

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
BURO STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21
No. W.S. 697

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 697

Witness

Patrick J. Bermingham,
10 Norwood Park,
Sandford Road,
Ranelagh, Dublin.

Identity.

Constable, D.M.P., 1914.

Subject.

Refusal of section of D.M.P. to disarm
Irish Volunteers, 1914.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil

File No. S.1994

Form B.S.M. 2

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Statement by Patrick J. Birmingham,

10, Norwood Park, Sandford Road,

Ranelagh.

I joined the Dublin Metropolitan Police in July, 1907. During my years in the Force I took an active part in athletics. On the Saturday previous to the landing of arms at Howth I was at the D.M.P. Sports in Ballsbridge and won a few prizes. I was with a man named Andy O'Neill who was a comrade of mine. I was attached to Green Street Police Barrack at the time. Sometime about 11 o'clock on Sunday morning 27th July 1914 a message came through that all available police were to be rushed to Howth Road. I was off duty but was one of the men who were sent with Andy O'Neill. We had no idea of the reason we were being rushed to Howth Road. On the way out I was wondering what our mission was. I mentioned to my comrade Andy O'Neill "I wonder if this is anything to do with the Nationalists Volunteers because the Ulster Volunteers were allowed land arms at Larne some months ago and no action was taken against them." O'Neill answered "If they are trying to rush us against the Nationalists Volunteers here is one who will have nothing to do with it". I replied "I am with you in that". I remember a peculiar remark which O'Neill passed. He said "Sometime ago I dreamed that my brother's arm was broken. The dream was very vivid and I was so curious about it that I wrote to my people to enquire if this had happened. When writing they denied the accident but subsequently admitted this accident had occurred at the particular time I had the dream. Last night I dreamed that there were a lot of women praying for me in the sacristy of the chapel and I

could see a stream of blood running down the street." It was peculiar that on that same day blood was spilled and was flowing down the street in Bachelors Walk.

We arrived at Howth Road about 12.30 where about 100 D.M.P. men had assembled in charge of Assistant Commissioner Harrold. He didn't say to us what our job was to be. After about ten minutes wait a Battalion of the Volunteers came from Howth direction armed with ~~revolvers~~ ^{rifles}. Our men were ordered to disarm them. Some of them obeyed but a number of us lined against the wall and refused to take any action. I should say that about twelve or fourteen of us refused. Some of the men took some ~~revolvers~~ ^{rifles} from the Volunteers and there was a bit of a skirmish and with that Harrold saw us standing against the wall. He came over to us and asked us if we refused to obey orders. I can't remember whether it was Constable O'Neill or Constable Gleeson who was first asked by the Assistant Commissioner if he refused to carry out the work assigned to him. In any case whichever of them was asked stepped forward and said that he did refuse. With that the remainder replied that they likewise refused but didn't take a leading part by stepping forward. He took a note of each individual and then directed the Sergeant to take Constable O'Neill and Constable Gleeson to the Bridewell with a view to having them suspended. The remainder of us were permitted to go home anyway we wished. In the meantime the Volunteer Party had marched past us.

I knew that while Constables Gleeson and O'Neill

would be dismissed since a charge was preferred against them, the same treatment would not be meted out to us. I felt that a charge would hang over us for about two months or so until things quietened down and then each one of us who had refused to take action against the Volunteers would find ourselves transferred and heavily fined. To obviate such action I got my dissenting comrades to come in before the Superintendent in Green Street and we demanded that we should be put on the same charge as O'Neill and Gleeson as we were equally guilty and we emphatically told him that if he refused to do this we would storm the castle. We were told to remain in the hallway until he consulted with the Dublin Castle Authorities and after a while a message came through that there was no charge against any of us. O'Neill and Gleeson were, however, dismissed and after some months were re-instated. The matter got a great deal of publicity at the time in the public press.

I could not say what were the re-actions of the D.M.P. to the Volunteers following the Howth Gun Running. We had instructions, however, as ordinary constables of the D.M.P. to pay attention to halls where political meetings were held and Volunteers were drilling and to submit our reports on them. This was a matter of routine as far as we were concerned and I cannot say if any notice was taken of our reports. Any of the reports that I filled up anyway I never gave any names.

The 1916 Revolution came as a surprise to me and my comrades. I remember on Easter Monday 1916 I was off duty and I was passing along Patrick's Close when I was arrested by a number of Volunteers, fully armed, and brought as a prisoner to Fumbally's Lane

where five or six other D.M.P. men were held prisoners. After a while I succeeded in escaping and the others were removed from there to Jacobs where they spent the whole week. They were released unharmed. Following the surrender a number of us were brought up to the Newmarket Street Station to identify the Volunteers who had taken us prisoners. We pretended we never saw the men before.

One rather amusing incident I remember towards the end of Easter Week is seeing a British soldier who was on duty as sentry at Patrick's Close near Kevin's Street Barracks, and who was very much intoxicated firing indiscriminately in the air and at windows and doors. Then he would lay down his rifle and light his cigarette and then carry on firing as before. To me he was a positive danger to civilians so ^{we} ~~I~~ arrested him and brought him to the police barracks. ^{P.J.B.} He was later handed over to the Military Authorities.

Signature: P. J. Bermingham
(P.J. Bermingham)

Date 26th June 1952
26th June 1952.

Witness: William Ivory Comdt
(William Ivory) Comd't.

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