

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

BURO STAIRE MILEATA 1913-21

No. W.S. 748

ROINN



COSANTA.

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 748

Witness

John J. Doyle,
48 Cabra Drive,
North Circular Road,
Dublin.

Identity.

Member of 'C' Company 2nd Battalion
Dublin Brigade, 1914 - ;

Brigade M.O. 1915-1922.

Subject.

Medical services, Dublin Brigade,
1916-1922.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil

File No. S.566

Form B.S.M. 2

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

BURO STAIRE MILEATA 1913-21

No. W.S.

748

W.S. 748

STATEMENT BY J. J. DOYLE,

48 Cabra Drive, North Circular Road,

Dublin.

I was born in Dún Laoghaire on 28th February, 1881. My father was a painting contractor. He was chairman of the Bray Branch of the Land League. He was sentenced to a month's imprisonment on account of his activities in connection with the League. On his release he received a great welcome from the nationalists of Bray. The greater part of his clients were of the unionist class, and as a result of the publicity he received, the unionists ceased to give him contracts, with the result that his business was seriously affected and he was forced to leave Bray and establish himself in Dublin.

I was a founder member of the Catholic Boys' Brigade, Church Street, and of which I am now Honorary Colonel. A first-aid class was formed under the auspices of the Brigade, Surgeon Fagan being the Instructor.

Before the Burgh Quay disaster which occurred in 1905, two officers of the Catholic Boys' Brigade and three officers of the Boys' Brigade (Protestant) founded the City of Dublin St. John Ambulance Association and Brigade. One of the officers of the St. John Ambulance Association was Sir John Lumsden. After a series of lectures under Surgeon Major Brown we established what was known as the Brigade Ambulance. I was connected with the St. John Ambulance Association, taking part in competitions, etc., and I became an instructor. In 1910 two of us

represented Ireland at the first aviation meeting in Britain and which was held at Blackpool southshore. I was a non-commissioned officer on that occasion.

About 1912 our Ambulance Brigade became associated with the British Naval Auxiliary Medical Service for emergencies. This meant that in the event of war we could be called up for service but could not be compelled as we had not taken an oath at all; we only made a declaration. Each year we went for a week's training with the Navy, which included surgical, medical, operation and laboratory courses, hygiene, sanitation and general medical transport. While on training we received pay according to rank. In 1912 and 1913 I did a week's course in Chatham and got practical experience while training in navy surgical and medical wards.

Previous to that we had opened First Aid Stations on behalf of the Ambulance Brigade at three race-courses, Leopardstown, Baldoyle and Punchestown. In Leopardstown the Medical Officer whom we were under was Dr. Redmond. Surgeon McArdle was the man concerned with Leopardstown and Punchestown. I operated under him and usually had two men with me.

I did not attend the meeting which started the Volunteers. As far as I remember I did not join the Volunteers until June, 1914. I then joined "C" Company, 2nd Battalion. I brought about 12 men that I had trained from the Ambulance Brigade into the Company. Captain Eamon Price was in command of the Company. Thomas McDonagh was Commandant of the Battalion. I was about a month in that Company when Thomas McDonagh

learned who I was and what I was. He came to me, and getting my history, he asked me would I organise a Medical Service in the Battalion as there was no organisation whatever. I undertook the job and was thereupon appointed Captain as Medical Officer and organiser for the 2nd Battalion. When I was a few months there the "Split" came in the Volunteers, The majority went with Redmond; I remained with the Irish Volunteers.

My job was to get men for a skeleton medical service. At all events I succeeded in getting some. Following the outbreak of the 1914 War, those of us who were members of the British Naval Auxiliary Medical Service were called up for service by the British Admiralty. I asked the men under my immediate command not to stir as I wanted to get the position clarified as to whether we were liable for six or twelve months' service. I saw Thomas McDonagh and explained the situation to him. I said: "I'm going. I don't know about my men, but I'm coming back", and I did. He said: "Alright". We were sent to Chatham Naval Barracks. The men were confined to Barracks all the week; a certain amount of pressure was brought to bear on them and they became uneasy. They decided to sign on for service as they wanted money. I said: "Do as you please but I will fight it out myself". During the week we had interviews with the officers concerning the regulations, including the Surgeon General, who decided the matter would have to go to the Lords of the Admiralty. There was a draft due for France in three ships, the Munich, China and the Copenhagen.

