

Cás Cúirte Spéisiúil sa Spidéal 1919

Donncha Ó hÉallaithe

Céad bliain ó shin, tugadh triúr ball den RIC os comhair na cúirte sa Spidéal agus cúiseanna curtha ina leith faoi fhear áitiúil darbh ainm Peter Curran a ionsaí. Gearradh fíneáil 5 scilling ar bheirt den RIC chomh maith le costais £1 agus caitheadh amach an cás in aghaidh an tríú duine. Mr. Kilbride R.M a bhí ina chathaoirleach ar an gcúirt agus in éindí leis ar an mbinse bhí an Tiarna Killanin.

Ina chuid fianaise os comhair na cúirte, dúirt Peter Curran go raibh sé ag seasamh ar 'River Road' sa Spidéal ag caint le Ml. Conneely agus a bhean, a bhí taobh istigh den chlaí ar a gcuid talún féin nuair a tháinig ceathrar ball den RIC anuas an bhóthair: Sáirsint Rheidy agus na Constáblaí Murhill, O'Connor agus Doherty. Bhí gadhar an tsáirsint in éindí leo. De réir na fianaise a thug Peter Curran, chuaigh gadhar an tsáirsint isteach sa ngarraí ag troid le gadhar na gConneelys. Isteach leis an Sáirsint Reidy ag bualadh gadhar na gConneelys le maide a bhí ina láimh. Dúirt Curran leis an Sáirsint gurb é a ghadhar féin a bhí as bealach agus dúirt an Sáirsint leis, "If you open your mouth I will put this stick back your throat". Thosaigh triúr ón RIC – Reidy, Murhill agus O'Connor - ag brú Curran agus é ag déanamh a bhealach suas an bóthair agus ag ceann a bhóithrín féin rug an Constábla Murhill greim scornaí air agus leagadh é. Dúirt sé gur bhuail sé a chloigeann ar an mbóthair agus go raibh a shrón ag cur fola.

Bhí *sub poena* curtha ar an gceathrú duine den RIC, an Constábla Doherty, le fianaise a thabhairt. Dúirt sé go raibh siad ar thóir poitín an lá sin agus iad ag filleadh abhaile. Bhí bád ar chairt acu, a bhí á thiomáint ag Coleman Noone. Thug sé fianaise a bhí ag tíocht a bheag nó a mhór leis an scéal a d'inis Peter Curran don chúirt, is é sin go ndeachaigh gadhar an tsáirsint isteach sa ngarraí i ndiaidh asail agus gur thosaigh an dá ghadhar ag troid. Rinne an sáirsint le maide ina láimh na gadhair a scarúint óna céile agus gur dhúirt Curran leis an sáirsint, "If it was my dog you wouldn't beat him like that". Le sin, dúirt sé gur thosaigh an bheirt acu ag argóint, gur bhrú an Sáirsint Reidy an Curraoineach agus gur leag an Constábla Murhill é ag ceann a bhóithrín féin.

Seo cuid den cheistiú a chuir L.E O' Dea, dlíodóir Peter Curran, ar an gConstábla Doherty, mar a tuairiscíodh é sa gCuradh Connacht ar an 12 Iúil 1919:

Mr. O'Dea: Did you see Curran being shoved about?

Constable Doherty: He was shoved in the

beginning.

Mr. O'Dea: When he came to the boreen did he try and go up there?

Constable Doherty: I believe he was making for his own house.

Mr. O'Dea: And when he was making for his own house did you see Constable Murhill do anything to him?

Constable Doherty: He gave him a shove.

Mr. O'Dea: Did he knock him?

Constable Doherty: He did.

Mr. O'Dea: Did Curran shout at you or say anything to you?

Constable Doherty: He shouted: "Witness this, Doherty. I will make them pay for this assault."

Mr. O'Dea: Had the sergeant and the other defendants any drink that day?

Constable Doherty: Not that I know of.

Mr. O'Dea: Did you see a bottle with Constable O'Connor?

Constable Doherty: We all carry bottles to the mountains to bring milk or tea.

Chairman: Apart from seeing them consuming it, had they any appearance of the effects of liquor?

Constable Doherty: No.

Nuair a cuireadh cros cheistiú ar gConstábla Doherty, dúirt sé gur aistríodh go Bearna é go gairid tar éis an eachtra. Sheas sé lena chuid fianaise agus dúirt arís gurbh é Reidy a bhrú an Curraoineach in aghaidh an balla i dtosach agus gur leag Murhill é. Ba léir nach raibh aon ghrá ag gConstábla Doherty don Sáirsint rud a tháinig amach as an gceistiú seo a leanas, a chuir Cathaoirleach na cúirte air:

Chairman: You need not answer this question if you do not like; Has there been any friction between you and the other constables up to this?

Constable Doherty: None with the constables whatever.

Chairman: As you limit it to the constables, I assume there was something between you and the sergeant?

Constable Doherty: The sergeant has not spoken to me for two or three years while I was at Spiddal station, except in regard to duty.

