

W.S. 926

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
BURO STAIRÉ MILÉITIA 1913-21
No. W.S. 926

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.
STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 926.....

Witness

Kevin McCabe,
3 Glasilaun Road,
Ballygall Road,
Glasnevin,
Dublin.

Identity.

Member of I.R.B., Dublin, 1911 - ;
Member of "F" Company, 1st Batt'n. Dublin Bgde.,
1914 - .

Subject.

- (a) His journey to Limerick, Holy Saturday, 1916;
- (b) O'Connell St., Dublin, Easter Week 1916.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil

File No. S. 2234.....

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1918-21
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STATEMENT BY KEVIN McCABE

3 Glasilaun Road, Ballygall Road, Glasnevin.

About 1911 I joined the I.R.B. I can't remember the name of the circle, but George Irvine was the Centre. We met at 41 Parnell (Rutland) Square. We paid monthly subscriptions of a shilling. I had been in the Archbishop McHale Branch of the Gaelic League and it was from there I was roped into the I.R.B. It was Gerald Griffin swore me in. Martin Conlon was secretary of the McHale Branch and Sean T. O'Kelly was President

The most interesting incident I remember in connection with the I.R.B. Circle was that after the foundation of the Volunteers Liam Clarke, who was also a member, asked me if he proposed Maurice Flanagan for membership would I second him. Maurice lived in Blessington St. with his father who was a retired R.I.C. inspector.

There happened to be a member present that night from the Centre's Board called Jack Tobin. He lived in Hardwicke St. Tobin, in the course of his remarks, warned us against having anything to do with a Volunteer called Flanagan. He was not to be proposed as a member of the I.R.B. That put a damper on our proposal and we dropped it obediently.

What happened eventually was that as Maurice Flanagan was a clerk in a shipping office down in the North Wall and he was working on Easter Monday of 1916 he received telephone messages from England of troop movements by ship. So he promptly put on his hat and made for the G.P.O. to take part in the Rising. He was with me through the fight in the houses opposite the G.P.O. between Nobletts and Lloyd's public-house. We were obliged to evacuate.

On the Thursday night, as the fire was gaining on us and we all, including those in the Imperial Hotel, got out into

Earl St., I missed Maurice Flanagan. I asked where he was and was told that he was on the roof of the building we had just evacuated. Someone went back and found him alone on the roof playing a hose on the fire below. He came down to us.

We escaped through a tobacconist's shop - I think Delaney was the name - and into Cathedral St., along Marlborough St. and what is now Cathal Brugha St. and into Seán MacDermott St. There Flanagan was wounded by machine gun fire and we thought he was dead as he lay on the street. We had taken refuge in an unoccupied basement in a tenement house. Flanagan was picked up by the British military and brought to Dublin Castle Hospital.

The rest of us split up and we were all captured - eleven of us from the basement I mentioned - together with the other male inhabitants of the house. When we were brought to the Custom House as prisoners we were told to say in answer to inquiries that Maurice Flanagan was our commandant - we thought he was dead and that it was safe to say that. The real commandant of our unit, Brennan-Whitmore, was amongst the captured in the Custom House. Our unit was a scratch company and we were not with our own companies, as happened in many other cases.

Maurice Flanagan turned up afterwards in Frongoch with Dan McCarthy and others who had been wounded and I introduced him to Brennan-Whitmore as Commandant Flanagan. Flanagan got back his job at the North Wall after his release from Frongoch. He afterwards died of T.B. I was anxious to record his part in the Rising in view of Seán Tobin's objections to admitting him into the I.R.B.

I must now go back to describe the situation before the Rising.

At the foundation of the Volunteers I joined a unit which afterwards became F/Company of the 1st Battalion.

Piarras Beaslai became our first captain and we carried out the usual exercises. Fionán Lynch, Gearóid O'Sullivan, Jack and

Frank Shouldice were all officers in turn, ~~When~~^{as} Piaras was transferred to H.Q. Staff. Fionán Lynch was our captain in 1916.

I was to take part in the Howth gunrunning, but was prevented through illness from marching out. I took out a collection box and stood outside Dominick St. Church. I collected about £4 including a gold sovereign from some gentleman who refused to give me his name, but said "I suppose you chaps will soon be taken over by the Government". I said: "I suppose so".

