

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

BURO STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21

No. W.S. 378

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 378

Witness

Mr. Thomas Kelly,
Mullewn,
Manorhamilton,
Co. Leitrim.

Identity

Member of I.R.B. and
Member of Irish Volunteers
Co. Tyrone 1914-1916.

Subject

- (a) National organisations, Co. Tyrone 1914;
- (b) Events in Co. Tyrone during Holy Week
and Easter Week 1916.

Conditions, if any, stipulated by Witness

Nil

File No. S.1091

Form B.S.M. 2.

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STATEMENT OF THOMAS KELLY, ~~MULLAWN, MANORHAMILTON,~~CO. LEITRIM.

I joined the I.R.B. in Donoughmore in 1914. I was introduced by Joe Carbury. My father, W.J. Kelly, was also a member. Before joining the I.R.B. I was a member of the Volunteers.

Roger Casement came to Dungannon and addressed a public meeting in the early summer of 1914. I think it was at this meeting that the Volunteers were started; names were taken after the meeting of men willing to join.

After the outbreak of the 1914-18 war Capt. White came to Derrytrisk and held a review of Irish Volunteers. Before this review I had got a bundle of pamphlets for distribution. The title of the pamphlet was "Ireland and the War". I distributed the pamphlets to the men on review. All the Volunteers from Coalisland and district attended the review. Capt. White addressed the men and advised them that when joining the British Army they should join in their units, not in twos or threes. I interrupted him and then started my distribution of the pamphlets which advocated our non-participation in the war.

Shortly after this review a meeting was called in St. Patrick's Hall, Dungannon, for the purpose of the Volunteers pledging their support to John Redmond. This meeting was the start of the split in Dungannon. Redmond's followers captured the big majority of the Volunteers, only about 16 men - nearly all I.R.B. men - refused to associate with John Redmond's crowd.

The section who refused to follow Redmond got an old loft in Dungannon as a meeting place and started to drill and organise. A Capt. McRory, an ex-American officer, attended our parades and gave instructions and drilled us. About the end of 1914 I went to Scotland. I met James Tamoney from Coalisland in Motherwell. I attended meetings in Glasgow in the Sinn Fein Hall in Anne St. I met I.R.B. men there but never attended an I.R.B. meeting. I

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returned to Ireland for the O'Donovan Rossa funeral in August 1915 and after the funeral I returned again to Motherwell. I remained in Scotland up to shortly before the Rising. When I returned home I attended regular drills and parades in Dungannon area. We occasionally travelled to Donoughmore and practised on targets with .22 rifles. The leader in Donoughmore in those days was a man named James McElvogue. He was originally a leading Hibernian and was President of the Donoughmore Division A.O.H. when he joined the I.R.B. He remained in the Hibernians and when the split came he took his whole division of the Hibernians into the Volunteers and we got the use of the Hibernian Hall.

Some time before Easter Week Tom Clarke sent a supply of rifles to Donoughmore; those were some of the Howth rifles. I can not now remember how many we had in 1916, probably 20 to 30. The Hibernians in Dungannon had rifles which they got through John Redmond's organisation which were of Italian make and useless. We had not control of those which were stored in their Hall in Dungannon.

On Saturday of Holy Week I was told to accompany a man named Hamill to Trewamoy and board the train from Belfast there and travel on the train on which the Belfast men were travelling on to Dungannon that night. When the Belfast men arrived in Dungannon we took them along to the Drill Hall in Dungannon. Later, all the Belfast men marched from Dungannon to Coalisland. It was only on Saturday when I was told to go to Trewamoy that I knew that a Rising was near.

I got no further orders on Saturday night and on Sunday morning I travelled by pony and trap to Coalisland. I cannot remember who was with me for sure. I expect it must have been my father and James McElvogue. When we arrived in Coalisland we went to St. Patrick's Hall where we met Volunteers from Belfast, Benburb, Coalisland and Donoughmore. The Volunteers, as far as I can remember, were standing about talking and discussing what

should be done. I was speaking to Archie Heron and he was talking about the possibility of getting to Dublin; about midday on Sunday a messenger arrived with a dispatch. There was talk before the messenger arrived that the mobilisation was called off, but apparently nothing definite was known until this man arrived on a motor bike with Eoin MacNeill's countermanding orders. After the countermanding orders arrived nearly all the Belfast Volunteers formed up and marched from Coalisland in Cookstown direction and got a train there for Belfast. I remained that evening in Coalisland and, as far as I could see, all the Tyrone Volunteers there demobilised.

