

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

BURO STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21

No. **W.S. 491**

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS

DOCUMENT NO. **W.S.** 491

**Witness**

Captain Thomas Scully,  
3 Leeson Park,  
Rathmines, Dublin.

**Identity**

Squad Leader 3rd Batt'n. Irish Vol's. 1918 - .  
Commissioned Officer in National Army.

**Subject**

Saving of the 3rd Battalion Arms Dump,  
Dublin, 1918.

Conditions, if any, stipulated by Witness

N11

File No. **S. 627**

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STATEMENT BY CAPTAIN THOMAS SCULLY,

3 Leeson Park, Rathmines,

Dublin.

THE SAVING OF THE BATTALION DUMP.

On Spy Wednesday, 1918, our Quartermaster Jimmy Murray, set out on his cycle to North County Dublin for the purpose of taking back to the Company Dump a Lee-Metford rifle that was in possession of a Volunteer who had been transferred from "A" Company to another unit. As Jimmy was responsible to the Skipper (late Major-General Seán Guilfoyle) for all arms belonging to the unit, Jimmy could not see his way to let this Volunteer's new unit have our Lee-Metford. Hence the journey into Fingal, where the rifle was collected.

No incident happened on the way home until Jimmy was almost at the door of the dump. Then out hopped a D.M.P. man from the shadows and wanted an explanation as to why our Quartermaster had not got a light on his cycle. Jimmy told all the lies in the calendar, but the cop did not believe him, even when the latter gave his name and address. So, to make sure, our Quartermaster and his cycle were conveyed to the Bridewell Police Barracks, where he had to languish in durance vile for the night.

In those days the D.M.P. were required to furnish all information in relation to arms, etc., to the British military authorities, and so it looked extremely blue for the Third Battalion dump. We could do nothing

and, in fact, were utterly helpless if the British, when the raid came off, found our dump. It would have been very serious, so we just crossed our fingers and prayed. We could, of course, have gone to the dump and made an attempt to move the stuff, but knowing British tactics for what they were worth, we had no intention of being mouse-trapped; so the only thing that could be done was to wait until the British made their raid and chance to luck. This we did.

Then the British struck. Three companies of infantry, with machine-guns, etc., surrounded the district of Michael's Hill, High Street, St. Augustine Street, the South Quays, etc., while the Intelligence people and detectives turned out the domicile of our imprisoned Quartermaster. Eight hours the British spent on the job and for their trouble were rewarded with one B.S.A. 22 calibre rifle, while 43 single-shot Martini rifles, two hundred-weight of gellignite, gun-cotton, revolvers, Mills grenades, .303 ammunition and other war material was just staring them in the face.

Commandant Joe O'Connor, our Battalion O/C., and his staff met to consider the position. At this period I was a squad leader, which rank is the equivalent of a corporal, and it fell to my lot to patrol with my squad the area in which the Battalion Staff were meeting. I met the Skipper on his way to the meeting and, standing in front of him and at attention, I said: "Sir, if you will allow me I will make an effort to shift the dump". He looked at me, smiling, and said: "If I do, how do you propose to carry it out?". I answered: "You are keen on strategy and tactics and as one of your pupils, who has taken in all your teaching, I have, I believe,

found a way to do the job". He then said: "Hang on here for a few minutes", and went on his way.

After about fifteen minutes he came to the door and called me in before the Battalion Staff, and, having satisfied the C/O. about the feasibility of the plan and its reasonable chance of success, I was asked how many men I would require to carry out the job. I answered two and myself. I chose Kit Farrell and Christy Murray, brother of our Quartermaster, and having arranged to meet my two assistants next morning I handed over my squad to Seán Whelehan. My final instructions from the Skipper were to report to him when and if the job had been completed.

I had now to get some place to store our dump, so I called on the late Pierce Walsh at his provision shop in East James's Street and told him what I required. Not alone did he give me his cellar, but actually thanked me for, as he said, paying him a great compliment. His wife, the late Mrs. Walsh, and their sons - Tom, Jim and Leo - were all delighted at the prospect of our attempt to save the dump - and, by the way, those are the famous brothers who defended Clanwilliam House in Easter Week until it was burned out.

