

ORIGINAL



ROINN  COSANTA.

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 135

Witness

Tadhg O Cinneide.

Identity

Member of I.V. Tralee 1913-1916.

Subject

- (a) Foundation of I.V. in Tralee.
- (b) Easter Week 1916 - Tralee.
- (c) Casement

Conditions, if any, stipulated by Witness

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ORIGINAL

STATEMENT BY TADG Ó CINNEIDE.

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

BURÓ STÁIRE MILEATA 1913-21

NO. W.S. 135

I was Secretary of Craobh Scoithin Branch of the Gaelic League, Tralee, in 1913 and I remember that I received a circular letter from a Dublin address signed by Fred. J. Allen and another, asking that a meeting be called at Tralee for the purpose of the formation of a branch or unit of the Irish Volunteers. I presume the circular was addressed to the Secretary of the Gaelic League and not to me personally. I remember, after consultation with Austin Stack I brought the circular before a committee meeting of the Gaelic League and I there got authority to call a meeting of delegates from various clubs and societies in the town for the County Council meeting Chamber in the old County Hall, Tralee. This meeting was held sometime at the end of 1913, possibly in Novr. 1913, and the business transacted there was to make arrangements for the founding of the Volunteers in Kerry and to appoint a Secretary who would organise the formation of a volunteer corps on the same basis as they did in Dublin.

At the committee meeting of the Gaelic League a condition was laid down that I wasn't to become Secretary to the new organisation and remain Secretary of the Gaelic League, and it was pointed out that this was necessary so as to preserve the non-political nature of the Gaelic League.

I remember there was a discussion at the County Hall meeting when I made the announcement that I was debarred from acting as Secretary to the Volunteers and some hard things were said of the Gaelic League Committee, but eventually it was settled that Mr. Diarmuid Crean, now District Court Clerk at Tralee, and who was then a clerk in the Tralee Post Office, should be appointed Secretary and call another meeting at the rooms of the Irish Club at High Street, Tralee.

I remember that present at the County Hall meeting were the late Messrs. Maurice Moynihan, Thomas Slattery of Rock Street, William Myles, carpenter, of Moydowell, Joseph Melinn, then of

Slattery's Bacon shop, and many others whom I cannot recall. I don't remember who acted as Chairman, but most likely Maurice Moynihan did.

I attended the meeting held subsequently at the Irish Club where arrangements were definitely made to establish the Volunteers and acquire premises for drilling, etc. I remember a proposal made by one of the Slattery family of Messrs. J.M. Slattery & Sons, Ltd., Bacon Curers, that the British Military be asked for the use of the parade ground in Ballymullen Bks. for drilling purposes was turned down after discussion. The Skating Rink at Basin View was subsequently acquired as Headquarters and for drilling purposes, and I attended the drills there becoming a member of C/Company, Tralee Battalion. We were drilled then by British ex-soldiers and got some training in musketry, using miniature rifles. Drilling exercises were of course carried out with timber guns. I was elected some sort of Lieut. in C/Coy. and the Coy. O/C. was Charlie Daly (R.I.P.) of Nelson St. who became one of Redmond's volunteers at the split and subsequently joined the British Army.

C/Coy. Tralee Battn. was mostly composed of white collared workers, drapers and grocers' assistants and the like, employed in the large shops in the centre of the town. I attended the mobilisation at the Rink at which the split between the Irish and Redmondite Volunteers took place. Practically all the personnel of the companies, with the exception of C/Company, remained with the Irish Volunteers section. All C/Coy., with the exception of 4 or 5, joined the Redmondite party and established the National Volunteers, I think at Benners Garage in Edward Street. I remained with the Irish Volunteers, so did Eamon O'Connor of Ashe Street, and the late Paddy Quinlan of Bridge Street. C/Coy. was never reformed and it was a mystery to the Tans and British authorities who eventually came to the conclusion that it was a special unit "the murder gang". The fact is that it never existed subsequently. I transferred to

B/Coy., then under Dan Jeffers, as Coy. O/C. and I remained with B/Coy. until the late Austin Stack asked me to take up Intelligence in Sept. 1917 when he appointed me Brigade I.O. for all Kerry. There was then only one Brigade in Kerry and I think it was early in 1919 the three Brigades were formed and I became Brigade I.O. to Kerry I Brigade, a position I held till I was transferred by the D.I., the late Michael Collins, in Dec. 1921, to G.H.Q. Intelligence staff with my location at Tralee.

