

**ORIGINAL**

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21  
BURO STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21  
No. W.S. 217

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 217

**Witness**

Mr. John J. Keegan,  
Cruagh,  
Rathfarnham, Co. Dublin.

**Identity**

Member of Fourth Battalion  
Irish Volunteers.

**Subject**

- (a) Delivery of McNeill's countermanding order to Pearse Easter Sunday 1916.
- (b) I.V. activities St. Patrick's Day 1916.
- (c) Black-and-Tan incident, Co. Dublin, September 1919.

**Conditions, if any, stipulated by Witness**

Nil.

File No. S.1290.

Form B.S.M. 2.

W.S. 217.

ORIGINAL

Bruagh  
Rathfarnham

The following is a detailed and accurate account of the delivery of the despatch which was to call of the parade of Irish Volunteers on Easter Sunday morning 1916.

The despatch was from Com<sup>dt</sup> Comr McNeill, Chief of Staff to any one of Pearse, Clarke, McDonagh or Plunkett in the order specified and was corroboration of his notice in the Sunday Independent.

John J Keegan  
March 1949

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BURO' STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21

NO. W.S. 217

I attended 8 o'clock Mass  
in the Church at Rathfrilandham  
on Easter Sunday morning 1916  
After Mass <sup>Staff</sup> Captain Sean Fitz-  
gibbon came to me in the  
company of Com<sup>dt</sup> Eoin McNeill  
and he said. I am glad I  
was lucky enough to meet  
you, Sean, it is so long since  
I saw you last. No need to ~~talk~~  
ask how you are only just look  
at you. were you going on  
parade today. I said, well  
no I was going to the country  
with Mrs Keegan and the  
children. Cap<sup>t</sup> Fitzgibbon  
then said, it is just as well  
the parade is off. Then he  
introduced me so. This is  
Com<sup>dt</sup> McNeill, Chief of Staff.

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we want a particular job done and I think you are just the right man for it, if you can spare an hour or so after your breakfast if you have not already had it I replied, well, yes I think I can manage alright, if I am back in time for dinner that will suit me.

Com<sup>dt</sup> McKell then said, you see we are in a bit of a difficulty, the parade to-day has had to be cancelled at short notice, owing to circumstances and the only medium at our disposal late last night was to issue a notice in the press. I am sure you have not read it yourself seeing that you have only obtained your Sunday Independent just now

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I said that was so and  
read the notice in the paper  
Com<sup>dt</sup> McNeill continued, I  
want you to convey this  
written corroboration of that  
notice to either Com<sup>dt</sup> Pearse,  
Clarke, McDonagh or Plunkett  
somewhere in the city; the only  
help I can give you is that Pearse  
may be seen at 44 Mount Joy Sq.  
and Com<sup>dt</sup> Plunkett at 27 U<sup>+</sup> Joy Sq.

That is all and I would like  
you to report back to me at  
Woodtown, you know Woodtown,  
as soon as you have completed  
your errand. You will do your  
best and as far as I know  
from Capt Fitzgibbon that means  
success in your hands.

You may rely on me, I said,  
that I will find them in the  
city no matter where they are

H

and I shall be back as soon  
as possible . After parting  
them I had breakfast and  
remarked to my wife that  
I was sorry I would not be  
with the children and her  
to her fathers house , I told her  
to go on and I would turn  
up as soon as I could , that  
I had to go to town for Mr  
McNeill and I would'nt be long

My wife (reading the paper)  
said this is a very dangerous  
business I think and you will  
need to mind yourself , I hope  
everything will be all right.

Remember dinner is at 2 o'clock.

I set out for the city on a  
bicycle at 8.55 am.

25 minutes later I was knocking  
and ringing at the hall door

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of 27 Mount Joy Sq. The door  
opens and I said, Good  
morning nurse I called to  
see Mr. Plunkett. Oh dear  
she replied Mr Plunkett is  
gone away bag and baggage  
about one hour ago, its really  
too bad. No harm done, nurse  
I said, then good morning  
and thank you.

