

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

BURO STAIRÉ MILÉATA 1913-21

No. W.S. 613

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COSANTA.

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 613.....

Witness

James Carrigan,
3 Boherbui Road,
Ellenfield,
Whitehall,
Dublin.

Identity.

Member of Fianna Eireann, 1913-1916;
Member of 'C' Company 1st Battalion, Dublin
Brigade, 1916 - ;

Member of A.S.U. Dublin, 1920-1921.

Subject.

- (a) National activities 1913-1921;
- (b) His associations with Fianna Eireann, 1913-1916;
- (c) Hibernian Bank and G.P.O. O'Connell St., Dublin,
Easter 1916;
- (d) The A.S.U., Dublin, 1920-1921.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil

File No. S.1885.....

Form B.S.M. 2

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STATEMENT OF JAMES CARRIGAN

3, Boherbui Road, Ellenfield, Whitehall, Dublin.

Fianna Éireann:

I joined Fianna Éireann about November or December of 1913, immediately after the strike. It was known as Sluagh Emmet. A lad named Paddy Houlihan was the officer in charge with Garry Houlihan and Peadar Brown. The only thing stands out in my mind regarding the Fianna is the Protest Meeting over the deportation of Captain Monteith. There was two or three of us mobilised in Surrey House, Leinster Road, as the Countess was to speak at the Protest Meeting. The Protest Meeting was to be held at the head of Grafton Street and Stephen's Green. It was called off, and we just went about our own business. The meeting was called off through a Government Order.

The other outstanding event was the Howth Gun Running on a Sunday morning on the 26th July, 1914. We had what is known as a treck cart. It was a hand cart that could be assembled and taken asunder in a comparatively short space of time. I happened to be one of five lads told off to take the treck cart out of Liberty Hall and go to the rear of Pearse Street known as Park View and we loaded there a supply of short batons with straps on them for use by the Volunteers. We joined a Volunteer Parade at Beresford Place and pulled and pushed the hand cart to the East Pier at Howth. We still had the loaded batons on it. When the party arrived at Howth the batons were taken from the hand cart and distributed to the front line of Volunteers. While in Howth I saw the arms being taken from the Arms Yacht and distributed to Volunteers on parade. When the yacht was

completely unloaded the Volunteer parade reformed and moved back towards Dublin. Four lads and myself brought up the rear of the parade with our treck cart. When the parade reached Killester it encountered opposition from the D.M.P. We got orders to disperse as quickly as we could and we left our treck cart at Killester and beat it across the fields.

Another boyhood recollection I have of my association with the Fianna was that on returning from a boyscouts camp at Barnaculla on the evening war was declared - Sunday, August 4th, 1914, we encountered a parade of boyscouts carrying a British flag. We captured the flag from this parade and dragged it to Grafton Street.

1916 Rising:

About a month before the Rising I transferred from the Fianna to "C" Company of the 1st Battalion under Frank Fahy who was at that time Company Commander and Joe McGuinness was Lieutenant of the Company. Although I had transferred to the Volunteers I had not definitely severed my connection with the Fianna. I think the first inkling I had that a Rising was about to take place came from Seán Heuston. He was the man who instructed me that I was to stand by over the Easter week-end. Mobilisation orders for the Easter Parade, however, came from my Company Commander. I was instructed to report at Blackhall Place at 12 o'clock on Sunday. On Sunday morning, however, a despatch rider came to my house and told me that the Parade was off. I was not mobilised for any parade on Easter Monday morning. I strolled down O'Connell Street and mingled with the crowd and to my great surprise I saw a crowd of Volunteers marching into the General Post Office. This conveyed to me that some event of importance was about to take place. Seán O'Neill and myself went to our homes and came out and saw armed Volunteers at the corner of Portland Row and North Circular Road armed with rifles so

