

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

BURO STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21

No. W.S. 1253

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 1,253

Witness

Joseph Daly,  
Kilmurray,  
Ibrickane,  
Quilty,  
Co. Clare.

Identity.

Captain Kilmurray Company Irish Volunteers  
Co. Clare, 1917 - ;

Comd't. 4th Battalion West Clare Brigade,  
later.  
Subject.

Kilmurray Company Irish Volunteers,  
Co. Clare, 1914-1921.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil

File No. S.2574.....

Form B.S.M. 2

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STATEMENT BY JOSEPH DALY,

Kilmurray, Ibrickane, Quilty, Co. Clare.

(formerly O/C. 4th Battalion, West Clare Brigade)

I was born on 18th March 1896, at Kilmurray, Ibrickane. I was associated with the Sinn Féin movement before I became a member of the Irish Volunteers, a Sinn Féin Club having been established in the district about October 1917. Though I was one of the foundation members, I am a bit confused now regarding the general details of the formation of this Club and the names of the officers. At any rate, it was through my connection with that Club that I became friendly with Sean Liddy, afterwards O/C. West Clare Brigade.

It was, I believe, early in November 1917, that Liddy swore myself and three or four others into the Irish Republican Brotherhood. The ceremony took place in a vacant house in Clinadrum, Mullagh, Co. Clare. I can now only remember the name of one of the others who were enrolled that night, a man called David Walsh, Shandrum, Kilmurray.

About three weeks subsequent to my enrolment in the I. R. B. I received orders from Sean Liddy, who was then captain of the Cooraclare Company of the Irish Volunteers, as well as being an I. R. B. Centre, to start a company of Volunteers in Kilmurray. I did so and secured between 45 and 50 recruits at the outset. I was appointed company captain and also acted as drill instructor. I had to rely on military training handbooks to guide me as drill instructor. The company met every Saturday night in my father's fields and, after having mastered squad and company drill, we went on to extended order drill and skirmishing exercises.

In addition to the Saturday night drill, the company usually paraded every Sunday morning after the 9.30. Mass in Kilmurray and marched from outside the Church to the Sinn Féin Hall in the village where a meeting of the Sinn Féin Club was held. Frequently, there was nothing to discuss at these Sunday meetings, but by getting the Volunteers to attend, the Sinn Féin organisation was kept alive and active in the area. Of course, the weekly papers such as "Nationality" and "New Ireland" and other literature of a propaganda nature was distributed on such occasions.

There was no R.I.C. station in Kilmurray which was in the police sub-district of Quilty, about one mile away. The sergeant in charge of that station, a man named Sweeney, was a mild type of person and did not unduly worry himself about the activities of the Irish Volunteers. However, our Sunday morning parades were always watched by a couple of R.I.C. who usually remained on duty in the vicinity of the Hall while the meetings of the Sinn Féin Club were in progress. On most Sundays a route march from the village of Kilmurray to Quilty took place at 3 p.m. and whoever was in charge of the company always made it a point to take the company past the R.I.C. station in the latter village before leading it back to Kilmurray. There was no Irish Volunteer unit in Quilty at the time as most of the people in that district were not in sympathy with the movement, a fact which caused a lot of trouble for us later on.

The development of the conscription threat in the Spring of 1918 helped in improving the position of the Irish Volunteer movement in our part of Clare. The interest in drilling became greater and the attendance at parades and mobilisations was practically 100%. Each man in the Kilmurray Company was equipped with a pike made at the forge of John Harrison, Cloghanmore, Cooraclare. The cost of forging and shafting these pikes was

met by the proceeds of dances organised by the members of the company the strength of which had, by the Spring of 1918, risen to about 65 at which it remained until the end of hostilities with the British in July 1921.

I have already referred to the fact that the people in the village of Quilty were not in sympathy with the Sinn Fein movement. In those days it was a thickly populated district mainly comprised of small farmers and landless men such as fishermen and those of the labouring class who depended mainly on kelp burning for a livelihood. Situated in the locality, however, was a good sized non resident grazing farm owned by Mr. M. S. Brew, who lived in Kilrush. There was a widespread outburst of cattle drives and seizures of grazing lands throughout Clare towards the end of 1917 and in 1918. G. H. Q. in Dublin looked on these activities with disfavour and issued orders forbidding Volunteers from participating in any form of land trouble. These orders were loyally observed by the men in the Kilmurray Company. In the Quilty district, however, the people, at the instigation of one of the publicans in that village, named Michael Casey, gathered as a mob at Mr. Brew's farm in Seafield and drove the cattle off the lands.

