

**ORIGINAL**

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21  
BURO STAIRE MILEATA 1913-21  
NO. W.S. 644

ROINN



COSANTA.

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 644

Witness

Joseph Hyland,  
5 St. Clare's Terrace,  
Harold's Cross,  
Dublin.

Identity.

Member of Irish Volunteers, 1917 - ;  
Transport driver in I.R.A. 1919-1921.

Subject.

National events 1917-1921.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil

File No. S.1907

Form B.S.M. 2

C O N T E N T S.

	Page
1. American Peace Delegation.....	1
2. I.R.A. Courtmartial at Dunboyne.....	2
3. Ammunition collected off Boats .....	4
4. Michael Collins searched by military patrol at Capel Street .....	5
5. Arrangements for an attack on a troop train in the Skerries area .....	5
6. Car at scene of shootings of British Agents	7
7. Capt. Lee Wilson.....	7
8. Michael Collins and Military patrol at Newcomen Bridge.....	8
9. Attempted rescue of Sean MacEoin from Mountjoy Prison.....	8
10. Lord Derby.....	10
11. General Recollections.....	10

---

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

BURO STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21

NO. W.S. 644

STATEMENT OF JOSEPH HYLAND,

5, St. Clare's Terrace, Dublin.

I joined the Volunteers sometime in 1917, when they were being reorganised following the release of prisoners from English Jails and Internment Camps. I was not attached to any Battalion. At the time I was running a hackney business in the city and it was on that account that I first became attached to the Transport Section of G.H.Q. It was through the late Joseph O'Reilly that both myself and my brother Batty came to know Michael Collins. From the time that I got to know Collins my car was extensively used by the Headquarters staff for various jobs. I garaged my car at the Southern Garage in Denzille Lane. Whenever I was wanted for any particular job I was notified by Joe O'Reilly, Tom Cullen or Tom Keogh.

It is difficult now for me to recall the occasions on which I used my car in connection with I.R.A. activities. I think one of the first occasions that come to my mind on which I was out with my car with the I.R.A. was the attack on Lord French at Ashtown. I was sent out on that day to bring back some of the men who were taking part in the attack. When the attack on Lord French had failed I brought back three or four of the attackers to the centre of the city. I cannot say who they were at this stage.

American Delegation:

Sometime in the year 1919 a number of delegates arrived from America who, I believe, were members of a

Peace Delegation. They were staying at 5, Fitzwilliam Square. One morning Joe O'Reilly said to me "I want you to drive these men with Larry O'Neill to Armagh to see Cardinal Logue!" Larry O'Neill was Lord Mayor of Dublin at that time. We started out from Dublin in the forenoon and having got numerous punctures on the way, we reached Armagh. There we learned that the Cardinal was visiting a Parish Priest friend of his in the town of Louth which we had passed on the way. We drove back there and my passengers went into audience with the Cardinal for more than an hour. Then we returned to Dublin just beating curfew. I cannot give any information as to what the visit to the Cardinal was about or what their mission was but I feel it had something to do with peace movements.

#### I.R.A. Courtmartial at Dunboyne:

A man by the name of Mark Clinton was shot either in the County Meath or the County Cavan while ploughing in his father's field. He was shot by two British soldiers. I don't know why he was shot. All I was told was that as he was ploughing one day two men stood up on the side of the ditch and fired at him and killed him. They were captured by the local I.R.A. and brought to County Meath for trial by I.R.A. Courtmartial in Commandant Sean Boylan's area. The Courtmartial consisted of Officers from Dublin and Austin Stack was President. The court was held at night and on each occasion I drove Austin Stack and five others whose names I cannot recall to an empty house outside Dunboyne in the County Meath. On the last night of the trial when the Courtmartial had given its verdict which was incidentally - sentence of death on one of the soldiers and deportation on others who were indirectly concerned with the shooting - we

