

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

BURO STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21

No. W.S. 335

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 335.....

Witness

Major Joseph Furlong,
2 Market Street,
Wicklow.

Identity

Member of I.R.B. Wexford 1908 - ;
" " Volunteers London 1911 - ;
" " Irish Volunteers, 'D' Coy.
2nd Battalion Dublin Brigade
1915-16.

Subject

- (a) National activities 1908-1916;
- (b) Jacob's Factory, Easter Week 1916;
- (c) His imprisonment and release.

Conditions, if any, stipulated by Witness

Nil

File No. ... S.1435.....

Form B.S.M. 2.

*Major (F.S.)*STATEMENT BY ~~COL~~ JOSEPH FURLONG,

2, MARKET STREET, WICKLOW.

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My Grandfather on both sides of my family were in the Fenian movement. My father did a period in Jail during the Land League days. My mother was also a separatist. I went to school with the Christian Brothers in Wexford Town. Brother Collins who was one of our Teachers there, instructed and explained Irish History to us and made us study it. Through him and my parents I grew up a Rebel. I joined the Gaelic League when it started in Wexford.

I joined the I.R.B. in Wexford in 1908 at the instance of Ned Redmond, who worked with me in the Wexford Engineering Company. This man was drowned at sea towards the end of the Great War when his ship was blown up. I was sworn into the I.R.B. by Séan McDermott, who visited Wexford, recruiting for the I.R.B. John Barker was then the Centre. Amongst the members that I remember were Joseph Vize, Matt Keogh, Gerard Dempsey, Larry Crannage, Murt Murphy and my brother Matt. Our centre was called, I think the "Fintan Lalor". There was another I.R.B. centre in the town of Wexford also. Ned Foley was head of this centre and J. Sinnott, - Bob Brennan and Bob Bafnville were amongst its members. On joining we took the Oath of the I.R.B. and paid a subscription of one shilling per month towards expenses.

We did no drilling or training of any sort. We held debates and discussions and read a lot of literature and the writings of James Fintan Lalor. We recruited further members for the centre. Our only other activity at that time was the posting up of anti-recruiting

pamphlets. This was against recruiting for the British Army. When King Edward of England died, the "Union Jack" was flown on the Custom house in Wexford at "half mast". We cut down the flag and hid it under the woodwork on the quays. There was great police activity following this, the whole Harbour was dredged, but they failed to find it. A Police officer named Scully told me he knew who cut down the Flag, but could not produce the evidence. He swore he would find the Flag. He never did.

On King George's coronation we black flagged the Town. This was done at night and two of our party going ahead were called on by the Police to halt. They did not do so, but ran away and were chased by the Police. We flagged the route of the chase, and the flags were flying there next day. The Police could not believe we had actually seen the chase, and were sure there would be no flags on that route. The Police turned out to remove all flags before morning. Two of the Police were stationed in our doorway to watch for Matt and I. The two Police chased Murt Murphy and Matt and I slipped into our own house as the Police turned around the corner of the street. My mother and sisters were in a state of excitement as they knew the Police were in wait for us. The Police came back when they lost Murphy and again took up position in the doorway. They were dumb-founded when we opened the door next morning to go to our work.

In 1911 there were large scale Labour troubles and lock-outs in Wexford, and Matt (my brother) and I went to London. We were transferred to the I.R.B. in London.

Mick Collins was our centre there. Dan Sheehan, who was drowned at Ballykissane on Good Friday 1916 and Dan Murphy were members of this Centre. We used to meet regularly in some of the Gaelic League Centres, usually when there was a Dance on. Some arms were being procured and sent across to Ireland. I took a rifle to Tom Clarke in Dublin. Dan Sheehan gave me the rifle for delivery. We thought we were in for it when we saw that one of the bitterest of the R.I.C. had been transferred to duty on the Pier at Rosslare to search passengers suspected of dealing in contraband articles. He asked us if we had anything to declare. I said; "Yes a rifle". He replied; "Trying to be funny again, better watch your step" and passed us on. The Rifle barrell was actually strapped to the outside of my case under a hurling stick. Matt had the stock in another case. We delivered the Rifle safely to Tom Clarke.

