

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
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No. W.S. 151

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 151

Witness

James Ryan,
10 O'Connell Terrace,
Clonmel,
Co. Tipperary.

Identity

Member of Irish Volunteers, Clonmel,
1916.

Subject

Clonmel area
Easter Week, 1916.

Conditions, if any, stipulated by Witness

Nil

File No. S.792

Form B.S.M. 2.

ORIGINAL

10, O'Connell Terrace,
Clonmel,
Co. Tipperary.

15th July, 1948.

Dear Sir,

I am enclosing documents of the 1916 period, also a written story of events that took place in Clonmel and county Tipperary during that period. I hope you will excuse the way it is written, also the paper at my disposal was not suitable. If I can be helpful in any other way I will only be too happy to do so.

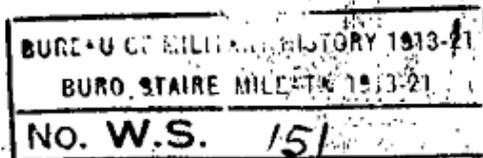
Wishing your efforts on the history of the 1916 men every success, and hoping it will go down to future generations.

I am Sir,

Your Obedient Servant,

James Ryan.

(signed).



ORIGINALSTORY OF THE RISING IN CLONMEL-

by one who took part!

About the year 1914 a small number of young men, all members of the Gaelic League, used to meet in a room in the Temperance Hall, Irishtown, Clonmel. Here under our leader, Frank Drohan, we studied the language, history and music of our country. We organised Feiseanna, céilidhi, and learned all the Irish dances.

About this time the R.I.C. were getting suspicious of our meetings and kept a close eye on all our members. A few of our members were summoned for collecting money for the League, others for giving their names in Irish to R.I.C. Sergeant. Organisers of the Gaelic League visited Clonmel - Michael O'Foley, M. O'Connor, and Martin Fitzgerald of Ardmore, Co. Waterford. We had some very good Irish concerts.

The Sinn Féin and Volunteer movement was soon organised in Clonmel and we got a good many new members into our ranks. We elected Frank Drohan as our Company Captain and had about 50 men in the rank and file. Some of our members belonged to the Workmen's Boat Club and we had the use of their Hall for drill and lectures. We also went up the hills on Sundays for drill and target practice. A subscription of 4d per week was paid towards the purchase of our rifles. We had about 25 rifles in the company. The R.I.C. were now on our track and took notes at our concerts for singing what they called seditious songs and recitations. Our Company was represented at O'Donovan Rossa funeral in Dublin. We also attended a review of Volunteers at Tipperary under Seán Treacy, Dan Breen and Seamus Robinson. Ben Hickey was arrested in

Clonmel for wearing uniform and the police made a baton charge at the men who tried to rescue him. The drums of the local band were broken. We posted up anti-recruiting bills around Clonmel and the police made another charge, armed with rifles. Some of our members had narrow escapes. Tom Lynch's 'Printing Works', Carrick-on-Suir, were dismantled for printing seditious literature. We carried out raids on postmen and captured useful information posted to the Military stationed at Clonmel. Mr. Treacy's Income Tax Office was raided by our men and all books destroyed. The local R.I.C. with one or two exceptions were all hostile. (Sgt. Henehan and Constable Creagan). The Fianna Boys were also attached to the Volunteers and also the Cumann na mBan and carried out some very daring work. There were about this time stationed in Clonmel Military Barracks 800 men - the Devonshire Regiment and Royal Irish. Some of our Volunteers were working as civilians in Clonmel Military Barracks and Sean Morrissy was able to buy some rifles from friendly soldiers. He was also instrumental in getting duplicate key of magazine which we were to attack later. We found out that the British had four sentries on magazine, also that the magazine had a vaulted roof, and the attack was called off. Mr. Morrissy was dismissed from the Barracks as he was under suspicion of being a rebel. When the Gaelic League held the annual procession to Patrick's Well the R.I.C. followed in large numbers, and Mulcahy Lyons was arrested for delivering a seditious speech. A Military Officer gave orders to remove the Republican flag from the Town Hall and threatened to burn down the place. A guard of Volunteers were then placed in the Hall. Despatches were carried from Clonmel to Headquarters at Glenegat almost daily, also to Tincurry House Faddy O'Brien was one of our best riders and always escaped arrest. The British were now about to apply

