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**ORIGINAL**

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21  
BURO STAIRE MILITAIRA 1913-21  
No. W.S. 730

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 930.....

**Witness**

Jeremiah Frewen,  
o/cElectricity Supply Board,  
Gracedieu Road,  
Waterford.

**Identity.**

Member 'B' Company Tipperary Irish Volunteers,  
1917 - ;

Intelligence Officer and Assistant Brigade  
Q.M. 3rd Tipperary Brigade, 1918 - .

**Subject.**

- (a) National and military activities, Co. Tipperary,  
1917-1921;
- (b) I.R.A. Intelligence, 1919-1921.

**Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.**

Nil

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Form B.S.M. 2

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Statement of Jeremiah Frewen,

Electricity Supply Board,

Gracedieu Road,

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I was born in 1899 in the townland of Baronstown, which is beside Limerick Junction. My people were farmers and I went to school to the Christian Brothers in Tipperary town. I left school in 1918, having done Senior Grade Honours in that year. I had become a member of the Volunteers some time about the middle of 1917 when, about July or August of that year, the Volunteers were reorganised in Tipperary following the Rising of 1916.

I remember that it was following the release of the sentenced prisoners, which was about July 1917, that I joined and it was at this time that public parades began to be held again. There were two Companies of Volunteers organised in Tipperary town, one on the east and one on the west side. The Company I joined was the Western one which I think was known as 'B' Company. These Tipperary Companies were part of the Unit which became known as the Fourth Battalion a little later. There were about 200 men in the two Tipperary Companies at this time, with from 80 - 100 men in each Company. The Company Captains were, as far as I can remember, Tom Rogers and Jimmie Hickey. I knew Seán Treacy before this time as he used to "hurl" with the Solahead team - at least I often saw him and knew him when they were practising. I also knew Dan Breen well at this time as he was working on the railway and was constantly up and down by Limerick Junction and actually a section of the railway line passed through our farm so they often came up to our place to have their tea at lunchtime.

My father had died when I was about five years old so I had no means of knowing what his views were on national questions but a man named Sam Fahy, who was a brother of the late Frank Fahy the Ceann Comhairle, was a Professor of Languages at the Christian Brothers School in Tipperary and also a Brother O'Donoghue at the School were very keen nationalists. They taught us something of our national history and imbued us with the ideals of nationalism. Sam Fahy had often during lessons told us little stories of his own experiences in prison after the Rising and things like this directed our minds on thoughts of the national struggle. The Conscription crisis of 1918 gave us plenty to do as the ranks of the Volunteers were swelled by an influx of recruits at this time and I know that for a few weeks I was kept busy running around with despatches between the various units.

Towards the end of 1918 the Parliamentary General Election came along and in preparation for this, Volunteer activities were directed into the organisation of public meetings and such work in support of the Sinn Féin candidates. Following the elections, there were victory meetings held all over the place. I remember P.J. Moloney speaking at one of these in Tipperary on the night of the election, and of course there was jubilation at the result. It was then that Seán Treacy came to me one night and told me that he was appointing me as an Intelligence officer and directed me to keep a close eye on all enemy movements and happenings in and around Limerick Junction. From then onwards, I watched all these things carefully: the movements and activities of the R. I. C. in the local barracks, and the movements of enemy personnel and material on the railway, and I reported periodically either to Treacy or to the Brigade Headquarters. My brother had died of the flu in September 1918 and I was

at home looking after the farm at this time. I knew that Treacy was the Vice-Commandant of the Brigade and that Séamas Robinson was the Brigade Commander, but I had never met Robinson at that stage.

