

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
BURO STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21
No. W.S. 186

ROINN  COSANTA.

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 186.....

Witness

Thomas J. Doyle, 4 Sion Hill Avenue,
Casimir Road, Lr. Kimmage Road, Dublin.

Identity

Member of I.V. 4th Battalion, 1914-1916.

Subject

- (a) I.V. activities Dublin 1913-1916.
- (b) The Rising 1916 4th Battalion Area.

Conditions, if any, stipulated by Witness

Nil.

File No.S. 956.....

Form B.S.M. 2.

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
BURO STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21
No. W.S. 186

STATEMENT BY THOMAS DOYLE

4 Sion Hill Avenue, Casimir Road,

Lower Kimmage Road, Dublin.

I joined the Volunteers before Christmas, 1913. I was influenced to join by my good Irish home atmosphere. My father was associated with the Invincibles, and my uncle was one of the Land Leaguers in County Wexford. He was an evicted tenant from a small holding, and his case was tried in the Dublin courts as a test case. He fought the case to the end, but lost it.

I joined the 1st Battalion of the Volunteers at 41 Parnell Square. M.J. Judge was the Company officer. I do not remember any of the other members of that Battalion, as, with a change of residence I transferred over to "F" Company of the 4th Battalion shortly afterwards.

There were about 800 in "F" Company of the 4th Battalion early in 1914, and we were instructed by Reservists of the British Army, instructed in drill and route marching. We used to march out from the Workmen's Club in Inchicore, which was Company Headquarters, to the Magazine and to different places in the Phoenix Park for route marches, but it was mostly ordinary drilling and manoeuvres. There was a plot of ground at the back of the Workmen's Club where we did our drilling.

At the outbreak of the world war our drill instructor Reservists were called to the colours, and then the split came along and there was a noticeable falling off both in the efficiency and in the numbers of the Volunteers.

Immediately after the outbreak of the world war I transferred to "D" Company of the 4th Battalion, whose

headquarters were at Larkfield, Kimmage. After going to Kimmage I met Eamonn Ceannt for the first time. Ceannt was O.C. of "A" Company first, and then he became Battalion Commandant; Cathal Brugha was Vice Commandant, and Seamus Murphy was Adjutant.

In Kimmage we were drilling, and had musketry instructions, and inter-Company and inter-Battalion manoeuvres night and day. We had several sham battles, and we had one notable sham battle between the 4th and the 3rd Battalions. That was the first time I saw de Valera on manoeuvres, and Liam Cosgrave was there that night too and lost his cap in one of the quarries. He was one of the first men to get a uniform, of which he was very proud.

I got a membership card in Kimmage. We took an oath later on, but I am not sure whether we took an oath in Kimmage or not, I have no recollection of it. I subscribed to the arms fund. Threepence a week was our subscription, apart from the arms fund, and then we paid something else for arms.

We continued drilling and training. Most people suspected that something was bound to come off. There had been several alarms and rumours of arrests, some men were arrested, and everyone was all the time on the qui vive.

I did not take part in the Howth gun-running, because my people were down the country then and I happened to be down with them at that particular time. I bought a Howth rifle myself from a chap called Delaney in Donnybrook, and that was the gun I took out in the Rising afterwards. I had kept the gun in my own house and I had ammunition for it.

I remember Eamonn Ceannt taking us out to Old Bawn and giving us a spiff. People say that there was no concerted plan of action as far as the 4th Battalion was concerned

but I remember that the buildings which were afterwards occupied in Easter Week were mentioned either during that "spiff" or else in Larkfield. I remember clearly that somebody said "What about Guinness's Brewery?", which was in the 4th Battalion area. Eamonn Ceannt said there were two reasons against taking Guinness's brewery, one was the vastness of the place, it would be nearly impossible to garrison it, and the other reason was that there was no food in it. I can always remember that the late Hugh Byrne said to the group around, "Is the man mad? The most magnificent food in Ireland is in Guinness's". I know that most of the buildings which were occupied in Easter Week were mentioned. There was general talk about the whole city, about the Four Courts, Trinity College and other buildings.

I do not know whether it was on that occasion or later on that Father Eugene Nevin, from Mount Argus, happened to be present. He was not a Volunteer, he was the son of a relation of some of the leaders of a former movement. I remember hearing that some relation of his had been executed in '98. Father Nevin used to say, "Peace hath its victories no less renowned than war", but at the same time he seemed to have no doubt in his mind that there was going to be a Rising. Some men used to say that it was only nonsense to be talking about peace, but I happened to mobilise some of these same men in 1916 and they did not turn out.