I was in the Petty Officer's Mess when one of the officers came to me and said my men had been taken from under me, as they had been drafted on the Munich and the

China. I went down and missed both these ships but got on the Copenhagen and went to Calais. We were working as medical staff on these hospital ships transporting the wounded back to England. After a time we were returned to service at shore establishments. I got home on a pretence and worked for my discharge from this side. I got in touch with Sir John Lumsden and other personnel of the Admiralty. It took me six weeks to complete the job, and this under promise to Lumsden that I would go to Dunkirk or to the Hospital in Dublin Castle. I got my discharge papers. This was in 1915. I reported back to Thomas McDonagh. He asked me had I got through alright. I said I had, and he asked me for my discharge papers. I gave them to him and he brought them to General Headquarters at 2 Dawson Street, and later returned them to me. I was still a member of the Battalion Council, being in charge of Medical Services.

Thomas McDonagh ordered me to Brigade Headquarters, 2 Dawson Street. The Brigade Council had gone through my discharge papers and I was appointed Brigade Medical Officer. I had now the responsibility of organising, training and equipping the Brigade Medical Service. At that time the numbers in the Companies were very small on account of the Redmondite split. My job was to get men from the various Companies. I reckoned that if I got eight men in each Company we would be able to form the nucleus of the Medical Service. These men had to be trained in a short time. The time at my disposal was very limited. I had to go through a course of lectures and instructions with those men: this had to be done on a short term basis as there was no time for extended courses. The transport side and the supply

side had also to be established. In addition there were about 12 or 14 branches of Cumann na mBan, and I had to look after them as well.

Most of the Captains grumbled at giving men away. I told them they were not giving them away because at that time there was no Red Cross. "Those men are lines men", I said. In other words, they were in the firing line and could be armed.

I got the required number of men and started training and had to put them through an examination. They were trained in anatomy and physiology and also the practical side of the field work, and transporting. I also had to deal with medical supplies for the Battalion and also the getting and making of first-aid dressings for every Volunteer. In addition to the training of the men there were officers' lectures every week on Saturdays. These were held in 2 Dawson Street. I had to attend there as when McDonagh or Pearse were lecturing they might have to call my attention to certain things in connection with the Medical Service. I also had to write out a pamphlet entitled "A Rough Idea of What a Volunteer should know and what he should do and what he should not do". Every Volunteer received one of these pamphlets.

I did contract with Fannings for field and first-aid dressings and I got some hundreds of them. I was afraid of drawing suspicion on them and I arranged to have Cumann na mBan get instructions on how to make the dressings, etc. In addition the men had to be instructed in what is known as latrine building, trenches, etc. Then there was the question of the water

supply. This was largely a matter that I had to write out papers for the officers of each Battalion, instructing them on the purification, sterilisation, etc. of water. The work continued on. I certainly must say that it was very satisfactory from the point of view that I happened to have men who were very enthusiastic and we got on very well. Then there was the question of supplying the Battalions because the Battalion would be separated, which they were. Training continued and everything was ready up to Easter Week, 1916.

I was dealing largely through Eamon De Valera who was Brigade Adjutant and Commandant of the 3rd Battalion. In the meantime there were what were known as officers' staff rides. These included the selection of ground for manoeuvres, etc. On the Friday night before Easter Sunday I was at Headquarters and the Brigade Adjutant told me that everything would have to be cleared out of Headquarters that evening. "Your Battalions will have to get all the medical supplies out of here and bring them to their own Headquarters. I said I would have it done. All the supplies were at Headquarters. They were all cleared out except the 5th (Fingal) Battalion stuff. That stuff had to be taken away and I had it stored and put in a certain place in Father Mathew Park. Headquarters was cleared completely and evacuated on the Friday night.

The mobilisation for Sunday was countermanded. The only orders we had was to parade on Sunday. We mobilised at Father Mathew Park. We had iron rations. I went with the 2nd Battalion H.Q. staff. Eamon Price, Tom Hunter, Vice-Commandant, and a number of the 2nd Battalion were

there, also M.W. O'Reilly. The parade was dismissed but the order was to 'stand-to' at home and await a further mobilisation. There was a disappointment among a lot of the officers and men. The parade was at about 11 o'clock. I was in company with Price, Tom Hunter, and I went home and went to bed as I had a heavy cold.

