

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
BURO STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21
NO. W.S. 629

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 629

Witness

John Twamley,
6 St. Thomas' Road,
South Circular Road,
Dublin.

Identity.

Member of 'A' Company
1st Battalion Dublin Brigade, 1913 - .

Subject.

- (a) National activities, Dublin, 1913-1916;
- (b) Disruption of lines of communication,
Easter Week 1916;
- (c) G.P.O. Easter Week, 1916.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil

File No. S.597

Form B.S.M. 2

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A Statement by Mr. John Twamley,
6, St. Thomas Road,
South Circular Road, Dublin.

I was present at the Rotunda meeting on the 25th November 1913 and became a member of the Irish Volunteers. I was posted to "A" Company, 1st Battalion of which Company Andy Fitzpatrick was also a member.

In 1916 I was a linesman in the Engineering Department of the Post Office and stationed in Bray.

In April of that year I was summoned to a meeting in North Frederick Street. Dermot Lynch presided at the meeting and among those present were Dick Mulcahy, Andy Fitzpatrick, Sean Byrne, Martin King and John Tyrell. We were told of the projected Rising and asked to get all possible information regarding the location of Cross-Channel Trunks and to obtain plans of all underground cables and secret wires running to Dublin Castle and Viceregal Lodge. We were also to try to obtain the tools necessary to lift manhole covers and to cut stays, poles and wires. The information obtained was to be submitted to Dermot Lynch. We were allotted areas in which to work. I was given the Bray area.

Afterwards we had a discussion between ourselves and as a result of this I being familiar with Trunks, went with Sean Byrne to the Inchicore Area and showed him where Trunk communication could be severed.

I had been told at the meeting to contact a ^{Mick} Mr. Higgins of ^{Loughlinstown} ~~Bray~~ a member of the I.R.B. who was to supply eight men who would work with me and come

under my orders. I met Mr. Higgins and he brought me to the ~~County~~ ^{Rural District} Council Offices ^{at Loughlinstown} near Shankill where there was a plan of the Bray Area. We mapped out the vital spots and then walked these points and discussed how we could best do the job of cutting communications.

We decided to cut down three poles on each side of the Railway line between Bray and Shankill which would mean the cutting out of all telegraphic and telephonic communications between Dublin and Wicklow and the East Coast. The felling of the poles would also block railway communication. We also decided to cut poles and cables linking Shankill Exchange and Bray. This was to be done at a point on the road between Shankill Police Station and Shankill Exchange.

John Tyrrell was to cut all telegraphic and telephonic communications at Kingstown which would mean a second cutting of these lines.

Andy Fitzpatrick who was a foreman in the Engineering Department of the Post Office was able to obtain from the draughtsman plans of the City areas on the pretence that he required them for work he had to do in these areas.

There were a couple of meetings later to discuss progress ready made and to make final plans. Andy Fitzpatrick and Martin King, as far as I can recollect got keys made to lift manhole covers. I obtained all the equipment I required - crosscut saws, stay cutters and pliers - from Dermot Lynch. The equipment was stored at Liberty Hall, having been obtained by various means from time to time.

We were called together at Liberty Hall on Good Friday or Easter Saturday and told by Dermot Lynch that the Rising was timed for Easter Sunday. James Connolly was present at the time. We were told when to start cutting communications.

I went to Bray and told Higgins to have his men in the Park in Bray at an appointed time with all the necessary equipment. To allay suspicion we were to play a game of cards until the time came to commence operations.

At about twenty minutes to twelve on Easter Sunday I received a despatch from James Connolly, via Sean Byrne, that the Rising was off. I went to Liberty Hall to get confirmation of the message I had received which I could not believe to be correct. I told Higgins before I went not to take any action until he received further word from me.

When I arrived at Liberty Hall Dermot Lynch told me the message was correct but told me not to leave Dublin (I was lodging in Bray). I got in touch with Higgins and told him not to leave Bray and to be ready for further instructions.

