

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
BUREAU STAIRS MILITARY 1913-21
No. W.S. 139

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 139.....

Witness

Michael Walker

Identity

Member of G/Coy. 2nd Battn. I.V.

Subject

Jacob's Garrison, Easter Week 1916.

Conditions, if any, stipulated by Witness

File No.S.736.....

Form B.S.M. 2.

ORIGINAL

STATEMENT OF MICHAEL WALKER OF THE BUEGALOW,
GLASSON'S BRIDGE, HILLTOWN, CO. DUBLIN,
EX-MEMBER OF G/COY. 2ND BATTALION, DUBLIN
BRIGADE, IRISH VOLUNTEERS.

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY
BUIO STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913
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My brother, John Walker, and myself were amongst the audience at the meeting to inaugurate the Irish Volunteers held in the Rotunda buildings in 1913. Amongst others present on the platform was the late Padraig Pearse. My recollection of the meeting is that it was one which pulsated with an intensity of national feeling with some excitement caused by the appearance in the hall of some labour elements who were on strike who had come with the object of preventing one of the persons present on the platform from addressing the meeting. After some considerable excitement they withdrew on a patriotic appeal by the Chairman for unity for the sake of Ireland. During this meeting printed recruiting forms were distributed amongst the audience for signature by anyone who was prepared to join the Volunteers it was proposed to form. Impressed by the appeals made by different speakers, including Padraig Pearse, at the opportunity which was offered to Nationalist Ireland by the formation of the Ulster Volunteers, myself and my brother John signed recruiting forms.

Some time subsequent~~ly~~ to this meeting we received notification to attend at the premises of the Gaelic League, Parnell Square, for the purpose of being formed into companies; we subsequently attended several parades and took part in drill practice.

About this time a difference of opinion crept in between the followers of the late John Redmond and the party supporting Padraig Pearse in respect of the supply and control of arms &c. and I was approached by the late Dick McKee with whom I was personally acquainted to join the "G" Coy. Irish Volunteers (as distinct from the "National Volunteers" or Redmond's supporters) which at that time had its headquarters in a small hall near the

Botanic Gardens which I believe is now called "Moibhi Hall".
 Myself and my brother John joined and were enrolled as members
 of the Company.

We attended every Tuesday night for drill and rifle
 practice, our officers being Capt. Paul Galligan, First Lieut.
 Dick McKee and Lieut. McSweeney. Myself and my brother John
 were actively connected with this Coy. until Easter Week 1916,
 and with this Coy. we both took an active part in the Rising.

Events leading up to Easter Week 1916, which have
 impressed themselves on my memory are, first, the great parade
 of the Volunteers on St. Patrick's Day 1916, in College Green,
 both as to its numbers and the determined spirit which seemed
 to actuate every man. I remember one incident of that day which
 was rather dramatic. A British officer in a motor car coming
 through Dame St. from the direction of the Castle reached a
 point near the Bank of Ireland leading into Westmoreland St.
 which, of course, was very crowded both by the Irish troops
 parading and the general public looking on - he was insisting on
 proceeding through Westmoreland St. - the people objecting.
 Eamon De Valera, who was in charge of the 3rd Batt. at this
 point, approached the officer and ordered him back through Dame
 St. The officer appeared to dispute his authority, but after
 some tense moments obeyed de Valera's order to return as he had
 come.

My second impressive recollection is attending at a
 concert held in a hall in Parnell Square (I think it was the
 Keating Branch of the Gaelic League) for the purpose of raising
 funds for the Irish Volunteers at which the late Padraig Pearse
 appeared on the platform in full uniform and fully armed. He
 addressed the audience and told them that the "Volunteers might
 be called into action at any moment" and appealed for the
 support of the people with funds, suggesting that the women might
 even contribute their jewellery. He also appealed to any man

who was not prepared to face this issue by reason of any other responsibilities to withdraw from the movement, hand in any arms which they might have and nothing the worse would be thought of them. This brought it home to me very clearly the dangers and realities of the position of matters and I made up my mind I would face up to the obligations which I had taken when I joined the movement.