When the Volunteers were started in Ireland, we also started in London, and Companies were started in the various Irish centres there. I joined the Sheppards Bush Company, and we used to drill under the Railway Arches there. We also had a Drill Hall. All the I.R.B. men were in the Volunteers in fact they were the Back Bone of the organisation. Mick Collins and Art O'Brien were members of the Sheppards Bush Company. We had no Arms and did our drills with wooden Guns. When the split occurred in the Volunteers in Ireland, we were also affected in London, but not very much. Some of our Volunteers drifted away from us, while others joined the British Army.

At Christmas 1915, Matt and I returned to Ireland to Wexford. Shortly after Xmas we got a message from Mick

Collins that he wanted to see us in Dublin. Joe Vize, Matt and I travelled to Dublin where we met Mick Collins. Mick told us that the Rising would take place soon. We were to give up our jobs in London and return to Ireland. We returned to London, gave up our jobs and having packed our belongings returned to Ireland. After a few days, we travelled to Dublin and reported to the Labour Exchange in search of work. We, that is Vize, Matt, and myself were given jobs in the Shell Factory at Kingsbridge, Dublin. This was a Military establishment run by British Military, where Shell cases were turned out. The Shells were not filled or fused here. We were employed in the Machine Shops, making tools for the other workers.

On reaching Dublin we were posted to Paddy Moran's Company of the Irish Volunteers, that was "D" Company 2 Battalion, Dublin Brigade. We did very little training with the Volunteers as our working time at the factory did not allow for it. I also transferred to the I.R.B. in Dublin, when I arrived there. Mick Collins was again our centre, and we had a lot of our old members from London here with us. We met at 48, Parnell Square. We were not issued with any arms before Easter Week. We continued to work in the Factory until about a week before 1916. Joe Vize walked into the Factory to start work one day about a week before Easter. He was purposely smoking a pipe, which was against factory regulations. He was ordered by a Corporal Foreman to take the pipe out of his mouth and stop smoking. He defied the Corporal and was brought before the Officer Commanding in the morning, and dismissed.

This was our cue and Matt and I and another man named Moloney decided to walk out. They tried to persuade us by threats not to do so, and turned out the Guard with fixed bayonets to prevent us. We walked up to and between the files of the Guard and out of the factory. Apparently when the bayonets did not frighten us they did not know what to do. We were subsequently summoned to appear before a Court to answer a charge in connection with this, but the Rebellion intervened and we heard no more of the matter.

We were living in expectation of the Rising, but did not know when it was coming off. We were mobilized for Easter Sunday at Croydon Park, but were dismissed in the normal way. On Easter Monday we remained in our "Digs" and about 1 p.m. or thereabouts a runner came and told us we were to report to Jacob's Factory getting there anyway we could. He also told us that the G.P.O. was already taken. Matt-Vize, I and Jim Moloney got our bandoliers and put them on, and started for Jacobs. We had one old bulldog type Revolver. We immediately met with a lot of opposition from the wives and daughters of British Soldiers, who were known to us as the "Ladies of the Separation Allowance". In fact we had to threaten them with the revolver, they became so violent. Just before we got to Jacobs on our way from Seville Place via the Quays we were stopped by a man and woman who told us that if we went any further we would be shot as the soldiers were coming. By this time we were receiving a lot of attention from the Public. A Priest came out of the Clarence Hotel and seeing us talking to the man and woman came over to us. He asked us what was going on.

We told him the Rising was on, and that we were on our way to Jacobs and that the man and woman was telling us we would never get there. He said; "Great God did I ever believe I would live to see this day". He took off his hat and blessed us and said; "You will get there alright". We were a bit late in being mobilized. The G.P.O. and Liberty Hall had been taken when we set out.

When we reached Jacob's Factory it was already in the hands of the Volunteers and the work of Barricading it was proceeding. We had to get in through a window. Sean McBride and Thomas McDonagh were there, also Liam Price and Capt. Moran. Capt. Moran who was our Company Commander in the Volunteers met us and said he was glad to see us. McDonagh gave me his own "Peter the Painter" which was a brand new weapon. The first job we were allotted was to bore into Kelly's Public House which was adjoining Jacobs, and is incorporated in Jacob's factory now. This position commanded Camden Street and the streets approaching the corner. The doors were sealed and no one was allowed enter the public part of the premises or to touch any drink. Our section Leader was Gerry Boland I think. We had a supply of about two dozen home made bombs, ten cans filled with explosives and a fuze which you lighted before you threw the bomb. We threw one of these to see the effect. There was a loud explosion but no destructive effect. For the first couple of days the soldiers wives kept up a torrent of bad language towards us. Food was plentiful including some meat and tea. We supplied the Garrison of the College of Surgeons and the Turkish Baths with food from Jacobs. A scouting party sent out from Jacobs

