

ORIGINAL

BURO STAIRE MILITARA 1913-21

No. W.S. 1012

W.S. 1,012.



BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21

STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 1,012

Witness

James Gleeson,
8, Lower Esmond St.,
Gorey,
Co. Wexford.

Identity.

Member of Sinn Fein, Gorey, Co. Wexford,
1910 - ;

Member of Irish Volunteers, Gorey, Co. Wexford,
1914 - .

Subject.

National Organisations, Gorey, Co. Wexford,
1910-1916.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

None

File No. S.2335 ..

Form B S M 2

ORIGINAL

No. W.S. 1012

STATEMENT OF JAMES GLEESON,

8 Lower Esmond Street, Gorey, Co. Wexford.

I joined the Gorey Branch of Sinn Féin about 1910. Seán Etchingham was Chairman. Among the members were John Byrne, Seán Kirwan, Eddie McDonagh and Darby O'Neill. Meetings were held frequently and were mainly concerned with discussions as to the best way of re-awakening the national spirit and of freeing Ireland.

I was present at the meeting held in the old Town Hall on the 6th January, 1914, at which the Gorey Company of the Volunteers was started. P.H. Pearse and M.J. Judge were the principal speakers. Seán Etchingham presided. So many people turned up at the meeting that the hall was packed and a large crowd had to remain outside. Pearse addressed the meeting in the hall and explained the objects of the Volunteers. He also addressed the crowd outside from one of the windows. About sixty joined the Volunteers. Seán Etchingham was appointed Captain. Peter Connolly, who was on the reserve of the British Army, was drill instructor. He gave his services free. Parades were held every week, and each Volunteer subscribed sixpence weekly to the Company funds. When the split occurred in the Volunteers following Redmond's speech at Woodenbridge, Co. Wicklow, about one half of the Company followed Redmond, but our numbers dwindled until we, the other half, had about twenty-one left. We had nine or ten rifles, mostly German Mausers; mine was a Martini.

In 1915 a review of the Volunteers was held at Vinegar Hill. On that occasion, as we had only twenty-one in the Company, we marched with the Ferns Company which was under

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the command of W.J. Brennan-Whitmore. We also marched in the funeral procession of O'Donovan-Rossa in Dublin the same year.

On Easter Saturday, 1916, Seán Etchingham mobilised us and told us that a Rising was about to take place. He instructed us to go to Enniscorthy on Easter Sunday night and to bring our arms and ammunition with us. On Easter Sunday we got word that the Rising had been called off and, therefore, we did not go to Enniscorthy that night. Late on Easter Monday we heard that the Volunteers in Dublin had risen.

On Easter Tuesday evening we got word from Seán Etchingham to mobilise again and go to Enniscorthy. About nine-thirty that night, six of us, Seán Etchingham, John Byrne, Eddie McDonagh Seán Doyle, Joe Funge and myself cycled to Enniscorthy, bringing our arms and ammunition with us. It had been arranged that we would be met at Solsboro, but when we arrived there, there was no one to meet us. We continued on to Enniscorthy and went to the Volunteer Headquarters, which were known as "Antwerp". It was during the early hours of Wednesday when we arrived there. Tom Stokes was there and he told us that it had been decided not to rise for the present. We remained at Antwerp. All day Wednesday conferences of the officers were being held. I was not present at any of these.

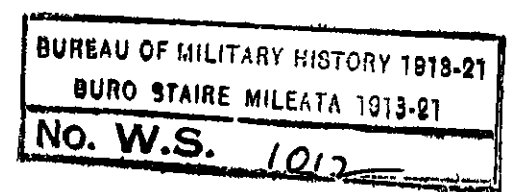
On Thursday morning one of the officers instructed Joe Funge and me to return to Gorey to do scouting and intelligence work, and to find out all we could about police activities, and to send all the information back to Enniscorthy. On our way to Gorey we left despatches at

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the Harrow. Any information we got, which we thought would be useful, we sent to Enniscorthy. Late on Saturday night we heard that Dublin had surrendered and that Enniscortny had refused to surrender unless they got word to do so from Pearse personally. On Sunday morning I saw Seamus Doyle and Seán Etchingham passing through Gorey in a motor car, under British escort, on their way to Dublin to interview Pearse and obtain from him confirmation of the surrender. I succeeded in evading arrest.

When the general release of the prisoners took place, we started to reorganise the Sinn Féin Clubs.

SIGNED: James Gleeson
 (James Gleeson)
 DATE: Sept 18 1954
 Sept. 18, 1954.



WITNESS: Sean Brennan Lt.-Col.
 (Sean Brennan) Lt.-Col.