

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

BURO STAIRE MILEATA 1913-21

No. W.S. 47



EIRE

Telefón 61018.

ROINN COSANTA.

BURO STAIRE MILEATA 1913-21

(Bureau of Military History 1913-21),

26 RAEDH NA NIARTHARACH,  
(26 Westland Row),

BAILE ÁTHA CLIATH.  
(Dublin).

DOCUMENT W.S.47

Joint Statement by:

Sean Healy,  
33 Barrack St., Cork.

Liam O'Callaghan,  
284 Blarney St., Cork.

Dated: 4th October, 1947.

On: Fianna Eireann, Cork City  
and County, 1910-1916.

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JOINT STATEMENT OF SEAN HEALY, 33 BARRACK STREET, CORK.  
AND

LIAM O'CALLAGHAN, 284 BLARNEY STREET, CORK.

PERIOD: 1910 TO 1916.

UNIT: FIANNA EIREANN, CORK CITY AND  
COUNTY.

The Fianna organisation was started in Cork about 1910. The initial steps were taken by a group of men who were at the time associated with different national organisations, having headquarters in An Dún in Queen Street. They were:- Tomás MacCurtain, Seán O'Hegarty, Seán O'Sullivan, Paddy Corkery, Miceal Ó Cuill, Tadg Barry, Martin Donovan, Miceal O'Neill, Donnad O'Donoghue and Ned Rochford. These men took a keen interest in developing the Fianna, and that interest was maintained even after the Volunteers started and most of them were devoting their time and energies mainly to the latter organisation. Up to the end of 1914, when the Volunteers started, some group of these men, not always perhaps the same personnel, formed a Committee of five or six which actively supervised all Fianna activity and assisted with training. Seán O'Sullivan and Paddy Corkery, in particular, were very active in connection with training, and may have acted in some capacity similar to that of Scoutmaster before the appointment of the first Scoutmaster, Walter Furlong. Seán O'Sullivan did all the Secretarial work, and Tomás MacCurtain acted as Treasurer, up to the formation of the Volunteers. After that the Fianna kept the closest contact with its old leaders, who were now the leaders of the Volunteers. We could and did always look to them for advice and assistance.

Fianna headquarters was in An Dún in Queen Street up to early 1914. For some months after that we were in the Transport Workers' Rooms in Merchant's Quay. One slough moved from there to Wherlin's Lane, Blackpool, and the remainder to the Volunteer Hall in Fisher Street. We moved with the Volunteers again when they went to the Hall in Sheares Street early in 1915. There we had a room of our own.

In An Dún Seán O'Hegarty had a .22 Winchester rifle which we used for practice. The caretaker of the Transport Workers' Rooms had a .22 also which he allowed us to use in a range that had been fitted up there for the Citizen Army.

Seán Healy joined in 1911 or 1912. Liam O'Callaghan and Christy Monahan were in the Baden Powell Scouts. They were taken to Dublin, with a number of other Baden Powell Scouts, on the occasion of the King's visit in 1912. Their expenses were paid by the Earl of Bandon. While in Dublin O'Callaghan, Monahan and Herlihy got in touch with the Fianna there and made enquiries as to how they could transfer to that organisation. They were told to go to the Dún in Cork. When they returned to Cork they did so, and about twelve boys left the Baden Powell's with them and joined the Fianna.

At that time there appeared to be no organisation, but the

Committee was functioning. Christy Monahan was appointed Scoutmaster. Appointments of Scoutmasters were made by the Committee up to the date of the Limerick Fianna Convention in 1915. By the end of 1912 there were about thirty boys in the organisation in the City, and the strength continued to grow after that. Nearly all the boys had uniforms which they usually provided themselves. There was a subscription of 2d or 3d a week, but there was no regular fund for the purchase of uniforms. Some of the lads who were not able to afford to purchase their own may have been helped out of the fund to get equipment. We got some financial assistance from Denis O'Mahony, Auctioneer, and from a Mr. Cashell. Diarmuid Fawsitt and Tom O'Gorman helped in getting uniforms and equipment of Irish manufacture.

In 1912 and 1913 we helped in carrying out an anti-recruiting campaign. Sean O'Hegarty supplied us with the posters and paste, and we put up the posters all over the city. Tomás MacCurtain used to get us to go round the shops asking for specific articles of Irish manufacture, which he knew were available but not stocked, in order to create a demand for them.

