

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

BURO STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21

No. W.S. 141

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS

DOCUMENT NO. W.S.141.....

Witness

James Kenny

Identity

Member of E/Coy. 4th Bn. 1914-1916.

Subject

G.P.O. 1916.

Conditions, if any, stipulated by Witness

File No.S. 921.

Form B.S.M. 2.

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

BUREAU STAIRS MILITARY 1913-21

No. W.S.

STATEMENT BY JAMES KENNY, 1 WHITEHALL ROAD,
RATHFARNHAM.

About the end of March or early April 1914 I heard a Company of the Irish Volunteers had been formed at Rathfarnham. I was anxious to join and with that intention went to Ballyboden Wanderers' Football field at Ballyboden where the Coy. held parades. Some of the older men approached me and told me I was too young and too small to join and sent me home. I was only 15 years old at the time and perhaps small for my age. However, I went again to the field the next parade night and was being turned away again when P.H. Pearse came over and said "let him stay - he won't be too small always!". I was enrolled that night in E/Coy. 4th Batt. P.H. Pearse was Captain, Liam Clarke (decd.) 1st Lieut., Michael Boland (decd.) 2nd Lieut. I don't remember who was Adjt. Frank Sheridan (decd.) was Q.M. I was issued with a membership card and paid a weekly subscription of 2d or 3d which was entered on the card. I also subscribed 1/- each week towards the purchase of a rifle and equipment. In addition I bought my own uniform.

We had a parade one night each week at which we were drilled and instructed in the use of the rifle and bayonet by an ex-N.C.O. of the British Army. His name was Thompson. He was not a member of the Coy. as he was paid for his services.

The Coy. was about 100 strong when Redmond delivered the speech at Woodenbridge which caused a split in the Volunteers. We did not hold a meeting to decide which side to take, nor was it discussed at any parade. Those who followed Redmond must have drifted away. About 50 remained with the Irish Volunteers. Recruiting after the split was very bad, in fact I don't think we got any recruits except a few senior boys from St. Enda's College. A large number of the senior boys of St. Enda's were already members of the Coy. After the gun-running at Howth and Kilcoole rifles were brought to the Company in small quantities at short

intervals. They were drawn for by lot as they arrived. I got one of the first batch to arrive - a Martini Henry. We were allowed to bring our rifles home. Later on we were issued with ammunition which we also kept at home. Before St. Patrick's Day 1915 every man in the Coy. had a rifle - either a Martini Henry or Howth Mauser. Early in 1915 a miniature range was erected at the rear of St. Enda's College. We carried out a considerable amount of practice on the range with .22 rifles and most of the men became very good shots. About this time training was intensified. In addition to the weekly parades and route marches we had field exercises ~~for~~ both day and night. The Coy. also took part in all 4th Batt. and Brigade manoeuvres held in various parts of County Dublin. During March 1916 we had target practices with service rifles in the woods at St. Enda's. Each man used his own rifle.

A short time before Easter 1916, Eamon Bulfin, a member of the Coy. and a student at St. Enda's, was promoted to the rank of Lieut. by G.H.Q. Bulfin's appointment was in addition to the two Lieuts. already in the Coy.

P.H. Pearse took a keen interest in the training of the Coy. and seldom missed a parade or exercise.

On Holy Thursday 1916, Frank Mackin (killed in Easter Week) received orders from P.H. Pearse - I do not know if they were verbal or written - to mobilise the Coy. for manoeuvres on Easter Sunday. Mackin informed me of this and told me to parade at R.C. Church, Rathfarnham, on Easter Sunday at 12 or 3 o'clock - I am not sure about the time. I think it was 12 o'clock as I went to early Mass that morning. He also told me to wear uniform and equipment, to bring my rifle and ammunition and also to bring 24 hours' rations. I read the cancellation order in the Sunday Independent and later that morning I was outside Rathfarnham Church with some other Volunteers when Lt. Bulfin came along and told us to go home and stand by as we were still

under orders. That afternoon we carried out rifle practice at St. Enda's.

