

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

BURO STAIRÉ MILITÁ 1913-21

No. W.S. 1082

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 1,082

Witness

Joseph McDonough,
2 Blessington St.,
Dublin.

Identity.

Member of 'C' Company 1st Battalion
Dublin Brigade, 1914-1916.

Subject.

Church Street area, Dublin,
Easter Week 1916.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil

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BUREAU STAIRS MILEATA 1138 1082

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STATEMENT BY JOSEPH McDONOUGH

2. Blessington St., Dublin.

and 27 St. Peter's Road, Phibsboro', Dublin.

I was born on 5th ~~November~~^{SEPTEMBER} 1896, at 5 Upper Abbey St. and I attended school at Strand St. Christian Brothers which I left in the latter end of the year 1911.

I was and am a hairdresser and in those days we used to work on Sundays up to 1 and 1.30 o'clock. I remember the Howth gunrunning which took place on a Sunday in July 1914, a few weeks before the outbreak of the first world war. On that occasion the citizens were fired on by men of the Scottish Borderers - a British Regiment - in Bachelor's Walk and a number of people were killed and wounded.

In common with the rest of the young people of the day, I was very indignant at this treatment meted out to our people and I resolved to join the Irish Volunteers. A few days afterwards I went down to 41 Parnell Square which was at that time the headquarters of the 1st Battalion, Dublin Brigade, and offered myself for membership. I joined the Movement and was posted to C/Company of the battalion.

My company officers were Captain Michael Judge, Lieutenants Thomas Dolan and Frank Fahy. From that date onwards until Easter Week I attended the usual weekly parades as ordered by the company commander, at which we took part in drill movements, musketry exercises and, on occasion, field exercises in the vicinity of King James's Castle, Finglas, and in brigade manoeuvres in the vicinity of the Three Rock Mountain.

I also took part in a battalion operation against units of the Fingal Brigade in the Finglas vicinity, our unit being commanded by Commandant Ned Daly who later distinguished himself in the Four Courts, South King Street area and was

subsequently executed by the British.

On this particular occasion John Redmond, leader of the Irish Parliamentary Party, was giving one of his recruiting speeches in Dublin City. This was the general routine work of my unit during the period up to and immediately preceding Easter Week, 1916.

For some time before Easter Week we were all busily engaged in getting supplies of arms and munitions, together and moving them from place to place.

I continued to live at the address already given and, as was customary in those days, I went to my place of business in Dorset St. on Easter Monday. At about 11 o'clock in the morning of Easter Monday I went down to book two seats in the old Coliseum Theatre in Henry St. which was burned down during the Rising. On my way down I met members of my company on their way to Blackhall Place and they told me that they were mobilised. I went on, booked the two seats in the Coliseum and brought the tickets to my brother's shop in Dorset St. I got my bike, went home, got my arms and equipment and reported to Blackhall Place. When I got to Blackhall Place, Commandant Daly had assembled the battalion at about 11.45 a.m. He informed us that the Rising had started and that any man who wished to leave was at liberty to do so. As far as I could see, no man left the ranks. I and others of my section ^{were} then marched out by Mark Wilson, who was the section leader, and proceeded down Queen's St. in the direction of the quays. Having reached the quays we swung left for the Four Courts and, on reaching Church St., we wheeled up Church St. and some of my comrades were detailed to enter the Bridewell and the Four Courts. I and some others were detailed for duty in Church St. This would be in or about 1.30 p.m.

While on duty in Church St. at about 2 o'clock, we were approached by a D.M.P. man who was going on duty, so we held him up. One of my comrades named Joe Brabazon (since deceased) went very close to the 'Bobby' who immediately caught Brabazon by the scruff of the neck, at the same time prodding him with his baton. One of our men fired and the 'Bobby', realising that this was not fun, dropped his baton, surrendered, was taken prisoner and brought to the Four Courts

In the afternoon, myself, Joe Brabazon and Sean Ellis were detailed for duty at the junction of Hammond Lane and Phoenix St. where we remained until 6 o'clock the following morning. Our main duty during this period consisted of observing enemy movements and arresting members of the British forces who were returning to barracks. These were taken prisoner and brought to the Four Courts. During the afternoon of Monday, while we were on outpost duty at the junction of Phoenix St. and Hammond Lane, Father O'Callaghan, who was then a curate in St. Paul's, Arran Quay, engaged us in conversation. In common with other Irishmen of the day, I expected that we would get some encouragement from one of our clergy, but, to my amazement, he took the opposite view, and condemned us roundly for our action in going out in rebellion against the established authority, and informed me personally that anyone of us who took part in the Rising would end up in hell!