Now for the transport. I could, of course, have obtained a motor car or other large vehicle, but that would have drawn the attention of the British military or their counterpart, the D.M.P., to our activities, so some other form of transport had to be arranged. At this time there was a lady residing in Irishtown who was of great assistance to our Battalion. I remembered that she was having some addition made to her home by a firm of building contractors, and so I paid her a visit with the

object of getting that builder's handcart and some of his materials, to make our journeys look the real thing, i.e. three builder's labourers going on a job. Our friend here, when told what we wanted, said "is that all you require. Why not bring your stuff here; no one would suspect this house". I had a job to convince her that I had already arranged for a place to put our dump in. She seemed hurt that I overlooked her house, but was all right when told that it would have to be in the city, where city units could get at it at short notice.

We went through the builder's gear and selected his handcart, ladder and other things, our friend undertaking to have them at my home by 10 a.m. next morning. I trust this lady will forgive me if I mention her name. She is Mrs. Joe Cunningham, wife of the prominent Dublin Commission Agent; but it is so long ago I cannot remember whether she was Mrs. Cunningham or Miss Fitzpatrick at the time. Well, she had the handcart and the other builder's gear at the spot appointed and at the correct time.

Everything was now ready for the attempt, so Christy Farrell, Kit Murray and myself with our builder's handcart and his other gear, proceeded on our way to the dump. At Christchurch Place we met Jimmy's sister, May, who informed us that herself and her mother (the late Mrs. Murray) had made a reconnaissance of the neighbourhood and all was clear. So far so good.

We entered the yard where our stuff was stored and proceeded to unearth it. We now became aware that our handcart, etc. would not be able to take it all in one or two loads, so we decided that, since Dame Luck had so far been kind to us she would hardly desert us now, we would

remove the lot. Our first load consisted of the 43 Martini rifles, made up in bundles of five, and the two hundred-weight of gelignite, which we unloaded safely in its new abode. In our next load we took all our .303 and other ammunition, together with some Lee-Enfield rifles; but our third and final load was nearly being a failure, for we got stuck in a traffic jam in Grafton Street, corner of Nassau Street. One of the handcart wheels had a mania for trying to come off and to make matters worse, the pointsman (D.M.P. man) on duty became very abusive and as we moved away, shouted after us that he would report our boss (the builder) for employing kids to do men's work. The names this cop called us and our employer would lift the hair from your head, and, of course, we had to grin and bear it. Here were we with a load of war material, which included slabs of gun-cotton and Mills grenades, and a handcart with one wheel doing its damndest to come off. Well, anyone with an elementary knowledge of explosives will agree that the other traffic and our poor selves would have been in a bad way had this handcart wheel succeeded in its object, for gun-cotton, coming into contact with hand-grenades or paving stones, is likely to make one hell of a mess of surrounding objects.

However, we got to our destination without any further trouble and, having unloaded the stuff, thanked our stars that the job was done - so we thought. I invited my two pals to have a well-earned meal at my home, but when we got there, sitting in the kitchen was the Skipper, who said: "Well done, lads", and at the same time informing us that Major-General Seán McMahon had decided that the stuff was to be distributed to the units which comprised our Battalion, and that, when I had

finished my meal, I was to contact him at once and he would give me the details for the distribution. I contacted General McMahon at Fitzgerald's shop in Pearse Street and received his warm congratulations, plus the details of the distribution of our dump and the longest screw-driver I have ever seen. This tool was used for removing the butts from the stocks of the Martins. Well, the three of us completed the distribution of the dump and left the home of the Walsh's at 2 a.m. next morning.

I still laugh when I think of the abuse we got from the traffic cop on that day in 1918.

SIGNED

J. Sweeney

DATE

16/3/57.

WITNESS

Seán Brennan. Bondt.