

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21

BURO STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21

No. W.S. 231

ROINN



COSANTA.

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. ....231.....

**Witness**

Mr. Peter Clifford,  
Eimer Terrace,  
Castletown Road,  
Dundalk, Co. Louth.

Identity

Member of Irish Volunteers  
Dundalk 1915-16.

**Subject**

Despatch work Dundalk-Dublin  
Easter Monday 1916.

National activities during remainder of  
that week.

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

Nil

File No. S.1309.....

Form B.S.M. 2.

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

BURO STAIRE MILÉATA 1913-21

No. W.S. 231

STATEMENT BY PETER CLIFFORD

Castletown Road, Dundalk, County Louth.

I, Peter Clifford, was a member of the Irish Volunteers since 1915. I was born in 1900. I was in Paddy Finn's section, and attended all parades and route marches.

At Easter, 1916, I was employed as a messenger boy in the shop of James Murphy, Francis Street, Dundalk. Paddy Finn, who was my section leader in the Volunteers, sent for me and told me to go to Confession that night and report later for orders at the John Boyle O'Reilly's Home, Dundalk. I met Paddy Finn and Phil McQuillan in the Boyle's Home, and both of them told me to go to half-past seven Mass on Easter Sunday and to report for duty at nine o'clock in the Boyle's Home.

When I went there I got a shotgun and ammunition. A small body of us marched from the Home to the Workhouse on the Ardee Road, and from that place to Ardee where Arthur Green took the shotgun from me and gave me a rifle, which he took out of a motor car. We marched from Ardee to Slane, through Collon where we camped in an old bakery for the night. Some time in the morning we marched to Dunleer, with a few stops on the road. Later on in the day we marched to Castlebellingham and proceeded towards Dundalk.

Two or three miles outside Castlebellingham Sean MacEntee came in a motor from Dublin with word that the Rising had started in Dublin. The late Paddy Hughes said that any man who wanted to go home could go.

Paddy Hughes ordered all motor cars to be held up. Myself, Pat Casey, John Barrett, James Agnew and Thomas Sharkey were ordered to hold up three motors there. About ten minutes later Pat Casey was told by Sean MacEntee to drive

P6

one of the cars. It was a two-seater car, and I was told to get in with him. Later we drove back to Castlebellingham where there was a stop, and Pat Casey and myself got out and put petrol in the car. While I was standing on guard at the car Paddy Hughes sent me up to a car further on, in which Hugh Kearney and James Dunne were sitting.

All the cars then drove a long distance to some place in the country where the cars stopped. Paddy Hughes got out and went over to a house on the side of the road and spoke to a man who came out in his shirt. Then we drove along the road and passed a load of hay. We later passed one of the cars in a ditch. We went then to a place where James Dunne of the Carrick Road was standing on guard with a rifle, and told us to go into a shed. I went into the shed with Hugh Kearney and James Dunne. I was only in the shed about a quarter of an hour when Dónal O'Hannigan came in and took me out to go with Pat Casey in a car. I saw Dónal speaking to a girl on the road, and she told him that some men went past with guns in a car. We went about five or six miles in the direction that this girl mentioned and we caught up with the car. It was a hackney car, belonging to the late Thomas Hearty, driven by himself. The men in the car were Arthur Green, James Reilly and John Quinn. The car turned back to the shed with us.

I was in the shed eating some biscuits which Hugh Kearney gave me when Dónal Ó Hannigan took me out of the shed again and asked me would I go in to Dublin and see how things were there. I said I would. I met Daniel Tuite and he asked me where I was going. I told him what I was ordered to do. He gave me two shillings to buy a pair of socks and a paper for him in Dublin. That would be about six or seven o'clock on Tuesday morning.

P.B.

I started off towards Dublin. When I was going through a village called Finglas a man followed me on a bicycle and asked me where I was going. He told me that he was Captain of the Irish National (Redmond) Volunteers. I told him that I was from Ardee and had a sister in hospital. He asked me how I got that far and I told him I got a lift in a motor, which broke down on the road. He asked me would I have a drink and I did not know what to say. However, I was hungry and went with him to a public-house and had a glass of wine from him. I stood him back with Danny's two shillings. We were only out of the public-house when the Sergeant of the R.I.C. came up to us and asked the man who I was. I told the Sergeant the same story, and he told me not to go into the city, that the Sinn Féiners were burning the city. After some time talking, the Sergeant said to the man who was a Captain in the Irish National Volunteers that he would call all the soldiers who were on leave from the British Army to the R.I.C. barracks.

I then went on my way to the city and arrived in the city that evening. When I came into Dublin I saw a load of hay lying on the street. I got in touch with a man who was standing on the bridge, which I believe was Cabra Bridge, on the Cabra Road. I told the man who I was and why I was sent. I believe the man was an officer in the Irish Volunteers. He told me there would be a girl going to the G.P.O. in half an hour. When the girl came I went down with her. Passing down Parnell Street I met two Dundalk people, Denis Lavelle, a schoolteacher, Ballsmill, County Armagh, and Sally Begley of Dundalk. I spoke to Lavelle for about ten minutes, and then went on to the G.P.O. with the girl. On going to the G.P.O. we were stopped by a man or sentry wearing the uniform of the Citizen Army.

PL

When I got into the G.P.O. James Connolly was sitting at a table writing. I stood before the table, saluted him and told him who sent me to the city. He looked at me for a few minutes, and asked me my age and what part of Louth I came from. I told him that Dónal O'Hannigan sent me to see how things were in the city and he told me that he did not know Donal or Paddy Hughes. I told him certain things that happened on our way. He got up, shook me by the shoulder and said, "The brave men of Louth". He told me to go back to where the men were and get them into the city. He also told me to go over to the barricade in the street next to Talbot Street. I told him I could not ride a bicycle. He told me to go back to the place where I met the men on the bridge at Cabra Road. My feet were very sore then and I told Mr. Connolly that I could not walk much. He told me to stay out at the post (Cabra Bridge) until morning and go back to the Louth men. He shook hands with me and then I met the same girl in the hall speaking to a woman wearing a uniform. She came back with me to the post.

