

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

BURO STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21

No. W.S. 194

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 194.

Witness

Mr. Domhnall Ó Buachalla,  
Ath-na-Cise,  
Eglinton Road,  
Ballsbridge, Dublin.

Identity.

Member of Irish Volunteers Maynooth 1916;

Last Governor General under 1921 Treaty.

Subject.

The Rising 1916 -  
Parliament St. Area and G.P.O.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil.

File No. S.303.

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BUREAU STORE MILITARY 1913-21  
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STATEMENT BY DOMHNALL Ó BUACHALLA (BUCKLEY)  
"Ath-NA-CISE", EGLINTON ROAD,  
DONNYBROOK, DUBLIN.

While at school in Maynooth and Belvedere College, I never learned anything about Irish History. I joined the Gaelic League on its inception and started an Irish Class in Maynooth and it was then I learned the history of my country, by reading. I came to Dublin once per week to buy goods for my father's shop in Maynooth, and after the Gaelic League started I always bought Irish goods.

When the Irish Volunteers were started I joined the Maynooth Coy. This Company was about 40 or 50 strong. On joining we took no oath. I cannot remember now if I signed a register or was issued with a membership card. We paid a weekly subscription of a few pence towards expenses and the purchase of arms and equipment. We had no arms of any sort. Our instructor was an ex-British Army man named O'Toole. We did route marches and physical training. No officers were ever elected or appointed prior to the split in the Volunteers. We did not take part in the Howth gunrunning or other such activities.

When the split in the Volunteers took place all of our Company in Maynooth except about fourteen decided in favour of the Redmond side, including our instructor. We had the use of a hall for drilling and after the split both Volunteer Units shared the use of it, but the Redmond Volunteers faded out in a short while. A man named Salts, who was also an ex-British army man, was now our instructor. I think he gave his services free.

We had drills and route marches on Sundays and week nights. I had a .22 rifle and we had firing practice with this in the hall. There were a couple of other .22 rifles in the Company also. I supplied the ammunition for the firing practices. We had no service rifles or arms of any other type at this time. There were never any officers elected and we never had any visits from any officers from Volunteer Headquarters in the city. I was not a

member of the I.R.B. and, as far as I know, there was no centre organised in Maynooth.

Some time before Easter Week 1916, I bought a service rifle (Lee Enfield) in Keegan's Gun Shop on the Quays. I also bought some shotguns in Henshaw's. I got some ammunition for the service rifle at Keegan's and, all told, I managed to collect about two hundred rounds. We made buckshot for the sporting guns, about a couple of dozen rounds for each gun. I had also a .38 automatic pistol and some ammunition for same.

Prior to Easter Monday 1916, I had no idea when the Rebellion would take place. In fact, I did not know that such was contemplated except that I estimated that such a thing would take place - but had no idea when. We received no orders or instructions prior to Easter Week.

On Easter Monday afternoon I learned from a breadvan driver that fighting was taking place in Dublin between the Volunteers and the British military. I got on my cycle and proceeded to Dublin to get instructions and find out what we were to do. On approaching the Phoenix Park I heard firing, I think it was from the Magazine Fort in the Park. I proceeded down the northern quays. At the Mendicity Institute there were British soldiers taking cover under the Liffey wall on the north side of the river and avoiding the firing which was coming from the Institute. They did not stop me and I passed through. Further down the quays near the Four Courts, the Volunteers had a barricade across the street. I was halted here. I told the officer who was in command here who I was and where and for what I was going. He let me pass through.

I proceeded to No. 2 Dawson St. which I knew to be the Headquarters of the Volunteers, but found the place locked up. I started back for home and travelled via the N.C. Road. The British had a barricade on the street near Phibsboro Church. It

was situated between Doyle's corner and the Church. I was allowed through here again without any interference. I cycled through the Park and back to Maynooth.