we knew that the moment had come and I joined up with the Volunteers at Portland Row. They happened to be 2nd Battalion men. When I reported to the officer in command (whose name I cannot recall) I had no arms or ammunition. He sent me up to Summerhill Bridge where I collected a rifle and ammunition off a Volunteer there. Before 5 p.m. on Easter Monday Volunteers posted at Portland Row and Summerhill Bridge were withdrawn to Father Mathew Park. We went along there and we were marched off again into the city to occupy the G.P.O. and Hibernian Bank. My party was about 25-30 strong. We were divided and the group that I was with broke into the Hibernian Bank with Captain Tom Weafer in charge. This building would have been occupied between 5 and 6 p.m. Orders were immediately issued to have the windows barricaded and vessels filled with fresh water. For barricading the windows we used the caretakers bedding and other articles of furniture that were lying around. We were only in possession of the building about an hour when we saw women going down O'Connell Street with goods looted from shops in the surrounding streets there. We were ordered by Tom Weafer to shout at these women from our windows and order them to drop their loot. The majority of them obeyed our instructions and piled up the loot in the middle of O'Connell Street or Sackville Street as it was then known and Abbey Street Junction. One rather amusing incident that comes to my mind is that I saw a very stout lady crossing O'Connell Street into Abbey Street. She appeared to me to be heavily burdened with loot, under her shawl. When I shouted at her to drop what she was carrying she opened her shawl and showed me an almost naked infant. Despite the seriousness of the situation at the time it afforded my comrades and myself a good laugh. The Hibernian Bank came under fire sometime late on Tuesday evening. By that time the British had succeeded in getting machine gun posts established in Frewen and Ryan's Outfitters close to Lemons. Machine gun fire

from that post continued to play on the Hibernian Bank throughout Tuesday evening and all day Wednesday. As far as I can recollect it was on Tuesday evening that our Officer, Tom Weafer, was killed around 8 p.m. When Tom Weafer was killed a man, I think, by the name of Fitzgerald took charge. He was, I understand, a Company Lieutenant. Up to about 4 p.m. on Thursday firing on our bank continued. Sometime about 5 p.m. we got orders to evacuate to the G.P.O. We grasped what mattresses or palliasses we could get hold of for covering and rushed across O'Connell Street to the Princes Street entrance of the G.P.O. The whole party of seven got safely across. By this time we were very fatigued as we had practically no sleep since we occupied the Hibernian Bank. I remember one of the Cumann na mBan girls, Miss Bridie Walsh, suggesting to me that I should lie down and have a sleep. I accepted her advice and when I woke on Friday morning I learned that James Connolly had been wounded in the process of issuing orders. Sometime on that day I learned that a namesake of mine was on the roof of the G.P.O. so I went up to see him. I didn't succeed in reaching the roof however, as the whole corner of that part of the building was on fire. Carrigan was unable to escape and lost his life there.

On Friday afternoon orders were issued for the general evacuation of the G.P.O. I made my way with the crowd to Henry Place. The order included the removal of all foodstuffs from the G.P.O. so each one of us took what we could carry. I took two loaves and when I got to Henry Place some Volunteer was trying to burst in a gate at O'Brien's Mineral Water Stores. Evidently his shotgun must have been at full cock at the time because when he hit the butt of the gun against the gate the charge exploded into his throat and killed him instantly. At that time we came under machine gun fire again from the rear of two hotels in O'Connell Street. They caused great confusion amongst us. As a result of the shooting incident at Mineral Waters Stores we

were unable to get into that building so we rushed past Moore Lane and got into a tenement house near the corner at the junction of Moore Street and Henry Place. On getting into this house burrowing operations were immediately started. These operations went on right through the night with the result that a line of retreat was burrowed through a considerable number of houses running down Moore Street in the direction of Parnell Street.

