

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
BUREAU STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21
NO. W.S. 219

ROINN



COSANTA.

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 219.....

Witness

Mr. John McDonagh,
Bearna,
Goatstown Road,
Dundrum, Co. Dublin.

Identity

Lieutenant Irish Volunteers;
Brother of Thomas McDonagh.

Subject

- (1) Acted as courier to Tipperary on Holy Thursday 1916;
- (b) Events of Easter Week 1916 - Jacob's Factory.

Conditions, if any, stipulated by Witness

File No. S.1097.....

Form B.S.M. 2.

On arriving at Dublin I went to the Clarence and roused the night porter. When I told him my name he said "You were here last night, weren't you"? I looked at the book and saw Tom's name for the night before. So I signed his name.

I notice the questionnaire says Tom joined the I.R.B. council in April in 1916. I would have thought he was in it before that.

On Saturday evening Tom got a message to attend a meeting in Dr. S. O'Kelly's house. He took a taxi and I went with him, but not into the house. He was not more than three minutes in it as he found none of his set there. Grace Gifford was with us.

I and Don went with him on Sunday evening to Eoin MacNeill's house. Seamus O'Connor was there. Tom walked up and down a long time with MacNeill. I think he was trying to find out what steps MacNeill was taking to stop the Rising. I did not see Sean Fitzgibbon.

It had been arranged some weeks before the Rising that Tom would occupy Jacob's with his battalion and he and Connolly had met to discuss the matter at the underground lavatory in Kevin St.

We assembled in Stephen's Green on Easter Monday and marched to Jacob's. We had not the keys to open the door so we had to break in the windows and pull each other up. One man's shotgun went off and Major McBride, who was second in command, picked a few pellets out of his moustache saying "that shotguns should be treated carefully".

We were in Jacob's till the Sunday when some of the priests from Church St. came to ask us to surrender as Pearse had done so and had ordered all commands to do so. Tom said as Pearse was a prisoner he was not a free agent to give orders. Finally the instruction from Pearse was brought by the priests and Tom, after consultation with the other officers, consented to go out to meet the British General. He told me to keep the men there until he came back, but said I should let Mick Hayes go home. I had been

promoted Lieutenant on the 'battle floor' so that the men might obey me. Father Monahan begged the men to go home for God's sake, but they remained till Tom came back and lined us all up outside to surrender. Our arms were taken from us. Major McBride had a beautiful rifle that had been presented to him in commemoration of his Boer campaign. It was suitably inscribed and a Dublin Fusilier - thinking no doubt he would get a stripe for his pains - who read that inscription, told his officer that McBride had fought against the British in the Boer War. The officer looked at the rifle, but took no further notice of the matter.

We have the letter Tom sent out before his execution and lots of other papers containing notes, chiefly about training. When I have time to examine them, which I hope to do in the weekend, I shall make out a more elaborate and detailed statement. Tom's speech at his courtmartial was published in American papers, but the British denied the authenticity of it.

I was in the I.R.B. but knew nothing of their military arrangements for the Rising until the Wednesday before Easter. I think Diarmuid Lynch and Sean T. O Ceallaigh would be able to give a lot of information and also Nedgy Daly, on account of her association with Tom Clarke and Sean McDermott.

Tom always said that at the meetings of the executive on military matters Joe Plunkett's proposals were accepted as the best. I do not know who was appointed to carry out the functions of Eoin MacNeill as Chief of Staff, if anyone was.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Witness: _____

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NOTES ON A CONVERSATION WITH
JOHN McDONAGH,
8.3.1949.

He heard the date fixed for The Rising from Tom 3 or 4 weeks previously. Tom came in as he was tying his shoe in Oakley Road one morning. He continued to tie his shoe.

Captain (?) Tammam went to swear in de Valera into the I.R.B. a few days before the Rising. Dev. laughed at him and took no notice. Tom McDonagh swore in Dev eventually. John McDonagh was sworn in by Eamon Ceannt who could not remember the oath. Jack never attended a meeting of I.R.B. He remembers a speech Tom made to a small Coy. of Volunteers in their house in Oakley Road, setting out the ideals that inspired them in the coming fight. Every generation of Irishmen had risen to show they wanted freedom for their country and they - the Volunteers - were prepared to lay down their lives, if necessary for the same ideal.

A few days before the Rising John had met O'Rahilly, who told him he had thought of laying in supplies of food in case a scarcity might arise if the fighting was prolonged, but he decided against such a course as he did not think it fair not to take his chance like anybody else.

A week or two before the Rising John's Company got their rifles and they were so delighted that they immediately marched out on the streets with them. Tom had procured about forty of them, they were new ones. That was the first time these men had marched with arms. When John and his unit assembled in the Green Major McBride turned up in a blue suit, with a walking cane and smoking a cigar. It looked funny. There was great confusion about the mobilisation and Volunteers joined units that were not their own. One young fellow tried to join the Volunteers in Jacob's. They didn't know he was a Volunteer, but he said they should have seen him at the H.Q. on a certain occasion. When they refused to let him into Jacob's he burst into tears. Tom then said he would let him in if he went home and came back with a rifle. He did and he was taken in.

A Volunteer named Allen was wounded and Tom sent for a doctor to the Adelaide Hospital. They refused to send one, but sent a message that they would treat any wounded sent to the hospital. Tom then sent armed men to bring back a doctor who came reluctantly.

Some of the Volunteers discovered an old-fashioned gramophone, in a corner downstairs in Jacob's, that played "God save the King" and one day when Tom and McBride were making their tour of inspection it was put on to take a rise out of them.

One day Nellie Donnelly (Gifford), who was in the College of Surgeons with Mme. Markievicz, came on a message to Jacob's. They tried to make her stay on account of the risk in going back, but she wouldn't. She should be able to give a good account of events of that time. Maire Ni Shiubhlaigh was with them in Jacob's. When she heard of the surrender she broke down and wept.

The Bureau should also contact Marie Perolz (Mrs. Flanagan), Mrs. O'Hanrahan O'Reilly and Sean McGarry. Have we got anything from Grace Plunkett (Gifford)? One day, not so long before the Rising, Tom asked John to guess who Joe Plunkett was engaged to and he guessed right.

He saw Plunkett walking across the barrack square after arrest and he looked so wretched that he was hardly able to walk. He could not have lived long in any case.

Copies of the speech made by Tom at his courtmartial were sold on the streets. The military seized them and the Government denied that the speech was made. The sentiments expressed in it were very like what Tom would say. Tom's wife did not see him before the execution because the military could not get to her. His sister, Sister Francesca, now in Cappagh, saw him and gave him a rosary beads. She has written down a lot about him and the Rising, but she is inclined to be a bit romantic.

San Ciarán
18/3/49