MY STORY OF 1916.

Kerry won the All-Ireland Football Final in Sept. 1915 and I travelled to Dublin on Saturday to see the match. On the Saturday Eamon O'Connor of Ashe St., Tralee, informed me that he, Tadhg Horgan, Painter, of Killarney, and myself were detailed by Mr. Austin Stack to transfer some rifles and boxes of .303 ammunition from Herbert Park (The O'Rahilly's?), Dublin, to Kingsbridge Stn. on Monday to the special train returning to Tralee. We stayed during the weekend at Wynn's Hotel and on Monday forenoon Mr. O'Connor informed me that there were three hackney sidecars waiting at the door of the hotel to take us to Herbert Park and I was to take one. Tadhg Horgan had been making merry over Kerry's win on Sunday and we decided that he was not in a fit condition to undertake his part of the job. We enlisted the services of Jack McGaley, now a Civil Servant, in the County Registrar's Office at Tralee, instead. As McGaley moved off with his car, Horgan insisted on climbing on to it and he had a green, white and gold flag which he stuck on the car. We proceeded by devious ways to Herbert Park and all three cars met at the rendezvous, I was left in charge of the cars whilst the other three went into the house for the goods. The first car was loaded up and Horgan, having by accident broken a glass door, was assigned the job of staying outside with the cars whilst I went into the house to assist in loading the other two cars. When we came out again Horgan had disappeared with the first car. We loaded up the other two cars and drove off, Eamon O'Connor

direct to Kingsbridge, whilst Jack McGaley and I called to Wynn's where we discovered Horgan's car. McGaley took over this car and we both arrived at Kingsbridge safely and the stuff was put on board the special train going to Tralee.

On arrival at Tralee the rifles were taken over by Volunteers who drilled on the platform and marched off with them. The ammunition was also removed to a safe place. I had nothing to do with them after having delivered them at Kingsbridge. I mention this operation as a preliminary to the story of my part in the 1916 period, as this was the ammunition which was delivered at the Rink, Tralee, on Wednesday of Holy Week under armed escort of which I was one.

On Wednesday of Holy Week 1916, I got instructions from Eamon O'Connor of Nelson Street, Tralee, to turn out fully armed and take up a position at Dr. O'Connell's corner leading from Nelson St. to Church St. to escort a cart transporting ammunition to the Rink, Tralee. I waited possibly for over half an hour before a cart emerged from a procession of people who were following a band escorting a lady supposed to be Countess Markievicz (but who was not in fact) to a meeting which was being held at Denny Street. There were a number of R.I.C. mingled with the crowd. I had my rifle inside my raincoat and resting on my right boot and in fact Constable Neazer stopped to talk to me and it was he who told me what the commotion was about. Needless to say he didn't spot the rifle. The pony cart was owned by Mr. J.P. O'Donnell of Bridge St. and was driven by Andrew Morley and with him was John Greany (R.I.P.), both employees of Mr. J.P. O'Donnell (R.I.P.). I took up my escort duty and went along Church St. Pie Lane and Market St. and along Bridge St., New Road, and to Island o' Geese where we were met by Austin Stack and a number of others. The cart went then by Strand St. and Basin View to the Rink where it was unloaded.

The Tralee Volunteer Battalion had been mobilised at the Rink and I took my place in B/Coy. Mr. Dan Healy^(R.I.P.) was Batt. O/C.

and with him was Austin Stack who was Brigade Comdt. for Kerry Bde. Dan Healy asked that any volunteer who had a bicycle should on the word of command take one pace forward. He and Stack came along and gave instructions to each Volunteer how to make his bicycle available for service, He instructed me to put my bicycle into the Hall of Dr. O'Connell's office where he worked and gave me the key for the purpose. He also took away my rifle and equipment and told me he would require my services for a special mission. He instructed me to go to Father Ayres, O.P. who would give me confession that night - it was then after 11 p.m., and to meet him at the Dingle Railway Station before the evening train left for Dingle on Thursday.