was fired on by the British at Stephens Green and one Volunteer was killed with a bullet in the stomach. It looked as if it was an explosive bullet as his stomach was practically ripped out. On Tuesday a party of soldiers were seen marching from the Rathmines direction. We fired on them and a couple of them fell, apparently they were hit. At least one man was carried away by his comrades. They retreated and went I believe by another route to the Castle. Sniping started on Tuesday and machine gun fire was opened on us. I think this was from the tower of the Castle. This fire was only hitting the top of the building, but succeeded in hitting one of our men, who was on look-out-duty in the Tower which is the highest point of the Factory. He was killed. Wednesday was quiet except for sniping. We were expecting a large scale attack at any moment. There were plenty of rumours afloat and we were told that our men were marching from County Wexford and other parts of the country to our assistance. I think our total garrison was well short of a hundred, but I am not in a position to definitely state.

We got some sleep by lying down anywhere, we had no beds. I had the Peter the Painter McDonagh gave me, the others had shot guns and rifles of various types. I had a good supply of ammunition but ammunition for the other weapons was scarce. Things went on like this during the week. We could hear firing including artillery from what appeared to be the centre of the city and see the glow of fires in the skies.

On Sunday morning I saw McDonagh and McBride go out. After a long spell we were told to parade down in one of the lower rooms and there McDonagh and McBride told

us that we were to surrender and the fight was over. They told us that Pearse had surrendered and that the G.P.O. and Liberty Hall were destroyed and all O'Connell Street was in ruins. Capt. Tom Hunter and some of the men kicked against surrendering and wanted to continue the fight, but McBride asked them did they think he would surrender if he thought there was any chance of success, adding, that we must now save the lives of our people. This had the effect he wanted, and we all agreed.

We then took down the barricades and paraded out on the street (Bride Street). The British soldiers were there waiting for us. We laid down our arms in front of us. A few men got away and did not surrender. Very few of our men were in uniform. During the week in Jacobs a priest heard our Confessions. When the mob outside were loudest in their abuse of us, an old priest came along and before them all, made the sign of the Cross at all parts of the building. This acted like magic on the mob, and they melted away.

On the decision to surrender, Jimmie Shields, who was one of the youngest of the garrison was selected to take charge and to march the garrison out to surrender. I understand or rather it is my opinion that he was selected on account of his youth, it being understood that the British would not take action against him. He was great and never faltered or jumbled his words of command; and lined us up on the street with our weapons on the ground.

From Bride Street we were marched under escort to the Richmond Barracks. On reaching the Richmond we were put into a barrack room. There were a lot of

other prisoners there. McBride or McDonagh were not with us. We got some tea and hard biscuits to eat. There were no beds or sanitary accomodation of any sort in the barrack room. No blankets or bedding of any sort was given to us. You just lay on the bare floor. Gerry Boland and I spent the night walking up and down the floor. The following morning we were brought to the Gymnasium for identification. "G" men and British officers did the questioning. They picked on a man named Davis. He was a Red Cross man with us. They took up the attitude that he was not a Red Cross man and had no right to wear the Red Cross. McDonagh intervined and told Davis not to answer any questions. This should have earmarked McDonagh as a Leader. As we were filing out of the Room, they picked out McDonagh and other men and we did not see them again.

We were taken back to the barrack room, and kept there until, I think on Wednesday, when we were marched to the North Wall, and put on a dirty Cattle Boat. We were put down in the cattle pens and in worse condition than cattle were ever put. While proceeding to the North Wall we could see some of the destruction wrought on the City. At that stage apparently no one was allowed on the streets. We could still hear sniping going on in the City. We proceeded from the North Wall to Holyhead, and thence by train to Knutsford. On arrival at Knutsford we were put in single cells. We were issued with one blanket and slept on the bare boards. We were thoroughly searched and everything taken from us, and attempts were made to bribe us, by suggesting that certain articles that had been taken from us, such as a