had a very narrow escape from the British Military. As we were coming into Dunboyne we saw a line of British Military drawn across the road from the chapel gate. This was about 8 or 9 a.m. The local priest, who was apparently about to say Mass, was talking to the Officer in charge of the Military party. I approached the cordon and sounded my horn and was allowed to pass through without interference. About two hundred yards down the road there was another armoured car drawn up on a side road with a gun trained on the village. When I passed this I increased the speed and soon reached the main Dublin-Navan road. Turning for Dublin as I approached Mulhuddart, somebody stated "They are following us". I think the man who said this was a man named Mooney who was at that time a Police Detective Officer and was also one of our Intelligence Men. He said "I know this area very well; turn here". He directed me through various roads. When I saw that we were leading the armoured cars I pulled up my car and Mooney said "Give me all the papers of the courts and I will take them with me across the fields". The papers, incidentally, were dealing with the Courtmartial. He got out and went off across the fields. We got safely back into town having passed a further cordon at the Thatch near Whitehall. The patrol there held me up and asked me where I was coming from. I told them I was taking the party to the Curragh Races, which were on that day, from Drogheda. With that I was let pass through.

A week later Joe O'Reilly came down to my place and said "You are to go to the Russell Hotel and pick up Ernest Blythe and a clergyman". I went there and took them to Dunboyne where the Courtmartial was recently held. Apparently the clergyman was brought down to Dunboyne to administer the Last Rites of the

Church to the condemned man. After about half an hour waiting outside I heard two shots ring out. I knew then that the man had been executed. I took the clergyman and Blythe back again to the Russell Hotel.

Ammunition off Boats:

I remember many occasions I took Joe O'Reilly and the late Tom Cullen down to the South Quays to take ammunition off Cross-Channel boats. I can vividly recall one incident. A consignment of ammunition was packed in soldiers kit bags. Three of us loaded up my car with this ammunition and conveyed it to Pembroke Lane where some local battalion had a dump. On the way up from the boat, I turned into Clanwilliam Place and into Northumberland Road. There I was intercepted by a British patrol which had left Beggars Bush Barracks. These patrols were sent out by the British unexpectedly as surprise tactics. At this particular time you were liable to meet them any place. The Sergeant stopped my car and asked me to show my permit. When he saw that I was wearing a cap, he couldn't identify me from the photograph on the permit because when that photograph was taken I didn't wear a cap. He called over another officer. He had a look at me and at the permit. Evidently he wasn't completely satisfied because he asked me where I was going. I said that I was taking the kit bags which were in the car from Richmond Barracks to Kingstown to the mail boat as a number of soldiers were evidently going on leave. He seemed satisfied then because he said "All right, carry on". I may say that both Tom Cullen, Joe O'Reilly and myself had a few unhappy moments while the questioning was going on.

Michael Collins searched by Military Patrol at Capel St.:

*£ 10,000  
Dead or Alive*

At the time that there was a heavy price on the head of Michael Collins I drove him one night from Palmerstown Park, from the house of Phil Sayers, who was at that time in the Motion Picture Line. I was taking Collins to Mountjoy Street. He told me to drive him through the back streets. This, I refused to do, as I always held it was best to keep to the main streets. Going up Capel Street a British Military patrol turned out of Britain Street and ran down towards the car with their rifles at the "ready". When I saw the patrol approaching me I slowed down and the next thing I heard was the rear door of my car opening and closing quickly. I thought at the time that Collins had jumped out of the car and ran up Mary's Lane. The officer in charge of the patrol asked me who my passenger was. I told him I didn't know. He was an ordinary passenger as far as I was concerned. While the officer was questioning me I saw to my amazement that Michael Collins was standing by the car. The officer ordered the two of us to be searched and as he found nothing on us we were let go. I said to Collins when I reached my destination that it was a very narrow escape. He said "little does that officer know what he has let slip through his fingers".