The ambush at Solaheadbeg which took place in January 1919 created a stir and a lot of talk in the neighbourhood, but I knew nothing about it at the time except what we heard and read in the papers. In 1919 a section of Volunteers was formed at Limerick Junction and as we kept careful watch on what passed through, we were able to carry out raids occasionally in which military stores and equipment and petrol were obtained for the use of the Volunteer units. I remember that on one occasion we captured a lot of shell cases. These would be 18-pounder or Howitzer shells. They were not loaded shells but merely the cases. We did not know exactly what they were when we took them at first, but they were military stores and so we removed them from the train and sent them to the Brigade Headquarters from where they were sent somewhere else - I don't know what became of them, nor do I know why they were in transit. Occasionally, we held up a passenger train passing through Limerick Junction and British officers were taken off and searched and their luggage examined. Most of the guards and checkers on the trains were either Volunteers or Volunteer sympathisers and as both Seán Treacy and Dan Breen, as well as Séamas Robinson were a lot of their time in Dublin around this period, I had occasion to send frequent messages to them and to receive despatches from them for passing on. This was done usually by handing the letters to one of these guards or checkers on the train and they, in turn, passed them on to some other reliable person at Kingsbridge Station in Dublin from where it was forwarded to its destination. This was the normal method of communication with Dublin which was adopted between then and the

Truce. John Mulligan and Seán Eivers were two of these checkers who carried messages on the trains. At Kingsbridge there was a man named, I think, Joe Whelan. The latter was a checker or an inspector or something like that and he took over the messages arriving from the South and arranged to have them passed on to their destination. I often travelled up and down to Dublin myself and assisted D.P. Walsh, Assistant Brigade Quartermaster, in getting down ammunition and arms which Walsh had procured in Dublin or had got from Glasgow. Walsh used to cross over to Glasgow where he had some contacts, and ammunition, arms and explosives were purchased in England and Scotland and smuggled into Dublin. We got them to Tipperary with the assistance of these fellows I mentioned who were guards and checkers on the trains. Actually, I was in Dublin for the purpose of bringing down some stuff like this on Bloody Sunday, November 1920. I knew nothing about the arrangements for Bloody Sunday, of course, but I had come up from Tipperary with D.P. Walsh or had come up to meet him in town to bring some stuff back.

To go back, however, to the chronological order of events - following Solahead, there was the rescue of Hogan at Knocklong which, again, I knew nothing about until we heard about it afterwards. In fact, I was on the Station at Limerick Junction where I had gone for an evening paper when the train on which Seán Hogan was travelling came in. I learned at the time that Seán Hogan was on the train under an R. I. C. escort but there did not seem to be anything that could be done about it and I was not aware at the time that Treacy had already arranged to take Hogan off the train by force at a later stage. I heard all the details of this exploit afterwards from Breen and some of the others but as my knowledge is secondhand and the incident is well known, I need not go into it here. After Knocklong, Breen,

Treacy and Robinson were on the run and having spent some time around the country and in Clare, where Breen and Treacy were recovering from their wounds, they then went to Dublin sometime about the middle of 1919 and I had occasion from then on to send messages to them in Dublin and to transmit messages from them to other people in Tipperary. I remember that soon after Breen and Treacy had gone to Dublin, they arrived down to me one day, having cycled all the way from Dublin, but they went back again to Dublin after this.

From then on, until the spring of 1920, there was nothing much happening in our area. I sent reports regularly about once a fortnight or so, unless anything important cropped up when I might send a special report along immediately. I was keeping a close eye on the local R.I.C. barracks at the Junction which was only a short distance from my own backyard. Actually, I could watch the barracks without leaving my own yard and the police also could see into our yard from the barracks. There were two detective sergeants attached to the R.I.C. barracks in Limerick Junction, whose chief duties seemed to be watching the trains, and they were constantly on duty at the railway station. I knew them pretty well to speak to and one of them, I think his name was Cadogan, appeared to be friendly disposed towards the I.R.A. One day he told me that it was likely our house would be raided and that if I had anything in it, I should get rid of it. He explained that he had been in the barracks in Tipperary just previously to that and had heard some discussion going on about myself and my sister, as being under suspicion for I.R.A. activities. My sister was in charge of Eason's bookstall at the station and through her the consignments of issues of An tÓglach arrived off the trains. They were usually put up in bundles and

labelled as "Irish Times", or some other newspaper, and the whole lot was thrown into Eason's stall off the trains. On one occasion this detective-sergeant had come up to the bookstall for his evening paper just as the papers arrived and as she began to slit the wrappers off the papers, she accidentally slit the wrong one, so that when the bundle opened up it was An tÓglach which came into view. She bundled these away again immediately, of course, but although the sergeant must have seen them, he made no comment.