I was given one of the Howth guns by Michael O'Kelly, a brother of Sean T. O'Kelly, and I kept it hidden in the house until just before the Rising. I used to take it out for our company drill walking past Fitzgibbon St. police barracks with it. We lived at 559 N.C.Road. It used to be 3 Margaret Place.

It was through the Tobins - Jack and Jim - that I learned there was to be a rising.

I should mention that about six months before the rising I was asked - I think by them - whether I would be able to store some new American shotguns that had arrived. I said I would store them in the store at the old coachhouse in the end of the garden. A man with a lorry came about 12 noon and delivered three wooden cases each containing ten guns. He asked me could I take three more as the people for whom they were intended were not at home. I said I could, we had plenty of room. They remained in the store until the Wednesday before the Rising when they were all, except four, collected by a boy with a handcart. I went with him to Liberty Hall and handed them over to James Connolly himself.

I went with a number of other Volunteers by train to Limerick on Whit Sunday 1915. When we arrived we paraded through the streets, cursed and stoned by the "separation".

women and prayed for by others. One woman held a crucifix over us out through an upper window. That evening I was with the Tobins in a hotel. Quite a number of women had come on the excursion. The purpose of the excursion was a sort of recruiting parade for the Volunteers and to bolster up the Limerick Volunteers. Monteith had been deported from Dublin and he was allowed to live in Limerick where he became active with the Volunteers.

We saw the women to the railway station before the Volunteers marched to it and the Tobins suggested I need not go back to join the parade, that I might as well go into the station and await the arrival of the Volunteers there. They themselves returned to the hotel where they were staying the night. As I crossed the square in front of the station I was attacked. I was not in uniform but my Howth gun gave me away. It was a woman who attacked me first and she was joined by the men. They wanted to get the gun off me. A couple of R.I.C. came to me and advised me to give up the gun and I'd be all right then. I clung to the gun until somebody caught me by the hair and then I had to let go the gun which was taken away by the crowd. Some days later Ned Daly sent for me and gave me back the gun. He had brought it up from Limerick where it had been handed over to one of the priests as I understood from Ned that the police would have nothing to do with these guns.

On Holy Saturday afternoon I met Jim Tobin and someone else at O'Neill's publichouse in Dorset St. and Jim told me they wanted me to do a job. They came home with me and collected the four remaining shotguns, my Howth gun and my 100 rounds of ammunition. I introduced them to my father who had no notion these or any other guns except my own Howth gun were in our place. We brought them to Tobin's house in Hardwicke St. Then we went from there to Joe Kissane's house which was the last house in Hardwicke St. near George's Church. This was later in the evening

Sean McDermott was there and there was a lot of coming and going. I believe Pearse was in the back room. I was introduced to Luke Kennedy who was, I understood, on the executive of the Irish Volunteers. He lived in Belvedere Place in the drawingroom flat of a house near Mountjoy Square. He was a widower, I think, with several children. Luke Kennedy and I were introduced to a Limerick man whose name I wasn't told.

When Sean McDermott told us what we were to do, this man got very disturbed and said he would like to go ^{to} confession. Sean told him to go over there in the corner and make an act of contrition. The man knelt down in the corner of the room and prayed fervently. It is more than I did. Sean instructed Luke Kennedy as to our destination. I did not hear the instructions, but Luke told me as we went on our way. We went to Thompson's garage in Pearse St. - that was where Sean Tobin worked - to hire a lorry and a particular driver. The man and this lorry had been on the Kilcoole gun-running. The driver had been told that the purpose of this journey was to tow a motor car back from Limerick; but when we saw him looking around for tow-rope we told him not to bother, but to take plenty of petrol. We were to get further instructions in Limerick at Daly's. Luke Kennedy had told me that the work we were to do was to go to Fenit Harbour to collect arms from a German ship that was due there. He said we might never get back.

We all four got into the lorry - Luke Kennedy and the driver in the cab and the Limerick man and myself in the back outside. When we got to Limerick we went to Daly's house. It might now be about 7 or 8 o'clock on the Sunday morning as there were quite a few people about. The O'Rahilly was just leaving Daly's. He had passed us out in a taxi on the road from Dublin and Luke Kennedy had remarked "That is one of our messengers".

