

W.S. 1,377

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

BURO STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21

No. W.S. 1377

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 1,377

Witness

Major General Aodh MacNeill,
20 Callary Road,
Mount Merrion,
Dublin.

Identity.

O/C. 1st Battalion Fianna (South Dublin)
1919-1920;

Director of Organisation and Training,
Fianna, 1920-1921.

Subject.

- (a) Formation of Fianna Eireann, Dublin,
1909;
- (b) General organisation and activities of
that body, 1909-1921.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil

File No. S.112

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STATEMENT BY MAJOR GENERAL AODH MacNEILL,

20, Callary Road, Mount Merrion, Dublin.

NA FIANNA ÉIREANN.

Summary of History & Development, 1909-1921.

1. Inauguration.

The Fianna can claim to have been by far the Senior Corps of the old Republican Army. It was actually founded in 1909, as against 1912 in the case of the Irish Citizen Army, and 1913 in the cases of the Irish Volunteers and Cumann na mBan. At the time of its foundation the general "Irish Revival" movement had reached what might be termed its intermediate period. Such bodies as the Gaelic League, G.A.A., the Irish Theatre movement, the Literary revival, the Co-operative movement, etc., were just beginning to really make their influence felt over and above the welter of constitutional politics. The general spirit of apathy and even seoinin-ism which had prevailed throughout Ireland almost since the Land League, was at least showing signs of giving way to a more hopeful and self reliant spirit.

This revival of national consciousness, however, was a slow process. It appeared that at least another generation would grow up before the old spirit of national consciousness and self respect would be finally restored. When and if this finally did come about, the Nation was bound to be handicapped by the lack of any military force to implement and exploit the successful work of the

cultural and economic movements. It was true that the cadres of the old Irish Republican Brotherhood still existed behind the scenes, but this body was concentrating on gaining a measure of control over all the other co-related organisations, and had lost most of its old strictly military outlook. In effect it was endeavouring to develop into a "power behind the throne", to establish itself as the main driving and co-ordinating agency, rather than to maintain itself as a military force.

Realising this, a small group of people got together in 1909 and decided to take steps to rectify this defect in the national revival movement. Believing, in common with all their contemporaries, that all this "reviving" was likely to prove a very slow business they felt they had plenty of time at their disposal, and their plan was to establish a Boy Corps and train it carefully on national military lines, so that by the time its members reached military age Ireland would have at least the nucleus of a trained fighting force. This plan had the additional advantage that a youth movement - a mere rival as it were to the Baden-Powell Boy Scouts - was likely to attract less attention, and therefore less active opposition, from both the British Authorities and the Irish Constitutionalists. This would give the new organisation an opportunity to firmly establish itself. In this way Na Fianna Éireann, the Irish National Boy Scouts, were established in 1909.

2. Founders of the Fianna.

The writer is unable to trace from the papers at his disposal the exact composition of the inaugurating

body of the Fianna. The leading spirit was of course the Countess Markievicz, a member of the aristocratic Gore-Booth family of Sligo, a famous Society beauty in her younger days, and a prominent figure in the Irish Literary and Dramatic movements. With her were associated Liam Mellows, Bulmer Hobson, (then a prominent I.R.B. official), Eamonn Martin, Padraig Ó Riain, David White.

Among those keenly interested in the new organisation were Padraic Pearse, Thomas MacDonagh, Roger Casement (then in the British Consular Service), and The O'Rahilly.

3. Objects, etc., of the Fianna.

The original Constitution of the Fianna laid down as its object: "The re-establishment of the Independence of Ireland; and as its means: "The training of the boys of Ireland, mentally and physically, by teaching scouting and military exercises, Irish history and the Irish language.

The Fianna oath, administered to all members read: -

"I promise to work for the independence of Ireland, never to join England's armed forces, and to obey my superior Officers".

4. Uniform, badges, etc.

The original Fianna uniform comprised a dark green felt sombrero hat; a green double-breasted hopsack shirt with two rows of brass buttons, and blue shorts or breeches or dark green kilt.

The Fianna flag was of St. Patrick's blue, with a golden sunburst breaking out of the bottom right-hand corner (next the Staff), and the title "Na Fianna Éireann" in gold running across the field, over the rays of the sunburst.

