

W.S. 728

# ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
BURO STAIRE MILEATA 1913-21
No. W.S. 728

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

**STATEMENT BY WITNESS**

**DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 728**.....

**Witness:**

Joseph O'Carroll,  
 2 O'Daly Road,  
 Drumcondra,  
 Dublin.

**Identity.**

Member of Irish Citizen Army, 1916 - ;  
 Member of 'C' Coy. 3rd Battalion, Dublin Brigade,  
 1917 - .

**Subject.**

- (a) National activities, Dublin, 1916-1921;
- (b) Bloody Sunday, 21/11/1920.

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

Nil

File No. S. 2009.....

Form B.S.M. 2

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Statement of Joseph O'Carroll,  
2, O'Daly Road,  
Drumcondra.

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About October 1916 I joined the Irish Citizen Army. I think it was a man by the name of Kelly was Company Officer. I attended many weekly parades and patrols at Liberty Hall. In November 1917 I transferred from the Citizen Army to "C" Company of the 3rd Battalion. Simon Donnelly commanded the Company at that time and Joe O'Connor was in charge of the Battalion. Up to 1919 things were very quiet in the Battalion. Our activities were confined to drilling and manoeuvres on Sundays. We raided houses for arms in the Fitzwilliam Square area. We were successful in getting a few revolvers and shotguns as a result of these raids. At that time our Company was badly equipped in the line of arms.

Police disarmed at Three Rock Mountain.

On a Sunday early in January, 1919, the whole Battalion was on manoeuvres in the Three Rock Mountain area. We were just stopped for a break for lunch when three R.I.C. men approached us (a Sergeant and two Constables). The Company Captain at that time was Captain Flanagan. He told us to remain where we were and permit the police to come right up to us. When they reached us Captain Flanagan asked them what they wanted and the Police Sergeant said "You are under arrest". Captain Flanagan said "I dont recognise your authority and I am placing you under arrest", and he disarmed them immediately. He sent cyclist scouts to different points on the way home, when the operation was over. Then we were ordered to disperse and two men specially selected took the guns home.

I should mention that we tied up the police with their suspenders and they were there for some hours before they were released.

When we arrived at Rathfarnham on the way home there were about six lorry loads of Police moving out towards the Three Rock Mountains.

I.R.A. Guard for Executive Meeting of I.R.A. Leaders.

An Executive meeting of I.R.A. was held at 25, Parnell Square, sometime late in the year 1920. Mick Collins, Dick Mulcahy and others were present. I dont know what the purpose of the meeting was but a number of us were detailed to do guard duty there. We took up positions inside the hall and remained there for about two hours. I cannot recall what specific instructions were given to us but the general idea was that we were there in the event of the place being raided by the British Military or Police and we were to use our arms against them if this happened.

Bloody Sunday.

About three days before Bloody Sunday I attended a meeting at McGees of Terenure. At that meeting only selected men of the Company were present. Paddy Flanagan told us that an operation had been planned for the following Sunday, 21st November. It was the shooting of a number of British Agents who were residing in hotels or private houses throughout the city. He further told us that those present at that meeting were to proceed to 28 Upper Pembroke Street at 9 a.m. on Sunday for the purpose of shooting British agents there. He said that on Saturday night we were to assemble at the Co-Operative Stores in Abbey Street where a Mr. Connolly, the father of a member of the Company was

caretaker there. We went to this place as instructed on Saturday night and remained there throughout the night. On Sunday morning our party which consisted of about 30 strong proceeded to 38 Upper Pembroke Street with Paddy Flanagan in charge. He divided up the party placing a number of outposts around the different points adjacent to the house. About half the party were detailed to enter the house and carry out the actual shooting. I was one of the party which entered the house. When we knocked at the door it was opened immediately. I think there was an arrangement made previously with the caretaker. However the caretaker was put under arrest. Then the whole party filed in through the open door and proceeded to the different rooms in the house and questioned the occupants. We had the names of the agents for whom we were looking and when we located them one was shot in his room and the other man was taken down stairs and shot. The reason the man was shot in his room was because he had heard the commotion and had got up and when we came in he fired at us. The two men who were shot were Major Dowling and Major Crookshanks. We took over the guns of the dead men and our entire party got safely away. We deposited our guns with Miss May Connolly who was a Tobacconist's assistant at Bridgeman's, Butt Bridge. Having done this we retired home.

As a result of this operation I had to leave my job and I was on the run for a while until the Active Service Unit was formed. I was Rotary Machinest at the time employed on the Evening Herald Staff.