Eamonn Ceannt used to have accommodation addresses then. Apparently even in the early stages he came to the conclusion that the police, through the post office authorities, were taking an interest in the leaders' correspondence, and any letters relating to Volunteer matters did not come direct to Eamonn Ceannt, but came under cover to other men in the Battalion. As a matter of fact I got some of his letters, and I would take them up to his house when they came to me. I

I would open the envelope addressed to me and I would find another envelope addressed to Ceannt. I think he lived in No. 9 Dolphin Terrace at the time. Liam Ó Broin, our Lieutenant who organised our end of it, knew Eamonn Ceannt very well, because he worked in the Corporation. Liam was in the Architects section and I think Eamonn was in the Rates section. Liam was more closely in touch with Eamonn than the ordinary Volunteer, and he was there to hand if Eamonn wanted him to do anything. There was a personal friendship between them, apart from Volunteer activities. Liam is dead, as well as his brother Peadar. There is one brother still in the waterworks department.

On Holy Thursday, 1916, the mobilisation orders went out. The officers were French-Mullen, Captain, Willie Pearse was 2nd Lieutenant, Ted Kelly was 1st Lieutenant, and Liam Ó Broin. Willie Pearse went on to Headquarters staff for the Rising, Ted Kelly was sent to the country as an organiser, and Liam Ó Broin came in as 1st Lieutenant. Liam got an officer's uniform, and I bought his uniform from him. Joe McGrath was promoted, by election at that time. Joe McGrath became Lieutenant just prior to the Rising, and he was Lieutenant in "D" Company for the Rising. I was a Squad Leader, and I was promoted Sergeant prior to 1916.

There was an emergency mobilisation order issued first, and I got a group of about ten or twelve men under the emergency mobilisation order. On Easter Monday morning I got a printed mobilisation form. Thomas MacDonagh was one of the names on the form, and I think there were some of our own Battalion names on it as well.

I proceeded to get myself into my uniform, of which I was very proud, put on all my gears, and with the Howth rifle across my back I proceeded to mobilise the squad. Some of my

men were in Blackpitts - one of them was killed afterwards - and more of them were around the lower end of Harolds Cross.

When I had everything done I came back along the Canal to Emerald Square, where we were to mobilise, but when I arrived at the Square the Battalion had moved off. None of my men had arrived with me at Emerald Square, I just left the orders at their homes and did not wait, because I thought that something was coming off and decided that this was it. On account of the huge parade that had taken place, there were women and children still knocking around Emerald Square, and they told me that the men had gone in different directions. I asked them if anyone had been left around the vicinity and they told me that some of the men were over in Moggy Keogh's yard, directly across Cork Street from Emerald Square. I went over and got into Keogh's yard, where I found Joe McGrath with some men, mostly "F" Company men, and a handcart with munitions on it.

I was talking to Joe McGrath, who told me that he wanted a dispatch taken to Eamonn Ceannt in the South Dublin Union. He selected Joe Gorman, an "F" Company man who is since dead, and myself to take this dispatch up to Eamonn Ceannt. Joe Gorman was a Poor Law Guardian, a fitter in the Dublin Corporation. I had a bicycle and so had Joe Gorman. Joe McGrath said to leave the Howth rifle with them, which I did, and got a revolver from him instead.

Joe Gorman and I went along to the back/^{Rialto}gate of the Union, the main gate into Kevin's Hospital. At that time it was a wooden gate and we could not see what was inside. It was getting late in the day, and we were getting no response from inside, until somebody opened the gate to let out a farm cart and we went in. But for that we would not have got in, because as we were kicking at the gate, the British were moving up Brookfield Road and we got in just before they arrived.

When we got inside we saw that "B" Company of the 4th Battalion were putting up mock barriers with mattresses and other things so that the Volunteers would not be visible. There was a row of small buildings along the inside of the wall. We recognised our own fellows inside and we enquired where Eamonn Ceannt could be found. We were directed to a building in the grounds, which was his headquarters. It was an isolated building at that time. It was a small, one-storey building, and Ceannt had his office there, but I believe that afterwards, during the week, he moved over to just inside the gate, where the Boardroom is now, I think.

They had a flag on the building, and a sentry, Jack Doherty, complete with rifle and bayonet, marching up and down outside. The flag was a tricolour about 4' x 2'. The stripes ran vertically, as our present flag.

We went and presented our dispatch to Eamonn Ceannt, who was in great form, but when he went to write the reply for us to take back he was so excited he could not write. It was Peadar Doyle who wrote the reply. Peadar was there in the building with Eamonn, as his Secretary or Aide-de-Camp. I do not know the contents of the dispatch I delivered to Ceannt, nor do I know the text of the reply. It was Gorman who actually carried it.

