

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

BURO STAIRE MILEATA 1913-21

No. W.S. 118

STATEMENT OF PATRICK C. O'MAHONY, SECRETARY,
KERRY COUNTY COUNCIL, TRALEE.

PERIOD: 1905 TO EASTER, 1916.

UNITS: I.R.B., DUBLIN, CO. CORK, CO. TIPPERARY,
CO. WATERFORD,
I.V., DUNGARVAN.

I was sworn in as a member of the I.R.B. in Dublin in 1905. I was then the "baby" of the organisation. I went to Brazil soon afterwards and returned to Ireland in 1910. I was regarded as an overseas delegate and, as such, attended the 1910 meeting of the Supreme Council.

From 1910 I was attached to the Survey Staff of the Post Office, and my duties involved residence, often for short periods, in various parts of the country. In view of this, I was given by the Supreme Council wide Head Centre facilities for organising. I availed of these facilities continuously down to Easter, 1916, and kept constant touch with the Supreme Council in connection with the work of organisation in whatever district I may happen to be in.

In May, 1910, I was in Bantry for a week on duties in connection with Naval Manoeuvres at Berehaven, but the period there was too short to contact anybody. From Bantry I went to Charleville and made contact there with Jack O'Brien and Paddy Dwane. After that I was in Roscrea for a week, and then went to Mountrath for three months. Tom Dunne was a member there. I contacted him and about four other members were recruited, including Seán Finn - a schoolteacher.

I then went to Maryboro' for a short time. Seamus Ramsbottom was a member there, and a circle was organised with Ramsbottom as Centre. I got a man, Seán or Peadar O'Leary, a schoolteacher, in Abbeyleix. He organised a circle there and became Centre of it. I went to Thurles where there was a good circle of about fourteen members with Jim Kennedy, the present Town Clerk, as centre.

I left Thurles in October, 1910, and went to Birr. I was in touch with Dick Mulcahy and his two cousins who had just left for appointments in Dublin. They had organised Thurles. In Birr I took in four men, Seamus ^{Matthews} ~~Lugnes~~, a bank clerk, Seán O Grogáin, - Pike of the "Midland Tribune", and Mossy Downey also of the "Midland Tribune". Downey was a cripple and a relative of Powell's who owned the "Midland Tribune". It was one of the best national papers in Ireland at the time. We distributed "Irish Freedom" there. Seamus Matthews was Centre.

Seán Ó Grogáin is still living in Rathgar, Dublin.

In 1911 I went to Clonmel where Frank Dohohan was centre of a circle which was seventeen strong when I left there at the end of 1911. The names I remember are, two brothers of Frank Dohohan's, Seán Morrissey, a contractor, Seamus O'Neill, now a Garda Superintendent, and Seán O'Neill, a schoolteacher. I went on special duty to Killarney for a short time in January, 1912. A circle existed there with Mick Spillane as

Centre. It had been organised by ^{ick}Maurice Crowe.

In the same month I went to Cashel, and from on my activities took the shape of personal organ as maintaining contacts with existing circles and When Dick Mulcahy left Thurles the circle there he I appointed Jim Kennedy. I found that there had in Cashel for a long time previously. John O'Lea Clerk, was the last man to be active there. I go with him and in the subsequent organisation of the took in a man without consulting him. I was in January, 1912, to September, 1914. During that three circles in the area: one in the town, of w was Centre; one in the ^{Dunlough}Fethard area, of Centre; and one in the Golden-Gould's Cross-Tippe which Eamon O'Dwyer was Centre. He got permissio to Knockavilla. Cashel was regarded as headquar Tipperary, and I was the County Centre. I was e meeting of Circle Centres held in August, 1912. was Secretary of the local Hibernian organisation

Dunlough
I had a circle
in Rockwell
College with
Samonn Dore
of Limerick as
Centre. Liam Donnell
afterwards Holy Ghost
Father, now in
America, was a
member.
Photo.

The Tipperary circles carried on a good deal activity in the period I was there from January, September, 1914. Concerts and dances were organ under the auspices of the Gaelic League. There sustained anti-recruiting campaign, carried on wi lets and painted inscriptions. Leaflets had even on the cars of British Army Officers. In August was a big Gaelic match, Boherlah and some other t Under cover of it we held a County meeting, as a in the Town Hall, which Diarmuid Lynch attended a At that meeting I was re-elected County Centre, a that position until I went to Dungarvan.

