

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

BURO STAIRE MILEATA 1913-21

No. W.S. 727

W.S. 727

ROINN



COSANTA.

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 727

Witness

Michael Joseph Lawless,
Canal Road,
Galway

Identity.

Member of "E" Company, 2nd Battalion,
Dublin Brigade 1913 - ;
Later; member of I R A Dublin.

Subject.

- (a) National activities 1913-1922;
- (b) College of Surgeons and Jacob's
Factory, Dublin, Easter Week 1916,
- (c) Bloody Sunday, 21/11/1920

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil.

File No. S. 2. 028

Form B.S.M. 2

W.S. 727

Statement of Mr. M.J. Lawless,

Canal Road, Galway.

C O N T E N T S.

	<u>Page.</u>
1. Service in Easter Week. Witness escapes at surrender. Subsequently arrested and released.	1.
2. Ambush - Newcomen Bridge.	2.
3. Bloody Sunday - 38 Upper Mount St.	3 & 4.
4. Witness employed as full time paid member of Munitions Branch I.R.A.	5.
5. Conclusion.	5 & 6.

ORIGINAL

Statement of Mr. M.J. Lawless, Canal Road, Galway,
formerly a member of E Coy 2nd Battalion Dublin
Brigade Irish Volunteers and Irish Republican Army.

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
BURO STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21

No. W.S. 727

I, Michael Joseph Lawless, was born on the 17th October 1890 in Canning Place, off Oriel St, Parish of St. Laurence O'Toole, Dublin. In 1914 I was living in "First Avenue", off Seville Place. I was then a monitor in the Christian Brothers Schools Seville Place. In 1916 I was working for Woods (Agricultural Machinery) South Dock St. I joined the Volunteers at the Inaugural Meeting Rotunda Rink December 1913. I was a member of E Coy 2nd Battalion Dublin Brigade (Tom Wafer). In 1914 I was in the operation at the L.N.W.R. (later L.M.S.) stores North Wall, which consisted of commandeering several cases of Martini rifles which were consigned to the Redmondite Volunteers. In Easter Week I served in the College of Surgeons with the Citizen Army, on the Monday at the Shelbourne Hotel gate, for the rest of the week on guard at a window overlooking Glover's Alley and in the houses occupied in the Grafton St. direction. On the Saturday night I was sent with a party to Jacobs for food and brought back supplies to the Surgeons. Then some of us E Coy men who had been in the Surgeons during the week, rejoined, by permission of Commandant Mallin, our Company which was in Jacobs. On the surrender next day, I got away accompanied by John O'Rourke of Seville Place. I arrived home next day, Monday, but was arrested almost immediately and brought to the L.N.W.R. station North Wall where a British post held various prisoners. I was brought before a Major Somerville there, about a fortnight later and released. That was the only imprisonment I ever experienced. I remained in E Coy 2nd Battalion when

it was re-organised under Seán Russell (to the best of my recollection). On the promotion of Seán Russell, Billy Byrne was, I think, Captain. At all events he was Captain at the time of the Truce.

In the Spring of 1919 I was present at the ambush of a goods train for the west at Newcomen Bridge. This train was carrying ammunition and troops. I was to take the signal box at the bridge but got orders to proceed to the Mountjoy Brewery signal box to warn the lads there not to interfere with a shunting engine that was moving up and down the line. Returning I was held up by a British sergeant but managed to conceal from him my .45 in my sleeve and eventually got away. The operation was on the whole a failure.

I was on various patrols and raids for arms subsequently. I was at the burning of Raheny barracks. I was detailed for the attempted rescue of Kevin Barry from Mountjoy during which some of us waited for 12 hours in the house of "Professor Maginni" the dancing master, in North Great Georges St.