One of the interesting things that Ceannt said was that we had the Papal Benediction, that we had the Pope's Blessing. He also said that they expected the whole country to be out under arms shortly. It is definite that he said that, although we were not very long with him because we had to get back. We were only to bring the dispatch there and bring back an answer. As a matter of fact it was not back to Cork Street we went with the answer.

Before we left the Union, we met Cathal Brugha, and he wanted a man buried. There had been a man shot already, and I suppose Cathal Brugha thought we looked like two good undertakers, but we told him we were on other business and he

got somebody else to carry out the job.

In the Union at that time ffrench-Mullen had a group digging trenches out in the open - Sean McGlynn, Tommy Boylan and George Irvine who was O.C. of "B" Company at that time, and he was in charge, apparently, of that area of the Union. It was he and the other men under him who were barricading the place. "D" Company was my old Company under ffrench-Mullen, and they were more or less in the open digging trenches. "C" Company were down at the far wall, facing Rowe's Distillery that is where Dan McCarthy was wounded.

Our trouble then was to get out. The military were coming up Brookfield Road and converging from the canal side. They were converging on the Rialto entrance gate of the Union so we could not get out that way. We made then for the James's Gate side. We had to get out with the reply and we still had our bicycles. I do not know who let us out, but we got out not through the main gate but lower down.

The military were also in James's Street. They came up Steevens's Lane and occupied around the Fountain. We kept in on the inner circle, around Basin Lane, and passed down Forbes' Lane beside Marrowbone Lane. Our fellows were so well barricaded in Marrowbone Lane that we came in contact with none of them, but we were making for Watkin's Brewery, where Con Colbert was in occupation.

We knocked at the gate of Watkin's Brewery, and got no reply. Then we tried the manager's house, beside it. A lady opened the door, and when she saw us she said, "If I had known it was you blackguards I wouldn't have opened the door". She was the manager's wife. We told her that as she had opened the door she could let us in, and we got through the house and into the brewery, where we delivered our dispatch to

Con Colbert.

Nothing happened then until Wednesday morning, when we evacuated Watkin's Brewery. Con Colbert in the meantime got in contact with Tomás MacDonagh in Jacob's and it was decided to evacuate Watkin's Brewery and to proceed to Marrowbone Lane. That was done in the early hours of Wednesday morning.

There was a small garrison in Barmac's Brewery as well, but I do not think they were 4th Battalion men. I think we tried to get in touch with them from Watkin's Brewery.

We marched out with fixed bayonets from Watkin's Brewery to go to Marrowbone Lane on Wednesday morning, and joined the garrison in Marrowbone Lane. Actually Seamus Murphy, as Adjutant of the 4th Battalion, was in charge there, but Joe McGrath had more to do with the defence of the place. I think Joe McGrath had only just moved in. I left Joe McGrath on the Monday evening to deliver his dispatch, and I did not see him again until I met him in Marrowbone Lane on Wednesday.

I was not long in Marrowbone Lane when Joe selected myself and another man to search the manager's house. Apparently it had not been searched up to that, although the manager's son, who was a Sergeant in the British Army, was held prisoner by our men in the house. He had been in the house when it was occupied, and he was more or less under detention. The manager's house is the big house that fronts Marrowbone Lane. The only thing we found during our search of the house was one small Union Jack, which I wanted to remove but Joe McGrath would not let me do so.

We proceeded then to search the side buildings in Marrowbone Lane, and to arrange for outposts with hand grenades in case the British military came up Marrowbone Lane and burst in any of the side gates. We had people posted along, with strict orders to keep silent so that the military

would not know that there was a trap set for them. That was on Wednesday.

On the Thursday I got promotion with a Lee Enfield rifle, and was put on sniping duty in 'Forbes' Lane, looking down Pim Street. In the meantime the British occupied Guinness's and were trying to erect barricades at the lower end looking across the canal - Echlin Street. I had a sand-bag post at the main windows to prevent the British from getting the barricades erected. We kept them from getting them up during daylight, but they got them erected at night, and then they proceeded to snipe our windows.

There was a good deal of shooting done from Marrowbone Lane to the canal bank. There was a group of our men posted along to cover the back. One soldier was killed in Marrowbone Lane, one of our men shot him. There was only one casualty on our side. Joe Gorman was shot by another Volunteer, he was shot accidentally as we were surrendering.

