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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 868

Witness

Patrick Kearney,
4 Clarke's Terrace,
Rialto,
Dublin.

Identity.

Member of 'A' Company, 1st Battalion,
Dublin Brigade, 1913-1914;

Adjutant 'C' Company, 2nd Battalion,
Dublin Brigade, 1919 - .

Subject.

His national associations, Dublin,
1897-1921.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil

File No S.2171 . .

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STATEMENT BY MR. PATRICK KEARNEY,
4 Clarke's Terrace, Rialto, Dublin.

I was born in 1884 and was educated at the Christian Brothers' School, Strand Street, Dublin. About 1897 William Rooney asked the teachers in the Christian Brothers' Schools in the city to send their pupils to him to learn Irish, which was not then taught in the schools. One of the boys suggested that we should go, so we all trooped down to his place in Middle Abbey Street, opposite where the "Irish Independent" offices now stand.

The Celtic Literary Society met in the same premises, so, in addition to the Irish language classes, we were allowed to attend lectures on the various aspects of Irish affairs.

William Rooney, who was most energetic and enthusiastic, created a very favourable impression on us by giving us a great insight to Irish history. He also wrote ballads and songs. Enough credit has not been given to him for his great efforts to revive the national spirit.

The general tone of the lectures was the futility of the policy of the Irish Parliamentary Party. Among those we met there were Arthur Griffith, S.T. O'Kelly and Major McBride.

Arthur Griffith often lectured there. His lectures were listened to with great attention, though he was not a very good speaker.

I was a member of the Celtic Literary Society when in 1900 the Dublin Corporation, despite strong protests,

passed a resolution welcoming Queen Victoria. The address of welcome was duly read at Mount Street Bridge on her arrival. Thomas Pile, who was Lord Mayor at the time, was knighted as a result of the visit, but McCabe, who was a butcher and High Sheriff, was not so honoured. Arthur Griffith in an article in the "United Irishman" referred to the failure of McCabe to obtain a Knighthood and said he would confer a title on him - "Sir Loin" McCabe.

One evening when we were discussing politics, I voiced my feeling of distrust in the Irish Parliamentary Party. Shortly afterwards I was visited by a man named Lennon who asked me to join the I.R.B. I consented and joined the Circle which held its meetings in 41 Parnell Square under the guise of "The Wolfe Tone Memorial" Committee. Peadar Kearney, the author of the "Soldier's Song", Peadar McNally, Jack McArdle and Liam Shorthall were some of the members I can remember. Meetings were held once a month but there were no signs of any great activity. A number of the members asked for military instruction and, when the request was disregarded, they left. The stories of the alleged misuse of I.R.B. Funds by P.T. Daly destroyed the great trust and confidence the members had in the leaders and led to the resignation of many more of the members. I left at this time.

I remember going to a meeting opposite the Gresham Hotel at which the formation of Gaelic League branches was advocated.

The young people and clergy were very enthusiastic and branches were formed in nearly every parish. I joined the Columcille Branch in Blackhall Street. Our Irish language teacher was Miss O'Flanagan who later became Mrs. de Valera. John Maxwell was President of the Branch.

In addition to the language classes, dramatic classes, choirs and hurling clubs were organised. It was as a member of the hurling club that I first met Harry and Jerry Boland, who were members of the Rathmines Branch Hurling Club. I also met S.T. O'Kelly, Seamus O'Connor and Seán Heuston at the Columcille Branch.

I was still a member of the I.R.B. when in 1910 I went to London as a boy clerk in the Post Office. While there I met Judge O'Byrne who was then a second division clerk in the Post Office Savings Bank and with whom Mick Collins, who was a Post Office clerk, lived. I was invited to the Irish Club and met Mick Collins there. After spending a short period in Sheerness, I left the Post Office service and returned to Ireland in 1912.

