

ORIGINAL

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21

STATEMENT BY WITNESS

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 238.....

Witness

Mr. Arthur Greene,
40 Mary St. North,
Dundalk,

Identity Co. Louth.

Member of I.R.B. Dundalk 1912-1916;
Sergeant Major Irish Volunteers Dundalk.

Subject

- (a) Formation and activities of Irish
Volunteers Dundalk 1914.
- (b) Mobilisation and marches Co. Louth
Easter Week 1916.

Conditions, if any, stipulated by Witness

Nil

File No. .S.1314.....

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STATEMENT OF ARTHUR GREENE, 40 MARY ST, NORTH,
DUNDALK.

24.11.48.

I am over 72 years of age. I was born into a Fenian family. I was initiated and sworn into the I.R.B. by Tom Hearty in 1912. Hearty was Centre of our circle. In the Circle were Owen Grant Bridge-a-Crin, Pat Casey, Williamson's Place, Ned Gallagher, Mick White, Haggardstown, James Hardy, Ladywell Terrace, "Hackler" Hoey, Meches, James Kelly, North Meches, Jack Quinn, and Paddy Murphy, Blackrock. The activities of the I.R.B. were devoted mostly to meetings of the Circle. I could see little use in it. We were constantly "hatching" and nothing came out of our plans. A lot of the I.R.B. were old men and were useless as a physical force body.

I attended a meeting of the Volunteers held in the Rink, presided over by Mat Comerford in 1914. This body was known as the Irish National Volunteers. Amongst the people who helped to form the I.N.V. were two German brothers named Bremer who had a business in town. The people behind the Volunteers were men of substance in the town and the majority were, I think, supporters of John Redmond. I did not join this body when I saw who were leading and training the Volunteers. I got disgusted and I believed the Volunteers were being used as a training ground for the British Army. Paddy Hughes, Sean McEntee, Owen Grant, Joe Berrill, Hugh Kearney, two Butterley Brothers, Jack Quinn, myself and some others discussed the question on numerous occasions and in the Boyle O'Reilly Hall we started the Irish Volunteers.

The Irish Volunteers in the early stages numbered only about 13 members. We got much annoyance from the National Volunteers and we were attacked on the streets on many occasions. Once at a meeting in the Town Hall we were attacked and some of our men beaten. Archie Heron attended this meeting in uniform and was attacked coming into the Town Hall. When we got some more recruits and our numbers increased to about 25 we held a route march up

Park St. and around the south end of the town. Stones were fired at us in Park St. and as a result we got some extra recruits. I mention this to show what an uphill fight we had to carry on and organise. Paddy Hughes was the driving force behind the Irish Volunteers. He never joined the I.R.B. He was looked up to by all Republicans in Dundalk and Co. Louth. He was the father of Republicanism in Dundalk. He was responsible for keeping the Emmet Band in existence. This band always turned out in Robert Emmet uniform, green coats, green hat and white cockade, black top boots, and they were a most inspiring sight. ~~When~~ on parade Paddy Hughes always provided the cash to keep the band equipped and in existence. Amongst the leaders who visited Dundalk and lectured us were Sean McDermott, Sean Mulroy, Pierce Beasley, Archie Heron. A Sean Tobin came on a few occasions and addressed meetings in the Boyle O'Reilly Hall. Tobin held a meeting at the ^{NEPTUNE} ~~Boyle~~ Hotel, Blackrock, of the I.R.B. and he disarmed all the old men of the I.R.B. I attended this meeting with Tom Hearty. There were also a few others from the Dundalk I.R.B. at this meeting. The arms collected were of little use and I don't know what became of them after they were taken up.

Shortly before Easter Week 1916, a quantity of lead was procured by Sean McEntee in the Power House. Shotgun cartridges were procured from the traders in town. John Kieran and I spent about 3 weeks working a mould in the Boyle O'Reilly Hall making slugs for the cartridges. We loaded all the cases with slugs. Material was procured for my mother and she made haversacks. When some of the neighbours asked her what she was doing she told them she was making aprons for her grand-daughters in Glasgow.