We were very active for the whole week. I never slept one single hour of that whole week. Once the first two days passed I never thought of sleep, just lived without sleep and never thought of it. We were active all the time in Marrowbone Lane. We just withdrew from the posts for food. There was very little food there, and part of the time they were trying to prevent the men from using the roasted malt that was there. A couple of cattle, which were passing by, were captured. Bob Holland killed the cattle. We captured a breadvan as well, and that relieved the situation for the time being. Some stuff did come in, I think the Cosgraves got it in, but food was a big problem for a while.

We could see that the city was on fire, and there were lots of rumours. We got word to Cease Fire. That was the

first intimation we got. That is very clear in my mind because I got into a row then. I was looking down Pim Street and saw an old fellow going around all the time. I thought he was taking too much interest in our place, so I waited until I got him sitting under the lamp at the bridge and I put a bullet through the lamp and brought the glass down on top of him. Immediately there was a terrible outcry, and somebody rushed up to see who had fired after the Cease Fire order had been given. That was the last shot except for the shot that wounded the fellow in Marrowbone Lane.

Eamonn Ceannt marched down with all his men to Marrowbone Lane, I think on Sunday. As far as I remember only General Lowe was with him. In the meantime several priests had been with us in Marrowbone Lane. Father Eugene Nevin had heard all our Confessions in Marrowbone Lane on Wednesday, and prior to that Father Barry from Dolphins Barn had come down to ask Con Colbert to come and surrender to the British authorities. Con was on the small side, and he looked up and said to Father Barry, "What about asking them to come down here and surrender to us"? Father Barry had been in early on Wednesday, and Father Eugene Nevin came along later and heard every man's Confession.

After Eamonn Ceannt marched down with his men and General Lowe, we were paraded, joined in with them, and the whole group - not the whole Battalion because some of them were in other posts - marched down to Bride Road. All our men did not come; Joe McGrath did not surrender, he went out through the back gate, Paddy McGrath went out through the back gate too, and there may have been others. The rest of us obeyed the orders we got. I still had the Howth bayonet, although I had not the rifle.

At Bride Road they had a cordon of military right around

both sides, and the two ends were cordoned off. There was no sign of a British soldier on the streets until we arrived at Bride Road. Eamonn Ceannt and General Lowe marched at the head of the men. Eamonn looked great; he had his shirt thrown open, his tunic thrown open and was swinging along at the head of his men. He looked a real soldier.

Cathal Brugha had been taken to hospital wounded, and so had French-Mullen, the Company O.C.

There was an opening left on the Patrick Street side of Bride Road. We marched in through the opening and then it was sealed off. We were drawn up in line along Bride Road. At the command every man left down his gun and the British crowd came along and collected all the arms. One officer, I remember, collared my Howth bayonet as a souvenir.

As we were surrendering there was firing and sniping still going on. There was a sniper somewhere along Old Bride Street, he was sniping from a chimney in Bride Street.

We marched from there up to Richmond barracks. The British were very nasty. Where a head was to be seen in a window they ordered the person in. I think they were very nervous.

When we got to Richmond barracks, we were put into big rooms, like dormitories, a big crowd of us together. I think we were provided with cocoa or something. That was on Sunday night.

I think it was on Monday that we were paraded in the gymnasium for an identification parade. A group of British officers came along with two "G" men, Johnny Barton and Hoey. These two men belonged to "G" Branch of the police. This group of men walked along in front of us and pointed out

certain people who were paraded and taken off for trial. I think Eamonn Ceannt was picked out in that identification parade. Patrick Pearse was never with the men from the time they surrendered.

I was crossing the yard, I remember, in Richmond barracks and I met Patrick Pearse under an escort of four British soldiers. He might have been going for trial. That was the only time I saw him. He was isolated from the very beginning and was not allowed to mix with the other men.

While we were in Richmond barracks, Father Augustine came to see us and he was talking in Irish to some of the fellows.

On Tuesday evening we were marched from Richmond barracks out through the grounds of the Old Men's Home, through the gate at Kilmainham and out the gate at the other end of St. John's Rd. past Kingsbridge Station and down the Quays to the boat. We got plenty threats about what was going to happen to us. There was one man, Hoey, at the crossing at Kilmainham, and his language was something barbarous.

I was deported to Knutsford. Knutsford was tough when we went there first. It was a modern brick English jail in the nicest village in the world. It had been a criminal settlement which had been turned into a military detention barracks for deserters and people who had committed military offences either in France or in England, and it was completely in charge of the military.