Nurse said good morning.

A couple of minutes later I  
was knocking at #4 Mount Joy  
Square. A young lady in  
black answered the door.

I enquired - I wonder if I  
could see Mr Pearce.

The young lady remarked -  
Mr Pearce, thats strange there  
was another man here this  
morning looking for him also.  
Is he a clergyman?

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I thought for a moment and said, well yes he could be as far as I am concerned I have only a message for him.

The young lady then said, there is no one of the name here and there never has been, so you are disappointed.

I said, I am sorry for troubling you so early but this was the address given to me  
Good morning and thanks  
Good morning

I am now thinking hard, nothing but disappointment, where am I going to turn to next?

Yes I will go down to Tom Clarkes shop, one never knows how luck goes. I enter, I was looking for Mr Clarke or Mr Pearne or even Mr Plunkett are any of them here?



7.

I sensed that I was diagnosed as a policeman and so got a very poor showing from Mrs Clarke (this was not to be wondered at for I looked the part and she had never seen me before)

I thought if only Kitty were here I would be all right but there you are, just luck. Wherefor next. I will try 41 Parnell Square, I might just hit it off. This house is generally crowded out on Sunday mornings with clubs of one sort or another but now there is no one to be seen, not even the caretaker.

I suppose its too early for anyone to be here. Well, now suppose I try the

Gaelic League at 25, on  
chance. No luck here either  
the only occupant of this  
big house is a solitary cat.  
Am I beaten, no. not yet  
I will go over to Whelan on  
the Quay, If I find him  
at home, he will put me  
right on to Arthur Griffith  
or Sean T O'Kelly.

I enter Mr Whelan's shop, a  
volunteer in uniform is at  
the counter conversing with  
the lady assistant.

I said, Good morning, miss  
Is Mr Whelan in?

She said. No Mr Whelan is out  
will he be back soon I enquired  
No, I don't think so, she replied  
I then asked was Mrs Whelan in  
and she said, Oh, yes Mrs

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Whelan is in but you cant see her, she is bathing the baby. I then said, Oh look here I dont mind I've seen babies bathed before she then said, But . . . . But what.

(Mrs Whelan in the room off the shop hears the conversation and comes to the door, baby in arms) Mrs Whelan said, well, well but you are an early visitor from the hills I replied yes, yes I am looking for himself and your assistant says he is not in. Mrs Whelan said. He is upstairs, go up and see him. Mr Whelan is on his way down as we meet.

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Mr Whelan said, what's the news, anything strange? you are early in town

I replied, well as you know from the morning papers everything is off for the present. Yes, it's too bad.

I continued, well I'm in town trying to locate Mr Pearce or Mr Plunkett, with corroboration of the press notice in Mr McNeill's own hand writing. I got two addresses 27 U<sup>t</sup> Joy Sq and 44 Mount Joy Square and I have failed to make contact. Mr Whelan remarked, oh that must be 44 Mount Joy Street, you should try there, just ask for Sean J and there you are wait I shall come with you there are usually G. men.

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Knocking around there.  
Mr Whelan brings out a  
bike and sticks a revolver  
in his pocket, remarking  
you never know.

we are going up Capel St  
now and at Donnock St  
corner he says, you go up  
this way and I'll go round  
by Blessington St and we  
will meet accidentally at  
HH. That plan worked  
out but it brought no  
result from HH.

There was no Sean T. there  
the G. man was outside  
all night and there were a  
good many lads inside in  
the parlour if one was to  
judge by the revelry.

Mr Whelan suggests to go down  
to Sean T's address at

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Belvidere Avenue and I part  
with him, wishing him God  
Speed, and I am away again.  
Arrived at Belvidere Av, Sean T  
is not living there now, he has  
moved to the corner of Mountjoy  
Sq. and Charles St I am informed  
by a local volunteer whom I  
questioned. Back again to  
the corner of Mountjoy Sq.  
where I knock and a woman  
answers the door.