The Fianna badge was a circular enamel one, worked in green, white and gold, with a golden sunburst and pikehead in a green centre, and the motto in gaelic - "Remember Eimerick, don't trust the Sassanach" in the outer white circle.

The first Headquarters Offices were located in the same building as the "Irish Freedom" Offices in Findlater Place..

5. Initial organisation:

The initial organisation was the essence of simplicity itself. The basic unit was the squad of six to eight boys under a squad leader. Two squads formed a section under a Section Leader, two or more sections a Sluagh under a Sluagh Leader.

A number of Sluaighte in one District (which could be a County, a City, etc.), were grouped together under a District Council. The normal controlling body was the Central Council, with its smaller Executive Committee. The supreme governing body was the Árd-Fheis, representative of the Central Council, District Councils, and Sluaighte, which met annually in Dublin.

6. Ranks and Grades.

The following ranks and grades only obtained initially:

Fheinnidhe, 1st, 2nd and 3rd Class.
Squad Leader (equivalent to Corporal).
Section Leader (equivalent to Sergeant).
Sluagh Leader (equivalent to Lieut. or Captain).

Members of District Councils, the Central Council etc., were either Sluagh Leaders or officials, such as Secretaries, Treasurers, etc., but held no special ranks or staff grades.

The ranks of Lieutenant, Captain, Commandant, and the appointments of Adjutant and Quartermaster were not introduced until 1913. Districts were grouped into battalions at the same time.

The further ranks and grades of Chief of Staff, Adjutant-General, Quartermaster-General, Directors of Training, Organisation, etc., were introduced in the re-organisation of 1915, when the Headquarters staff was first formed.

The original rank badges were as follows: -

Fheinnidhe, 3rd Class	-	Green cord on left shoulder.
"	2nd Class	- Green and Yellow cord on left shoulder.
"	1st Class	- Green, white and yellow cord on left shoulder.
Squad Leader,	-	Saffron cuffs and shoulder straps.
Section Leader	-	Red cuffs and shoulder straps.
Sluagh Leader	-	Blue cuffs and shoulder straps.

7. Basis of early administration.

Self Government was the basis of the early administration of the Fianna. In the Sluaighte the boys elected their own officers and their delegates to the Árd-Fheis. The District Councils were composed of the Sluagh Leaders in the District, and a Secretary and Treasurer elected by the Council. The Central Council

was elected by the Árd Fheis, and included a General Secretary and General Treasurer. The President presided at its meetings and at those of its Executive Committee. The Árd Fheis, as already mentioned, was composed of delegates, elected on a numerical basis by all Sluaighte, delegates from District Councils, and the members of the outgoing Central Council.

It must be admitted that this attempt at youthful self-government was not exactly an unqualified success. Boys of from 12 to 16 years of age were not exactly the best judges of suitable leaders. However, it did instil into the boys the principles of democratic government, and it did teach their leaders to assume responsibilities often far beyond their years, and older Fianna officers still hold that this justified the system. It is noteworthy, however, that after 1917 all officers were appointed by General Headquarters.

8. Early Developments.

While the Fianna did not exactly sweep the country like a prairie fire, it did progress slowly but surely. By 1912 eight Sluaighte, with an average strength of 50 boys, existed in Dublin. A ninth was added that year. Sluaighte also existed in Belfast, Newry, Dundalk, Waterford, Cork, Tralee, Limerick, Athlone, Maryborough, Tuam, Sligo and Derry, and in other centres of which the writer has no record. District Councils were functioning in Dublin, Belfast and Cork. By 1912 the Fianna had a permanent organiser on the road in the person of Liam Mellows.

In 1913 the Fianna published its own monthly paper, "Fianna". Although never a financial success this paper achieved good results in the propaganda and training field up to 1916.

In the same year the organisation published its official "Fianna Handbook". Designed as an antidote to Baden-Powell's "Scouting for Boys" this was the first military text book published in Ireland during the present century. It featured articles by Padraic Pearse, Roger Casement, Countess de Markeivicz, and contained fully illustrated chapters on arms and foot drill, signalling, first aid, counting, camp craft, etc. During the early days of the Volunteers it became regarded practically as an official drill manual. A second edition was published in 1920, but was not as comprehensive as the 1913 edition.

