

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
BURO STAIRÉ MILÉATA 1913-21
No. W.S. 771

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 771

Witness

James Doyle,
Gresham Hotel,
Dublin.

Identity.

Manager, Gresham Hotel, Dublin,
1920.

Subject.

Shooting of two officers of B.F.
in Gresham Hotel, Dublin, on 21/11/1920.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil

File No. S.2097.....

Form B.S.M. 2

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Statement of JAMES DOYLE,

Gresham Hotel, DUBLIN.

From the year 1911 to the year 1922 I was Manager of the Gresham Hotel, Dublin.

I remember when Lord Derby visited this country for the purpose of trying to negotiate peace he stayed in this hotel under the name of Mr. Edwards. He was accompanied by a Liverpool Parish Priest. I recognised Lord Derby but I did not know what his mission was at the time. Lord Derby did not receive any people connected with the Independence Movement while in the hotel. He was going out a lot.

Archbishop Clune stayed in the Gresham Hotel also. He told me he had contacts with Arthur Griffith and Michael Collins and that he had come to this country at the request of Mr. Lloyd George with a view to negotiating for a settlement.

At about 9 o'clock in the morning of "Bloody Sunday" I was in bed in my room and was awakened by noise. It was a muffled sort of thing like the beating of a carpet. The porter called up to my room afterwards and I asked him what was the noise I had heard. He said that Captain McCormack, who was occupying a room quite close to me, had been shot dead. I got out of bed and entered Captain McCormack's room and I saw that he was then dead.

The porter also told me that another man had been shot dead in a room on the next floor over Captain McCormack's. I went to this room also and saw the dead man. His surname was Wilde. I was totally ignorant of what took place or why these men were shot at the time.

I questioned the porter and he told me that a number of armed men had entered the hotel and asked to be shown to the rooms occupied by these two men.

I immediately telephoned to the Right-Honourable James McMahon, then Under-Secretary, and told him what had happened. He advised me to telephone Dublin Castle and speak to the Military Authority there who, I think, was General Boyd. I did so and the General informed me that similar incidents had happened throughout the city. I was anxious that no reprisals should be taken against the Gresham Hotel and asked for an assurance from him that it would not be interfered with. He gave me the assurance and told me the Military would be confined to barracks.

Subsequent to the shootings, various members of the staff were taken to Police Headquarters for the purpose of identifying the men who had entered the hotel that morning, but identification was never proved.

McCormack had been staying here since September and had made purchases of race horses. He had booked his passage back to Egypt for December by the Holt Line. Although he had been a Veterinary Surgeon in the British Army there would appear to have been grave doubt as to his being associated with British Intelligence. While he was here I never saw him receiving any guests. He slept well into the afternoon and only got up early when a Race Meeting was on. When I found him shot in his room, "Irish Field" was lying beside him.

I mentioned to Collins after the Truce that there was a grave doubt as to Captain McCormack being a British Agent. He said that he would make inquiries into the matter, but after this the matter was never referred to again.

Mr. Wilde had been here for a considerable time before "Bloody Sunday". When Archbishop Clune visited this hotel again subsequently, I mentioned the shootings to him and he told me that Wilde had been put out of Spain; that he was well-known there as a British Agent.

I never met Michael Collins until after the Truce. But I saw him coming into the hotel on Christmas Eve 1920 with three or four others who came in for a meal. While he was here the place was raided by military. I saw a military officer approach Collins and I heard him being asked questions in the front hall. His comrades at this time were in the dining room. I heard Collins mention the name of Grace. Presumably he had papers to identify him under this name. The raid did not take long and the military party left without arresting anybody. Collins and his party, I think, left immediately without partaking of the meal which they had ordered.

When Collins and his party entered the hotel, information was evidently conveyed to the military by someone who had been in the hotel at the time. I suspected later that it was an Acting D.I. of the Royal Irish Constabulary. I cannot recall this man's name now but I believe an attempt was made to shoot him afterwards.

I got to know Collins very well during the Truce period. A number of rooms in this hotel were taken over which were used by Collins and his staff as offices for liaison work. It was then that I recognised the man who had given his name as Grace on being searched by the British Military at the previous Christmas as being Collins.

I cannot recall anything of importance occurring during the period of occupation here. There were a lot of people coming and going visiting Collins. One incident might be mentioned. A fellow arrived at the hotel off the morning boat. He had a conversation with the porter. Amongst his inquiries he asked particulars about Mr. Michael Collins who was using the hotel a good deal at the time, and he was then, or pretending to be, on his first visit to Ireland. I recognised him as a well-known member of the Black & Tans named McIntyre. He said that he was commissioned to publish the memoirs of Michael Collins and that he had a good sum of money at his disposal for that purpose.

I took an early opportunity of telling Mr. Collins what I knew of this man who left Dublin the same day without having seen Michael Collins. The next day Collins told me he had been put on the boat and warned not to return.

Later, when I was Controller to the Governor-General, Mr. T. M. Healy, at the Viceregal Lodge, a lady by the name of Mrs. Llewlyn-Davies had an appointment with him. Mr. Healy interviewed her in the drawing-room and I was present in the room during the interview. The purpose of her visit was rather obscure and for this reason he did not want to interview her in his Study. I should mention that I had previously met this lady when in the Gresham Hotel. She had called there on many occasions with a view to seeing Michael Collins. One of his staff, however, told me that she was making herself a bit of a nuisance. He added that Collins did not want to see her and had absolutely no interest in her.

SIGNED:

James Doyle
(James Doyle)

DATE;

18 Dec. 1952.

18 Dec. 1952.

WITNESS:

W. Ivory Comdt.

(W. Ivory) Comd't.

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No. W.S. *771*