"The Last 3 Days of Michael Collins' [Emmet Dalton]
IE CCCA/SM839
Descriptive List
Cork City and County Archives

IDENTITY STATEMENT
Reference: IE CCCA/SM839
Title: "The Last 3 Days of Michael Collins' [Emmet Dalton]
Level of description: fonds
Date: 1922 [23 Nov 1922]
Extent: 6pp

CONTEXT
Creator
Dalton, Emmet | 1898-1978 | Major General, Irish National Army

Biographical/Administrative History
Emmet Dalton was born in the United States in 1898 and grew up in Ireland. He served in the British Army 1915-1919, winning the Military Cross. He joined the Irish Republican Army (IRA) in 1919. He became part of 'the Squad', the special unit created by Michael Collins as IRA Head of Intelligence. He supported the Anglo-Irish Treaty of 1922. He was appointed a Major General in the newly-created Irish National Army and commanded troops fighting 'Irregulars' (anti-Treaty Republicans) in Dublin's Four Courts at the outbreak of the Irish Civil War (1922-23). He led several operations in the south of Ireland, and retook control of Cork city from the Irregulars in August 1922. He accompanied Collins, now commander in chief and chairman of the provisional government, on a tour of West Cork during which their convoy was ambushed and Collins killed (22 August). Dalton resigned from the army in December 1922. In later life he worked in the film industry, founding Ardmore Studios in 1958. He died in 1978. [See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Emmet_Dalton]
Archival History
The document was deposited by a private donor in July 2014, having lain unnoticed among family papers for many years. A shorter version of Dalton’s account is reproduced in Rex Taylor’s book: Michael Collins (London, 1958) [Appendix J, pp321-24], sourced from the Freeman’s Journal (22 August 1923). Another version of Dalton’s account, almost identical to the present item, entitled ‘The Death of Michael O’Coileain’, was posted online by Chris Dalton, a grandnephew of Dalton’s. This version has a covering note by Dalton dated 23 Nov 1922, dedicateing ‘my first little work’ to his brother Pat. This confirms Dalton’s account was written within three months of Collins’ death. This version may be seen here: http://www.generalmichaelcollins.com/life-times/ambush-at-bealnablath/death-of-michael-collins/

CONTENT AND STRUCTURE

Scope and Content
Typescript first person account, ‘The Last 3 Days of Michael Collins’ [by Emmet Dalton]. Unsigned, with several ms notes, and last two pages in ms pencil. On Oglaigh na hEireann (Irish Army) stationery. The statement begins ‘The war which had been forced on the people of Ireland by the Mutineers from the I.R.A. had been in progress for two months, and Cork had been captured by forces under my Command’. It goes on to describe Collins’ unexpected visit on 20 August, and the reasons behind it (to review the military situation, and, as government chairman and minister of finance, to seek to recover customs and excise money stolen by Irregulars). There then follows a detailed account of the tour of West Cork, which departed from the Imperial Hotel, Cork, at 6:15am on 22 August, and stopped at Macroom, Clonakilty, Sam’s Cross [Collins’ birthplace], Rosscarbery, Skibbereen, and Bandon. On the way back to Cork the convoy was ambushed, and Collins insisted that the driver stop and the enemy be engaged. Collins is reported to have shouted out ‘Emmet, I am hit!’ shortly before he was found mortally wounded. His death, the wounding of a second officer, and the journey back to Cork are also described. The writer recalls his feelings while proceeding through Cork: ‘The thought struck me that those poor people had gone peacefully to their nightly rest, all unconscious of the calamity that had befallen them’.

The present account is of particular interest as a draft, with amendments in pen, and the last two pages written in pencil, described as ‘alternative for 5 & 6’. It is an important early version of a first-hand account of a key event in Irish history.

PERSON/INSTITUTION INDEX:
Dalton, Emmet | 1898-1978 | Major General, Irish National Army
Collins, Michael | 1890-1922
Irish National Army (Oglaigh na nEireann)
SUBJECT/EVENT ETC. INDEX:
Civil War, Ireland (1922-1923)
20th century
Military
Personal Papers

CONDITIONS OF ACCESS AND USE

Conditions Governing Access
Open by appointment to all holding a current reader’s ticket

Conditions Governing Reproduction
Subject to rules governing reproduction of records at CCCA

Language
English

Physical /Technical Requirements

Finding Aids
Descriptive List

ALLIED MATERIALS

Existence and Location of Originals/Copies
See ‘Archival History’

Related Units of Description

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Publication Note
RULES /CONVENTIONS USED

ISAD(G)

ARCHIVIST'S NOTE
Description Prepared By: Timmy O Connor, Local Government Archivist