


W. S. 1,153 ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
BURO STAIRE MILEATA 1913-21
No. W.S. 1,153

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 1,153.....

Witness

Sean O'Neill,
609 North Circular Road,
Dublin.

Identity.

Lieutenant 'H' Company
1st Battalion Dublin Brigade.

Subject.

Commandeering of ammunition from Keegan's
gunshop, Inn's Quay, Dublin, Easter Mon. 1921.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil

File No. S.2388.....

Form B.S.M. 2

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STATEMENT BY MR. SEÁN O'NEILL,

609, North Circular Road, Dublin.The Raid on Keegan's Gunshop, Inns Quay, Dublin.

On Inns Quay, Dublin, there was a gunsmith shop known as Keegan's. Over this shop there were in 1921 the offices of the Pawnbrokers' Assistants Union. I happened to go there with a member, Seán Dwyer (better known as Spivis) who wanted to pay his Union fee. This was on Easter Sunday evening. While going up the stairs we noticed a lot of parcels along the side of the wall, in the hall, up the stairs and on the landings. Spivis, always inquisitive, wanted to see what was in those parcels and tore a corner off one. What was inside only shotgun ammunition! This was a find. We then looked at a few more and they were all live cartridges. We put the parcels we opened with the torn part back to the wall and went and reported the matter to Comdt. P. Holohan. He got in touch with Corless, Battalion Q.M.

As Keegan's was in H/Company area, H/Company got orders to commandeer the ammunition. Captain S. Kavanagh got me to get the men necessary for the job which was set for Easter Monday evening at 5.30. The stuff was to go to a dump off Botanic Road and had to be guarded all the way to Cross Guns Bridge. This would entail extended armed men from Chancery St. and along the route via Constitution Hill, Phibsborough Road etc. Hence we mobilised 50 men.

Now, the position of Keegan's was right at the corner of Inns Quay and Chancery St. with the halldoor entrance just around from quay in Chancery St. On the other corner was the Four Courts and, of course, the Bridewell, about

100 yards away. In the Four Courts a British armed guard was maintained and in the Bridewell was stationed a large party of Black and Tans. Peter Ratcliffe, Maurice Higgins and Peter Flood (now Brother John) were stationed on the bridge - Liffey side. Tommy O'Brien and Bob Purcell were stationed at a publichouse which is just opposite Four Courts gate where British sentry was on guard. Jimmy Quirke, Johnny Ryan and J. Whelan were at O'Hara's pub facing Chancery St., and other men were stationed all along the route to Cross Guns Bridge. Tommy Hoban was the cyclist who was to send the men away after the van passed each armed party.

Spivis Dwyer, Jerry Killeen, Tucker Reilly and other men were inside Keegan's Hall to load the stuff on to a flat van. Bill Lackhart and J. Dignam were on the van. All men took up their positions at 3.20. Bill Tobin and myself stood at Keegan's window on the quay. The Van turned up and loading proceeded. During the loading Tommy O'Brien was talking all the time to the sentry at the Four Courts.

Now, 20,000 rounds of ammunition takes a lot of loading and time, and while same was in progress, eight Red Caps, armed, passed by Keegan's on way to Royal Barracks, and, passing Chancery St., looked at our men loading. This looked very serious and I saw the men on the bridge get ready to open up, and Tobin and myself got ready too, but they passed on up the quays and, about ten minutes after, the van went off with all goods on board. The men inside went away quietly and so did the men around the area. Tobin and myself had to wait for T. Hoban to return with the O.K. signal. We turned left into a small square of

cottages behind Keegan's and were just in the centre of the road going towards George's Hill when the Tans came along each side of the road from Bridewell. We were right in the centre, Tobin, Hoban and myself. Hoban was unarmed, but he had an Evening Herald. We thought we were for it and knew we hadn't a ghost of a chance. We stood talking with Hoban holding his bike and reading the paper "a La." One of the Tans asked Hoban what won a certain race and, lucky for us, Hoban was a racing man. He told the Tan and he said he backed some other horse and Hoban said he backed the same, and I needn't tell you the choice language that was used to describe the horse. Anyhow, this saved our bacon, as all the Tans passed away from us and this fellow had to run after them to catch up. Although it was after raining, this fellow had white rubber shoes on him, and that was how we spent Easter Monday 1921 and got 20,000 rounds of shotgun ammunition.

Signed: Sean O'Neill Lieut.
(Sean O'Neill) Lieut.
Date: 4. May 1955

Witness: M. F. Ryan Comd't.
(M.F. Ryan) Comd't.

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