

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
BURO STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21
NO. W.S. 222

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS

DOCUMENT NO. W.S.222.....

Witness

Mr. Daniel Branniff,
18 Herbert St.,

Belfast.
Identity

Subject

Member of Dungannon Clubs,
Newcastle-on-Tyne and Belfast 1907.

Co-opted member of Supreme Council I.R.B.
1912-1914.

Conditions, if any, stipulated by Witness

Nil

File No.S214.....

Form B.S.M. 2.

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STATEMENT

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DANIEL BRANNIFF, 18 HERBERT STREET, BELFAST.

I was born on the 28th July, 1879, in ^{Muninabane} ~~Munabane~~,
Dromara, County Down. The first national organisation
I joined was the '98 Club in Ballinahinch in 1897.
Later on, I joined the Ancient Order of Hibernians,
Board of Erin, in Jarrow-on-Tyne. I was in Jarrow or
district from 1902 to 1907. I started to read the
"United Irishmen" and, as a result, I and others got
expelled from the Ancient Order of Hibernians for
advanced separatist opinions. We then formed a
Dungannon Club in Newcastle-on-Tyne. The objects of
the Club were industrial revival, Gaelic culture and
complete freedom. When I came to Ireland in 1906/7,
I joined the Dungannon Club in Belfast. Sean
McDermott and Sean McGarry were then members.
I cycled weekly from my home to Belfast, a distance
of over twenty-five miles, to further the organisation
of the Club. It is possible that the idea behind the
organisation of Dungannon Clubs was initiated by
Bulmer Hobson, Harry Dobbin and Robert Johnston.
Johnston and Dobbin were old Fenians and also
members of the Ancient Order of Hibernians (American
Alliance). I went to Glasgow in 1907. When I arrived
in Glasgow, there was a Sinn Fein Club there. About
this time, April 1907[?], a Conference was held in
Dundalk, and, as a result, the Dungannon Clubs,
Cumann na nGaedheal and National Council were
amalgamated under the title of "Sinn Fein". I was
not present at this Conference. About the same time
the paper "The Republic", which was run by the
Dungannon Clubs, was incorporated with "The Irish
Peasant and Nation" under the new title "The Irish
Peasant and Nation, with which is incorporated The
Republic".

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 About 1910, Bulmer Hobson went to Dublin and was subsequently associated with Sean McDermott in the running of the paper "Irish Freedom".

I joined the Irish Republican Brotherhood on my arrival in Glasgow in 1907. In the Circle which I joined was James ^{Mr. Cullough} McCulloque, an old Fenian who had served a sentence of over thirteen years for his dynamiting activities with Tom Clarke and others. The activities of ~~McCulloque~~ ^{Mr. Cullough} show the direct continuation between the Fenians of 1867 (whose official name was Irish Republican Brotherhood of Ireland) and the Irish Republican Brotherhood of my time. I represented Scotland on the Supreme Council of the Irish Republican Brotherhood between the years 1912 and 1914/15. My appointment on the Supreme Council covered at least two years in all, pre-1916. In my spare time, I took part and was associated with others in the organisation of Irish Republican Brotherhood Centres in districts outside Glasgow, including Edinborough, Motherwell, Hamilton, Bellshill, Mossend, Wishaw and Coatbridge on the east side, and Paisley, Renfrew, Clydebank, Portglasgow, Dumbarton and Greenock on the west side. In addition to this work, we were organising Sinn Fein Clubs.

I was a Co-opted member of the S C during this period
 JB

The organisation of the Irish Volunteers started in Glasgow in 1913. The nucleus of the Irish Volunteers was first the Irish Republican Brotherhood, and members of the Sinn Fein Clubs and also the Gaelic organisations came in, in large numbers, in the early stages. From 1913 up to 1916 the organisation of the Irish Volunteers in

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Glasgow made rapid progress. Joe Robinson was an officer in the Volunteers, and a man named Kearney, who had been in the American Army, was in charge. Another Volunteer Officer in Glasgow was Seamus Dempsey, who is now in America. Associated with the Irish Volunteers in Glasgow was a Sluagh of Fianna Eireann who were trained and drilled by Margaret Skinnader and Seamus Reader. I left Glasgow in February 1916. I have no clear idea of the numbers, but I took part in parades and saw large numbers on parade and at route marches. I would estimate that I saw up to two hundred men on parade. The Volunteers practised with miniature rifles in the drill halls. There were a few miniature rifles in use. A good number of the men were armed with revolvers and automatics.