He handed me a letter for delivery at Dingle to Michael J. Moriarty of John St., Dingle, who was O/C. of the Volunteers in Dingle district. I went by that train (4.45 p.m. I think) on Holy Thursday and travelled in the Guard's van. The Permanent Way Inspector, Mr. John O'Donoghue (R.I.P.) of Dingle, drew my attention to what he described as a strange ship which was off the Maharees. I was not told by Stack that a ship was expected with arms, but I was conscious that the time for action had arrived. My instructions from Stack were to deliver the letter to Michael Moriarty and to return by road to Tralee with the Volunteers on Easter Sunday morning. He particularly emphasised that no diversion was to be caused in the plans, that no incidents were to take place, and explained that in the past plans had been upset by such incidents. He also warned me to carry out my instructions to the letter and especially to take no orders from anyone other than those issued by himself. I arrived at Dingle Station and noticed there a plain-clothes R.I.C. man named McNamara who walked behind myself and another chap from the station to the town. Needless to state I did not go direct to Michael J. Moriarty's house but went by the Railway tracks to the house of my grand-uncle Michael T. Moriarty of Strand St. where I spent a good deal of my boyhood days. It was not unusual for me at that time to visit my uncles and stay there, and it was like home to me.

After tea my cousin, Johnathan Moriarty and I went to Tom McDonnell's at Green St. and whilst there I noticed McNamara (R.I.C.) had taken up a position across the street. I had noticed that he was opposite Moriarty's at Strand St when we left there. We left McDonnell's and went to a butcher's shop in Main St. owned by another cousin, Tom Moriarty (Fountain) and I noticed that McNamara shortly came along and sat on a window sill opposite Moriarty's house. I came to the conclusion then that he was following me and I waited until it became dark when I slipped out through a wicket gate in an archway and crept down the street to the house of my aunt, Mrs. Ellen Bowler of Main St. From there I sent her son, Michael Bowler (now in U.S.A.) for Michael J. Moriarty to whom I delivered the letter I got from Stack. I know nothing of the contents of the letter but Mick Moriarty told me that the Dingle contingent would march by Connor Hill to Camp where they would join up with the Lispole and Annascaul contingent. I went by the evening train to Annascaul and saw the Coy. O/C. Tom Walsh, and arranged that we would leave Annascaul at midnight on Easter Saturday night.

We left at 12 midnight sharp and arrived at Camp Junction where we were joined subsequently by the Volunteers from Dingle and the Gaeltacht districts. The whole contingent then proceeded towards Tralee but were met on the way at Curraheen or Derrymore by a boy named Switzer with a despatch ordering them to return to Dingle and cancelling the mobilisation. After some consultation Mick Moriarty, who was in charge, decided to complete the journey to Tralee which we did, arriving at the Rink about 7 a.m.

I asked for Paddy Cahill, who was Brigade Adjt. and was informed he was at Mass. I reported then to Joe Melinn who was Vice-Comdt. and asked who was the strange man pacing up and down the Rink. He said he was a man named Walsh who was sent from Dublin to take charge after Stack's arrest. I waited until Paddy Cahill came back from Mass and he upbraided me for not returning by train

on Good Friday instead of by road on Sunday. I explained that I carried out Stack's orders to the letter and he accepted my explanation and said I was perfectly right. He then introduced me to the strange man who was Monteith whom I had met at Limerick on a previous occasion when I went there with Austin Stack. Monteith told me they had come to stop the rising and discouraged the idea of attempting anything in Kerry, having regard to the arms and equipment he was informed they had.

Some meeting was held at the Rink and it was decided to send home the Volunteers from the Dingle peninsula by a special train which was leaving Tralee for Dingle Pig Fair at 7 a.m. on Monday morning. Paddy Cahill consulted me before the meeting and I agreed that under the circumstances it was the right thing to do. I was at that time in no position of command and was simply the confidential and trusted messenger of the Commandant, Austin Stack.

Meanwhile on Easter Sunday Paddy Cahill ordered me to return to the Rink after attending 12 o'clock Mass and having my breakfast. This I did and at dusk in the evening I was sent with Jack Collins (R.I.P.) of Currans, then employed at Latchfords, on bicycles out to the Mile Height on the Tralee-Killarney Road to see if the Volunteers there were in position. On returning back we passed the Ballymacelligott Coy. escorting Monteith out of Tralee and at Tralee Workhouse we ran into the Dingle Volunteers at the double as a rumour had reached the Rink that the Ballymacelligott Coy. with Monteith had been attacked by the British Forces. We reassured them that there was no foundation for the rumour and they returned to the Rink with us. It had rained very heavily whilst we were out on duty and we were wet through and through and Paddy Cahill very considerately told Collins and myself that he had no further use for our services that night. We slept together at my digs in Nelson St. and went to work as usual on Monday morning.