I had frequent consultations with Seán McDe before the formation of the Volunteers, discussed him on several occasions. The general line of p to it was that I.R.B. men would not take too prom or show their hands completely in the formation o tion. It was desirable that the Volunteer movem fully representative of Irishmen of all political was felt that I.R.B. men on their own merits wou sufficient voice in the affairs of the organisati them to keep its national policy on the right lin

We actually got the Volunteer organisation Tipperary before the start in Dublin. Soon afte Volunteers were formed, I got in touch with Seán arranged for a public meeting which he addressed town in the Autumn of 1913. From that meeting s of all organisational work for the formation of t in mid-Tipperary. Pierce McCan was closely asso in addressing the series of meetings that followe Volunteers going in Mid Tipperary. Others who w the time included Tom Dawson, Secretary of the Hil Town Clerk, Tipperary, - Rogers, - O'Sullivan and three teachers in Cashel; Willie McNamara, Lower Our first parade was held from Cashel to Rockwell 1913. 700 men marched. Organisation had so fa representatives of different parts of the County consultation and were able to send two representa Connor and Dick Maher of Friar's Street - to the meeting in November, 1913. We were being drilled at the time. Connor and Maher were selected as

because they were prominent Hibernians. Connor was Chairman of the Urban Council.

No meetings to elect Officers for the Volunteers were held in Tipperary until after the Dublin meeting. Soon afterwards, however, a County Committee was elected, of which Tom Connor was Chairman. The different Companies elected their own Officers. Generally speaking, I.R.B. men secured a large percentage of posts.

In June, 1914, we had a big meeting of Volunteers from the whole of Mid Tipperary at Fethard. We got The O'Rahilly down. I was ordered to address the meeting and I did so with The O'Rahilly. I was O.C. of the Mid Tipperary Volunteers at the time.

About that time I got a letter from Birrell, Chief Secretary, informing me that I must choose between my employment and the Irish Volunteers. I replied, pointing out that I could see nothing in the regulations or in my contract which prevented me from taking part in a national organisation. I said it was known to me that officials of the Post Office in Belfast held office in the Ulster Volunteers, and I did not see why I should not hold office in the Irish Volunteers. I asked him to point out any rule to the contrary.

A convention for the whole of Tipperary was arranged to be held in Tipperary town in August. Tom Condon, Mayor of Clonmel, was to preside, and Tom Connor, Willie McGrath and I were to be on the platform as three delegates from Cashel. I was, however, sent to Killarney on official duty for the Aireachtas. Frank Cremins was there also on special duty from the Dublin office. He and I and Diarmuid O'Sullivan were on duty there for the period. The Surveyor, Cooper, (afterwards Postmaster at Cork) came to me rather excitedly on August 12th and asked me to take charge of a special instrument carrying communications between Killarney and London. Messages passed through in regard to mobilisation orders for reservists and in connection with German residents in Killarney. I went off to bed at 6 a.m. on August 14th after the declaration of war.

Word was sent to me at 12 o'clock that I was to go on to Valentia. General Robertson had gone there to take charge of a censorship staff, of which I was one, and the staff was to follow as soon as possible. I was six weeks in Valentia. Then a staff of six Englishmen came over and took the duty, with Robertson in charge. While in Valentia I made contact with Tim Ring and his brother, who were I.R.B. men.

Leaving Valentia, I got word to call to the Postmaster, Norwood, at Killarney. When I saw him he said, "I have a terrible document to show you". It was a letter from the Chief Secretary's office to the Secretary of the Post Office in Ireland, Egerton, and was substantially as follows:-

"The following Civil Servants are to be transferred out of Ireland to the following Post Offices:-

P.S. O'Hegarty, from Postmaster, Queenstown, to Postmaster, Shrewsbury.

Sean O'Hegarty, from Cork Post Office to Sheffield P.O.

James J. Walsh, from Cork Post Office to Bradford P.O.
- Howe, from Kilkenny Post Office to
Northampton P.O.
P.C. O'Mahony, to Bradford P.O. "

I said I was not going to Bradford. Norwood directed my attention to the last portion of the file. I did so and saw recommendations from Robertson and Cooper. Cooper recommended that I be sent to a place in Ireland where there were no Volunteers, and he proposed Dungarvan; and to Dungarvan I was sent, a supervising clerk to take the place of the Postmaster, who was ill.

I found that, in fact, there were no Volunteers in Dungarvan in September, 1914. I contacted Dan Fraher, whom I knew, also Father Lawrence Egan, and, through him, Archdeacon Power, who was one of the best patriots Waterford ever produced. Archdeacon Power put me in touch with Father Cowman, O.S.A.

