

Military Archives Cathal Brugha
BKs Rathmines Dublin 6

REAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

BURO STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21

No. W.S. 125

Robert Brennan

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A. PERSONAL FACTORS.

1. The Irish Volunteers.
2. No.
3. Wexford Batt. Wexford Brigade and later Brigade H.Q.
4. Yes.
5. Partly.
6. Up to about 6 weeks before the Rising I was a private in A/Coy. Wexford Batt. At that time an order arrived from Comdt. Pearse that I was to take up the position of Brigade Q.M. with the rank of Captain. This order was conveyed verbally by Captain Seumas O'Sullivan, then an organiser for the I.V. He subsequently married a sister of Ned Daly's in Limerick.
7. See 6.
8. Not my rank but my position. When Comdt. Paul Galligan left Enniscorthy to take over Ferns and Camolin during the Rising it was agreed by the other officers that I should be acting Comdt.
9. See 6.
10. Prior to the Rising Sean Sinnott, Mount John, Grogan's Road, Wexford, was Comdt., Wexford Battalion, and V.Comdt. of the Wexford Bdge. Myles Redmond was a Lieut. I forget the names of other officers.
11. During the Rising Paul Galligan was Bde. Comdt., Seumas Doyle, Adjt., Seumas Rafter, Jn.R. Etchingham, M. de Lacey, and Rd. King, Staff Officers.
12. None that I know of.
13. Yes.
14. I was Secretary of County Wexford Board.

15. 1906, I think. It might have been earlier or later. Wexford Circle. Met in various houses, principally in mine in later days. E.P. Foley, now of Crossabeg, was Centre. There was about 15 or 20 members. I was sworn in by Sean T. Ó Ceallaigh.

B. THE VOLUNTEERS PRIOR TO THE RISING.

1. The I.R.B. was responsible for the organisation of the I.V. in Wexford.
 2. By insuring that the officers were members of I.R.B.
 3. The I.R.B. selected officers and tried to have them appointed or elected.
- 4 to 13. I can give no information under these heads.

C. PREPARATIONS FOR THE RISING.

- 1(a). Sometime previous to the outbreak of war (I think it was early in 1914) Bulmer Hobson addressed a meeting of members of I.R.B. in my house at Somerville, Wexford, and stated that war between Germany and England was practically certain and that when it occurred we would certainly have a Rising.

After the war started in 1914, I attended a Leinster Council meeting of the I.R.B. in the Foresters' Hall, Parnell Square. Tom Clarke presided and stated the Rising would occur at a suitable time before the War ended.

In March 1916, Padraig Pearse delivered a lecture in Enniscorthy Athenaeum. From the tone of his speech it was clear to everyone that the Rising was only a few weeks off. After the lecture he made arrangements to convey the date by code messages to the officers in the various districts.

- (b). On Thursday 21st April, Sean Sinnott, Comdt. Wexford Bn.

and V.Comdt. Wexford Bde., showed me a communication from Pearse purporting to order a number of school desks by a certain date. This conveyed the news that the mobilisation for the Rising was fixed for Sunday 23rd at 6 p.m.

2,3,4. Sean Sinnott ordered the mobilisation and there was no dissent until Saturday when, following rumours that there was dissent at H.Q. in Dublin, a message arrived from the Kilkenny Bde. (which was to have acted in concert with Wexford) saying that because of the H.Q. dissent Kilkenny was not moving. We had a meeting in my house on Friday night or Sat. night of the local Batt. officers with, I think, Seumas Doyle, the Bde. Adjutsnt, and we decided to go ahead without Kilkenny. We did so decide at some time.

5. No.

6-14. I have no personal knowledge.

15. From the beginning of the war we had been arming the Brigade as well as we could by purchasing carbines in Dublin and by making pikes. My wife organised first aid classes in Wexford; and in Enniscorthy. Mary White did likewise.

16-31. I have no personal knowledge.

D. PLANS FOR THE RISING.

1. Liam Mellows came to Wexford to discuss plans which I think he divulged in full to Sean Sinnott, Mount John, Grogan's Rd. Wexford. Mellows told me he was to take charge of Wexford, Kilkenny (and I think Carlow) and march on Dublin. Subsequently his command was changed to Galway and Ginger O'Connell was appointed to the former area.

2-11. I don't know.