As regards the operations of Bloody Sunday, 21st November 1920, I was ordered to report at the Painters' Hall Gloucester St. (as it was then) on the Saturday night (20/11/'20), by my Company Officer, B. Byrne. There I met a few other men and we received orders from somebody of G.H.Q. (I cannot remember whom). The orders were to be at Dunlop House, afterwards Oriel House, (corner of Westland Row and Merrion Row) on the following Sunday morning at 9 o'clock. Myself and Johnny McDonnell (brother of Paddy McDonnell, very well-known G.A.A. footballer of the period - St. Laurence O'Toole Club) and

Willie Maher, as we lived near one another, arrived there together and met there Herbert Conroy and Seán Daly (London-Irish - Kimmage pre '16 - later E Coy 2nd Battalion - brother of Liam Daly of Old Dublin Brigade association). Tom Ennis then arrived. We were all E Coy members. Ennis was in charge. He told us what the job was. He detailed us to proceed in twos. He and Conroy went ahead, the rest, well apart, two by two, followed. I walked with Seán Daly. We went to Upper Mount St. direct. Tom Ennis and Conroy knocked at the house No. 38. We all met in the hall of the house which had been opened to him. I was detailed to patrol the outside of the house and to watch out for any unexpected developments. After a few minutes I have the impression I heard shots from the direction of Lower Mount St. After about 10 minutes I heard the heavy footsteps of a man running from the direction of pepper-box church (St. Stephens). I was moving up and down and as I heard them I was moving down the street with my back to the church. A swift glance over my shoulder showed me the man was in khaki. I moved just past the house where Ennis and the others were, then suddenly wheeled round and held up with my revolver the soldier who was only a few yards behind me. He almost fell on his knees and cried out, "Don't shoot! Don't shoot!" I ordered him to go up the steps of the house and knock at the door for admittance, I following closely behind up the steps. I did not direct him to knock in any particular way as I had received no such instructions myself. Previous to our admittance a man put his head out of an upper window in a house opposite (nearer to the church) and shouted something like, "What's going on down there?". (This would be Major Carew. See Michael Noyk's statement. L. Ó B.) He had a revolver in

his hand. I immediately covered myself with the soldier, shouted to the man: "Get in from that window", and fired at him. He disappeared quickly. I hadn't hit him however. The door was opened then, by I think, Seán Daly and we were let in. Tom Ennis took him in charge then. He put him into a room on the ground floor, off the ? and either locked him in there or left Daly in charge of him. I got a glimpse in another room of three men standing up in pyjamas facing the wall with their hands on the wall. (Apparently only 2 men were shot here - Ames and Bennett. See M. Noyk's statement. On pointing this out to Lawless, he said simply, "I thought there were three". Note by Liam Ó Briain). I stayed in the hall while the shots were being fired in that room. We all left then immediately and crossing the street, went down the alley nearly opposite (nearer to Merrion Square) called "Power's Court" (?) and thence keeping together and taking back streets and alleys arrived at the ferry station on the South Quay opposite Common St. (near B. & I. stores). We met other men there coming from other operations. The ferry boat was there but no men to work it. However we got a fellow who was hanging about there to scull us across and on arrival in Common St. we dispersed to our homes.

I recollect being on a small operation at Rudge-Whitworth's cycle depot on Stephens Green, sometime previously. We took away from it various shell-cases and suchlike, which would be useful to our munitions' department. This was also an E Coy job.

Sometime after the Mount St. operations, Seán Russell asked me to join the staff engaged in chemical

work for explosives. He said the pay would be £4 10 0 a week, the regular pay of men engaged whole-time on active service. I said I was ready to do anything for nothing. For about three months before the truce I used to go every morning about 10 o'clock to Peter St. dispensary, in through the hall (not the waiting room) and directly downstairs to the basement where we spent the day making the "cheddar", with a luncheon interval during which we used go home (sometimes) and knock off about 4.30 or 5 o'clock. There were there also; John Joe Tallon, Tommy Kearns, Mick Kelly, Dunne (a N.U.I. man) and Donovan (a N.U.I. chemist) who was O/C. We mixed according to a scale given us the chemical substances, which were then heated in enamel saucepans on the gas stove, afterwards packed in little wooden kegs such as a grocer would keep bread-soda in, then brought by other men secretly to an armoury which was situated somewhere behind City Quay R.C. parish church (Seán Russell showed it to me once) and to other places; or sent to the country. I remained on there a while after the truce.