Our armament at Easter Week 1916, were about 20 to 25 shotguns. Many of the men had revolvers which they purchased themselves. We had no rifles in Dundalk. There were rifles in Ardee belonging to the National Volunteers which we intended to commandeer on Easter Sunday. All the rifle drill we had for Easter Week was carried out in the two weeks preceding Easter Week when D. O'Hannigan came to us

from Dublin. O'Hannigan put us through a lot of drill in the Boyle O'Reilly Hall and he took us into the fields at night and gave us skirmishing practice. The first indication I got that a rising was likely was about 1915. Owen MacNeill had a meeting in Ardee which we all attended. Paddy Hughes told me then that we were heading for a fight. Previous to Easter Week John Finnigan was our drill instructor. He was an old militia man and was a good instructor.

On Holy Thursday I was in the Boyle Hall and Sean McEntee told me that if something would not happen soon he was getting 'fed up'. I knew then that we were mobilising on Easter Sunday. On Good Friday definite word came to Paddy Hughes, through Anglia Mathews, that the mobilisation was definitely on for Easter Sunday. We went to confession on Saturday night and some of the men provided themselves with rations. I didn't provide myself with rations. Some of the others didn't make provision for rations as they believed the mobilisation was for a route march.

On Sunday about 50 of us mobilised at the Boyle O'Reilly Hall. We marched from there up the Ardee Road to the Workhouse and were joined there by another contingent of the Dundalk Volunteers. I was a Sergeant Major at the time and I counted the entire mobilisation at the Workhouse. After I had sent old men and youngsters home whom I considered were unfit for active service, the remaining mobilised men numbered 75. We marched to a place called Gilbertstown where O'Hannigan told me to take a cycle and go into Ardee to call to Brophy's Yard and find out if the Dunleer men were there. On my way into Ardee I met Phil McMahon and he asked where the Dundalk men were. I told him they were coming along the road and he said that he had the rifles ready to be taken up in Ardee. I went on to Brophy's Yard and found the Dunleer men there including 2 Butterleys, 2 Kellys, J. Layng, ... Reynolds, and about 3 or 4 others. I remained in Ardee until the Dundalk men came into the town. The Dunleer men joined the Dundalk contingent when they came in at the Foster monument in Ardee. Shortly after, Phil McMahon

and D. O'Hannigan went away and later returned with about 15 rifles. They carried the rifles in their arms and distributed them and also ammunition. After the distribution of the rifles we started on the road again in the direction of Slane. When we were about a mile outside Ardee, a dispatch rider came to us with MacNeill's countermending orders. Paddy Hughes and O'Hannigan consulted on the matter and O'Hannigan stated that he was not taking orders from MacNeill, that P.H. Pearse was his Commanding Officer. I remember distinctly O'Hannigan using those words. Paddy Hughes and O'Hannigan sent Joe Berrill on a motor cycle to Dublin to make inquiries as to what was right or what was wrong. After Berrill left we resumed the march to Slane and arrived there about 6.30 p.m. On our march from Dundalk we were accompanied by a two-horse brake which carried food supplies and spare ammunition and it was intended the brake would pick up any casualties resulting from the fatigue of the march.

It started to rain heavy after our arrival in Slane and continued raining Monday and part of Tuesday. We were accompanied to Slane by 2 R.I.C. - Sergeants Wymes and Connolly. We partook of some bread and cheese in Slane and we took over a bakery shed in the village. Some of the men took shelter in the bakery. I was sent to the Marquis of Conyngham's gateway with 2 men to prevent persons going in or out of the gateway. About 12 p.m. Sean McEntee remembered us and sent Paddy Finn to take us back to the main body. When I returned to the shed I could only see about 30 men there. I was told by P. Hughes that some of the men had returned to Dundalk. I got tea and some bread and had a feed. I took exception to men leaving for home and was told by Paddy Hughes that, as the mobilisation was cancelled, some of the men went home on "yokes" that came out from Dundalk, and some others returned walking. We made ourselves as comfortable as possible and had a bit of a sing-song to keep up our spirits. We were ordered up by O'Hannigan about 3.30 a.m. on Sunday to form up. O'Hannigan informed us that we were marching home. It appears that by this time all hope of Joe Berrill's return, with definite instructions to us, had been given up.