I rested throughout Friday night well into Saturday morning and sometime on Saturday evening to my great surprise and to the surprise of my comrades we heard a young man by the name of Commandant Seán McLoughlin give orders that we were to fall in in Moore Street and march to O'Connell Street where we were to drop our arms and then proceed to our homes. We knew then, of course, that it was a general surrender. I think Seán McLoughlin must have misinterpreted the orders of the British Commander because when we got to O'Connell Street we found to our dismay that we were not going home - that we were then, in fact, prisoners of the British. Having dumped our arms we were marched to the green in front of the Rotunda Hospital where we remained overnight. One incident that comes to my mind about that night was the assault on a Red Cross man by a British Officer. Bowen something was his name. It wasn't Lee Wilson. He went over to a young Red Cross Man by the name of John Doyle and ripped the Red Cross from his arm with a bayonet. At 7.30 or 8 o'clock the following morning we moved from Rotunda Hospital and route-marched to Richmond Barracks. On the way we were openly insulted by the women of Dublin. I was detained there for a week and as apparently I was considered to be too young for deportation I was allowed to go home. While in Richmond Barracks 84 of us were confined to a small room. The late Seán MacDermott was one of the prisoners in the room. I remember Councillor Paddy Mahon passing cigarettes through a ventilator to us.

The last I remember of Seán MacDermott was to hear his name being called and later saw him going out under escort.

Volunteer Units re-organised:

Sometime early in 1917 word reached me that Volunteer Units were again being re-organised and I was requested to rejoin my own Company. At the first meeting of the Company which was held at 41, Parnell Square, Frank Fahy and Seán Flood were elected Company Officers also Joe McGuinness. Company organisation was then proceeded with. Sections were formed and section leaders were appointed. From then on weekly parades were held and instructions in the use of small arms were given.

Conscription Crisis:

The conscription crisis created an influx into the company with the result that "C" Company became too strong and a second company was formed from it known as "H" Company. I was attached to "H" Company for a short time as a small arms instructor.

Brigade Transport:

When Brigade Transport Section was formed I was attached to it. Pat McCrae and Maurice Brennan were in charge of transport which consisted of one small mail van, one Army Albion lorry, one new Hudson and one small ford Tourer - the Hudson car being the property of a British Army Officer called Robertson who lived at Sutton. I should mention that I was only concerned with the North City and our garages were situated in laneways off North Great Charles Street and Hardwicke Street. I was an assistant driver to a man by the name of Pat Kelly from Clare and Davy Golden from Dublin. These cars were mainly used for the shifting of ammunition dumps and quick transportation of volunteers on completion of a job. One of the occasions on which I was detailed as

assistant driver to Davy Golden was the day that Kevin Barry was arrested. On that day we took the van down to the vicinity of Monks Bakery, Brunswick Street, where we were to collect the arms of the Volunteers on completion of their work there and convey the arms back to a dump at Charles Street. We arrived at the corner of Church Street. I heard a shot and the next thing I saw was three or four Volunteers rushing up to our van and dumped their arms in it. The next thing I heard was a burst of rifle and revolver fire and then we withdrew with the arms that were deposited in our van.

The next occasion on which I was detailed as second driver was late in June, 1921, when an operation was staged to shoot up British Military and Black-and-Tans frequenting various restaurants in the vicinity of Grafton Street. Our instructions were on that occasion to proceed with our van to Nassau Street and to park it outside a restaurant there and await the arrival of members of the Squad who would deposit their small arms in the car. We arrived at our waiting point and after about 10 minutes delay five men of the Squad came up to the van and dropped their revolvers into it. We drove away to our garage in North Great Charles Street. On the eve of Bloody Sunday, Patrick Kelly and myself stopped overnight in Victoria Street, South Circular Road, and parked our Ford touring car outside the door. Between 6.30 and 7 a.m. on the following morning we proceeded to the Pembroke Power Station, South Lotts Road, where we collected a battery which was being charged for the new Hudson car. We collected the battery, brought it back to the garage at Charles Street, put it into the Hudson and took that car to Upper Pembroke Street. Our instructions were to collect any wounded men or their arms. We toured round Upper Pembroke Street on the lookout for Volunteers who were engaged on operations that morning. Someone gave us the all clear and said that our car would not be required so we returned it to the garage.

