

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
BURO STAIRÉ MILÉ TA 1913-21
No. W.S. 998

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21

STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 998

Witness

Diarmuid O Conaill (Jeremiah O'Connell),
Irish House,
Cahiriveen,
Co. Kerry.

Identity.

Member of Irish Volunteers, Cahiriveen, Co. Kerry,
1914 - ;
Commandant Cahiriveen Battalion later.

Subject.

Preparations for landing of German arms at
Fenit Pier, Co. Kerry, Easter Week 1916.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil

File No S.2885

Form B S M 2

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STATEMENT BY JEREMIAH O'CONNELL,
Irish House, Cahirciveen, Co. Kerry.

The Irish Volunteers were organised in the Cahirciveen area at a meeting which was held on the 6th January, 1914. It was a local effort. I was a teacher and we had a drapery business in the town of Cahirciveen. After the organisation had been got going in Cahirciveen, companies were formed at Fellamore, Reenard, Valentia, Portmagee, Ballinskelligs, Waterville and Mastergeehy. I was appointed in charge of the area.

I knew Cathal Brugha, who was a traveller for a firm of candle manufacturers, and we formed a very warm personal friendship which lasted through the years. He stayed with me when he came to Cahirciveen on visits. In 1914 he swore me into the I.R.B. and I became Centre for the Cahirciveen area. I swore in about thirty men in the Cahirciveen Battalion area.

In the summer of 1915 I went to the Galtee Training Camp with my brother, Jeremiah O'Riordan, Patsy O'Connor, Michael Walsh and James O'Shea. We stayed in the Camp for two weeks and were instructed by Colonel O'Connell (Ginger).

About this time my activities as an officer of the Volunteers came to the notice of the Board of Education and I was warned that I would have to sever my connection with the Volunteers. Thomas McDonagh and John McNeill were heads of the Volunteers and I informed John McNeill of the notice I had received from the National Board of Education, and he instructed me on the lines of my reply to the Board. I informed the Board that teachers were members of the Ulster Volunteers and no action had been

taken against them; no order had been made for their dismissal. The Board informed me that, if I did not comply with their order, I would be dismissed. McNeill had instructed me that, while there was discrimination between the treatment of the Irish Volunteers and Ulster Volunteers, I should refuse to obey the order of the Board. I did eventually, on McNeill's instructions, inform the Board of Education that I had resigned from the Volunteers. I, however, retained my position in the Volunteers, but I did not appear in public with the Volunteers.

In 1916 I received instructions from the late Austin Stack to provide a pilot for the boat which was to carry arms from Germany. She was expected to land the arms at Fenit pier. Mr. Stack had already provided a pilot from Castlegregory, but he thought it advisable to have a second pilot in case of accident regarding the Castlegregory pilot. I did, in fact, provide a pilot, a man named Mr. Maurice O'Connell of Reenard, who is still to the good, he knew the coast pretty well. I also got instructions from Mr. Stack to get in touch with the clerk at the Cable Office at Valentia, named Mr. Timothy Ring. It was intended that, when the Rising had started, the following message should be cabled to John Devoy in America: "Operation on John carried out successfully". The message was got off when news of the Rising was confirmed.

The British authorities discovered that the news of the Rising had reached New York and they started enquiries. They discovered that Ring had sent the message and he was dismissed. He was re-instated after some time. Mr. Ring is deceased.

On Easter Sunday I was asked to bring as many men as I could from Cahirciveen to Tralee to unload the arms which were expected. It was the intention to capture the police barracks, railway station and post office in Tralee when the landing was being made. We had no means of getting to Tralee except by cycle, and I brought about ten men to Tralee. Maurice O'Connell and two others went on Saturday. The following are some of the men who travelled on Sunday morning: Jeremiah O'Riordan, John Conway, Patrick O'Sullivan, Florence O'Shea and Maurice King. The police had been keeping me under observation and, when we came to leave Cahirciveen, I walked out past the police barracks. I got a boy to take my bicycle to a bridge, about a mile and a half outside the town, where I met him.