When we mobilised on the road at Slane I again saw the two R.I.C. men. It was raining very hard and we returned again in Collon direction. We had to take shelter from the rain on our way to Collon on several occasions. In all it took at least 2 hours from Slane to Collon. Approaching Collon we came to a publichouse and O'Hammigan told me that we could have some refreshments. It was about 6 a.m. then. I went over to the R.I.C. men and told them that we all required food and refreshments and that I intended to rouse the people in the pub. They told me that my plan was good and that the woman who owned the pub was decent. I rapped on the door and after some time a woman put her head out of a window and inquired what we wanted. She saw we were armed with rifles, and Sergt. Wymes told her to come down and open up as it was all right. She did so. When we got in we found that there was spirits and groceries in the house. All our men were put into one room and orders were given that the men drinking would only get one drink each. The R.I.C. took 6 or 7 drinks. When I insisted on the order of one drink for each man Sergt. Wymes told me I was rather strict. The woman made tea for us all and we had tea and bread and butter in the kitchen. When we had finished we had only 25 or 26 of our original force. We paid the woman for the food and drinks.

From the pub we took the direction of Dunleer. On reaching Dunleer we got orders to get at the ready in case of attack from the Dunleer R.I.C. We saw no person in Dunleer. It was still raining heavy. When we came to the railway bridge on the Dundalk side of Dunleer we had to take shelter from the rain for over half an hour. Later we arrived at a farmer's place 3 miles from Dunleer, where we called and got buttermilk from the woman of the house. We rested awhile in a shed in the yard. We resumed our march and at Kilsarn near Castlebellingham we were ordered to get at the ready for passing through Castlebellingham. It was still raining. No incident took place passing Castlebellingham. We continued to the Marsh Farm at Lurgangreen. A motor car overtook us and Sean McEntee and another man got out of the car. McEntee shouted out so that all

could hear him "Dublin is up". We were ordered to deploy on each side of the road and stop all traffic on the road. The two R.I.C. were searched for papers and arms by Sean McEntee. A local farmer came along in a cart and refused to halt. He was fired on and wounded in the hand. A bread cart came and I commandeered bread and bacon. We held up about 30 motor cars and motor cycles. We made prisoners of an officer and 2 soldiers and put them in a barn nearby. When we commandeered cars and drivers we dismantled any cars or bicycles that we did not require. As the cars were commandeered they were moved towards Castlebellingham with the drivers and some of our men in each car. At this time I had Paddy McHugh and Ned Bailey with me on the Dundalk side of the party. After a short time we realised that all the cars and all our men had gone away and we were along on the road with the two R.I.C.. Another policeman came from Dundalk direction. We fired a shot at him and he turned back and disappeared. A two-horse brake came along from Castlebellingham direction containing some of the people from whom cars were commandeered and we halted it. We let it go on as they stated that they had got permission from Paddy Hughes to take the brake into Dundalk. A motor car came from Castlebellingham. We halted it and I asked one of the men to get out. McHugh and I got into the car and took it back into Castlebellingham. Near Castlebellingham we halted another car containing the Macardle family from Dundalk. They were able to give us our password "Limerick" and we let them proceed. As they had got the password from P. Hughes to get through if stopped going into Dundalk. On our way into Castlebellingham our driver told us that Castlebellingham was in an uproar when they were passing through, with motor cars and armed men on the street. When we arrived in Castlebellingham we released the car and told the men they could go home.

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 We met the rest of the Dundalk men there and we commandeered cheese in Byrne's pub. Const. McGee came running across, apparently to see what was wrong. Some person fired a shot and Const. McGee fell. Lieut. Dunville came from somewhere when he heard the shot

and was running to where McGee fell. He was fired on and fell on the road. The shooting of McGee was an accident, as we had orders not to shoot any of the R.I.C. We got into the cars and proceeded in the direction of Dublin. At Sarsfield's pub near Dunleer we commandeered some minerals. We proceeded through Dunleer and cut off the main Dublin road and took the direction of Co. Meath. It was dark when we left the main road. I don't know exactly where we left the main road, as I had no knowledge of the country. We were going fine when one of the cars ran into a ditch on a narrow road and blocked the road for the cars coming after it. We could not get the car out of the position it was in. Tom Hearty from Dundalk was with us at this time with his horse and sidecar and he unyoked his horse to try and remove the car. The drivers of the other cars behind where we were working on the ditched car drained their petrol tanks. We were left without transport. Sean McEntee was with us. His feet were sore and he washed them in a stream and it appears he started from there on his own for Dublin.