conscription and we got many new recruits. The Irish Party had recruiting meeting in Clonmel and advised all young men to join the British Army. A few joined the National Volunteers but the majority fell in with the Volunteers to fight for Ireland. Events were moving now in Clonmel and some of us were expecting a call to arms would soon come. The call came on the Saturday night before the Rising. We paraded at Jackson's Cross. About 100 men were given instructions to go to Confession and be ready with 24 hours rations, rifle, and whatever ammunition was available, also small arms or shotguns. We had a good supply of shotgun cartridges refilled with slugs made from a mould by Jim Whelan and his brother Larry. Our rifles were smuggled in cases to Hearn's of Waterford and came by car to Two-mile-Bridge, where Volunteers carried them into town, under our great coats, past the military. Bill Mackey was our Q.M. and kept a strict look after rifles and ammunition. Sunday morning of Easter Week came and no news from Dublin. All Military were confined to Bks. in Clonmel and we had a suspicion that all leaders were about to be arrested. On Monday night we decided to get in touch with Limerick and Cork who were moving south to Clonmel, and meet them at a place called Rathronan two miles from Clonmel. Tommy Donovan volunteered to cycle to Cork by motor cycle to find out if Cork and Limerick were out. We now got news from Dublin that the Rising was on and next day about 50 men left their work in Clonmel and proceeded to Rathronan. Some went on bicycle and more on foot, and carried arms and equipment. Tom Barrett brought more rifles out in a breadvan. We waited for about four hours expecting columns to arrive from Cork and Limerick. A despatch rider, D.P. Walsh of Fethard, arrived from Pierce McCann with McNeill's order that the Rising was called off. Some Volunteers passed Lisronagh Bks, -R.I.C.-

but were not held up or searched. Within two miles of a garrison of 800 soldiers and about 40 R.I.C., it was not very easy to get our rifles and ammunition into safe keeping and get back into town again! Early on Wednesday R.I.C. and military made the following arrests in Clonmel - John Morrissy, Thos. Halpin, Phil Cunningham, Dominick Mackey, Frank Drohan and James Ryan, also Ed. Dwyer, Gooldcross, and Michael Sheehan, also P.J. Hennihan, Fethard, and Seamus O'Neill, Rockwell. The following were also arrested in Clonmel, Ed. Condon, J. Purcell, Phillip O'Donnell, Wm. Myles, Denis Skehan, James Forristal, William Cleary, P. Rigney, Thos. Donovan, Matthew Morris, James Heffernan, Thos. Smyth, Matt. Tynan, Jack Allen, Michael White, Jack Tynan. The arrests were carried out by R.I.C. with an army officer and 50 men with fixed bayonets. I knelt to say my prayers and was handled roughly by an R.I.C. Sgt. who told me I would have plenty of time to say them in gaol. We were hand-cuffed in pairs and arrived in the Military Bks. at 4 o'clock in the morning. I saw a policeman with kilts belonging to Mr. Foley - Gaelic League Organiser - under his arm. He said, using an Irish expression, "If I had --- I would have them all". Mr. John Fennessy, at his house I was arrested, was a great Irishman and a fluent speaker of the language. All the Gaelic League people stayed there. We were put into cells and Col. Cooke said to the Guard "Have those men alive or dead in the morning". I must here give credit to some of the Royal Irish Rgt. who pointed their rifles at himself when he was leaving the doorway. They also brought us in some loaves of bread. In the morning Col. Vigors gave us tea which we drank out of sardine tins. At dawn we were brought under heavy escort to Tipperary Barracks where we met more prisoners, P. J. Moloney, Willie Benn, L.J. Dalton, Willie Ryan, Tom Rodgers