We now come to Easter Sunday 1916, My brother John and myself, being well-known racing cyclists at this period, had been appointed by our Coy. as men who were each to mobilise at short notice so many members of the Coy. whenever they would be required. Easter Sunday morning my brother John and myself received instructions from Commandant Thomas Hunter to attend at Father Mathew Park, Fairview. We attended there and were both given instructions to inform the men on our respective lists to stand prepared in their homes for further instructions. We subsequently received word to inform our men that they were released.

Easter Monday morning at 7.30 a.m. Commandant Hunter sent word to me that he required my presence in Father Mathew Park. I went over and saw him and he instructed me to inform Dick McKee that the Coy. was being mobilised for 10 a.m. at Stephen's Green and to bring rifles and ammunition and full equipment. I sent my brother John to inform Dick McKee of this order and proceeded to mobilise the members of the Coy. on my list and my brother John did likewise with the men on his list after he had informed Dick McKee of the foregoing order from Comdt. Hunter. The mobilisation of the men having been completed, I returned to Father Mathew Park and informed Comdt. Hunter that his orders had been carried out and he then said to me "God bless you Mick, get to the Green yourself and let no one stop you". My brother John had preceded me to the Green and I followed on and joined the Coy. there.

On arriving at the Green I found several companies there waiting for orders. We were waiting about 1½ hours when Dick McKee came to me and said "Mick, I will have to ask you to go over to Father Mathew Park again and ask why the other companies are not coming over". I proceeded immediately on my bicycle and saw Capt. Frank Henderson and I also saw about a couple of hundred men. As instructed, I asked Capt. Henderson why himself and the companies had not come to Stephen's Green, and he told me his difficulty was transport. I told him he was to commandeer any cars he found on the road. He said he would do this and follow on after me. I then returned to the Green but found nobody there and was at a loss to know what I should do myself. I was, however, approached by a man in civilian dress who said "Walker, get to Jacob's". I went to Jacob's and found the premises in the course of being occupied. I reported to Dick McKee whose headquarters was in premises occupied by Barmac Ltd. My brother John, Volunteer Macfynn, the composer of the National Anthem (Peadar Kearney) and myself were ordered to take up positions on the roof of the Barmac buildings where we remained for some hours. We were eventually ordered from the roof by Capt. Dick McKee and put to construct a barricade in Blackpitts.

The inhabitants of Blackpitts were very hostile, singing and dancing to English songs of a quasi-patriotic type - pelted stones at us and generally showed great opposition which eventually culminated in an attack on a Volunteer by a man who formed one of the crowd with the object of disarming the Volunteer. This man was shot and bayoneted, I believe, fatally. Somewhere between 6 p.m. and 7 p.m. we were withdrawn from the barricade and entered Jacob's buildings forming portion of its garrison.

Some time prior to Easter Week Capt. Paul Galligan was transferred to Wexford. Lt. Dick McKee acted as O/C. of the Coy. On Easter Monday McKee was promoted to the rank of Capt. by Comdt. McDonagh. Our Coy. was about 50 strong. Of this number only about 20 turned out. This was due to the confusion caused

by the cancellation order issued by Eoin MacNeill. I was armed with a rifle and 150 rounds of ammunition; in addition I had a .38 automatic.

I do not know how many men formed the garrison.

The officers in charge, so far as I know, were Commandant Thomas McDonough, Micheal O'Hanrahan, Major McBride, Commandant Thomas Hunter, Captain Dick McKee, Captain Slator, Capt. Colber and Captain Meldon.

My brother John and myself were assigned to the portion of the garrison defending the ground floor of the building. Several members of the Dublin Metropolitan Police, who were on duty in the district, both in uniform and plain clothes, were arrested and brought into the building as prisoners.

At first the catering for the garrison consisted of all kinds of confectionery and rich cakes found on the premises, with tea, but subsequently parties were sent out to commandeer provisions, and members of the Cumann na mBan, who also formed portion of the garrison under Miss Maire Ni Suiblaigh, gave the garrison some substantial meals.

The strategic points covered by the buildings occupied were Dublin Castle, Portobello and Wellington Barracks, Ship St. Barracks and also, of course, the positions occupied by the Volunteers under Madam Markievicz in the College of Surgeons and elsewhere in the Green.