After McEntee left, Sean Quinn, James Kelly, Tom Hearty and myself decided to go to Dublin on Hearty's sidecar. Hearty drove and when we arrived near Dunshaughlin, a motor car and 2 men overtook us with Peter Clifford and Paddy Casey who drove the car, and told us we were wanted back. I asked him who wanted us back, and the boys in the car said O'Hannigan - that he was in a barn near Mulhuddart. We followed the car until we came to the barn. When we arrived near the barn Quinn complained that he had a bad leg. He showed me the leg which was very sore and inflamed and I sent him home with Tom Hearty on the sidecar. Kelly and I went down to the barn and saw O'Hannigan, Hughes and the remnants of the force lying on hay there. We were all exhausted and wet through to the skin. It was still raining when we arrived in the barn. It was early on Tuesday morning when we were joined by some men from Dunboyne, Sean Boylan and his brother, Eden Creane, Peter Byrne, ... McGuire and others - in all about nine. About 4.30 a.m. on Tuesday morning we got orders to march along a bye-road. I was

tired and hungry. We had a rest along this road. The rain had cleared and the sun was shining. We lay on the grass for awhile. We eventually came to Tyrrellstown House and took possession of it. O'Hannigan ordered us to take over the outoffices. It was a big place with piles of accommodation for us. We placed outposts which were relieved regularly. We could hear the sounds of rifle fire in Dublin. I got a cup of tea and bread and butter in a little house which I paid for. On my return to the boys I was told that Simon Hall from Dunboyne was sick. I went back to the house and got tea and bread for Hall. When Hall got the feed he recovered. A girl came into the yard on one of the days we were there with food. She was Eden Creane's sweetheart. She is now married to Creane and has her family reared. We remained in Tyrrellstown House for 8 days. O'Hannigan told us that we were to remain where we were. During one of the days we were told of a big lump of a girl who came on to the main road opposite the house and stayed there while looking at the house. I reported this and Peter Byrne went out and got behind her. I got on the road on the other side of her and we interrogated her. She said she was a friend and well-wisher of the rebels and that the Volunteers were winning and that she was keeping a watch-out for us and would report any danger approaching. I didn't find out her name. We saw her frequently after this and on 1st May she came and told us that the rebels were defeated and that the military knew where we were and that we were to be surrounded that night by soldiers with artillery. At dusk that evening O'Hannigan told us to get up, that everything was over. We evacuated Tyrrellstown House. The Dunboyne men had left us at Tyrrellstown House. O'Hannigan took us through fields and we were walking for a few hours. We came to a mud cabin and got into it. It was a quiet place. We slept there that night and early the next morning we were told to keep very quiet, that the military were at Tyrrellstown House. A man came on horseback past our cabin, had a good look at the house, passed, came back, had another good look, and went off. ~~Th~~ We were satisfied this man had no suspicion we were in the house. About half an hour after this man passed, O'Hannigan announced that he was demobilising us.

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O'Hannigan, Hughes and McHugh dumped our arms at the house and O'Hannigan shook hands with me. I felt this break-up with our G/C. very much and we all felt disappointed.

I started for home. with me was James Dunne, James Kelly, Hugh Carney and a few others. We did not know the country and our main idea was to go north avoiding police barracks and towns. We proceeded on our way home and as some of our boys had friends living on our way, those men went to their friends. Some left us at Drogheda, some at Dunleer. Eventually I was left with James Kelly. We travelled mostly by night and slept or rested in barns and haysheds by day. We had refreshments as opportunity offered in backward localities. Sometimes we called at country pubs as we had cash to provide refreshments. Kelly and I eventually reached the vicinity of Dundalk by the Ardee road. We were halted at the railway bridge on the outside of the town by a soldier. We told him we were "dealing men" going to a fair and were allowed through. We parted in the town. Kelly went to his home and went to Liverpool the next day. I went to my home and was arrested shortly after my arrival by R.I.C. and military. I was roughly handled and they took me to the Courthouse. Inside the Courthouse I found Tom Hearty, Jack Quinn, John Finnigan and others - about 30 in all. There had been a big round-up the previous night and all those men were captured. We were all surrounded by soldiers, handcuffed in pairs and marched up to the jail. Full particulars of our marks and description were taken; all our money, beads and everything we carried - except our pocket handkerchiefs - were taken off us. We were kept in jail from about Wednesday until Saturday. On Saturday the Jail Governor gave each man his money back, also valuables.

