

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21  
BUREAU STAIRS MILITARY 1913-21  
No. W.S. 1761

ROINN



COSANTA.

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 1761.

Witness

Stephen J. O'Reilly,  
16 O'Connell Avenue,  
Berkeley Road,  
DUBLIN.

Identity.

Attached to Transport Section, Dublin Brigade,  
and G.H.Q.

Subject.

Irish Volunteers and I.R.A. activities,  
1913-1921.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil.

File No S. 1543.

Form B.S.M. 2

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21  
BURO STAIRE MILEATA 1913-21  
No. W.S. 1,761

STATEMENT BY STEPHEN J. O'REILLY,

16, O'Connell Avenue, Berkeley Road, Dublin.

I first became associated with the Volunteers in 1913 when we had big manoeuvres in South County Dublin. I was not actually connected with any particular Company of Volunteers at the time, because I had a job as inspector or instructor in transport and I used to be sent all over the country.

During 1914 and 1915 I attended meetings now and again.

I was down the country the week before the Rising in 1916, and I came to Dublin on Easter Saturday or Good Friday. I met my brother, M.W. O'Reilly, and he informed me that there might be something doing on Easter Monday. He told me to get in touch with a man named in Booterstown Avenue. At that time I was living in Stillorgan, and on my way home I called on this man, who told me to come back to him on Monday. On Monday I went down to his place, but he was not there. I went then to Blackrock, where I met a man named Frank Gaskin and he told me to come into the city with him. We started off for the city, but only got as far as Sandymount when we had to turn back again. I returned home on Monday night.

On Tuesday morning I started off for the city with a .22 revolver. I got in as far as Dawson Street without any trouble, but I could not get any further. I went into the Automobile Club, where I was well known, thinking I might be able to wangle something or get some sort of a badge that I could use, but there was nothing doing.

I stopped in town on Tuesday and Wednesday and returned home on Thursday without doing anything further. There was nothing doing on Saturday and I returned to work on the following Monday.

Things were very quiet from that time until I met Captain Monteith one night in Seville Place. He asked me would I help to do a job and I said I would. We went over to the back of Parnell Square and got into 44, Parnell Square through the back. We raided and took possession of this place. I think the Redmond Volunteers had this place, but Monteith said we wanted it, so we took it. There were five or six of us in the raid. I stopped there all that night until about twelve o'clock the following day, when I was relieved.

I joined up with Simon Donnelly, Captain of 'C' Company of the 3rd Battalion. I stopped with him for about one or two months, when Captain Mick McEvoy called on me and told me I was to go to the Engineers. I went up to Simon Donnelly to make sure that this was all right, and he said, "Yes, you are being transferred. You will be more useful with them than with me".

An election was held and I was elected Adjutant of the 3rd Engineers. That was some time early in 1918. We had a lot of activities; we were out on the Three Rock Mountain; we were camping out at the Pine Forest; we built bridges and did a lot of other work.

Mick McEvoy and four or five of us raided Sandyford\* police barracks.

We went back to the Pine Forest and started off next morning into Dublin on bicycles. There was one man arrested

\* There was no Police barracks in Sandyford

that morning on our way in, but the rest of us got through all right.

On a couple of occasions we held up military police in O'Connell Street at night and took revolvers from them. We had not much trouble taking these, only one man made a fight for it.

I was sent down to Maynooth about the end of 1918 or the beginning of 1919 to blow up the Town Hall there. I brought 30 lbs. of gelignite with me to Maynooth. I went by train and arrived there at about three o'clock. I was to go and see Dónal Ó Buachalla, but when I went to see him he was out. There was a man in the shop who evidently knew or guessed who I was and he brought me in. Dónal Ó Buachalla arrived home at about six o'clock and we had a chat. I was told I could get as many men as I wanted for the job.

We came out at about ten o'clock that night and went over to the Town Hall and forced the door open. Paddy Colgan was on that job. We got in, and I instructed a big hefty man to bore a hole in the centre main wall and to put some gelignite into it.

During that time a runner came in and informed me that there were two men outside having an argument. We went out and saw a post-man and some poor unfortunate civilian having an argument outside Pitt's public-house, where they had come from. One of the men was just going to light his pipe; he lit a match and as soon as he did I put the revolver up in front of him, and match, pipe and all went. The two men cleared off, and I was pleased to find later on that they had been taken prisoner by our guards who were holding up the roads leading into the town.

The gelignite exploded but did very little damage to the wall. We then got some paraffin oil and we made short work of the building.

We came out when we found everything all right and we dismissed our men. We went over to Mr. Ó Buachalla's place where I enjoyed one of the best meals I ever had, after which I decided to get home. Mr. Ó Buachalla informed me that I would have to pass five police stations on my way to Dublin if I cycled, but that it would be dangerous to drive a motor car. He said he would provide me with either a motor car or a bicycle, and I told him I would prefer the bicycle.

I left Mr. Ó Buachalla at about three or four o'clock in the morning and I cycled straight into Dunboyne and from that into the Phoenix Park. I had a good rest in the Phoenix Park, as curfew was on until six o'clock in the morning and there was no use in my trying to get through. At about a quarter to seven I came along the North Circular Road, down into Goldsmith Street and into O'Connell Avenue, which is off Goldsmith Street. I delivered the bicycle later on to O'Hanrahan's on the North Circular Road; I had arranged with Mr. Ó Buachalla to leave it there.