On the Monday morning a despatch was sent to me from Tom Hunter to mobilise for Stephen's Green at 10.30 and to bring rations and whatever supplies I had. The supplies I had would need a big lorry, so the job was to commandeer one. I asked my orderly Tom Mason if he could get a lorry to convey our stuff. He went away and returned and said there was a man with a lorry on the North Circular Road. He said he had asked this man to come along, but he would not do so. I went along to the Park and I picked up four men, and commandeered the lorry. We put the driver under arrest. One of my men drove the lorry. We picked up the supplies and conveyed them to G.H.Q. in the G.P.O. In the meantime a Captain Breen of the Engineers had supplies to be taken away and he got them to the G.P.O. safely. During this time also there were a few calls for me - Volunteers on despatch work meeting with accidents. By this time we were on the march but it was past the time for the parade and hostilities had started.

When we had all those that had been demobbed on Sunday ready and rounded up, we started on the road via the Ballybough route. As soon as we had arrived at Summerhill Bridge there was a barrage of machine-gun fire from the slob-lands near Fairview Park. I ordered the men to take possession of the corner house on the bridge and Portland Row and barricade it. Captain Breen, Leo and Frank Henderson and I think, Tom Weafer, with a party of

men went down Bayview Avenue, Charleville Avenue, and engaged the enemy and drove them back putting one of the machine guns out of action. We got our convoys advanced down to Portland Row when a despatch came along to the officer in command. There was no officer present except myself and I found myself in command. In the meantime men were coming in from different parts, those that had been demobilised. I had about fifty or sixty men before we were ready to start. Word came that we were not to advance till we got further orders. After an hour or so an order came from Commandant-General Connolly that we could advance by Summerhill, Gardiner Street, Abbey Street to the G.P.O. About five o'clock we arrived at the G.P.O.

Commandant-General Pearse met me and I told him I was reporting and he asked what had happened to the remainder. I told him what I knew of the Fairview incident. I said, "I'm mobilised by Commandant Thomas McDonagh". "This is G.H.Q. This is where you are going to be", he said. "There are two men already inside waiting on you". I said I wished to report to Commandant McDonagh. I went in. I said, "I have no medical staff except my orderly". He said, "We will see what we can do". The two men inside were Liam Clarke, who was suffering from grenade injuries, and Captain MacCarthy who had abrasions on the knees where he had knelt on the broken glass. I put these men under treatment and when there was an opportunity I got them away to Jervis Street Hospital.

After our party had entered the G.P.O., another party came along. Our people in Clerys opened fire on them

as they mistook them. All escaped injury except Liam McGinley who received shrapnel injuries.

I had to go round O'Connell Street where we had established outposts: one in Clerys, one in Hopkins, one at the Bank in Abbey Street and one at Bachelor's Walk. Captain Tom Weafer was in charge of the Bank outpost. He had come across to me in the Post Office to know if a certain house would be suitable for a Red Cross post. I went across with him and selected the house next the Bank and instructed them to put out a Red Cross flag. We were not fired on. This was on Tuesday.

On Wednesday I got a report from Miss Lizzie Bourke, a Cumann na mBan girl, who brought word that Tom Weafer had been killed. He was shot through the back. It appears according to her statement that he had his back to the window which was open. One of the men put his head out, the sniper fired and he got the fire. An evacuation took place almost immediately but the body was never recovered. His brother Paddy was in the G.P.O. We had thirty-five military prisoners in the G.P.O., five of whom were officers. Outside that casualty most of the wounded were suffering from wounds caused by their own negligence.

We had to find supplies here and there. I had about twelve Cumann na mBan for the nursing inside. A number of them were looking after the cooking arrangements under Miss Gavan Duffy. In the meantime I was sent down three men: one a chemist named Joe Cripps, the other two were Dr. James Ryan (who was not in uniform) and a medical student named McLoughlin. That was the medical personnel at headquarters in the G.P.O.

There was no great call on them during the week as I did most of the work myself except for minor things such as cut fingers, etc. I had about thirty wounded during the week. We had Father John Flanagan from the Pro-Cathedral on Wednesday. Tom McGrath was one of the patients who was very seriously injured.

At that time I had a very small staff and Commandant-General Pearse said to me that one of the prisoners was an officer in the Indian Medical Service and asked me could I make use of him. I said I certainly could make use of him. His name was Captain O'Mahony. He was brought down to me and he later assisted at the operation on Connolly.