9. Chief of the Fianna.

Countess de Markeivicz held the position of President of the Fianna from 1909 until 1915. In that year the appointment was abolished and replaced by the title Righ-Fheinnidhe or Chief of the Fianna. Padraig Ó Riain held this appointment in 1915-16, Eamon de Valera (in an honorary capacity) in 1917-18, and Countess de Markievicz from 1918 to 1921.

10. Establishment of the Volunteers.

The revival of national consciousness in Ireland came to a head much more rapidly than anyone could have hoped for when the Fianna was founded in 1909. Four years later, in November, 1913, the great

Irish Volunteer movement was inaugurated. This was the Fianna's first real test, and the value of its training became quickly apparent. The country realised that a young trained army had grown up practically unseen and unheard. All over Ireland the officers and older boys threw themselves into the new Volunteer movement. The early officers and instructors of the Volunteers were confined to practically two classes, viz., those who had served in the Fianna and those who had served in the British Army.

The following Fianna Officers were elected to the first Provisional Committee of the Irish Volunteer Force: Liam Mellows, Bulmer Hobson and Padraig Ó Riain. In Dublin numerous Fianna Officers received Volunteer Commissions, of whom the most notable were Seán Heuston, Con Colbert, Padraig Ó Dálaigh, Patrick Houlihan, Seamus Kavanagh and Leo Henderson. Of these the first two were executed in 1916. Ó Dálaigh commanded at the capture of the Magazine Fort in 1916, and in the years that followed led the famous G.H.Q. Squad, the first A.S.U. in Ireland, up to the Truce, when he joined the National Army, retiring in 1924 with the rank of Major General; Houlihan fought in 1916 and afterwards commanded the 1st Battalion, Dublin Brigade; Kavanagh also fought in 1916, and later commanded 'H' Coy., 1st Battalion, Dublin Brigade ("Kevin Barry's Own"), Henderson also fought in 1916, and distinguished himself subsequently as an officer of the 2nd Battalion, Dublin Brigade, and the G.H.Q. Staff. The same situation prevailed in other centres over the country.

11. The Howth gun-running.

The Fianna next came into prominence at the Howth gun-running, July, 1914. A specially selected Fianna detachment was mobilised with the Dublin Brigade of the Volunteers for that operation. They brought with them their hand drawn trek-cart, which was used to transport the specially prepared batons to Howth, which the Volunteers later used to hold back the R.I.C. while the rifles were being unloaded. On the return journey, when the bulk of the ammunition was sent into town by motor car, a reserve supply was loaded into the trek-cart for use only in case of grave emergency. When the British police and military held up the column at Clontarf some of the Volunteers demanded that this ammunition be issued. Attempts were even made to get possession of it by force. In the absence of orders from the responsible Volunteer Officers, the Fianna stood and, where necessary, beat off attempts to seize the ammunition with their batons. It was indeed fortunate that the discipline of these Fheinnidhe was equal to the test imposed on it, for in the then state of efficiency and discipline of the Volunteers an armed conflict with the British could only have resulted in a massacre, the loss of practically all the rifles, and probably in the ruthless suppression of the entire Volunteer force.

12. Central Council, 1915-1916.

In 1915 the Executive Committee was abolished and replaced by a Headquarters Staff appointed by the Central Council. The following Central Council was elected by the Árd-Fheis, 1915:

Bulmer Hobson; Padraig Ó Riain; Eamonn Martin; J.A. Dalton (Eimerick); Con Colbert; Seán Heuston; Leo Henderson; Padraig Ó Dálaigh; Garrett Houlihan; B. Mellows; Countess de Markievicz; A.P. Reynolds; and Niall MacNeill, together with a delegate nominated by the Belfast District Council.

13. Organisation prior to 1916.

(a) Headquarters Staff. The writer is unable to trace the details of the organisation outside G.H.Q., and the Dublin area. The following Headquarters Staff was appointed by the Central Council in August, 1915:

Chief of the Fianna	-	Padraic Ó Riain
Chief of Staff	-	Bulmer Hobson
Adjutant	-	A.P. Reynolds
Director of Training	-	Seán MacAodha
Director of Organisation and Recruiting	-	Eamonn Martin
Director of Equipment	-	Leo Henderson
Director of Finance	-	Bert Mellows.