I went to Headquarters in the Plaza in Gardiner's Place that evening and reported that the job in Maynooth had been carried out satisfactorily.

I was then instructed to take charge of No. 2 Engineers and went over to Great Denmark Street where the 2nd Engineers were. There was a Captain there but they told me to take charge and I refused. They decided then to have an election. Headquarters sent over a man named McMahon, Barney McMahon's

brother. I was elected Captain. I went before the men and told them straight that I would not ask them to do any job that I would not do myself. The men were quite agreeable and were prepared to stand by what I said.

There was an election then. Tom Keegan, who had been Captain, was appointed Lieutenant, but I forget who the other Lieutenant was. Purfield was the Adjutant.

We carried on activities then for some months, and carried out several raids. We took a motor car and five motor bicycles out of Aldboro House, and we raided the coastguards station in Dollymount. We had a lot of small jobs as well.

I was also on Belfast boycott work. My job was to drive the motor car which we had taken from Aldboro House, pick up some of the boycotted goods and dump them somewhere, it did not matter where.

I got instructions one evening to report to headquarters in the Plaza, where I was informed that there were explosives, gelignite, detonators and wires at Kilmainham; I was to get a car, go to Kilmainham for the stuff and bring it out to Killester.

I picked up a car and went straight out to Kilmainham, where I met a gentleman, who had evidently been told I was coming, and he brought me into a plot and handed me over the gelignite, bombs, an exploder and wires. I put the lot into the back of the car, and I said to the man, "That is great cabbage you have there". He said, "Would you like a couple of heads?". I said I would, and he gave me a few heads, which I put into the back of the car on top of the stuff.

I decided that the best way to come back would be down the North side of the Quays, into Capel Street, through Capel Street and out to Killester. When I came to Capel Street, to my horror I saw about three Auxiliaries who had rifles with bayonets on top of them. I pulled up and one of them asked me for my permit. I said, "Certainly", although I had not even a bit of paper. The other two went to the back of the car and one of them said, "It's only spuds and cabbage. Let him go". I was allowed go on without having to show the permit which I had not got. I can assure you that I saluted those men.

When I arrived at Killester we dumped the stuff there. It was to be used for a job on the railway, but the job misfired.

I came back into town and left the car outside the Mater Hospital, and brought my two heads of cabbage away with me.

The following morning I had to get up early and go out to Killester. Something went wrong with the arrangements for the job out there; I think the Active Service Unit did not turn up or something like that. I received instructions later to remove my stuff into a safe place. There were five or six of us there and we had a look round and we dumped it. About a week afterwards Captain Cremen asked me for 30 lbs. of gelignite and I told him it was out in Killester. He told me to go out and get it for him. I went out to Killester, and to my horror I found that the Auxiliaries were there with two motor cars and saw that they were examining the place where I had dumped the stuff. I saluted them and passed by. Further on there was a bit of a rise, and by getting up on the rise in the car I could see the tops of the lorries; they were caged lorries.

I waited for about half an hour. Eventually I saw the cars moving away and hoped they had not taken my gelignite. I turned the car and came back, and a friend of mine told me that the Auxiliaries had taken away a bag of stuff. I said, "I hope they haven't taken what I came for", and he said to me, "Before you go down there, you had better have a look around". I had a good look around and saw that we were safe. I went down and discovered, to my great surprise, that my 30 lbs. of gelignite had not been touched.

I got the gelignite into the car and was coming straight down to go to Clonliffe Road when I met the Auxiliaries again, and they held me up. One of the Auxiliaries said, "He is only after passing us by up at the bridge", and I was allowed through.

I delivered the gelignite to Mick Cremen. He wanted me to go out that night with him for a job, but I said, "I am not going. You can go yourself". I told him I had a meeting or something on that night and that I could not go with him. I was delighted at getting rid of the 30 lbs. of gelignite, but I was sorry to hear the following day that a couple of men had been arrested and the gelignite taken.

I was then appointed transport driver to the Dublin Brigade. Pat McCrae was Mick's right-hand man, and used to drive Mick everywhere. Oscar Traynor got a car and I was his driver. I was in charge of the Brigadier's car only. I drove Oscar Traynor and the headquarters staff to each of the inspection parades during the Truce. We had to go through the whole Dublin Brigade.



I was more or less connected with the Squad, but I was not really with them. I was out in Killester some time afterwards. Pat McCrae saved my life one time in 1921, I think. There was a raid out in Killester and we went out and brought a slab of gun-cotton with us. When the tender passed I put the slab of gun-cotton on to the rail, put my detonator in, went straight over and up the bank to my exploder and had everything ready when the train actually arrived. Instead of an explosion there was just a bang. Immediately after the train passed I went down and picked up some of the gun-cotton and put it into my pocket. Pat McCrae shouted to me to come up at once, that the train had stopped and the soldiers were coming. A few bullets passed by me; I heard them passing.

Pat McCrae drove me to Mountjoy Square in a car and I went from that to the Plaza and reported the matter. Rory O'Connor was there and I showed him the gun-cotton, and told him that it had not exploded but had burst only. He said it was hard lines, but said he was glad I had brought the evidence to prove that the detonator had worked, although the gun-cotton was not up to the mark.

