

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

BURO STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21

No. W.S. 309

ROINN  COSANTA.

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 309.....

Witness

Mr. James Doyle,  
The Rock,  
Coolattin,  
Carnew, Co. Wicklow.  
Identity

Survivor of Clanwilliam House Garrison  
Easter Week 1916.

Subject

Clanwilliam House, Mount Street,  
Easter Week 1916.

Conditions, if any, stipulated by Witness

Nil

File No. S.709.....

Form B.S.M. 2.

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STATEMENT BY JAMES DOYLETHE ROCK, COOLATTIN, CARNSW, CO. WICKLOWONCLANWILLIAM HOUSE, MOUNT ST. BRIDGE

I was born in the townland of Coolroe, Tinahely, Co. Wicklow, on 27th August 1898, and I went to Dublin in 1914. About October of the same year, I joined C/Coy. 3rd Battalion, Irish Volunteers. The Coy. officers were:- Captain - Eddie Byrne; 1st Lieut - Simon Donnelly; 2nd Lieut - Michael Malone.

On Easter Monday 1916, I paraded with my Coy. at 11 a.m. at Earlsfort Tce. At about 11.30 a.m. the Coy. moved off under Lieut. S. Donnelly and shortly afterwards the cyclist company, which I was attached to, moved off under Lieut. Michael Malone. We moved on foot, wheeling our bikes and proceeded via Hatch St., Upper Pembroke St., Fitzwilliam Square, Fitzwilliam St. and into Upper Mount St. The Coy. under Lieut. Donnelly had halted here. Lieut. Malone and Lieut. Donnelly talked together for some time. The Coy. then under Lieut. Donnelly marched down Stephen's Place and we, the cyclists and a section on foot, under Lieut. Malone, continued by Mount St. Crescent to Mount St. Bridge. A halt was again made here and I noticed Lieut. Malone, Section Commander Reynolds, Patk. Doyle, James Grace and Denis Donoghue talking together. After some time Lieut. Malone and Section Commander Grace went up Northumberland Road taking two men with them. Section Commander P. Doyle followed with a few men and Section Commander Donoghue with some men moved into the schools on the left of Northumberland Road. I then noticed Section Commander George Reynolds removing his arm out of a sling (he was suffering from blood poisoning). He then instructed Willie Ronan, Daniel Maher, a recruit by the name of Byrne and myself to follow him. We marched to the halldoor of Clanwilliam House. Reynolds knocked on the door which was opened by a maid. Reynolds ordered us to take our bikes inside. The maid could only laugh. He then told Ronan and myself to go upstairs

and to send everybody we found there down to him in the hall. We met two ladies on the first landing, also another maid. One of the ladies asked "What is this all about"? We did not find anybody else and on coming down I heard Reynolds apologising to the ladies and telling them not to be frightened. He asked them to remain in the back parlour. He locked the halldoor and placed our bikes against it, also some furniture, but in a way that was easy to remove them. He also got us to place furniture at all of the windows on the ground floor, but in a way that would not be noticeable from outside. He also informed us that the Republic was proclaimed and that we should be happy to fight for it. We also filled all the vessels in the house with water and placed them in a room upstairs. I then went with Reynolds to the top of the house and on the top landing he noticed in the ceiling a trapdoor. He sent me back down to look for a ladder. I found a step-ladder off the kitchen and, on taking it up, we got out into the valley of the roof. He said "this would be a good line of retreat". "We could remove some slates and enter some of the houses further down".

About 4 o'clock in the evening I was in the back room on the first landing. I heard some shots that sounded quite near and almost immediately Willie Ronan called me and said "You are to go to Reynolds". He was in the large front room on the same landing. On entering the room Reynolds was looking with field-glasses in the direction of Haddington Road. He signalled to me to lie down at a window, but said "Don't fire". I could see some soldiers lying on the road up at the junction of Haddington Road and Northumberland Road and some running back towards Ballsbridge. We did not fire, and we heard no more shooting. Sometime after this Reynolds sent me to the schools, with instructions to ask Donoghue if he could spare him a few men. Reynolds removed the barricade from the halldoor to let me out. I delivered the message to Donoghue, but he laughed and said he had not enough men himself. He asked me what the shooting was a short time ago.

