

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
BURO STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21
NO. W.S. 696

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 696

Witness

Henry O'Hagan,
48 Raymond St.,
Dublin.

Identity.

Member of Irish Volunteers, Trim, Co. Meath,
1917 - ;

Adjutant 3rd (Edinburgh) Battalion,
Scotland Brigade, 1920.

Subject.

- (a) His national activities 1917-1921;
- (b) Organisation of I.R.A. in Scotland, 1919.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil

File No. S.1917

Form B.S.M. 2

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Statement of Mr. Henry O'Hagan

48 Raymond Street,
South Circular Road, Dublin.

I took part in the formation of Trim Company Volunteers in January or February 1917 in a field at the Reservoir. The Officers elected on that day were the late Colonel Seamus O'Higgins Captain, Mick Hynes 1st Lieutenant and Patrick Fay 2nd Lieutenant. We did foot drill there for a few Sundays, and O'Higgins asked me to ask my mother if she would give us a room for drilling. She consented and we drilled there on week nights. The house I lived in in Trim was the old R.I.C. barracks before the R.I.C. moved into the old military barracks. We had a fish and fruit shop there. We had an advantage as you could drill 100 men in one of the rooms, the dormitory where the R.I.C. slept. Eddie Cullen, late Assistant Chief Commissioner Civic Guards, and Seamus Finn, Athboy attended our first parade and afterwards formed a Company of Volunteers in Summerhill and Athboy. I want to state that no Company of Volunteers existed in Trim prior to 1916. In fact, they were almost all pro-British. The only one I knew with sympathy for the Easter Week men was Seamus O'Higgins. He kept a public house two doors from me. During 1917 there were about 6 or 8 of us sworn into the I.R.B. by General Sean Boylan, Dunboyne. Seamus O'Higgins was our Centre. I carried on with Trim Coy. until early in 1918 when I went to work at my trade in Athy. I was then transferred to Athy Company through the I.R.B. I was elected Company Adjutant and Batty Maher was Captain. Athy at that time was a very hostile place as out of a population of 4,000, about two thousand had British Army associations. About June 1918, we got orders from the Carlow Brigade Staff to raid all

houses where we knew arms were kept. I was told to meet Commandant Malone at the show grounds. He sent me from there to the Seventh Lock to John Hayden who was in charge of the party there which consisted of 6 men. Being a stranger he sent a boy to show me the place. On arrival there we raided the house of an ex-British Captain by the name of Hosey who had 2 sons serving in France at the time. We knocked at the door of the house, and when he opened it we hid in the shadows until he went back down the hall. We opened the door and followed him down and asked him for the guns that were in the house in the name of the Republic. He stood with his back to the wall and fought us off with a clothes horse. I carried a club and struck him with same. As I struck him he flung a lighted oil lamp in my face. My showerproof coat was all blood. On my way back through the town with young McNamara, he was only a boy, 2 R.I.C. men came meeting us. I told the boy that if they stopped us I would have to shoot. He said: "You shoot one and I will shoot the other", but the 2 R.I.C. men went up a side street before we came to them. When I got home to my digs - Lawler's public house Barrack Street - Mr. Lawler asked me where I was and what happened me. I told him I was out at Seven Stars and fell off the bike, as I was cut around the ear and mouth. This man Lawler was a Sinn Feiner, as was the boss I worked for, but they were against physical force movement. The street I lived in was raided on that night by the R.I.C. but my digs was not. About 5 days later I was arrested in Gillespie's where I worked and brought to the police barracks for interrogation. The R.I.C. had got the Sinn Fein members names but I had not joined the Sinn Fein Club. That I think saved me. After about 4 hours interrogation by police and Head Constable I was let

