

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

BURO STAIRE MILEATA 1913-21

No. W.S. 236

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS

DOCUMENT NO. W.S.....236.....

Witness

Mr. Frank Martin,
64. Dublin St.,
Dundalk,
Co. Louth.
Identity

Member of Irish Volunteers Dundalk
1914-1921.

Subject

- (a) Irish Volunteer activities Dundalk
from 1914;
- (b) Preparations for and Irish Volunteer
activities during Easter Week 1916.

Conditions, if any, stipulated by Witness

Nil.

File No. S.1312.....

Form B.S.M. 2.

ORIGINAL

STATEMENT BY FRANK MARTIN, 64 DUBLIN ST.,

DUNDALK.

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(See Pensions Claim for correct dates).

I joined the Volunteers when the organisation was started in Dundalk, late 1913 or early 1914. Paddy Hughes was the leading man at the starting of the Volunteers. After the organisation was in existence for a short time we had 300 to 400 members. We engaged in drills and training exercises in The Rink and also in the adjoining athletic grounds. Our drill instructors were ex-British army men. We collected money for arms fund and made efforts to get arms whenever available. Our drilling exercises were carried out with hurley sticks and wooden guns. I can't remember if we obtained any rifles previous to the admission of the Hibernians into the Volunteers.

When the Hibernians came into the Volunteers the number in the Dundalk Battalion increased greatly - our strength was at least double what it was previously. The split took place in the Dundalk Volunteers shortly after the outbreak of the 1914-18 war. Paddy Hughes got a lot of us together and formed the Irish Volunteers. The Hibernians organised themselves into the National Volunteers. After the split we had no further connection with the National Volunteers. We continued drilling and training and as my memory is very defective I cannot remember what arms we had close to the Rising.

About 2 weeks before the Rising Donal O'Hannigan came down from Dublin to take charge of us. He was a trained military man and put us through a severe course of training practically every night up to the Rising. I would like to point out that Paddy Hughes was the O/C. that we looked up to, but as Paddy had not sufficient military training Hannigan was sent down to help him in the Rising. I expect that Hannigan would be in charge when fighting took place.

On Holy Saturday night I first heard that a rising was

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contemplated. I was playing with the Geraldines G.A.A. Club at the time and we had a match arranged with Kilcurry for Easter Sunday. I went down to the Boyle Hall. I met Paddy Hughes and he asked me was I all right for Sunday. I told him I was to play in the match. He told me that the mobilisation ordered for Sunday was most important, that the mobilisation was to extend over some days, that I should take a week's rations with me and that we might be in action before 24 hours. From this I knew it was more than manoeuvres that were contemplated. I mobilised on Sunday morning about 10.30 a.m. at the Workhouse on the Ardee Road with my Company. Other Companies mobilised at the Boyle O'Reilly Hall. I was not armed on Sunday morning. When the Volunteers who mobilised in the Boyle Hall marched out as far as the Workhouse on the road to Ardee we fell in with them.. We marched on towards Ardee and when we arrived there we seized the rifles from the house of a chemist named McCutcheon. I don't know how many rifles we got, but I was handed one - a fine Lee Enfield. I had previous military experience before Easter Week through my associations with the Military Bks. where I was a painter for some time off and on. I got to know how to handle and care a rifle.

On Sunday, from Ardee we marched to Slane where we arrived after dark on Sunday night. We remained the whole night in Slane and took possession of an old bakery as a billet. On our way to Slane we got a message containing MacNeill's countermanding orders for the manoeuvres on Sunday. Paddy Hughes and D. O'Hannigan told us that there was no mobilisation authorised for Sunday. It was decided to carry on and we proceeded on our way.

On Monday morning we proceeded back in the direction of Dundalk when we came as far as Lurgangreen, We got a message that Dublin was up in arms from 12 noon. I think this message was brought to us by Sean McEntee. On getting the message we returned in the direction of Dublin and arrived in Castlebellingham. On our way to Castlebellingham we stopped a few cars coming from Fairyhouse Races and commandeered drivers and cars. When we arrived