In October, 1914, a meeting was held in Dungarvan to form a Company of Volunteers. It was called consequent on the dissolution of the local National Volunteers, as a result of communications between me and the Secretary of the Irish Volunteer Executive Committee in Dublin. In my I.R.B. capacity I was able to make contacts and I acted on the request for revival, with the accepted I.R.B. policy, not so much of controlling but of being a power behind the movement. Some preliminary discussions had been held, principally with Irish Party officials and Tom Power. About twenty attended the meeting, which was presided over by P. Mulcahy, Town Clerk. A Committee was elected and the work of organisation and training commenced. The following are the names of those who attended and joined at the initial meeting:-

P.C. O'Mahony.
Pax Whelan.
G. Lennon.
P. Lynch.
P. Cullinane.
Philip O'Donnell.
Paddy Whelan.
William Meehan.
Dan Fraher.
Phil Walsh.
Eddie Dea.
Michael Hasset.
P. Mulcahy.
Tom Power.
Oscar Beaumont (Swiss National).
P.J. Broderick.
Michael Brennock.
Lar Condon.
Paddy Condon.
Thomas Walsh.
Michael Maloney.

Strength remained unchanged up to Easter, 1916. The Committee met weekly, and the usual training in close order foot drill, marching, scouting, etc., was carried on. The following

Officers were elected and held office up to Easter, 1916:-

O.C.	P.C. O'Mahony.
Vice O.C.	Pax Whelan.
Adjutant,	George Lennon.

In December, 1915, we had six rifles. These were transferred on instructions to Waterford city in March, 1916. We had about eighteen shot guns and twelve revolvers. These were the only arms we had at Easter, 1916.

I received the general order for the parade on Easter Sunday with all arms and equipment and full rations some time beforehand, but I do not recall how it came. Liam Mellows had been in Dungarvan early in 1916, and had discussed with me the action to be taken by our Unit in the event of a Rising. After impressing on me the need for absolute secrecy, he had indicated that our mission would be to cut the cables at Passage East, thereby severing that line of communication between Ireland and England. I had been in Dublin the week before Easter Week. I had seen Liam Mellows, Seán McDermott and Kent. Liam then told me that the Rising would begin on Easter Sunday at 7 p.m., and confirmed that the mission of my Unit was to cut the cables at Passage East. I would get an order in due course. Immediately that I got the order I was to contact Pierce McCann, Tipperary, Seán Matthews in Waterford and ~~someone~~ in Kilkenny. The Tipperary and Waterford Volunteers were to concentrate near Carrick-on-Suir. After we had cut the cables at Passage East, we were to march and join them there. We were poorly armed, our six rifles having gone to Waterford in March. The Waterford men had the mission of destroying the bridge at Waterford before marching to Carrick-on-Suir. Ginger O'Connell was to be in Waterford and was to take command. That was the plan for our area as far as I know.

In Dublin Liam Mellows asked me to make some plans of the vital things in the G.P.O. I made those plans and handed them to Eamon Kent in the City Hall on the Thursday before Holy Thursday. I then went to see Seán McDermott at "Irish Freedom" office in D'Olier Street, and told him why I was in town. I had to get back to Dungarvan quickly to avoid comment on my absence.

On Holy Thursday Mary Perolz brought a message from Dublin to me at Dungarvan. The message was from Liam Mellows and was to the effect that I was to carry out the mission agreed upon between us at 7 p.m. on Easter Sunday. I was in bed off duty when she came and she insisted on seeing me personally. It was between 2 and 3 p.m. on Thursday. She said to me, "I am the bearer of an important message". She then gave me the message from Liam Mellows and asked for a receipt for it. She had a notebook and in the notebook I wrote for her, "Remember '65, no countermanding orders". To Mrs. O'Mahony she said, "Do you realize the seriousness of it? This is the most serious thing that ever happened". Mary Perolz left us on a train for Cork, but I do not of course know if she actually went to Cork that day.

On Good Friday I called the men together and issued the instruction for general mobilisation on Easter Sunday at 6.30 p.m. with arms and full rations. I told them orders would be issued when we mobilised. I wrote a note to Seán Matthews in Waterford telling him what my mission was on Sunday, giving him the time we would pass through Waterford on our way to Passage East, and informing him that we would go direct to Carrick-on-Suir from Passage East when our job there was done. There

would have been no point in returning to Dungarvan. With this note I enclosed the despatch Mary Perolz had brought me from Liam Mellows. I gave the letter to my wife, and she and Miss Broderick left on the 7 o'clock train for Waterford.

