

W.S. 670

**ORIGINAL**

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21  
BURO STAIRÉ MILÉATA 1913-21  
NO. W.S. 670

ROINN  COSANTA.

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 670.....

**Witness**

James Rogan,  
Monascrebe,  
Faughart,  
Dundalk,  
Co. Louth.

**Identity.**

Member of Dromantee Company (Co. Armagh)  
Irish Volunteers, 1917 - .

**Subject.**

- (a) National activities, Ulster, 1917-1921;
- (b) Ambush of party of Special Constabulary  
at Creggan, Co. Tyrone, March 1921.

**Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.**

Nil

File No. ...S. 1967.....

Form B.S.M. 2

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670

STATEMENT BY MR. JIM ROGAN,

Monascribe, Faughart, Dundalk, Co. Louth.

I joined Dromantee Company of the Volunteers about 1917. There was little activity in 1917 or 1918 except drilling and training. I attended an officers' training camp at Dromantee in the summer of 1918. The training officer at this camp was an ex-Australian officer who had deserted his regiment and come to Ireland. He was a splendid man at the job of making smart soldiers from raw recruits. I attended all his drills and classes. The drills were carried out at night and were mainly concerned with extended order work in the open country. The lectures were held indoor and concerned musketry and the care of arms.

Raid on Ballyedmond Castle - May 1919:

I travelled to this raid with McAteer, Capt. Dromantee Company, Owen Moore R.I.P. and James Murphy. We received our orders for this operation from Dundalk, and we cycled across the mountains to Omeath via the Longwoman's Grave and the Flagstaff. At Omeath we met a number of Dundalk and Cooley Volunteers. We all travelled a short distance from Omeath in the direction of Carlingford and we 'dumped' our bikes near the Greenore Railway line - 18 to 20 bikes all told. Jim Laying, Dundalk, seemed to be in charge of all of us at this point. He had a boat available near where our bikes were dumped. Paddy Oaks, who was Capt. Omeath Company, was in charge of the boat. We all got into the boat and pushed off from the shore. As soon as we got from the shore, the boat started to submerge due to overloading. We started bailing out the

water but it soon became apparent that the overcrowding made the back unsafe so we got back to the shore again and 6 or 7 men had to be disembarked and the remainder proceeded across to the vicinity of Ballyedmond Castle on the County Down side of the Lough.

When we arrived near the Castle we were halted along a main road. We spent about half an hour in this position holding up cyclists and pedestrians and retaining them as prisoners to ensure against any alarm being raised locally. I and some others then got orders to proceed to the Castle. The Castle door was opened when I got there, and I was sent with Mick Donnelly to a stairway leading on to a landing with the instructions to keep a number of house servants under my control. Mick Donnelly got the job of looking after some members of the Nugent family who belonged to the Castle. The room in which the ammunition was supposed to be was on the ground floor, and in the floor of this room there was a trap door covering an iron ladder which led to a basement underneath. When the room on the ground floor was properly searched and no arms or equipment found, men went down into the basement underneath and with bars and pick axes commenced breaking up the cement floor in that room. The breaking of this floor showed that there was no space underneath.

As far as I know there was no arms got in Ballyedmond Castle. I saw some tins of vaseline and rifle pull-throughs which were got in the Castle during the raid.

The raid was over and all the participants called off at about 3 a.m. Our party returned by boat to Omeath and we cycled from there home, arriving at Faughart about 6 a.m. on Sunday morning.

Attack on Church parade of Special Constabulary at Creggan, Crossmaglen:

About March 1921 I was mobilised early on a Sunday morning for an attack on a party of Special Constabulary going to Church Service at Creggan.

When I proceeded to the point of mobilisation I met Felix Dawe, who was in charge of the operation, James Walsh, Tom McCrave, Paddy O'Hare, Billy Lawless, a man named O'Dowda, Hugh Jordan, Charles Heeney, Patrick Farrell, Thomas O'Rourke and Peter McShane. We were all equipped with cycles and we started off for Creggan, arriving there about 10.15 a.m. When we arrived at the public house at Creggan we found a lot of people on the road, some going to Mass in Crossmaglen and others going to Protestant Service in the nearby church. We took up a position at the public house at Creggan, and we started to get the people on the road herded into the yard of the public house as we were anxious to prevent any civilian casualties. We intended to carry out the ambush when the party of Specials coming from Crossmaglen Barracks had passed the gable of the public house. We found that the removal of the people off the stretch of road between the pub and the graveyard was a slow and difficult job as many of them became excited and others were not inclined to do what they were told. Whilst we were engaged in getting the people off the road, we saw the local Protestant Rector on the road and he was acting in a most excited manner. A few of us went up to him and took him along the road in the direction of the public house so that we could have some control over his actions, and also prevent him from getting into danger when the shooting started. As we were nearing the pub, and almost there, the party of Specials came round a bend on bicycles and in extended