I was working in Eason's when the big strike of 1913 started. In Liberty Hall I had a lot of contacts with James Connolly, Jim Larkin, Delia Larkin, and Countess Markievicz. I was appointed a clerk on the Strike Committee and sent from Liberty Hall to the Trades Union Hall in Capel Street. Tommy Lawlor and James Connolly went to England to appeal for funds and support for the strikers. There was a great response to the appeals. In addition to the money given, a ship called "The Hare" was sent with food. My job was to acknowledge receipt of the moneys sent.

The Countess was a prominent figure at the Soup Kitchen, dressed in trousers and smoking cigarettes, both of which were regarded as astonishing things for women to do in those days.

During the strike Larkin was billed to address a meeting from the Metropole Hotel, O'Connell Street. The

meeting was banned and, when Larkin appeared, he was arrested. The hundreds of police, both mounted and on foot, ran amok, charged and batoned about five hundred people. They later went in and smashed a number of workers' houses.

On his return from England, I heard Connolly say in Liberty Hall that he would form his own Army of civilians and would arm them, even if with sticks only, to protect themselves from the police. Shortly afterwards the nucleus of what was to become the Citizen Army was formed.

The Irish Transport and General Workers' Union owned Croydon Park and we marched there about twice a week for drilling. We had no arms at the time.

I attended the meeting in the Rotunda in November, 1913, when the Irish Volunteers were formed. I joined and was sent to "A" Company, 1st Battalion, at Blackhall Street. Captain Monteith was one of the instructors. Captain John Alwright was in charge of the Company. Denis O'Callaghan was also an officer.

I took part in the Howth gun running in 1914. I was on the pier that Sunday morning with "A" Company and got a rifle. When all the rifles had been handed out, we marched towards the city. When we reached Fairview, there was some commotion. An attempt was being made by British military and police to disarm the Volunteers. We were at the rear and scattered across the fields to safety. A Volunteer, named Judge, was wounded. When we were coming through Henry Street on our way home, we were attacked by British soldiers' wives who recognised us as Volunteers.

After the war started in 1914, it was freely

mentioned in Liberty Hall that, at the request of Lord Kitchener, the authorities had asked Jim Larkin to leave the country. Larkin went to America in October of that year.

In 1914 when Redmond had been trying to get control of the Volunteers and the split came, the majority of our Company went with Redmond and took their rifles. Out of a strength of about 250, only about 60 remained with the Irish Volunteers. Like many more at the time, I became disgusted at seeing so many joining the Irish National Volunteers and joining the "Pals" Battalion to fight in France and the lack of progress in the Irish Volunteers, so I lost faith in the whole business and left the Irish Volunteers. I took no part in the Rising.

In 1917 I met a man named Walton who had come back from Frongoch. He advised me to join again and, when I consented, he took me along to Tara Hall in Gloucester Street where I joined "C" Company of the 2nd Battalion. The attendance that night numbered about 200. As the Hall could not accommodate that number, the newcomers were marched around the Battalion area so that they could become familiar with it. Shortly after joining, I was picked out and sent with a man named Devoy to a place in Clonliffe Road to take the names of men joining the Battalion.

In 1918 Devoy was sent to Banba Hall to take over a Company of grocers' assistants. I went with him as Company Adjutant. There were so many members that it was almost impossible to get into the Hall. The Company was stronger even than "C" Company. The conscription threat was very real at the time but, when this threat passed, the Company faded away, there being only one member left.

I went back to "C" Company which by now was very small, being only from twenty to thirty strong. John Meldon was now in charge of the Company. After Meldon, Mick Reilly became Company Commander. We were brought to the Odd Fellows Hall where Dick Mulcahy administered the I.R.A. oath. To put us in good humour, he told us we would be in action soon.

