

W.S. 276

DUPLICATE

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
BURO STAIRÉ MILÉTA 1913-21
NO. W.S. 276

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 276

Witness

Charles S. McQuaile,
103 Furry Park,
Raheny,
Dublin.

Identity.

Member of 'D' Company 1st Battalion Dublin Brigade
1913 - ;

Member of Postal Staff, G.P.O. 1916.

Subject.

- (a) National activities 1913-1921;
- (b) Taking of "Secret and Confidential"
document from G.P.O. Holy Thursday 1916.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

N11

File No. S.1360

Form B.S.M. 2

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STATEMENT OF CHARLES McQUAILE,

103, Furry Park, Raheny, Dublin.

I joined the Volunteers at the Rotunda meeting on the 25th November, 1913 and was attached to the Companies parading at ~~Columcille~~ Hall, 5, Blackhall Street. It was the Gaelic League Hall at the time.

Before the "split" I held no rank in the Volunteers. My Company officers in Blackhall Street were Liam Murnane, Eamonn Moran, Callendar and the Battalion Commandant was Daly.

I was not in the I.R.B. I took part in the Howth Gun-running.

After the "split" I remained with the Irish Volunteers at Blackhall Street, taking part in their parades and contributing to the gun fund. There was no change in the Company Officers. I was not aware that a Rising was to take place.

Since the age of 15 years I had been a member of the Postal Staff as a Learner Boy employed in the G.P.O., Dublin.

At this time also I became a member of the Sinn Fein Organisation at Harcourt Street where I got to know the leaders.

On Holy Thursday of Easter Week in the course of official duties I saw by accident on the desk of the Superintendent's clerk an official paper headed "Secret
/and

"and Confidential" with the address "Dublin Castle.

Glancing through this document I saw that it was meant for a 'round up' of Volunteer leaders and other prominent Sinn Feiners. This paper was addressed to the Secretary, G.P.O. It was sent to the Secretary of the G.P.O. to ensure that all suburban sub-Post Offices under his control, which extended to Maynooth and Balbriggan, would have some member of the staff in attendance to admit members of police and military only on Easter Sunday night and Easter Monday. The gist of this document was to the effect that a "round up" of Volunteer Leaders and prominent Sinn Feiners was to take place at Easter Sunday midnight.

On Holy Thursday night I paraded at Blackhall Street. Recognising the significance of the document I had seen in the G.P.O. I mentioned the matter to my Company Officer, Murnane. He instructed me to see Sean Heuston, also my Company Officer, and tell him all about the document. This I did and Heuston asked me if these papers could be got. I said it might be possible adding that the most likely place where they would be held would be in the Secretary's Office and if we could get down there before 9 p.m., before the Cleaners left off, we would be able to get into the Office direct. It should be mentioned that the Instrument Room door led to the Secretary's Office by a private entrance on the first floor. With Heuston I entered the Secretary's Office by this entrance and as fortune would have it the Secretary's room door was open and we were not seen by anyone. Arriving there we found, amongst a lot of other papers, the document ^{fw} which we were searching. We took this document which referred to the arrests and we went across to an address in Dawson Street which I now remember is No. 2 or 3. There we went up a stairway.

Heuston
/said

said "You hang back a minute" and he went into the room. In a short time Mr. Tom Clarke and Bulmer Hobson emerged, also MacDermott and MacNeill. McBride was there too. These were all I knew by appearance. This would be somewhere between 9 and 9.30 p.m.. Heuston came out and more or less dismissed me with the remarks "It was a good night's work". During my period on that stairway I noticed bundles of paper being brought into the back entrance and I heard the carriers remark "More fuel for the fire". This conveyed to me the impression that stuff was being burned.

