

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
BURO STAIRÉ MILÉATA 1913-21
No. W.S. 178

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 178.

Witness

John Garvey, Blackwaterstown, Co. Tyrone.

Identity

Captain in Blackwaterstown Coy. I.V.

Subject

I.V. activities in Co. Tyrone 1914-1916.

Conditions, if any, stipulated by Witness

Nil.

File No. S. 1047.

Form B.S.M. 2.

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Statement by John Garvey, Blackwaterstown, Co. Tyrone.

I joined the Irish Volunteers in 1914, Blackwaters Company. I joined the Irish Republican Brotherhood some short time after I joined the Volunteers.

I was Captain of Blackwaters Company, Irish Volunteers. There were fifteen men in the Company pre 1916 and all were members of the I.R.B. We had a miniature rifle in the Company area before 1914 and after the Company was organised we got three more rifles (two Italian and one Martini). The ammunition for the Martini was scarce. We procured four or five revolvers which were also available for Easter Week 1916.

About 65% of the population of the Company area were Nationalists, about 25% of the Nationalists were Republican and 40% supporters of the Irish Parliamentary Party. At the start of the 1914-18 war a big number of the Parliamentary Party supporters joined the Volunteers. After they joined the Company strength on parade was about 90 men. The Redmondite supporters left the Volunteers at the time of the split, which took place locally in September, 1914. After the split our numbers were reduced to about 25 men.

In 1916 our Circle of the I.R.B. were linked up with Armagh City. We held I.R.B. meetings in Armagh City. I was appointed Centre of Blackwater Circle by Dr. McCartan late in 1914 or early 1915. I was summoned to a Convention in Dublin in October 1915. I was prevented, by illness in my family, from going to the Convention.

From 1915 up to the time of the Rising there was no

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distinction made in the Volunteers between I.R.B. men and others who did not join the I.R.B. organisation. I would say, however, that all the active Volunteers were I.R.B. men. Matters of training, arming and organising were occupying much of our time. The hostility of the Unionist section and the indifference, or in some cases opposition, of the Redmondite section of the Nationalists made our progress difficult. We were not able to increase either our numbers or our armament to any great extent. I know there was a training camp organised by the I.R.B. for both the I.R.B. and the Irish Volunteers at Donoughmore, County Tyrone. I was not asked to attend this camp.

Shortly before Easter Week, 1916, I got a dispatch through the I.R.B. organisation to mobilise in Coalisland on Easter Sunday, and take with me the picked men of my I.R.B. Circle. I cannot now remember when I got this dispatch. It may have been on Easter Sunday morning. The dispatch did not contain any information of a contemplated Rising, or any orders to carry arms or rations. I proceeded to carry out my orders and got four men to accompany me to Coalisland. We arrived there about 1 to 2 p.m. We carried small arms and ammunition for each man.

When we arrived in Coalisland there was great activity in the town. The Tyrone men were occupying a Hall near the Square. Some were cooking and others eating a meal. The Belfast men were formed up in military order on the Square and soon after we arrived marched out of the town. I reported to James McElvogue of Donoughmore. Shortly after reporting McElvogue returned to me and informed me that the Rising was called off from Dublin. This was the

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first inkling I had got that a Rising was planned for Easter Sunday. We returned home to Blackwaterstown on Sunday evening.

During Easter Week we met regularly each night under arms. We could not get any reliable news of what was happening in Dublin or other parts of the country. We got no further orders to mobilise.

There was a big round-up around ~~Blackwaterstown~~ ^{in County Tyrone} district during the first week in May 1916. On the Friday week after Easter Sunday District Inspector Conneran of the R.I.C. in Armagh called on Father Ward, Administrator, Armagh, and told him I was to be arrested and that I was the only man in his district noted for arrest. Father Ward made representations to D.I. Connery that as I was the only man in the district under suspicion it would be better not to press an arrest. Father Ward sent word to me by my brother. I was in Moy fair that day and my brother came there and informed me of Father Ward's message. The local Sergeant of the R.I.C. was also in Moy fair and spent the day shadowing me. I left the fair hurriedly and the Sergeant made no attempt to follow me, or to interfere with me later. I was not arrested.

Signed John Garvey

Date 3/11/48

Witnessed John Messey

Date 3/11/48

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