12. We collected information regarding the strength and disposition of military and police forces in Wexford area and I believe this information was forwarded to H.Q.
- 13-19. I don't have any personal knowledge.
20. On Thursday, 21st April, a written dispatch from Pearse was delivered to Sean Sinnott, Vice Comdt. of the Brigade, and Comdt. Wexford Battn. The courier travelled by train to Wexford. I think the bearer was Miss Min Ryan (Mrs. Mulcahy), but it may have been Miss K. Brady. On Sunday, 24th, the countermanding order from MacNeill was brought to Ginger O'Connell by Miss Min Ryan. Later that day (about 8 p.m.) a dispatch was delivered to Sean Sinnott from Pearse postponing the mobilisation for the Rising.
21. With the exception of the first mentioned dispatch above I saw none of them and I don't know whether copies are available.
22. Yes.
- 23(a). It prevented the Wexford Bde. from finally going out till Wednesday night or Thursday morning.
- (b). The mobilisation point for Wexford town was the Wexford sports field and the time 6 p.m. I was there at 5 p.m. when Lieut. Myles Redmond arrived on a bicycle and said that Ginger had arrived and on the orders of MacNaill called off the mobilisation. I saw Ginger and he confirmed this. At eight o'clock Sean Sinnott got a dispatch from Pearse postponing the mobilisation. On Monday 24th at 2 p.m., hearing that Dublin was out off from all communication we concluded the Rising was on and Sinnott mobilised the local units for that night. Again Ginger arrived and said that only a handful of Citizen Army men had gone out and ruined everything. He admitted he had no exact knowledge and on my invitation came to

my house to await news from Dublin by the night train. The Wexford officers assembled there and so did Seumas Doyle, the Bde. Adjutant. At 2 a.m. (25th) I met the Dublin train which was five or 6 hours late and the Guard (John Doyle) said all Dublin was in the hands of the Volunteers. I reported this to the officers in my house and Ginger agreed we should go out. He and Seumas Doyle left for Enniscorthy. Paddy Leary was sent to Rosslare to try and destroy the railway viaduct to delay troops expected from England. Myles Redmond was ordered to mobilise the volunteers in South Wexford. At 6 a.m. (25th) Sean Sinnott and I crossed the Three Rock Mountains to Skeeterpark where, during the day, the men from Forth and Bargy assembled. We posted scouts to prevent surprise and commandeered such vehicles and implements as we thought would be useful. At 10 p.m. as we were about to march to Enniscorthy, Lieut. Redmond arrived from Wexford with an order from Ginger that we were not to proceed, that Dublin was smashed and that the British had landed a division at Dunlaoghaire. We disbanded, but I warned the men to be ready for another order to proceed which I hoped to send them. On Wednesday morning I returned to Wexford and had a row with Ginger in the course of which he said he would have me courtmartialled. I said it was I who would be doing the courtmartialling. On Wednesday afternoon (26th) I went to Enniscorthy by train and found the officers there awaiting the return of Comdt. Galligan who had gone to Dublin. As I had heard in Wexford that British reinforcements were to arrive via Rosslare we sent two men to disrupt the railway line south of Enniscorthy. These men were captured by police from Oylegate after some firing. Thereupon we decided to go out and began mobilising the Enniscorthy, Ferns, etc. men. Comdt. Galligan arrived at midnight and brought an order from Comdt. Connolly that we were to lie across

the lines from Rosslare to Dublin so as to cut off any British reinforcements arriving via Rosslare. We posted the proclamation on the Athenaeum and occupied the town of Enniscorthy and subsequently other posts in North Wexford.

24. See above.

25. I held that if any considerable action was taken it was the duty of all of us to go out believing as I did that no fight had failed because of premature action, but that many had been lost because the fighting men had waited too long.

26(a). Generally, every man in the Wexford Area knew that the mobilisation for Easter Sunday meant a Rising and the same was true for the subsequent mobilisation.

(b). I think most of the Wexford units realised that a fight was pending on Easter Sunday certainly as early as the Thursday or Friday before that day.

27-29. I can't say.

30. I have no figures but I daresay there were two hundred or three hundred carbines or rifles in the Wexford Brigade area; a goodly number of shotguns and a considerable number of pikes. There was a standard pike, the design of which had been made by Mr. Judge of Dublin. This design was printed and I brought copies to Wexford, but after making a few from this design, we discarded it as the head was too heavy and we concentrated on making a lighter head.

31. We had counted on taking nearly all the arms and equipment of the R.I.C. by taking their barracks by surprise.

E. MISSIONS ABROAD.

1-20. I have no personal knowledge.

Sean McDermott told me that the first idea was to land the arms from Germany in Limerick but they had been unable to make satisfactory arrangements and changed the venue to Fenit. Later it was found a merchant in Limerick was willing to receive the cargo and word was sent to Germany to have the consignment go direct to Limerick, but this message arrived too late.

F. THE VATICAN.

1 - 9. I have no knowledge.

G. THE FRAMEWORK OF THE RISING.

1. On Thursday 21st April Sean Sinnott, Comdt. Wexford Battn., gave me orders to mobilise for Sunday 24th at 6 p.m. on Newtown Road near Wexford Park.

If the purport of the rest of this question is to show the effects of the countermanding order, as I believe it is, I wish to say that the following was the result:

If the countermanding order had not been issued we would have had on Sunday the whole Wexford Brigade out. As it was the Wexford Town Battn., with the exception of a few individuals, did not come out and neither did the Forth and Bargo contingents, nor New Ross, Ballymurrin and Gorey.

