

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
BURO STAIRÉ MILÉATA 1913-21
No. W.S. 8

DOCUMENT Ws. 8.

Statement by

SEUMAS MAC CAISIN

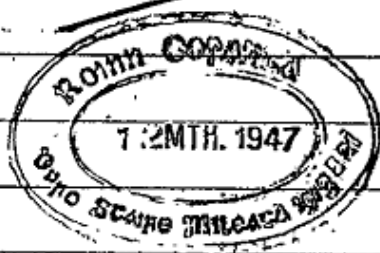
On

THE FOUNDATION OF

NA FIANNA ÉIREANN

File S. 119.

ORIGINAL W/S 8



2 Emmet St
Harold Cross
5th June 1947.

Achara.

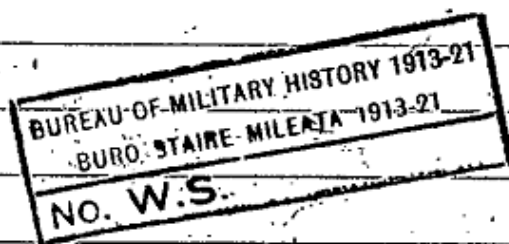
I am in receipt of yours of 30th May.

Many thanks.

I am herewith enclosing a few notes on the formation of the Feinnua which may be of some use.

Mise, le meas

Seumas Mac Laisin



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na Fianna Ligeann.

The following remarks on Fianna Ligeann I can vouch for as being true.

Seamus Mac Rosten

There seems to be some doubt as to who founded the Fianna and where it was founded.

Bulmer Hobson and Joe Robinson had been associated with a group of boys in Belfast which had ceased to exist as an organisation when the Fianna was founded in Dublin.

The group in Belfast bore a different name:-

"The Red Branch Strights" and was not formed with the same set of objects as set out in the Fianna Handbook.

There can be no doubt the Fianna was founded in 24 Leinster St Dublin and that it was founded by Bulmer Hobson, and not, as is often stated Madam Marciewicz.

Madam Marciewicz was associated with Bulmer Hobson in its foundation and helped, but she was not its founder.

But for Hobson and Padraic O'Keefe the Fianna would never have succeeded. Padraic was a terrific worker in the Fianna and he had a wonderful enthusiasm. He was its first Secretary.

When he became General Secretary as the organisation spread I became second Secretary of An Leas Bhagh.

The original notices convening a meeting for the establishing a National Boys Brigade appeared in An Chaidream Solus and two other National Journals.

I was then a member of the staff of An Chaidream and together with Padraic O'Riain another member of the staff I went to the meeting at 24 Lower Camden St Dublin.

We found a boy standing at the door holding a flag. There were a number of urchins around. We did not like the look of the place but were met in the long hall leading to the place of meeting by Sean Mc Garry who was then a member of the staff of "The Irish Peasant" which had its offices in Temple Lane.

Sean Mc Garry introduced us to Bulmer Hobson who was to act as Chairman of the meeting. Madam Markiewicz was seated to the right on the little stage with Helena Maloney.

There were about twenty or thirty boys present. The meeting was lighted by candles and an oil lamp supplied by Madam Markiewicz. Bulmer Hobson explained the object of the meeting. He explained there had been a Boys Brigade in Belfast which had failed. The name of the Boys Brigade had been "The Red Branch Knights".

Padraic O'Riain next spoke and put forward the idea that there was no room for a Boys Brigade. He proposed we should form a group of National Boy Scouts to counteract the influence of the Baden Powell Boy Scouts. The proposition was agreed to.

The name chosen for the organisation was:-
Na Fianna Eipeann (Irish National Boy Scouts)
Its objects were:- To counteract the anglicising
influence of the British Boy Scouts and fight for
the Independence of Ireland.

An objection was raised at the meeting by
a - Bob Harding - who was a member of the
Michael Dwyer Hurling Club.

Bob Harding spoke strongly and loudly.
His objection was to "women" having any part
in an organisation of boys.

Bulmer Hobson replied explaining that but for
Madam Marxiewicz the organisation would
not be in a safe position as she was its
financial backing.

After a certain amount of discussion
Madam Marxiewicz and Helena Maloney
were allowed to be members of the Organisation.

Madam Marxiewicz & Bulmer Hobson with
Helena Maloney and I then Sean McGarry
had previous to this meeting called at a
number of schools recruiting boys for the
Organisation.

I
I would say there can be no doubt that:-
Bulmer Hobson founded the Fianna

It
That the Fianna was founded in Dublin
and had no connection with the previous
organisation in Belfast which had ceased
to exist and which was not in any way like

The Fianna.

The first Committee elected at the first meeting in Camden St. was:-

Bulmer Hobson	President.
Madam Marciewicz	V President
Padraic O'Brien	Secretary.

Committee

Helena Mahoney	Seumas Mac Laisin
- Fitzgerald	Sean Mac Garry.
*	Joe Robinson.