out but told I would be arrested again. I cycled back to Trim that evening and I was in Trim at the time of the 1918 Elections. We marched to election meetings and got around platforms as local people were partly afraid to listen to speakers until they saw a crowd around the platforms. We took the advantage of forming Volunteer Companies in all the villages we went to. By the time the Elections were over there was a Volunteer Company in every village in Trim area. Paddy Mooney, afterwards Comdt. in the Free State Army, Joe Lawler and I were out painting slogans in Summerhill for elections when we were caught by the R.I.C. with brushes, paint and knuckle dusters. We needed the latter as the places we visited were pretty hostile. We were summoned but Joe Lawler and I were not allowed to recognise the Court. Mooney was allowed but said he was just driving us. We didn't appear in Court but we came to Dublin, Lawler and I, to look for work and got transferred to the Dublin Brigade. I joined "A" Company, 1st Battalion, and Lawler joined the 3rd Battalion. I got a job as conductor on the trams. While there I was mobilised by Greg Murphy to I.R.B. I worked in Dublin and drilled in Blackhall Place until O'Higgins was arrested in Trim and correspondence found on him from me. One of the "G" Division men, Lavelle, who was afterwards shot, raided the house of Mrs. Cavanagh Phoenix Street where I stayed and I had to get out. While there I got in touch with a man named Devlin from Manchester, who told me I could procure arms there if I had credentials. I went down to Dunboyne to General Sean Boylan's house and met him and got his credentials. I had about £20 saved and was very anxious to procure arms for Trim Company. I went

to Manchester and I met Seamus Barrett in his second-hand shop in Liverpool Road but I could not get arms. He told me Boylan's credentials were no good to him. He wanted Collins' authority. There was lots of guns there and I saw Annie MacSwiney procuring some.

I came back to Dublin almost broke. I went to Scotland soon afterwards with Denis Fitzpatrick, a man who had fought in the Four Courts in 1916. When I got to Falkirk we started to organise the I.R.A., I in Falkirk and Fitzpatrick in Denny, Stirlingshire. Henry Coyle came from G.H.Q., got in touch with me and came down with Seamus O'Keefe and swore the Company into the I.R.A. I was elected Company Captain, Paddy Aspill 1st Lieut. and Batty Geraghty, 2nd Lieut. Both were Kildare men. We carried out drilling on two nights a week. Father Robert Scott, at present in Kilkenny, helped us a lot. We had a Company of about 100. They were very useful for procuring gelignite. I do not think it cost the I.R.A. more than £5 for stuff. These men procured it themselves as the majority were miners. Fitzpatrick from Denny and I from Falkirk brought the gelignite in suit cases to the home of Sean McGovern (who was a cousin of Sean MacDermott), Leith Walk, Leith Edinburgh. On one occasion I met Joe Vize there with three or four Germans and gave him a gun. Colonel Joe Vize formed the 3rd Batt. in Edinburgh early in 1920. The Officers elected that day were :

- Joe McCauley, Loughgello (who had won Croix de Guerre in France) Commandant.
- Denis Fitzpatrick, Denny Vice Commandant
- Paddy Thompson, Edinburgh Quartermaster
- H. O'Hagan, Falkirk Adjutant
- Paddy Hyland, Winchborough

There were men from a few other places but I cannot

think of the names. Vize swore all those not already members into the I.R.B. that day.

In August 1920 I came home to Trim and attended some of the lectures in Maurice Collins' shop given by Richard Mulcahy and Dick McKee. During that time the attack on Trim barracks was planned. We had a meeting in the Town Hall, Trim, on the Thursday and made plans to capture and burn the barracks on the Sunday morning when half of the R.I.C. would be at Mass. Twelve men were picked to take it, twelve to burn it and twelve men to carry away the stuff. On the Saturday night before all the men and those who were to fell the timber on the roads were mobilised to meet in my mother's house as it was Headquarters. There were so many coming and going into the shop for years that nobody suspected there was anything on. The timber fellers went home during the night, leaving the 36 men in the room and the driver of the car. I was in the first 12 and my brother in the second. In fact, the Trim Company were mostly brothers. The barracks was entered on the last stroke of the chapel bell as all roads were to be blocked at the last stroke. A number of rifles were taken, some gelignite and gun cotton and ammunition. The Head Constable was shot. After doing the job we went home and dressed in our Sunday clothes and nobody suspected anyone from Trim had anything to do with it. There was a football match in Navan on that day and Paddy Mooney and I got a lift on an Edenderry lorry to the game. On our way home a lorry of military passed us on a bend between Trim and Navan and called on us to halt, and as we did three more lorry loads came up behind, ordered us out and told us to extend to the right and, of course

