

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

BURO STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21

No. W.S. 255

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS

DOCUMENT NO. W.S.255.....

Witness

Mr. Thomas Smart,
47 Harold's Cross Road,
Dublin.

Identity

Member of 'C' Coy. 1st Battn.
Dublin Brigade 1915-16.

Subject

- (a) National Activities 1915-16.
- (b) On duty at Four Courts during Rising
Easter Week 1916.

Conditions, if any, stipulated by Witness

Nil

File No. S.1350.....

Form B.S.M. 2.

ORIGINAL

STATEMENT OF Mr. THOMAS SMART,47, Harolds Cross Road, Dublin."C" Company, 1st Battalion,
1916.

I joined the Irish Volunteers about March 1915. I was about 16 years of age at the time. I was employed in Becker Brothers, Tea Merchants, Dublin, and was attached to "C" Company which drilled at 41 Parnell Square, Forrester's Hall. Captain Judge was O.C. of the Company at that time. The other officers of the Company were :- Lieutenant Joe Magennis, Lieutenant ^{Tom} Sean Dolan, Lieutenant ^{Tom} Allen, Lieutenant Denny Begley. Later Frank Fahy became O.C. of the Company and remained O.C. until after 1916. Lieutenant Sean Dolan died before 1916.

After the "split" the majority of the Company stayed with the Irish Volunteers. We drilled in the hall and had firing practice at Croydon Park on Saturdays with .22 ammunition. I remember being on Battalion Manoeuvres in the Finglas and Swords areas and also in the Rathfarnham area. I played Gaelic Football with Laurence O'Tooles'.

Beyond strong rumours of something going to happen I knew nothing definite about Easter Week.

About the Saturday before Palm Sunday I got instructions from the Company mobiliser to have my section mobilised on Easter Sunday at 12 o'clock at 41, Parnell Square.

On Sunday morning I visited J.J. Walsh's place at Blessington Street and I was informed by him that all mobilisation was off.

On Monday morning I was again in J.J. Walsh's shop about 10.30. He asked me was I not going out. I said "Where?" and he said "Did you not get any further orders!" I succeeded in mobilising four out of my section and proceeded towards Blackhall Street when I met Commandant Daly marching up North Brunswick Street. On his instructions I proceeded to the Headquarters of my Company at the Four Courts.

When I arrived at the Four Courts I found about 30 men under the command of Captain Frank Fahy lined up at Hammond Lane and facing the Four Courts. He then gave us our instructions to take the Four Courts. We went immediately around to the gate in Chancery Street but did not succeed in forcing it. We then went around to Chancery Place. There was a policeman inside the gate. We asked him to open the gate and he refused. We asked him to hand out the keys and he also refused. I threatened him with a revolver and he then handed out the key. We entered and made him a prisoner. We searched the place to see if anyone was in it and we collected any police that were there and put them into the central hall. We went up to the second floor on the south-east corner of the Four Courts and we barricaded the windows on the second floor with books and tables. Having spent about a half hour at this work I came down accompanied by about five men to the telegraph office outside the gate in Chancery Place. We erected a barricade inside the iron gate. We were not long there when we got word from those we had left that there were soldiers approaching along Ormond Quay. We opened up the side gate at Chancery Place and the six of us went up to the corner of Ormond Quay and Chancery Place. We allowed them to pass within

50 yards of us. There were two horse-drawn lorries in it with a heavy escort of Lancers on each side. We opened fire first. At the first shot the Lancers got orders to charge and they made a cavalry charge. Some fell off the horses and more fell wounded. Those who remained turned into Charles Street with the two lorry loads of ammunition. We captured three of the Lancers at the corner and took them back into the Four Courts. It was discovered that our post would have been of little use so we were removed to a point overlooking Hammond Lane on the third storey and there I barricaded a window assisted by Lieutenant Tommy Allen and another man whose name I cannot recollect. The barricade was practically completed in that room when a burst of machine-gun fire came from some where in Smithfield and Tommy Allen fell. He died about four hours later. As the post was too exposed we were withdrawn from it as soon as Lieutenant Allen was taken away. I think it was Father Augustine who came in to attend Lieutenant Allen and he had to crawl in and when going he had also to crawl.

After that we were withdrawn to a post at the ^{eastern} corner of Church Street and the ^{Hand's Shop.} Quays. Some time in the middle of the day a Company from Chapelizod came in and they were posted in the same place with us. While we were at that post a car came along which we called on to halt. The chauffeur refused to do so and was fired on. The chauffeur was wounded in the hand and the car stopped. In addition to the chauffeur there were two officers in the car. A group of us approached the car and took the chauffeur and the two officers prisoners. One of these officers was Lord Dunsany. They were taken into the Four Courts. We had a barricade right across the bottom of Church Street and the following day, Tuesday, we put

up another one from the ^{western} corner of Church Street to the Quays. There was some sniping going on at this post during the day and we could not locate the source from which it came. We relieved each other at the barricades and rested over Hand's shop. During Monday night we left about six men on the barricade at the bottom of Church Street.

