew to Greenhill area, but I moved with Jeremiah Deasy, Jack Fitzgerald, Mick O'Neill and Paddy Crowley to FarranThomas graveyard, where we slept that night. We moved next day to Greenhill where we made contact with the remainder of the Column which had taken part in the engagement at Newcestown on 10th October, 1920. We remained in Greenhill on Sunday (11th October) and early on the following morning we moved to Crosspound area where we were disbanded and instructed to return to our home areas. The enemy casualties at Newcestown were - one officer killed and several other ranks wounded. We had no casualties.

The representatives from the Companies north of the Bandon River were now called to a training camp in Crosspound Company area. Tom Barry (Brigade Training Officer) was in charge of this camp. The men present underwent a course of training on similar lines to those who attended the previous camp at Clonbuig. Before the trainees were dismissed from the camp they took up an ambush position at Killountan on the main Cork-Bandon road about 1½ miles from Innishannon. They were reinforced by some men from Ballinadeo in addition to Dan Crowley and myself. We were all armed with rifles. We remained in position all day until darkness set in but no enemy patrol or convoy passed through. We then withdrew to our home areas.

During the months of October and November we were mainly engaged in the collection of the Arms Fund Levy from friendly people resident in the area. There were a large number of British loyalists in the area who were hostile to us and the collection of the levy in their case was deferred to a later date.

Towards the end of October, 1920, Mick O'Brien - a member of the Kilbrittain Company - died. He was given a military funeral to Murragh graveyard. This funeral was attended by representatives from all Companies in Bandon Battalion. Those present from Innishannon Company included Dan Crowley (O/C.), Con Sullivan (witness) and a number of others whose names I cannot now recollect. On the day following this funeral Dan Crowley, Denis Kiely and James Cotter were arrested. They were charged with taking part in the ambush at Toureen on 26th October, 1920. The arrest of the O/C. (Dan Crowley) led to a change in the officers of the Company (Innishannon). The officers now were :-

O/C.                    Con O'Sullivan (witness),  
1st Lieutenant Tom Kiely,  
2nd Lieutenant Jeremiah Deasy.

On the morning of the 2nd December, 1920, a party of about twenty-five men drawn from Innishannon, Crosspound and Ballinadee Companies were mobilised for an attack on a lorry load of R.I.C. at Clashaniscud on the Brinny road. Amongst the men from Innishannon were Jeremiah Deasy, Jack O'Brien, Jack Kearney, Con O'Sullivan (witness). There were, in addition, a number of men from the Company engaged on scouting duties. The party was in charge of the Brigade O/C. (Charlie Hurley). Other Brigade officers present were Liam Deasy (Adjutant) and Dick Barrett (Quartermaster).

We were armed with a mixture of rifles and shotguns and home-made bombs. The combined force was divided into two sections which were placed in position about 200 yards apart on the northern side of the road.

All sections were in position about 9 a.m. and were just about to withdraw as nightfall approached when our scouts from the east signalled the approach of the enemy. Fire was opened on two lorries of military as they drove through the position. They continued on their way - replying to our fire as they dashed through - and went on to Bandon. The enemy casualties were unknown. We had no casualties. All sections now withdrew to their home areas.

At this stage it was decided to proceed with the collection of the Arms Fund Levy from the British loyalists in the area. All members of the Company (Innishannon) were engaged on this work during the month of December, 1920, either as armed guards on the roads leading to the district in which seizures of cattle or goods - usually cattle - were being made, or in the actual work of rounding up the stock and driving them to a central point from which they were driven to fairs in the area to be sold. In addition to the work of rounding up the cattle it was necessary to place guards on the loyalist houses to ensure that messages regarding our activities were not sent to the enemy posts at Innishannon or Bandon until the cattle had been disposed of.

