

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
BURO STAIRIE MILEATA 1913-21
No. W.S. 305

ROINN  COSANTA

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21
STATEMENT BY WITNESS
DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 305

Witness
Mr. Patrick Smyth,
175 James' Street,
Dublin.

Identity
Wardmaster in South Dublin Union,
Easter Week, 1916.

Subject
Events at South Dublin Union
during Easter Week 1916.

Conditions, if any, stipulated by Witness

Nil

File No. S-1409

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STATEMENT OF PATRICK SLINGSBY, W.S. 305

175 JAMES'S ST. DUBLIN.

During Easter Week 1916, I held a staff appointment in the South Dublin Union. I was in charge of the Main dining Hall opposite the gate and also temporarily in charge of bread stores for Easter Monday. I remember Easter Monday 1916, at approximately 12 noon a detachment of Volunteers Commdt. Ceannt, in command and Capt. Cosgrave (both of whom I knew personally) entered the South Dublin Union by the front gate. The gate was open. The Volunteers on entering closed the gate and barricaded same. They immediately took over the buildings known as the board room and clerks offices and also a department called the orchard sheds and the Nurses home where Ceannt remained in command. No word was spoken to me. Another building occupied by them was No. 1 Auxiliary close to the Nurses home. About 1 p. m. I heard rifle fire in the direction of Nos. 2 and 3 hospitals where I was informed that other detachments of Volunteers had taken up positions. About 1.30 p. m. I heard from a member of the Staff that Nurse Keogh had been shot. While rushing down stairs to take in her patients who were out in the yard, I was also informed that she had been shot through a glass door by British forces. Some time after Nurse Keogh had been shot I saw for the first time that British Forces had entered the grounds south of Nos. 2 and 3 hospitals. They took over these hospitals and in doing so one volunteer Dan McCarthy by name was wounded. Some of the attendants took him into the hospital where I saw him later. I should have mentioned that before the Volunteers entered a dray cart the property of Moggie Keogh entered the grounds of the Union with a load of ammunition. It was placed in an open shed outside the boiler house and the horse was turned

loose in the paddock. All I can remember of Easter Monday night is that firing continued all through the night until early morning.

I remember Tuesday morning at about 9 a. m. I contacted Comdt. Ceannt, and told him of a large bag of ammunition in main dining hall and the load of ammunition outside boiler house. He thanked me and ordered four men to fall in. Comdt. Ceannt and myself marched behind them into main hall. He ordered one of his men to take the heavy bag of ammunition to the Nurses Home. We proceeded through the hall out by the end door and on to the shed where the cart of ammunition was. The party took the cart towards the board room and clerks offices where part of the Volunteers were.

I remember about 10 a. m. on Wednesday seeing Capt. Cosgrave running from the Nurses Home to the boardroom under heavy fire from the British and escaped. On Wednesday evening Capt. Cosgrave saw me crossing the front yard of the boardroom and he called me to hand a pick axe which was lying in the yard to himself and Volunteer Foran, which I did and by the following morning the Volunteers had cut a right of way through the clerks office into No. 1 Auxiliary and joined up with the Force in the Nurses Home.

On Thursday morning on entering the bread-stores I saw the dead body of a British soldier lying on the floor. I had to step over him to enter and when I did enter I was covered by a rifle man, the bayonet of which rested on my chest. The rifle man was shaking all over and after great difficulty in explaining my position he put his rifle down.

Another soldier badly wounded was lying in the yard. He was removed to hospital, and between 8 and 8.30. as I was getting the breakfast for the male section, I was standing

outside the kitchen when a British soldier came through the dining hall and was talking to some inmates when he was shot. I had him carried into hospital and sent for Fr. Gerard who came along immediately but the soldier said "I do'nt belong to your church; leave me in peace, I am dying for my King and Country". He died shortly afterwards.

On Thursday evening I in company with two other members of the staff procured two coffins from the mortuary put them on a dray, proceeded to the bread stores where the dead soldier was. We brought in the two coffins, closed the bread stores door and put the live soldier in the coffin, put on the lid with one nail and then confined the dead soldier. Both coffins were carried out on to the cart and taken to the mortuary at back gate. On reaching there the live soldier jumped out of the coffin and made for Richmond Barracks.

About 10 a. m. Friday, Volunteer Burke was shot in the Nurses Home by a soldier from the hospital opposite. I assisted in helping to remove his remains to the Catholic Church accompanied by his father and Volunteers from the Nurses Home, and Rev. Fr. Gerard. On Saturday the staff were told that the place would be blown up by heavy gun fire from the British at the Old Men's Home Kilmainham if the Volunteers did not surrender by 3 p. m. So we all went to confession to prepare for whatever was to happen. On Sunday evening about 3 p. m. Comdt. Ceannt asked me to give a hand with another official to open the front gate as he had received word that he was to surrender. I opened the gate and admitted a priest and a British Officer. The priest was covered with flour. Comdt. Ceannt was inside in the Office at the gate. He came out to the British Officer and on meeting him the British Officer put out his hand to shake hands with him but Ceannt remained rigid and did not shake hands. The

British Officer said "you had a fine position here"; Comdt. Ceannt replied "Yes, and made full use of it. Not alone did we hold your Army for six days but shook it in its foundation". The British Officer then asked him "how many men had you here" and he answered "forty-one all told" and during the conversation Capt. Cosgrave was out in the yard forming up his men and his word of command could be clearly heard. The British Officer proceeded to inspect the men and in doing so Cathal Brugha who was wounded was sitting on the foot-path. Ceannt remained where he was at the gate and conversed with me. I asked him his terms; he said they were unconditional. I said that speaks very badly and the words he used were "shooting for all us fellows and deportation for the Rank and file. By that time the men were moving out the front gate. I shook hands with Ceannt and that was the last I saw of him.

Signed

Patrick Smyth

Date.

18th October 29

Witness

Wm. Jerry Lomas

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