Between 9 and 10 a.m. on Easter Saturday morning Mrs. O'Mahony and Miss Broderick saw Matthews in Waterford and gave him my communication. He read it, then said to my wife, "Tell P.C. this is all off. Ginger O'Connell is in town and he has come from a meeting in Dublin where it was decided. As a matter of fact, the men here are on holidays for the week-end". He handed back Mellows' note to Mrs. O'Mahony and said to her, "Ginger O'Connell is at the Metropole Hotel. Go and see him and tell him what I have just told you". Mrs. O'Mahony went to the Metropole Hotel, where Mrs. Power told her Ginger O'Connell had gone to the Railway Station as he was leaving Waterford. My wife saw O'Connell at the station and said she wanted to speak to him for a moment; They went into the public waiting room where she told him what Matthews had said and showed him the note from Liam Mellows. O'Connell read the note and said, "What Matthews told you is correct. All this is off. I came straight from the meeting in Dublin at which this was decided on the instructions of Eoin McNeill. Go back and tell your husband to disregard any notes. As a matter of fact, if we strike now we are throwing back our cause for a lengthy period, but if we have patience and lie low for a while it will have much more effect. I am on my way to Wexford with the same message for Bob Brennan". He then struck a match, put it to the note sent by Mellows and burned it.

As Mrs. O'Mahony was leaving the station she met Willie Walsh who was on his way to a G.A.A. Convention in Dublin. "This is a serious business", he said, "the news brought by Ginger O'Connell. If there is any change I'll come back on the goods train arriving at 4 a.m., or, if not, I'll send a messenger on Sunday morning". After discussion, they arranged that he would send a wire to me, "Convention off", if the cancellation was confirmed in Dublin.

I got no message from Dublin or elsewhere on Friday or Saturday. On Sunday I got Willie Walsh's wire, "Convention off" This confirmed O'Connell's instructions and I assumed that for some reason everything was off. Also on Sunday, but subsequent to getting the wire, I got a message from Pierce McCann to the effect that The O'Rahilly had passed through Thurles on his way to Kerry and left word that everything was off. A man on a motor bike brought that message. He was going on to Waterford and went in that direction. I cancelled the mobilisation order for my own men unless fresh instructions were issued.

No message came on Easter Monday. That night I went to the office about 8 o'clock and found a note on my desk, "All communication with Dublin broken down". I called Cork and asked for Healy. He was on duty and came on the wire. He told me the Rising had commenced in Dublin and that Cork had decided to do nothing. He promised to call me again if he had any further news. I remained in the office. A code message came through for D.I. O'Keefe from the County Inspector, Waterford. I had the key to the R.I.C. cipher and I decoded the message. It was to the effect that an ammunition train without lights would pass Dungarvan Station at 12.15 a.m. with a small military guard on way to Cork, and instructing the D.I. to see it passed safely.

I immediately mobilised twelve men with revolvers. I told them the Rising had started in Dublin, that Cork was doing nothing and gave them the substance of the decoded message. I said that if we could capture this train we would get sufficient arms to do something in Waterford. It was agreed to make the attempt. It was then about 11 o'clock on Monday night. I went down and handed in the telegram at the Police Barracks, which was all lighted up. I came back and posted the men in the P.O. and Railway Station. We took five men out about two miles and pulled up two sections of the railway track. Pax Whelan had got the tools. We built a bit of a wall of stones across the line in the hope that this would hold up the train. The intention was that the other seven men would come up on the opposite side of the track.

The train did not come. Pax Whelan asked me to go back to the P.O. and see if anything else had come through, and see what the position was at the Railway Station. I went back to the P.O. and sent Paddy Cullinane and Paddy Lynch out to Pax. George Lennon came in later and told me everything was in readiness. It was better that I should remain in the P.O. as suspicions might be aroused if I was absent. No police went up to the Station, there were no lights there and no train came. I went home for a cup of tea at 4 a.m. The railway gates were open when I was going home but closed when I was coming back. A train actually came through, stopped at the station, then went on and stopped at the block. The Guard got out. George Lennon questioned him and found that it was an ordinary goods train. There was no military guard and no arms on it. Pax Whelan and George Lennon searched it.

On Wednesday I was arrested, together with Dan Fraher, Willie Walsh, Phil Walsh and Peter Raftis. On the following Monday Miss O'Mahony saw Seán Matthews in Waterford. He said, "It will go hard with your husband; he is a military prisoner". She asked him why he had not got in touch with me during the previous week and he said, "I got Pearse's message on Monday that Dublin was rising at noon, but all my men were out of town and there was nothing I could do about it".

SIGNED: *P. O'Mahony*

DATE: 29/4/48

WITNESS: *Florence Donoghue*

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1013-21
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No. W.S. 118

STATEMENT OF MRS. KATHLEEN O'MAHONY.

I have read the foregoing, and I certify that the matters of which I have personal knowledge are correctly recorded.

SIGNED: *Kathleen O'Mahony*

WITNESS: *Florence Donoghue* DATE: 29/4/48