An incident occurred but I do not know whether it took place on Monday or Tuesday, that is the burning of a public house at the corner of Bridgefoot Street on the Quays. I was one of those ^{with Lieut. Pender Clancy and the "Rebel" Doyle} who threw in home-made hand grenades, etc. There was a clothing factory next door. We had observed civilians passing in with parcels. We held a conference at which we arrived at the conclusion that the "civilians" were military dressed up as civilians, hence it was decided to blow up the publichouse in order to get rid of them. We set fire to it. The Fire Brigade came along eventually but at that stage it was practically burned out.

After Tom Allen had been taken away we were badly in need of stretchers and it was decided to make home-made ones with poles and bits of straps. When Mick Lennon had completed one stretcher he decided he would go out and relieve some member at the barricade and he was only a short time out when he was wounded in ^{the} abdomen and was taken away on his own stretcher. That was on Tuesday. The next person who was wounded the same day at the same barricade was Joe Brabazon. We were trying to find out where that sniping was coming from as apparently it was when the Volunteers were lying on their sides they got hit. It took us about two days to locate the sniper. He was at the corner of Cook Street and Bridgefoot Street. He was
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firing down Bridgefoot Street and at our barricade. He would just get his head around the corner and let go and when we did finally sight him we waited for hours and hours until we got sufficient of him in view when we put him out of action. I do not know whether he was wounded or killed. I remained in that post until Friday when some of us were transferred to reinforce Sergeant Mark Wilson in the Bridewell. I was with that crowd.

About Wednesday, I think, there was a heavy gun which the British Military at first tried to place at the corner of Exchange Street and Wood Quay but this was found impossible owing to ^{our} ~~the~~ concentrated fire. Then they got the gun into position at the corner of Parliament Street and the Quays at the present Lever Brothers and what was then Port Sunlight. They were some considerable time trying to get it into position there. Eventually they succeeded and opened up fire on the Four Courts. They hit the south-west corner with a couple of shells which wrecked the room and the outpost had to be evacuated. They only shelled it for one day using only three shells. For some unknown reason they stopped shelling the Four Courts that week.

On Thursday night at a late hour a Volunteer was called on to carry a dispatch to Commandant Edward Daly to the Father Matthew Hall, Church Street, which was his Headquarters. I volunteered to carry the dispatch and I was given a password which would enable me to pass through two of our own barricades; one was at the junction of Mary's Lane in Church Street; the other was at Church Street Roman Catholic Church. When I got to the first barricade I was called on to halt and gave the wrong password. The sentry on the barricade having approached me and taken charge of me certified me as alright, I was given another password but when I got to the next barricade the same thing happened -

I gave the wrong password. The sentry again placed me under arrest until I was again identified. It was discovered at the second barricade that the password which I had used at the first barricade was that which I should have used at the second barricade. There was some slip-up. I delivered the d&spatch to Commandant Daly in the Father Matthew Hall: he looked very tired and worn out; his uniform was white with dust and it was torn. I do not know who sent me with the d&spatch. In the Father Matthew Hall there was a small hall known as St. Brigid's Hall where there was a number of wounded Volunteers being attended by the Cumann na mBan. After delivering the d&spatch I returned to my post. I do not know what the d&spatch contained. That was Thursday.

On Friday I was sent along with other members of the post at Church Street to reinforce the garrison at the Bridewell who were under the charge of Sergeant Mark Wilson. As the British Military had gone into North King Street and were trying to advance on the Four Courts from that angle this action was to prevent them. The British did not succeed. We held them there up to the time of the surrender. The British Military were trying to advance down through Beresford Street through North King Street. I remained in the Bridewell until Saturday evening. A d&spatch was sent over to us ~~by~~ ^{by Capt. Frank Fahy} Sergeant Wilson who told us of the surrender but the members of the garrison refused to surrender. A second d&spatch was sent over to us to the effect that there was no use holding out. This second d&spatch was from Frank Fahy and informed us that all the other garrisons had surrendered. Then we started to destroy our equipment. We were still in the Bridewell. Frank Fahy sent word /that