On Easter Monday morning between 9 and 10 o'clock I got an order to report immediately to Liberty Hall. When I got there I was told by Dermot Lynch and James Connolly that the Rising was taking place at 12 o'clock and that I was to go to Bray at once. I went to Bray but could not contact Higgins or any members of his section although I called at their homes and to the Church. Just as I was about to commence the job myself, I met Higgins and told him the Rising was

taking place almost immediately and that there was no time for him or his men to take any action in Bray. I told him to mobilise his men and get them to the G.P.O. as soon as possible. It was then about five minutes to twelve. I then set across the fields to the Railway, climbed the poles and cut the telegraph and telephone wires and all the railway signal wires. Having completed the job here I went on to the road and cut the telephone wires and junctions between Shankill and Bray and the underground cable at Shankill.

Due to the loud whistling of the held up trains which I was afraid would attract the attention of the Police in the nearby barracks, I was forced to make a hasty retreat. I proceeded to Dublin calling at the Lamb Doyles for a drink. The first indication I had that the Rising was in progress was when I arrived at Rathmines Road opposite Portobello Barracks. Here a rope was drawn across the street and military were on duty keeping back the crowds which had collected. When I got into the crowd I saw that the back of the tunic of the Military Officer in charge was covered with blood.

I turned back and went by Rathgar and eventually reached the G.P.O. I met Dermot Lynch there who told me that he had already received word of my work in Bray that morning and that it was very satisfactory.

I was put in charge of a party in the Henry Street side of the Post Office with instructions to see that the men got food and rest and were ready to relieve other parties on the roof of the G.P.O.

On Tuesday I was instructed to get a party of men and proceed to Lower Abbey Street to build an obstruction across the street opposite the position where Wynn's Hotel now stands. I ordered the men to break the doors and windows of adjacent buildings and throw out all suitable materials for the barricade. This they did with great gusto, throwing out tables, chairs, bales of paper and all types of office equipment. Having erected the barricade we reported back to the G.P.O. and took up post on the bottom floor again.

On Wednesday Desmond Fitzgerald who was in charge of the kitchen told me they were nearly out of food. I sent out a party to search for some and they eventually returned with some flitches of bacon. Afterwards I sent the men to the back entrance of Arnotts to get socks and underclothing. Mick Collins came to the men as they were returning and asked for some of the clothing but was refused.

When the G.P.O. went on fire and the occupants were preparing to retire, I with four others moved a lot of explosives from the fire zone to the strong rooms in the basement.

When we were retreating from the G.P.O. there was a stampede in Henry Place as the British were machine gunning up Moore Lane from the Rotunda direction. When we got to the corner of Moore Lane and Henry place, Tom Clarke put up his hand and shouted "One more ~~more~~^{RALLY} for Ireland". I dashed across safely but my comrade was wounded in the

calf of the leg and I had to pull him to safety.

As ordered I went to the side door of the provision shop at the corner of Moore Street and Henry Place and burst it open. When I got in I was confronted by an old man and woman who were frightened out of their wits. I told them they would be quite safe but they would not stay with us. Instead they locked themselves in the basement. I then barricaded the back room window facing towards the Rotunda. Shortly afterwards Pearse came in and Connolly was brought in on a stretcher. Later two Cumann na mBan girls who had been with us on the retreat from the G.P.O. produced a cooked ham from a pot on the fire and made me a sandwich which I enjoyed as the first real bit of food I had since I went into the Post Office.

I was on guard for a while when Dermot Lynch came and brought me to have a look at the buildings which were being tunnelled from house to house. During my travels through the buildings I saw Sean McDermott in a Grocer's shop cracking two eggs and swallowing them.

When I went back to the room where Connolly was lying I saw Pearse kneeling beside and talking to him. Immediately after this I heard we were surrendering.

After the surrender we were marched to O'Connell Street, where we were examined for arms and then taken to the green patch in front of the Rotunda. From there we were marched to Richmond Barracks where our names, addresses and places of

employment were taken. Finally we were taken to the North Wall and thence to Stafford Jail.

Signed: J.J. Twamley
(J.J. Twamley)

Date: 8/12/51
8/12/51.

Witness: J. Kearns Comdt.
(J. Kearns, Comd't.)

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