

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

BURO STAIRÉ MILÉATA 1913-21

No. W.S. 140

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 140

Witness

Michael Lonergan

Identity

Member of Fianna Boys 1909-1914.

Subject

Fianna Eireann 1909-1914.

Conditions, if any, stipulated by Witness

File No.S. 937.....

Form B.S.M. 2.

ORIGINAL

"Pro-Aris et Focis"

File 5934

W.S. 140



AMERICAN IRISH ASSOCIATION

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 August 1st, 1948.

Bureau of Military History
 26 Westland Row
 Dublin, Ireland.

Gentlemen:

I have been reading with great interest of the establishment of the Bureau of Military History, having received from your office a questionnaire and some literature bearing on same.

I was connected with the Fianna Eireann in Dublin from the time of its formation some time shortly after 1909 until I left to join my people in this country in April of 1914. I was later a member of the National Council of the Volunteers and a company commander of volunteers with H.Q. at 41 Parnell Square. In addition, I helped with the training of companies at Blackhall Place, Tara St. Baths etc. This would be when the volunteers were operating on a secret basis and as "athletic clubs". Many a time I mentioned to old veterans of the Fianna and Volunteers here, and there are, or were, many of them, that it was a great pity that the history of those times and events was not written up before it was too late.

There is in the public library here very considerable material bearing on the Rising of Easter Week, newspaper clippings, magazines articles, souvenir journals etc. but what I

am interested in and what is, so far as I can see, lacking, is the story of the movement and times and events leading up to and responsible for Easter Week. I have inquired into this and have so far come across nothing that covers the period. There is a book by Bulmer Hobson which does cover part of the period in question, but it is not complete; neither does it go back to what I consider the very beginning of the events which led up to Easter Week eventually - the first organization of the Fianna Eireann, the first meeting to organize same which was held in a dingy hall at the rear of 34 Lower Camden St. This place should really be designated some kind of a national shrine for it was there that things actually started.

I attended that first organization meeting of the Fianna, being then about 15 years of age. There were 50 or 60 boys present, mostly adventurers from the Coombe and neighborhood, and I found myself seated beside a lad whom I judged was not from Dublin at all by reason of his accent - Con Colbert. Out of the Fianna grew a Circle of the I.R.B. and out of this circle's initiative grew the active military training of the members of the I.R.B. This was carried on for a year or two before the open organization of the Volunteers at the Rotunda Rink in 1912, I believe. So that it can really and truly be said that this first organization meeting of the Fianna was the beginning of the military history of recent time. Previous to that, nothing whatever was being done by any organization in a military way.

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At that first meeting Madame Marokievicz was present, also I believe, Dr. Pat McCartan, a group of women and a few men, one of whom was old Councilor Paul Cregan, long since dead, I suppose. He had a son, Denis (Dinny), who was given to wearing of the kilts, day and night. Others whom I think were present at that meeting were Tom Donohue (now a priest), Sheamus McCashin and a lad named Shalloe. The Houlihan Brothers, Garry and Paddy, Sean Heuston, and others did not come in until later, but I know for certain that Con Colbert was at the first meeting. Miss Meagher of Tara St. was also at that meeting, I believe. They tell me she resides in Dublin still. I was later made commander of the Fianna (subject to "Madame" who was the "civilian" head) and I traveled Ireland week-ends organizing same in cooperation with the I.R.B. In Belfast I worked with Dinny McCullough, the Connollys and others, some of whom went over to the enemy afterwards, as Kelly did, I understand. In Cork we had a nice company in the Queen St. hall and in Limerick we established headquarters at John Daly's. Waterford was fairly barren territory, and so were sections of the West.

At any rate I wish you great success in compiling and making available to posterity the glorious story of 1916 and the events leading up to it, and I certainly do hope that the events covering the early days of the Fianna will be included complete and in detail.

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Sincerely yours,

Michael Lonergan
Michael Lonergan.

P.S. I was the first man in Ireland who taught Padraig Pearse to "form fours". When admitted to the Volunteers he was assigned to my company at 4I, as were many of his students.