In the early hours of the following morning one of my comrades went into the Four Courts to see if he could scrounge some food for us and learned that they were not aware that we held the outpost mentioned. During the Monday night and Tuesday morning there was heavy firing going on in the vicinity of the Mendicity Institution which was held by Seán Heuston and his men, and it is understandable that in these circumstances we were forgotten about. We were brought in

from our post and we got a meal.

Having partaken of the meal, I was sent off on duty to one of the big rooms facing Adam and Eve's Chapel. I remained there all day on Tuesday, Tuesday night and Wednesday morning, On Wednesday morning I was sent out on duty on the barricade at Church St. Bridge which was then under heavy fire from British forces from the Watling St. end of the quays. Sometime on Wednesday evening I was withdrawn from the barricade and sent to a room in Hand's at the corner of Church St. which was, and still is, a fruiterer's shop. This room commanded a good view of the approaches from the Phoenix Park direction and from which likely reinforcements for the British would probably arrive.

Sometime on Thursday British troops were observed advancing down the quays from Watling St. and came under heavy fire from our forces. As they suffered some casualties they withdrew and did not press the attack. Sometime on Thursday night, on the orders of Peadar Clancy, we took possession of the publichouse opposite Hand's and set fire to it so as to prevent it falling into the hands of the British. The premises went up in flames together with a tram car which had been abandoned by its crew right in front of the publichouse.

All through Friday we came under heavy fire from the British from all directions, particularly from the Queen St. area and the houses on the opposite side of the quays.

On Friday evening the British brought artillery into action and commenced to shell the Four Courts from the direction of Exchange St. During all this time we had very little sleep, and on Friday night, things quietened down somewhat and we got a few hours rest during which time anything could have happened of which I am not aware.

On Saturday morning things quietened down so much that we did not know what to think and we were wondering whether the British or ourselves had chucked in.

Sometime on Saturday morning we observed a civilian coming along the quays in our direction and he stopped and informed us that our people in the centre of the city had surrendered. Some of my comrades took such a poor view of this that they doubted his word and were inclined to shoot him for spreading false rumours. Some of the saner men amongst us said: "Let him go and we'll see about it further".

All during the week Father O'Callaghan of Arran Quay had been moving amongst our men persuading them to lay down their arms and discontinue the firing. He became such a nuisance in this respect that Lieutenant Thomas Allen, who was killed later in the Church St. area, asked him for God's sake to go away and leave us alone. Despite this request, he persisted in his activity, but nevertheless he heard our confessions when asked to do so.

At about 1 o'clock on the Saturday I was on Church St. Bridge when Father O'Callaghan and a British officer came along. I held both up and put the British officer into the hallway of Hand's premises, and when Father O'Callaghan attempted to go in after him, I refused to let him in. I sent word to Commandant Ned Daly telling what had happened and saying that the officer and Father O'Callaghan wished to see him. Commandant Daly with Captain Eamon Duggan and some other officer arrived on the scene and Commandant Daly asked Father O'Callaghan what authority he had to bring a British officer there. Father O'Callaghan, turning, pointed to Peadar Clancy (just returned from a reconnaissance of the Queen St. area where they had been trying to locate British snipers who had been giving us a rough time) said: "That's the man". This was a falsehood, as Peadar Clancy had been

away on a mission when Father O'Callaghan left the bridge previously and could not, therefore, in any circumstances, have been in contact with him. Immediately Father O'Callaghan made this statement, one of our hot-headed comrades went to have a smack at him but was restrained.

Some short time after the previous incident, one of the Cumann na mBan was observed coming down the quays under the protection of a White Flag. She was admitted into the Four Courts to see Commandant Daly. Commandant Daly came out and gave us orders that on no account were we to fire on anyone and to cease action for the time being. After a lapse of some time he again returned from Winetavern Street direction and gave us the bad news that the Surrender had been ordered by Commandant General Pearse.

This news was very badly received by the men who were most anxious to continue the fight and, seeing that our Commanding Officer was adamant in his attitude, a number of men commenced to smash up their arms so that they would not fall into the hands of the British. I, with others of my comrades who were present, were ordered into the Four Courts by our Commanding Officer. When we got into the Four Courts we found that the "Pals" Battalion of the Dublin Fusiliers (a British Regiment) was lined up in Charles St. and we were ordered to proceed to the railings separating the Four Courts from Charles St. and hand our arms through the railing to the British. While I was doing this I recognised a sergeant of the Dublin Fusiliers who had been a customer of mine in our hairdresser's shop in Dorset St. He recognised me, but beyond that took no further notice. I met him many times afterwards and he never referred to the incident.