It was about January or February 1920 that the detective-sergeant warned me of the impending raid but, as this <sup>raid</sup> ~~rad~~ did not take place immediately, I had grown to look upon it as a false alarm, but the raid did take place at Easter 1920 and some small things were found in the house. Actually, I was lucky because on Easter Sunday I had got some stuff - despatches, ammunition, parts for revolvers and a bolt for a rifle - from Seán Treacy and these were in the house, but I got them away that night. The raid took place on Easter Monday but they only found a revolver holster and a few things like that which did not make much matter. I was in Tipperary when the raid took place and my mother gave an explanation for the things which were found. The revolver holster, she said, had belonged to my brother, who was dead, and some military books on the American Civil War had been sent by a sister in America and, in fact, I had not yet read them. These were seized and I never saw them afterwards.

One bit of information that I had sent along to the Brigade on several occasions was about a Crossley tender with a patrol, which passed regularly between Tipperary and Clonmel and no action was taken on the matter until July. On July 29th Treacy arranged to

ambush this lorry at Oola and on that occasion I was warned of what was about to take place and I acted as a scout in the engagement which followed. The details of this engagement have been published and as I was out of sight of the actual engagement, there is no point in trying to give details. It was on this occasion that General Lucas, who had escaped from I.R.A. custody, happened to be picked up by some military lorries and found himself in the middle of this engagement. Lucas and the military no doubt thought that the attack was designed to recapture him but, in fact, the attacking party knew nothing of Lucas' escape when the attack began and the military lorries were an unlooked for arrival in the ambush position. The vehicle that the ambush was designed for was a single Crossley tender which carried mails and such-like things daily and would have an escort of about six soldiers. The other lorries came along independently and merely happened, accidentally as it were, upon the ambush position.

I think it was about this time that an attack on the Clarihan R. I. C. barracks near Clonmel was planned and a number of us travelled over to Clonmel for the occasion. Actually, I drove the pony and trap bringing some of the fellows and their weapons over from the Junction but I do not know what happened about the attack. It was called off for some reason or other just when everything seemed to be ready and the fellows had to get back again as best they could. I never heard why the attack was called off.

In October 1920 Seán Treacy was killed in Dublin and I came up to town on the Saturday in connection with the arrangements for the funeral, and travelled down on the train with the remains to Limerick Junction. The coffin was brought to Solahead Church and the funeral was



from Solahead to Kilfeackle Graveyard on the Monday following. Big numbers of men of the 4th Battalion assembled for the funeral and we wore crepe bands with tricolours on the bands. A Battalion of British military were also in attendance not, however, to pay honour to the dead, but to prevent our marching in any kind of military formation. They also tore the bands of our arms. Most of us had bicycles and the military seized these bicycles and we never got them back. I do not remember that anyone was arrested, but they made every effort to bully the people and to prevent any organised attempt to pay honour to the dead soldier.

As I mentioned earlier, I was in town for Bloody Sunday which was in November 1920. I had come to town to help D.P. Walsh to get some stuff down to Tipperary. On the Saturday night, somewhere about 10 o'clock, I was in Phil Shanahan's, where I had gone with D.P. It must have been about closing time as there was noone else except P. Shanahan, D.P. Walsh and myself in the shop at the time. Suddenly, a fine big athletic looking fellow bounded in and spoke to Phil and was introduced to us. This was Mick Collins whom I met then for the first time. He impressed me as a man full of energy and competence and he talked casually with us while he drank a bottle of stout. He said to Phil Shanahan in the course of his conversation, "If any of you are thinking of going to Croke Park tomorrow, it might be safer for you to stay away as there may be trouble", and having finished his drink, he left as quickly as he entered. Actually, I took his warning seriously and did not go to Croke Park as I had intended but Phil Shanahan went there, notwithstanding Collins' advice, but he escaped without injury.