I joined the regular national army in Beggars Bush after the Treaty and worked for a while there at chemicals under Commandant Dan Stapleton.

On the outbreak of the Civil War I was in the armoured car "Sliabh na mBan" and was at the capture of the Gresham. I was in the armoured car after firing had ceased when a final shot from somewhere wounded Dan Stapleton.

Shortly afterwards, in July '22 probably, I was sent in a convoy to Limerick under Comdt. James Hogan (now Professor U.C.C.). We went via Athlone and at Kilchreest, Co. Galway, were ambushed and I was nearly

killed. A soldier called Charley O'Connor was killed. I bluffed 8 or 9 irregulars into surrendering. One of theirs called Kearns was killed also.

During the rest of the Civil War I was operating, in charge of the car Sliabh na mBan, in the country round about Limerick. James Hogan gave me my commission as Lieutenant in August '22.

I served in the army until '24. I was to take part in the army mutiny, my job being to seize the "Brian Houlihan" barracks outside Tralee where I was then stationed. I was then acting Captain, Special Infantry A Coy 1st Battalion.

I was employed in the Custom House subsequently and in 1937 came to live in Galway where I am still residing (1952).

Signed:

M. J. Lawless

(M.J. Lawless)

Date:

8/9/52

8/9/52

Witness:

M F Ryan Comd't

M F. Ryan, Comd't.

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

OLLSCOIL NA hÉIREANN.

THE NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF IRELAND.

COLLEGE.....

Here insert Spring, Summer or Autumn..... EXAMINATIONS, 19.....

Here insert Name of Examination..... EXAMINATION.

Here insert Subject.....

Here insert "First" or "Second," etc..... Paper.

Strike out where necessary..... Pass or Honours.

Examiners Names.....
BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
BURO STAIRE MILEATA 1913-21
NO. W.S. 727

mark

This statement was written down by Prof. Liam O'Brien on

the 27th of August 1952 from Michael Lawless in chambers of Commerce, Galway

I Michael Joseph Lawless, was born on the 17th October 1890 in Banning Place, off Oriel St. Parish of St. Laurence O'Toole, Dublin. In 1914 I was living in "First Avenue", off Seville Place. I was then a monitor in the Christian Brothers School, Seville Place. In 1916 I was working for Woods (Agricultural Machinery) South Dock St. I joined E. Co. the 2nd Battalion of Volunteers at the inaugural meeting Rotunda, Park December 1913. I was a member of E. Co. 2nd Battalion, Dublin Brigade (Tom Wafer). In 1914 I was in the operation at the L.N.W.I.R. (later L.M.S.) stores North Wall, which consisted of commandeering several cases

2
of Martini rifles which were consigned to the
Redmondite Volunteers. In Easter Week
I served in the College of Surgeons with
the Citizen Army, on ^{the} Monday at the Shelbourne
Hotel Gate, for the rest of the week on
guard at a window overlooking Glover's
Alley and in the houses occupied in the
Grafton St. direction. On the Saturday
night I was sent with a party to Jacobs
for food and brought back supplies to the
Surgeons. Then ~~some of us~~ some of us
~~E. Co.~~ E. Co. men who had been in the Surgeons
during the week, rejoined, by permission of
Commandant Mallan, our company which
was in Jacobs. On the surrender next
day, I got away accompanied by John
O'Rourke of Seville ^{Place}. I arrived home next day
Monday, but was arrested almost imme-
diately and brought to the L.N.W.R. Station
North Wall where a British post held
various prisoners. I was brought before
a Major Somerville there, about a fortnight
later and released. That was the only
imprisonment I ever experienced. I
remained in E. Co. 2nd Batt. when it was
reorganised under Sean Russell (to the
best of my recollection.) On the promotion
of Sean Russell, Paddy Byrne was, I think
captain. at all events he was captain
at the time of the Truce.