#### Active Service Unit.

Sometime about Christmas 1920, I was instructed

to attend a meeting at Oriel Hall. Here I was told arrangements were being made to establish an Active Service Unit. I attended the meeting which was addressed by Mr. Oscar Traynor who was then O.C. of the Dublin Brigade. He told us at that meeting that it was now proposed to organise an Active Service Unit which would be available day and night for operations against enemy forces in the city. He said that Paddy Flanagan had been appointed O.C. of this Unit. Oscar Traynor also said that we would be paid soldiers and would receive £4. 10. per week for life. Michael Collins later told us that the survivors of this Unit would be well looked after. Immediately the meeting was over we were organised into four sections numbered 1, 2, 3 and 4. I was allotted to No. 3 Section with Michael Stephenson in charge of our Section. Our Headquarters was located at Mrs. Brown's of Crown Alley. This was a small sweet shop and her husband was a member of the A.S.U. We were constantly armed from the time we became members of the Active Service Unit. Each of us had a revolver and 20 or 30 rounds of ammunition which we had with us continually. We reported to Brown's shop every morning. Whenever operations were planned for the day an Intelligence Officer met us there and gave us details of the job which was to be carried out that day and we operated from Brown's house.

I think one of the first operations I took part in as a member of the A.S.U. was the ambushing of a lorry of Auxiliaries in Dame Street. This was carried out from the side of Jury's Hotel. It had been known for some time that it was usual for this lorry to proceed from the Castle down Dame Street at a regular time each evening. Paddy Flanagan took about 10 of us to ambush this lorry. He placed us at the

corner of a street running down by the side of Jury's Hotel. When the lorry came abreast of us we opened fire with revolvers and Paddy Flanagan threw a grenade. Some of the occupants of the lorry were wounded.

Attempted Rescue of Sean MacEoin.

Information reached the Active Service Unit that Sean MacEoin who had been arrested, in his own area was being conveyed by ambulance to Dublin, to stand trial by Courtmartial.

Instructions were issued to two Sections of the A.S.U. that this ambulance was to be intercepted in the vicinity of Lucan and MacEoin was to be rescued. On the day that the rescue was planned we took up positions near Lucan and remained in them for about five hours. Eventually word came through that the rescue was off as it had been discovered that MacEoin was conveyed to the city by a different route.

Auxiliary Officers ambushed at Capel Street Bridge.

Intelligence people reported that Auxiliary Officers were in the habit of travelling in a small car from Dublin Castle to the Depot in Phoenix Park at about six p.m. each day. The route was down Parliament Street, across the bridge and on to the North Quay. Instructions were issued that this car was to be ambushed. Early in the summer of 1921 Numbers 3 and 4 Sections took up positions on the Quay on each side of Capel Street Bridge. We weren't long there when the car arrived containing four occupants. We opened fire on it immediately with revolvers and grenades. We fired at close range and we were told later that two of the occupants were very badly wounded. They swerved and accelerated and the occupants didn't return fire. Evidently they were totally surprised.

A.S.U. arrest I.R.A. Men with British Passports.

G.H.Q. Intelligence had information that a number of men from the West of Ireland who had served in the I.R.A. Units there were now stopping at the Globe Hotel and a Hotel in Marlboro Street prior to their going to England and that they had received British Passports to travel. G.H.Q. decided that these men were to be arrested by us and their passports confiscated. The names and addresses of these men were supplied to us. At about 5 p.m. on a date early in 1921 members of the Active Service Unit raided the Globe Hotel and the Hotel in Marlboro Street where these men were staying. I was a member of the party which went to the Hotel in Marlboro Street and we found the two men for whom we were looking. We questioned them as to their names and addresses and having satisfied ourselves as to their identity we asked them for their passports. They didn't have the passports in their possession and we then discovered that some ladies were accompanying them. As we could not search the ladies Michael Stephenson, one of the party, left the Hotel and brought back with him members of the Cumann na mBan, who carried out the search and discovered the passports. The men were then taken under escort to Harcourt Street and later were taken to 100 Seville Place where I believe they were to be courtmartialled. Evidently the Castle Authorities got information about the unusual activities around 100 Seville Place and they surrounded it by Auxiliaries and raided it. Four of us were arrested there with the prisoners. Fortunately none of us had our guns on us but one revolver and an old rifle was discovered on the premises. It seemed the prisoners satisfied the authorities because



they were put in a separate car and we were taken in another car to the Castle. There we were interrogated by Captain Hardy, British Intelligence Officer. I should have mentioned that when we were first brought into the Castle we were badly bashed up by the Auxiliaries. Captain Hardy having finished his interrogation with us we were transferred to Arbour Hill. After spending about a week or two there we were taken to the North Dublin Union for courtmartial. The charge as far as I remember was concerned with being a member of an illegal organisation and acting illegally in arresting men whom we had no authority to arrest. We refused to recognise the Court and we were sentenced to five years penal servitude. We were then committed to Dartmoor prison and interned there for about nine months.

I refused to obey the prison rules and regulations and I was regarded as a very badly conducted prisoner by my jailors. The result was that I was transferred back to Mountjoy and I was released the following January under the General Amnesty.

Signed: Joseph O'Carroll  
(Joseph O'Carroll)

Date: September, 15<sup>th</sup> 1952.

Witness: Williams Ivory bondt.

