

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
BURO STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21
No. W.S. 768

ROINN



COSANTA.

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS

DOCUMENT NO. W.S.768.....

Witness

**Seamus Mac Diarmada,
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Cavan,
Co. Cavan.**

Identity.

Intelligence Officer for Cavan Town area.

Subject.

**Chronology of national events
in Co. Cavan, 1906-1923.**

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil

File No.S.2056.....

Form B.S.M. 2

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STATEMENT BY MR. ^{Seamus} ~~SEAN~~ McDERMOTT

c/o Messrs. J. Mowlem & Co., Windmill Road,
Sudbury-on-Thames, Middlesex, England.

S. OWEN ROE THE. CAVAN.

CO. CAVAN. 1906-23.

"Sinn Féin" was the name of a small journal with Irish Ireland outlook, published by late P.J. Bartley, Mountrugent, Co. Cavan, and printed by "Anglo-Celt", Cavan, around 1906-'08 period.

1908 - The "Owen Roe O'Neill and Myles the Slasher Commemoration" committee's meeting, to be held in Cavan Town, was banned by episcopal decree, principally on political grounds.

1913-1914. Suffragette threats to burn churches provided an excellent excuse to local Loyal Orange Lodge to arm their section of "Ulster Volunteers". These men, armed with Winchester rifles, paraded Cavan Town every night.

1914. "Irish Volunteers" were formed in every parish in Co. Cavan. Later periods, detailed in all Irish history, brought in to this movement many constitutional nationalists, press and clergy.

1915. "Irish Volunteers" (Sinn Féin) were reformed; organisers, amongst others, being Archie Heron, ex T.D., Sam Heron (R.I.P.), Seamus O'Sullivan, Frank Thornton, Peadar O'Donnell, E. Rooney, &c. (Sean McDermott, R.I.P., also came in 1915.) Ballinagh, Co. Cavan, was the only active area in the Co. in Sinn Féin matters. Cavan Town had a small number of Irish Volunteers amongst whom were Dick Coleman, (R.I.P.), died in Usk Prison, (he was a clerk on M.G.W.Rly.) and P.J. Cassidy, Sec. Others were active in Cootehill, Virginia, Bailieboro', Kingscourt areas, but they were very few.

1915. The O'Rahilly, Captain White, &c. reviewed public parades in Cavan, Ballinagh &c.

1916. One Co. Cavan man - Caldwell, N.T., Denn, Co. Cavan, was arrested in G.P.O. fight. Peter Paul Galligan, ex-T.D., was arrested in Cavan, following the rising in Enniscorthy.

No active volunteers seem to have gone from any part of Co. Cavan to Dublin for Easter Week.

Una O'Higgins (R.I.P.) was arrested near Kingscourt, on her way with dispatches for Sinn Féin leaders on Easter Monday. She was tried in Cavan Town and sent to Armagh Gaol for 3 months.

1916. May, June, July - arrests were carried out all over the county by R.I.C. and British army (Inniskilling Fusiliers, Ulster Division).

1917. Return of arrested men. Formation of Sinn Féin Clubs &c. after the pattern shown in every county.

1918. Death of Sam Young, M.P. Election of Arthur Griffith for Cavan. Two seats in Cavan East and West - W.P. Kennedy (Nat.) for West resigned. P.P. Galligan elected 1919.

1919. Usual pattern of events in every area.

1920. Local elections. Capture of County and Urban Councils, Guardians, R.D.Cs. and committees by Sinn Féin and Labour.

1920. Cavan area very unorganised. Captain Joseph McMahon ("Denis McCarthy") on release from Belfast Jail appointed to liven up area. He was accidentally killed on Sunday, 15th Aug. 1920, Patk. Roche being wounded in the incident. McMahon's remains were interred in Kilmaley, Ennis, Co. Clare, during that week, R.I.P.

Arrests in the area in that period, principally in Ballinagh, included Peadar Cowan, T.D. and O/C. Thomas Fitzpatrick (R.I.P.)

May 1920. Thomas Sheridan was killed in an ambush of R.I.C. at Ballinagh, Co. Cavan.

