

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

BURO STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21

No. W.S. 348

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 348.....

Witness

Captain E. Gerrard,
Hillicot,
Rathgarnham,

Identity

A.D.C. 5th Division British
Forces in Ireland 1916 - 1921.

Subject

Defence of Beggars Bush Barracks by British
Easter Week, 1916.

Conditions, if any, stipulated by Witness

Nil

File No. S.1038.....

Form B.S.M. 2.

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STATEMENT OF CAPTAIN E. GERRARD,

Hillcot, Rathfarnham, Co. Dublin.

I was educated at Clongowes College, and received a Commission in the Army. I was posted to the Royal Field Artillery.

About the 18th July, 1914, when I was 2nd Lieutenant, Glen Dmaal Practice Camp, I rode down with Major Haig - at that time Second-in-command of the King's Own Scottish Borderers - I said to him casually - we were both on horses - "what a lovely country! I hope you will like it". He said, "I hate the something place. I hate the something people ... " Major Haig was in command of the Company of King's Own Scottish Borderers, who opened fire on civilians at Bachelor's Walk a few days later. I often wondered was there any connection between what he said to me and his action. He was always known in the British Army afterwards as "the man who made the war".

In April, 1916, I was home from the Dardanelles, and was stationed in Athlone. In Athlone there were two batteries - eight guns. Not one of these guns was in a position to fire without being oiled and pumped by the artificers. It would have taken them two days to get them into action. The only ammunition of any sort in Athlone, was shrapnel.

3.

Subaltern was John D'Arcy, a son of the Protestant Bishop of Down. He is still alive and is now Lieutenant-General. If any more information is required, you could get in touch with him.

The other officer was John O'Beirne, who was with me in Clongowes College. He later transferred to the King's Dragoons Guards. He could give you more information about the guns. He was one of the O'Beirne's of Roscommon. One of his family was drowned with Kitchener. The Acting Captain doing "Q" side was Lieutenant C.H. Dickens. He told me that he had a shot at the flag on top of the G.P.O. with one of these guns. He did not realise that the shell would not burst. The shell travelled on to the lawn of the Vice-Regal Lodge. He told me that the Lord Lieutenant was very annoyed at being shelled. I see from the List that he is still alive. That is all I know about guns, although they were my own crowd.

I was home on leave at Easter, 1916. I heard that there were disturbances in Dublin. I went to see what was happening. I was in civilian attire. I was in Harcourt Street when I heard a shout: "Stop the man with the pipe". I hastily removed my pipe and managed to escape. I did not know what was going on. I saw the insurrection troops assembling at the top of Grafton Street and going into Stephen's Green. I was specially struck with their magnificent physique. They were huge men. I realised there was something serious on, and I went home and got my

4.

uniform in a bag. When going home I met Sir Frederick Shaw, Bushy Park, and he told me to go into Beggars Bush Barracks. I arrived there at about eight o'clock on Monday evening.

There were no arms in Beggars Bush Barracks. Thinking over it now, the G.Rs. were there - but their rifles were not service type - and they had no ammunition. My estimate, looking back, was that in Beggars Bush Barracks for three days there were Sir Frederick Shaw, myself, one or two ranker officers, four non-commissioned officers, and about ten men, three of whom were invalids. That was the garrison until the Sherwood Foresters arrived.

I was the only officer there who had seen a shot fired of any sort, except Sir Frederick Shaw. He told me that he had been in arms against the Fenians when he was in the Life Guards in 1867 at the Battle of Tallaght. We had nothing to eat. There was not a scrap of food. That went on for two days. Sir Frederick Shaw's coachman drove in and out with some food for the officers. What happened the troops I don't know. I don't think they were fed at all. There was nothing in Beggars Bush Barracks if only they had rushed it.

One of my sentries in Beggars Bush Barracks, about Tuesday evening, said to me, "I beg your pardon, Sir, I have just shot two girls". I said, "what on earth did you do that for?". He said, "I thought they were rebels. I was told they were dressed in

all classes of attire". At a range of about two hundred yards I saw two girls - about twenty - lying dead.

On Wednesday morning after the Sherwoods arrived, Major Harriss organised a continuous barrage of rifle fire against the windows of the houses in Northumberland Road. About three rifles were laid on each window and at a signal by whistle at least ten rounds from each rifle were directed at each window. Our men were in the windows of Beggars Bush Barracks. They had sandbags. I often thought there must have been a terrible lot of people killed, but what could they do! They were being sniped at the time.

While we were sniping in Beggars Bush Barracks I saw a Sinn Féiner. By some accident, he put his head up over the railway line wall and I saw him. I said, "there's one fellow going to have it anyway". I loaded the rifle and at a range of about 200 yards I fired. I saw the bullet hitting a stone within two inches of his head. I think this was on Wednesday morning. I was very glad afterwards that I had not hit him. I had never fired that particular rifle before. Of course, if he had seen me, he would have done the same.

I saw R.A. Anderson shot. He was Fr. Finley's Second-in-command, in the Irish Agricultural Organisation Society. He was hit by shotgun cartridge slugs through a loophole in Beggars Bush Barracks. He was in the G. Rs. He was shot by Sinn Féiners.