I told him that I did not know, but that some soldiers had run back towards Ballsbridge from above at the cross. He said "Malone is up in the corner house. He must have fired on them". I returned to Clanwilliam House and told Reynolds what Donoghue had said. Reynolds said he would go across to the school himself and see Donoghue. He left Willie Ronan in charge. From a window I could see him crossing the bridge and going into the schoolyard. He remained for some time and on coming out he walked up some distance in the direction of Haddington Road. He had his automatic in his hand; he stood behind a tree and seemed to be signalling to Malone's post. He then returned to Clanwilliam House.

Late in the evening I noticed a man coming in at the garden gate and walking up towards the halldoor. Reynolds had also noticed him and went down to the hall. I could hear him shouting out to him "Go round to the back lane". After some time I heard this man and the two ladies talking to Reynolds down in the hall and sometime afterwards the two ladies and the two maids went from room to room collecting all the small valuable articles. They placed them in suitcases and trunks. Reynolds instructed Ronan and myself to carry them to the top of the house. He placed them in a back room, locked the door and handed the key to the man. The man thanked him, also the two ladies. Poor Daniel Maher seemed to be greatly upset. He was in bad health for some time and his nerves had got bad. As soon as it was dark he put on a civilian overcoat over his uniform and Reynolds told him to go home and that when he felt better to come back. His rifle and equipment was left behind. Reynolds placed Ronan and the recruit Byrne in the large drawing room to watch the bridge. He placed me on the ground floor in a small scullery or pantry leading out to the back garden. It had a door with a small window in it. He instructed me not to allow anybody to leave the house by that door and not to show a light. At about 12 o'clock midnight a lot of damn cats started to fight outside in the garden and this seemed to

get on my nerves. I had noticed a candle on the shelf when I first took up the post. I struck a match, found the candle and lighted up. I placed a towel over the window. Shortly afterwards Reynolds came down. He stared at the candle and then said "Good God, are you afraid to be in the dark?". He blew the candle out and went back up, taking the candle with him, but shortly after he returned again and said "It must be lonely down here". We'll barricade this place and you can come upstairs. On my way upstairs I noticed the two ladies and the man, also the maids sitting at a fire in the back room of the hall.

Reynolds placed me in a room at the top of the house, looking out on the bridge. He instructed me to keep a sharp lookout and to go into the back room occasionally and take a look out at the back and that if I wanted him he would be in the front parlour, down at the hall door. (I think he was afraid that some of the residents would go out, and that he had orders from Lieut. Malone not to let it be known that the house was occupied by us in case the enemy would be informed).

I placed a mattress on the floor at the window and made myself comfortable on it. I also took a look out of the window in the back room. About 1 a.m. I noticed from the front window two men crossing the bridge in the Ballsbridge direction and a man and woman came from Ballsbridge direction carrying two children. I had three days' rations with me and started to eat and did not stop until all was gone. I must then have fallen asleep. I remember Reynolds awakening me. (I felt very ashamed of myself). He said: "I want you to go across to Donoghue in the schools and ask him if he could exchange some .303 VII ammunition for VI", as we had very little VI and he was afraid the VII would be too heavy on our Martini rifles. I crossed over to the school but could see no sign of anybody. I climbed up to a window and looked in; the school was empty. I returned and told Reynolds. He seemed annoyed. Shortly after we could see Lieut. Malone coming down Northumberland Road towards the bridge.

It was now daylight (Tuesday morning). Malone came in to the house, by the back. We could hear him talking to Reynolds and the residents down in the hall and, after some time, he came upstairs with Reynolds. He smiled at me and asked if we were all right. I heard him telling Reynolds that the shooting the evening before at Northumberland Road was at the G.R. (British Volunteer Force or Garrison Reserves). They had come from Ballsbridge, but retreated when fired on, and he believed they had got into Beggars Bush Barracks by Lansdowne Road. He also told Reynolds to send down to Boland's and see if he could get more men. He said "Send the lad with no uniform"- meaning Byrne, the recruit. He also said something to Reynolds "But it is a very hostile area". He then left the house.

Reynolds sent Byrne to Boland's and he came back carrying some fruit cake. Reynolds sent him back again and told him to see Lieut. S. Donnelly (now Coy. Capt.) and ask him for more men. It seems Donnelly sent Byrne some place else. I was having a wash about 7 or 8 a.m. when I heard strange voices in the house. It was Patrick Doyle and Richard Murphy who had come up from Boland's and shortly after the brothers Jim and Tom Walsh arrived, also from Boland's. Our forces now numbered seven:- George Reynolds (in command), Patrick Doyle, Richard Murphy, Tom Walsh, James Walsh, Willie Ronan and myself. We had four Lee Enfield rifles, two Martini rifles, two German mausers (Howth guns). We also had two .38 revolvers, two .45 revolvers and one .38 automatic pistol with about 2,000 rounds of ammunition all told.

