

**ORIGINAL**

THE BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY  
1913-21  
W.S. 870

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21  
BURO STAIRE MILEATA 1913-21  
NO. W.S. 870

ROINN  COSANTA.

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 870.....

Witness

Charles Shelley,  
45 Kilworth Road,  
Drimmagh,  
Dublin.

Identity.

Member of 3rd Battalion, Dublin Brigade,  
1915 - ;

Member of 'G' Company, 1st Battalion,  
Dublin Brigade, 1917 -.

Subject.

His National activities,  
1913-1921.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil

File No. S.2172.....

Form B.S.M. 2

ORIGINAL

W. S. 870

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
BURO STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21
No. W.S. 870

STATEMENT BY CHARLES SHELLEY  
45 Kilworth Road, Drimnagh, Dublin.

My father, having a great interest in national and labour affairs and being a friend of Jim Larkin and James Connolly, joined the Citizen Army when it was formed. I, being too young to join the Citizen Army, joined the National Guard which was an organisation similar to the Fianna and attached to the Citizen Army. It was organised by Seamus McGowan.

We trained at Croydon Park which was owned by the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union. We had lectures and exercises in scoutcraft. We drilled and were trained in the use of the revolver, including firing practice.

On the Sunday of the Howth Gun-running we were out on an exercise at Swords, which I think was arranged purposely to keep us out of the way. As a result of the Howth gun-running, my father and I did get two rifles which we kept at home. These had been picked up near Croydon Park after the attempt had been made to disarm the Volunteers.

In 1915 I joined the 3rd Battalion of the Irish Volunteers at Camden Place. I couldn't attend many parades as I was engaged on night work at the Broadstone Railway works. Consequently I was not mobilised by the 3rd Battalion at Easter 1916.

My father had been mobilised by the Citizen Army and on Easter Monday morning he returned home to see my mother who was being removed to hospital that day. It was then I learned that the Rising was about to take place. Having a rifle at home, I decided to offer my services. I knew it would be of no use to look for the 3rd Battalion and, as I lived in Augustine Street at the time, I decided to go to the nearest post. I met a Volunteer at the Church Street post~~(s)~~, told him my position and he directed me to go to Headquarters at Convent in North Brunswick Street. I went there and met some of the officers. I didn't know any of them then but later I knew one of them to be Eamon Morkan. I was questioned about my qualifications and knowledge of arms. Eventually I was told to go home for my arms and report back.

I was asked by one of the officers to deliver a

letter, on my way, to the Reverend Mother, Stanhope Street Convent. The letter was from a girl who was being held as a prisoner and was, I believe, to her brother who was on leave from the Australian Army.

When I reported back, I was placed as sentry over the girl prisoner who was kept in one of the rooms. After a while she asked if she could see an officer. I told one of the officers and he brought her along to the room where Commandant Daly and his staff officers were. I never saw the girl again, nor did I hear why she was kept a prisoner.

I was then ordered to join a party which had been told to dig a trench across the road between the Convent and the Richmond Hospital. After about an hour the men, who were unused to picks, not have made much progress, the work was called off.

On Tuesday afternoon we were issued with rations in the North Dublin Union. A party of about from twelve to fourteen of us under Lieutenant Donoghue were marched to the railway bridge at Broadstone Station. We were told that British Army troops were expected to occupy the station and that we were to get there first. We were ordered into

the prone position on the bridge, and Eamon Martin was ordered to go and see if the gates into the main office were locked. While he was testing the gates, which he found to be locked, no move of any kind was made, but as he was returning a shot rang out and he was hit. He was brought to the Richmond Hospital. The remainder of us were taken to a garden on the right-hand side of the wagon shop wall. After about an hour we were withdrawn to a house at the corner of Coleraine Street and Church Street to cover Constitution Hill, up which the British military were expected to come. There was, however, no movement of British troops there and we were withdrawn between ten and eleven o'clock that night.

On Wednesday we were quartered in Moore's Dairy in the upper portion of the house. It was quiet that day, so quiet that some of the bakers had returned to Monks Bakery and there were lines of people being served with bread.

I saw a party of police, probably from the Bridewell, passing by under arrest and with a Volunteer escort.

On Thursday firing was continuous. The British forces had started that morning to move up North King

Street. They came from the <sup>Capel Street end of North King St.</sup> ~~Constitution Hill way~~. Our party in Moore's Dairy engaged a party of the enemy who were attempting to come through Monks' Bakery. The main body of Volunteers were engaging the British forces coming up North King Street. Later in the day a party of men who were in Reilly's publichouse and who were in danger of being cut off, as the British forces were now well up in North King Street, had to bore through seven or eight houses to get to North Brunswick Street. Rumours began to reach us about how the fighting was progressing. One of the rumours was that the Germans had landed and were advancing along the Naas Road. On this day we were joined by the men of the Mendicity Institute garrison.

On Friday the firing was again continuous.

Reilly's publichouse had been evacuated and the British forces had almost reached the barricade at North Brunswick Street. We in Moore's Dairy were in a dangerous position, having to lean out of the windows so as to be able to fire at the British troops at <sup>North King</sup> ~~Brunswick~~ Street corner.