During the course of the day on Monday Mr. Singleton Goodwin, County Surveyor, called to my office to inform me that I was to be arrested but that Mr. Robert Fitzgerald and himself were calling on the Colonel at Ballymullen Barracks to get my arrest cancelled. Subsequently, Mr. Fitzgerald called to say he had succeeded in stopping the arrests of Jack Collins (of Latchfords), Paddy Quinlan of Ballyard and myself. With a number of others who escaped arrest we reorganised the Tralee Battalion and when the internees were released in September 1917, they found that the Battalion was going strong and was much stronger in numbers than it had been in 1916. It was at this time that Austin Stack asked me to leave the Volunteer Company and take up Brigade Intelligence. There was no G.H.Q. that I knew, but I attended the meetings of the Brigade Council which at that time included all Kerry.

Loag O'Rourke

*Attn. Honorary Secy,
 Tralee Co. Kerry.
 5-7-1948*

CASEMENT'S MESSAGE.

When I reached the Rink at Tralee on Easter Sunday morning I learnt of the landing of Casement and his companions, Monteith and Beverley, at Carrahan Strand near Ardfert in a collapsible boat. I had only a hazy knowledge of Casement and of his connection with the Volunteers. I think the only recollection I had of him was the incident at Cork when at a meeting he called for three cheers for Carson and he very nearly got killed by the crowd. I did not identify him with occupying a leading position in the Volunteer or Republican movements. Very few of us regarded him as a leader and a big man in the fight for independence, as indeed he was. I did not ask Monteith, nor indeed Paddy Cahill, about Casement and I was not very much interested in his arrival in this country. I even went to Ardfert Police Barracks to see the collapsible boat and I succeeded in getting into the Barracks to see the boat through the good offices of Mrs. Aherne, the Sergeant's wife, whose maiden name was Kennedy. I got the tip that she had a weakness for the name and I used the circumstance to wangle my way in where others, loyalists of the first water, were refused admittance, which I understood could only be given on a written order from the District Inspector of the R.I.C. Tralee. I went to work as usual on Easter Monday and, in the course of the day, Mr. P.M. Quinlan (R.I.P.), Secretary of the County Council, who was my superior officer, called me on the house 'phone and said he wanted me in his office. I called and with him was Rev. Father Francis Ryan of the Dominican Priory, Tralee. Father Ryan asked if I could tell him the name of the responsible Volunteer Officer to whom he could deliver a message he got from Sir Roger Casement before he was taken away. I suggested he should go and see Paddy Cahill, the Brigade Adjutant, who was Secretary to the firm of Messrs. Donovan & Sons, Ltd., Merchants, and Millers, &c., The Square, Tralee, and with whom he was formerly at school in Blackrock College. He came back to me after some time and said that Paddy refused to discuss the

matter with him unless I were present also. I then went with Father Ryan to Paddy's office and he (Fr. Ryan) then said that Casement wanted a message sent to Dublin Headquarters of the Volunteers to the effect that he advised that the Rising should be cancelled, that the guns sent by Germany were old Russian rifles and, as well as I remember, that no officers were sent by Germany to advise on military tactics. The message was on the same lines as the advice given by Monteith. I know that the message was sent to Dublin and could possibly supply the names of the two volunteers sent. I think ^{Jimmy} ~~Jeremy~~ Wall of Tralee was one and I could find out if I were at home.

Father Ryan was reputed to be a strong supporter of Mr. John Redmond and hence Paddy Cahill's reluctance to discuss Casement's message with him. Casement had asked the R.I.C. at Tralee Barracks to bring him a Dominican priest and it was Father Ryan who came to him. He gave Father Ryan a pencil as a memento of his visit and Father Ryan was very anxious to deliver his message and to the proper person. I don't know whether Father Ryan is still alive or not.

Laog Sturmeade

5.7.1948.

*Apals Memorial Hall,
Tralee, Co. Kerry.*