Reynolds now ordered Ronan and myself to go and get a sleep. (I don't remember Reynolds, at any time, taking sleep himself). Ronan and myself had slept for a long time when we were awakened by firing quite near and, on rushing into the large drawing room, we could see a wounded man being taken away in a milk car. Some of the garrison informed us that he was travelling in a motor car with a British officer and had fallen out of the car when it was fired on. Sometime that day (Tuesday) a man who was passing

informed us that the British forces had control of the Green and the Shelbourne Hotel and that a lot of our men had been killed in Stephen's Green. Lieut. Malone again visited the house and had a very long conversation with Reynolds. It seemed to be all about the residents. I heard him say "It would be terrible if any of them got killed". He also said "The password is Tyrrell" or something that sounded like it. After Malone left the residents also left. I heard some talk about them going to friends in Baggot St. Reynolds now ordered us to barricade the ground floor more strongly, but again in a way that it would not be noticed from outside, and said on no account break any of the glass in the windows. We also placed a wardrobe on each of the two landings in a way that they could easily be pushed down and block the stairs if the house was stormed. We placed mattresses on the floor at each of the three windows in the large dressing room on the first landing and the lower windows frames we run up to the top. Sheets were torn for bandages and some water left in the room. Some syphon bottles that we found downstairs we placed at each of the windows so that we could have a drink. Sometime on Tuesday also, some women came along and shouted nasty remarks up at the windows facing Mount St. Reynolds said "Pass no remark and don't let them see you".

Towards evening (Tuesday) we could hear somebody shouting "Stop Press". A man came along reading one. Reynolds spoke to him from one of the side windows in Mount St. He lowered a piece of twine with a key tied to it. The man fastened the paper to it and Reynolds hauled it up. It was the "Irish Times". It had a government proclamation and warned all citizens to keep indoors. It ended with "God save the King". Reynolds said "If our men hold the city, it is curious that paper can appear". Tuesday night was quiet, but we could hear shooting away in the distance. Early on Wednesday morning Reynolds took Richard Murphy and myself up on the roof. We could see smoke from a steamer away out at sea. We left a hammer in the valley of the roof in case we would want it for breaking the slates to enter some of the houses further down.

At about 12.30 p.m. (Wednesday) a man who was passing informed us that thousands of troops had landed at Kingstown and were marching on Dublin. Reynolds ordered us to fix our rifle sights for 300 yards range and said there was to be no waste of ammunition with aimless firing. Sometime, I think about 2 o'clock. I was in the back room talking to both the Walshes, Patrick Doyle had just entered, when we heard a volley that sounded quite near. Patk. Doyle said "We are in action at last. For God's sake, keep steady". Doyle and myself rushed back to the drawing room. I took up my position at the window facing the landing door and Willie Ronan was also at this window. Reynolds shouted "Remove your safety catches". He was at the centre window. In a few seconds I saw a large body of troops rushing towards the house at the corner of Northumberland Rd. and Haddington Rd. which was held by Lieut. Malone and Section Comdr. Grace. Some rushed up the steps towards the halldoor and some took up a kneeling position in the centre of the road. Reynolds shouted "Open fire" With our first volley they scattered for cover and some fell. We could see the flashes of Malone's and Grace's rifles coming from the windows, and Reynolds said "Good old Mick". We could now see stretcher bearers carrying back the wounded towards Ballsbridge. Sometime after this we heard machine gun fire. Reynolds tried to locate in what direction it was coming from. He said "It seems to be in the Baggot St. direction; be careful if you see anybody on the roof, as it could be Mick or Seamus Grace". Again a large body tried to storm Malone's post, and again we opened fire and they ran back.

The stretcher bearers now seemed to be carrying the wounded in to some house far up on Northumberland Road. We had not so far come under fire. A blast of a whistle is heard, and a large body of troops (English) charge down Northumberland Road; some rush up the steps of Malone's house, but the main body advance on the bridge. We greeted them with rapid fire, but on they came. It was easy to see the officers with revolvers leading them on.