(b) The Dublin Battalion. About the same time the Dublin Fianna were reorganised as a battalion of nine companies. The details of the units and officers are as follows:

(1) Battalion Staff.

Commandant	....	....	E. Martin
Vice Commandant	....	....	S. Heuston
Adjutant	....	....	P. Cassidy
Quartermaster	....	....	J. Pouch.

(2) Company Commanders..

No. 1 - Camden St.	P. Cassidy
No. 2 - Dolphins Barn	B. Mellows
No. 3 - Inchicore	E. Murray
No. 4 - Blackhall St.	S. McLoughlin
No. 5 - Merchants Quay	G. Houlihan
No. 6 - North Frederick St. ...	S. Heuston
No. 7 - Ranelagh	N. MacNeill
No. 8 - Fairview	L. Henderson
No. 9 - Dollymount	P. Ó Dálaigh.

Practically all the foregoing Fianna Officers played an important part in the struggle that began in 1916 and only concluded in 1921. E. Martin was wounded in 1916 and became Chief of Staff of the Fianna in 1917. Seán Heuston was executed after the 1916 Rising. Seán McLoughlin was promoted Commandant-General, I.R.A., when James Connolly was wounded, and afterwards became a G.H.Q. organiser, and commanded a Volunteer Brigade in Tipperary. Garry Houlihan was second-in-command at the attack on the Magazine Fort in 1916, and was Brigade Commandant, Dublin Fianna from 1917 to 1921. Niall MacNeill commanded a company and battalion in the 2nd Dublin Brigade, I.R.A., during the 1918-21 period, became Brigadier, 2nd Dublin Brigade after the "split", and afterwards Colonel, National Army; and Colonel Regular Army, later Colonel, Reserve of Officers. Leo Henderson commanded the Fairview post in 1916, was Officer Commanding, 'B' Coy., 11 Battalion, Dublin Brigade, I.R.A., later Vice-Commandant, 11 Battalion, and later Dublin Brigade and G.H.Q. Staff. P. Ó Dálaigh commanded at the attack on the Magazine Fort in 1916,

later succeeded Leo Henderson as Officer Commanding, 'B' Coy., 11 Battalion, formed the G.H.Q. "Squad" in 1919 and commanded it to the end, and later became Major General, National Army.

(c) The Fianna Commando. In the spring of 1916 the Fianna Commando was formed in Dublin. This was an active service unit composed entirely of officers and older boys, formed in preparation for the coming conflict. It was originally commanded by Seán Heuston, but as his services were required by the 1. Battalion, Dublin Brigade, I.V., the command devolved upon Seán McLoughlin just prior to the Rising.

14. The Fianna in Easter Rising, 1916.

The Fianna arrangements in 1916 were seriously dislocated in common with those of the Volunteers by the countermanding order. The Commando was to mobilise as a separate unit at Skipper's Alley Hall (behind Adam and Eve's Church) on Easter Sunday. It was to fight as a distinct unit in the 1 Battalion area. A special detachment of it, under P. Ó Dálaigh, was detailed to capture the Magazine Fort. The countermanding order cancelled this mobilisation. In the resultant confusion the Commando as a whole did not receive mobilisation orders for Easter Monday, and individual members of it simply reported to the nearest I.R.A. post as they got the news of the outbreak.

The Magazine Fort detachment was mobilised specially by Ó Dálaigh. They proceeded to the Phoenix Park on bicycles and two hackney cars, disguised as footballers. Idly kicking the ball up the slopes