On reaching Maynooth I found Tom Byrne of Boer War fame, and ~~Tom Harris~~ <sup>HARRIS</sup> there. Byrne had come on from Prosperous. I do not know if he was sent down by Volunteer Hqrs. to take charge in Kildare. The Maynooth Volunteers had mobilised in the yard of my house. There were about fourteen men present all told. They had the sporting guns and some rations. I got my rifle and we fell in on parade and marched to the College. Tom Byrne was in command. Two R.I.C. men and a Sergeant had been observing us and when we marched out towards the College, they followed us. Vol. O'Kelly covered them with a revolver which he had and told them that if they came any further he would let them have the contents. They then went back to the barracks. We proceeded to the College and asked the President for his blessing. He said he did not approve of what we were doing. He gave us his blessing, however. When passing through the College the students were favourable to us and encouraged us. A servant boy in the College, who was not a Vol. joined us and came all the way to Dublin with us and fought there during the week.

We came out of the College on to the canal bank and proceeded towards Dublin. For some portion of the way we travelled on the railway, and at other times through fields, until we arrived at Glasnevin Cemetery. We walked across the Tolka River which is about two feet deep and entered the cemetery. We had sandwiches to eat before leaving Maynooth and another en route. We got to Glasnevin about 2 or 3 a.m. on Easter Tuesday morning, and rested there. About 6 a.m. Byrne went into the city to see if the road was clear and he then came back and marched us into the General Post Office. There was a dead cavalry horse in O'Connell Street, otherwise everything was quiet. We got a cup of tea and some buns in the canteen from Desmond Fitzgerald. We were then sent to the

## Exchange Hotel in Parliament St.

We got into the Hotel by a back entrance and immediately were posted in positions at the windows. This was in the forenoon. We were not long there when a party of British soldiers arrived at the "Evening Mail" Office, which is at the junction of Parliament St. and Dame St. One big soldier started to smash in the door with a sledge. I asked Byrne if we would fire. I do not know what he said. I put up my rifle and took aim at this soldier and fired. He dropped the sledge and fell forward and the man next to him fell also. The second man was behind the big soldier and, apparently, both of them were hit. Immediately the rest of our boys opened up with the sporting guns on them and in a few seconds at least a dozen soldiers were lying on the street. An amazing thing was that a priest appeared on the scene almost immediately and attended to the soldiers who were wounded or dead. We went on to the roof of the hotel to see if we could engage the soldiers in the Castle. The roof was heavily under fire from the Castle and the enemy had a party in the drapery establishment at the corner and junction of Dame St. and Parliament St. and opposite the "Evening Mail" office. This party were able to throw hand grenades at us and one of our garrison - a Dublin man - was badly wounded in the groin. Shortly after this we got orders from Byrne to go back to the G.P.O.

We left the hotel by the back entrance and proceeded back to the G.P.O. via the Metal Bridge over the Liffey. The garrison in the G.P.O. seemed to be well organised and everybody was going about their duties in an efficient manner. That evening (Tuesday) another man, whom I do not know, and I were detailed to proceed to the glass turret or dome of Arnott's in Henry St. This was to try and keep sniping by the enemy from Westmoreland St. under control. I was given good field glasses. We used bales of cloth to barricade the dome and try and make it bullet proof. There was sniping from the <sup>Street</sup> Westmoreland/direction, but it was impossible to locate the snipers.

After some time I noticed that one of the upper windows of M McBirney's drapery establishment on Aston Quay was opened, the rest being closed. I could see a waitress in her uniform carrying a tray past the window. It occurred to me that it was strange for a waitress to be on duty when the premises were closed, being right in the centre of the area where fighting was taking place. I got my glasses on to the window and, as I suspected, I observed a soldier in a stooped position in the far side of the room and holding a rifle. I took aim at the window and fired. The first shot was high, hitting over the window. My second shot went thro' the top pane and my third also went into the room. I did not see the waitress any more after this. No firing took place from that window afterwards.