We were all handcuffed again, surrounded by a strong military escort and marched to the station. It was raining hard. When we arrived at the station the officer i/c. was told that the train was not due for an hour. He took us back again to the jail. The officer gave us the order 'about turn'. I asked "What the d----1 sort of an order was that to handcuffed men" We were marched back

again to the station and put into the train. The carriages were oldfashioned. We called them 'dog-boxes'. The train arrived at Amiens St. station which was packed with soldiers. We were formed up in columns of four and taken under strong military escort to Richmond Barracks; twenty-five of us were put into a big room. Amongst the men in the room were some Belfast men including Denis McCullough, Sam Heron, C. McDowell and a man named Smyth. We had to lie on the bare floor without bed clothes. The next day we got dog biscuits and black tea, bully beef, and then a blanket each. I remember in this room us telling stories about the Valley of the Black Pig. We held a mock breach of promise case against one of our prisoners. I was the judge at this trial. Samples of our writing and finger prints were taken by a Scotland Yard man. Amongst those I saw in Richmond were Arthur Griffith, Sean McDermott, Darrell Figgis. Another manly man I saw there was Curtis O'Leary. The soldiers were insisting on us doing drill and marching at attention. Curtis O'Leary refused and was threatened with a bayonet. He defied the soldier and refused to drill. Sean McDermott was executed while we were there, I think he was shot on the 12th May. Courtmartial were carried out in a room in Richmond. I think Lords Decies and Chelmsford sat on the courtmartial. Tom Hearty, John Quinn and myself were taken before the courtmartial. Carbery, the D.I., Sergt. Wymes, Sergt. Connolly, R.I.C., officers and soldiers were present. Hearty was the first charged with being a Sinn Fein Volunteer, taking part in rebellion and the murder of Sergt. McGee at Castlebellingham. Hearty told the court that he was a jarvey and was paid for driving the men. Quinn was similarly charged; he admitted a lot of the evidence against him. I was charged last. Sergt. Wymes swore he saw me with a gun and revolver at Lurgangreen also in a pub in Collon, where I was allowing men to get one drink each. He stated I was a "severe" man. I told the Sergt. that I didn't ration him as he got 6 or 7 drinks in the pub. I also told him that at Lurgangreen I told him to go home. I was asked by one of the judges if I was a volunteer. I told him I was in the

Volunteers in 1913-1914 and later. He said "that was Redmond's

time". He did not give me time to finish what I intended saying. I shouted up to the Lords that when I sent the police home from Lurgangreen that I knew no more of the doings. Quinn was sentenced to 3 years. Hearty was deported to England and I was released with a number of others. A few days after the courtmartial I was called out from exercise. I was told I could go home. I was given the price of my journey.

When I got outside the barrack gates I was met by a few strange girls who asked me where I was from. I told them I was from Dundalk. One girl offered me a 10/- note. I refused to take it as I had some cash. She forced the money on me. I asked her name and she told me she was Maggie McCabe, Talbot St. Dublin. I wrote her a letter of thanks and sent her the 10/- the day after I returned to Dundalk.

I got a good reception on my arrival in Dundalk; a lot of friends met me and escorted me home. The 12 or 14 days from I left town on Easter Sunday 1916, until my return home again was one of great physical hardship and mental strain. On Easter Sunday and Monday we must have marched about 80 or 90 miles over rough roads. It was raining hard from Sunday evening and we were soon wet through. We had little food except scraps here and there. Our boots were soon worn out, our socks in rags and our feet blistered. Our journey on Monday night from Castlebellingham to Dunboyne was over bad country roads under heavy downpours of rain. We were continually losing our way and losing contact with our comrades in the darkness. For the most part of this journey we were on the point of exhaustion and it was our willpower that kept us going. After our cars were immobilised we were staggering along more than marching.

The journey home from Mulhuddart was even worse; our clothes and boots were in worse condition and at this time we were hunted men and had to travel parts of the way through field and backward country lanes. We got no regular meals. After we returned to be

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arrested without any time to recover from the fatigue
was the last straw. I will never forget this experience
It took men of great physical endurance to carry on.

Signed: Arthur Greene

Date: 6th April 1949

Date: John Madog.
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