order. As soon as the first of the Specials came into my view, the Rector threw his hands up in the air and started shouting 'MURDER', 'MURDER'. The action of the Rector served its purpose as it warned the Specials and prevented the entire party getting into the position in which we had planned to attack them. As they were making efforts to turn back or get off the road we opened fire on them. I estimated that there were about 15 or 16 Specials in the party. We used ~~one~~ handgrenades in addition to the revolvers we carried. We had a few men armed with shotguns which were also used.

The shooting lasted for about 5 minutes. The majority of the Specials who had not got into close proximity to us decamped back towards Crossmaglen as soon as the shooting started. Near the end of the shooting, I saw a wounded Special lying in a roadside shuck and I went over to him and took his revolver from him. I do not know how many Specials were shot, but I would think that there were 3 or 4 wounded, at least. I do not know either how many weapons we captured as we made a rather hasty "get away" from the vicinity as Crossmaglen with its large R.I.C. Barracks was only about  $1\frac{1}{2}$  miles distant.

Death of Terence MacSwiney, Lord Mayor of Cork  
Attempt to stop work as a mark of respect to his memory:

About November 1920, when the news of the death of Terence MacSwiney, Lord Mayor of Cork, was known, the Volunteers in Dundalk area got instructions to go around to the people requesting them to cease work on the day of the Lord Mayor's funeral as a mark of respect to his memory. A number of local Volunteers were selected in each area to carry out the details of the stoppage of all work and for a general canvass of the district to have the /stoppage of

work made effective.

On this day a Unionist named Barrett, who lived in a residence called Plaster House near Mountpleasant, had a threshing mill belonging to a man named McDowell, another Unionist. A few Volunteers called on Barrett and McDowell requesting them to cease work for that day as a mark of respect for the dead Lord Mayor. McDowell told the Volunteers that as he was employed by Barrett he would be pleased to stop the threshing if Barrett agreed and ordered him to do so. Barrett refused to stop the work and no further action was then taken.

The next day Barrett went into Dundalk and made a complaint to the R.I.C. at their headquarters in Ann Street Barracks. During this visit to the police he also gave information about a young fellow from Jonesboro who was attending the Christian Brothers School in Dundalk. Barrett claimed that this young fellow was one of the party who came to his premises to put a stop to the threshing. The young fellow was arrested and taken before a Resident Magistrate for trial. He was advised to recognise the Court and produced ample evidence to prove that he was not near Barrett's place on the particular day in question.

Shortly after this, a police or Black and Tan guard of about 30 men was placed on Barrett's house. This guard lived on the premises during their periods on duty. They were relieved each morning about 8 a.m. by a fresh guard.

Barrett, after the police guard had been placed on his house, began to act in a most provocative manner to all his republican neighbours. He adopted the practice of calling out the guards to hold up and search persons

passing his place. It was felt locally that he was going a bit queer in the head and he became a nuisance to both his neighbours and the police who were guarding him.

Laid ambush at Faughart and attack on police guard at Plaster House:

Around April 1921, it was decided to ambush the relief either going to Barrett's place or leaving there and plans were made accordingly.

As far as I could observe at the time, the plans for this operation were as follows : - The Tans guarding Barrett's travelled as a relief each morning by motor lorry from Dundalk and came either by Thistle Cross to Barrett's, carried out the relief and returned by Faughart School Road, or came out by Faughart School Road and returned from Barrett's by Thistle Cross. In other words, the relief made a circuit touching Barrett's house each morning, travelling either via Thistle Cross or via Faughart School and never retracing the road they came. A site for the ambush was selected at Faughart School, and there was no possibility of knowing in which of the alternative directions the Tans would be travelling when passing this spot.

I was mobilised with Charles Heeney some days before the date fixed for Plaster House ambush to take charge of rifles which were being sent to Faughart for the ambush. Those rifles, 11 in number, came, we were informed, from Carlingford, and arrived to us in a horse cart in charge of a young fellow whose name I cannot now remember. Heeney and I took charge of the rifles, and conveyed them to a vacant house belonging to a Patrick McDermott which lay about 800 yards from Faughart School. I think the rifles came on a Wednesday or



Thursday and we were responsible for them until Sunday morning. On Friday, or perhaps Saturday, morning Tom Rogers, then Battalion Quartermaster of Dundalk Battn., came out to where the rifles were. He inspected the rifles and then he and I cleaned and oiled them.