On Saturday the firing died down and that evening two priests came through to tell us that a cease fire had

been arranged. The men were dismayed at the news of the surrender. At this time there was no shortage of food; we had plenty of rifle ammunition but no revolver ammunition. As the British troops were so near, we had been issued with revolvers on Friday.

On Sunday morning I was sent on duty to the barricade running from Moore's Dairy to Moore's, the Coachbuiders, near the corner of North Brunswick Street. While there a British officer came up from North King Street and turned around the corner of North Brunswick Street. The Volunteers near me shouted to cover him off. Commandant Holohan went out to meet him and, after talking to him for about fifteen minutes, Commandant Holohan ordered us to fall in - there were less than sixty of us. We handed our revolvers to students from the Richmond Hospital. We marched from North Brunswick Street to North King Street where we were told to "ground arms". A lot of the men smashed their rifles and, although the British troops were watching, they did not interfere. We were marched from North King Street along Capel Street and Parliament Street to the Castle. After about an hour we were marched to Richmond Barracks where detectives were identifying

prisoners. We were marched to the boat to be taken to Stafford Prison. It was only then when passing that we saw the destruction of O'Connell Street.

At Stafford Prison they must have expected a lot of trouble and resistance from us, for our guards were armed with batons and we were kept in solitary confinement until, after repeated protests, the restrictions were ~~released~~ <sup>relaxed</sup>.

After a period in Frongoch Camp to which we were transferred, I was released in 1917.

On my return I joined the re-organised "G" Company of the 1st Battalion which met at Blackhall Place. The only incident concerning the Company in 1917 was when on an exercise in Whitehall one Sunday the police arrived on the scene. We were ordered by the Company Commander to break up into parties of two and take no notice of the police. Two of our Company, including Joe Dodd, were arrested.

When the 5th (Engineer) Battalion was formed, I was transferred to it. Liam Archer was the Commanding Officer of the Battalion. Mick Cremin was my Company O.C. Other



officers of the Battalion at the time were J. Darcy, Brendan Muldoon, Ned Kelly and Jim Hughes, who is now an engineer in Thurles Beet Factory. We had a number of University Engineering students in the Battalion.

Our Company did most of its training at Liffey Junction. This consisted of drill, signal training, lectures on explosives and laying of mines. We were taken around and shown the lay-out of telegraph and telephone wires and how to locate different trunk lines. We also noted the types of tools required and places where they could be obtained. I obtained some from the Broadstone Locomotive Works; others were obtained from places like the Dublin Corporation Workshops.

We had a dump for these tools in Mountjoy Square.

During the years 1920 and 1921 we were engaged on patrols, generally along the Quays. During this period I took part in attempts to de-rail trains carrying British military, at Cabra, Drumcondra near Jones' Road, and Killester, but these failed because a pilot engine which went in front of the train was always too near it to allow time for the laying of the explosive charges on the rails.

The Company was mobilised in North Great George's Street to take part in an attempted rescue of Kevin Barry who was under sentence of death in Mountjoy Prison. This was to have been a Brigade operation but it was called off.

In the late summer of 1920 the Company was mobilised for an ambush on Black and Tans which was planned to take place in Frederick Street. The Company had a paper strength of between fifty and sixty, but only about thirty could be regarded as active.

The spot selected was between the L.S.E. garage and the corner of Dorset Street. Lieutenant Darcy was in charge. Four men were placed at the L.S.E. garage, a section at a laneway opposite the garage and the remainder further along the street. When two lorries of Black and Tans arrived at the spot, fire was opened from the laneway and a grenade was thrown. One of our party, named Lanigan, threw a grenade when the lorry had slowed down. The Tans returned the fire but did not stop. One of the Volunteers named Dwyer was wounded and died later in Jervis Street.

When Lanigan was throwing the grenade, he was hit and fell on top of us. Being a very big man, we had considerable

difficulty in carrying him. We carried him to Mountjoy Street, across North Great George's Street. We put him on a van, covered him over and brought him to a doctor in Gardiner Street who was friendly to the Volunteers. He eventually got him into a Hospital.

I did not take part in the burning of the Custom House as I was working down the country at the time.

We were continually engaged in wire cutting. This involved risks, as it was generally done during the hours of curfew. If a patrol was sighted, we had to take cover in doorways. Mick Cremin always used his bicycle when engaged on these operation and often gave me a lift home during the curfew hours. We were not armed when engaged on this work.

When we were engaged on any job requiring explosives or heavy tools, these were taken by Mick Dunne on a handcart. In this way no suspicion was aroused as it was a common enough sight and he looked like any other workman.

In June, 1921, it had been noticed that the Black and Tans appeared to be more confident about walking around the

city. Our Company, as part of a bigger operation, was ordered to take up a position one evening between Bachelor's Walk and Capel Street Bridge and to shoot any Black and Tans in sight. The operation was, however, called off at the last minute.

I was one of those selected to deliver the cease fire order to units down the country.

After the Truce we established a camp at the Pine Forest where we continued our training.

*Charles Shelley*

(Charles Shelley)

*24th June 1953*

24th June 1953.

*J Kearns Comdt.*

(J Kearns) Comd't.

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
BURO STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21
No. W.S. 870