

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21  
BURO STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21  
No. W.S. 16



Éire

Telefón 61018.

ROINN COSANTA.

BURO STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21

(Bureau of Military History 1913-21),

26 RAEDH NA NIARTHARACH,  
(26 Westland Row),

BAILE ÁTHA CLIATH.  
(Dublin).

DOCUMENT W. S. 16.

Statement by

Riobárd Langford,  
22 South Terrace,  
Cork.

Dated 10 September, 1947.

On National Activities Cork 1909.  
Formation of I.V., Cork, 1913.  
Cork I.V., Easter, 1916.

6 pp. - Typescript. - F'scap.

File S. 285.

ORIGINAL

W.S. 16  
BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21  
BUNO STAIRÉ MICE TA 1913-21  
No. W.S. 16

~~DRAFT~~ STATEMENT OF ROBERT LANGFORD,  
22, South Terrace, Cork.

From about 1909 until the establishment of the Irish Volunteers, An Dún in Queen Street was the centre of all advanced national activity in Cork City. I was Secretary in 1912. The whole building was rented by the Gaelic League, but was sub-let at times or in part to various national or cultural bodies. The O'Growney Branch of the Gaelic League held its classes and meetings there. That Branch was started in 1910 by persons interested in the Sinn Fein policy. Miss Gaffney, Miss Cashel, Dr. Alice Barry, Miss O'Leary, Annie Walsh, Tomás MacCurtain, Frank Daly, Seán O'Hegarty, Jerry Fawsitt, Martin Donovan, and Denis O'Neill were active in it from the start. There were several other Branches of the Gaelic League in Cork, but they confined their activities mainly to reviving the language. The members of the O'Growney Branch were interested and active in every forward national movement.

The Cork Branch of the Gaelic League contained men like Pat Prior, Padraig de Burca, Seamus de Roiste, Seán O'Connell (Sculptor) Seán Toibin, and the two brothers O'Driscoll from Douglas. The South Parish Branch had men like Seán Jennings, Donal Barrett and Seán Nolan.

There was a Dramatic Society which had a room in An Dún. Daniel Corkery, Terence McSwiney, D.L. Kelleher, Dr. Denis Lucy and Forbes were active in it. Terence MacSwiney was not a member of the O'Growney Branch. P.S. O'Hegarty used to lecture in An Dún. The Post Office Club had a room there also.

The original Cork Pipers' Band was started there and the Fianna organisation held its first meeting in An Dún. Fianna lectures and drills were held there and it was the local Headquarters of the organisation.

There was another Cork organisation which was active in Anti-British activities before the Volunteer movement started. It was the A.O.H. American Alliance. The following were members:- Tomás MacCurtain, Eamon Coughlan, Seán Good, Tadg Barry, Harry Lorton, Pat Harris, Jerry Fawsitt, Frank Healy, B.L., Gobh, Seán O' Tuama, Seán O'Leary, Domnal Óg O'Callaghan, Miceál Ó Cuill. From the O'Growney Branch of the A.O.H. American Alliance came all anti-British and anti-recruiting activity at that period. In the background there was always the I.R.B. under Seán O'Hegarty's control and its activities were exercised mainly through the members of these two organisations.

After the public meeting for the formation of the Irish Volunteers in Dublin (25-11-1913) and before the public meeting in the City Hall, Cork (14-12-1913) a start was made in An Dún to enroll Volunteers and drill them. That affected only the group of men who were normally habitués of the Hall, but they took the lead in the preparations for the public meeting and in giving a good example themselves. A drill instructor, an ex-Army man named Collins, who worked in Suttons, came voluntarily and drilled us. Tomás MacCurtain probably secured his services, as he also worked in Suttons at the time. I had a .22 rifle and we had target practice in the Post Office room. Some of those I can remember at the early drills were Miceál Ó Cuill, Seán O'Leary,

Tadg Barry, Harry Lorton and David O'Connor.