surrounding the Fort, two or three of the "players" came close to the British sentry at the gate, held him up with revolvers, the main body rushed in, disarmed the guard, cut the telephone, and the Fort was captured. Small parties of the raiding force at once entered the ammunition stores, and set them on fire. They then withdrew in accordance with order, and reported to the Four Courts. Only one life was lost in this exploit. While the fort was being set alight a youth, the son of an N.C.O. of the garrison, made a dash for Islandbridge on a bicycle to raise the alarm. A member of the raiding party saw him leave, seized a motor cycle in the fort and went in pursuit. Overtaking him at the corner of Conyngham Road and Islandbridge he called on him to halt, but the plucky lad rode on and he had no option but to shoot him. The names of the Fianna boys participating in this successful exploit could no doubt be obtained from P. Ó Dálaigh, E. Martin or G. Houlihan, who are all available to-day. As already mentioned, individual Fheinnidhe were on duty at practically all I.R.A. posts in the City, acting as scouts, despatch riders, cooks and, of course, riflemen. Two of them were killed in action - Seán Howard in North King St., and Edward Healy in Henry St. bringing a despatch to the G.P.O.

Two other Fheinnidhe were executed after the Rising, Seán Heuston, Vice-Commandant, Dublin Battalion, and Officer Commanding, No. 6 Sluagh; and Con Colbert, ex-Officer Commanding, No. 2 Sluagh. At least one, Eamonn Martin, was seriously wounded in action.

Such are the broad outlines of the contribution of the Fianna to the national resurgence in 1916.

15. Re-organisation after 1916.

(a) Initial Re-organisation. The Fianna was probably the first of the military bodies to gather the threads of its organisation together after the 1916 Rising. Early in May, less than a month after the Rising, a meeting of all available officers was held in the hall of An Céad Sluagh in Camden St., and at this meeting it was decided to hold together at least a skeleton organisation. As a result the position from May, 1916, to January, 1917, was as follows in Dublin: -

(1) Provisional Committee of Control (acted for all-Ireland as well as Dublin).

E. Martin; L. Staines; J. Pouch;
T. Fitzgerald and J. Reynolds.

(2) Sluaighte.

No. 1 - Camden St.	-	P. Cassidy
No. 2 - Dolphins Barn	-	J. Pouch
No. 3 - Inchicore	-	R. Holland
No. 4 - Blackhall St.	-	L. Staines
No. 5 - Merchants Quay	-	T. Fitzgerald
No. 6 - North Frederick St.	-	P. Brown
No. 7 - Ranelagh-Rathmines	-	H. MacNeill
No. 8 - Fairview-Dollymount	-	M. Henderson.

(b) Re-organisation of January, 1917. With the release of the bulk of the internees in December, 1916, a further re-organisation was effected. This provided for the following: -

(1) Headquarters Staff.

Chief of Staff - E. Martin (and Acting Righ-Fheinnidhe in place of C. de Markievicz, in jail).
 Adjutant General - B. Mellows (re-arrested - January, 1917).
 Quartermaster General - G. Houlihan.

(2) Dublin Battalion.

Commandant - B. Mellows (see above)
 Acting Commandant - R. Holland
 Adjutant - P. Cassidy
 Quartermaster - J. Pouch.

Sluagh Commanders (as in 15 (a-2) above except that Rathfarnham Sluagh formed January, 1917, and Niall MacNeill appointed Officer Commanding.

(3) Belfast Battalion.

Commandant - R. McKelvey.

(4) Cork Battalion.

Commandant - Frank MacMahon.

(5) Other areas.

No information available to writer.

(c) Re-organisation of June, 1917. Six months later the progress of the movement necessitated a further re-organisation which remained fairly static until the Truce of 1921. This provided for the following: -

(1) Headquarters Staff.

Righ-Fheinnidhe	1917-18	-	E. de Valera
	1918-21	-	C. de Markievicz.
Chief of Staff	1917-20	-	E. Martin
	1920-21	-	P. MacMahon (Cork).
Adjutant General	1917-21	-	B. Mellows.
Quartermaster Gen.	1917-21	-	G. Houlihan.
D/Organisation & Training	1917-20	-	E. Martin
	1920-21	-	H. MacNeill.
D/Education	1918-21	-	L. Langley.

(2) Dublin Brigade.(i) Brigade StaffBrigade Officer Commanding.

Entire period - G. Houlihan (also Q.M.G.
Fianna G.H.Q.)

Brigade Adjutants.

1917	-	P. Stephenson	_____
1918	-	J. Pouch	_____
1919-21	-	J. Reynolds.	_____

Brigade Quartermaster.

June 1917-July 1918 - J. Reynolds (also Adjt.
2nd Bn.)