Communications, so far as I know, were maintained with other strategic points in the city by dispatch carriers, principally members of the Cumann na mBan.

On the first night of the occupation (i.e. Easter Monday night) clergy from Whitefriars St. came into the buildings and ministered spiritually to any members of the garrison who required their services.

On Wednesday morning we were informed that Commandant McDonough had received a request from Eamon de Valera in charge of Boland's garrison to send out a party to relieve pressure on him by making a demonstration as far as Mount St. Bridge which was held by British Military. Members of the garrison with bicycles were selected for this sortie including my brother John and myself and we left the buildings some time in the afternoon, I think somewhere between 2 and 3 o'clock in charge of the late Lieutenant Reardon. We proceeded by Whitefriars St., York St., Stephen's Green W., Leeson St., Fitzwilliam St. as far as the corner of Holles Street where we dismounted and fired several volleys up towards the Mount St. Bridge - the noise of our volleys made it difficult to tell whether our fire was returned or not. We were then ordered to remount and we returned to headquarters by the same route as we had come but, on the return journey, on arriving at the corner of Harcourt St. and between that and the corner of York St., we came under machine gun fire from the top of Grafton St. - the order immediately was extended order and the order was immediately obeyed. One of our party however was critically wounded but we managed to get him back into Jacob's. A small garrison situated in a corner house in York St. near the old Congregational Church, supporting the garrison of the College of Surgeons, hearing the volleys, opened up and asked if we wanted shelter, but we declined and said we would prefer to return to our own H.Q. which we did. On arriving at H.Q. our casualty received first aid and was then transferred to the Adelaide Hospital nearby where he died about six hours afterwards. This was the only casualty of our garrison during the week.

Continuously during the week sniping went on from the buildings which we occupied with what results, of course, I cannot say.

On the Sunday following Easter Sunday Comdt. McDonough came back into the building (after, apparently, being out around the

city) accompanied by a clergyman whom I believe was a member of the Whitefriars St. community but whose name I do not know and, shortly afterwards, the cease fire order was given. The garrison was then paraded in a room on the ground floor before Commandant McDonough who spoke to us and he said "We are about to surrender but we have succeeded in establishing the Irish Republic according to international law by holding out for a week. Although I have assurance from his reverence here that nobody will be shot, I know I will be shot, but you men (or comrades - I am not sure of exact words here) will be treated as prisoners". Uproar broke out on this declaration and numbers of the garrison shouted "We will not trust their word (meaning the word of the English) they have deceived us before". The priest then said he "would be the last man to come in and ask you to surrender if I thought anybody would be sacrificed". Comdt. McDonough then appeared to be overcome with emotion and retired from the room. Several of the garrison commenced to destroy their arms. Another clergyman entered the premises through a window and urged all who could to escape from the building. Many did so and were supplied with clothes which had been left by people at the Whitefriars St. Priory. My brother John and myself approached Capt. McKee and I told him I believed we could make our escape. He shook hands with me and said "More luck, Mick, if you succeed let my mother know I am safe" I promised to do so. My brother and I left the building through a window and proceeded to work our way across the city and eventually succeeded in reaching home in Fairview just as curfew fell that evening after a nightmare journey through the military lines. I never had an opportunity to convey Dick McKee's message to his mother because two days afterwards both my brother and myself were arrested by the military and eventually sent to Stafford Jail

Signed: Michael Walker

Date: 6th September, 1948

Witnessed: Sean Brennan

Date: 6 September 1948

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NAMES MENTIONED BY MICHAEL WALKER.

Comdt. Thomas McDonagh	Executed after Easter Week.
P.H. Pearse	do.
Major McBride	do.
Micheal O'Hanrahan	do.
Eamon de Valera	
John Walker	
Captain Dick McKee	Later O/C. Dublin Brigade. Since deceased.
Captain Colbert	Since deceased.
Captain Paul Galligan	
Lieut. McSweeney	
Comdt. Thomas Hunter	Since deceased.
Peadar Kearney	do.
Eoin MacNeill	do.
Lieut. Reardon	do.
Captain Frank Henderson	
Captain Slater	
Captain Meldon	
Maire Ni Suiblaigh	