On the following day, Monday, my brother-in-law,

Mick Breen, who was also in town, decided he had better get away home as his name being similar to Dan's was likely to get him into trouble in Dublin. I saw him off on the evening train at Kingsbridge and when he was on the train military and Auxiliaries made a raid on the train and began an examination of the passengers. There was a respectably-dressed old man in the carriage with Breen and Breen took the bowler hat and spectacles from him and put them on himself to effect some kind of a disguise. When the raiding party came along to him they took no notice of him. I remained in Dublin for a few days at that time arranging to take back a small consignment of ammunition and things like that with me on the following Thursday or Friday. I got this stuff home all right and I dumped it in the hay barn in my own place, covering it up well with the hay and before I could get anyone to take it over, my place was raided by the Black and Tans who searched the place thoroughly inside and out, but did not go down far enough in the hay to find the ammunition. It was the Auxiliaries who raided the place on that occasion. They were stationed in Tipperary town. They were accompanied by the local R. I. C. Detective-Sergeant Fox who, I suppose, came with them as a local guide. In the course of the raid they looted everything in the way of eggs and chickens. My sister was arrested at this time and brought into Tipperary Barracks where she was searched by lady searchers, but she was released after a while. We believe that her name or some such identification had been found on Seán Treacy's body when he was killed.

It was about this time that Seán Hegarty, who was one of the Glasgow Irish who had come over to Dublin for the Rising and had remained in Ireland, came to Tipperary with Séamas Robinson's wife. Hegarty, I think, had

merely come from Dublin with her, as an escort, and he wanted to see Séamas Robinson. They came to our house and I drove them out to a house of people named Doherty at Seskin, where Dan Breen, Séamas Robinson and some of the others were. When we arrived at the house, Hegarty went in to tell the others we had arrived and, just then, we heard the sound of a military lorry approaching. I jumped off and ran towards the house to warn them but as the lorry was approaching rapidly, I realised I would not have time and the girls in the car called to me to come back. So, jumping up into the trap again, we drove off down a boreen where we went to the house of another family of Dohertys, less than half a mile away. When I was driving into this house, I met two R.I.C. men coming out of the house who questioned me as to what I was doing there. I explained that the two girls in the car were friends of these people and had come to visit them and I had merely undertaken to drive them out. They accepted my story and let me go. In the meantime, as I heard afterwards, the military had entered the first house where we had been, but Breen and the others escaped after some exchange of fire with the raiding party. Seán Héagarty, who was not armed, decided to remain where he was and try to pass himself off as a member of the household. They did not accept his plea, however, and after giving him a bit of a beating in the effort to extract information about Breen and the others, he was arrested and after receiving a sentence of, I think, three months, was sent to Waterford Prison. Later that evening military and Tans returned to Dohertys and burned down the place. This occurred about the last week of 1920 between Christmas and the New Year.

From then onwards ambushes, attacks on barracks, raids and arrests were very frequent and my time was

given, practically entirely, to the collection of useful information which was forwarded to the Brigade Headquarters as I was able to obtain it. These reports dealt almost always with enemy moves and the appearance of enemy forces in new localities and all such details: I cannot remember now what was in them, nor do I remember anything of outstanding importance that came under my observation. Occasionally I received despatches coming from Dublin by the railway for the Brigade Headquarters and I had to cycle over to Headquarters at Rose Green with these - it was about 17 miles away.

One of the things I had constantly reported was the presence of two military policemen who were in constant attendance at the station at Limerick Junction watching the trains. I feared that these men might have other duties besides their military police duties and the Brigade took action on the matter by getting a couple of men from one of the columns to come over one night to shoot these fellows. They fired on them but whether they were too far from them at the time or not, they only wounded one man and they were withdrawn to Tipperary Barracks. There were wholesale raids and arrests carried out in the locality after this shooting and as I was in the station one evening, the local R.I.C. Sergeant came to me and said he wanted me down at the barracks. I had no option but to accompany him and when he got me there he informed me I was under arrest. They held me at the barracks that night and the following day some lorries of military came out from Tipperary and I was placed in one of these and removed to Tipperary barracks. There were about 10 or 12 of us under arrest in the military barracks in Tipperary where we were placed in cells and the following day we were paraded outside and a soldier, who was the unwounded military policeman, was marched up and down