Shortly after 9 o'clock on Easter Monday morning Joe Gannon called at my home and told me that Frank Mackin had sent him to tell me to parade immediately at R.C. Church, Rathfarnham. He said that Mackin had got the instructions from P.H. Pearse. The orders regarding uniform, rifles, rations, etc. being the same as for Sunday, I went to the Church without delay, and as I was one of the first to arrive there, I was sent to mobilise other members of the Coy. I mobilised Jack Keeley, Matt Caffery and Tom Corbally. When we were assembling outside the Church Eoin MacNeill and Sean Fitzgibbon came over to us and MacNeill told us to go home as all manoeuvres for the weekend had been cancelled. Lt. Bulfin replied that he had orders from P.H. Pearse to bring the Coy. to Liberty Hall and that he intended carrying out Pearse's order. MacNeill and Fitzgibbon then left. I do not know if MacNeill came especially to Rathfarnham to get us to disperse. MacNeill's brother James lived at Woodtown and I think he was proceeding there when he saw us.

The students from St. Enda's who were members of the Coy. arrived with shopping baskets filled with .303 ammunition. This was the first indication I received that something more serious than ordinary manoeuvres was intended.

Mobilisation was very slow. This was due to the short notice, and to the fact that some of the men lived as far away as Rockbrook. Shortly before 1 o'clock when it was decided to move, 36 members of the Coy. had arrived. They were:-

Lt. Boland (since deceased).

Batt Burke
 Matt Caffery
 Thos. Carney
 Michael Cowley
 Michael Cremin
 Thos. Corbally
 Paddie Donnelly
 Chas. Donnelly
 Henry Gannon (since deceased).

Jack Keeley (killed Easter Monday at G.P.O.)
 James Kenny
 Joe Lee (since deceased)
 Hugh Lee
 Frank Mackin (killed Easter Week)
 Wm. Mulvey
 Dom Mulvey
 Kevin O'Carroll
 Pat O'Connor (since deceased)
 Wm. Reilly
 Ml. Rodgers (since deceased)
 James Sweeney
 Pat Sweeney
 Frank Sheridan (since deceased)
 James Wardick (since deceased)

The following, who were students at St. Enda's, were also present:-

Lt. Eamon Bulfin
 Brian Joyce
 Conor McGinley
 Fintan Murphy (later I.V. Executive)
 Patrick Slattery
 Frank Burke
 John Kilgallon
 Euan McGinley (since deceased)
 Desmond Ryan
 Joseph Sweeney (later Major General)

Three other members of the Coy. were in the G.P.O. when we arrived there:

P.H. Pearse
 Willie Pearse and
 Liam Clarke (since deceased)

Everyone present had a rifle. I had 100 rounds of ammunition and I am sure the others had the same amount. About 20 including myself were in uniform. Some of us had bicycles and Lt. Boland told those with bicycles to cycle to Liberty Hall and to wait there until the remainder of the Coy. arrived. The others were to proceed there by tram and to bring the extra ammunition with them. Both Lt. Boland and Lt. Bulfin were with those who went by tram. I went with the cyclists. We proceeded via Terenure, Kelly's Corner, Sth. Cir. Rd. As we passed the bottom of Sth. Richmond St. we heard firing from the direction of Portobello Bridge. We continued down Camden St. and Aungier St. where I heard people saying the Volunteers had taken over Jacob's Factory. I had not noticed anything unusual when passing Jacob's. We reached Liberty Hall and put our bicycles inside and waited for our comrades. When they arrived we fell in and were marched into Abbey St. where Lt. Boland halted us and gave us the order to "load" which we did.