Almost from the start of the organisation in Cork the Fianna acted as Guard of Honour for the Blessed Sacrament at Wilton Church on the occasion of the annual public procession. We acted in a similar capacity one year at Rochestown Monastery. One of our first public appearances was on the occasion of the reception of Dr. Kuno Meyer and Canon Peter O'Leary when the freedom of the city was conferred on them. Another annual function performed by the Fianna was the laying of laurel wreaths on the Fenian graves at Ahabullogue, Rathcooney, St. Joseph's and St. Finbarr's Cemeteries on the morning of the day of the Manchester Martyr's commemoration.

Monahan was an excellent Scoutmaster and very efficient in all scouting subjects. Training was given in Map Reading, Knots, Morse, Semaphore, First Aid, Tent Pitching, Tracking and Scoutcraft generally. Tests were held at intervals and the Scoutmaster was very strict in maintaining a high standard in them. A badge was issued for First Aid but not for the other subjects. This badge was a Red Cross emblem on the sleeve. Boys who had qualified for it also carried a belt pouch containing a First Aid outfit. Dr. D.J. O'Sullivan conducted the First Aid classes. Irish and History classes were held in An Dún. Donal Óg O'Callaghan, Miceal Ó Cuill and Bob Langford conducted the Irish classes; Sean O'Hegarty the History class. Discipline was strict. There was an order that members of the Fianna would not appear on the streets in uniform in company with girls.

Parades or classes were held on three nights a week and route marches almost every Sunday, except in the Winter months. Camps were usually held at Easter, Whit and during the Summer months. Camping sites were normally at or near Blarney, Ballincollig, Healy's Bridge, Knocknahorgan or Clash. We had two bell tents and a few patrol tents.

There were inspections, one of which was carried out by Bulmer Hobson and another by the Countess.

A Sluagh had a total strength of nine - eight boys and a Sluagh leader. It was based on the Baden Powell patrol. Each Sluagh was named after some patriot, such as Captain Mackey, O'Neill-Crowley, Wolfe Tone, etc. A knot of ribbons, with a separate colour for each Sluagh, denoted to what Sluagh a boy belonged. Members of a Sluagh wore a plain green shirt, but the Officers wore a double-breasted one. Later the double-breasted shirt was generally worn by all ranks.

From the start up to Easter, 1916, there were, of course, many changes of personnel. Boys were continually joining up and some were falling away. The age limits were eleven to seventeen. During these years there were a number of Sluagh leaders who were really the pioneers in keeping the Fianna vigorous. They were Seamus Courtney, Liam óg O'Callaghan, Michael McCarthy, Tadhg Murphy, Domnick Mulcahy, Jerome Bushy, *Bushy* Joe O'Shea, Frank McMahon, Eugene Vaughan, Seán Healy, Liam O'Callaghan, Paddy Herlihy and Bob Desmond. They did not all function at the same time, as there never were fourteen Sluaghaite existing at once. The maximum number would have been twelve.

We estimate the City strengths as:-

1913	-	30 to 40.
1914	-	40 to 50.
1915	-	60 to 80.
1916	-	80 to 100.

The title "Scoutmaster" was discontinued after the Limerick Convention in 1915 and the military rank of "Captain" substituted. The O.C. Munster, appointed for the first time, at the same Convention, also had the rank of Captain. The Scoutmasters and Captains were:-

Walter Furlong	-	a few months at the start.
Christy Monahan	-	1912 to 1913.
Liam O'Callaghan	-	1913 to 1914.
Seamus Courtney	-	1914 to 1915.
Seán Healy	-	1915 to 1918.

Seán Healy had been appointed Sluagh Leader in 1914. The system was that the appointment was given, after tests, to the best scout in the Sluagh. At the Munster Convention held in Limerick on Whit Monday, 1915, Seamus Courtney was appointed O.C. Munster, and he appointed Seán Healy to replace him as O.C. Cork City and County.

Members of the Fianna in uniform were on the platform in the City Hall on the night of the meeting for the inauguration of the Volunteers. They did their best to prevent the hostile crowd getting on to the platform when the row started. In fact, Christy Monahan saved the Chairman, J.J. Walsh, from more serious injury by breaking a blow intended for him.

Close contact with the Volunteers was maintained. Sean Healy led their first public parade, playing the bagpipes. Detachments of the Fianna were sent with the Volunteers to Camps, such as Rafeen and Mitchelstown, where they assisted with the erection of tents and cooking. Members of the Fianna took part with Volunteers in a protest at the Palace Theatre against the showing of a British recruiting film. The boys battered the screen with eggs.

There was a Captain Gibbons of the A.O.H. American Alliance who used to come to Cork on holidays from America and who took a great interest in the Fianna. He marched with us and drilled us on a few occasions. He presented us with an American flag in 1912 or 1913.

