

ROINN  COSANTA.

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS

DOCUMENT NO. **W.S.** 682.....

Witness

Vincent C. Ellis, M.D., F.R.C.P.I.,
Garda Depot,
Phoenix Park;
Dublin.

Identity.

Assistant M.O. Grangegorman Mental Hosp. 1918 - ;
C.M.O. Garda Síochána at time of statement.

Subject.

Hospitalisation of I.R.A. members who
became mentally incapacitated as a
result of active service.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil

File No. S.1966.....

ORIGINAL

Statement of Vincent C. Ellis, M.D., F.R.C.P.I.

Depot, Phoenix Park, Dublin.

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BURO STAIRE MILEATA 1913-21

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In 1918 I was Assistant Medical Officer to

Grangegorman Mental Hospital and was a Sinn Fein member of the South Dublin Board of Guardians. I knew many leading personalities of the day through my friendship with Michael Staines who was then actively associated with the Independence Movement and was incidently chairman of the Grangegorman Board and after the 1918 Election T.D. for one of the Dublin Constituencies.

A day or two after Bloody Sunday a young man called to see me with a note signed O/C - Company, I.R.A. and initialed. The note was a request that I should do what I could for the bearer. The bearer was unknown to me. He accompanied me to my room, smoked a cigarette while he told me that one of the boys engaged in the executions of that Sunday had become mentally upset and wished to give himself up. He pointed out that should he do this it would allow the British Military Intelligence to discover the identity of all or some of the others involved with dire consequences. I suggested taking the boy into the Mental Hospital but since, as an official, I was debarred from issuing an admission certificate, advised him to take the boy to Dr. O'Carroll, Westland Row, for certification. I advised him that it was completely unnecessary to give details of what led up to this course being adopted.

I expected the boy to be brought along that evening or at latest the following day for admission but weeks passed before he was actually admitted. I never discovered why.

During the interval I felt very worried as my discussion with the bearer of the note had been very frank. I had discussed the male nurses who were friendly disposed to the movement, the precautions which would be taken to keep his previous activities secret, and, in general, gave

information which might be very useful to the British Military Authorities and very embarrassing to the nurses involved. After some days I discussed the affair with an active member of the movement. Without mentioning names I asked was it likely that in circumstances such as I described a member of the party would disclose the identity of any of his colleagues, or admit his own participation even to a doctor. The answer was definitely no. However all ended well and no harm resulted from our mutual frankness.

About this time Grangegorman Mental Hospital was raided by a large force of British Military complete with Field Kitchen. The raid started about 5 a.m. and lasted into the afternoon. It had been expected for some weeks and so although many members of the staff were active members of the movement and ammunition kept stored in the Mental Hospital the raid achieved no object whatever except that one young officer cut the telephone wires on arrival and thereby causing embarrassment later when other officers wanted to get into telephone communication with Headquarters.

One attendant on duty when the raid started and who was likely to be arrested had himself locked into a padded cell and behaved very like an acute maniac until the raid was over when he resumed his duties as a nurse.

Following the Truce, Michael Staines asked me if I would go to Broadmoor Criminal Lunatic Asylum in England and take home an I.R.A. prisoner there named Patrick Harte who originally came from the south - Cork, I think. I took two attendants with me and on arriving at Broadmoor I found that Harte was in a very bad state mentally, that he was almost in a state of dementia, refusing food and not co-operating in any way.

With him at the same time were two other prisoners from Broadmoore and I think one of them was Henry Dillon a Dublin man. He was taken home in care of his friends and subsequently admitted to Grangegorman. Harte was admitted directly. The third man was Leahy from Mayo. This man was mentally normal but when he was arrested he had arms on him. This was a capital offence so he was advised to feign madness. The British Military Medical Officer and the local Mental Hospital Doctor declared him "Mad", so he escaped execution. There was nothing at all wrong with him. he was perfectly normal in every way and he returned to his friends on arriving in Dublin.

I don't think that any instructions were issued to the Medical Officers of Grangegorman Mental Hospital from the British Authorities concerning the treatment of I.R.A. wounded but I do believe that the General Hospitals did receive some instructions to notify at once the British Authorities of any persons seeking treatment for gunshot wounds.

I remember quite well that patients admitted to the Mater Hospital who had received gunshot wounds were always rushed out by their colleagues as quickly as possible after emergency treatment was carried out.

Signed : Vincent C. Ellis .
(Vincent C. Ellis).

Date : 15th May 1952.
15th May 1952.

Witness : Edmond Morony Sgt.
Jane Siochana.
15/5/52
(Edmond Morony) Sgt.
Garda Siochana.
15/5/52.

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