

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

BURO STAIRÉ MÍLEATA 1913-21

L.C. W.S. 80



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BURO STAIRÉ MÍLEATA 1913-21

(Bureau of Military History 1913-21).

26 RAEDH NA NIARTHARACH,
(26 Westland Row),

BAILE ÁTHA CLIATH.
(Dublin).

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ORIGINAL

STATEMENT OF PATRICK HARRIS, 11 ST
NESSAN STREET, CORK.

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

BURÓ STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21

PERIOD: 1902 TO EASTER, 1916

NO. W.S. 80

UNIT: 'B' COMPANY, CORK CITY I.V.

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I was a member of the Cork Celtic Literary Society from about 1902 to 1908. The Society had rooms in ~~An Dún in Queen Street~~ and had about 22 members, including Liam de Roiste, Dan Tierney, Terence MacSwiney, Fred Cronin, Jim Barrett, Bob Fitzgerald, Miceál O'Neill, Dan O'Mahony, Donal Cronin, Dan O'Sullivan, Jeremiah O'Sullivan, Bill Henley, Daniel Delanty, Diarmuid Fawsitt, Seán Mulroy, Michael Radley, Brian Kelleher, Denis O'Neill, Gus O'Neill, Denis O'Mahony, Ned Sheehan and myself. This body was the forerunner of Sinn Féin in Cork, and the members of it were active in all advanced national and cultural activities. They started the Irish Industrial Development Association, of which Diarmuid Fawsitt became Secretary; they led all anti-British and anti-recruiting activities. Labour in Cork was hostile and pro-British at the time.

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When a Branch of Sinn Féin was organised locally about 1905 its main strength came from the same men and from the associated organisation, Inghnídhe na h-Eireann, which had about 50 or 60 members and rooms also in ~~An Dún~~. Most of the members of the Celtic joined Sinn Féin; Terence MacSwiney and Fred Cronin did not; they did not approve of the dual monarchy idea and were in favour of Republicanism.

I was in U.S.A. from 1908 to 1912, and on my return to Cork had not much contact with national organisations until the start of the Volunteers.

I attended the first public meeting called for the formation of the Volunteers in the City Hall, Cork, on 14th December, 1913. I think the meeting was called by a notice in the Press signed by Tomás MacCurtain, Liam de Roiste, Seán Jennings and Maurice O'Connor. The published accounts of the meeting are fairly correct up to the point where they imply that the meeting broke up after the attack on the platform by the A.O.H. contingent. That was not the case. The Hall was full and the majority of the crowd did not approve of the A.O.H. men's action. They stayed in the Hall after the A.O.H. contingent left and the meeting went on. Forms of application for membership were distributed - I got mine from Denis O'Mahony - and a large number of them were filled up and handed in.

There was no formal election of a Committee at the first meeting. The promoting Committee carried on the organisation for a time afterwards but there was an election for a Committee when we were in Fisher Street in 1914.

The first parade I attended was in An Dún, Queen Street, on 14th January, 1914. There were about 20 or 25 present. An ex-serviceman named Donovan drilled us. Parades were two nights a week for each group, but drilling went on every night.

We moved to the Hall in Fisher Street early in 1914, and the four Companies in the City were formed there. 'A' and 'B' Companies were on the south side of the City, 'C' and 'D' on the north side. I was in 'B' Company. It extended from Barrack Street to Douglas, south of the River; 'A' Company covered the area from Barrack Street to the College Road. This four Company formation for the city was not changed at any time up to Easter, 1916. When the Redmond followers came into the organisation in

large numbers in the Summer of 1914 they were absorbed into the existing Companies, and their influx did not make any changes in the Officer personnel of the Companies.

The Company Officers were elected after we had been in Fisher Street for some time. Tests had been carried out by the Chief Drill Instructor, Donovan, before that, and everyone had a pretty good idea of who would be most suitable as Officers. Everyone was willing to work under anybody appointed or elected. There were some changes of Officers at the earliest stages but, in general, the Officers at Easter, 1916, had held their posts, some from the start and most of them for 18 months or more.