On hearing of this cattle drive, one of the local priests, Fr. McKenna, who at the time was an Irish Volunteer officer, collected myself and a few men from the Kilmurray Company and proceeded to Seafield to try to prevent the cattle drive. Our efforts proved futile. The mob refused to listen to the appeals of Fr. McKenna and actually attacked us with stones; the priest was struck by a stone on the forehead and wounded. After that we retired.

I reported this incident to Battalion H. Q. and, in the

course of a week or so, Sean Liddy accompanied by six or seven men came to Quilty and arrested Michael Casey. A courtmartial was held for which the whole battalion was paraded. Casey was fined and warned that any future misbehaviour on his part would be dealt with more drastically. He gave no further trouble. At the same time it was considered that the easiest way to keep the Quilty people quiet would be to bring them into the movement. The younger element were enticed to join the Irish Volunteers. A separate company was set up in Quilty about the middle of 1919 and thereafter until the British forces left the country there was no repetition of cattle driving in that locality.

Up to the end of 1918 Co. Clare comprised only one brigade of Irish Volunteers under the command of Paddy Brennan of Meelick. The county was then divided into three brigades and the country between Loop Head on to about a mile north of Quilty on the west coast of the county formed part of the West Clare Brigade. I'm not too sure now who the first Brigade O/C. was, but I'm certain that Sean Liddy, formerly captain of the Cooraclare Company, assumed control of the brigade some months after its formation.

Following the creation of these brigades, there was a reshuffling of the battalion areas. The 4th Battalion was made up of the companies of Coora, Doolagh, Mullagh, Craigaknock, Kilmurray and, subsequently, Quilty. The officers of the battalion were:- O/C. Christopher McCarthy; Vice O/C. Rev. Fr. McKenna, C.C. Kilmurray; Adjutant, Patrick O'Dea; Quartermaster, Daniel Montgomery.

Some time in 1920 McCarthy had a disagreement with the brigade staff and he left the area altogether and went into

East Clare where he later lost his life in an engagement with British troops at Meelick about a month before the Truce. McCarthy was replaced as battalion commandant by Patrick O'Dea of Doolough who was arrested towards the end of 1920, and I succeeded him in that post until my arrest in March 1921. My place was taken by Patrick Kelly. Dan Montgomery was also arrested in November 1920, and he was succeeded as battalion quartermaster by John Griffin. During 1920, too, the Mullagh and Craigaknock companies were amalgamated and, so far as I can remember, this was the last organisational change in the battalion.

The British forces in the area at the beginning of 1919 comprised two small R.I.C. garrisons, one at Quilty and the other at Mullagh. Both stations were vacated by the end of that year or early in the following Spring. The Quilty barracks was destroyed by men from the Miltown-Malbay district under Commandant Ignatius O'Neill, while the Mullagh barracks was demolished by the local Volunteers, acting under the battalion commandant, Christopher McCarthy. I assisted in the latter operation and, as reprisals were expected, it was decided to attack the enemy should he attempt to carry them out. Bill Hough, brigade adjutant, came to Mullagh that night and took charge of a party of about twelve men armed with shotguns. The enemy did not put in an appearance and next morning the party dispersed. In fact, I do not recall any retaliatory measures by the British forces following this incident.

Early in 1920, all the firearms in the battalion area were under the control of the I.R.A. These guns were entirely shotguns and, with one exception, the owners surrendered them voluntarily to the different company

officers. The one exception - Kelly's of Kilmurray - resulted in a raid being made by the local company, seven or eight of whom raided the house under my charge. We took the gun without experiencing any resistance.

Sinn Féin arbitration courts and Dáil Courts began to function in West Clare earlier than most of the rural areas in Ireland. In connection with the establishment of these courts, some of the local clergy played an active part, especially Father Culligan, then a curate in Kilmurray (McMahon). Art O'Donnell of Tullycrine and Conor Whelan, Vice O/C. of the West Clare Brigade, were also prominently associated with them as either "Brehons" or officials.

In those days most of the people in the rural parts of West Clare were of a very litigious disposition and the British Courts, especially the Petty Sessions were kept busy dealing with minor types of cases such as trespassing, rights of way, assaults and turbary disputes. The boycott imposed on the British Courts by Sinn Féin was generally observed by the people in West Clare who, when they found alternative Courts available, readily used them.