July 1918-June 1921 - P. Byrne _____

Brigade Training Officers.

1917-1918	-	R. Balfe	Training and Organisation Officer.
		F. Daly	Engineering and Explosive Instr.

(ii) 1st (South Dublin) Battalion.Battalion Commandants.

June '17-May '18	-	B. Mellows	(re-arrested May, 1918)
May '18-Jan. '19	-	R. Holland	
Jan. '19-May '19	-	J. Reynolds	(Acting)
May '19-Nov. '19	-	B. Mellows	(after escape from Usk. also A.G., G.H.Q.)
Nov. '19-Apr. '20	-	H. MacNeill	(on release from prison Oct. 1919. Transferred G.H.Q. Apr. '20)
Apr. '20-Jan. '22	-	W. Rowe	_____

Battalion Adjutants.

June '17-April '18 - H. MacNeill (arrested April '18)
 April '18-Nov. '19 - D. MacNeill _____
 Nov. '19-Oct. '20 - P. Dunne _____
 Oct. '20 -Jan. '22 - D. MacNeill _____

Battalion Quartermasters.

June '17-April '18 - D. MacNeill _____
 April '18-Nov. '19 _____
 Nov. '19-Nov. '20 - B. O'Carroll _____
 Nov. '20-Jan. '22 - A. Burke _____

Company Officers.

<u>Coy.</u>		<u>1917</u>	<u>1918</u>	<u>1919</u>	<u>1920-21.</u>
A.	O.C.	A. Dyas	W. Rowe	W. Rowe	M. Kavanagh.
	1st Lt.	P. Byrne	J. Markey	M. Kavanagh	J. Pidgeon.
	2nd Lt.	W. Rowe		J. Pidgeon	H. Murphy
B.	O.C.	J. Pouch	K. McNamee	J. Ardiff	J. Ardiff.
	1st Lt.	P. Houlihan	J. Ardiff	T. O'Keeffe	T. O'Keeffe.
	2nd Lt.	_____	_____	J. Dempsey	J. Dempsey.
C.	O.C.	R. Holland	R. Holland	S. Doyle.	S. Boyle
	1st Lt.	_____	S. Doyle	_____	W. Holland.
	2nd Lt.	_____	_____	_____	M. Cunningham.
D.	O.C.	E. Langley	H. MacNeill	P. Byrne	P. Byrne.
	1st Lt.	_____	(1) P. Sweeney	E. Nicholson (2)	E. Nicholson
	2nd Lt.	_____	_____	J. Markey	J. Markey.
(1) In prison, April-July, 1918. (2) In prison, March-August, 1919.					
E.	O.C.	T. Eee	D. MacNeill	P. Dunne	P. Dalton
	1st Lt.	D. MacNeill	P. Dunne	P. Dalton	_____
	2nd Lt.	_____	_____	_____	_____
F.	O.C.	N. MacNeill	N. MacNeill	B. O'Carroll	D. MacNeill
	1st Lt.	B. O'Carroll	B. O'Carroll	R. Saunders	S. Brennan
	2nd Lt.	T. MacNeill	T. MacNeill	S. Brennan	T. Donnelly
G.	O.C.	P. Geraghty	P. Geraghty	T. Mullins	T. Mullins.
	1st Lt.	_____	_____	_____	_____
	2nd Lt.	_____	_____	_____	_____
H.	O.C.		J. Kenny	J. Kenny	J. Kenny.

(iii) 2nd (North Dublin) Battalion. - Battalion Comdts.

June, 1917-Jan.1918 - T. Fitzgerald.
 Jan., 1918-Jan.1922 - E. Langley, also Director of
 Organisation, G.H.Q.

Battalion Adjutants.

June 1917 - Jan., 1918 - R. Connolly.
 Jan. 1918 - July, 1918. - J. Reynolds.
 July 1918 - Oct., 1918 - C. Clarke.
 Oct., 1918 - Jan., 1919 - J. Reynolds.
 Jan. 1919 - Jan., 1922 - C. Clarke.

Company Officers.

