

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

BURO STAIRE MILEATA 1913-21

No. W.S. 221

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 221

Witness

Mr. Arthur McElvogue,
Pomeroy,

Co. Tyrone.
Identity

Member of I.R.B. Pomeroy 1913-1916.

Captain *high* Volunteers of Pomeroy Coy.

Subject

(a) National activities 1913-1916.

(b) Activities during Easter Week 1916.

Conditions, if any, stipulated by Witness

Nil

File No. S.1048.

Form B.S.M. 2.

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Statement by Arthur McElvogue, Pomeroy.

In my young days I was a member of the A. O. H. in Pomeroy. I was a few years in the Hibernians. About 1913 I was approached by an aged man named Pat Toner and he explained to me the aims and objects of the I. R. B., and he suggested that I should join the organisation. He approached a number of other young men in this locality with the same object. He asked us to attend a meeting in a certain place and that a man would meet us there and enrol us in the organisation. We met in a field outside Pomeroy and Peter Burns from Belfast met us and fully explained the objects and aims of the organisation. We were all sworn in at that meeting by Peter Burns. It was decided at the meeting that each man enrolled would do his best to get new members into the organisation of the right type. We got four circles formed in the district - Pomeroy, Kildr^{ess}ss, Donoughmore and Cockstown. There were about twelve members in each circle, and this number could easily be multiplied only that the critical selection of the men was of first importance. We were warned by Burns that we should be extremely careful to take in only the most reliable people into the organisation. When a new member was to be approached his name was proposed by a member of the circle to the other members and each member of the circle had to approve of the new candidate before he was asked to join. It was not usual to have objections made to a candidate's entry into the circle after his being approached to join the circle.

A number of the members of the I. R. B. circles still retained membership of the A. O. H. after they had joined the organisation. This fact turned out a good policy as when the time came to organise the Volunteers the I. R. B. were able by their influence in the A. O. H. to get the divisions of the Hibernians to help to form the Volunteer Companies. In this

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early stage of the Volunteer organisation there was no distinction between Irish or National Volunteers. A man was not critical as long as he was joining the Volunteers and the question of who was in control did not apparently matter.

Sometime about 1915 I and Dr. McCartan called to Donoughmore on a Sunday evening and we visited a training camp that was held there for the I.R.B. I saw Robert Moore Pim there. This camp lasted for a week. The camp was next moved to Carrickmore and I heard that the police raided the camp and succeeded in breaking it up.

Around my part of the country the I.R.B. were the driving force behind the organisation of the Volunteers. The following Companies were formed: One in Pomeroy; 2 Companies in Kildr^{ESS}ga (Upper and Lower); 2 Companies in Galbally, Munderadoe, Carrickmore, Cookstown and Six Mile Cross.

I would estimate the average membership of the Companies as 50 men. The formation of these Companies started around April 1914. There was little arms got by the I.R.B. or the Volunteers. Dr. McCartan got some arms which went to his local units in Carrickmore area. In Pomeroy area we got about 12 rifles. I can't state where they came from. I would think they came from Dublin. We picked up a few revolvers locally and also a fair number of shotguns. In Pomeroy area we were able to arm about 30 men with arms of various types. I know that shortly before Easter Week 1916, that the Carrickmore Volunteers drove to Fintona and that 30 of them were armed with rifles.

After the war broke out in August 1914 the split in the Volunteers affected the area in the following manner. The I.R.B. called all their supporters out of the existing Volunteer organisation and after this there was no connection with the Redmonite or Hibernian section who were in the Volunteers.

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After this the Hibernian section were disorganised and made no further attempt to drill or reorganise. After the split when the Hibernians were eliminated, any falling off in membership was soon made ^{up} by new recruits who had not been in any organisation previously.

On Easter Sunday morning at 4 a.m. Joseph Carbery came to where I was living in Pomeroy. I was in bed and he woke me up. He asked me if Dr. McCartan had sent me a message as he understood he was to do so. I told him I had got no message. Carbery did not explain to me how he got to know that McCartan was sending me a message. He said that he was told that Dr. McCartan was sending a message to me which I was to have sent to Donoughmore. Carbery left me and went back home. I heard nothing further until Sunday evening.

On Sunday evening Dr. McCartan called on me about 4 or 5 p.m. He told me that the Belfast Volunteers had come to Washing Bay and that he had decided to send them home and that he was then on his way after doing so. He also told me a rising was taking place in Dublin and that the contemplated rising in the North would only lead to slaughter. He told me that locally he did not know what would take place, that I and my men should hold ourselves in readiness and that he was proceeding to Dublin to find out the position. Dr. McCartan then left me. I did not hear anything further until Easter Tuesday morning.

On Easter Tuesday at 9 a.m. Dr. McCartan's sister called to me with a verbal message to mobilise Pomeroy, Kildrins, ^{FSS} Galbally, Donoughmore and Munderadoe, and to report at Carrickmore at 9 p.m. on Tuesday night. I carried out these orders. There was a fairly good attendance at the mobilisation, composed principally of members of the I.R.B. We arrived at Carrickmore at the appointed time, in detached groups to avoid attention and we took with us any available arms that could be concealed on our persons. Some of the men were armed with

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rifles, some with shotguns and others with revolvers. No rations were carried.

When we arrived at Carrickmore we met the local Company. We were told by them to remain with them and await further orders. From conversation with the Carrickmore men we learned that the plans for us all were to march to Co. Monaghan and arrive there before daylight. We remained in a country house during the night. Fr. Shortt, C.C., Carrickmore, was at this house. He was there for the purpose of hearing confessions in the event of our getting orders to leave for Monaghan. There was no necessity for this as things turned out. We did not lie down to sleep as we were expecting marching orders at any moment. At 2 a.m. on Wednesday morning a message came ordering our disbandment and to return home again. It was explained to us that this order was due to some mix up in the plans. I did not know the man who gave us this message. He came to our billets on a motor bike. My party started soon after this time in the direction of our homes. We arrived home early on Wednesday morning.

On the following Friday morning a general round up of suspects by R.I.C. started. I got no interference from those raiding parties and was not on the run.

Arthur M. E. Choque

22nd Oct 1948

Witness John Meboy.

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