That night I was called in from Arnott's and sent across to the Dublin Bread Company's premises in O'Connell St. which is now the Grand Central Picture House. It was occupied by the Volunteers. There was at this time a lot of sniping from Trinity College and I was sent there to try and deal with it. I engaged some soldiers on the roof of Trinity College and, while I drew back from the loophole in the barricaded window from which I was firing, a bullet came through and grazed my hair. I could see Liberty Hall from the window and observed the effect of the shelling by the British war vessel - the Helga - and saw some of the walls crumble and fall. That evening I was called back to the G.P.O. and placed at one of the windows. I noticed a Volunteer going around who did not seem normal. He had a shotgun with which he was continually "fiddling". He was near me and let off a shot which lodged in the books with which the window was barricaded. I jumped down and took the gun from him and threw it into a big wastepaper basket. I remained in the G.P.O. during the shelling of the place and until it took fire. At this time the other side of O'Connell St. was on fire also and the heat was intense.

The garrison of the G.P.O. under Sean McDermott fought the fire

with hose and buckets, but it was no use and we had to get out. We had to move along Henry St. until we got opposite Moore Lane. We crossed Henry St. into Moore Lane and halted there and here <sup>the</sup> the "fumbler" with the gun was beside me again. He had the <sup>BUTT</sup> butt of the gun on the ground and a shot went off. The poor fellow got the complete contents in his throat and died immediately. While we were there an officer asked for four men to do some job. I do not know what it was now. I can remember that three of us in single file were running down Henry St. towards Mary St. The enemy had a barricade across the street at Williams Shop. We were under fire all the time. When half-way from Moore Lane to this barricade the man in front of me dropped, having been hit. Almost immediately, the man behind was hit also. I dropped down in the channel on the side of the street. I saw that a large window of Williams & Woods' shop was devoid of glass, apparently having come under the notice of the looters. I got up and jumped in through the window leaving my rifle on the path. When inside it struck me that there might be a shop hook and I searched around in the dark for it. I found one. With this I hooked in my rifle. There was a big number of young men inside, apparently after loot and making an awful amount of noise. I asked them to keep quiet, but it was of no avail, so I decided I was getting out of this. I took off my boots and, having discarded my rifle, tried to get out through back. The place was a mass of broken glass, jam, treacle, etc. I succeeded in getting out at the back and made my way along a lane towards Parnell St. After wandering around and eluding the British troops and barricades I eventually arrived at the Broadstone Station. In the meantime I had secured a pair of shoes. It was now Saturday morning. When I arrived at the station there was a guard of British soldiers on the gate and I was halted and placed under arrest. I was brought into the station and placed under guard in the ticket office. There were a few prisoners already there whom I did not know. We got no food or any refreshments.

The following morning, Sunday, I was brought with the other prisoners to Richmond Barracks and placed in the Gymnasium. There was a big crowd of prisoners there at the time. The police and detectives and military officers were moving along the lined-up prisoners and picking out the leaders. I saw Gearmt in a corner having, ~~having~~ been one of the men picked out. We were given some bully beef and dog biscuits to eat. We were kept in the Richmond Barracks that night and on Monday, together with some hundred other prisoners we were marched via Kilmainham and Kingsbridge to the North Wall and put on a cattle boat. We were placed in the cattle pens on the boat and were packed like sardines. I cannot remember if we got anything to eat. I don't think we did.

We sailed to Liverpool and from there we travelled by rail to Knutsford Jail where we were placed in single cells. No intercourse was allowed between prisoners. Food was very poor and very scarce. We got a mattress and a couple of blankets. After a time we were allowed to associate and talk with one another. The food improved and we were allowed to receive parcels now, and the White Cross also sent us parcels of food.

From Knutsford we were transferred to Frongoch. This camp was in an old mill. Food was good here. We did our own cooking. We had plenty of scope for amusements and classes for Irish and other languages as well as many other subjects. We also had classes in home crafts. Some beautiful specimens were made here and some of these are now in the National Museum.

We were released from Frongoch a few days before Christmas 1916. We arrived back in Dublin in the morning. There was a noticeable change in the people now, and I received a royal reception on reaching Maynooth.



When we were being escorted to the boat for internment, the people of Dublin were inclined to be hostile towards us, particularly in the Richmond Barracks area. They were mostly British soldiers' wives.

Signed: Domall na Duicalla

Date: 16.II.49

Witness: Maurice Lacey

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