watch and signet ring ^{of mine (L)} ~~in my case~~ should not be entered in the records. We had solitary confinement here for twenty eight days, except for a short period of exercise in the Rings. The warders were British soldiers. When at exercise in the Rings, the younger men were on the outer ring, and the older men and some who had been wounded including Brennan Whitmore, were on the inner ring. Thus they would have less distance, and slower pace than the outer men. No intercourse was allowed between prisoners. The food was ordinary prison diet of the worst type. We were terribly hungry, so hungry that it became a nightmare, and you never could get away from it. We carefully picked up and eat every crumb of bread we could find on the floor. We got thin porridge in the morning (commonly called "Skilly") and a little bread. Dinner was soup - poor soup and some bread. In the evening you got a further small share of bread and some tea. We got an issue of margarine, which was less than three-quarter inches square per day. The hunger was appalling, and the cold was intense too. When you fell asleep, you dreamt of food and woke up to the realities that you were starving.

After about twenty eight days of this treatment, Alderman Alfie Byrne M.P. visited us at the Prison, and he informed us that conditions would be improved and that we would be allowed to receive parcels. Conditions were relaxed, and parcels of food and other items were allowed in. These were sent in by our Irish and English friends. We were allowed to associate and talk now for a limited time each day. In a short time we were transferred to the Internment Camp at Frongoch, in Wales. I was sent

at first to the North Camp and later to the South Camp. When we arrived in the North Camp it was a sea of mud. Here we were put in huts, and were supplied with beds and bedding. Conditions were much better here than in Knutsford. We did our own cooking and free association was allowed up to a certain time of day. We had here a "Dry Canteen", where you could buy cigarettes and so forth. Books and reading matter were supplied to us from outside sources. Classes in languages and various subjects were organised. There was no dearth of teachers, as the prisoners contained men of all walks of life. We had Games such as football and hurling and athletics.

After some time in Frongoch we were put in buses and brought to Wandsworth Prison and from there we were taken before the Sankey Commission. The people in London were hostile to us, but we cheered and gave them back as much back chat, as they gave us. The Sankey commission tried to make us say that we were duped into the Rebellion, and that we did not know what we were going into. Our reply was that, we did and that we had worked for it all our lives. When this was over we were brought back to Frongoch.

We were now transferred to the South Camp. Here the Camp Authorities wanted us to do the cleaning up for the soldiers of the Garrison. We refused to do this, and this started a big row, and all parcels and letters were stopped. It was now winter-time, and the snow was on the ground. We made a huge snow-man on the Square. On this we placed an ordinary civilian cap (Martin Henry

Cap) as they were known by, on the snow-man. This was made to operate by means of a cord, which when pulled would remove the cap. The Governor was a pompous old chap, one of the old school type. When paraded for inspection, the internees were required to remove their Headgear when he came on Parade, the Sergt. Major who accompanied him calling out; "Hats off". On this occasion as the row about the scavenging was on, when the Sergt. Major called out "Hats off", the only one to uncover was the snow-man. The Governor ignored the incident and went on to his inspection. Every morning a party of Internees were detailed for this scavenging job, but each day, they refused and were placed in solitary confinement in the North Camp. We sent our own working parties to the North Camp daily, and they always were able to smuggle cigarettes and parcels into the detained men. Eventually the camp Authorities gave up the detailing of these parties, but our letters and parcels were still refused us.

A meeting of the principal leaders of the Internees was held, amongst the principals of which were Michael Collins and Gearroid O'Sullivan. It was decided that the whole Camp should go on "Hunger Strike". A general hunger strike then took place, and in less than a week some of the men were dangerously ill, and were admitted to Hospital. The Camp Doctor, a Welsh civilian took a very serious view of the strike and worried so much about it, that he eventually threw himself into a quarry and committed suicide. At least it was understood that the strike was the cause of he doing so. The authorities then got the Chaplain to try and influence us to give up the strike, using the

Doctor's death as a lever. We still refused. One of the British officers made a speech to us and said we were responsible for the Doctor's death. We replied "No". "The British Government is responsible". Shortly after this, the strike came to an end, on the Authorities conceding our parcels and letters, and camp life became normal again.

On the 23rd December we were released and arrived home on Christmas Eve. We were the last to leave the Camp. ^{from Wexford (I.S.)} We travelled to Ireland via Rosslare. It was hard to believe the change that had taken place in the country by now. It seemed a miracle, the change in the attitude of the people and the warmth of their reception to us, and this increased in volume as time went on.

Signed; Joseph Lumborg Major (Ret)

Date; 10th Jan 1950

Witness;

Matthew Lumborg

