

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

BURO STAIRÉ MILLEATA 1913-21

NO. W.S. 625

ROINN



COSANTA.

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21

STATEMENT BY WITNESS

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 625

Witness

Edward Handley,
207 Kildare Road,
Crumlin,
Dublin.

Identity.

Sergeant in the British Army
1916 - .

Subject.

Acquisition of British arms for
the Irish Citizen Army.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil

File No. S.1903

Form B S M. 2

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

BURO STAIRE MILEATA 1913-21

NO. W.S. 625

STATEMENT OF EDWARD HANLEY,
207, Kildare Road, Crumlin.

At the outbreak of the 1914-18 War I was serving with the 4th Battalion, Dublin Fusiliers. Prior to that, I had worked in White's Public House, 79, The Coombe, where Andy Redmond, who was later a member of the Volunteers, was manager. I knew a number of men in the area who were, or later became members of the Citizen Army.

In 1916 I was on sick leave, having been wounded in France. As a matter of fact I was in Liberty Hall on Easter Sunday night with a comrade who was in British Army Uniform. I did not know that there was anything unusual going on.

When my leave was up, I went absent but was apprehended, courtmartialled and reduced from the rank of Sergeant to Private. After spells in Hospitals in Naas; Shoreham, Surrey and Dublin, I was on account of my wound sent to Portobello Barracks, Dublin, as a storeman. James (Skiver) Keogh and later James O'Shea and Matt Burke asked me what were the chances of getting some rifles and revolvers from Portobello. I told Keogh I could take them out if I could get a suitable turnscrew to enable me to take the rifles to pieces. Keogh who worked in the Railway at Inchicore made me one and I was able to carry out the stripped rifles - Later I was able to pass rifles out through the railings at the Sports Field to Citizen Army men waiting in Mount Thomond Avenue near Harold's Cross. To do this I had to elude the sentries near the Sports Field. James O'Shea

was one of the persons to whom rifles were passed out in this way. Barney Craven, I remember, was the driver of the cab in which the rifles were always taken away.

The authorities knew that rifles were being taken but I was never suspected. They had come to the conclusion that the rifles were being taken out in traders vans and used to conduct periodical searches of these vans.

I was later transferred to a newly formed Labour Corps at Wellington Barracks where I was again able to pass out rifles at the back gate near Harold's Cross Bridge. A military policeman who had been transferred from Portobello with me knew what I was doing and was sympathetic. I always chose the time he was on duty at the back gate to pass out the rifles.

In Wellington Barracks there were huts where men used to go for lectures on wet days. They often left their rifles outside the huts and it was an easy matter to take a few. As I was a storeman I did not attract undue attention when walking around with the rifles. The men, of course, had to pay for the lost rifles and this generally seemed to satisfy the authorities, although there were periodical searches of traders vans here also. My Military policeman friend always gave notice of any searches that were to take place.

About 1920 when a number of troops coming home on leave were either selling their rifles or having them taken from them the authorities built

a hut at North Wall and collected the rifles of men coming on leave and later transferred the rifles to Ship Street Barracks. I was able to get a number of these rifles. I even got about five or six belonging to the Black and Tans stationed there. The Black and Tans were very often drunk so it was easy to take a rifle now and again. They of course were not particular about keeping the numbers of their rifles, but just took hold of any rifles. This made the tracing of any lost rifle very difficult.

When traffic was too great at the North Wall men were sent on leave via Holyhead. A hut was built and a military post was established at Kingstown. Here the rifles were taken from the men coming on leave, kept in the hut and given back to them when they were returning. The Sergeant Major kept a book in which he noted the names of the men and the numbers of the rifles handed in. My job was to oil and clean the rifles. If a pullthrough got jammed in a rifle or there was any defect it had to be sent to Islandbridge as we had no armourers equipment at the post. If we had a big number of defective rifles they would be sent by car to Islandbridge but if we had only a few which was generally the case, I was detailed to take them to Islandbridge. I was given a voucher to Westland Row and then took a tram or walked to Islandbridge. No record was kept of rifles sent to Islandbridge for repairs. When I had sufficient time I would arrange for some Citizen Army man to meet me down the line a little distance from Westland Row. I generally carried four rifles, two slung on each shoulder if I could manage it and having got off at

Westland Row station walked down the line and handed over two of them and went along to Islandbridge and handed over the other two. If ~~no~~ one was there to meet me I went home and left one or two there which were either collected or as often happened taken to Liberty Hall by my sister who was then engaged to a Citizen Army man names Henry Cassidy, who had taken part in the Rising.

When the Sergeant Major was out and I got the opportunity I crossed off the number of the missing rifles as being re-issued. In any case I could always say they were in Islandbridge or that it had been issued to some one else. Another rifle would then be issued. As we had a big number of rifles belonging to deserters we were always able to supply rifles to men going back without the shortage being detected.

It was extraordinary that I should be asked to take rifles unescorted to Islandbridge when soldiers weren't allowed to take them home and that I wasn't held up once by the I.R.A. which led me to think that they were aware of what was happening. We had an officer in charge of the post but he did not take any interest in the collection or return of the rifles.

At one period we got so many rifles in that the store couldn't hold them all and railway carriages had to be run up near the hut to take the remainder.

I told the citizen men they were there for the taking but, I think, on the night they had planned for a raid, a strong guard had been placed on them.

I was in Kingstown until I was discharged in 1922.

I was never suspected at Kingstown as far as I know. This may be due to the fact that although I had permission to sleep at home, I was never seen taking anything out when going on pass. My home was raided once. A Volunteer named Tuohy living near me was on the run. When he came near the district his home was usually raided and it was suspected that the information was given by the person living next door to me. On one of these raids my house was also visited. A thorough search was made of the place, even the bed being pulled asunder. The fact that I had four rifles in the house at the time, which my wife had hidden in the chimney and were not found, made me think that the information was supplied by the same person who may have known I had arms in the house.

I reckon I got well over a hundred rifles and revolvers as well as ammunition for the Citizen Army.

Signed: Edward Handley
(Edward Handley).

Date: 12th Dec 1951
12th Dec. 1951.

Witness: J. Kearns Comdt
(J. Kearns, Comdt.)

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 7913-21
BURO STAIRE MILEATA 1913 21
No. W.S. 625