We proceeded in single file on each side of the street. We reached the G.P.O. at about 2 o'clock. It was already occupied by the Volunteers. A volunteer in one of the front windows indicated to us to enter by the Princes St. side. As we entered Princes St. someone shouted "Heres the Lancers". Lt. Boland ordered us to line Princes St. The front row adopted the kneeling position, the remainder standing behind. All had bayonets fixed and rifles at the ready. When the Lancers reached Nelson's Pillar they were fired on from the front of the G.P.O. They turned and retreated back towards Parnell Sqr. We then proceeded to enter the G.P.O. through one of the windows in Princes St. When Vol. Jack Keeley was getting through the window he received a bullet wound from which he died later that day in Jervis St. Hospital. When we got inside I saw P.H. Pearse directing operations. He carried a revolver in his hand. The men were busy barricading the windows with ledgers, mail bags, etc. Chas Donnelly and I were detailed by P.H. Pearse to take up positions at one of the front windows. Others were sent to various parts of the building. Between 3 and 4 o'clock that afternoon Pearse asked for someone to volunteer to deliver a dispatch. I volunteered for the job. Connolly wrote the dispatch. Pearse handed it to me and told me to deliver it to the Officer i/c Ballybough Bridge. He also told me he was sending a section of men to reinforce that position and that I could go with them. I took my rifle with me and also a .22 revolver which I had picked up in the P.O. earlier. I did not know any of the men I was going out with. We left by the main door and as we turned into Earl St. I saw a number of D.M.P. men standing against shop fronts. Immediately they saw us they ran down a side street. We reached Ballybough Bridge without further incident. I handed over the dispatch to the officer in charge who was, I think, Captain Weafer. After reading it he told me to tell Pearse his order would be carried out to the last. I understood the dispatch was to hold the Bridge at all costs.

He then gave me a dispatch for Pearse which I delivered on reaching the G.P.O. Pearse handed it to Connolly who, after reading it, said "that's good".

I again took up the position at the front window I had previously occupied. Some time afterwards two foreign seamen came to one of the windows and offered their services. They were brought inside and asked if they could use guns; they said they could. They were then asked why they wanted to fight. One replied they wanted to fight for small nations and that one was a Dutchman and the other Norwegian. One of them was given a shotgun which he accidentally discharged, wounding me in the foot. I did not know at the time I had been wounded. It was some hours afterwards when my foot started to pain me that I discovered what had happened. I was brought to the first aid station and attended to by Dr. Jim Ryan (afterwards Minister for Agriculture) who removed the shot and dressed the wounds. I do not know who admitted the seamen, or who questioned them, nor do I know what happened to them. I did not see them after the shot had been discharged. After my wound was dressed I continued at my post and left it only for short periods for meals. On some occasions the Cumann na mBan brought food to us at our posts. On Tuesday James Connolly left the building to carry out a reconnaissance; some time later he was brought in badly wounded in the leg. He remained on a stretcher for the rest of the week. We were sniped at continually from various places, particularly from Purcell's. From Wednesday on things were getting rather hot. About this time we were also subjected to grenade attacks also principally from Purcell's and later we were shelled from the Helga which was anchored in the Liffey. My foot continued to trouble me and I was somewhat lame. On one occasion when a member of Cumann na mBan brought food to Connolly and myself, Connolly turned to me and laughingly said "its a grand thing to be wounded to get all this attention".