that any man who could make his escape who was not in uniform could do so. This was still Saturday. The time seemed very short trying to destroy our equipment in the Bridewell and then we came out on the street and there was a barricade right across at the corner of the Bridewell and Greek Street. It was on our side and it ran between the Bridewell and the Four Courts. Two of us - I think the other was McDonagh - went out on the street to observe if there was any chance of escaping and we noticed the British Military coming into Chancery Place. They had fixed bayonets and they were accompanied by one of the Church Street priests, I presume Father Augustine, who was holding a Crucifix aloft. We returned to the Bridewell and informed the other members of the garrison, and we remained there for some time. When we came out on the street again we noticed the Four Courts garrison handing rifles out through the gate. At that moment we crossed the barricade which was, presumably, 50 yards away from the British Military and went in the direction of East Arran Street. On our way we met a boy from whom we enquired as to the positions the British military had taken up. He told us that there was no chance of our getting away, that they had the whole place surrounded. This boy took us to a house in East Arran Street where he got us put up for the night. His name was ^{John} ^{Re.} ("Kruger") Fagan who later played for the Shamrock Rovers Football Team. He is now the Manager of the Labour Exchange in Werburgh Street.

On Sunday morning I came out on the street [East Arran Street and people were trying to identify dead bodies that were placed in the Daisy Market. Just at that moment a lady named Miss Fanny Tremble, whom I had

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known for a number of years and who was keeping company with a British soldier garrisoned in one of the City barracks, approached and spoke to me and I had to admit what had happened to me. She offered to help me and told me that her boy friend was on one of the barricades in Mary's Lane. Thereupon she contacted him and he agreed that he would let me through but added that I might not get through the other barricade entering Capel Street. I succeeded in getting through the other barricade probably because they saw me getting through the first one. I got into Capel Street and was then like a rat in a trap. There was a crowd of captured Volunteers in Capel Street lined outside the Trades Hall and I went in that direction and was put standing in the line by a British soldier. I had my back to the Trades Hall. With my hand I felt a door unlocked behind me and I told some of my comrades that I was going to chance stepping back into it. They asked me not to do this as my chances of escape were very remote. I took the chance and succeeded. When I was inside the door for about three-quarters of an hour I heard some voices and tramping of feet and on looking out I noticed that the men who had been lined up were moving off in the direction of Parnell Street under military escort. When they were out of sight I came out into Capel Street again and proceeded in the direction of Capel Street Bridge as I saw there was no chance of my escape in the other direction. I went down Capel Street and when I got some distance down I saw two British Staff officers sitting at a table on the footpath at the corner of Mary's Abbey and I thought there was nothing else to do but to keep on walking it being hopeless to turn back. When I

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got near them I was called on to halt by a sentry and taken to the two staff officers for interrogation. They asked what I was doing and where I had been and I answered that I had been down feeding horses as I was an employee of O'Hanlon's of the Fish Market. They politely told me that I could go back to where I had been for the remainder of the week and that they would get me when they wanted me. At this time I was wearing a rubber coat which was blood-stained which I had not noticed before. On being told that I could return to where I had been I crossed to Abbey Street, where there was a military barricade, as I had some friends in Abbey Street. This was Mrs. Ring, 147 Upper Abbey Street whose son-in-law was serving with the British Forces in France. The military did not question me at the barricade on seeing that I had been allowed through by the staff officers. I remained in that house for two days and during my stay there I noticed that my other comrade was in the house opposite which was his home. On my third day there a message was sent that the military knew there was a "rebel" in the house and that it would be advisable that I should leave that area. I had scarcely taken my departure when the military raided the house. Finding my coat which I had left behind and which bore my name in indelible ink they tore up the floors and searched the roof-tops. I just made my get-away in time. From there I went to a man named Mr. William Coleton of Temple Street whose brother was also employed at the G.P.O. and now lives at Marino, and they put me up for a considerable time. From there I made my way to Mrs. Murtagh's, 31 Lower Dorset/^{Street.} They were friends of mine; from there I went to 66, Botanic Road and from there to Mrs. Lally, 14, St. James's ^{Avenue} ~~Alley~~, Clonliffe Road, who is my sister.

I evaded arrest all the time. I arrived home about three weeks later to 46 Mountjoy Street. The Munster Hotel was three doors away from me and Joe Brabazon lived two doors away: he had already been wounded in Church Street. I was only a few hours in the house when the military and police arrived on one of Guinnesses lorries accompanied by some plain-clothes and uniformed policemen. They commenced to surround the place and raided the Munster Hotel. I was about to attempt escaping over the back-yard wall when my father stopped me saying that the military were outside the wall and to remain. After about an hour the military drove away without raiding any of the other houses. Following this for about three months my life was practically that of a hermit. Then I decided to apply in person for my job to Messrs. Britains, Motor Engineers and Haulage Contractors. During an interview by Mr. Brittain, Managing Director, he left me in the pretence of going to his office and I observed that he was 'phoning the police as he suspected me of taking the cars - about 20 in number - out of the garage and handing over the keys of petrol tanks. I left there and I did not get my job back.

(Signed) Thomas Smart
Date: 25th May, 1949.

Witness: D. J. Veely Soudt.
Date: 25 May '49.

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