In the Spring of 1919 I was present
at the ambush of a goods train for the
West at Newcomen Bridge. This train

3

was carrying ammunition and troops. I was to take ~~of~~ the signal box at the bridge but got orders to proceed to the Mountjoy Brewery signal box to warn the lads there not to interfere with a shunting engine that was moving up and down the line. Returning I was held up by a British sergeant but managed to conceal from him my '45 in my sleeve and eventually got away. The operation was on the whole a failure.

I was on various patrols and raids for arms subsequently. I was at the burning of Raheny barracks. I was detailed for the attempted rescue of Kevin Barry from Mountjoy during which some of us waited for 12 hours in the house of "Professor Maginnis" the dancing master, in north Great Georges St.

As regards the operations of Bloody Sunday, 21st Nov. 1920. I was ordered to report at the Painters Hall, Gloucester St. (as it was then) on the Saturday night (20/11/20), by my company officer, B. Byrne. There I met a few other men and we received orders from somebody of G. H. G. (I cannot remember whom). The orders were to be at Dunlop House afterwards Oriel House (corner of Westland Row and Merrion Row) on the following Sunday morning at 9 o'clock. Myself and Johnny McDonnell (brother of Paddy McDonnell, very well known G. A. A. footballer of the period - St. Laurence O'Toole Club) and Willie Maher, as we lived near ~~to~~ one another, arrived there together.

OLLSCOIL NA hÉIREANN.

THE NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF IRELAND.

COLLEGE.....

Here insert Spring, Summer or Autumn. } EXAMINATIONS, 19.....

Here insert Name of Examination. } EXAMINATION.

Here insert Subject. }

Here insert "First" or "Second," etc. } Paper.

Strike out where necessary. } Pass or Honours.

Examiners Names.....

4

and met there Herbert Courvoys, Sean ~~Daly~~
 Daly (London Irish-Kumage pre '16-later E.
 Co. 2nd Batt) & Tom Ennis then arrived. We
 were all E. Co members. Ennis was in charge
 He told us what the job was. He detailed
 us to proceed in twos. He & Courvoys went
 ahead, the rest well apart, two by
 two, followed. I walked with Sean
 Daly. We went to Upper Mount St
 direct. Tom Ennis & Courvoys knocked at the
 house no 38. We all met in the
 hall of the house which had been opened to
 him. I was detailed to patrol the outside
 of the house and to watch out for any
 unexpected developments. After a few
 minutes I have the impression I heard shots

Brother of Liam
 Daly of old Dublin
 Brigade association

~~came~~ from the direction of Lion Mount St. after about 10 minutes I ~~to~~ heard the heavy footsteps of a man running from the direction of the ~~church~~ pepper box church (St. Stephens). I was moving up and ~~down~~ down and as I heard them I was moving down the street with my back to the church. a swift glance over my shoulder showed me the man was in Khaki. I moved just past the house where Ennis and the others were, then suddenly wheeled round and held up with my revolver the soldier who was only a few yards behind me. He almost fell on his knees and cried out "don't shoot! don't shoot!" I ordered him to go ~~down~~ up the steps of the house and knock at the door for admittance, I following closely behind up the steps. I did not direct him to knock in any particular way as I had received no such instructions myself. Previous to our admittance a man put his ~~or~~ head out of an upper window in a house opposite (nearer to the church) and shouted something like "what's going on down there?" He had a revolver in his hand. I immediately covered myself with the ~~the~~ soldier, shouted to the man: "Get in from that window," and fired at him. He ~~disappeared~~ disappeared quickly.

This would be
 Major Carew. See
 Michael Noyle's
 statement
 [G.O.B.]