The first elections for the Committee were held in Fisher Street in the early months of 1914. I was elected a member of the Committee at that election and held office until the next election which was six months later and after the Redmond followers had gone out. In this second election Dan Barrett was nominated and I withdrew in his favour.

Although the influence of the I.R.B. was not obvious to me at that time, I saw later, when I became a member in 1915, that the I.R.B. men, largely on their merit as individuals, did, in fact, exercise an unseen control over the Volunteer organisation. Practically all the Officers were I.R.B. men. The circle I was taken into in 1915 had ten or twelve members, and Seán Murphy was the centre. The I.R.B. influence worked in the selection of members of the Committee and in the selection or election of Officers.

There was an executive Committee of the large Committee, and there was also a Military Council, composed of a few of the higher Officers and a representative from each Company. There were also Finance, Equipment and other Sub-Committees. Some members of the principal Committee were not Officers of the Volunteers, they held no rank; some of them paraded as ordinary Volunteers, others did not parade at all.

When the Redmond followers came into the Volunteers, 'B' Company, which had been about 40 strong, went up to 140 or 150 men. There was a demand for representation of the new element on the Committee, and a number of names were submitted. On the Committee we decided to accept four nominees, and we selected the four men whom we thought would be least partizan and weakest from the A.O.H. point of view. They were George Crosbie, J.F. O'Riordan, Pat Aherne and Tom Byrne. ~~John J. Hergen was a candidate but he was defeated.~~ We proposed these four ourselves and they were elected. 'B' Company did not lose any arms when the A.O.H. men left at the Split. Any arms we had then were in the hands of men who continued to follow the Committee. The rifles stolen out of Fisher Street by the Redmondites after the Split were Garabaldi's, and not much use anyway. There was no ammunition for them. They stole the bugles of a bugle band that had been formed at the same time.

After the Split a meeting was held in Fisher Street of the 50 or so from the four Companies who decided to support the Committee. We had about 10 in 'B' Company. Tomás MacCurtain put the position to the meeting and said that anyone who did not agree with what the Committee had done could leave. Numbers were very small for a time and it was very hard to get men to turn up regularly for parades. They were very conscious of the hostility everywhere evident against us at the time.

We moved to Sheares' Street Hall early in 1915. Each Company had a room there which they decorated and looked after themselves. Numbers were still small but were growing steadily. Many joined but did not continue to turn up. Tomás MacCurtain questioned all of us individually as to why we thought men were not turning up and he urged each of us to get a few recruits.

The Officers at Easter, 1916, as far as I can recollect them, were:-

Brigade O.C.	Tomás MacCurtain.
Vice O.C.	Terence MacSwiney.
Adjutant.	Pat Higgins.
Quartermaster.	Seán Murphy.

Cork City Battalion.

O.C.	Seán O'Sullivan.
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'A' Company.

Captain.	Seán Scanlon.
1st Lieut.	Jeremiah Donovan.
2nd Lieut.	Paddy Corkery.
Adjutant.	
Quartermaster.	

'B' Company.

Captain.	Daniel Barrett.
1st Lieut.	Paddy Trahey.
2nd Lieut.	Donal Óg O'Callaghan.
Adjutant.	Pat Harris.
Quartermaster.	Con Murphy.

I do not remember the Officers of 'C' and 'D'.

I am not sure what the exact arms position was, but all 'B' Company men who turned out were armed. My brother Tom had a box of 3,000 rounds of .303 ammunition at home which had come from Dublin some time before. We brought it to the Hall in Sheares' Street on Holy Thursday. Between 30 and 50 Mauser rifles had come to Cork and had been distributed to the Companies. Some Lee Enfield rifles came from Dublin also. Liam Roche bought a Mauser rifle in England. It came over in a sail and was delivered to Fisher Street. Tadg Barry and I brought it to Liam's house in St. Bridget Street. Pat Ahern and I bought a target rifle for £5.0.0 from a man living near the Barracks whose son was in the army. 'B' Company had always been very active in procuring arms, and we may have been better off in this respect than the other City Companies. In addition, both Seán Murphy, the Brigade Q.M., and Seán O'Sullivan, the Battalion O.C., were from the Company Area and this may have helped.