When we came out of the G.P.O. I saw people looting Lawrence's toy shop across the road, on the left-hand side of the Pillar. I heard shots coming from the G.P.O. at the looters. Lawrence's went afire. We stopped there for about a quarter of an hour until the Fire Brigade arrived. I saw people on the roof of Lawrences, and a woman being taken down by a policeman. We then went back to the post on Cabra Road. I was taken into a house for some food and stayed there that night.

On Wednesday morning I left to go back to the men and had a good parcel of food with me. Going up to the village of Finglas I saw horse soldiers and R.I.C. men with rifles.

I decided to go back to the city, as I was afraid they would arrest me.

On going back towards the city I met a man with a pony and trap, and I asked for a lift. He gave me a lift, and on the way to Dublin he asked me was I a Sinn Feiner. I told him I was. He told me he was one as well, and that he stole the pony and trap to join the boys. He told me he came from Maynooth.

I went to the outpost on Cabra Road again and told them there what I saw. I wanted to stay there, but a man said that the best thing I could do was to take a route which he described to me. I did what I was told, and a girl took me down some street, I do not know the name of it, and we arrived at Talbot Street and out the Howth road. There was terrible shooting going on there. I had to crawl on my stomach along a small wall, along with other people, until we came to the end of the road. There was a band-stand near us. I was stopped by Irish Volunteers, and while I was speaking to them a boy was shot alongside us. He was shot accidentally by a young fellow in the Irish Volunteers. The officer in charge was a middle-aged man. He asked me to help to carry the boy across the road to a chemist's shop, which I did. I then went on my way. I came to a road on the left-hand side of the Howth Road. This was the road I was to take. I took this road and went on for two miles, when I saw a lorry belonging to Smith's Bakery, Howth. I asked them for a lift, which they gave me. Along the road they stopped at a one-storey house and went in. I did not know it at the time, but it was an R.I.C. barracks. The Sergeant and two R.I.C. men came out and took me into the barracks and put me sitting on a form. The Sergeant asked my name and where I came from.

96

I told him the same story as I told to the Irish National Volunteer man in Finglas. After about two hours the Sergeant let me go. When I went outside the barracks the two motor men were fixing the car. I waited until they were finished and I got a lift into Swords.

When we got into Swords I found the place upside down. The R.I.C. barracks had been captured that day. The two men let me down at a bicycle shop.

I went on and took the road to Dunshaughlin. It was so late in the evening that I went on to a hay-pressing machine, the name R.J. Gray, Dundalk, was on the machine. I knew the men who were with it, and they knew me. I was speaking to a man called Maguire who was the engine driver for the machine when I heard the sound of a motor on the road. After a few minutes one of the men said, "Here are the police". Maguire said they were after me, and he hid me in the living van that the men were using on the job. Four R.I.C. men came into the field and asked did they see a man on the road. They said "No". After speaking to the man in charge they went away. The man in charge was Mr. Roche of Wexford. I stopped with these men that night and for the best part of Thursday. I told Roche where I wanted to get to, and I left them that evening.

I came to another village, I think it was Dunshaughlin, and it was dark then. I asked a man the way to Delvin and he showed me the Finglas Road. For the best part of that night I was walking. I came to where the car was stuck in the ditch and I knew then that I was all right. After a good bit of walking I came to where I thought the shed was. I stopped and went over to the door and shouted in, "Pat Casey and Danny Tuite", but I got no answer. I did not know what to do then, so I went into the shed, lay down and fell

asleep. I was awakened by a farmer and a girl, and they kicked me out to the road. I got on the road and I was walking for about two hours and was very hungry. I met a girl coming on a bicycle. She got off the bicycle and asked me was I one of the men who had been in the shed. I told her I got lost from the rest of the men and that I was hungry. She got me something to eat. I went to her house across the fields, and she told me that she heard the men who were with me had been arrested. I heard afterwards who the men were. I stayed in her mother's, Mrs. O'Grady's, house until Sunday night, when I left and headed for Drogheda, which I reached on Monday night.

I went to a friend of mine in Drogheda, and stopped with him until Wednesday morning when I left for home. Outside Drogheda I met a British soldier named Joe Brennan (a brother of Joe Berrell) who told me that Tom McCrave and Sammy Hall were arrested, and to mind myself.

I went on to Dunleer and arranged with a friend named Hynes to take me over to the station and to take me on the train with him for Dundalk. When we came to Dundalk station it was full of soldiers and R.I.C. men. My friend got one of the porters to open the door on the off-side of the train and we got out of it and walked up the line to the goods station, where we got on to the road and walked to Castletown to a friend's house. We stopped there until it was dark and then went home to my mother.

On Thursday morning the door of the house was broken in with pick-axes by R.I.C. men and soldiers. The soldiers were Carson's men. I was arrested by Sergeant Wymes, who was one of the men at Castlebellingham where Constable McGee was shot dead on Easter Monday. The Sergeant said when he



was handcuffing me that I would be charged with murder. I was then taken to the courthouse where I found some of the other men who were arrested.

I was taken to Dundalk jail, to Richmond Barracks and later to Barlinnie Prison in Glasgow. Afterwards I was taken to Frongoch in Wales.

I was released in August, 1916.

SIGNED Peter Coffey

DATE 8. 4 49

WITNESS: John Mc Coy.  
8/4/49.

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21  
BURO STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21  
NO. W.S. 231