and T. Daly. We were removed from Tipperary to Cork Military Bks. next day. The handcuffs were now cutting our wrists and P.J. Moloney strongly protested. In Cork we were confined in the Military Detention Bks. Mr. Kent, Castlelyons, was executed the following morning at the rear of the Detention. A soldier told me he was badly treated and shot in his bare feet and trousers. We heard the volleys but did not see the execution. Late that evening we were removed to Cork Jail as there was trouble between the Devonshire Rgt. and Royal Irish. En route the people thought to rescue some of the prisoners and we were in grave danger of being shot. After about one week in Cork Jail we were removed under escort to Richmond Bks. Dublin. Here we were placed in a room 40 by 20 feet, about 100 prisoners in each room. We slept on the bare floor in our clothes, with four sentries at each door and no lavatory accommodation. Some of the leaders were picked out of our room. I remember an English officer saying to Finnan Lynch "I recognise you by your high teeth", and brought him away. When we got out for an hour's exercise some of the older men were made double up and down until they fell out on the hard ground. Shots were fired at our windows if we looked out. We were confined to this room for about three weeks without any exercise, and the men were getting sick. Sean Morrissy made a protest and told the sentries that he would smash the door if it was not opened. We were then allowed to go to lavatories with armed sentries. Mr. Asquith, British Prime Minister, and Mr. Dillon visited us. It was said Mr. Dillon stopped about 15 more executions as the officers were picking out men in every room. I remember hearing Mass on the barracks square and seeing the brave Cumann na mBan of Dublin kneeling on the hard gravel stones. Clergymen visited us and gave consolation. After about three weeks in Richmond we were

lined out on the square and told to prepare for an unknown destination. We were removed under heavy escort to Dunlaoghaire. A big crowd gathered to see the prisoners. The Devons made a charge with fixed bayonets and some women were injured. The prisoners were then put on board cattle boats and locked down in the hold. It was filthy with vermin and disease. Half-past three o'clock we left Dunlaoghaire on Friday, and sailed up the Clyde to Glasgow at 4 o'clock on Saturday evening. We had nothing to eat all this time. We were met at the boat in Glasgow by the Scottish Borderers and Policemen, who escorted us to Barlinnie Prison, about three miles outside the town. A policeman said to me "You will not make any potteen up here". The women spat at us and the men booed as we passed. Barlinnie Prison was full of conscientious objectors, jews, marine officers and people who would not fight. They were given a tough time. We were given Oakum to pick but refused. Jim Haverty of Galway got three days bread and water for shaving. He got a razor in to the prison in a cake of bread. We were left in this prison for about three months and then transferred to Wormwood Scrubbs. The officer in charge gave us tea at Wolverhampton. Arriving we were brought before a tribunal of about 12 men called the "Advisory Tribunal", who asked us a number of questions. After some days we were sent on to Frongoch Internment camp, an old distillery alive with rats. We spent about three months in Frongoch where we met about 1,700 prisoners from all parts of Ireland, under the leadership of Michael Collins, Michael Staines, Leo Henderson, Capt. O'Connell, Brennan Whitmore. About this time a number of names were read out every day for release. It was with joy in our hearts one day we heard the Clonmel members names read. When we arrived in Dublin we got a great reception, and also back in Clonmel where the local band and all the people turned out. We were carried

shoulder high through the streets. Armed R.I.C. followed but there was no clash. Some months before we were called dreamers but now all was changed. A local publican wrote a letter to the paper to say he was no connection of the James Ryan arrested.

But more was to come. We were not finished yet. We began to organise again. Sinn Féin was winning in Clonmel and at the next election Frank Drohan was elected T.D., and later Mayor of the Town. In the 1918 election we had a party of Volunteers outside every polling booth where we did police duty. We had a rough time in Waterford when John Redmond was defeated. Pierce McCann of Cashel and P.J. Moloney of Tipperary were elected T.D.s for Tipperary. We got plenty of recruits for the Volunteers. The Sinn Féin Courts replaced the British Courts. We also had our own Republic police. The British empire now sent over the Black and Tans to enforce law and order. About 40 of them arrived in Clonmel. They were also sent to all the barracks in Tipperary to strengthen the garrisons in the small barracks. We had at this time stationed in the R.I.C. Clonmel, Head Constable Maher. He hated the Tans and kept them under control to a certain extent but under the guidance of the local R.I.C. they made searches and arrested local men. A raiding party of Tans and soldiers and local R.I.C. dressed in khaki uniform, raided the village of Rathgarmack and fired on a party of men playing cards. One man was shot and another seriously wounded. A raid was made on the Sinn Féin Hall. Arms were removed by local men before the Tans arrived. The Columns were now organising and prominent men on the run joined them. No. 1 Column under Denis Lacy, No. 2 Seán Hogan, later P. Dalton, Denis Saddler accidentally shot afterwards, Seán Treacy, Seamus Robinson, Ernie O'Malley and D. Breen were at Headquarters.