At first, I think it was early in 1919, when the Sinn Féin Arbitration Courts were set up, the enemy forces did not interfere with them and later on, when the District and Parish Courts began to function under decree of Dáil Éireann, they were held under the noses of the R. I. C. frequently in the same venues as the British Courts. I'm afraid that it is also true that the unsettled state of the times caused a certain element of the population to try to take advantage of their quieter or weaker

neighbours in making claims for which there was no legal justification. This, of course, added to the volume of business with which the Sinn Féin Courts had to deal.

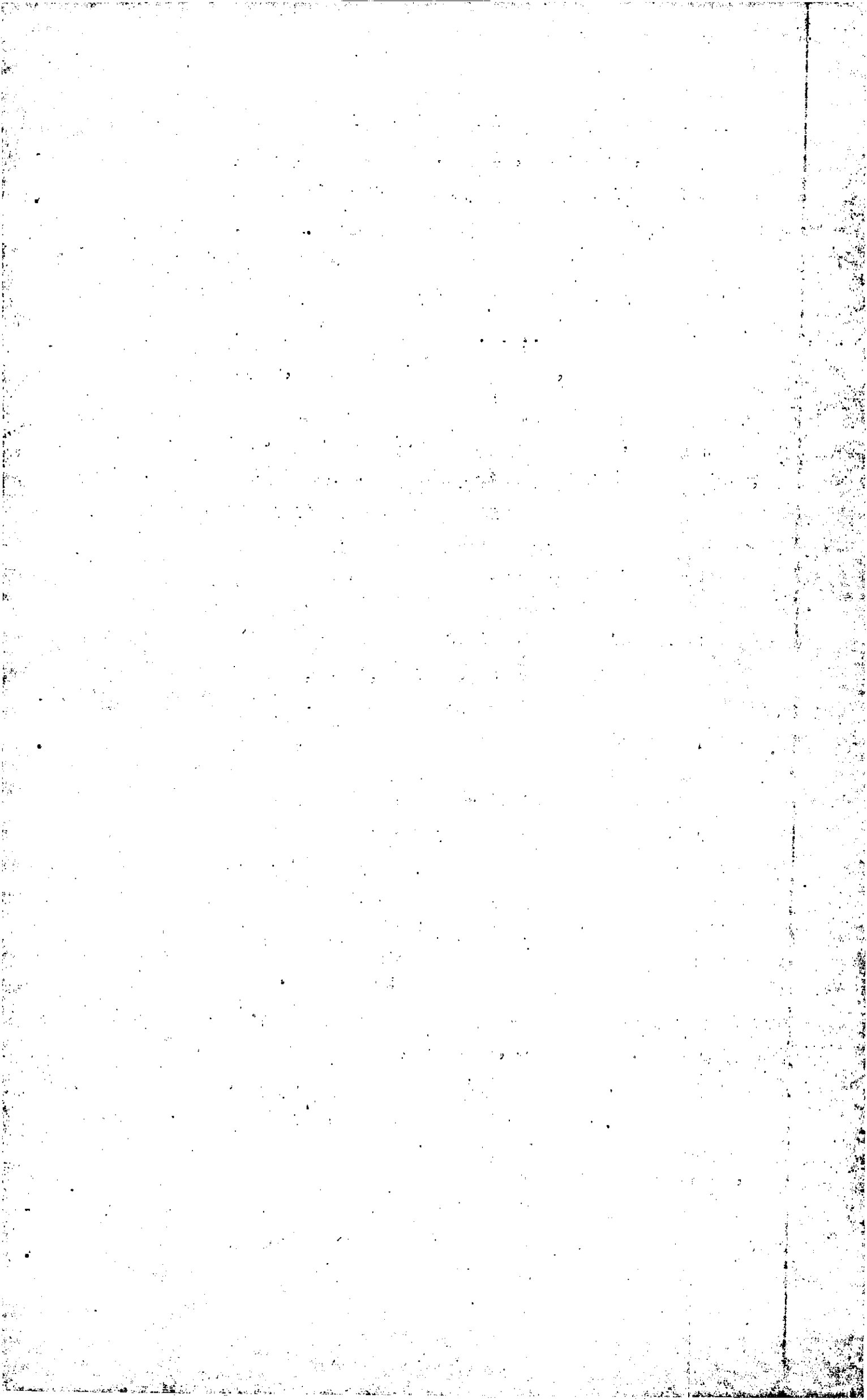
The work of policing the Sinn Féin Courts and of enforcing the decisions given thereat became the responsibility of the I.R.A.. As company captain and, later, as battalion commandant, I was obliged to devote a considerable amount of time to the making of arrangements for the sittings of the Courts, seeing that they were adequately policed, enforcing the decisions, providing for the detention of persons who had to be held as prisoners awaiting trial or serving sentences.