The Non-Commissioned Officers in charge of Knutsford had been invalided from France, either through being gassed or wounded, and the biggest blackguard in it was a fellow who had lost an eye. I was in "E" Wing, and the fellow in charge of that wing was an Englishman named Frazer, he was not a bad fellow, all he wanted was to make some money out of

it, even the papers coming in he would take them to the village to sell them, but he would do anything in the way of getting food for the lads. There was a Corporal in the same Wing. He was from Dublin and he was the greatest bully I ever met. Even so, our wing was the best of the lot. The men in some of the other wings got terrible treatment.

We were in solitary confinement for about three weeks after we went there first, marching three paces apart. After that we were allowed to mingle in the yard, and it was only then that we discovered that there had been executions. The first day that we were let out in the yard, Alfie Byrne arrived and brought some newspapers. The news of the executions spread and it was an awful blow. The fellows had been cheerful up to they heard the news, they never expected anything like that.

Prior to getting the bad news there was a very amusing thing in "E" Wing. A man named Abbott, from Dublin, was the Sergeant Major in charge of the place, and there was a Corporal Marshall there too. This was more or less a military detention camp and some of the prisoners were still subject to military discipline. They used to do their shooting exercises every morning - whether it was the guards or the prisoners were doing the shooting exercises I am not sure. When they would be shouting for Corporal Marshall, our fellows used to think it was "court-martial" they were shouting instead of "Corporal Marshall".

We were sent then to Frongoch, to the South Camp which was an old distillery. There we met men from other prisons. We met Ginger O'Connell, Joe O'Connor of the 3rd Battalion, Pádraig Ó Maille and Mick Collins were in the South Camp.

I was released in August 1916. I think we were released

because we were only an embarrassment to them. There was some talk that they were going to deport us to some island or another, but then they came to the conclusion that we were only a nuisance and they issued forms in Knutsford. We were to state on these big forms that we did not know that there was a Rising coming off, and that we did not know anything about it. Some people had been deported who did not have any connection with the Rising at all. For instance, when we were marching down from Marrowbone Lane to Bride Road, a fellow joined us who was fairly drunk. He staggered in amongst us as we marched along and arrived at Bride Road with us. Nobody bothered about him, but when he attempted to get out of Bride Road he was not allowed out. By the time we arrived at Richmond barracks he had sobered up and stated that he was a van driver for Easons. He said he was of the other way of thinking, but that when he saw the lads marching he joined in with them not knowing what they were. He tried to get out, and tried to get Easons on the job, but could not manage it. He kicked up such a row that the sentry at the door of Richmond barracks went for the Sergeant. The Sergeant came along and said, "What's the row?". The fellow said, "I have no connection with these men. I was only marching with them after having a few drinks and I didn't know what it was all about". The Sergeant said to him "You are not a soldier, so you must be a Sinn Féiner. You have got to be either a soldier or a Sinn Féiner. He was landed in Knutsford along with the rest of us.

The British were trying to have the leaders of the Rising repudiated, by getting the men to fill in these forms saying that they were led into it and did not know that there was to be a Rebellion. There was no use in men like me filling in those forms, even if I wanted to sign it, because I was wearing uniform. The fellows who filled in the forms

because they wanted to get home to organise things again did not get out.

The Sankey Moore-Pim Commission was then set up. We went to Wormwood Scrubs in batches of twenty at a time. The Commission sat at one end of a room, and we entered like mice. A solicitor named McDonnell was there on behalf of the prisoners. I do not know who paid this man, maybe the Prisoners Dependents Fund paid him. One of the Commission said to me, "You were mixed up in this Rising". I said, "I was". One of them then said, I think it was Sankey, "You carried a gun". Apparently they took note of the men who had surrendered with guns. I said I did surrender with a gun. They asked a lot of questions. They said there were a lot of fellows from Jacobs and that every man spent all his time sweeping out the place.

We went back from Wormwood Scrubs. They tried to bring us under criminal conditions, three paces apart. We smashed the discipline in the Scrubs while there. Wormwood Scrubs was a cold, wet place, the walls exuded water all the time. Knutsford was a pleasure ground compared with it. Out in the grounds you would meet three or four fellows pulling hand-carts. The warders knew them all by their stripes, different markings on their garments to denote their sentences. There were life sentence fellows there, murderers and all sorts of criminals, who were known by their colourings. We were only there for two or three days.

We were returned to Frongoch and were released from there.

We returned home in August, 1916, and immediately

linked up again and started re-organising. I was in the position that there was no trouble about starting again because Joe McGrath had not surrendered. I was only home three or four days when we had a meeting in Weavers Hall in Donore Avenue, and re-elected officers to carry on again.

SIGNED

Thomas J. Doyle

DATE

2nd February, 1949.

WITNESS

Peter J. Mahonally Captain

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

BURO STAIRE MILEATA 1913-21

NO. W.S. 186