Raid for Arms - Kings Inns:

On the 1st June, 1920 a number of us were selected from the 1st Battalion along with members of the Squad for a raid on the Kings Inns with a view to disarming the military guard there and procuring whatever arms or ammunition we could get hold of. We were assembled at a house in Parnell Square. Each one of us was armed. We moved out from there about 3 p.m. I cannot recollect who was in charge. Before we moved out, however, we were assigned to different positions. Men were told off to take up positions at various street corners in the vicinity of the Kings Inns. My particular position was the corner of Bolton Street and Henrietta Street, and my instructions were that if I saw any British military approaching I was to open fire on them. I don't know what happened in the Kings Inns itself. All that I remember is that I saw a number of our comrades coming out of the Kings Inns and heard them cheering. I was told later that the operation was entirely successful; that the guard had been disarmed and a considerable amount of arms captured. I saw one of our transport cars driving away when the arms and ammunition were loaded into it.

Company Patrols:

During the winter of 1920 the Company carried out a series of street patrols at night for about four nights each week. We were armed with revolvers and patrolled the Company area - North Circular Road, Phibsboro', North King Street and Constitution Hill. Our instructions were to attack any armed enemy forces that we might meet with. While I was engaged on these patrols no particular incident occurred.

Active Service Unit:

Late in December, 1920, my Company Officer, Sean Prendergast, informed me that I had been selected for duty with the Active Service Unit which was due to be formed and that I was to report on a certain date to Oriel Hall. On reporting there I found that I knew quite a number of men from other Units assembled there and we were addressed by Oscar Traynor and the late Sean Russell. The gist as far as I recollect, of Oscar Traynor's address was that we were now joining a Unit that was being formed for the purpose of engaging the enemy in the streets of Dublin and that we were to be paid soldiers of the Irish Republican Army - our main tactics would be guerilla warfare - hit and run- and that this was to continue night and day and that we were to regard ourselves as full-time soldiers. He said if any of us felt that we were not up to this standard we could now stand down and that nothing the worse would be thought of us for doing so. He then introduced us to our new officer, Captain Paddy Flanagan. After that we were formed into four sections. I was attached to No. 1 Section and my Section Commander was the late Frank Flood. My arms consisted of a short Webley revolver and 12 rounds of ammunition. The Active Service Unit Headquarters was situated in a small shop in Templebar. The Section Headquarters was the Oxford Billiard Rooms, in O'Connell Street. I took my orders of course from my Section Commander, Frank Flood. How he got them I am not in a position to say. We kept our arms in our own homes.

A.S.U. attack on General Tudor's Car:

One of my first engagements with the Active Service Unit was an attack on the car of General Tudor at Charlemont Street Bridge, early in January, 1921. Frank Flood knew beforehand that the car was expected at Charlemont Bridge at a certain time in or around 10 a.m. Four of us took up

positions at McQuillan's public house at the junction of the canal and Charlemont Street. Frank Flood was on Charlemont Bridge, opposite me. Christy Fitzsimons was in a shop on the corner of Charlemont Mall and Siney was positioned near a G.H. Q. Intelligence Officer that accompanied us on the crown of the bridge. After about 10 minutes delay I heard a shot fired at a touring car by the late Frank Flood. The car headed towards me, turning towards the canal and I opened fire on it. Simultaneously the other two men opened fire on it. The driver swung his car left and right away from me, upsetting a milk van. I fired again into the car and kept on firing as I followed it. I cannot say who was in the car. I saw two passengers in the back; one was a tall gentleman and the other was a tall lady. Neither can I say if we caused any casualties.