We had breakfast at Daly's. We were brought into a room that was full of people mostly young Volunteers! After that we went to a sort of small drill hall that was somewhere at the back of Daly's. Our driver was in need of sleep as he had been working all the day before, so we thought he should have an hour or two's sleep. The Fianna boys were in and out and we tried to keep them quiet. I have no recollection of going to Mass.

Then we got instructions to meet the Limerick Volunteers at Killonan and we were told what direction to take; one of the boys even drew a map on the wall. In spite of these careful instructions we took a wrong turning and found ourselves in Clare. We met a band of Volunteers in uniform carrying arms. We stopped to talk to them and they told us, after some hesitation, as they were suspicious of us, that we would have to go back to the city to get our correct road. We came to the town clock which had been our landmark and there somebody was on the lookout for us and waved us on in the right direction. Shortly after that we saw some Volunteers on the road; they were on the lookout for us. We stopped a minute or two with them and Luke Kennedy had a chat with them as a result of which we continued on our road which was the road to Dublin. Luke said something like "We won't be wanted, we are going back home".

We continued on our way, but as time went on our driver was getting more and more drowsy. It might be about 10 p.m. This was his second long drive within 24 hours and as we came towards the Curragh he said he would have to have a cup of tea and a sleep before proceeding further. We knocked at the door of some little restaurant on the roadside and we were admitted. We got tea and bread and butter and the driver went to sleep on a chair for a while. We got into the lorry again and reached Dublin before daybreak. We parted with the lorry at College St.

I went with Luke Kennedy to his flat and slept on a sofa in his sitting room. When they woke me up the breakfast was ready. After breakfast we went to Sean Tobin's house in Hardwicke St. Sean was not there but Jim was and he said Sean had gone away on some business and had told himself to remain at home till he came back. We met Sean McDermott later in the day at the G.P.O. and we reported the result of our journey to him. He asked us where was Jim Tobin, that he knew where Sean was. I heard afterwards that Sean was sent with a dispatch - I presume to Dundalk - to Donal Hannigan who was in command of the Volunteers there, but Donal said he never delivered the dispatch to him, but stayed in the hotel during the whole of Easter Week.

Both the Tobins dropped out of everything after 1916.

It was also said that Gerald Griffin was not out and Tom Murray told me that Gerald slept in his own bed every night that week, but I have evidence that he went to Parnell Square and Mountjoy Square with Piaras Beaslai on the Tuesday of Easter Week seeking the A.O.H. rifles. Gerald told me himself that on Holy Saturday he had got about £60 from Sean Tobin, who was high up in I.R.B. Circles, to go around to various firms of hauling contractors to hire lorries - I don't know what these were for. Gerald paid a £1 deposit on several lorries that were never called upon.

It must have been about one o'clock when Luke Kennedy and I entered the G.P.O., because before leaving Hardwicke Street we had seen the Lancers returning after their charge down O'Connell St. There were a couple of empty saddles too. I noticed a group of D.M.P. standing inactive with their backs to the pillar and I advised them to go home or they would be fired on. The next time I looked in that direction they were gone.

We were not long in the G.P.O. when Luke, I and a Volunteer armed with a rifle were sent out to buy tea and sugar. We went up Henry St. and to a publichouse at the corner of Liffey St. It was open and packed with people drinking. They were surprised to see us. Luke asked for as much tea and sugar as the house could supply. The publican hesitated, under the impression that we would not pay. But Luke said he would pay cash. We then got as much as we could carry and we walked back to G.P.O. Luke remained in the G.P.O., but I fell in with a group of men who were standing idle and were now given arms and ammunition (30 rounds) and instructed to cross the road to occupy Noblett's sweetshop, which was at the south corner of Earl St. I really don't remember how we got in; someone must have broken in the door.

We started breaking all the windows and barricading them and the doors and the looters who perhaps had got in before us cleared everything in the shop. Then we occupied the rooms upstairs and we started breaking open the walls towards the Imperial Hotel which was over Clery's. We were at this work for a couple of days and then joined up with Volunteers who were working on the walls coming towards us. Some of these walls at Clery's were three feet thick. Some others of us broke through the walls up Earl St. as far as Lloyd's publichouse. Other fellows built a barricade of furniture across the street about where Hickey's shop was. Nearer the Pillar in Earl St. was a tram on the rails. We tried to push it further along Earl St. and turn it over so as to make a barricade, but we failed. The rest of the week was spent consolidating our position and waiting for something to happen. We did practically no shooting as there was no target.