On the night of 2nd January, 1921, a local Column drawn from Innishannon, Kilbrittain, Ballinadee, Ballinspittal, Timoleague and Clogagh Companies under Tom Barry (Column O/C) carried out an attack on the Kilbrittain R.I.C. barracks. This post was an isolated building in the middle of the village. About fifty men were mobilised for this job. We met at the Round Tree at the outskirts

of Kilbrittain village on the Ballinadee road about twelve midnight. It was proposed to lay a mine against the wall of the barrack and to rush the breach should the explosion be a success. Covering parties of riflemen were placed in position around the building. With Jack Corkery, Denis Manning and another, whose name I cannot recollect, I carried the mine on a trestle to the barrack. We laid it on the barbed wire entanglements surrounding the building. The mine was to be detonated by electricity. It failed to explode so there was no opportunity to rush the barrack. The covering parties then fired a few shots at the enemy post and we all withdrew to our home areas.

When arrangements were being made by the Brigade Column under Tom Barry (O/C.) to attack Innishannon R.I.C. post on the night of 26th January, 1921, I was in charge of a party from my Company which were engaged in blocking the old road from Innishannon to Bandon. This party were operating under armed guards posted at strategic points to ensure that we would not be surprised. The road was blocked by digging a trench about 6' deep and 8' wide across the road which was about 20' wide. In addition a number of trees were knocked across the road between the trench and Innishannon. Due to the failure of the mine which was laid at the door of the barrack, the attack was called off and all sections withdrew. The Column withdrew to Brinny where a section from it had been lying in wait for possible reinforcements in the event of the attack developing, but the enemy did not travel.

During the early days of February, 1921, I received a report that a patrol of two R.I.C. men with rifles had left their barrack and crossed Innishannon bridge. I hurriedly assembled about ten members of the Company and sent the most of them to scout the area while, with Jack Murphy, I took up a position on high ground



overlooking the bridge. As the patrol returned to the village (Innishannon) we opened fire on it but the distance was a bit too great for our shotguns. However, one member of the patrol was wounded but both succeeded in reaching their barracks. Amongst the men engaged in scouting on this occasion were :- Dick Russell, Richard Twomey, Patrick Butler, Dan Falvey, Tom Falvey and Denis O'Connell.

Several raids on the mails carried out in the area were carried out by myself and the other officers of the Company about this period, but nothing of military interest came to light.

About this time an order was issued to trench all roads in the area and to use every means to cut enemy lines of communication. This was a general order issued to all units. This work had to be carried out under armed guards in order to prevent surprise by enemy raiding parties. This work was strenuous and involved hard work by all available men as the material excavated from the trenches had to be carted away some distance so that material to refill the trenches would not be available to the enemy. During this period the following trenches were opened on the roads in my area south of the Bandon River :-

Farranagour	20' X 10' X 6'
Knockroe	20' X 15' X 8'
Rock Castle	21' X 8' X 7'
do	21' X 8' X 6'
Ballinamona Road	21' X 10' X 7'
Dunderrow Road	25' X 10' X 6'
Bandon - Ballinadee	21' X 15' X 8'

Following the attack on Bandon on the night of 23rd/24th February, 1921, the Brigade Column, which had carried out the operation, retired into Innishannon area where they remained for some days. I was with the Column during the period and returned to my home area on the morning of 27th February, 1921, to ascertain whether there were any enemy activities in the district. I called to the home of Dick Russell (Battalion O/C., Signals, Bandon Battalion). I had only entered the house when Major Percival's Column surrounded the area and I was taken prisoner. I was taken to Bandon Military barracks and later to Military Detention Barracks, Cork. I was eventually transferred to Spike Island Internment Camp where I took part in a smash-up strike and a hunger-strike. Following these strikes, all internees in Spike were transferred to Maryborough gaol from which I was released on 8th December, 1921, following the signing of the Treaty on 6th December, 1921.

My rank at the Truce was O/C., Innishannon Company, Bandon Battalion, Cork III. Brigade. The strength of the Company was about seventy.

SIGNED: \_\_\_\_\_

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

WITNESS: \_\_\_\_\_

