

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY. 1913-21

BURO STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21

No: **W.S. 117**

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS

DOCUMENT NO. **W.S.**.....117.....

Witness

Maurice Moriarty

Identity

Member of Tralee Coy. I.V.

Subject

Casement's landing at Banna Strand

Conditions, if any, stipulated by Witness

File No. **S.771**

Form B.S.M. 2.

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY
BURO STAIRA MILEATA 1913-21

No. W.S. 117

STATEMENT OF MAURICE MORIARTY, STACK'S
VILLAS, TRALEE, CO. KERRY.

PERIOD: EASTER, 1916.

UNIT: TRALEE, I.V.

W.S.
117

In 1916 I was a member of the Irish Volunteers and lived at 46, Rock Street, Tralee. I was employed by Mr. Charles Nolan, Pembroke Street, as a motor driver. The car I usually drove was I.N. 433 which was registered in my own name. Mr. Nolan had another car, I.N. 405, registered in his own name. On Holy Thursday I was driving a traveller round North Kerry in I.N. 433, and when I garaged it that night there was practically no petrol in the tank.

On Good Friday morning I was leaving my own house when I saw Austin Stack and Con Collins approaching. Stack asked me if the motor car was in order, and said he needed it urgently. I explained that there was no petrol in it, and, after a short discussion, it was decided to use Mr. Nolan's car, I.N. 405. I drove this car to Dingle Railway Gates in Rock Street on Stack's instructions and met him there. He put some coats into the car and told me to wait for him at the New Road - now Stack's Villas. It was then about 10.30 a.m. I was waiting about 10 or 15 minutes when a scout came to me and told me to go to Tom Slattery's in Rock Street. When I arrived outside Slattery's a Tralee detective named Neazer was standing at the door. Mr. Slattery threw a parcel from one of the windows and it landed in the back of the car. I drove on past Neazer to the New Road again.

I was at the New Road about 10 minutes when the late Batt Flahive of Reidy's Lane came along on a lorry and told me he was going to Fenit with a despatch. He instructed me to take the car as far as the gate outside Ballonagh Convent. I did so and after a few minutes Con Collins, and a man whom I afterwards heard was Julian Bailey, came up the road. They walked past the car in the direction of Caherslee. Stack then arrived, got into the car, and told me to drive on slowly and pick up Collins and Bailey. We picked them up. When we reached Ballinasore Height, Stack turned to Bailey and asked, "Would you know the locality from here?" Bailey replied that he did not know, all he could say was that it was "somewhere on Banna Strand".

Stack then said to me, "Roger Casement is after landing; we don't know where he is but he is probably somewhere around Banna Strand". Stack told me we would have to avoid going through Ardfert at all costs, so I branched off at Tubrid, came down the North Commons Road and broke out at Banna Cross. Stack was delighted that we had passed the village without encountering the police. We went on towards Banna Strand. On the way from Banna Cross to the Strand a horse and cart in charge of two policemen came against us. On the cart was a boat. Stack turned to Bailey and asked, "Is that your boat?" Bailey said, "Yes, that is the boat we used after leaving the submarine". Stack paused for a moment and then said, "Oh, God, lads, the game is up". When we got to Banna Strand there were about twenty policemen there posted at different points. Stack repeated, "The game is up; what are we going to do now?" I suggested

that the best course was to keep up the bluff that they were visitors sightseeing, and that I was driving them to Ballyheigue.

Just then Sergeant Crowley of Ballyheigue came towards the car. When he was about twenty yards from it one of the tyres burst. Crowley came up to the car, alleged that he had been fired at, and accused the men in the car of having fired at him. I denied it and pointed out the burst tyre to him. He then got curious, and demanded an explanation of our presence on the Strand. I told him my passengers were visitors on holidays, they wished to travel along the sea coast, and that I was under the impression it was possible to get to Ballyheigue by following the beach. The Sergeant did not appear to believe this. He asked for names. Stack, Collins and I gave our own names and addresses, Bailey gave the name, Mulcahy, 44, Mountjoy Street, Dublin. Stack had previously told him to give that name if questioned. The Sergeant then went away to collect his bicycle.

After changing the tyre we decided to go to Lawlor's Cross. When we got there Stack got out of the car, went into Lawlors and remained there about half an hour. Sergeant Crowley came along the road on a bicycle. He stopped and began to question us again about our business on Banna Strand. Stack came out of Lawlors just then and said to Sergeant Crowley, "Did we not tell you we were on holidays?" The Sergeant expressed himself puzzled that we should try to reach Ballyheigue by going along Banna Strand. He asked Stack, "Did you know there was a boat landed this morning?" "That's the first I heard of it", said Stack. "Yes", said Crowley, "we got the boat and we got our man too". He then asked Stack what he would say if the whole party was put under arrest. "I should be very sorry for the Sergeant", Stack answered. "What would you do?" was Crowley's next question. Stack replied, "I would make a fight for it, anyhow". After some delay the Sergeant decided he would search the car. He told Stack of his intention. Stack turned to me and said, "Go along and give him a hand, you know the car better than he does. There might be a few machine guns there that he would not be able to find". Crowley searched the car, and then released us with the remark, "Oh, well, I suppose it will be alright. I will take your word for it that you are going to Ballyheigue".