<u>Coy.</u>		<u>1917</u>	<u>1918</u>	<u>1919</u>	<u>1920-21.</u>
A.	O.C.	T. Fitzgerald	L. Murphy	L. Murphy	J. Cashin
	1st Lt.	D. McArt	S. Saunders	P. Evers	J. Byrne
	2nd Lt.	L. Murphy	P. Evers	J. Cashin	C. Fox.
B.	O.C.	J. Thorpe	P.O'Brien	P. O'Brien	R. Carrick
	1st Lt.	_____	S. Bent	R. McLoughlin	R: McLoughlin
	2nd Lt.	_____	L. Power	_____	_____
C.	O.C.	T. Meehan	T. Meehan	S. Caffrey	S. Caffrey
	1st Lt.	P. Kennedy	P. Kennedy	J. O'Connor	J. O'Connor
	2nd Lt.	P. O'Brien	P.O'Brien	_____	S. Cole.
D.	O.C.	D. MacArt	D. MacArt	R. Conlon	R. Daly
	1st Lt.	_____	R. Conlon	R. Daly	T. Black
	2nd Lt.	_____	_____	W. Alforde	G. O'Brien
E.	O.C.	_____	S. Saunders	S. Saunders	S. Saunders
	1st Lt.	_____	M. Molloy	M. Molloy	_____
	2nd Lt.	_____	M. Carrick	M. Carrick	_____

(3) Other areas.

The Fianna was also expanded into two battalion brigades in Cork and Belfast in 1919, the respective Commandants being F. MacMahon and R. McKelvey. No other details are now available to the writer re their organisation, nor of the organisation of other areas, except that by 1919 every important sized town and village had its Fianna Sluaighte.

16. Fianna Activities 1916-1921.

After 1916 the Fianna initially concentrated on defiance of the marching and drilling orders. As early as

April, 1917, they were marching openly through the streets of Dublin, in uniform and often carrying hurleys. The Volunteers seemed quite willing - and rightly so - to sit back and note how this open defiance on the part of the younger organisation progressed. Its result was several clashes with the police initially. The most notable of these was in July, 1917, when the entire Dublin Brigade marched in uniform through the South City and County. Efforts were made by D.M.P. to stop the parade and break it up at Terenure and Rathmines Police Stations, but the police cordons were broken through at both points and the march continued in good order to the G.P.O. where the parade dismissed. These minor acts of defiance were quite useful in reviving national morale after 1916.

In February, 1918, the Fianna Commando in Dublin was re-organised in view of the imminence of the anti-conscription conflict, under the personal command of the Brigadier, G. Houlihan. Its constitution was generally the same as prior to 1916, but its strength was greater. During the same period practically every Fianna officer and senior N.C.O. in Dublin was assisting in training the rest of newly enrolled recruits to the Volunteers. This of course was a passing phase.

In March, 1918, a serious conflict was narrowly averted at Rathfarnham. On the conclusion of a 1st Battalion (Fianna) Inter-Company Competitions in St. Enda's College, Rathfarnham, the competing companies were dismissed and ordered to return home as individuals. While passing Rathfarnham R.I.C. Barracks a squad of R.I.C. ran out, surrounded an individual Fianna Officer

and proceeded to pull him into the barracks under arrest. A number of individual Fheinnidhe at once rushed to the rescue, but the R.I.C. beat them off and succeeded in getting the officer and a Section Leader, who had played a prominent part in the attempted rescue, into the barracks. The boys outside rallied about 100 of their comrades and attacked the barracks with stones and hurleys, etc. The R.I.C. lost their heads, loaded their rifles and took post behind their loopholes. The least thing would have precipitated a shot, and the result would have been a massacre of children. Realising this the captured officer volunteered to order the boys to disperse. The R.I.C. Head Constable promptly accepted the offer, a window was cautiously opened and the boys ordered to go home. Some other officers outside, who had arrived later, at once backed up this order, and the boys eventually dispersed. This incident is typical of the spirit of these youthful soldiers, a spirit which most of them proved in the ranks of the Volunteers in subsequent years.

In October, 1918, 'A' Coy., 1st Dublin Battalion, were on parade at their Headquarters, Camden St., when the Sinn Féin offices in Harcourt St. were attacked by a mob of British soldiers off duty and Trinity students. Hearing of the attack a selected party of officers and older boys quickly got into the building from the rear and assisted in beating off the attack. Their arrival was most opportune as the building was defenceless except for a few officials, three or more stray Volunteers and a few visitors.