For the final mobilisation in Enniscorthy there were only the Enniscorthy and Ferns men. However, towards the end of the week there were several other contingents in North Wexford assembled and ready to march on an order from our H.Q. in Enniscorthy. I'm sure that Seumas Doyle will have particulars of these.

2. Yes.

3. Enniscorthy.

4. The Irish Volunteers and Cumann na mBan (O/C. Mary White).
6. Only a few of the officers were in uniform. (I can't give the total numbers).
7. The Enniscorthy battalions, Ferns, and individuals from Wexford and Gorey.
8. From Comdt. Paul Galligan who had got a verbal order from James Connolly.
9. I can't say.
10. To prevent British reinforcements reaching Dublin via Rosslare.

We sent out scouts to various points to warn of any approach from Wexford town where the British assembled some 2,000 troops.
11. We did not intend to defend the town but to fight delaying actions if necessary with the Blackstair mountains on one flank and the sea on the other. We expected to get an order from Dublin to go to their aid and for this purpose we held a train under steam.
17. There were journalists, teachers, shop-keepers, printers, blacksmiths, carpenters, plumbers, hairdressers and every sort of clerical worker and artisan and unskilled labourers.

H. ARMS.

- 1-7. I do not have the figures.
8. No.
9. We collected a good number of shotguns and revolvers from private houses throughout the North Wexford area.
- 10-13. I do not know.

I. WIRELESS.

- 1-5. I do not know.

J. ENGINEERING.

1-6. I do not know.

K. FLAGS.

1,7,9. The tri-colour was hoist over the Athenaeum, our H.Q.
10,11. I believe this flag is in the possession of Father Pat
Murphy then of the House of Missions, Enniscorthy and
now P.P. of Glynn, Co. Wexford.

8. I believe it was Seumas Doyle, Adjutant of the Brigade.

L. RAILWAYS AND SHIPPING.

1,2,3. We were to destroy such railway lines as would hamper
the enemy. We did destroy portion of the main line
between Wexford and Enniscorthy, but not before a train
had arrived from Wexford. This train was the usual
train intended to bring workers from Enniscorthy and other
North Wexford points to Kynoch's powder factory in Arklow
We took the crew off the train and held it under steam
prepared to use it in transferring our forces to Dublin
if this became necessary.

M. FOOD.

1. They were to bring three days' food.

2. So far as I know, yes.

4-8. In Enniscorthy we commandeered food from the shops.
This was cooked in the Athenaeum and in private houses
by members of the Cumann na mBan.

O. CLERGY.

1-5. We were visited by Rev. P. Murphy, M.S.S., Rev. P.
Cummins, the cathedral, Rev. John Codd, do. After news
of the Dublin surrender reached us Father Cummins and a
number of prominent citizens went to Wexford to

interview Colonel French who was in charge of the British there to with a view to arranging terms of surrender. Prior to this a Father Owen Kehoe who had a parish north west of Enniscorthy, came in with District Inspector McGovern, R.I.C., Arklow, and two R.I.C. men in a motor car waving a white flag. They had a copy of an order from Pearse ordering us to surrender or disperse.

P. CASUALTIES.

- 1-10. A first-aid station was set up in the Athenaeum by Cumann na mBan in charge of Miss Mary White.

Q. LOOTING.

- 1-2. There was no looting. To help preserve order, we closed all the publichouses. One man who transgressed was arrested and the keys of his premises taken from him.

R. PRISONERS.

1. Two volunteers attempting to wreck railway were captured by R.I.C. from Oylegate after an exchange of shots. Several couriers were captured by police or military from Wexford.
2. The three R.I.C. men who came to Enniscorthy from Arklow with Pearse's order were placed under arrest because they carried revolvers. They were released on giving certain guarantees.

S. VOLUNTEERS FROM GREAT BRITAIN.

- 1-8. I have no personal knowledge .

T. SURRENDER.

1. On Saturday a copy of a special edition of the Wexford Free Press was brought in telling of Pearse's surrender.
2. Later, three police (as detailed above) arrived from

Arklow bearing a white flag. They gave me a copy of Pearse's order. Seumas Doyle may have the document.

3. I think not. I could write it in part if necessary.
4. No. I shall write the story when I get time.

U. CONVERSATIONS WITH EXECUTED LEADERS.

1. I had a long conversation with Sean McDermot the night before or two nights before he was executed. I had no opportunity of putting it on record at the time and the details are now hazy in my mind.

V. THE STORY ETC.

1. Not that I know of. I intend to write what I can remember of it.
2. Yes, if I could afford the time.

W. MISCELLANEOUS.

1. I cannot say.
2. Very little Irish was used.

X. DOCUMENTS.

1. The letter from Colonel French offering to conduct two officers from the Co. Wexford Bde. to interview Comdt. Pearse in person, (We had insisted we would not surrender unless we got a verbal order from Pearse), is in the Museum. This document was addressed to "Capt. Brennan" and referred to the two officers as "Capt. Doyle and Capt. Etchingham" and to Pearse as "Comdt. Pearse".

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