6

I hadn't hit him however. The door ^{was} opened then, by I think, Sean Daly and we were let in. Tom Eunis took him in charge then. He put him into a room on the ground floor, off the floor? and either locked him in there or left Daly in charge of him. I ~~got~~ got a glimpse in another room of three men standing up in pyjamas facing the wall with their hands on the wall. I stayed in the hall while the shots were being fired in that room. We all left then immediately and crossing the street went down the alley nearly opposite (nearer to Mission Square) called "Power's Court" (??) and thence keeping together and taking back streets and alleys arrived at the ferry station on the South Quay opposite Common St. We met other men there coming from other operations. The ferry boat was there but no men to work it. However we got a fellow who was hanging about there to scull us across and on arrival in Common St. we dispersed to our homes.

I recollect being on a small operation at Rudge-Whitworth's cycle depot on Stephens Green, sometime previously. We took away from it various shell-cases and such like, which

Apparently only 2 men were shot here. Amer & Bennett see Mr. Moyl's statement on printing this out to Lawless, he said simply "I thought there were three" (NOTE BY CHIAMO B. Britain)

we are writing in Salway! - m. Lawless - L. O.B.

near B. & J stores

OLLSCOIL NA hÉIREANN.

THE NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF IRELAND.

COLLEGE.....

Here insert Spring, Summer or Autumn. }EXAMINATIONS, 19.....

Here insert Name of Examination. }EXAMINATION.

Here insert Subject. }

Here insert "First" or "Second," etc. } Paper.

Strike out where necessary. } Pass or Honours.

Examiners Names.....

7

would be useful to our munitions' department. This was also an E. Co. job.

Some time after the Mount St. operations, Sean Russell asked me to join the staff engaged in chemical work for explosive. He said the pay would be £4.10 a week, the regular pay of men engaged whole-time on active service. I said I was ready to do anything for nothing. For about three months before the truce I used to go every morning about 10 o'clock to Peter St. dispensary, in through the hall (not the waiting room) and directly down stairs to the basement where we spent the day making the "cheddat", with a

Kearns

luncheon interval during which we used go home (sometimes) and knock off about 4.30 or 5.0'clock. There were there also; John Joe Tallon, Tommy ~~Donovan~~ Mick Kelly, - Drunne (an U.I. man) and - Donovan (a U.I. chemist) who was O.C. We mixed according to a scale given us the chemical substances, which were then heated in enamel saucepans on the gas stove, & afterwards packed in little wooden kegs & such as a grocer would keep bread-soda in, then brought by other men secretly to an armoury which was situated somewhere behind City Quay R.C. parish church (Sean Russell showed it to me once) and to other places; or sent to the country. I remained on there a while after the truce.

I joined the regular ^{national} army in Beggars Bush after the Treaty and worked for a while there at chemicals under Commandant Dan Stapleton.

~~Shortly afterwards~~ ^{on} the outbreak of the civil war I was in ^{the} armoured car "Sliabh na mBan" and was at the capture of the Gresham. I was in the armoured car after firing had ceased when a final shot from somewhere wounded Dan Stapleton.

Shortly afterwards, in July '22 probably I was sent in a convey to Limerick under Command. ~~by~~ James Hogan (now Professor

9
//

U.C.C.) we went via Athlone and at
Kilchree St Co. Galway were
ambushed and I was nearly killed. A
soldier called Charley O'Connor was killed. I
bluffed 8 or 9 irregulars into
surrendering. One of them called Kearns
was killed also.

During the rest of the Civil War I
was operating in charge of the car Slabh
na mBan, in the country round about
himerick. James Hogan gave me my
commission as Lieutenant in August '22.

I served in the army until
'24. I was to take part in the army
mutiny, my job being to seize
the "Brian Houlihan" barracks outside
Tralee where I was then stationed.
I was then acting captain, Special infantry
A. Co. 1st Battalion.

I was employed in the Custom
House subsequently and in 1937 came
to live in Galway where I am
still residing (1952)

(Signed) M. J. Lawless
Canal Rd
Galway.

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1013-21
BURG-STAIRE-MILEATA-1913-21
NO. W.S. 727

27/8/52

Signed _____

Date _____

Witness