I drove to Ballyheigue and we called into a public house there. After we were there some time I saw Sergeant Crowley going into the Post Office. I called Stack's attention to this and Stack said, "Yes, I saw him. I suppose he is phoning all over Ireland. We are done now". It was decided to go on to Causeway and I drove there. As we entered the village three constables and a Sergeant named Loftus approached the car. One of the policemen said, "Yes, this is the car alright", while another went off quickly in the direction of the Post Office. He kept going in and out of the Post Office at regular intervals.

Sergeant Loftus questioned us, and when Con Collins got out of the car he was immediately searched and a Webley revolver found on him. The police took it and he was taken into the Barracks. Bailey and I were then searched, but nothing was found on either of us. Loftus then approached Stack who was still sitting in the car and asked, "What about you, Mr.

Stack; I suppose I will have to search you. Have you any objection?" Stack said, "I have, yes", and, in reply to further questions by Loftus, he said that he had things in his possession that he did not want the Sergeant or anybody else to know about. Loftus said, "Will you show me what you have?" Stack put his hand in his pocket and took out an American automatic. "Is it loaded?", asked the Sergeant. "Yes", said Stack, "there are six in the magazine and one in the breach". "Have you anything else?", enquired Loftus. "I have", Stack answered, "a box of ammunition and some documents that you or anybody else will not know anything about. Loftus then asked if he had a certificate for the automatic. Stack said, "No Irishman needs a certificate nowadays to carry firearms". The Sergeant said that he supposed such was the case, and Stack enquired whether he intended to hold Collins in the Barracks very long. He also suggested that the Sergeant should hand back Collins' revolver to him. After saying this, Stack got out of the car with the automatic still in his hand, walked over to the barrack door and went in. In a few minutes I saw him come out with Collins, and Collins had his Webley. Loftus enquired where the car was going. Stack said, "Tralee, I suppose".

The next place we stopped was Ballymacquinn. Here the three of them left the car and were away for some time. Only Stack and Collins came back. Stack had left Bailey with some Volunteer he had contacted there. When Stack and Collins returned to the car, Stack said to me, "Whatever happens you are not supposed to know anything at all about all this. If the police ask you anything, plead ignorance. They have got Casement, that is the devil of it". I drove back to Tralee by Tubrid and Bullock Hill. When we came down Rock Street Neazer was sheltering out of the rain in the gate of the C.W.S. Factory. I drove to Miss Elizabeth Slattery's, where Stack used to stay. Neazer was on our heels, and demanded to know where we had come from. I said, "Good God, man, are you blind? Didn't you see us pass you down Rock Street coming from Abbeydorney". Stack and Collins went into Miss Slattery's. Neazer went in also and searched the house and found nothing.

I drove the car down Rock Street. There were police on duty at the Dingle Railway and Market gates. I put the car in the garage, and, when I had done so, a policeman came and put his back against the door.

I went home and had just finished dinner when a policeman came and took a statement from me. I said that, as far as I knew, the people I drove that day were visitors on holidays. I went out and went towards the Rink. There were many rumours in circulation, one to the effect that a spy had been captured. I do not think the police knew who Casement was at that time. Passing the police barracks on my way to the Rink, I saw Collins being questioned by the police in the barracks. I turned back and met a scout who told me that Stack had been arrested, that he had gone to the barracks after receiving a message from Collins through the police that Collins wanted to see him at the barracks, and had been detained there.

Next day I was at work at Charles Nolan's when a policeman came and took me to the barracks. I was questioned there and told that I knew more than I professed to know. I asked why and was told "We got the man you left out in the car at

Ballymacquinn and he has told us all". I heard later that Bailey had been arrested. I was taken to a cell. After some time I was brought to the day-room and asked to make another statement. I refused and was allowed to go home.

On Sunday morning, May 4th, Sergeant Crawford arrested me and brought me to the barracks. He said, "You are going on a bit of a journey". In the barracks I was questioned again by Sergeant Restick, Abbeydorney, and Sergeant Crowley, Ballyheigue. Restick said that I said in my statement that I came through Abbeydorney. "How was it", he said, "that I did not see you, and I waiting there all day for you?" I said his eyesight must be failing.

That day Michael Hussey of Banna and myself, with a police escort, were put on the train at Tralee. We arrived in Dublin at 7 p.m., had a snack at the Soldiers' Home near Kingsbridge, were taken to the boat and arrived in London at 5 o'clock next morning. On the way to New Scotland Yard, Hussey was left behind accidentally at a subway station. The police escort were in a state of agitation at losing him and asked me if I thought he knew where he was going. I said I did not know, but had heard them speak about New Scotland Yard. When we got there the police found Hussey there before them. He had been picked up by a policeman on duty at the Station.

I was seven weeks in London waiting to be called as a witness in Casement's trial. The police escort, Hussey and myself were staying in the Shaftsbury Hotel. One night Sergeant Crowley and I got lost trying to find the hotel. I thought he knew where we were going and he thought I knew the way. We were on the other side of London. We met a policeman who turned out to be from Ballyheigue and he directed us. Witnesses were not allowed to be present at the trial except while giving evidence, and I managed to be present only for a small part of the hearing. I returned to Tralee on 30th June, 1916.

SIGNED: Maurice Moriarty
DATE: 30th April 1948

WITNESS: Finneas Donohue

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