Is cinnte gur cás eisceachtúil a bhí ann sa mhéid is go raibh duine amháin den RIC ag tabhairt fianaise in aghaidh beirt dá chomhghleacaithe a bhí os comhair na cúirte faoin ionsaí a dhéanamh ar an gCurraoineach. Tugadh roinnt fianaise eile a thacaigh leis an gcás a thóg an Curraoineach.

Dúirt Michael Thornton go raibh sé féin ag caint le mac leis an Sáirsint Reidy agus go bhfaca sé an Sáirsint ag brú Curran agus go bhfaca sé an Constábla Murhill ag fáil greim scornaí air agus á leagan ar an mbóthair.

I nGaeilge a thug Ml. Conneely a chuid fianaise os comhair na cúirte agus dúirt sé gur ionsaigh gadhar an tsáirsint a ghadhar féin a bhí ag ina luí sa gharraí. Dar leis, dúirt an Sáirsint Reidy lena bhean go mba cheart di an gadhar a bhá agus gur bhuail sé gadhar na gConneelys lena mhaide.

Fear os cionn 20 bliain d'aois, Coleman Noone, a bhí ag tiomáint na cairte a raibh an bád uirthi agus dúirt seisean go raibh an chuma ar thriúr den RIC go raibh siad óltach.

Ar ndóigh nuair a glaoth ar an Sáirsint Reidy mar fhinné bhréagnaigh sé gach a bhí curtha ina leith agus dúirt sé gur ionsaigh gadhar na gConneelys a ghadhar féin agus nár bhuail sé an gadhar ach gur bhuail sé an talamh leis an maide leis na gadhair a scanrú. Níor bhrú sé Curran ach chuir sé i leith Curran gur eisean a rinne an brú. Rinne L.E. O' Dea agus cathaoirleach na cúirte an Sáirsint Reidy a chroscheistiú ansin.

Mr. O'Dea: Is it not extraordinary you did not issue a summons against Curran if he was "shouldering" you?

Sgt. Reidy: We are so well used to get abuse along the roads.

Chairman: Surely you are not accustomed to that in this district? Is there a man from here to Derrynea who would have the cheek to shove a policeman on the road? I am coming here ten years, and never heard a case brought by a policeman for such an alleged incident. Did it ever occur to you before?

Sgt. Reidy: Yes, on a few other occasions I was struck on the road.

Chairman: And you took no notice?

Sgt. Reidy: The thing was trivial, and we were not afraid of them.

Chairman: What had Curran done that you should call him a blackguard? Policemen, you know, are not allowed to use language of that kind? What blackguardly conduct had

he, you say, been guilty of?... Did he use any offensive word towards you?

Sgt. Reidy: I cannot remember that he did except going on talking about the dog.

Chairman: Did he touch you?

Sgt. Reidy: Yes, he was walking beside me and rubbing against me.

Ansín thug an Constábla O'Connor a chuid fianaise inar dúirt sé go ndearna Curran iarracht an Sáirsint Reidy a bhuaileadh ach gur stop sé féin agus an Constábla Murhill é. Ní raibh an Cathaoirleach rótógtha leis an bhfianaise seo ón gConstábla Murhill, mar a léiríonn an cuid seo den tuairisc:

Chairman: This is the first we have heard about Curran raising his fist. Can you give any explanation why the man was not made amenable up to this moment?

Constable O'Connor: The thing was trivial.

Chairman: It is not. Interfering with the police is not trivial.

Lord Killanin: It is not a trivial offence.

Chairman: An actual attempt to assault a sergeant, which was only stopped by the constables - do you call that trivial?

Constable O'Connor: Well, it is a fact.

Bhí a dhóthain cloiste ag cathaoirleach na cúirte, Mr. Kilbride R.M. Ba léir nár chreid sé an fianaise a thug an Constábla O'Connor ná an Constábla Murhill, a thug le fios gur stop siad Peter Curran ón Sáirsint Reidy a bhuaileadh.

"Why should any man" a dúirt sé, "if he threatened to assault a police sergeant, and was only held back by two policemen, never be made amenable to this moment in a court that deals with the most trivial offences?.... We must come to the conclusion that there was at least a technical assault between the sergeant and this man, and a definite act of assault by Constable Murhill.... And so we have come to the conclusion leaving all these considerations aside that the evidence binds us to convict them for this assault. Sergt Reidy will be fined 5s. and £1 costs, and Constable Murhill 10s. and £1 costs. The case against Constable O'Connor is dismissed on the merits."

Ní minic a tharla sé go raibh cúirt faoi réimeas na Breataine sásta baill den RIC a chiontú as daoine a bhuaileadh agus iad i mbun a gcuid oibre, ach tharla sé sa Spidéal 100 bliain ó shin.

Nóta: Peadar Mór Curraoin a tugadh go háitiúil ar Peter Curran ón mBaile Ard, an fear a thóg an cás in aghaidh an tSáirsint Reidy agus beirt eile ón RIC céad bliain ó shin. Fuair Peadar bás tragóideach agus é amach sna hochtóidí, ar an 5 Feabhra 1962, nuair a las an teach ina raibh cónaí air. Níor phós sé riamh. Tá muid buíoch do Timín Joe Tim Ó Curraidhín as an eolas seo a chur ar fáil. ■