Between 1914 and 1918 Seamus Courtney and Seán Healy organised a good many areas in the neighbourhood of Cork, including Blarney, Clogheen, Riverstown, Cobh, Douglas, Blackrock and Youghal. In Blarney Felix O'Doherty was Sluagh leader, in Clogheen Ned Hegarty, in Cobh Daithi O'Brien, in Douglas Liam Foley, in Blackrock Michael Walsh. Volunteers were present at our first meeting in Cobh. In the other areas Fianna leaders were later the pioneers in forming Volunteer Companies.

When the Volunteers started in Cork, Liam O'Callaghan immediately joined them and became a Section leader. From then onwards some of the older boys were transferring regularly to the Volunteers. The split in the Volunteers did not affect the Fianna organisation in Cork at all.

Seamus Courtney replaced Liam O'Callaghan as Scoutmaster and continued in that position until appointed O.C. Munster at the Limerick Convention in 1915. Seán Healy followed Courtney as O.C. Cork City and County. When he joined the Volunteers in 1918 Tadhg O'Sullivan replaced him. A vote of the boys was taken on this occasion, the candidates being Tadhg O'Sullivan and Frank McMahon. The meeting was held in the City Hall. Frank McMahon later succeeded Tadhg O'Sullivan as O.C. Seamus Courtney held his appointment as O.C. Munster until his death in 1918 or early 1919. Seán Healy held the appointment as O.C. Cork City and County from the Limerick Convention until he joined the Volunteers in 1918.

Up to 1915 the Fianna in Cork was purely a Scout movement. After that it became more of a military body and a training ground for the Volunteers. We were getting some small arms, which the boys were picking up themselves, and the older boys were given training with the revolver. We also got some rock rifles. Up to 1915 the Fianna carried staves or poles similar to the Baden Powell Scouts, but this was discontinued after 1915.

Some day during Holy Week, 1916, Seamus Courtney and Seán Healy got instructions from Sean O'Sullivan to mobilise all the bigger boys at the Hall in Sheares Street on Easter Sunday morning. He instructed us to get them to bring plenty of grub as they may be out late. He did not tell us that they would be out overnight and we had no idea of what was on. About a week before that Seán Healy had moved boxes of ammunition from D.T. O'Sullivan's, Cork Street, to various places in the city. He had a motor cycle and side car for delivering English daily papers at the time and he carried the boxes under the newspapers.

On Easter Sunday morning between twenty and thirty Fianna paraded at the Hall in Sheares Street. Some were from Blarney and other outside areas, but most of them were city lads. We were armed with two or three rock rifles and eight or ten revolvers, some .22 and some .32. Seán Healy had a Lee Metford rifle and a good supply of .303. We had no idea of where we were going or what the purpose of the parade was, but there was a tension which made us think it was something more than an ordinary mobilisation.

We travelled to Crookstown on the train with the Cork City Volunteers and marched from Crookstown to Macroom. We fell behind in the march and when we got into Macroom some time after the Volunteers we were told the parade was cancelled and we were to return home. We came back to Cork by train the same evening.

On the Tuesday night of Easter Week Seán Healy ~~was~~ a member of the guard on the Hall. During the remainder of the week he was on duty keeping the Brigade Officers informed of what was going on around town.

Immediately after Easter Week the Fianna continued to parade in uniform and on one occasion the Sluagh leaders were arrested and detained for one night.

After Easter Week, 1916, the Cork Fianna did everything possible to revive the spirit of the people and to change their apathetic attitude. One incident may be worth recording. Seamus Courtney and Seán Healy decided to run a concert in the City Hall. It was the first of its kind after Easter Week. We asked Birdie Conway to sing "The Wearing of the Green", to which she kindly consented. When she came to the line "High above their <sup>shining</sup> weapons hang their own beloved green", she turned to the wings and Liam óg O'Callaghan marched on to the stage carrying a green flag with harp, and escorted by a Guard of Honour composed of Dick Murphy and Jerome Mullane with rifles and bayonets at the slope, and in full uniform. The people went absolutely mad with enthusiasm. There were detectives in the Hall, and we had to get girls to smuggle the rifles in and out of it. Monica Vaughan, Annie Wickham and Katty Gorman were three who helped in this respect. We were very proud of the success of the concert at that particular time.

*x Shining*

SIGNED:

*Seán Healy*  
*from the Ceilidh*

DATE:

*4th October 1947*

WITNESS:

*Florence O'Donoghue*

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