When they came to the Parochial Hall the garrison there opened up on them also. A small number reached the bridge and Reynolds shouted "Pick up your revolvers and let them have it". I think about this time the two Walshs also took up position in the drawing room. Reynolds said "If they charge again, the two men in the right window fire to the left of the road. The two men in left window fire to right and those in the centre window will take the middle of the road". Several more times they stormed Malone's post and we could hear loud explosions, but so far, we had not come under fire. We could still see flashes of fire coming from Malone's windows and Reynolds would say "Good old Mick". Again another charge was made, but it also failed. Sometime after this, two women crossed the bridge. One carried a jug. Reynolds shouted "Women, get back" but they paid no attention and started to attend the wounded.

Two men in white coats also came; they had their hands held up and stood facing our windows. Reynolds shouted "Go ahead". They then started to carry the wounded on their backs, holding the wounded men arms in front. A large number of nurses in white uniforms also arrived. They carried the wounded across the bridge to the rear of our position. While the removal of the dead and wounded was in progress I heard another blast of a whistle and the enemy made another charge from Haddington Road Cross. Reynolds shouted "Stop the nurses", but the charge came on and Reynolds shouted "Fire, but for God's sake be careful of the nurses". Some soldiers now rushed out of Percy Lane and into Percy Place. We fired on them, and some fell, and the rest ran back. This last move worried Reynolds and he said "That lane must be kept open. It is the line of retreat for Mick and Grace". He passed some remark about himself and Patk. Doyle going over and taking up a position on the canal, facing the lane, but just about then a machine gun opened up on our position. The sashes of the windows were cut to pieces. Reynolds shouted "Keep well down, lads" and with his field glasses he tried to locate the position of the gun.

Most of the houses in Percy Place were now occupied by the enemy and they had started to fire on us from the windows. We could also see soldiers coming from Baggot St. direction. They were crawling on the ground down behind the stone work of the railings in Percy Place along the canal. On the blast of a whistle they all jumped up together and rushed behind an advertisement hoarding on the far side of the bridge. Reynolds took cover in the corner of the room and we passed our rifles to him in turn. He cleaned them and passed them back. The Martini rifles had given trouble and it was hard to get them to eject the spent cases. Fire was now directed on us from all directions. The wall of the room facing the windows was cut to pieces and the plaster on the ceiling was falling. We could now hear explosions on the ground floor. As Ronan and myself were at the window nearest to the landing door, Reynolds shouted for us to try and get upstairs and fire from the top windows as it might draw some of the fire off the drawing room. Both of us crawled out of the room. The stairs were almost shot to pieces and water was coming as if some pipe had got hit. We succeeded in reaching the top landing. Ronan went into one room and I to another. I noticed at once that the room was under fire as the window sashes were cut away. I shoved a table that was in a corner of the room over to the window and got on top of it. I had replied to some firing coming from the houses in Percy Place and I noticed that a sniper had taken up a position in the end house at the corner of Percy Lane. He was in the hall and was firing through the fanlight over the hall; perhaps he was standing on a table or something. I had just replied to him when something happened and I landed on the floor. I think I was knocked unconscious. The next thing I recall was that poor Reynolds was bending over me; he was wiping blood from my nose and face. He said "You are all right, Jimmy, but the rifle is finished. I noticed it on the floor with the stock split. After some time Reynolds said "You can have my rifle, as the spare one is downstairs". He then crawled out of the room and

and I got back on the table. I could see a large body of troops advancing along Percy Place from Baggot St. direction. My nose was still bleeding and I found it hard to use my rifle. The brothers Walsh had a mauser rifle each and everytime that they fired the house seemed to shake with the report that they made. I could hear explosions downstairs and smoke was all over the place and also a smell of powder. Soldiers had got behind the advertisement hoarding on the city side of the bridge now and from there somebody shouted "Surrender, surrender" and from below I immediately heard the report of a rifle. It was Reynolds's reply to "Surrender". About this time Ronan called me. I crawled out to him. He said that his room was on fire. The carpet was smouldering, but we got it out. I got back to my room. I had only a few rounds of ammunition left. I heard somebody on the landing calling and, on looking around, I saw Reynolds again. I crawled out to him. He pointed to the room in which we had placed the valuable articles for the ladies. Smoke was coming from underneath the door. With his shoulder Reynolds forced open the door. Some of the ceiling had fallen down and a mattress was smouldering. We extinguished it. Reynolds now said "Don't worry; we will have more men and plenty of ammunition. Go back to your positions". He also gave Ronan and myself 10 rounds each. He then went back down the stairs and we returned to our positions again. I again heard a voice calling "Surrender, surrender". Some soldiers had now got to the canal on the city side facing Warrington Place. I opened fire but they got cover behind a low stone wall at a railings. I heard a terrible explosion and almost the whole ceiling in the room fell down and I could see very little with dust and smoke. I heard Ronan calling again from the other room. I went to him. He said "I think the roof is on fire, Jim". We had to rely on our revolvers now as all the rifle ammunition was used. Somebody called from downstairs. I think it was Tom Walsh. We went down the stairs keeping close to the wall for cover and, on going into the drawing room, I saw Paddy Doyle and Dick Murphy lying dead.

