

ORIGINAL

STATEMENT BY

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

BURO STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21

No. W.S. 269

Mr. PETER BOYLAN,

7, Upper Beechwood Avenue, Dublin.

My father was connected with the Fenian Rising and was always very anti-British in his outlook and infused into me Irish Ireland ideas from my earliest days. My ancestors originally came from the Parish of Tara, County Meath, and I believe took part in the Battle of Tara in '98 and gave refuge to the men escaping after the defeat of the Rebels there. For this, some of them were transported to Van Diemen's Land.

I joined the Irish Volunteers at some period subsequent to the "Split" and before Easter 1916. On joining, I took no oath. Neither was I asked to sign any registration forms. We did not receive membership cards. My brother, Sean, took me into the Volunteers; he was the officer in charge of the Dunboyne Volunteers at this time. Amongst the members were my brothers, Sean and Ned, the two Keating brothers, Christy Lynam, Paddy Mulally, Jimmy Maguire, Owen King and others. I subsequently joined the I.R.B. but this was in 1917.

We had training parades two or three times per week and some firing practice with .22 rifles. We had no other arms then except a few shot guns. Larry Murtagh, who was a Captain in the Dublin Brigade, came out to Dunboyne and gave us instruction. We did route marches but practically no field training. This was the normal procedure up to Holy Week 1916.

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I had been to South Africa and returned to Ireland at Christmas 1915. On the boat coming home there was a Galway man and he told me that there was going to be a Rebellion in Ireland. When I arrived home and observed what was going on I realised that there seemed to be truth in his statement.

Up to Friday of Holy Week there was no special activity. On Friday a message arrived from Pearse to my brother, Sean, telling him that he would put the plan of operations into force on Easter Sunday evening. As far as I know this plan was to hold Blanchardstown on the Dublin-Navan road until the Louth and the other Meath men joined us there. On Easter Saturday we had special rifle practice and the buck shot which we had made previously was got ready for issue for the shot guns. We had at least one Lee Metford rifle and a couple of "Howth Mausers" and some ammunition for same. I do not remember now how we came by them but they were there.

We were instructed to mobilise on Easter Sunday at our house at Dunboyne - sometime in the afternoon. This, however, was cancelled however before it became effective as Benson had come out from the city with McNeill's countermanding order and my brother, Sean, then travelled to Tara and Kells to have the men who had assembled there demobilised also. He did not get back until some time before noon on Monday. On Easter Monday, early in the forenoon, a messenger arrived from Dublin looking for Sean. I believe this messenger came from Pearse. He was told he was not at home. He said he would come back later but he never returned. This was Race Day in Fairyhouse, a short

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distance away and most of the Volunteers had gone to the Races. Sean arrived back at the house about midday on Easter Monday. A man from Maynooth (either Maguire or Colgan, I cannot remember exactly now) called to the house and met Sean. I was not present when he conversed with Sean but when he was leaving I heard him tell Sean that he would go back to Maynooth and get them mobilised and that he would meet us (Dunboyne Volunteers) on the Canal Bank at Leixlip.

We were partly mobilised at this time. There was Sean and Ned, the Keating brothers, Christy Lynam, Hughie Farrell, Owen King, Madden and some others. We had about thirteen or fourteen all told. We had all the arms and ammunition that was available to us and also some gelignite: I had about 15 rounds for the Lee Metford. We started to demolish the Railway Bridge at Dunboyne Station, that is the bridge which carries the road over the railway, but this was stopped, I don't know why. I remember that we started through the village and travelled then to Clonsilla and I understand that when we got there a message was received that we were to proceed to Leixlip and join the Maynooth Volunteers there. We came back to Dunboyne and from there we travelled to Leixlip. This was all done by foot march.

It was late on Monday night when we got to Leixlip and we waited under cover on the Canal Bank on the Maynooth side for some considerable time but no Maynooth men turned up. I heard afterwards that they had gone through at this time. We came back to Dunboyne again arriving there - at our house - early on Tuesday morning.

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We all had a good breakfast there. We stayed there that morning, the Volunteers sleeping around anywhere they could get lying down. In the early forenoon a special troop train arrived at the Station which is only about one hundred yards from our house. This was carrying field guns and troops from Athlone. The guns were unloaded off the train at the Station. When we seen this we had our weapons in the garden and all concentrated in the house and lay low. However the military never came near the house. When the train arrived the military enquired if there were any rebels around, and were infomed, no, that they had all marched away the previous evening. The fact that we had marched through the village the previous evening and had returned in the early morning before anyone was around had led the people to believe we were going out of the district. This incident, I believe, saved us from all being caught in our house by the military then. It would have been very unwise to have engaged such a strong force with our few men and armament. The military with all their guns moved off towards the city in the afternoon.