We got orders for Easter Sunday, 1916, from Seán O'Sullivan during the week before it. We were to mobilise for a two day exercise, bring all arms, ammunition and equipment, and two days' rations. We had no definite information as to what was intended, but there was a general feeling that it was something serious. Rumours were plentiful, and when the Officers advised everyone to go to Confession, and when we saw the preparations being made in assembling ammunition and so on, it was clear to everybody that it was going to be more than an ordinary exercise.

At the Hall in Sheares' Street on Sunday morning scapulars and medals, which had been sent by some convent, were distributed, and it was evident that there was going to be a fight, but we did not know where we were going or what plans had been made. 'B' Company mobilised everyone of the 40 or 50 men on the rolls and the following paraded:-

Seán Murphy	Battalion Q.M.
Donal Barrett	Captain
Patrick Trahey	1st Lieut.
Donal O'Callaghan	2nd Lieut.
Patrick Harris	Company Adjutant.
Con Murphy	Company Q.M.
Thomas Harris	
Edward O'Donoghue	
James Hastings	
Tadg Murphy	
Seamus Murphy	
Seán (Bán) Murphy	
Joseph Keynolds	
Micéal Ó Quill	
John Swanton	
Denis Neville	
D. Coveney	
Toddy Sullivan	
James Flaherty	
Jerry Donovan (Douglas)	
Denis Lyons	
Mick Murphy	
James Walsh	
Con Cauty	
Patrick O'Donoghue	
Frank McCarthy	
Wm. Fitzgibbon	
T. Canny	
Liam de Roiste	
Rd. Keyes	
Wm. Power	
Micéal O'Neill	
Jim Ahern	
Dan McSweeney	
John Brown	
Don Cronin	
<i>Thomas Walsh</i>	

Each man had brought his own food supply and Oxo cubes in tins were distributed at the Hall. First aid outfits were also distributed - the first time we had got them. The strengths of the other Companies, as far as I remember, were:- 'A' - 57. 'C' - 18. 'D' - 60.

To indicate the uncertainty of the position, Liam Roche, who was a member of the Committee, said to me that day: "I don't know if we will be back. I have to attend a meeting in Ballingearry tomorrow."

Everyone in 'B' Company was armed with a rifle, and the rifles of any men who did not parade were collected. Every man had at least 50 rounds. Some had revolvers as well - I know Donal Óg had one. We had no explosives. Some few men, of whom Henry Lorton was one, were detailed to remain behind as a guard on the Hall. Some oldish men turned out, including Denny Neville, Swanton and Courtney.

We marched to Capwell Station where the tickets for the train were issued to us by Denny Barry, who had gone ahead and secured them. We did not pay for the tickets. We had almost the whole train to ourselves. We detrained at Crookstown and marched to Seánablath, where Pat Higgins and a contingent from Ballinhassig met us. We went from there via Kilmurray to Macroom, picking up the West Cork men at Kilmurray. The day was very wet. We did not know of the cancellation of the orders until we got to Macroom, where we were told to return to Cork.

I stayed at home on Monday as we had been ordered to be available in case we would be needed. All of us had taken our arms to our homes in the usual way when we returned from Macroom.

I have no knowledge of what happened at the Hall during Easter Week, but I went to the Hall the night the meeting was held about the surrender of arms. I did not surrender my rifle, but dumped it in a safe place.

My brothers Tom and Michael were arrested on 8th May. I escaped because I was not in the house at the time of the raid.

SIGNED:

Patrick Harris

DATE:

9th Dec. 1947.

WITNESS: _____