When I came to Ireland in February, 1916, I and others had orders from the Irish Republican Brotherhood to return and be available for the Rising in ^(in Ireland) ~~Ireland~~. I went to my father's place at Dromara and stayed there for a few weeks. I was arrested by the police as a deserter under the Military Service Act. I was detained in Belfast Prison for a few weeks whilst inquiries were being made, and was released on my appearance before a local magistrate. After my release, I obtained a job in Belfast and was working there up to the eve of the Rising.

My orders for Easter Week were conveyed to me at my place of work by a girl who was sent by Denis McCullough to contact me. I was ordered to proceed to the Scottish boat on Sunday morning so that the expected contingent from Scotland might be contacted

on their arrival and taken to Tyrone to join the Belfast men already there. On Saturday I attended at the preparation of First Aid Dressings, etc. On Friday and Saturday the Belfast men travelled to Tyrone. On Sunday morning I went to the boat to contact the contingent from Scotland, but none arrived via Belfast as they had travelled to Dublin direct. I then procured my bicycle, went by train to Portadown and from there I cycled to Coalisland. When I arrived in Coalisland, I found that the Belfast contingents were on their way back to Belfast. I heard nothing of the countermanding order from Eoin MacNeill until I arrived in Coalisland. Seamus Timoney, a Tyrone man, informed me that the countermanding order was issued. On Sunday ~~night~~ ^{night}, I cycled from Coalisland to Belfast. JB

On Monday I went to Newcastle to visit my brother. He made contact that day with railwaymen who informed him that the Rising had started in Dublin.

I returned to Belfast on Tuesday and spent the most of the day making contacts with other Volunteers and awaiting further orders. Amongst others, I made contact with Cathal O'Shannon. As no special order came through for the men in Belfast and as there was conflicting opinion as to what should be done, Cathal O'Shannon and I decided to start for Dublin. On Tuesday evening we went by train to Newcastle, County Down.

We left Newcastle on Wednesday morning by Norton's mail car for Kilkeel. We missed the early ferry boat to Greenore and had to wait until the afternoon boat. We arrived at Greenore late in JB

the evening, and proceeded that same evening by the coast road, to Ravensdale, Co. Louth. We spent the night there with friends, Joe Crilly and his wife.

On Thursday, the trains were not running and we walked to Dundalk. I think we got a train to Carrickmacross, County Monaghan. We had tea there and, later, walked to Kingscourt, Co. Cavan. We stayed in Kingscourt on Thursday night.

On Friday, we walked via Kells to Navan, Co. Meath. We stayed in Navan on Friday night.

On Saturday we walked to Dunboyne and stayed there that night.

On Sunday morning we proceeded to Dublin. We made contact with the military circle around Dublin city at Drumcondra bridge, on the north road leading out of the city. Cathal O'Shannon knew Alf Monahan's sister, Mrs. Byrne, and her husband, and we called to see them. We got particulars of the Rising from them, and stayed there most of the day. Late that night, we started on our return journey to Dunboyne. When we arrived there, we found the Sherwood Foresters in possession of the place. We were stopped by the military, and Cathal spun them a tale that proved effective. In the village we could not procure any sleeping accommodation. There was a travelling show in the village and the military were letting people into the place but not letting them out. We had to doss in a common lodging house in Dunboyne, lying on the floor between two of the showmen.



Between eleven and twelve on Monday morning, the 1st May, the military were withdrawn from the roads, and we started northwards, reaching Navan that night. We were interrogated by the police at the Railway Station in Navan, on Tuesday morning, and we were able to satisfy them that we were not the type they were looking for. On a check up of our finances, we found that we could not purchase two tickets for Belfast, so it was agreed that O'Shannon would go by train to Belfast and that I should go by train as far as Dundalk. We travelled by the same train as far as Dundalk where I got off and proceeded to the Crilly's place at Ravensdale. I could not stay there, however, as the local police had been to the house a short time before my arrival, making inquiries about the two strangers who stayed with them in the previous week. I got money from them for my train fare from Dundalk to Lisburn. I got a train at Dundalk for Lisburn and walked from there to Belfast.

James Branniff
 — 14/10/48

Witness *John Trebov*

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