On Sunday morning 17th April 1921, about daylight, I mobilised at the house where the rifles were dumped. A number of Dundalk Volunteers came along, and I think it was Tom Rogers who distributed the rifles to the Volunteers selected to use them.

A number of men came that morning from northern areas - south Armagh and Newry town. Those men included Frank Aiken, John McCoy, Seán Quinn, R.I.P., Andy O'Hare, Seamus Monaghan etc. Frank Aiken was then O/C 4th Northern Division and he was in charge of the whole operation.

The first thing I remember being done that morning was the commandeering of the extensive residence of Mr. John McAllister at Faughart. This house was only about 200 yards from the ambush position and overlooked it from the side of a slight hill. The reason for commandeering this house was to use it as a safe place for the families who lived within the danger zone near the site of the ambush when firing commenced.

During the time that McAllister's was being commandeered and the neighbouring families being taken there, a number of men were engaged in making a hole in the road slightly on the Dundalk side of Faughart School for a land mine which was subsequently placed there. About this time I was detailed with others to take up a position at the Great Northern Railway Bridge across the New Line Road. From this position there was a good

view of the main road leading into Dundalk. At the time I was detailed for this position a number of men were told to cross the hill in the direction of Plaster House and to take up firing positions in an old quarry which is situated about <sup>100</sup> yards up the road leading from Faughart Road to Faughart graveyard. The quarry position overlooked and commanded the front of Plaster House, which was about 300 yards distant. The men sent to this quarry were to ensure that the Tans at Plaster House should not come to the assistance of their comrades when the attack at the ambush position started. I understood later that a few of the men who were sent out to the quarry remained on the side of the road near the quarry in a position which also controlled Plaster House and safeguarded the rear of the quarry position from surprise by Crown Forces.

Another party was placed in a house beside the railway bridge facing Dundalk. This party was under the command of Felix Dawe, who later became O/C Dundalk Battalion.

The men at the ambush position were placed in firing positions at the railway side of the road and comprised many Dundalk Volunteers, together with officers from south Armagh who had some large scale operations to their credit.

Some time after the party sent to the quarry position to cover Plaster House had left from the ambush position, and the men occupying the other position were in their places, there was quietness and a feeling of nervous alertness. All eyes were focused on the main road, leading from Dundalk for a sign of the approach of the relief party coming in our direction. I then heard the sounds of rifle firing from the Plaster House side of the

hill which suggested that the party sent out to the quarry had got into action with the guard at Barrett's. The sounds of firing increased and I got the feeling that a machine gun was being used. I then heard the sound of a number of motor lorries coming towards us from Dundalk direction. Most of those lorries went on in the direction of Thistle Cross and one or two took the turn leading to Faughart School. It was now evident that the firing at Barrett's had given the alarm in Dundalk and that a big concentration of Crown Forces - Military and Tans - were moving in our direction. We received orders from the ambush position to evacuate our position at the railway bridge as there was danger that all our positions were being encircled. The Dundalk men from the various positions started in the direction of the town and the men from the other northern areas retreated in the direction of their home districts.

I later heard that the men who went to the quarry got into their position without causing any alarm or attracting any attention from the guard at Barrett's. After being a short time in this position they noticed a number of Tans out in a paddock in their shirts and trousers kicking a football about. I was informed that the men at the quarry could not resist the temptation of having a shot at the Tans.

I cannot now remember clearly what way I went from my position at the Great Northern Railway Bridge. I do remember that I got the job of looking after the safety of some of the rifles used and having them dumped. Charles Heeney, Hugh Jordan, myself and some others I cannot now remember, carried a number of rifles from the vicinity of Faughart School for about a mile to the south side of Carrickbroad Mountain where we dumped them.

After this I came home and I was standing outside my house when a number of Tans and R.I.C. came along. They arrested me and took me with them into Ann Street Barracks in Dundalk. In the Barracks I was beaten during an interrogation in an effort to extract information from me about my part in the Plaster House affair.

I was later brought to the Dundalk Military Barracks and was kept there for about 2 weeks. From Dundalk I was removed to Victoria Barracks, Belfast. Some time later I was removed from Victoria Barracks and taken to Bath Internment Camp, Co. Kildare, where I remained a prisoner up to the General Release of interned men.

Signed : James Regan  
(James Regan)

Date : 21. 4. '52.

Witness : John McCoy  
(John McCoy)

Date : 21. 4. '52