Is Mr Kelly in. I ask  
No, came the reply, Mr Kelly is  
gone to half-eleven mass and  
wont be back, can I take any  
message for him I am his wife.

Pardon me, if I may say so  
but I dont think your Mr  
Kelly is the man I'm seeking  
I am looking for Councillor  
Sean T Kelly and I dont think  
you are his wife.

She said, That is so, but I  
 know the councillor, he lives  
 I think at the corner of  
 Charles St and Rutland St.  
 I thanked her very much  
 and said I must be away.  
 I am in a hurry.  
 a few seconds later I am  
 knocking at the hall-door in  
 Rutland St. Knock. Knock.  
 a volunteer in uniform  
 opens the door (it is Mr O'Kelly's  
 brother.) I said. I want to see  
 Mr O'Kelly if he is in, I mean  
 councillor O'Kelly. He replied  
 He is in alright but you  
 cant see him. Why? I said  
 There's no why about it, you  
 cant see him and with that  
 remark he thrusts the point  
 of a bayonet towards my chest  
 Oh, look here man, I said,  
 just put that thing round

at my back, it is just as effective that way but I must see Sean J.

well, if you are so persistent he said, go on in front of me up the stairs, first door on the left but be careful and knock easy. I knock who's there? said a voice Keegan from Rathfarnham ~~Council~~ said J.

Come in Sean, said the voice and right there on the bed was the Councillor, resting awhile as he said himself after being out all night raiding Brittas Camp.

well, Sean he said, what's your trouble.

I am looking for Com<sup>dt</sup> Pearse I replied and I am sure you can help me, I have



here Mr McKells cancellation  
order for him.

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Oh that cant be, he interjected  
it must go on, it must go on  
now. Well, I said I am  
not going to argue with you  
at all, where can I see  
Com<sup>dt</sup> Pearce.

Sean I then said, he was here  
up to a half-hour ago and he  
has gone down to Liberty Hall  
but I say it must go on.

I then said good-bye and  
thanks and the best of luck  
no matter what happens.

The best of luck to yourself  
he rejoined but I say it must  
go on.

Very soon after I arrived  
in Beresford Place where  
there appears to be thousands  
assembled. I try to cycle  
through the crowd towards

the Hall. Several voices  
shouted. Pull him off, dont  
let him in there.

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Easy on there, friend I'll get  
off. But you cant go in there  
shouted my interrupter.

And why not. I enquired,  
What's the objection?

You are a policeman, a spy  
he repeats.

Now, do you think if I were  
a policeman, I said, that I  
was going to rush this place  
all by myself. Have a little  
sense. I added and kept  
moving forward.

All right then, he said, go  
on but look out for yourself.

I am now on the steps of  
Liberty Hall, I make up  
my mind that I cannot  
ask for Com<sup>dt</sup> Pearse right  
away, so I decide to ask for

Councillor P. J. Daly. but before doing so I see Countess Markievicz on the stairs landing, so I decide to approach her which I do with a military salute saying I have a despatch here for Comdt Pearse, where can I see him.

To which she replied, I know nothing about him. I am in a quandary to know what to do next, when a voice rings out from the top stairs, Hello, Sean

It was a voice that I knew well for I had known it for close on 25 years.

It was Capt Sean Connolly who spoke. I hastened up the stairs towards him

and we shook hands, had a few friendly words about old acquaintances and in answer to my enquiry for Comdt Pearse, he opened the door of the Council Chamber and I went on and there sure enough was Comdt Pearse coming towards the door.

I saluted him and handed him my despatch. Before he read it, he asked me did I want any answer to it.

To which I replied I dont think it requires any answer it is as far as I know the commands of the Chief of Staff. He then read the despatch and said, Tell him it shall be so.