Arrangements for an attack on a troop train in the vicinity of Skerries:

I remember one morning in the summer of 1920 Jack Plunkett came down to my garage and said "Come on I want you to do a bit of a job". With that he jumped into my car and we went to the North side of the city and collected Dick McKee and a couple of others. We drove to Donabate and there my party met the local I.R.A. Officers. On the way out Jack Plunkett told

me the job in mind was the ambushing of a troop train by the Fingal Brigade. He gave me to understand that two separate troop trains were leaving the Curragh and taking troops to the North of Ireland, and that arrangements had been made to stage an ambush on them at Donabate and Skerries. The first train was to be let pass through Donabate and attacked at Skerries. The second train was to be attacked at Donabate. I cannot say if the tracks were mined at Donabate before we got there but McKee and Plunkett had evidently discussed the matter with the local I.R.A. Officer at Portrane. We left that place and drove to Skerries. Here again the party went into discussion with the local I.R.A. Officers. A short time later I saw a number of Volunteers bringing mines up to the railway track at a point a mile outside Skerries where the railway runs parallel to the road. I parked my car up a side road in a concealed place and the whole party remained out all night waiting for the arrival of the trains on the following morning. By that morning the local Company of Volunteers, fully armed, were in readiness for the attack. A messenger, however, arrived from Dublin calling off the whole thing. It seems that word had come through that the two troop trains were to be merged into one. This being so it was felt that the number of Volunteers available for the attack would not be in a position to cope with such a large body of troops. For this reason it was considered advisable to cancel all arrangements. We then drove back to Donabate and the local Volunteers there were very disappointed and didn't understand why we allowed the troop train to pass through. Dick McKee then of course told them the reason.



Car at scene of shooting of British Agents:

I drove my car on a number of occasions with the Squad when they were carrying out shooting operations against British spies. On the morning that Allen Bell was shot in Ballsbridge I had instructions to drive to Simons Court Road and there pick up some of the men who were doing the shooting and get them away as quickly as I could. I was at the appointed place as instructed and I took back three or four of the men concerned in my car.

Similarly in the case of Frank Brook who was shot at Westland Row Station, I was also present with my car in the vicinity of Pearse Street and took back three or four of the men concerned in the shooting and dropped them in various parts of the city. I think the main idea underlying the necessity of having my car in the vicinity of places where shootings were about to take place was to provide an alibi for the men concerned. Immediately the job was done it would be my business to get them as far away from the scene as I possibly could and in the shortest possible time.

On the morning of Bloody Sunday I was warned by Joe O'Reilly on the previous night as to what was to take place. He ordered me to have my car in the vicinity of Lower Baggot Street, and pick up any of the lads taking part in the operation if they came to my car. I was there about 9 a.m. Nobody came along and I drove back to the garage.

Captain Lee Wilson:

Lee Wilson was shot in the County Wexford sometime in the year 1920. About a week before the actual shooting took place I was sent down to Carnew in the

County Wicklow to take back men who were on the look out for Wilson. It seems that they didn't know precisely where he was located at the time and I think they were under the impression that he could be got in Wicklow. However, all I know about it is that I was instructed one morning to go down to Carnew and take back to the city, Tom Keogh, Jim Slattery and some others. About a week after that Wilson was shot in Gorey.

Michael Collins and Military Patrol at Newcomen Bridge:

One night in the Spring of 1921, I drove my car to the house of Thomas Gay in Clontarf and there picked up Michael Collins, Colonel Broy, Dave Neligan and Jim McNamara. As I was driving them back towards the city, when we came to Newcomen Bridge we were held up by a British Military patrol who had been patrolling the area following an ambush there that night. We were all ordered out of the car by a British Officer and searched.