We attacked Clerihan with Seamus Robinson, also Kilmanahan, Lisronagh and Drangan Bks. Road trenches were made and trees were cut to block roads. A police patrol were fired at at Lisronagh. A Black and Tan was disarmed in Clonmel. The Black and Tans with armed military made a raid on our men trenching the road at Two-mile-bridge and shot Volunteer James O'Keeffe dead. We had a company of Volunteers at Grange under John Lonergan which did some good work in that area. T. Looby, Clonmel, was wounded near Clonmel. An attack was to be made on certain publichouses frequented by Tans. He was sentenced to death but reprieved when the Truce came later. Mick Lambe, a local Volunteer, was wounded in the arm by a local farmer who fired at him when collecting shotguns. T. O'Donovan was killed at Killenace in a fight with the military. He was a brave soldier of Ireland as was also his companion Mick Burke. In the attack on Drangan Bks. he acted with great daring. Climbing to the roof of the barracks, under fire, he removed the slates and poured petrol in, which set fire to the barracks. The Garrison then surrendered. Glenbower Bks. was attacked but owing to its position the Column had to withdraw. The Tans and Military surrounded a meeting of the Column at Knockroe and three young men, Clancy, Hacket and Fleming were killed. At this time spies were very active and some of them paid the penalty. I went on a visit to Ballyhale, Co. Kilkenny to see my mother. A Bridge at Ballyhale was blown up by the local Company and a tan lorry fell into it. I was captured by the Tans at Newmarket. T. Barron, a local man, ran up a hill trying to escape. The Tans put the vickers gun on my back and fired several shots at him but he escaped. They then blindfolded the two of us and brought us in the lorry as hostages to Hugginstown, Co. Kilkenny, where a policeman was shot a few weeks before. The Tans fired on

everyone along the roadside. They raided all the pubs and gorged themselves with drink. They then brought us back to Woodstock House, Co. Kilkenny, Headquarters at that time. We were flung down in a cellar where four men prisoners were saying the Rosary, Hogan from Borris, Co. Carlow, McGrath, Listerlin, and Heffernan, Glenmore. We were left there for nearly two days without anything to eat. The Tans drank 14 doz. stout everyday and the officers brought in baskets of eggs and fowl stolen from farmers. When they were in a drunken mood they brought us out and fired shots at us. At this time a tunnel was to be made to Woodstock House to rescue the prisoners. The Tans got information and raided Mrs. Hanrahan's house, capturing Ernie O'Malley. They burned down Hanrahan's house and brought Mrs. Hanrahan out in the yard from a sick bed. She died a few days afterwards. I was brought to Kilkenny jail as a hostage and a British officer left me in Kilkenny for trial. Here I met all the leaders - Ned Aylward, Rev. Fr. Delahunty C.C., Denis Butler, Pat Aylward, Seán Gibbons and others. After about four weeks I was released and got back again to the Column in Tipperary. Soon after the Treaty was signed and the Truce/^{was} proclaimed in Tipperary. We marched into Clonmel under D. Lacy and P. Dalton - Columnleaders. The officers of the Devonshire Regiment handed over the barracks to our officers and marched out with about 500 men. The Union Jack Flag was then hauled down and the tricolour floated proudly in the breeze as about 50 men of the Tipperary Column marched in and took over the barracks. It was a proud day for the people of Clonmel. This was a glorious finish for men of the Columns and people of gallant Tipperary who stood by us in dark and evil days. But more was to come - the civil war - on which I will not comment. I wish to state here that two Easter Week men are buried at Powerstown Churchyard with no stone to

to mark their memory. I hope the National Graves Association will take the matter in hands. I wish to pay tribute to the people of Tipperary for the way they fed and housed the Columns during those trying times, often at personal risk to their homes and property. This story of the Easter Week period and the Tan War written by me is subject to correction as it is a good many years since those events happened and a good many of the people who took part are dead. If I have left out any names of those taking part in the fight in Clonmel I hope to correct it at some future day. I am giving the names of the men - Irish Volunteers; boys, Fianna Éireann and women - Cumann na mBan, as far as I can remember, who took part in the Rising, also in all the activities leading up to that period. A raid was made on the R.I.C. bks. at Clonmel by Column men under Denis Lacy and Michael Burke, capturing all their arms and ammunition. The R.I.C. offered no resistance. Some time before this raid all the small posts around Clonmel had been closed. A one days strike by all business firms in Clonmel was carried out in Clonmel while the prisoners were on hunger strike to demand their release. I must here pay a tribute to the women of Clonmel; members of Cumann na mBan - who looked after the comforts of the men on the run, also sent parcels to the men in Ballykinlar Camp and Frongoch, also collected funds for the White Cross funds, also looked after the homes of the men who were fighting with the Columns or in jail. I must mention one family in Clonmel who gave of all they had to the movement - the Cooney family Main Guard. When this history will be written I hope that all those incidents which I mention here will be recorded. I will now give the names of the men and women who took part.