* There was boy from Westland Row Schools whose name I have forgotten

Badge

The first badge of the Fianna was a button made quickly by the Dundalgan Press. It was just like the button worn by the members of the National Army. - Brass and with a harp on it. Surrounding the harp was the name Na Fianna Eireann.

The second badge of the Fianna was decided on by the Committee at a later date:

There were two designs submitted one by Madam Marciewicz and one by myself:- My own design represented the implements of war used by the Fianna.

Madam's design was not really a Fianna Badge at all. It represented a Sunburst with a thirty eight pike. With the war cry used by the men of Limerick.

Remember Limerick & the faith of the Laxon and of course the name Na Fianna Eireann

There was a division at the Committee
and by my own vote which in decency I had
to cast in favour of Madam's design. Madam's
design was adopted.

The Flag

The Flag of the Fianna was designed and
painted by Madam Marcevoy.

Shraighte

It was decided to separate branches of the Fianna
by the name Shraighte.

The first in Camden St being called
An Lead Shraighte.

Finance

The Fianna relied for support on the subscriptions
of its members.

Subscriptions obtained by members from outside
Ridge Lacerment per Bulmer Hobson gave some money.
A number of Concerts and Lectures were given
to help the funds.

The first lecture was given by Dr Pat McCartan
on "The Boy Heroes of Ninety Eight".

The second was given by Madam Marcevoy
on "Women in Irish History".

We formed a Dramatic Group named
The Fianna Players.

The first production was The Saxon Shilling
by Padraic Colum.

The members of the Fianna Players were:

Seumas Mac Cashen Percy Reynolds

Con Colbert. Theo Fitzgerald. Sean Shallow

- Mc Moran, Andy Dunne, Helena Maloney,
Madam Maruena, Harry Walpole,
Brian Callender, etc.

This group produced a number of plays and
was successful.

Drill.

Drill in the Fianna began with the forming
of the Organisation.

Knowledge was obtained from British Army
Books. The B.P. Handbook.

Drill cannot be said to be of any great
significance until the services of a ^{ex} British
Army man by the name of Sean Kavanagh
were available. Sean Kavanagh joined the
Fianna and I attribute the discipline of
the Fianna to him. In fact the discipline of
the Irish Volunteers later.

Uniform.

The First Uniform of the Fianna was the
kilt with a brat over the shoulder. An
Owen Roe Cap and a jacket.

Later this developed into a kilt an Owen Roe Cap
or Blouch Hat and a Tunic with Brass
Buttons, and a Haversack with a brass button.
A number of boys disliked the kilt and to
facilitate them breeches were introduced.

Fianna Song.

The Fianna Song was written by Brian O'Steggins
and was published in the Fianna Handbook.
It was not popular. The Soldiers Song
by Peadar Kearney who was a member of
the Fianna being more popular.

The Fianna Pipes

The Fianna Pipes was formed by Brian Callender. Its members were Brian Callender, Jack Reynolds, Barney Murphy, Peadar Kearney and about eight others.

The Fianna Handbook

The Fianna Handbook was written by Bulmer Hobson and Padraic O'Shaughnessy. It contained the constitution etc of the organisation and the Fianna Pledge.

Fianna Pledge

I pledge myself to fight for the Independence of my country. Never to join the British Army, Navy or Police and to obey my superior officers.

The Fianna Circle in D.H.B.

The Circle was called "The John Mitchell Debating Society".

It met at The Foresters Hall, Parnell Square.

The first head centre was not a member of the Fianna. His name was Stone (?).

This Circle later moved to Doherty St.

Its membership was:

Bulmer Hobson (Centre) Padraic O'Shaughnessy

Liam Mellows, Barney Mellows, Jack Reynolds

Frank Reynolds, Percy Reynolds, Sean Shallow

Desmond Ryan, Eamon Bulfin, Len Colbert

Sean Hueston.

Arms.

The Ianna were trained to shoot by Madam Marciewicz with a small Lee Enfield Rifle when out of doors and a large air rifle when in doors.

The Ianna practised Bayonet Fighting Rifle Drill and Single Sticks

Training

The Ianna learnt Map Reading & Topography & Military Strategy. Boxing First Aid. Swimming & Running. Camping. There were a number of "Sports" held.

James A. Cashe
(Seumas MacCashe)

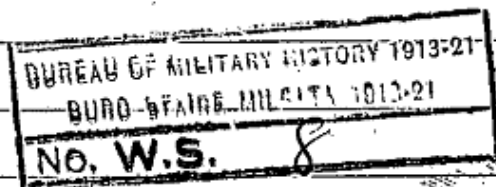
There are a few others which I think you might contact

Rev Fr. Thos O'Donoghue

A Parish Priest in Liverpool. His address may be had by ringing his brother, Seumas who is a clerk in Vertas House Abbey St.

Dr. Pat Mc Cartan.

Capt J. O'Brien. Portobello.



Retracted
MS 12
6/47