we stood like sheep. Mooney and I were in the centre of the group. He had 4 rounds of ammunition and I had a bombing lecture in my good clothes which I forgot to remove, but the soldiers took so long reading the Edenderry boys correspondence and love letters that the officer in charge ordered us back into the lorry. When we got back into Trim it was like a deserted village as during the day one boy was wounded and another was riding a bicycle down the street and was shot. Mooney and I went to take up our positions for the night but found no officer there. We were surprised as the outside Companies were to be in to defend the town when the Black and Tans came in to burn it. It was decided the Thursday night before that they were to defend it. We never found out who called it off. I went back to Glasgow and reported to Carney. I had brought back a dispatch to General Boylan concerning Sean McGovern who was suspected of selling arms in Glasgow, for a reference as he came from his area. I went back to Falkirk and Mr. McCauley asked me to help him to organise a few Companies in Fifeshire. During that time I was on the bodyguard to Archbishop Mannix when he landed in Scotland. I came back to Falkirk and Joe McCauley came in and told me that Henry Coyle and Joe McGinn (Strickland) were arrested in Alloa and we would have to try and release them. He sent a messenger to John Sweeney to send some men and equipment right away. About 7 o'clock 6 or 7 men arrived from Glasgow. Two of them I knew - Mick O'Carroll and Sean Flood. Denis Fitzpatrick, Felix O'Hanlon, George Coyle, Paddy Smith and John Murphy, all from Denny, were there also and Johnny Sweeney, the son of the man of the house.

Sweeney's, Kerse Lane, was our dump and headquarters. Sweeney's daughter made masks for all of us. Mick O'Carroll from Glasgow and myself went by train to Alloa where the prisoners were and the others went by car. We got there all right and met at our allotted places but the prisoners had been moved before we arrived. We had to walk back. It took us all night. It must be 30 miles the way we came back.

All the arms and gelignite were stored in Sweeney's, Kerse Lane. The car was to call to Falkirk to Sweeney's for a load on the night they were caught. Joe Furlong also collected stuff out of Sweeney's.

The names of the Falkirk born men in the I.R.A. were : J. McAlenan, Stephen Fallon, John James Fallon, Peter Fallon, Hugh O'Kee, James O'Kee, James McCue, Tommy Doherty, Owen Maher, Joe Ryan, Willie Harte, Edward Goodman, Joe Goodman, Tommy McMorrow. Primo Moscardini and Joe Moscardini, Cafe Proprietors, and John Savoy - all Italians - gave us assistance and help at all times.

The Cumann na mBan members -

Lizzie MacKean	Main Street
Elizabeth Molloy	Camelon
Mary Mullane	Grangemanth
Maggie Gallagher	High Street
Bridget McMurrrough	Manor Street
Mary O'Donnell	Manor Street
Katie Hegarty	Glebe Street
Mrs. Cassidy	Camelon

All were born in Scotland.

Joe Booker who is at present employed in Clancy Barracks was in Scotland throughout this period and was in constant touch with Joe Vize and Joe Furlong. He should be in a position to supply information of all activities in the other areas in Scotland.

Signed Harry O'Hagan
(Harry O'Hagan)

Date 23rd June 1952
23rd June, 1952.

Witness

J. Kearns Comdt.
(J. Kearns) Comd't.

Date 23rd June 1952
23rd June 1952.