At about four o'clock on Wednesday afternoon some of the Sherwood Foresters arrived in Beggars Bush Barracks - twenty-five - as far as I remember, untrained, undersized products of the English slums. Sir Frederick Shaw said to me - we were being very badly sniped from the railway bridge, South Lotts Road - "you take Q.M. Gamble and those men, climb up on the railway line and put them off". I said, "very good, Sir". We got over the side of the Barracks and through the houses on Shelbourne Road and up on to the railway by a ladder. I was over the wall first, followed by Q.M. Sergeant Gamble. As soon as I got over the wall, at a range of about 200 yards, about eight Sinn Féiners advanced from the direction of the city to meet us. I saw them coming towards us, firing. There was what they call a fairly sharp fire fight. These men were standing up, not lying down. They came out of their trenches to meet us. They were very brave, I remember. They did not know how many of us there might be. The first casualty was Q.M. Gamble. He was shot dead, under the right eye. I was the next casualty. I don't know how many Sherwoods were killed. One of them was wounded on the approach to the railway.

The young Sherwoods that I had with me had never fired a service rifle before. They were not even able to load them. We had to show them how to load them.

One thing, from the Army point of view, I would like to mention is that the Sherwood Foresters had Mark VI

7.

ammunition. It was very old-fashioned stuff. I had some of it, but during the Black and Tan time I threw it into some river.

I was taken into Portobello Hospital, where I used see Captain Bowen-Colthurst raging along the perimeter of the walls. Even then I was told he was quite mad. He was heavily armed. He was shouting and yelling and patrolling the place. That was why the troops were frightened of him. He was the boss of that place and was letting everyone know it.

When I was in hospital, the soldiers used come in and say how many they had shot. These were Irish troops - Irishmen. They were not like the Sherwood Foresters.

About April, 1935, when I was in Aldershot, our Medical Officer was Colonel H.V. Stanley, R.A.M.C. He said to me, "I was the Medical Officer who attended the executions of the first nine Sinn Féiners to be shot". After that I got so sick of the slaughter that I asked to be changed. Three refused to have their eyes bandaged - I can't remember who the three were - anyway, he said that there were three - "they all died like lions. The rifles of the firing party were waving like a field of corn. All the men were cut to ribbons at a range of about ten yards". That is what he said to me. He was an Irishman. He is probably retired now.

Another matter of interest is Lloyd George getting a hold of Prendergast's "Cromwellian Settlement".

In 1921 I was Aide-de-Camp to Sir Hugh Jeudwine, Officer Commanding, 5th Division, who was asked by Sir Neville Macready, Commander-in-Chief, for a copy of Prendergast's "Cromwellian Settlement". Sir Hugh got a loan of the book from Baron de Robeck. Neville Macready took the book to England with him and showed it to Lloyd George. I heard Sir Neville Macready say: "The little man wanted to see what was the alternative to a settlement". I gave the book back to the Baron.

I remember Sir Hugh Jeudwine saying that the estimate for the whole of Ireland was 150,000 men in 1921. Himself and Strickland required two Divisions each. That was 150,000 men between them. They wanted to divide the whole country into areas with barbed wire.

I rode through Carlow and Kilkenny with the Cavalry Brigade, 10th Hussars, and 12th Lancers, in June and July, 1921. I was actually in Carlow when the Armistice came. Every field we got into was made into enclosures by trees cut down. I remember saying to the Major, "if it is like this within twenty miles of the Curragh, what is it going to be like in Cork?". The Hussars could not see anyone. There was no one to attack. It was all so elusive.

Every officer I ever met who was ever in Dublin, was so impressed by the extraordinary gallant bearing of the insurgents.

I was in Somaliland with Captain W.G. MacKay, Royal Artillery, who was Intelligence Officer in charge of Kevin Barry before he was executed. His job was to see he did not escape. He said he was very struck with the high gallantry of Barry all the time.

Smyth, an Army Officer, who was seconded to Intelligence, was shot dead in Dublin. He was trying to capture Treacy. He was a brother of Colonel Smyth, Divisional Police Commissioner for Munster, who was shot dead previously in the Cork County Club.

I remember before he got killed, I tried to persuade him not to get mixed up in secret police work. A few weeks after his brother was shot, I met Smyth in Grafton Street. He had only one good arm. The other used hang limply. He said, "I am coming up to get the fellows that got my brother". I said, "Smyth, don't have anything to do with this. You are a soldier. Don't have anything to do with this". He was an extraordinary gallant fellow. He got wounded three times and was recommended for the V.C. It was a pity he did that police work. He was very fond of his brother whose death rather affected him mentally. He had a magnificent record, if only he had kept out of this business.

I heard from General Gerrard who was head of the R.A.M.C. in Dublin in 1920, that when the Intelligence Officers were shot in 1920 there was an extra officer shot - they could not find out for a long time who he was. He was a Scotland Yard man sent over independently

10.

of the military. He was found out and shot with
the others.

SIGNED

Cherrard capt. late
Royal Artillery

DATE

3 Feb 1950

WITNESS

Seán Brennan. comdt.

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