I was instructed to mobilise on Easter Monday about 9.30 a.m. and conveyed a haversack and a box of ammunition on my bicycle to George's Church, Dorset Street. I was taking this from my residence at 38, Stoneybatter. A Mr. O'Neill, who had mobilised me on that morning, told me it was a matter of urgency to have the ammunition delivered by 11 a.m. I brought the ammunition and handed it over to Captain Heuston as ordered. When the Company moved off to Liberty Hall at about 11.30 Captain Heuston detailed me to remain at George's Church and direct all late comers to follow on to Liberty Hall. Members straggled along and I instructed them accordingly.

About 11.50 my brother-in-law, Mr. Armstrong, with whom I had a prior appointment to go to Wilkinstown outside Navan for a day's rabbit shooting and who had been a spectator at the George's Church parade, persuaded me to go with him on the motor cycle, which had a combination, rather than with the Volunteers for what we then thought was a day's manoeuvres on the mountains. At Navan we were stopped by local police - a Sergeant McCormack and a /policeman

policeman named Kerrigan. I knew the latter personally and we were conveyed to Navan Police barracks. As we had a shot gun in the motor side-car the police made a great fuss and commotion, and it was here we learned first of the Rising in Dublin. We were detained in the Police Barracks until Wednesday when we were allowed to go on to Wilkinstown but in no circumstances would the Sergeant sanction our return to the City.

Police Officer Kerrigan, now in America, came out to Wilkinstown on the Friday evening and informed us that everything was now quiet in the City and we could make for home. We returned to Navan Police barracks on the Saturday and we were permitted to return home which we did on bicycles borrowed from a friend at Wilkinstown. Armstrong's motor bicycle was detained for many weeks afterwards. That is as far as I can go in 1916.

Following 1916 I became associated with the National Aid Association in Exchequer Street and helped that Association in the collection of funds in the Post Office. I visited the dependants of those who were deported and reported on their claims. I met Mrs. Ceannt and an elderly man with a lame leg. I handed monies over to them and they were the only two people with whom I ever came in contact.

On the release of the prisoners in 1917 I resumed membership of "D" Company, 1st Battalion. Healy, Moran and Murnans were my Company Officers. It should be mentioned that when the British Forces were re-enforced following 1916 they set up their own Postal Section within the G.P.O. I was the civilian clerk responsible for all postal arrangements in connection with the British military.

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In this way I had access to military correspondence and the location of troops throughout the country. Letters received into the Post Office did not indicate the location of the officer or soldier; they simply gave the number, rank and name of the individual and serving somewhere in Ireland. It was my job to endorse the address of the unit to which the officer or soldier belonged. In that way I was in possession of a complete list of all the military units and their locations throughout the country. This information I passed on to Michael Staines. I was a known source of contact to people in the Volunteers looking for this information. I was not a very prominent member but they all knew of my functions in the Post Office and were sent to me.

The principal duty at that time was known as Home Defence in the Sorting Office. I was occasionally asked to intercept letters to various members of the British Military Forces from a list supplied to me. I would be asked by other members of the Postal Staff - Moynihan, Leddy and Ryan. I think the present Major-General Archer asked me on a few occasions to get him military list locations of the Army units and their destinations. I supplied Dermot O'Sullivan with a sketch of the various branches of the G.P.O. and also gave probable times that the military called for their mails. Later the British began to intercept correspondence addressed to certain civilians throughout the country. Two superintendents of the G.P.O. staff held these lists and I was commissioned to convey the packets of censored correspondence to Dublin Castle and G.H.Q. direct. There were two bundles of sealed envelopes made up. On that occasion I was brought over to the Castle and my appearance was made known to a Mr. John Anderson, Chief Secretary I think at the time, a Mr. Cope and a Mr. Connolly. The latter was supposed to be a ~~finger~~-

finger-print expert. Then I went up to G.H.Q. direct and was introduced to Major Hill-Dillon, a Military Censor and a Captain Larressy who was a former Post Office clerk. All I was asked to do was to carry the sealed envelope containing the letters safely to Dublin Castle or G.H.Q. as the case may be. I travelled by bicycle or on a side-car. The Superintendent held the pass to visit Dublin Castle and it was only given to me for the journey and I returned it to him when I came back. After some time it was a very easy matter at Dublin Castle to enter the precincts. It was only a matter of showing my pass and free access was given. Before undertaking this work I got the direction of Michael Staines who told me to carry on and who later asked me if I could get the names of people whose correspondence was intercepted. All I can recollect were Cathal O'Shannon, Wyse-Powers, Larry O'Neill, a Father Augustine of Church Street, a priest of the Carmelite Order in Clarendon Street and a Merchant's Quay priest. These are the only names I can recall at the moment of whom correspondence was intercepted. The Superintendent was very particular and these were all I could get to see. It was not an easy matter.