On Wednesday night I was relieved for a few hours to get a sleep. We slept in our clothes on mattresses on the floor of a back room. This was the only sleep I had for the week. The shelling of the building increased considerable on Thursday. Early on Friday the roof and upper portion caught fire and soon the top of the building was a mass of flame. During the day part of the roof collapsed. The fire spread very rapidly and on Friday morning it had reached the ceiling of the ground floor. It was then decided to evacuate the building. The evacuation was orderly and well planned. We left by the Henry St. door. As each man left he was given provisions to carry. I saw some carrying hams and others cases of eggs. I was among the last group to leave. I was not given anything to carry. I think the stock had been cleared out before my turn came. I was quite close to Connolly who was carried on a stretcher. I think the last two to leave were Jack and George Plunkett. We crossed Henry St. and into Henry Place. Our objective was Moore St. Henry Place connects Henry St. with Moore St. It runs northwards from Henry St. for about 100 yards then turns sharp left. Some distance further on, on the right is Moore Lane, at the top of which the British had a barricade and several machine guns. The machine guns covered the junction of Moore Lane and Henry Place, and kept up continuous fire. To get to Moore St. we had to pass this place. It was at this spot we suffered a number of casualties. We dashed across singly. Those of us who got across safely got into buildings on the right hand side and broke our way from building to building until we reached Moore St. We did the same for some short distance in Moore St. On Sat. morning we were lined up in a yard off Moore St. where Pearse addressed us. He said that in order to save the lives of the women it had been decided to surrender, that we would probably not see him again. Some of the leaders might be detained, but the men would be allowed to return to their homes. Later that day we were marched under our own officers to O'Connell St. and halted opposite where the Gresham now stands. Here we were scrutinized by detectives (G.Men) and afterwards ordered to

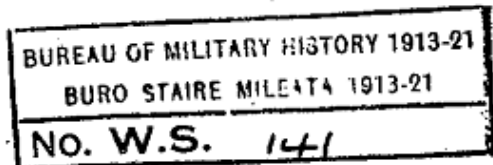
"lay down" arms. We were then marched to the grounds of the Rotunda Hospital. We were compelled by the British to lie down on the wet ground, and were not given any food or drink. We remained like this all Sat. night. On Sunday morning we were marched under strong military guard to Richmond Barracks. As we passed through the streets some people jeered us and appeared very hostile towards us. One of the soldiers escorting us snapped my watch from me. I did not see it again. At Richmond Bks. we were given bully beef and dog biscuits but were not given anything to drink - not even water. We were again scrutinised by G. Men who pointed out the leaders. Those who had been pointed OUT were brought under heavy guard to another part of the Bks. That night we were marched to the North Wall and put aboard cattle boats. On arrival in England I was sent to Knutsford Prison. After about 3 months I was transferred to Wandsworth Prison. About a week after my arrival at Wandsworth I was brought before the Sankey Commission and questioned about my Volunteer activities and if I knew beforehand that the rising was to take place. I was then served with an internment order (which I have presented to the National Museum) and sent to Frongoch. I was released in July 1917.

(Signed) James. Kenny

(Date) 31st August 1948.

Witnessed Sean Brennan.

Date 31st August 1948.



NAMES OF VOLUNTEERS MENTIONED BY

JAMES KENNY.

James Connolly O/C. G.P.O.Area
 P.H.Pearse Capt.E/Coy.4/Bn.
 Willie Pearse
 Liam Clarke Lt. E/Coy. 4/Bn.
 Michael Boland do.
 Eamon Bulfin do.
 Frank Sheridan Q.M. E/Coy.4/Bn.
 Sgt.Thompson Instructor E/Co.4/Bn.

Frank Mackin
 Eoin McNeill
 Sean Fitzgibbon
 Batt. Burke
 Matt Caffery
 Thos. Carney
 Michael Cowley
 Michael Cremin
 Thos. Corbally
 Paddie Donnelly
 Chas. Donnelly
 Henry Gannon
 Jack Keely
 Joe Lee
 Hugh Lee
 Wm. Mulvey
 Dom. Mulvey
 Kdvin O'Carroll
 Pat O'Connor
 Wm. Reilly

Michael Rodgers
 James Sweeny
 Pat Sweeny
 James Wardick
 Frank Burke
 Brian Joyce
 John Kilgallon
 Conor McGinley
 Eugan McGinley
 Fintan Murphy
 Desmond Ryan
 Patrick Slattery
 Joseph Sweeney
 Capt. Weafer
 Dr. Jim Ryan
 Jack Plunkett
 George Plunkett