These bloodless skirmishes, parades, manoeuvres etc., continued on into the early winter of 1919. By that time it was apparent that the resumption of active hostilities on a large scale between the Irish and British forces was imminent, and steps were taken to place the Fianna on a proper footing in relation to the Volunteers. The main difficulty was that esprit de corps was so highly developed in the Fianna that its members were reluctant to transfer to the Volunteers, irrespective of age. This of course was an undesirable situation and the so-called "Army Agreement" was arrived at as a result. Under this agreement the Fianna was recognised as an integral corps of the Republican Army, with the primary mission as acting as a training agency for the Volunteer Force. Following on this all Fheinnidhe, except officers and senior N.C.Os were to be transferred to the Volunteers on reaching the age of 18; Officers and N.C.Os were to be permitted to serve in the Volunteers as well as the Fianna if they so desired, and the Adjutant General of the Fianna became a full-time officer on the Headquarters Staff of the Irish Republican Army.

This arrangement worked fairly well, although not perfectly. Fianna officers, other than officers of the Fianna Headquarters Staff, found it difficult to serve in both forces simultaneously; their first duty was to the Fianna and this occupied so much of their time that they felt they were not "pulling their weight" in the actual fighting of 1920-21. This feeling was eventually got over by authorising the formation of Fianna A.S.Us in Cork and Belfast, composed of Fianna Officers and N.C.Os,

and available for active service under the local Volunteer Command, although not on a whole-time basis as in the case of the Volunteer A.S.U.s. There was no specific Fianna A.S.U. in Dublin, but the Volunteer Brigade Headquarters co-operated in maintaining the morale of the older Fheinnidhe, whose duties held them to their own organisation by assigning them special tasks from time to time. Examples of these special Fianna operations included the rounding up of a gang of armed cycle thieves in October, 1919; general raids for arms in the area of the 4th Battalion, Dublin Brigade (September, 1920); recovery of arms and explosives lost by 4th Engineers when surprised by Auxiliaries in September, 1920, etc., etc. All such tasks were successfully carried out and the allotment of them to the Fianna fully justified. A considerable amount of the intelligence and communications work was also carried out by the Fianna. The main task of the organisation was to train recruits for the Volunteers, and this was definitely its most valuable contribution to the Republican movement in the 1920-21 period.

The Fianna was as badly disrupted as the Volunteers by the disastrous "split" in 1922, except that it at least succeeded in maintaining its identity. Those of its members who took the Pro-Treaty side nearly all went straight into the National Army, and no attempt was made to maintain a Pro-Treaty Fianna organisation. The organisation as such took the anti-Treaty side, and for its subsequent history reference should be made to the authorities given below.

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It must be realised that the foregoing summary is compiled mainly from memory, extending as it does over a period of 12 years (1909-1921) and written many years later. It is bound to contain inaccuracies and to be deficient in many respects. These inaccuracies could be corrected and the deficiencies rectified by reference to the following authorities:

1. G.H.Q. and organisation in general.

E. Martin, 2, Gray's Inn Road, London, W.C.1.

L. Langley, Office of Revenue Commissioners,
Dublin Castle, Dublin.

2. Dublin Brigade.

G. Houlihan, Engineers Department, Dublin Corporation.

J. Reynolds, "Irish Press" Office, Dublin.

D/Sergt. W. Rowe, "S" Branch, Garda Síochána, Dublin
Castle.

3. Cork & Munster generally.

F. MacMahon, 2, St. Stephen's Place, Friar's St., Cork.

4. Belfast & Ulster generally.

Lieut. H. O'Neill, Ordnance Survey Office, Phoenix Park.

H. Kennedy, 19, Grove Park, Rathmines.

5. Connaught.

L. Langley (see 1 above).

Should any further information be required, the writer will be glad to furnish it if possible.

Signed: Aodh Mac Neill

(Aodh Mac Neill)

Date:

MARCH 20th, 1956.

March 20th, 1956.

Witness:

Sean Brennan Lieut-Col

(Investigator) (Sean Brennan)