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in Castlebellingham other cars came along and we proceeded to commandeer them. Sean McEntee told me to keep an eye on a Lieut. Dunville who was travelling from Fairyhouse Races in one of the commandeered cars. I told him to stand against the railing along the road. There was also a Constable McGee made prisoner and he was put alongside Lieut. Dunville. Sergt. Kieran was also lined up with the other two. Lieut. Dunville was jeering and abusing us. I cannot explain what caused the shooting, but some shots were fired. Const. McGee was killed and Lieut. Dunville got a slight wound on the arm. There was intense excitement at the time, mainly caused by Lieut. Dunville's antics. After the shooting we got into the commandeered cars and proceeded in the direction of Co. Meath. Eventually we arrived at Tyrrellstown House on the Navan Road outside Dublin City about Wednesday. We billeted there up to the Tuesday following. We heard by then that the Rising was over and we started for Dundalk in scattered batches of twos and threes. We dumped our arms, in a place some distance from Tyrrellstown House, in an old disused shack. We arrived in Dundalk about the end of the week. I was arrested the following morning. I was taken to Dundalk Jail and then later to Richmond Barracks.

In Richmond Barracks I was courtmartialled along with Sean McEntee, Denis Leahy and James Sally, charged with open rebellion and waging war against His Majesty the King and murdering Const. McGee, R.I.C. at Castlebellingham; doing acts for the purpose of assisting the enemy, etc. We were defended by Tim Healy, K.C. We were all found guilty - with the exception of James Sally - and sentenced to death. This sentence was confirmed by General Officer Commanding, and subsequently commuted to penal servitude as follows.

Sean McEntee	-	Penal servitude for life.
Frank Martin (myself)	-	do. for 10 years
Denis Leahy	-	do. for 10 years
James Sally	-	sentenced to penal servitude for 10 years, confirmed by G.O.C. with the remission of 5 years of the sentence awarded.

The trials took place on 9th and 10th June, 1916.
(See Irish Independent, Sat, June 10th 1916, for 'photo').

Shortly after our courtmartial - about 2 weeks - we were removed

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to England to Dartmoor Prisons. There were about 60 sentenced Volunteers from all over the country in Dartmoor. We were segregated from the criminal prisoners. Amongst the prisoners in Dartmoor were E. de Valera, Frank Fahy, Peadar Clancy, Fionan Lynch, Dermot Lynch, Harry Boland, Harry O'Hanrahan, William and Phil Cosgrave, P. Etchingham, George Plunkett, Jack Plunkett, Frank Thornton, Denis O'Callaghan, Billy Partridge, J.J. Walsh, J.J. Burke, Vincent Poole Desmond Fitzgerald, Pearse Beasley, Eoin MacNeill.

We were treated as criminals in the prison and had to wear prison clothes and had no association except about half an hour's exercise in the day. No talking allowed at exercise. All the Irish Volunteer prisoners in Dartmoor were sent to Lewes Prison after Xmas 1916. In Lewes we got slight relaxation in our treatment. We could talk on exercise. We still had to wear prison clothes. No parcels, papers or tobacco. We broke up the prison in Lewes - windows and furniture - as a result of a pre-arranged plan. Shortly after the smash up of Lewes we were removed in batches to other prisons. Shortly after the Lewes affair we were released, about June 1917. For our release we were all taken to Pentonville from the various prisons we were in at the time and released from there unconditionally.

We came to Ireland via Dublin and got a tremendous reception. The people in Dublin showed us by their wholehearted welcome that they thought we had achieved something. We felt in great form, and realised that our sufferings of the previous 14 months had not been in vain. The Dundalk men all returned home to Dundalk the same evening as we arrived in Dublin. The reception we received in Dundalk was marvellous.

After our return to Dundalk I was unemployed for about 18 months. Right off the reel we started to get the Volunteers going again. We had no difficulty in getting recruits. Drilling and training was started again. The first item of importance locally was the South Armagh Election campaign in January 1918. We all

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worked hard. Dundalk was the principal centre for carrying out the campaign. We were working night and day for a few weeks before the polling took place. This election was remarkable for the effect it had in getting recruits for the I.R.A. and supporters for Sinn Fein. Shortly after the election, I, John Garvey, George Fitzsimons, John McGuill, Joe Clarke, Tom Callan and Joe Duffy were arrested and taken to Belfast Prison. We were not charged with anything and we went on hunger strike. The hunger strike lasted for about 14 days and we were released unconditionally. I was again arrested in 1920 and interned in Ballykinlar Camp, Co. Down. I was released from internment at Xmas 1921.

Signed: Frank Martin

Date: 6/4/49

Witness:

John Meboy
6/4/49

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