The duties which devolved on me through the Sinn Féin Courts from their institution in 1919 to the Autumn of 1920, when, owing to the hostility shown to them by the British forces, it became necessary to hold sittings in secret venues, occupied a great deal of my time.

From thence onwards, it became the job of the Volunteer officers in West Clare to ensure that the sittings of the Courts would take place without being interfered with by the British forces and also to have suitable accommodation provided for the hearing of the cases. My own house was used a good deal for the sittings and, between one job and another, scarcely a day elapsed from, roughly, the end of August 1920 until the date of my arrest in March 1921, but I had something to do in connection with Court work.

In the campaign to oust the British Courts, particularly the lower Courts known as the Petty Sessions, the Sinn Féin organisation resorted a good deal to the





use of propaganda to bring these Courts into contempt. The press and platform were used for this purpose. It was also part of the campaign to induce the Justices of the Peace who composed the Petty Sessions Courts to resign from these posts which were unpaid. Though, generally speaking, these 'Justices' were not in sympathy with Sinn Féin, the most of them did resign as time went on. The task of dealing with the recalcitrant few became one for the I.R.A. to tackle. In my battalion area there was only one such person to deal with, a man called Christopher Kelly of Craigaknock, a gentleman farmer. He was asked to resign several times, but refused.

In order to compel Mr. Kelly to change his mind, the Brigade H.Q. decided that the most effective way to deal with him was by kidnapping his only son, Joseph, then a youth of about 20 years. This job was carried out by the local Volunteers under the control of the company captain, Patrick Clancy. Young Kelly was a prisoner for about nine or ten days when I met the Brigade O/C., Sean Liddy, at Father McKenna's house in Mullagh. I received orders from him to take a message to Mr. Kelly, senior, that if he signed a document agreeing to resign from his Justiceship of the Peace that his son would be released forthwith.

Immediately after the kidnapping of young Kelly, a party of British soldiers numbering about twenty, under a Captain Glass, had been guarding the Kelly household and when I arrived there, I found Mr. and Mrs. Kelly sitting in the kitchen with Captain Glass. Mrs. Kelly, on seeing me, became hysterical and was lamenting the fate of her son who, she thought, might be shot. I asked Mr. Kelly to have a private conversation at which Captain Glass was not

present, during which I explained the errand on which I had been sent. I then had a further conversation with Captain Glass. He appeared to be a reasonable type of man, very much concerned about the safety of young Kelly, and the disturbed state of Mrs. Kelly's mind over the whole business. He asked me if it could at all be possible to release young Kelly that night. My reply was similar to the statement I had already made to Mr. Kelly, senior. Eventually the latter did sign the undertaking to resign as a J.P. and the document was delivered by me to the Brigade O/C. Young Kelly was released next day and the British soldiers who were guarding his parents were withdrawn to Kilrush soon after.

Despite the activities of the British forces in trying to suppress the Sinn Fein Courts in West Clare, their efforts failed. Though the sittings of the Courts from about August or September of 1920 onwards were not held as regularly, still they managed to function due to the co-operation of the local I.R.A. units. As already explained, it was almost a full-time job for me to ensure that these Courts did not collapse. During the winter of 1920 and spring of 1921, the Parish, District and Arbitration Courts held several sittings in the district between Quilty and Doonbeg. The venues varied a good deal but the litigants rarely had the experience of coming to the Courts without having their cases heard. Of course, I frequently had to carry on my person documents relevant to these Courts. In March 1921, I was intercepted in the vicinity of my own home by a party of British troops and on the occasion had some such papers in my possession, I was detained in custody and sent to Limerick Jail where

where I was tried by military court for being in possession of illegal documents. I received a sentence of six months' imprisonment which I duly served, receiving political treatment while in custody.

I was in Limerick Jail when the Truce was announced on 11th July 1921.

Signed: Joseph Daly  
(Joseph Daly)

Date: 19. 9. 55

19.9.55

Witness: D. Griffin  
(D. Griffin)