One morning during the year 1920 or 1921 - I am not clear which - as I was coming out the back door of the G.P.O. at that time located in the Rink, two men met me. One was known to me as Peadar Breslin. They said to me "Come along with us". I went with them to, I think, No.2, Dominick Street near Parnell Street. This was a tailor's shop and McMahon was the name. I was taken into a back-parlour in which about three men were seated at a table evidently awaiting our arrival. One of the men resembled

/Michael

Michael Collins. Breslin later confirmed that it was Collins. This gentleman questioned me as to the procedure I adopted in the delivery of the packets at Dublin Castle and at G.H.Q. I explained the procedure in detail with the aid of a rough sketch of the Castle and the rooms through which I passed with the correspondence. He said "Instead of you going this morning I am going. Do you think it will be a safe mission?" I confirmed that there was nothing to fear as the Castle Authorities were, in my opinion, rather laokadaisical. At this stage I handed him my pass and the packets and he told me to wait here until he came back. He returned in about an hour and a half and said everything went 'lovely'. He returned the pass and told me I had nothing to worry about as he had met with no obstacles. Some days later it was announced in the press that it was believed Michael Collins had entered Dublin Castle disguised as a coal porter but I knew otherwise.

It was noticed at this time that there was a certain laxity in the supervision of these offices at Dublin Castle and G.H.Q., and that the correspondence, although marked "Secret" and "Confidential", seemed to be there for anyone to handle. The cleaners could have access to them too.

My house in Stoneybatter was raided on three occasions coming near 1921, I think, and judging from the gist of the questions put to me and the search of the house I had a suspicion that it was known I was bringing these papers out occasionally to make copies, that that was what they were more or less looking for. When lists were called for it was usual for me to take them home and prepare copies.

In one of the offices in Dublin Castle - that of Mr. Cope, Mr. Taylor or Mr. Connolly - I noticed in a file lying on the table lists of monies paid out in respect of information

/received.

National Archives Act, 1986, Regulations, 1988

ABSTRACTION OF PART(S) PURSUANT TO REGULATION 8

**Form to be completed and inserted in the original record
in place of each part abstracted**

- (i) Reference number of the separate cover under which the abstracted part has been filed: WS 2761A

- (ii) How many documents have been abstracted: 1 p.

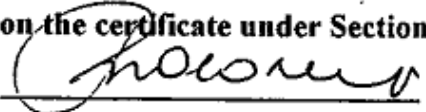
- (iii) The date of each such document: 12/7/49

- (iv) The description of each document:
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names of individuals.

(Where appropriate, a composite description may be entered in respect of two or more related documents).

- (v) Reason(s) why the part has been abstracted for retention:
(c) Would or might cause distress or danger to living persons on the ground that they contain information about individuals, or would or might be likely to lead to an action for damages for defamation.

(These will be the reasons given on the certificate under Section 8(4).)



Name: (J. Moloney.)

Grade: Col.

Department/Office/Court:

Date: 7 March 2003.

received. The names of a man named _____ with an
 address _____ and a man named _____ of _____
 were noticed as being in the pay of the Dublin
 Castle Authorities. This information was passed on by me
 and it has been noted that these two men were later shot.
 Their bodies were found.

Earlier Staines said to me "You must regard yourself
 as being attached to our G.H.Q. Intelligence Department."

I was engaged in these duties until after the Truce.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Witness: _____

Date: _____

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