That afternoon Miss Mulally came to the house with a note signed "Captain Off". This was from Commandant Hannigan and stated that he proposed to go towards the City through Finglas and to throw out a screen of scouts. I saw that note. We left our house and joined Commandant Hannigan at the Red House which is about a mile north of Dunboyne on the Navan Dublin Road. We arrived at the Red House after dark. This was on Tuesday.

We were only at the Red House for a short while when we left again. Before leaving Commandant Hannigan addressed the men and told them they were going into action

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and that if anyone wanted to leave now was the time to leave. No one left. We then marched to Tyrellstown House near Blanchardstown. This house was vacant. It was daylight when we got there on Wednesday morning and the men were tired. We made camp there. I was appointed cook. There was a fair supply of food available. My mother and the Mulallys supplied us with bread and butter and eggs and such things. We also killed a sheep. There was, as far as I can recollect, between 30 and 40 men in the camp. Commandant Hannigan's men had a good supply of arms and ammunition.

A guard was kept on our camp and scouts out on the roads continuously. Some stray Volunteers joined us during the week. A scout was sent to contact Tom Ashe and the Fingal Volunteers. I believe it was Commandant Hannigan's desire to join up with Ashe. I also know that Ashe had sent a man to contact us, but he never did. This man subsequently gave evidence at Ashe's courtmartial. While prisoners in Richmond Barracks I spoke to this man and tried to persuade him not to give evidence against Commandant Ashe, but he insisted on doing so and I concluded he was a "Bad One".

We remained at Tyrellstown House until late on the following Sunday night, when we left, and moved across country in single file led by the Keating Brothers who knew the fields and country around. We eventually arrived at Mulallys, Dunboyne. We understood by this time that the Rebellion was over. We dumped our arms and ammunition there and then went home. Some of the Louth Volunteers accompanied the Dunboyne men to their homes around Dunboyne. We buried the arms and ammunition. On disbanding we understood we were to 'stand to', in case of another

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mobilisation being ordered. Sean, Ned, Joe, my brothers and Christy Lynam and myself all went back to our house at Dunboyne. This was Monday. After we had some food and had fallen asleep we woke up to find the house surrounded by military. We were arrested and brought in a lorry to Richmond Barracks, Dublin, and placed in the Gymnasium. This place was full of prisoners. I saw there De Valera, Cosgrave, Ceannt, Colbert, McBride, Tom Hunter and many others whom I knew. After some days in the Gymnasium we were moved to a barrack room. Police and detectives were continuously moving amongst the prisoners picking out the leaders. The Gymnasium was packed with prisoners. There were no beds - you just lay on the floor when you could. The only food supplied was chalky tea and dog biscuits. Sanitation consisted of buckets placed on the floor. On removal to the barrack room conditions were no better except that we got a blanket each. In this room I saw Commandant Ashe, the Lawlesses of Swords and Dr. Hayes. The food given us was still the same.

After a few days here we were paraded on the barrack square and marched via Kilmainham and Kingsbridge to the North Wall and placed in a dirty Cattle Boat down on the cattle pens. When passing through the city to the boat, there was some hostility from sections of the people, there was also some applause. Before leaving the Richmond Barracks we were issued with a tin of Bully Beef and some hard biscuits. This was the only food we got on route. We shipped to Holyhead and from there by train to Wandsworth Prison, London. On arriving there we were put in single cells with plank beds and only a couple of very very poor blankets. No mattress was supplied. Food was very poor and altogether insufficient. We were kept in solitary confinement being only allowed exercise for two half hour /periods

periods per day. No intercourse between prisoners was allowed.

Military police were our Warders. This went on while I was there. The hunger was appalling and it was only then that I really knew what "hunger" meant. After a few weeks I and some others were released on medical grounds. We got two shillings and a warrant to Dublin. From Dublin I came home to Dunboyne. Joe, Ned and I were released together. Even in this short space of time I noticed a big change had taken place in the outlook of the people and that they were turning in our favour.

Signed: Peter Bayliss

Date: 24. 6. 1949

Witness: Matthew Barry
24-6-49

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