I belonged to the 2nd Section of the Company. There were six men in each Section. We were paraded one day in Parnell Square and told we were going into action to ambush a military lorry. We had two grenades and four revolvers, but hadn't the full number of rounds of ammunition for each gun. We proceeded to the junction of Talbot Street and Marlboro' Street, and three went on each side of the street. Instead of the type of military lorry expected, the military came in a car with a wire cage on it. In spite of the fact that we had been warned not to attempt to bomb cars of this type, the men threw the two grenades. When the explosions occurred, the military opened fire in all directions. None of the Volunteers was hit, but one little girl was killed when the military fired up Talbot Street. One of the military in the car was hit. Armed Volunteer patrols of the areas were continually carried out after this.

On one occasion Patrick Sweeney of the Battalion Staff paraded the whole Battalion and told us we were going to hold up Amiens Street railway station. Tom Burke was our Company Commander at the time. Some of the Volunteers had to go on the job without guns, as there were not sufficient to go around. If any of the Volunteers became a casualty - unpleasant thought - an unarmed Volunteer was to take his gun.

We went to Seville Place and up a stone stairway which led to the tracks, to reach which we had to climb an iron gate. Some of the men moved to the main station entrance and closed the gates leading to Talbot Street; others lined the bridges across Amiens Street and the bridge leading to Commons Street.

I was directed to go to a signal box, climb up the iron ladder and prevent the signal man sending any messages by phone. Another man stayed at the foot of the ladder. When I explained the situation to the man in the signal box, he was prepared to co-operate. He asked me not to interfere with the signal levers, as trains were due in and out. When we were in position, Sweeney phoned British Army Headquarters and told them that the Volunteers were in occupation of Amiens Street station, but the military did not come out. They patrolled other areas but did not come near Amiens Street. I think they were suspicious about the message.

After waiting for about two hours, we were ordered to move along the line to Ballybough where we were dismissed and made our way home.

On another occasion an ambush on the British military was planned by the Company to try out our Company Commander, Tom Burke, who had just been posted to the Company and was practically unknown to us. His appointment was not very popular. The whole Company turned out. Seán Lemass, who had been acting Company Commander, was there. We waited a long time but no military lorries came and Seán Lemass told us to disperse. On our way back to Parnell Square, we were walking in a bunch towards the Engineers' Hall when one of the brothers Cotter from

Drumcondra threw a bomb at a lorry of Black and Tans which passed. Both Tans and Volunteers opened fire. I saw Tom Burke running after the lorry and firing at it. The Tans did not stop. A second bomb, which did not go off, had been thrown at the lorry and was picked up again by Cotter. Seeing a crowd on the footpath, I went over and found that a Volunteer named McEvoy had been wounded. We stood around until the ambulance came and had him removed to Jervis Street Hospital. That night Jim Brennan, Quartermaster of the Company, mobilised about ten or twelve men and took McEvoy out of the hospital. The D.M.P. man on duty did not interfere. McEvoy was taken in an ambulance to Portrane Asylum. He died shortly afterwards.

We had a big dump in North Great George's Street. One evening we were mobilised and told that the British forces had the area cordoned off and that we would attack them if they located the dump. They did not, however, succeed in locating the dump.

Just before Kevin Barry was due to be hanged, we were mobilised and told to go to Parnell Square. There we were told to get ready as a determined effort was to be made to rescue him. For some reason which I do not know, it was called off at the last minute.

Shortly before the Custom House burning was carried out, the Company had been engaged on the collection of petrol which was stored in a dump, the buying of hatchets and breaking of sticks.

On the morning of the job there were about ten or twelve men available but not enough arms for all. The available arms were given to those who had to report to

the Custom House. Two or three of us were told to stand by. A lorry went off with a load of men and materials and was to come back for us. Before it came back, the shooting had started, due to some British forces arriving at the scene, so I didn't get to the Custom House. Most of our men on the job were arrested and not released until after the Truce.

SIGNED: Patrick Kearney
(Patrick Kearney)

DATE: 18/6/53

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WITNESS: J. Kearns Comdt
(J. Kearns) Comd't.