past us to see if he could identify any of us. We were then marched over to the hospital where we were paraded up and down by the bed of the wounded soldier but, apparently, neither of them recognised any of us as having been amongst their assailants. The following day, which was Saturday, my name was called out and I thought I was in for trouble. When I came out, the Sergeant of the guard asked me if I was Frewen and when I told him I was, he said "Get your belongings and clear off out of here," using a impolite remark. I could hardly believe that I was being discharged so easily and cleared off, expecting to be pounced on again at any moment. I met a couple of Volunteers in Tipperary town when I got clear of the barracks and I told them what had happened and I spent a while with them while waiting for the train to take me back to the Junction. Having arrived home some time about 10 o'clock that night, I stayed awhile talking with some of the fellows there but decided I would not sleep at home that night. I went to the house of a neighbour about 300 yards away where I stayed the night. About 5 o'clock next morning, hearing military lorries approaching, I looked out the window and could see them surrounding our house and was very thankful then that I had not stayed there. I made my way across the fields so as to get out of the way and from then on was careful if I went home not to stay there too long.

It was no use trying to join the column at that stage as there were insufficient arms for the men who were on the column already. Soon afterwards, D.P. Walsh, the Assistant Brigade Quartermaster, was arrested in Glasgow. Consequently, I was sent to Dublin to replace him as the agent for the Brigade in Dublin. The scarcity of arms and ammunition was very much felt at this time and every effort was being made to acquire these by any means.

Little could be got through General Headquarters unless there was someone on the spot to work for the Brigade in Dublin and the resources of G.H.Q. were also limited. Consequently, each Brigade had fairly largely to work for itself and that is why D.P. Walsh had established contacts in Glasgow from where he was able to get some small quantities of ammunition and such-like. When I went up to Dublin to replace D.P. I, of course, had not the contacts that D.P. had and I was able to do very little until after the Truce.

I am not too sure of the dates but I think it was some time in February that D.P. was arrested and it was about the beginning of April 1921 when I was sent to Dublin. My chief points of contact while I was in Dublin were Phil Shanahan in Foley Street and Maura Gleeson. Maura Gleeson was able to put me in touch with a couple of Black and Tans in the R.I.C. Depot where we negotiated the purchase of some arms. But we never got any further with the transaction than promises from them, although I believe they were genuinely willing to sell any arms they could get their hands on. I had a sister married in Dublin to Charlie McLoughlin the bookmaker. I was always welcome to stay with them when I was in town. It must have been soon after I came to town or at any rate sometime in April that Ernie O'Malley got in touch with me and came to stay with us at McLoughlin's for the night. That would be a week or ten days after his escape from Kilmainham and he was going down south as the Commander of the Second Southern Division which had then been formed. I went with him the next morning to Kingsbridge and put him in touch with some of the checkers I knew who would help him in case there was any raid on the train by military or Tans.

I was in Dublin when the Truce occurred and we had

heard rumours going round about the likelihood of the Truce for about a week or more before that. At that time I was searching for means of getting arms for the Brigade and Eamon Fleming, who had an office in Dublin, sent for me. He heard what I was doing and he explained that he would give any money to get hold of some arms for his own Brigade which was Kildare or Laoighis, I think. However, we were not able to do anything about it before the Truce. After the Truce I was down with the Division a few times and there were divisional training camps set up though I was not on any of these myself. There were other incidents, such as the raid on the British hutments at Tipperary and the hold up and disarming of the evacuating Black and Tans but, as I have no personal knowledge of these things, they could, perhaps, be got from Mickie Fitzpatrick or some of those who would know the details. There is a matter of interest - a proclamation which was issued by Denny Lacey and signed by him and, I think, all the other members of the Brigade staff. This proclamation was issued during the Truce and was intended to show a positive stand against the Treaty by the South Tipperary Brigade. I have a copy of this proclamation which I shall hand in, together with some other papers that may be of interest.

Signature Jeremiah Frewen

Date 10th March 1954

Jeremiah Frewen,  
10th March 1954.

Witness J.V. Lawless Col.  
J.V. Lawless, Col.