Once Brennan-Whitmore, our commandant, thought he saw signalling from somewhere in Upper O'Connell St. and he fired a shot in that direction.

There were no girls with us, but we had a couple of good cooks among the men, such as Maurice Flanagan and Gerald Crofts and there was a restaurant near us where we commandeered some food. Later, a couple of Cumann na mBan girls came to assist us and we let them in by a ladder, but we sent them in through the holes in the walls to the Imperial Hotel. All the furniture in these houses had been thrown out into Earl St. to make the barricade. I remember the sickening thud of a piano as it fell on the street pavement. In this way there was nothing left for us to sit or lie on and we had practically no rest during the week.

There was a lot of wanton destruction done when we had made a forced entrance to the shops around about. There was a boot shop at the corner - Tyler's - now Burton's the tailors, and the crowd of looters rushed in there and took every pair of boots and shoes in the shops. I actually saw a boy and girl in the office lighting a bundle of papers to set fire to the place. I closed the door and threatened to keep them there unless they put out the fire. They beat it out quickly then. My only weapon on this occasion was a little automatic as I had left my shotgun upstairs.

From Wednesday morning the heavy firing by the military started and after that fires broke out in various places in the rear of our buildings. We saw a blaze in the direction of the Ship publichouse in Lr. Abbey St. In my simplicity I took up the 'phone to speak to the fire brigade. I was answered, rather to my surprise, and was asked where I was speaking from. I said: "You must not ask too many questions" and was then told that they intended to let us burn out. I think the military must have set fire to those buildings. They came along from Amiens St. and probably up the Quays.

On Thursday night I was upstairs in a second-floor room with several others when Brennan-Whitmore sent for us and told

us to evacuate. We got away as best we could in the manner I have already described. As far as I am aware, there were no instructions about reassembling anywhere.

In the Custom House where we were brought on Saturday morning after our surrender we spent two days. On the Sunday Gerald Crofts asked a swanky looking Colonial officer whether we could go to Mass. He said there was no need to bother, that we would soon be all shot. I then told him there were two wounded men with us and we had no dressing for their wounds and he might as well shoot them where they lay - one of them was Henry Manning and the other Brennan-Whitmore. At once the officer became all sympathy and he left us. An ambulance arrived half an hour afterwards to take away Manning. Whitmore's wound was slight and was dressed by one of the ambulance men. I helped the wounded man into the ambulance and was going to get in myself when the armed sentry at the door shouted after me and I had to ^{go} back.

On the Monday we were marched through the streets - guarded on each side by military - to Richmond Barracks. We were first brought into the old gym. I don't know how long we were there before we were sorted out. Not long after our arrival I saw Tom McDonagh being brought out of the gym by an armed guard. We had become merged in the crowd of Volunteer prisoners and I happened to be near Liam O'Briain. As McDonagh passed Liam he stopped to have a word with him in Irish and then was marched out the door. Liam turned to me and said he had asked McDonagh "Who will write the story?" McDonagh had answered promptly: "Sean T. O'Ceallaigh".

We spent the night - 40 or 50 of us - stretched on the floor in one of the barrack rooms. No blankets or covering of any sort was served to us. I remember sharing my overcoat with Peter McLoughlin. He slept but I didn't.

On Tuesday we were marched along the quays to a boat. On board I found myself near a Pole, who had been arrested though, of course, he had nothing to do with the Rising. He beckoned to me and some others to follow him - he was at home in a ship. I can't remember his name, but it is in the Sinn Fein Handbook. He had nothing to do with the Rising, but was probably found in one of the houses occupied by the Volunteers. He brought us to a big locker and we stretched out on top of it and we had a very good night's sleep, the first I had for over a week. When we awoke all the others had trooped out and we followed them down the gangway.

We were brought to Knutsford Gaol where we stayed some weeks, then to Frongoch. I was released at Christmas with the others none the worse for my experiences.

I was one of the lucky ones as I had no home worries. I resumed my employment as a watch-maker, first in Galway and then back in Dublin.

Signed: Kevin J. McCabeDate: 3rd Mar. 1954Witness: S. Ni Chiosain

(S. Ni Chiosain)

(Kevin J. McCabe)

3rd Mar. 1954