I got one hurried glance around that Council Chamber and at the further end of the room from me I saw McDonagh, Clarke, McDermott and Plunkett with a few others whose backs were towards me, and so I left Liberty Hall with another few words to my friend Sean Connolly thanking him for making my visit so easy. I returned with all speed to Woodtown Rathfarnham where Mr McNeill apparently was anxiously awaiting my return, round about there were a lot of people

motor cars and bicycles.

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I communicated to him  
Comdt Peares decision and  
he expressed thanks to God  
for that same.

I was in the act of going  
away when a young man  
came to me and asked  
me was I from the local  
company and how were  
we off for arms, he said.  
he was from Wicklow  
and that his name was  
Bullen and that they had  
only ~~only~~ a few shot  
guns in Wicklow, that  
boy was afterwards  
Brigadier Tom Bullen.

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John J Keegan  
C. Co. 4<sup>th</sup> Batt.  
Irish Volunteers

Buagh  
Rathfarnham  
March 1949

I wish to place on record  
(what I believe has never  
been recorded). an instance  
of which I was an eye -  
witness as I think it is  
due in honour to the memory  
of the man concerned.

It was St Patrick's Day 1916  
in College Green where  
Eoin McNeill was reviewing  
the volunteers of the Dublin  
Brigade. I was in charge  
of the cyclists of the 4<sup>th</sup> Batt.  
on the right of College Green  
as you face Cork Hill,  
on my left were the cyclists.

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of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Batt, in charge  
of Lieut. Malone, our  
duty was to close the road  
against traffic.

Just at Comd<sup>e</sup> DeValera  
was giving the order for  
his battalion (immediately  
behind us) to present arms  
a large motor car came  
to a halt in front of  
Lieut Malones cyclists, in  
that car was Major Genl-  
Friend, G.O.C of the British  
Forces in Ireland with  
some members of his staff  
The obvious intention of the  
driver of the car was to  
cut the corner into Trinity  
Street otherwise the car



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would have driven to my side.

Lieut Malone went forward and objected to the car getting through, he was determined that it should not get through and his determination succeeded as the car was backed and went away in the direction of Georges Street

Now this Lieut Malone was the same Lieut Malone who gave his life for freedom at Barisbrooke Ho a few weeks later (Easter 1916), His guiding motto on both occasions would appear to be. They shall not pass.

H.

All honour to his name  
and memory, and to  
his soul eternal Rest.

John J Keegan  
E. Co. 4<sup>th</sup> Batt  
J. V.  
Dublin Brigade

Brunagh  
Rathfarnham  
March 1949.

I wish to record an instance  
of moral courage & daring  
of which I was an eye witness.

It was September 1919  
on a Sunday. Sean Etkingham  
Minister of Fisheries on the first  
Hail was staying with me  
at Kilmashogue, Co Dublin  
His health at the time was not  
very robust, hence his stay  
with me.

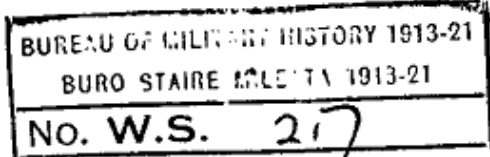
I was outside my residence  
doing nothing in particular  
when I noticed some fields away  
several men with guns moving  
about, this was unusual, so  
I called Sean out to have a  
look. He came out and  
decided that they were probably

the Black & Tans, apparently it was their first outing.

2.

I suggested to him to make himself scarce as there was a price on his head, he laughed and said nonchalantly, lets go up the road and have a look at these fellows, we did so in our shirt sleeves & bare-headed and sure enough it was the Black & Tans. They had (as we learned afterwards) just shot young Sean Doyle and were evidently on the look out for others of his comrades.

Sean Etchingham was as cool as any man ever could be in the circumstances as he surveyed his foes, fortunately he was not recognised by any of them as a wanted man.



John J. Keegan