A.S.U. attack Auxiliaries at Bachelors Walk:

Early in January, 1921, also, numbers 1 and 2 sections took up positions in Bachelors Walk to ambush any tenders of Black-and-Tans or military that might pass down the quays. No definite instructions were given to us or, no definite time. We simply knew that it was usual for enemy forces to travel down the quays in the afternoon. Arriving at the point on the quays where we selected for the ambush we positioned ourselves on various street corners and auctioneers' doorways for cover. I remember that in company with Christy Fitzsimons I stood in the doorway of Coxes auction rooms. After a wait of about five or ten minutes two tenders of Auxiliaries came down the quays from the direction of Kingsbridge. As they came abreast of where we were standing we threw two grenades at them. I don't know if we caused any casualties or not because we withdrew straight away but the evening papers indicated that we had caused casualties.

A.S.U. attack Auxiliaries at Phibsboro':

On a Sunday morning late in February, 1921, a number of us were detailed to proceed to the vicinity of St. Peter's Church, Phibsboro', where we were given to understand that it was usual for Auxiliaries from the Depot to pull up outside this Church on Sunday mornings and search the people coming out from the Church. We were armed with grenades. About 11.30 a.m. the police tender containing about eight or ten Auxiliaries slowed down as it came to the Church. As I felt that this was the car we were sent out to attack I fired my grenade at it. Christy Fitzsimons who was paired off with me did likewise. We withdrew immediately and didn't wait to see if we had caused any casualties. In any case we had no revolvers on us to defend ourselves if the occupants of the car attempted to attack us. It was reported in the Irish Independent on the following morning that Auxiliaries and civilians were wounded as a result of our attack.

A.S.U. attack Police Dispatch Rider:

It was known to the Active Service Unit that a police despatch rider by the name of Constable Steadman carried despatches each day between the Castle and the Depot. It was also known that he invariably changed his route and didn't use the same route any two days in succession. The section had instructions that they were to be on the lookout for him and that if it should meet up with him he was to be ambushed and his despatches taken from him and confiscated. During the last week of April, 1921, four of us were in the vicinity of Mary Street and Jervis Street corner. We saw a motor cyclist and we suspected straight away that this was the police despatch rider which we were on the lookout for. As he came near where we were standing a wagon belonging to Messrs. Guinness and Co. was responsible for

slowing down his speed. We decided straight away that this was the man we were after so Frank Flood and myself fired on him straight away. His bicycle fell under Guinness's wagon and he fell on to the street and we left him there wounded. He lived for six hours. We learned through hospital authorities that he gave a very accurate description of the two men who attacked him.

Burning of the Custom House:

As is well known the Active Service Unit in conjunction with the Squad and units of the Dublin Brigade took part in the burning of the Custom House on the 25th May, 1921. On that morning No. 1 Section reported to Oxford Billiard Rooms as was usual to do so. Our Section Commander, Tom Flood, who succeeded his brother in command of the Section told us that the job on that day was the burning of the Custom House. He gave us the idea of what Volunteer Units were to take part in this job and told us that our Section was to proceed down the quays and enter the Custom House by the first door on the left and there to collect and assemble the civilian staff and to take over any other members of the staff that might be handed to us by Volunteers taking part in the burning of the building and that we were not to use our arms unless we were fired at. We were in position about quarter to one. On entering the building we went into the first office on our left and there held up the staff and brought them out to one big office. After that other members of the staff kept on arriving having been ejected from their offices. Our instructions were that we were to hold the staff there until we heard three blasts of a whistle. After that we were to get out of the building as quickly as we could and leave the staff to look after themselves. On hearing the first blast of the whistle we withdrew and told the staff to look after themselves. When we got outside the building a fusillade of shots came from Butt

Bridge direction. We ran down the north side of the quays and entered the Silloth Company shed and dumped our guns aboard a steamer in the ashes and a fireman who was there and saw us discarding our guns told us that the ship was sailing at 6 or 6.30 and that our guns would be dumped into the sea unless they were collected before this. We got safely away and returned to the ship before it sailed and collected our guns.

I continued on as a member of the Active Service Unit until the State was formed.

Signed:

James Carrigan
(James Carrigan).

Date:

26th Nov. 1951

Witness:

William Ivory Comdt.
(William Ivory, Comd't.)

