

**ORIGINAL**

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

BURO. STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21

No. W.S. 533

ROINN



COSANTA.

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 533.....

**Witness**

Thomas Dowling,  
44 Mount Prospect Ave.,  
Clontarf,  
Dublin.

**Identity.**

Member of 'C' Company  
1st Battalion, Dublin Brigade, 1915 - .

**Subject.**

- (a) National activities, Dublin, 1915-1921;
- (b) Bow St. - Mary's Lane area, Dublin,  
Easter Week 1916.

**Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.**

Nil

File No. S.1074.....

Form B.S.M. 2

# ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21  
BURO STAIRE MILEATA 1913-21  
No. W.S. 533

STATEMENT OF THOMAS DOWLING, THE LIBRARY,  
KILMAINHAM, DUBLIN.

---

I joined 'C' Coy 1st Battalion Irish Volunteers sometime in September 1915. My Commanding Officer was Frank Fahy and the other Company Officers were 1st Lieutenant McGuinness and 2nd Lieutenant Doran.

We used to meet every Thursday in 41, Parnell Square for arms drill, lectures, and city parades. From the date of my joining 'C' Coy until Easter Week 1916 we just carried out the usual parades and training.

On the Holy Thursday of Easter Week we mobilised in 41 Parnell Square, and were addressed by Comdt. Edward Daly. The gist of his address was that we would soon be given an opportunity of putting into practice, in the streets of Dublin, the knowledge we had acquired in military exercises and arms drill. This was the first intimation we had that a Rising was contemplated. The address was favourably received by all present - to the number of roughly 100 officers and men.

At that parade we were told to hold ourselves in readiness for further orders and were provisionally mobilised for Easter Sunday and instructed to bring with us full equipment and twenty-four hours' rations. I cannot recollect the exact place fixed for the parade.

On Easter Saturday afternoon I called on my 1st Lieutenant - Joe McGuinness - at his request to his shop in Dorset Street and collected shot gun, bayonet and ammunition.

On Easter Sunday morning I cycled to Saucerstown, Swords where the Fingal Battalion were on parade under Thos. Ashe. I did not return until Monday morning, and on my way back I delivered dispatches to J.V. Lawless at Cloghran and T. Duke at St. Margaret's. I then continued on my way home and at about 11 a.m. I was mobilised and ordered to parade at 5 Blackhall Place with full equipment and twenty-four hours' rations. I proceeded to Blackhall Place as ordered and at the junction of Mary's Lane and Bow Street I met a section of the Volunteers under the command of Lieut. Diarmuid O'Hegarty, who instructed me not to proceed further but to join his unit which I did.

The first thing we did was to erect a barricade across Bow Lane with materials taken from Jameson's Distillery. While we were at this work we heard shooting from the Church Street direction. I later heard that some Lancers had strayed into the area, were fired on, some were wounded, and all were taken prisoners.

Other barricades were erected across Church Street, Mary's Lane, one near St. Michan's Church, and one near the Fruit Market.

The Battalion Headquarters was located in Father Matthew Hall on the Thursday of Easter Week, although it may have been in the Boy's Brigade Hall earlier in the week. The Battalion Commander, Comdt. Daly, had as his staff officers Martin Conlon and Fionán Lynch, to both of whom I carried dispatches on Friday.

I remained in the Bow Street - Mary's Lane sector of the Battalion area under Lieutenant Diarmuid O'Hegarty during the entire period. From Monday to Wednesday we had very little action, but on the Thursday, the British, having found the range of the barricades, commenced firing on them. As the firing became more intense the outlying

outposts were withdrawn to the Four Courts, my section being withdrawn on Saturday morning.

The only casualty in my section occurred on Wednesday morning when one of our men accidentally shot himself in the foot and was removed to the Richmond Hospital..

I remember that early in the week, about Tuesday, a detachment of men under Richard Coleman arrived from north county Dublin and proceeded to take up positions in the Mendicity Institute.

Shortly after we retired to the Four Courts we learned of the surrender. I was having a meal at the time, when someone came in and said that we were surrendering and must give up our arms and ammunition. It came as a great surprise to all of us. The British military were outside the gates in Chancery Place and we handed them our arms and ammunition through the bars. When all the arms, ammunition and equipment had been handed over we were formed into ranks by our officers and marched to the Rotunda Gardens, which we reached, I think, about 7 p.m.

When we got to the Rotunda Gardens we found the place full of men from other areas who had surrendered. We remained there for the night, without shelter or food, and it was not until Sunday evening that we got a meal in ~~the~~ Richmond Barracks.

On Sunday morning we were formed up in O'Connell Street by British officers and marched to Richmond Barracks. On my arrival, and while standing on the square, I collapsed with hunger and was removed to the side of the parade ground for attention. While being attended to I heard some British soldiers endeavouring to get possession of a ring which Comdt. Joseph Plunkett was wearing, but which

he refused to give up.

After being searched we were locked up in barrack rooms in batches of sixty men to each room. After about two hours, I, with some others of 17 years of age and under were removed to another room in which Seán MacDermott, Fionán Lynch, Leo Henderson and some others to the number of about sixty were confined. The conditions were appalling - there being no sleeping or sanitary accommodation.

I remained in this room for about a week, and our rations during that period consisted entirely of hard biscuits and tea, served once and sometimes twice daily.

On Saturday evening, I, with other youths of 17 years and under were marched to the barrack gate and told to go home.

From my release, in early May, until about mid August 1916 there was very little Volunteer activity. We used to meet occasionally over Mark Wilson's Billiard Saloon in North Frederick Street, but we did not parade as a Volunteer unit in the accepted sense of the term until some time after the release of the prisoners from Frongoch Jail in December 1916.

On the reorganisation of the Volunteers subsequent to the Rising in or about January 1917, the Company Officers were -

Captain	-	Seán Flood,
1st Lieutenant	-	Seán Prendergast,
2nd Lieutenant	-	Denis Holmes.

The Company met at 41 Parnell Square for a time and subsequently in the Carpenter's Hall, Gloucester Street. Training consisted mainly of lectures on the use of the

Rifle, Revolver, Hand-grenade and the technique of street fighting. The lectures were given by the officers and Non-Commissioned Officers of the Company. I was a Section Leader from the latter part of 1917 to the Truce on the 11th July, 1921.

There was a number of raids for arms carried out by the unit, but as I did not participate in same, I am unable to recall the details. The Company organised the usual patrols in which I took part, and which had for their object the observance of the movements of British troops which we reported to Battalion Headquarters.

The Company took part in a number of ambushes in the Dorset Street, Capel Street and North Frederick Street area, and turned out on a number of occasions with a like object in view, but, for one reason or another, attacks did not materialise.

I remember one occasion - a Saturday in April, 1921 - I was with a party detailed to carry out an attack on British troops in Dorset Street. A patrol consisting of two men on a motor cycle and sidecar came down Dorset Street from the direction of North Frederick Street, and, when opposite the Picture House, we opened fire on them which they returned. The occupant of the sidecar was wounded as was also Joe <sup>CROWE</sup> ~~Dignam~~ who was one of the attacking party of Volunteers. Martin Finn (now a Commandant in the Army Medical Service) was also one of the attackers. The patrol managed to escape.

In dictating this statement, I have confined myself to men and events of which I have personal knowledge arising out of my association with the Movement for Independence as a

Volunteer of 'C' Company, 1st Battalion, Dublin  
Brigade.

Signed: Thomas Dowling

Date: 10<sup>th</sup> June 1967.

Michael F Ryan Council

Witness: ~~Thomas Dowling~~

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
BURO STAIRE MILEATA 1913-21
No. W.S. 533