Maurice O'Connor, Solicitor, was joint Hon. Secretary of the first public meeting in the City Hall on 14th December, 1913. Admission was by invitation cards which had been printed and given to all the known reliable people to distribute to young men whom they hoped would join the Volunteers. These cards were green and white in colour. It was discovered on the night of the meeting that the A.O.H., who were very hostile, had printed duplicate cards of invitation and had sent a strong contingent of their supporters to the meeting. The hall was full. Enrolment forms had been distributed amongst the audience before the row started and between 400 and 500 had been filled up and handed in. All of these did not, however, turn up to subsequent parades. At first the strength was small, but after a while it worked up to about 400 men in the city. Four Companies were formed - 'A', 'B', 'C' and 'D'; 'A' and 'B' in the South side of the city and 'C' and 'D' in the North. This four Company formation was not changed at any time up to Easter, 1916. When the Redmondites came in the strength in Cork City went up to 1,400 to 2,000 men, but they were absorbed into the existing Companies. I got my official card of membership from Liam de Roiste in An Dún and paid my first subscription there. I was one of the first Section Commanders appointed, and became 2nd Lieutenant of 'C' Company in 1914.

In the first instance the Officers were nominated by the Committee, and there were some changes in the early days. Later, when we were in Fisher Street, elections for Officers took place, and most of the existing Officers were elected. These elections were before the Redmondites came in, and there were no elections during the time they were in the organisation.

When the split took place in Cork only 26 Volunteers continued to accept the leadership of the Committee out of the 1400 or 1500 in the organisation at the time. All the others accepted Redmond's policy and leadership. An O'Brienite political meeting was held in the City Hall before the split and after Redmond had made his Woodenbridge speech. In an effort to influence the general body of O'Brien's followers against the known policy of O'Brien himself in following Redmond's lead on the war, a pamphlet was prepared, mainly by Jerry Fawsitt, and printed by Mooney, Shandon Printing Works. It was headed "All for England League" and asked the O'Brienites to declare against the policy of offering the Irish Volunteers to the British War Office for service abroad. Donal Óg O'Callaghan, Micheal Ó Guill and I distributed the pamphlet at the City Hall meeting. We got a hostile reception, and it had no effect. The O'Brienites were as pro-English and as pro-war as the Redmondites.

About the same time it was thought that Joe Devlin would take an anti-British attitude on the Volunteer question. He reviewed units of the Irish Volunteers at Midleton on 13th September, 1914, and, much to our surprise, spoke strongly in favour of the Empire. I was so annoyed that discipline was forgotten and I shouted "Damn the Empire". The incident was referred to subsequently by Terence MacSwiney in his paper "Fianna Fail".

After the split, the Redmondites, led by Tom Byrne, raided the Hall in Fisher Street while a parade was taking place at the Corn Market and carried off 28 Italian rifles. There was no ammunition for these rifles at the time, but a small quantity was got later and we had some of these rifles out on Easter Sunday.

Although our numbers were very small after the split, the officers had practically all remained on our side, the four Company organisation was continued nominally and efforts made to build up the Companies again. Growth was slow up to 1915.

The Hall in Sheares Street was taken early in 1915. A small course of training was run there that year by J.J. O'Connell, who was in Cork for a short time. A two-weeks' course, attended by almost 50 officers, was carried out by him there in January, 1916. The training was based on U.S. army system.

Tomás MacCurtain and Terence MacSwiney made frequent visits to Dublin before Easter, 1916. Tomás was taking orders from the I.R.B. and they knew of the intended Rising some nine months beforehand. There was a meeting of the Cork officers five weeks before Easter, at which I was present, and at which we were given to understand vaguely that something was to happen soon. No date was mentioned.

The Officers of 'C' Company at Easter, 1916, were :-

Captain	-	Paddy Cotter.
1st Lieut.	-	William Barry.
2nd Lieut.	-	Robaird Langford.
Adjutant	-	J.P. McCarthy.
Quartermaster	-	Paddy Healy.

The following is a complete list of the officers and men (35) of 'C' Company who paraded on Easter Sunday, 1916:-

Paddy Cotter, Captain.	
Bill Barry, Lieut.	R.I.P.
Robaird Langford, Lieut.	
James Barry.	
Arthur White.	
Mark Wickham.	
James O'Neill.	
Denis O'Neill.	
Ned Barry.	
T. Gaggin.	
Cross.	R.I.P.
Joe O'Sullivan.	
Dan Donovan.	
Seán Crowley.	R.I.P.
Ml. Crowley.	
Tom Walshe.	
Ned Walshe.	
Ned Cronin.	
Tom Barry.	
Paddy Healy.	
J.P. McCarthy.	R.I.P.
Jas. O'Mahony (Shinker)	U.S.A.