Commandant-General Connolly was wounded on Thursday or Friday while inspecting one of the outposts. He was shot with a .303 bullet in the biceps which I treated. He asked me not to mention it to the men. Shortly after I dressed his wound Connolly again left the G.P.O. He received very serious wounds in the leg and ankle, the dum-dum bullet causing a complicated and commuted fracture of the tibia and fibula, which necessitated his being put under an anaesthetic. The operation consisted of stopping the haemorrhage and trying to bring the bones together, which was impossible. I performed the operation, with the assistance of a prisoner named O'Mahony, who was an officer in the Indian Medical Service. Dr. Jim Ryan gave the anaesthetic.

There was only one bed in the place and we put Connolly on this. In dressing Connolly's wounds he asked me not to say anything about them to the other men as he did not want to excite them. Before the operation could take

place Connolly had to see his Secretary to make statements. He was brought up after the operation on his own orders to the front of the premises where his position had been all through. He remained there until the evacuation.

Nothing but perpetual firing from machine-guns was going on all the time. Eventually the opposite side were getting the better. They started to shell the place and it started to go on fire. It was decided by Headquarters to issue instructions to the men about the surrender. I was called up and I was asked by Commandant Connolly to give him a report on what the wounded was, which I gave to him. The firing was very heavy at the time, it was getting into the archway. "You needn't be afraid, it is coming mighty near", I said. He said, "You take your line of retreat with your personnel", of whom there were twelve Cumann na mBan, about thirty patients and my staff of four. I left Jim Ryan with Connolly, who told me my line of evacuation was into the Coliseum. They, he said, were going out into Henry Street. I told him that I heard rumours that the Coliseum was closed to us, that the enemy had got in. He told me to get an officer and find out. I got an officer who I think was M.W.O'Reilly, but I am not sure. We went through to the Coliseum and reported back that the way was clear. Connolly said, "That is your route". I asked Pearse to allow O'Mahony, the Indian Medical Officer, to accompany me with my staff. He agreed to that. We evacuated into the Coliseum, over walls, and through holes, carrying the wounded. Fr. O'Flanagan was with us. We settled the patients in the Coliseum. In evacuating the G.P.O. we had to move quickly as the place was on fire and I had to treat a number of Citizen Army men who were on the roof, for shrapnel wounds.

The next thing I had to get my staff to get all the dressings and materials they could possibly carry away, and others to get as much food as possible. The last persons to leave the building were Commandant-General Pearse and myself, he going into Henry Street and I going into the Coliseum. Connolly refused to come with us; he was carried on a stretcher into Henry Street. When they were all evacuated, Miss Gavan Duffy came back to get me to leave and I said as long as you keep coming back I have to stop here. I left through the tunnels to the Coliseum and established the patients there.

Some time during the night I was watching the G. P. O. It was becoming too dangerous to remain where we were as we were in close proximity. I called to O'Mahony. "What is your opinion about that?", I said. "We may be involved at any time, it is very dangerous". He agreed it was. I decided we would wait another while. It was later decided to evacuate to Jervis Street Hospital and I collected the wounded. I had asked Connolly to give me sufficient men to carry the wounded. He told me to pick whatever men I required that were with my party then. Eventually we got out and Father O'Flanagan offered to lead the way and we got them through a burning barricade down a lane from Prince's Street to Abbey Street, and lined them out on the south side of Abbey Street.

After some time Father O'Flanagan called out, "Wounded, Red Cross". After several times calling out he got the answer to advance with the Red Cross flag. Father O'Flanagan advanced down to the barricade and after some time we got orders to advance to Jervis Street Hospital where we left our wounded. I was told after

that when evacuating the G.P.O., Dr. Ted O'Kelly had dropped into our party. The women were kept at the hospital, and those of us who were healthy were told by the British Officer in charge to fall in. I asked him, "Are we going to cross the barrier?". The Captain said, "No, you are going out to where you came from, to be shot or burned out". He took the Red Cross flag and handed it to me. He said, "Take your men out with you". We then formed up. Before the gate was opened he shouted out to the officer in charge at the barricade, "Those men going out are not to be fired on until out of sight and out of sight only". There was only one lamp lighting in the street when we came out. They did not fire on us. Desmond Fitzgerald was in our party. I returned to Arnott's and I decided to evacuate there and watched an opportunity and assembled the men back on the laneway again and wait for an opportunity to go across the road. Some doors opened. We got the men in two's and three's to go across the road. We all got across. We were picked up the next morning. This was on Saturday. We were marched over to McBirney's and brought to Trinity College and there we were interrogated and brought up to the Castle and again interrogated there and brought to Ship Street Barracks.

