

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
BURO STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21
NO. W.S. 189

ROINN  COSANTA.

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS

DOCUMENT NO. W.S.189.....

Witness

Mr. Michael T. Soughley,
42 Suir Road,
Kilmainham, Dublin.
Identity

Ex D.M.P. Sergeant

Subject

Execution of Leaders
after Rising 1916.

Conditions, if any, stipulated by Witness

Nil

File No. ...S.1145.....

Form B.S.M. 2.

128 A

ORIGINAL

PERMIT.

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21	
BUNO STAGE MILITARIA 1913-21	
NO. V.S.	189

Constable Michael Sougily 'A' Division, D.M.P. has permission to enter Kilmainham Court House at any time during the month of August 1921.

Kilmainham.
DUBLIN.

W. J. [Signature]
Captain,
Staff Captain 'A'
25th Provisional Brigade.....

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

BURO STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21

NO. W.S. 189

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(128)A

STATEMENT BY EX-SERGEANT MICHAEL T. ~~SHELLY~~,
D.M.P. (RETIRED), 42, SUIR ROAD, KILMAINHAM,
DUBLIN.

I was a Constable in the D.M.P. and attached to Kilmainham Police Station in 1916. On the 24th April when the Rebellion started we were withdrawn from the streets by order of Colonel E. Johnstone, Chief Commissioner, Dublin Metropolitan Police. We had to report to our Barracks in the normal way as if reporting for duty during that week. No one interfered with us. On the 1st of May I went on night duty again. Kilmainham Prison had been closed as a civilian prison about 1904 or thereabouts. At the outbreak of the Great War in 1914 it was reopened as a Military Prison and was used as such when the Rebellion broke out. Towards the end of April 1916 and the end of the Rebellion the Prison was cleared of military prisoners and male and female prisoners were drafted in. Curfew was in force at this time and there were therefore no civilians on the streets.

On the morning of the first executions, at about 2 a.m., there was great activity in Kilmainham Jail. This was the 3rd May 1916. I was at the Police Barracks, Kilmainham, which was situated close to the Jail. Motor cars with staff officers began to arrive in the prison and a party of soldiers came from Richmond Barracks and went into the prison. A short time afterwards a large force of military commanded by an officer also came from Richmond Barracks and also entered the prison. I noticed a Volunteer officer in the centre of the party. They were travelling at a very fast pace. About five minutes after they had entered the prison, the first volley of shots rang out. After a lapse of ten minutes a second volley rang out and after a further ten minutes a third volley. A short time later the military party with the Volunteer officer whom I later ascertained was Comdt. E. Daly, returned to Richmond Barracks. I was told by an N.C.O. who was on the staff of the jail at that time that Tom Clarke had expressed a desire to see Daly before he (Clarke) was executed and as Daly was considered a very important prisoner, being one of

the leaders and, in view of the fact that he (Daly) had already been tried and sentenced to death considerable difficulty was experienced in getting the necessary authority to remove him from the Richmond Barracks to Kilmainham Jail for that purpose. The staff officers withdrew shortly after the executions and the bodies of the three executed men, wrapped in army blankets were removed in a horse-drawn army wagon to Arbour Hill.

This N.C.O. told me that when Comdt. Daly arrived at Kilmainham with his escort he was informed that as Tom Clarke was about to be executed he could not see him. Daly said he would like to see him dead or alive and he was allowed to remain. When the three men were executed their bodies lay in an old shed in which prisoners broke stones in bad weather. Daly went out to this shed - stood to attention and saluted the remains. He then took off his cap, knelt down and prayed for some time. He put on his cap again, saluted again and returned to his escort. Daly stood in the same spot the following morning for his own execution.

This N.C.O., who was a very good Catholic, being Irish and a retired R.I.C. man, told me that some of us should volunteer to go for the priest and relatives of the condemned men who were still to be executed as the soldiers who were driving the cars had a very poor knowledge of the city. He pointed out that there was a possibility that some of these men would go before firing squads without seeing their relatives or having the consolations of their religion. He told me that thirty five blindfolds and white cards had been made in readiness for executions. The white cards were pinned over the condemned men's hearts as aiming marks for the soldiers. I told him I would discuss the matter with the other policemen who were on night duty with me, but I was afraid that they, like me, would not be keen about having anything to do with executions.