Liam O'Reilly.  
Mitchell, Parnell Place. R.I.P.  
Sean Ivers, Lower Road.  
Harry Mooney, " " "  
Sean Prendergast. R.I.P.  
Gus O'Shea.  
P.J. Cronin. R.I.P.  
Dan Duggan (driver). R.I.P.  
Jack McGrath, Lower Road - Finglas Road, Dublin.  
Mick Manning.  
J. Wickham.  
Matt Wakefield. /  
Dan Crowley. R.I.P.

I am unable to give the exact armament, but practically every man had a rifle or shot gun. There was a good number of Martini Henrys, a few Italian, a few Lee Metford and one Mauser rifle. The remainder had single barrel shot guns. There had been a distribution of S.B. shot guns some time before and 'C' Company got about six. There was a fair amount of ammunition for them; filling of cartridges had been going on in the Hall for some time before Easter. The ammunition for the rifles was about 40 rounds per man, with the exception of the Mauser, for which there was very little. The officers had revolvers, and some few others may have had revolvers also. Every arm and every round of ammunition in the Company was out. Every man had been mobilised for the parade, and the arms of those who did not turn out were collected. We had no explosives in the Company.

Tomás MacCurtain and Terence MacSwiney slept in the Hall in Sheares Street during Holy Week. I was in charge of the Guard. At about 02.30 hours on Saturday morning Fred Murray arrived at the Hall, having come off a train from Kerry. He told me that Casement had been captured but I do not remember that he said anything about the arms ship having been captured. My recollection is that he did not. He reported to Tomás MacCurtain and the news was a great shock.

All the Cork Volunteers went to Confession on Easter Saturday night. There was tension and everyone felt the day had come. There was no definite information about what was intended but the feeling was general that something more than an ordinary parade was due on Sunday. When the men assembled in the Hall on Easter Sunday morning MacCurtain distributed First Aid outfits - this was the first time they had been issued. Every available weapon was secured. Five rifles, which were held by the O'Sheas in Dominick Street, were not brought to Sheares Street when the men assembled. They were sent for and the parade did not move off until they arrived.

One hundred and fifty-four Volunteers, officers and men, entrained at Capwell Station. Dr. Jim Ryan arrived in the Hall at Sheares Street with MacNeill's countermanding order after the parade had moved off to Capwell Station. He saw MacCurtain and MacSwiney. They had a car and went to Crockstown in it. The Volunteers left the train there and Sean O'Sullivan, who was in charge, was informed by MacCurtain that the exercises were cancelled.



We marched to Bealnablaith, met the Ballinhassig men there and the Ballinadee men at Kilmurray and all marched to Macroom. A meeting of Senior Officers was held at Macroom but I was not present. My impression is that MacCurtain and MacSwiney did not know on Sunday the arms ship was lost. There was much dissatisfaction when it became known that we were to return to Cork. Sean O'Sullivan, C. O'Gorman, P. Cotter and myself, amongst the officers, were in favour of staying in Macroom. We returned to Cork by train on Sunday evening and the men took their arms to their homes. There were no arms in the Hall except the arms of the Guard.

A Miss Perolz arrived from Dublin on a motor bike on Monday with Pearse's message "We start here at noon to-day". She went to the Hall but there was no Senior Officer there. It was late on Monday evening when MacCurtain and MacSwiney arrived in Cork and saw this message for the first time. I did not see Miss Perolz but I heard she was in the Hall on Monday. Paddy Trahey was Guard Commander and was on duty at the Hall on Easter Monday. There was considerable confusion and everyone was worried by the absence of MacCurtain and MacSwiney. They stayed in the Hall on Monday night and the guard was maintained.