Some time before Easter Week I had been instructed by Volunteer Headquarters in Dublin to send a man, named Con Keating, to Dublin on a special mission. The mission for which he was selected was to take possession of a wireless transmitting and receiving set, which was held by a Mr. Fitzgerald who had a school in Cahirciveen for training wireless operators. Con Keating had been trained by Mr. Fitzgerald and was a competent operator. It was intended, as far as I know, to take the wireless set to Dublin. Denis Daly of Cahirciveen, who was a member of the I.R.A., was in Dublin at the time; he knew of the plans for the Rising.

Denis Daly and Con Keating were sent from Dublin to procure the wireless set. I think it was on Good Friday they were sent. They were to travel to Limerick where they were to contact some others, who were to provide two motor cars and travel down to Cahirciveen.

Denis Daly was in the first car because he knew the road. Con Keating was in the second car, with instructions to keep close to the first car. They were travelling by night. The first car drove into Killorglin from the Milltown road and, having crossed the bridge at the bottom of the town, took a turn to the right and then veered to the left to come round the turn in front of the Church, but the second car, after crossing the bridge and taking the turn to the right, continued to go to the right instead of veering left, and carried on until it left the road at Ballykissane pier.

The first car, after passing through the town of Killorglin, stopped on several occasions to wait for the second car to come up to them but, not seeing the lights of the car following, drove on to avoid police observations. On approaching Cahirciveen and just at Carhane bridge, the car was stopped by two R.I.C. men, one of whom (Gibson) knew Denis Daly by sight, but Denis was in the back of the car and went unnoticed. The other occupants of the car pretended to be tourists going to Waterville on holidays for Easter and they were allowed to proceed. They did not go to Waterville. They branched off the road at Spunkane Church and went by Baleach Oisín and headed back for Dublin via Limerick.

And now back to my own journey from Cahirciveen to Tralee. When passing through Killorglin, I learned of the affair at Ballykissane pier. The remains of Con Keating were in the Courthouse. We went on to Tralee and, to our surprise, we learned of the arrest of a man, whom we learnt at a later date was Casement, and Austin Stack. A despatch had been received from McNeill calling off the Rising. Pierce McCann brought the message from Dublin.

I think An Seabhach got the message from McCann. We also learned of the capture of the German ship. We were ordered to return to our own area. There were no arrests made in Caherciveen following the Rising.

In August, 1916, accompanied by Florence O'Shea, I set out to cycle to Dublin to ascertain what was the position and, on our way, we went to Miltown Malbay, where I knew that Cathal Brugha was recuperating. I met Cathal there and I stayed for a few days. We went bathing together and I saw the wounds on his body. He gave me a letter of introduction to the Head Centre in Dublin. I was anxious to know whether they intended taking any further steps about continuing the Rising.

We proceeded to Dublin and we stopped at Tullamore. I wanted to meet Peadar Bracken whom I had met at the Galtee Camp in the summer of 1915. I met Bracken and some other man, and we remained talking at the hotel at which I was staying until a late hour. When Bracken and his friend left the hotel, the police jumped on them and then they arrested myself and O'Shea.

They held us at Tullamore for a couple of days and then removed us to the Curragh Camp where we were given into military custody. The letter, which Cathal Brugha had given me, was found in my possession, but he had been careful in what he wrote and they could make nothing of it. We were held for two weeks and then released.

I have nothing further to say regarding my activities. I had been elected Commandant of the Cahirciveen Battalion and held the rank right through until 1919 when I underwent a very serious operation.

I am now eighty-four years old, and in 1916 I was a married man with seven children.

The arms we had in Cahirciveen at the time of the Rising were: 50 Mauser rifles; 4 rifles .22; 3 rifles .303; and 15 revolvers.

My premises were destroyed by the Tans at a later stage because the name was in Irish over the door and I refused to remove it.

SIGNED:

Diarmuid O'Connell

(Diarmuid O'Connell)

DATE:

An 31ú lá Lúghnasa 1954

31adh la Lughnasa, 1954.

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1013-21

BURO STAIRÉ MILEATA 1013 21

M.S. 998

WITNESS:

James J. O'Connor

(James J. O'Connor)