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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 483.....

Witness

Maurice Aherne,
30 Dartry Road,
Rathmines,
Dublin.

Identity

Constable D.M.P.
Rathmines, Dublin, 1921.

Subject

Cooperation of D.M.P. with
Intelligence Department of I.R.A., 1921.

Conditions, if any, stipulated by Witness

Nil

File No. 1635.....

Form B.S.M. 2.

Military Archives Cathal Brugha
BKs Rathmines Dublin 6

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beaten. After about ten minutes he was taken from the Doctor's room and brought to the Station Sergeant's office where I approached the Station Sergeant and told him that I believed this man was going to be shot and that we, as policemen, should have some responsibility for his safety. The officer in charge of the military said that it was none of our business, that he was their prisoner, but we told him that if he was not brought back to the Bridewell we would report the facts. The military returned with their prisoner to the Bridewell about 4 a.m. I had a chat then with Guilfoyle who told me that he was brought to the Milltown Golf Links and put on his knees there, but added that he gave them no information. He (Guilfoyle) heard a discussion between the officers regarding the attitude taken up by the policemen before he was taken from the Bridewell and he believed that the action of the Sergeant and Constable was responsible for saving his life. I believe he was released as he subsequently had a message conveyed to me expressing his gratitude of what I had done for him. It must have been as a result of this that Constable Mat Byrne (now deceased) called me aside one day and told me he, himself, was very prominently identified with the Volunteer Movement at the time and that he was in touch with Michael Collins and others. He asked me if I would get into the Movement and give all the information and help I could. I said I would be delighted to give all the assistance and information that might be of use to them which would come my way.

At that time Curfew had been enforced in Dublin. Raids were being carried out intensively by the British military. Prior to a raid being carried out it was usual for the military to come down to Rathmines Station from Portobello barracks to take one of us with them to point out the house that was to be
/raided.

raided. I remember on one particular occasion a British party coming down and the officer in charge saying to me, "Paddy, we are going to raid a couple of houses in the locality to-night. Do you know where Frankfort Avenue is?" I said I did. His next question was, "Do you know McGee's shop?" I said I did. I may mention that at this time I knew from Collins's staff where certain 'wanted' men would be residing. This information was given to me so that if I knew beforehand the places where these men were residing were about to be raided I could convey the information to those concerned prior to the raids. When the British officer asked me if I knew where McGee's shop was, it occurred to me that J.J. Walsh was the man they were going to raid for, as I knew him to stay there occasionally. The British officer said to me, "Paddy, come along and show me where these places are". I said to him, "Do you mind delaying, Sir, for about a quarter of an hour until I get a cup of tea", and he said, "Certainly not, come to the Station Sergeant's office when you are ready". He addressed these remarks to me at the Station door and when I saw him going towards the Sergeant's office I sneaked across the road, walking slowly, until I finally got up the steps to the private house at the back of McGee's shop. There was a certain signal arranged which consisted of three loud knocks with about a second between each knock. If J.J. Walsh were in the house at the time he would know this was a danger signal. I could see the lorries drawn up outside the Police Station. I gave these knocks and did not wait for any reply. I returned to the Police Station and told the military officer that I was now ready. A short time later we went to McGee's house but did not find J.J. Walsh there. There was a bed there which had the appearance of being recently

4/slept

slept in and the officer wanted to know who had occupied it. The proprietor of McGee's shop, Tom O'Connor, was closely questioned as to who slept in this bed. They found nothing there. There were assistants sleeping in the place whose clothes were searched and they were questioned as to their names, etc.

We then went to Frankfort Avenue and this address would appear to have been a practical joke by someone because the occupant was a very prominent Unionist who produced photographs of the British Army, and they did not search the place.

By this time the G.H.Q. staff of the I.R.A. had evidently recognised the assistance I was giving them, as the Constable Byrne I have referred to came to me one evening and asked me to attend a meeting at Mrs. O'Donovan's house in an avenue off Rathgar Avenue. Byrne and myself went to the meeting together and on arriving at O'Donovan's house we met Constable Culhane who is now in America. I think there was a man named MacNamara of the 'G' Division there, but Colonel Broy was not present that night. From the I.R.A. side there were Frank Thornton, Gearoid O'Sullivan and a man named O'Connell I think, or the name may have been Cullen. There were about five or six D.M.P. men present. I cannot remember who presided at the meeting but I do recollect that we were all sitting around a table and the matter under discussion that night was the help that the D.M.P. men, as a whole, could give. It was put to us that we should do our best to get at least one man whom we could rely on from each station in the Dublin Metropolitan Police area, to talk the thing over and to bring them along and introduce them at a future meeting.

/Following

Following that meeting we got down to work and we had a discussion amongst ourselves as to the Stations and men of the Force that could be safely approached. I went to Fitzgibbon Street Station and there got in touch with Constable Terence O'Reilly (now Superintendent, Garda Siochana) who was a friend of mine. I put the matter to him as it had been represented to us at the meeting in O'Donovan's house, and he agreed to come in. I think some other members of our party approached Constable Mannix who was stationed in Donnybrook and who also agreed to give all the help he could.

As a result of the first meeting we got about five or six men into our party. At the next meeting in O'Donovan's house we had three or four new members. There were others who could not come as they were on duty that particular night. Colonel Broy was at the next meeting. At this meeting a further appeal was made to enlist new men into our circle. I think it was Frank Thornton who expressed at that meeting his deep appreciation of our efforts to secure members and he added that no matter how hot things got none of us was to resign from the Force because if we did we would be of no use to him.

Other meetings were held in O'Donovan's house. The subject discussed at these meetings was always the same. We were to get all the reliable D.M.P. men we could to help us and any information that would come our way we were to pass on to the Intelligence staff as quickly as we possibly could. I cannot recall the information that came my way from time to time that I passed on but, as I was only a Constable at the time, it is needless to remark that

/information

information of major importance would not come my way.

I remember at one of the meetings held in O'Donovan's house Michael Collins was there. It was the first time I had seen him. Collins addressed us that night and told us he appreciated very much all we were doing, adding that he still felt that he could rely on us to get many more reliable men who were serving in the D.M.P. to come over to our side.

Two local men, Thomas O'Connor and Seán Clarke, who were prominently associated with the I.R.A., resided in our area. Through these men we were to transmit to the Intelligence Department any information of importance that came to our knowledge.

Signed: Maura O'Brien

Date: 1st March, 1951

Witness: William Jerry Comdt.

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