When I went on duty that night at 10 p.m. I told the others:

about the conversation I had with this N.C.O.. At first, like myself, they were rather reluctant to have anything to do with the work that was going on in Kilmainham Jail, but after some discussion we decided to go. We reported to the Jail about 11 p.m. that night. This was the 3rd May. We were put in a waiting room and were told that a staff officer had gone up to tell the condemned men that they were to be executed at dawn and to get particulars as to the relatives and clergymen they wished to see. After some time a N.C.O. came down to us. I found that Comdt. E. Daly was on the list and he was anxious to see Father Albert of Church St. as well as his two sisters - Mrs. Tom Clarke and Miss Daly. Miss Daly was staying with her sister, Mrs. Clarke, at Philipsburgh Avenue. I volunteered to bring them to Kilmainham. The arrangements were that relatives were to be brought first and next we were to take the priest. Then the relatives were to be taken home and finally to take the priest home after the executions were over. We travelled in Army cars driven by soldier drivers.

To make sure that there would be no disappointment about the priest I went to Church St. first where I found Father Albert and told him I would be calling for him later. I went then to Philipsburgh Ave. and got Mrs. T. Clarke and Miss Daly and brought them to Kilmainham. I returned for Father Albert and brought him to the Jail. I brought the two ladies home and after the execution had been carried out I took Father Albert back to Church St. The priest always accompanied the man to his execution and administered the last rites of the Church to him after he was shot. When I arrived at the home of Mrs. Clarke on the first occasion that night I knocked at the door and Mrs. Clarke opened it. She was in her dressing gown and seemed to be very nervous and was shaking. I later discovered that this was not so, but that it was cold she was. I said I was very sorry to hear of her husband's death that morning that I knew him well and never expected he would meet such an untimely end. She replied that there was nothing to be sorry about that he had died as honourably as he had lived.

On the morning of the first executions there was only one firing party for the three men executed and I was told that the soldiers displayed considerable nervousness when the third man was brought out to be executed. On all subsequent mornings there was a different firing party for each man shot.

There was great admiration amongst the staff of the jail for the manner in which the executed leaders met their fate especially Tom Clarke who, notwithstanding his age and frail constitution, expressed his willingness to go before his firing party without a blindfold. I was also told that as far as the others were concerned they did not care whether they were blindfolded or not. Death did not seem to hold any terrors for them.

I had great sympathy for Mrs. Mallin when I brought her home from Kilmainham that morning her husband was executed, because she was in an advanced state of pregnancy at the time and, taking her condition into consideration, was bearing up remarkably well.

On the night prior to the final executions I went to the Jail for what I expected would be the last batch as Asquith, the English Prime Minister, had announced in the British Parliament that they would be the last lot of executions. No relatives of James Connolly were included in the list that we got that night at 11 p.m. He was then lying wounded in a Red Cross Hospital in Dublin Castle. The following morning the executions were completed. The firing parties and staff officers had withdrawn and a mantle of gloom once more hung over Kilmainham Prison. The staff of the Jail, as well as ourselves, were all delighted that the grim work was finished. We went back to our Barracks and about half an hour later were surprised to see a firing party return to the prison as well as staff officers. A four-wheeled General Service wagon drawn by two horses came along the old Kilmainham road at a very fast pace, swung to the right and went into the Prison. We saw a man sitting in the wagon surrounded by a number of soldiers who were sitting around him. As far as I

can remember he was dressed in civilian attire. He did not seem to be wounded that we could see, but as the soldiers were sitting very close to him they could be supporting him with their bodies. A short time after the wagon entered the Jail a volley rang out and we later learned that the victim was James Connolly. It would appear as if Connolly's execution was a rushed affair and squeezed in at the last moment.

Constable William Barry, 120A, who retired in 1924 and is now living somewhere in Co. Kerry, saw John McBride being executed.

Signed:

Michael J. Longhey

Date:

25th Jan 1949

Witness:

Matthew Dacey Lord

