

**ORIGINAL**

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

BURO STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21

No. W.S. 196

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 196

**Witness**

Mr. Albert D. Mitchell,  
23 Waterford St.,  
Dublin.

**Identity**

Red Cross Ambulance Driver  
Easter Week 1916.

**Subject**

Ambulance Driving in Dublin  
Easter Week 1916.

**Conditions, if any, stipulated by Witness**

Nil

File No. S.521

Form B.S.M. 2.

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W.S. 196. After thirty years it is difficult to remember the particular day of the week or time of day of many of the events.

On the Tuesday or Wednesday of Easter Week 1916 I arrived at Kingsbridge, Dublin, about 8 p.m. by train from County Carlow. Not knowing what the row was about, and as there were no trams or conveyance of any sort I started to walk to my factory in Waterford Street. I was stopped at Kingsbridge and questioned and searched by an English Officer with a revolver in his hand pointing at my chest.

I went by Benburb Street and very soon came to a barricade across the street behind which were 20 or 30 English soldiers. I was halted and questioned again and then allowed to proceed. About half a mile further on I came to another barricade and was again halted and questioned this time by young men wearing bandoleers over civilian clothing - these were a Company of the Irish Volunteers. The Officer in charge of this barricade politely explained the situation to me - that there was a Rising of the Irish Volunteers and that I should not be out. He offered to send an escort with me but after a moment's consideration I thanked him and declined the offer, as I felt it might be safer to be alone.

I got to my office without further trouble and slept on the floor that night. The next morning I started to cycle to my home in Merrion. With considerable trouble I got as far as Ballsbridge and owing to the cordons of English soldiers drawn across the roads I could get no further having no permits and for the same reason could not get back, so slept that night on the roadside.

Next morning I met Walter Sexton who was Secretary of the Irish Automobile Association. He wore a red armband and seemed to have some authority. I explained my position to him and he took me to a British Officer who was sitting in a hut inside the Anglesea Road entrance to the R.D.S. Grounds, and as I could drive a motor car they gave me a Red Cross Ambulance and several permits to pass me through the different cordons of British Troops in various parts of the city.

Without any definite instructions as to my duties I was to report to this Officer at 9 a.m. next morning which I did. Shortly after 9 a.m. a British Staff Officer came out and ordered me to start the engine as he wished to be taken to Portobello Barracks. I told him I had no instructions to carry any but wounded or hospital cases, and he replied that he was giving me my instructions. To argue seemed useless and after my previous experience of the night before I thought it better to comply.

I drove through the city without interference until

I came to Aungier Street when in the distance I saw a crowd of people on the street near Jacobs factory and among them some men in green uniforms with rifles - obviously Irish rebels. I stopped the ambulance and ordered the Officer to get in and lie down on a stretcher. I then drove on and when I came near the crowd they opened out and the men in the green uniforms made a passage for the ambulance to pass through, but when I got to the barracks and thought what would have happened if someone had jumped on to the back of the car and had seen this Officer!!!

The Officer was in much the same condition of nerves and fright as I was. I refused to wait to take him back and told him to get back any way he liked, but when I reported back to the R.D.S. and Orderly informed me that the Officer inside wished to speak to me.

He received me politely and asked to see my permits which he had given me the day previously. He thanked me for my assistance and put my papers into his desk - in short I was discharged. I suspect the Officer I had taken to the Barracks telephoned back to H.Q. I was therefore left without identification papers and back again on the roadside.

I again met Mr. Sexton who took me to the Simmonscourt Road entrance to the R.D.S. where I was introduced to another British Officer and this time was given a lorry to drive and the usual permits and passes to get me through the military lines.

My instructions were to visit all hospitals and morgues, collect all dead, search them to try to identify them, and then take them to Deans Grange Cemetery for burial. For this I was given the assistance of a Sergeant and four Orderlies.

While driving through Moore Street to Jervis Street Hospital one afternoon towards the end of the week the Sergeant drew my attention to the body of a man lying in the gutter in Moore Lane. He was dressed in a green uniform. I took the Sergeant and two men with a stretcher and approached the body which appeared to be still alive. We were about to lift it up when a young English Officer stepped out of a doorway and refused to allow us to touch it. I told him of my instructions from H.Q. but all to no avail.

When back in the lorry I asked the Sergeant what was the idea? His answer was - "he must be someone of importance and the Bastards are leaving him there to die of his wounds - it is the easiest way to get rid of him".

We came back again about 9 o'clock that night. The body was still there and an Officer guarding it, but this time I fancied I knew the Officer - he was not the one I met before. I asked why was I not allowed to take the body and who was it? He replied that his life and job depended on it being left there. He would not say who it was. I never saw the body

again but I was told by different people that that was The O'Rahilly.

The British Officer in charge of these burials was Capt. deBurg Daily M.D. I reckoned we buried over 200 bodies of civilians and Irish soldiers, also some English soldiers in Deans Grange.

An interesting sidelight on these doings occurred while the Sergeant and I were waiting for a load being prepared in the mortuary of Jervis Street Hospital. We were both sitting in a little Church Yard immediately opposite the hospital and just ten steps before us was a tombstone and on it was cut "Here lies the body of John Toler, Earl of Norbury etc.etc." I am told that it was not generally known where this fellow, like his unfortunate victim, was buried.

A few words in passing about my companion the Sergeant, a typical Cockney, intelligent and witty, like Brett Hart "his language was painful and free" - thought he was again being sent to France and wondered how everyone he met spoke such good English - never heard of any rebellion in Ireland for which country he had a strange sort of sympathy. It appears he was married to an Irish girl when he was young "The best bloody woman that the Lord ever put breath into".

I told him the story of Lord Norbury and Robert Emmet - wanted to know why this bastard (Norbury) should have a tombstone and would have pulled it down and smashed it up had I not prevented him.

I left my job of burying the dead on the 6th May.

I enclose some military permits given to me for various purposes.

*Albert D. Mitchell*  
20/2/49

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