I went home on Sunday night, and on Monday I kept moving about in Dungannon. I was in and out to Jack McElvogue of Dungannon who was then I.R.B. Centre there, expecting some orders or dispatches from Dublin. Nothing came.

On Tuesday, Seamus Dempsey arrived at Jack McElvogue's with a message to mobilise the Volunteers and to proceed to Donoughmore. I went around all the Volunteers in Dungannon and mobilised them. We procured the 2 or 3 rifles then stored in Dungannon and proceeded to James McElvogue's place at Tullydraw, Donoughmore. That night we joined up with the Donoughmore Volunteers and marched to Carrickmore, 11 or 12 miles distant. When we arrived at Carrickmore there was no person to meet us. We got a man named Daly out of his bed and he told us that the mobilisation was off. I cannot remember if Daly went away to find out the position before he told us all was off or that he knew it before we arrived. Daly was a prominent Volunteer at the time. We didn't start from Carrickmore until some time late on Wednesday morning. On this journey to Carrickmore we all carried rifles and a supply of ammunition. When waiting at a shop on the road near Carrickmore, 2 R.I.C. walked up and down the road past us several times. They bid us the time of the morning. We started for home and I arrived in Dungannon on Wednesday about 1 p.m. Before we dispersed we dumped the arms

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at Largalea near Galbally. We left them with an old woman who lived alone. The Galbally Volunteers were then to take charge of them and have them safely dumped, which I know they did.

On Thursday, about midday, a message came to Jack McElvogue. I got this message to procure a car to take a lady to Carrickmore, who desired to contact Dr. Pat. McCartan. I got a motor car and a driver in Dungannon. The driver was Thomas McGuigan, an I.R.B. man. We proceeded to Peter McGrath's, Derrytreenk, and picked up the lady, Miss Nora Connolly, and James Tamoney of Coalisland. I was told that Miss Connolly was armed. It was coming on dusk when we arrived at Dr. McCartan's place. Before we arrived there we met military lorries at Pomeroy who, we heard later, had been raiding McCartan's house.

When we arrived at McCartan's house we met Dr. McCartan and his brother, Johnnie. Miss Connolly, when speaking to Doctor McCartan, urged him to do something. I understood from her manner that she had orders for Dr. McCartan. Miss Connolly remained in Dr. McCartan's and we returned towards Dungannon. We left Tamoney in Coalisland on our way back. We were held up by 2 R.I.C. in Coalisland. Tamoney jumped out of the car on the opposite side from the R.I.C. and boarded the mail car and got away undetected. We were questioned as to where we were coming from. The driver told the policemen that I was in Omagh visiting a sister of mine who was in hospital there and they let us through. When we came near Dungannon I got out of the car as I feared the police in Coalisland would have a check up on the driver's yarn to them and send word into Dungannon police to pick us up. I walked into Dungannon and when I arrived there I met Jack Shields, Benburb, and we decided to raid St. Patrick's Hall, Dungannon, for the Nationalist Volunteer rifles. Jack, Tom Hamill, Peter Byrne and myself carried out the raid. We carried away all the rifles in the Hall and hid them in a store in Brannagan's yard in Dungannon. Hamill came into town the

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next day with a pony and cart and removed them to his place in the country where they were properly hid.

On 5th May 1916, I and my father were arrested at our own house, taken to the local R.I.C. Bks. and later to Armagh R.I.C. Bks. After a time there we were transferred to Richmond Bks. in Dublin. When in Richmond I saw Sean McDermott. He was executed shortly afterwards.

About 7th or 8th June I was removed with a batch of prisoners to Wandsworth Prison. After a month there we were removed to Frongoch. I was taken from Frongoch to Wormwood Scrubbs to go before the Commission to be questioned on our membership of what was then an illegal organisation.

I was released at Xmas 1916 and returned to my home in Dungannon.

Signed: Thomas Kelly

Date: 18/4/1950

Witness: John Mc Coy

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