

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
BÚRO STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21
No. W.S. 1,635

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 1635.

Witness

Lieut-Col. M. O'Kelly,
8, Parkmore Drive,
Terenure,
Dublin.

Identity.

Lieut. 'E' Coy., 2nd Battn., Dublin Bgde., I.R.A.

Subject.

Ambush of a party of British Intelligence
Officers, May, 1921.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil.

File No S. 2730.

Form B.S.M. 2

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SECOND STATEMENT BY LIEUT.-COLONEL M. O'KELLY

8, Parkmore Drive, Terenure, Dublin.

In May 1921, I, with six other members of D/Company, 2nd Battalion, Dublin Brigade, was detailed to lay an ambush for a party of British Intelligence officers who at the time were billeted in the Holyhead Hotel, Eden Quay.

Our Intelligence Branch had, for some time previous, kept the hotel under observation and had noted the movements of the officers concerned who, it may be mentioned, were under the command of the infamous Major King, a wellknown British Secret Agent.

It was noted that five or six of these officers made it a practice to travel in an open saloon car from their billet in the hotel each morning to Dublin Castle and return from there each evening. They followed the direct route - Eden Quay, O'Connell Bridge, Westmoreland St, Dame St., Dublin Castle. They did not vary the route or times of departure and return to any great extent. We were told that the officers were a tough bunch and would put up a stiff fight.

On the evening of 19th May we took up positions in the area O'Connell Bridge-Eden Quay-Marlboro St. and arranged our attack positions as follows: Two men were stationed on the footpath outside Hopkins & Hopkins, Jewellers, at the corner of O'Connell Street and Eden Quay. Two men were under the archway beside Mooney's publichouse on Eden Quay, two men were on the footpath at the corner of Eden Quay and Marlborough St. and one man was stationed on the island in the centre of O'Connell St. His job was to identify the car and give our party the prearranged signal. Each man was armed with a revolver, six rounds of .45 revolver

ammunition and a grenade.

The situation in May 1921, in the Dublin Brigade area was becoming more tense and raids, arrests and holds-up by British military, Auxiliaries and Black and Tans were a regular daily feature of enemy activity. In these circumstances. Volunteers selected for any job involving action against enemy forces had to be prepared to meet and deal with unforeseen situations as they might arise from time to time.

On this particular occasion (19th May) about five minutes before the car conveying the British Intelligence officers was due to show up, two lorries of British military stopped on O'Connell Bridge, the troops dismounted from the lorries and proceeded to put an armed cordon around the area and commenced a search of and interrogation of pedestrians. The moment the lorries stopped on O'Connell Bridge, we anticipated that a search was contemplated and rapidly withdrew from our positions; the attempted ambush of the British Intelligence agents had, therefore, for the time being to be postponed.

The ambush was next fixed for the evening of 21st May when we occupied the same positions at 5.45 p.m. as on the previous occasion. An amusing incident happened which I consider worthy of mention. A British soldier in uniform who was walking past approached our two men who were standing on the path outside Hopkins & Hopkins (Jewellers) and asked them to direct him to the Royal Barracks (now Collins). The boys were delighted with his company as it made their position less conspicuous and afforded them a measure of protection for the job on hand. They held him in conversation while, at the same time, keeping their eyes on the scout on the Island in the centre of O'Connell Bridge.

After a few minutes the scout gave the signal that the

car was approaching and the boys at Hopkins & Hopkins threw the grenades into it. Hell then broke loose; the occupants of the car had apparently expected an attack and opened intense fire with automatic pistols. The car proceeded down Eden Quay and was again attacked by our men from the archway beside Mooney's publichouse with grenades and revolver fire. When it reached the corner of Marlborough St. and Eden Quay the Volunteers stationed there also opened fire with revolvers and threw grenades.

The car went on towards Butt Bridge where it stopped. We subsequently learned that some of the occupants had been wounded. One of them was hanging from the knees out of the car, having been hit in the chest by the attacking party in Mooney's archway. Needless to mention, we did not wait to see the result of the operation, but made our getaway as quickly as possible.

I have a very vivid recollection of an Inspector of the D.M.P. who was proceeding up Abbey St. making a determined effort to halt myself and my colleague as we were coming from Mooney's laneway. He rushed at us with his walking stick raised to strike us and we had to cover him with our revolvers before he retreated.

Street patrols of the enemy were sent out that night from the Holyhead Hotel wearing rubber shoes and any unfortunate citizen caught on the street at the time was subjected to interrogation and a beating up, which was the usual tactics adopted by the forces of law and order.

Signed: Michael O'Keefe Col
Date: 12th June 1957.

Witness: Mr Bryan Connett.

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