On Tuesday about 12 o'clock I was in the Hall and I saw the message. Its text was "We start here at noon to-day". It did not contain the words "Carry out your instructions". It was in manuscript on cream laid paper about the size of an envelope. It was signed "P.H.P.", not "P.H. Pearse". There was some question of the authenticity of the message and Tomás said he had never known Pearse to sign in that way before. Mary MacSwiney was in the Hall and she took part in the discussion about what action was to be taken. She said in effect: "Was a fine body of men like the Irish Volunteers to be dragged at the tail of a rabble like the Citizen Army?" There was comment that the messenger was not a Volunteer but a Citizen Army messenger. I have the impression that a further message came in confirmation of Pearse's message but I did not see it nor the person who brought it. The messenger is supposed to have been a Miss Brennan, or someone who went under the name of Brennan, and a member of the Citizen Army. In any case, Tomás finally accepted the Pearse message as being genuine when it was known that fighting was actually taking place in Dublin.

I was in the Hall all day on Monday. The atmosphere was very tense and strained. The younger officers particularly wanted to fight, and were resentful of the waiting policy adopted by the leaders. They expressed their views, but the weight of the influence and authority of the older men - as they regarded the Brigade Officers - was against them. A lead from them would have taken the majority of the Cork men into the fight in some way. Action in the city may have been inadvisable, but there was nothing to prevent the Volunteers mobilising outside the city on Monday or Tuesday.

On Tuesday night a railwayman named Pat Duggan came to the Hall and said he had been called out to drive an armoured train to Dublin. He was willing to derail the train if he got instructions to do so. He saw Tomás and Terry but they would

not take the responsibility of giving him an order.

No move against the Volunteers was made by the Military or police up to the Thursday of Easter Week. On that day the Auxiliary Bishop, Dr. Cohalan, was at a function at St. Francis Hall, Cove Street. He sent a message to MacCurtain and MacSwiney, and I, with, I think, Pat Trahey, was sent over to him. He would not discuss anything with us, but gave us a written message for the Brigade Officers. MacCurtain and MacSwiney saw him later and negotiations for the surrender of arms began. Lord Mayor Butterfield took part in these negotiations, and it was finally agreed to give the arms into the custody of the Lord Mayor at his house on the South Mall.

The question of surrender was put to a vote of the men assembled in the Hall on the Monday after Easter Monday. The surrender had then taken place in Dublin. There were from 100 to 140 men in the Hall, and about 90% of those present voted for the surrender, but all the arms were not, in fact, handed in to the Lord Mayor and I and others took the bolts out of the rifles that were handed in. The Volunteers did not believe the British would keep their side of the agreement, and were not surprised when they seized the rifles soon afterwards. The strongest opposition to the surrender came from the junior officers.

A Dominican, Fr. Ayres, was Chaplain to the Cork Volunteers before 1916. He was transferred to Tralee. It was he who called to the Police Barracks to see Casement. He told the Kerry Officers who the prisoner was and that he could be rescued. I knew Fr. Ayres well; he gave me a book on tactics.

Early in 1917, after the release of the internees, there was an inquiry of some kind into the action taken by the Cork Volunteer leaders at Easter, 1916. It was held in the Grinan in Queen Street under cover of a Gaelic League dance. At that meeting or inquiry, Tom Hales charged MacCurtain and MacSwiney with having let down the Volunteers in Cork. To a question put by Hales, MacCurtain replied that he had known of the intended Rising several months beforehand. As far as I remember, neither MacCurtain nor MacSwiney made any claim that they knew on Easter Sunday that the "Aud" had been captured. There was a representative from G.H.Q. at this inquiry.

About that time I printed 500 copies of a four page pamphlet for the Brigade, which was, I believe, a record and explanation of what happened in Cork at Easter, 1916. I printed it in the Hall in Sheares Street on a hand press. Paddy Cotter had made the hand press, and the type was procured in Dublin by Diarmuid Lynch early in 1915. He bought it from Patrick Mahon, Yarnhall Street, at the request of the Brigade Officers and brought it down to Cork. There were two cases of type. I printed a number of other documents with it for the Brigade.

I was not in the I.R.B. before 1916. Michael Collins took me in in Dublin in 1917. I do not think there was a circle of I.R.B. in 'C' Company before Easter, 1916.

10 ad to. Meador Johnson, 1947.

witness

Robert Johnson  
Florence Dowling