Irish Volunteers;Easter Week men;

Frank Drohan	Ned Dwyer
Seán Morrissy	Pat Dwyer
Tom Halpin	Thos. Barrett
James Ryan	Seán Mackey
Dominick Mackey	W.P. Bowen
Philip Cunningham	Bill Mackey
Edward Condon	Denis Skehan
Jeremiah Purcell	Mulcahy Lyons
William Myles	John Hickey
Philip O'Donnell	Dick Dalton
James Forristal	Seán Cooney
William Cleary	Jim Whelan
Patrick Rigney	Thos. Regan
Seamus O'Neill	David Short
Patrick Henehan	William Tobin
Bob Drohan	Ned Dalton
Frank O'Meara	Seán O'Neill
James Kennedy	Seán Hurley
Michael Hanrahan	Michael White
Thomas Smyth	Matt Kinnane
John Allen	James Daly
Matt. Tynan	Michael Meany
John Tynan	
John Cronin	
Martin Power	
Denis Daly	
Thomas Donovan	
Michael Burke	

Mick O'Shea	Fred Mackey
Cathal Byrne	Patrick Kelleher
James Reardon	John Burke
Thos. Norris	Pat Burke
William Phelan	Pat O'Connor
William Greene	M. O'Connor
Denis Patterson	Martin Maher
James Patterson	John Morrissy (jun).
Patrick O'Brien	Mick Kennedy
William Fitzgerald	Patrick Ryan
John Quirke	Patrick McGrath
Thos. Looby	Patrick Brennan
Edmond Hanrahan	Patrick Dalton
John Mulcahy	Charlie Hegarty
John Kelly	Jack Coffey
William Byrne	William Molockney .
Ned Norris	Paddy O'Gorman
Thos. Hacket	Laurence Hallinan.
Mick Sullivan	John Aylward
John Sharkey	Stephen Corcoran
Thos. Condon	Charles Hickey
James Moore	James Corbett
Thos. Barron	Michael Drohan
Dick Kelly	David Drohan
Dan O'Shea	Owen Cooney.
Edmond O'Connor	
Tim Buckely	
Seán Cooney	
James Moroney	
Denis Dunmead	
Tim Lonergan	
John Condon	

Miss Eily Davin

" A. Cooney

" B. Purcell

" A. Myles

" Mary Meany

" D. Hennessy

" M. Hanley

" M. Condon

" Mary O'Meara

" K. O'Meara

Mrs. A. Crotty

Mrs. D. Drew

Miss A. Purcell

Miss C. Cooney

Miss M. Lonergan

Mrs. M. Delaney

Miss A. Finn

Miss B. Finn

Miss B. Condon

Mrs. B. Drohan

Mrs. M. Power

Miss C. Kelly

Miss C. Cleary

Lil O'Keefe

Mary Moroney

Mary Ryan

Alice Mackey

Mrs. O'Gorman

Maggie White

Miss Heffernan

Alice Power

Mrs. Tobin

Miss Cantwell

Mary Kennedy

Miss A. Davin

Miss K. Greege

Mrs. J. Allen

Miss Maggie Meskill

Miss Mary Cooper

Miss Eily Condon

Miss C. Lonergan

Clonmel Prisoners
in Ballykinlar Camp.

Thos. Smyth
James Forristal
Thos. Halpin
Michael White
Jack Tynan
Bill Cleary
John Allen
Matt. Tynan
Thos. O'Brien
Dominick Mackey.

10, O'Connell Terrace,
Clonmel,
Co. Tipperary.

2nd August, 1948.

Dear Sir,

In sending you the list of Clonmel prisoners interned in Ballykinlar during the War of Independence I forgot to mention the name of Mr. James Fennessy, Boot Merchant, O'Connell Street, Clonmel, Co. Tipperary.

I am Sir,

Yours Sincerely,

(Signed).

James Ryan.

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