At my interrogation in Trinity College certain medical instruments were found on me about which I had to explain. They sent for a Medical Officer who came down and put me through an examination which I passed alright. I still had to go to the Castle for further interrogation and then to Ship Street Barracks.

On Sunday morning a list of names was called out - those that had been taken the night before. I reminded

them that my name was not on this list. They went off and continued collecting prisoners for transfer to Richmond Barracks. Five or six of us were left back out of between forty and fifty. We were then taken from where we were upstairs to the guardroom cell. After some time we were brought out into the guardroom proper and were told to get out and were released.

During the time the men were in prison a number of others who escaped and officers from the different garrisons came together and started re-organising "C" Company, 2nd Battalion. We had to work underground. We did this through societies, various clubs, etc., and we had officers' meetings under the guise of my own trade.

In 1916 there was a lull as most of the men were in jail. We started to get together and re-organise under cover but practically nothing was done to get on with the various activities. When the prisoners returned after their release they returned to their respective posts. After the execution of the Commanders, such as Ned Daly of the 1st Battalion, Eamon Ceannt, etc. with whom I was intimately associated, there were promotions. In 1917 I resumed duty as officer in charge of Brigade Medical Services.

In 1918 I continued active service, night and day. The Brigade staff was formed principally when the prisoners were released. Mulcahy was the first O/C. of the Brigade after 1916. He was succeeded by Dick McKee. Oscar Traynor became Brigade O/C. after Dick McKee's death.

I had a lot of work to do. I was trying to re-organise and get more personnel to form a Medical Unit.

I had to take every advantage I could of having lectures held and meetings with the staff on Saturday afternoons at cycle clubs, etc. As far as I was concerned I was there practically all the time.

I continued with my active service during 1918 and 1919. After the Ashtown ambush in 1919 I attended Dan Breen at Stasia Twomey's on Phibsboro' Road. Commandant P. Daly called for me to attend him. Martin Savage, who was killed in the ambush, had been with me on the previous evening.

The usual routine work and training continued during 1920 and 1921. Brigade meetings were held regularly in different places during the Tan War. I asked to be allowed attend the 2nd Battalion meetings. These meetings were held secretly.

After the Treaty we broke sides. After the Truce with the British we had a Medical Camp at Mount Seskin and had all medical personnel out there, including those from the South Dublin Brigade which had a man there who assisted me, named Dr. Loftus. We went through a course of training and night operations, i.e. field operations. We took over a place which was known as the A.S.U. Training Camp. I was sent for from Beggars Bush, A.S.U. Headquarters and asked to go whole-time into the Free State Army, which I declined to do. I was asked to supply medical personnel. I said I would do so if I got instructions from my Brigade. The man who asked me was Dr. Ahearne who was appointed by the Free State to be Medical Administrator. After some time I was instructed that I could send on a number of men but the understanding was that if there was not to be a republican army the men were to be at liberty to return. Then the Civil War came on. Our troops took over various

jobs: we were fighting the issue between ourselves. I was arrested after the fall of the city - Moran's Hotel, Four Courts, H. Q., The Hammond, Barry's Hotel.

I was interned in Wellington Barracks and then transferred to Mountjoy, but was released after about six weeks. The excuse was put forward that I was not a dangerous man but was an important man, and that my house was to be searched as it was reported that I was having meetings there. During the Black and Tan War the Battalion medical staff included, Vincent Gogan, M. Traynor, 2nd Battalion, T. Farrell, Dr. Crowley, 4th; Porter, 3rd; T. Lynch, 2nd.

I want to praise the Cumann na mBan at G. H. Q. during Easter Week for their courage and devotion and work; it was magnificent. They were as brave if not braver than the men themselves. They were, to me at all events, as I had to depend largely on them as I had not the male personnel.

SIGNED

Const John P. Doyle
J. J. DOYLE

DATE

12th November 1952
12th November, 1952.

WITNESS

Sean Brennan Comdt.

(Sean Brennan), Comd't.

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
BURO STAIRE MILEATA 1913-21
No. W.S. 748