The Surrender having been completed insofar as it affected the Four Courts Garrison, we were then lined up in the courtyard by Commandant Ned Daly and the other officers of the battalion. Lieutenant Joe McGuinness, one

of our officers, told us that any of us who felt we had a chance of escaping should do so. I, with some others, finding we had a good chance of getting away, took the opportunity. While in Hand's on outpost duty during the week, I had noticed a pair of trousers hanging in one of the rooms and, as I was wearing puttees and breeches, I headed for Hand's with the object of discarding these and getting the trousers. I got into Hand's without difficulty and, as the trousers were big enough, I pulled them over my puttees and breeches and made my way down to Phoenix St. The idea originated in the mind of a comrade, ^{Stephen} Frank Pollard, who had been fighting with us in the Four Courts and who had previously been a member of the British army. During the week he got a civilian suit and, in discussion with us, he said that if anything happened it was his intention to get out of uniform, get into civilian attire and make his escape, which he did.

While I was on outpost duty at the corner of Phoenix St. during the week a school pal of mine (Freddie Kavanagh) came up to me and during the course of conversation he told me he lived at No. 5 Phoenix Street. When I escaped from the Four Courts as stated, I made my way down Hammond Lane to this address and, having gained admission, Mrs. Kavanagh, my pal's mother, put me up for the night. I burned the breeches and puttees so that if the place was raided by the British, evidence of my connection with the Volunteers would not be found.

After breakfast the following morning, which was Sunday, I made my way to Adam and Eve's chapel where I attended Mass and where I met some more of my comrades who had been in the Four Courts and who had made their escape in a somewhat similar manner to my own. After Mass I made my way down Arran St. with the object of cutting through Little Mary St.

to Abbey St. where I lived. When I got to Little Mary Street I found that the British had a barricade erected and were holding up all male civilians, but were letting the women through. A Miss Kennedy whom I knew, and whose brother had been with us in the Four Courts, attempted to get me through as her brother, but she was unsuccessful.

I retraced my steps back to Adam & Eve's Chapel to see if I could meet any of my comrades from Abbey St. where I lived, but saw none. I then tried to get back to the north side but, in the meantime, the Bridge had been occupied by the British troops as were all the other Bridges within sight. I then made my way in the direction of the Kingsbridge with the idea of getting across some of the Bridges to the north side, but it was not until I came to Kingsbridge that I found the way clear.

Just as I crossed the Kingsbridge, a military touring car passed and in it I noticed our Commander-in-Chief, P.H. Pearse, who was then a prisoner and was being brought to British Command Headquarters, I presume. By this time I was pretty well fed up trying to make my way to Abbey St. Having got across the Kingsbridge and while going down the Esplanade, I was held up by a party of British troops. I was then in the state of mind that I did not care what happened, when one of the British soldiers pulled out a prayer book and asked me if I had been to Church. I said I had and he told me to go ahead. I made my way down the quays, passing groups of British soldiers at the different Bridges, and particularly in the vicinity of the Four Courts, but I was not molested in any way. I saw that there was no chance of getting to Abbey St. as the area was completely surrounded and I then made my way to our place of business in Dorset St. and spent the night with some friends named Burke who lived in 17 Temple Street.

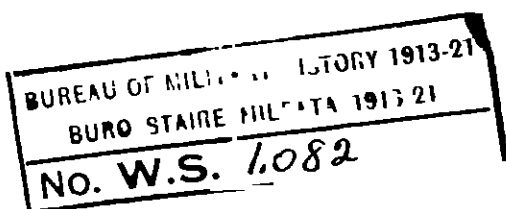
The following day I made my way down to O'Connell St. together with large numbers of the population who were out viewing the ruins of the G.P.O. and the whole of O'Connell St. which I found in ruins. The only object I saw standing, I am sorry to say, was Nelson Pillar as it is today.

I would like to mention at this stage before concluding my recollections of the fighting in Easter Week, that "C" Company of the 1st Battalion, to which I had the honour of belonging, turned out in full strength, there being no absentees from mobilisation. I am aware that many men who had not been mobilised, but who had been made aware of the Rising, reported, not alone to the Four Courts, but to the G.P.O. and other positions throughout the city.

Eventually, I got home to my residence in Abbey St. where I remained for a few days, but as the Dublin Detective Division were becoming more active in tracing members of the Volunteers, I had to shift my abode to Brunswick (now Pearse) Street, where I put up with a brother of mine who was living there.

Andy Flynn, who was a member of the Metropolitan Police, "C" Division, Strand St., and also a friend of our family, informed us that he had been questioned by his superiors regarding my movements during Easter Week, as it had been reported that I had been seen leaving the house on Easter Monday with my equipment. He told them that he knew the family well and that, as far as he was aware, we had no connection with any disloyal organisation.

I stayed with my brother in Pearse St. for a fortnight when I returned home and, strange to say, I was not subjected to any interrogation or raids by the British Authorities.



Signed:

Joseph MacDonough
(Joseph MacDonough)

Date:

3rd Feb 1955

Witness. *M. F. Ryan* (M.F. Ryan)
Investigator