Sept. 1920. Boycott of Belfast goods. Train raids, &c. Some Volunteers from North Cavan took part in Ballytrain, Co. Monaghan, R.I.C. barrack attack. Reorganisation resulted in setting up of brigades and divisions and incidentally swamped Co. Cavan for purposes of record, as credit is given to the Division concerned for all activities.

Particulars of this organisation (which was done by people who knew nothing of Co. Cavan) can be had from Referee Board's office.

Sufficient to show that Cavan and Cootehill area became 3rd Brigade, 5th N. Div. (O/C. Eoin O'Duffy, R.I.P.), Hqrs. Co. Monaghan. (O'Duffy was President, G.A.A., Secretary, Ulster Council G.A.A. &c., also was best known in Cavan as Assistant Surveyor, Monaghan) 1916-1919 period. Ballinagh, Arva, Belturbet, Bawnboy, Ballyconnell, Swanlinbar &c. were taken into Midland Div. O/C. Sean McEoin, T.D.

Bailieboro, Mullagh, Virginia &c. came into Meath Bde. area. O/C. Seamus Farrelly.

Barrack attacks were made in Arva, Dec. 1920. Swanlinbar, Dec. 1920, and possibly some other areas. Ballyjamesduff (Cavan area) also staged an abortive one.

1920 - Nov. 1st. saw first internees for Ballykinlar amongst them being late P.J. Bartley and T.K. Walsh (R.I.P.) detained in Cavan Military Bks. Few of those then arrested were I.R.A. men, but individual arrests resulted in 10 years sentence on 3 members of Cavan Town Coy. - Messrs. Chas. Reilly, Co. Co. Cavan, Sean O'Neill (Co. Carlow) and late Capt Sean

Lynch (Cork), R.I.P., native of Laragh, Co. Cavan.

A third seat, with Co. Cavan as electoral area, was now available under "Government of Ireland Act 1920". The probable candidate, an East Cavan man, was not supported, due to absence of Sinn Fein Standing Committee from County Convention in Ballyconnell.

Sinn Fein Hqrs. sent a girl to Cavan for correct information as to their choice. This girl is very probably known as a C. na mBan member in Dublin. At any rate, she must remember her first visit to Cavan town - as an example of how things then stood; it will suffice to say that after many hardships she was put in touch with the writer (I.O. for the Cavan area). From no source whatever could any information be had as to probable candidate and so, later in the week, S.F. Hqrs. named Sean Milroy (R.I.P.) Townalast, Co. Tyrone, then interned in Ballykinlar. He had never seen Cavan before, but he duly became M.P. and was released from Ballykinlar.

Much the same conditions obtained in I.R.A. circles. Courts ceased, arrests by R.I.C. were very accurate. Cavan Coy. lost 11 members in one sweep.

1921. opened with new efforts. A flying column of Belfast men arrived in the area. May 1921 saw them encircled at Lappanduff, Cootehill, Co. Cavan, Sean McCartney being killed in the fight. He is buried in Milltown Cemetery, Belfast, in same plot as Joe McKelvey. Survivors of this fight can give full details. One of the survivors, saved from execution by the Truce, is Patk. Smith, T.D., Minister for Local Government. Another is the O/C. Seamus McGoran, O/C. Eastern Command; alão Major Tom Fox.

11th July 1921 to May 1923. Civil War period provides nothing worth detailing. Clergy formerly opposed S.F. and I.R.A. became very active in support of "The Treaty". Every public body in Co. Cavan urged its acceptance; members who had not attended meetings for years turned up to support it. (My proposition against caused much the same sensation as an atomic blast would today in Cavan town - voting 15 for - 3 against)

"Fighting men" grew in every area, vide "Pensions". Feby. 1922 saw an effort to abolish the "Border". The only armed attempt to do so. It resulted in the death of Comdt. Matt Fitzpatrick and six R.U. Constabulary, at ^{CLONES} Clons Rly. station.

Civil War became intense, arrests of former I.R.A. men by National army &c. Cavan and other areas were merged into 4th N. Div. (O/C. Frank Aiken, T.D.). Long processions, coffins covered with the tricolour, marching men, mark the passing of "the faithful and the few", R.I.P.

Signed: Seamus Mac Diarmada
Date: 17/12/52 (Seamus Mac Diarmada)
17.12.52

Witness: John McCoy
17/12/52 (John McCoy)

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