Attempted Rescue of Seán MacEoin from Mountjoy Prison:

An armoured car was captured at the Dublin Abattoir on the morning of the 15th May, 1921, and was driven to Mountjoy Prison by Paddy McCrae and a Rescue Party consisting of Joe Leonard, Emmet Dalton, Tom Keogh and others with a view to rescuing Seán MacEoin and Frank Carty from British custody. Sometime before that date I knew of the arrangements for the rescue. I was detailed by Joe O'Reilly to have my car in readiness at North Richmond Street to which the prisoners - MacEoin and Carty - would be transferred and taken to a place of safety. I did not know what their destination would be. I was to be told this later by MacEoin. I had my car at the appointed place from

9 a.m. After a considerable delay I saw an armoured car approaching me. By the way it was travelling with steam issuing from the engine I sensed that it was our men were driving it and that they were in trouble. When the armoured car came to the point where I had my car parked Joe Leonard and Emmet Dalton jumped off the back of the armoured car and told me the rescue had failed. They jumped into my car and told me to get away as fast as I could. This time they were both dressed as British Officers. I went straight down the North Circular Road to Portland Row, to the North Strand and turned towards Clontarf. The armoured car had turned towards Ballybough and I didn't want to be along with it. We went on towards Howth and Dalton said that if any police tried to hold us up at Sutton Cross, I was to carry on; that they would shoot their way through. Luckily there was no one there and we turned towards the Hill of Howth by the Bailey and when I reached the top of the Hill they told me to pull up. They got out of the car and knocked at the convent door. A nun opened it and she nearly collapsed when she saw the two British Officers. Dalton said to me "Get our clothes sent out to us". I carried on down the other side of the Hill of Howth and back into the city. By the time I reached Amiens Street the city was surrounded by military and a stop-press edition of the daily papers was being shouted by the newsboys, giving a description of the raid. I should mention that for three or four mornings preceding the actual day of the attempted rescue I was waiting at the same venue with my car. Each morning Joe O'Reilly would come down and give me the signal that there was nothing doing for that day.

Lord Derby:

One night Joe O'Reilly instructed me to go to the Gresham Hotel and pick up a Mr. Edwards there and I would be instructed to take him to a certain place. When I reached the Gresham Hotel I saw Tom Cullen and Bill Tobin standing on the footpath. Tom Cullen told me I was to take this old fellow to O'Meara's at Fitzwilliam Place. He said "He is not to be told his destination and you are to travel on a round-about route". With that Tom Cullen brought this gentleman to my car. He got in beside him and Liam Tobin got in front along with me. I drove him for a considerable time through streets and side streets in Dublin and over several canal bridges. After a considerable time we reached O'Meara's. I left him there and Tom Cullen and Liam Tobin came back with me to the garage. After an hour we went back and picked up the old gentleman at O'Meara's and brought him direct, this time, to the Gresham Hotel. By this time I knew who my passenger was - Lord Derby. He must have been surprised that it took such a long time to get to O'Meara's and such a short time to get to the Gresham.

General Recollections:

I have many recollections of driving de Valera and many other leading personalities of the day but it is difficult to recall now any special instances occurring while I was conveying them to various places in my car. When Dev was 'on the run' I used to pick him up at the Strand Road, Sandymount and take him to Phibsboro' to see his wife. I would leave him there and call back again for him and take him back. At that time his wife was staying with her sister, Mrs. Cotter. While Dev. was in America and Mrs. de Valera

was living in Greystones I frequently took to her a packet from the Finance Office, and which was given to me by Michael Collins. Many times also I took Michael Collins to Greystones.

On many nights on which I drove Michael Collins to different places in the city I was the last to know where he would be stopping for that night. I have heard him tell Sean O'Muirthuille and others of his colleagues that he intended to stay in a certain place and when I parted with him it would be at a totally different address that he would put up for the night. At that particular time it must be remembered that there was a price of £10,000 on the head of Michael Collins.

Once I became associated with Michael Collins I was used extensively by him to be at his command whenever he wanted me or wanted anything done. My memory is so clouded now that the numerous occasions on which I drove him and members of his staff and leading personalities in the Fight for Freedom that I cannot recall them all in this short statement which I am giving you for historical record.

Signed:

*Joseph Hyland*  
(Joseph Hyland).

Date:

*8<sup>th</sup> Feb 1952*

8th Feb. 1952.

Witness:

*William Ivory Comdt*  
William Ivory, Comd't.

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
BURO STAIRE MILEATA 1913-21
No. W.S. <i>644</i>