Murphy was still holding his rifle. Poor Reynolds was on the floor, in a pool of blood. Tom Walsh was lying beside him. I can recall that Tom and myself dragged him out on to the landing. He asked for water. I crawled into the back room to get some. I could hear soldiers cheering outside in Mount St. I got a cup of water out of a basin, but it was dirty from falling plaster. I held it to his lips. He said "God" and then said "Mick, Mick" I could never recall what happened after this, nor do I know how I got out of the house or in what way I got separated from the Walshs and Ronan. I had an idea that the landing collapsed, or that a large wooden beam came down, but I am not sure. Both Ronan and the two Walshs agreed afterwards that we got out by the window in the door at the back, leading to the garden, and that we got separated outside. This must be correct. I must have crossed the garden wall or perhaps a few walls in the direction of Grand Canal St. I recall that I was stretched out on the ground close to a wall, and that my nose was still bleeding. The whole area was lighted up, I suppose by the flames from Clanwilliam House. My rifle was underneath me.

Suddenly, some soldiers (about 4) rushed out of the back door of the house to the garden I was in. They had their bayonets fixed on their rifles. They stood for some time and then crossed the wall to the next garden in the Grand Canal St. direction. They had not seen me. I then got up and went to the end of the garden. I noticed a door leading to a low house. The door was fastened with a chain and padlock. I placed my rifle under the chain and forced out the staple that was holding it in place. I opened the door and went in. It was some kind of a stores, or stable, as some hay was in a corner. It also had another door leading out to a lane. It was fastened only with a bolt on the inside. I heard voices out in the lane and somebody said "Yes, sir" and somebody said "Sergeant". I then heard a whistle and somebody said "Follow me". I then heard voices in the garden I had come in from and I knew it was time to get going. I pulled

back the bolt of the door leading to the lane, opened it a little and peeped out. I had my rifle on a sling hanging from my shoulder, and my revolver in my hand. I could see nobody in the lane, so I went out; there was a cart up against the far wall, it had only one wheel on it. I was just crossing over to it, to see if I could get over the wall. I heard a voice say "Damn" and the next thing I saw a soldier running towards me. He had his bayonet fixed. I fired at him with my revolver; he dropped the rifle and went down on his knees, holding his stomach. I jumped up on the car, put my rifle on to the top of the wall and climbed to the top. A volley rang out just as I dropped down from the wall and into a yard. I think my rifle was still on top of the wall. There was a mangle (clothes press) in the yard and, using it, I was able to get on to a low roof and from this on to several others. I reached one and, helping myself to crawl over it, I placed one foot in the metal water gutter. I had gone only a short distance when the gutter gave way and I fell down. I have an idea it was into some lane. I do not know what happened after this, but, from what I was told afterwards, it seems I came out of a lane into Lr. Mount St. near the "Nurses' Home" and staggered down towards Merrion Square and a hostile crowd was supposed to have tried to stop me near Grattan Street. It seems I then collapsed near Stephen's Place and a man by the names of James Fields and some others carried me to a house down Grant's Row. They removed my uniform and dressed my leg and arm which were badly cut and, sometime that night, or early next morning they took me to a friend's house in York Street. I was in great pain with my leg and knee, and from York St. I was removed to Mercer's Hospital, but was only detained for a short time and was taken back to York St. On Saturday or Sunday I was able to go myself to a cousin of my own in James's St. I remained with them for some weeks and then got down the country and remained there until about Christmas 1916 when I came back to Dublin.

Signed: James DoyleDate: 16 October 1949Witness: Sean Brennan. Esq.