

**ORIGINAL**

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21 -

BURO STAIRE MILEATA 1913-21

No. **W.S. 1.637**

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

DOCUMENT NO. **W.S.** 1637.

**Witness**

Henry T. Banks,  
"Ceann Coradh",  
8, Highfield Road,  
Dundrum,  
Co. Dublin.

**Identity.**

Member of 'A' Coy., 3rd Battn., Dublin Bgde., I.R.A.

**Subject.**

'A' Coy., 3rd Battn., Dublin Brigade, I.R.A.,  
1913 - 21.

**Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.**

Nil.

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Form B.S.M. 2

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STATEMENT BY HENRY T. BANKS,

"Ceann Coradh", 8, Highfield Road, Dundrum, Co. Dublin.

I am a native of Dublin. I joined the Irish Republican Brotherhood in 1910. Seán MacDermott swore me in. To his credit, he pointed out to me the attitude of the Church towards that organisation. I said that, if the Church could point out to me how we could arm openly without being prevented by the British Government, I would not join, that they could not do that, and my conscience was quite clear about joining it.

While I was in the I.R.B., we had a meeting one night, and the question of internationalism cropped up, raised by a man named Browne, I think. Seán MacDermott asked him would he put Ireland before internationalism, and Browne said, "No! Internationalism would come first". MacDermott told him to get out, that there was no room for him there, and we never saw him again.

I joined the Volunteers the night they were formed in the Rotunda in 1913. Larkin was to have broken up that meeting because of Kettle, who was to speak at it. There was some labour trouble. We were to see to it that Larkin would not make any trouble at the meeting, but nothing happened.

The next evening, I was talking to Tom Clarke. He said he was finished with Larkin, that he had been making a collection every week for him, but that he was finished after his action on the night before.

I took part in the Howth gun-running. We saved some of the guns. I loaded the taxi, in which Seán MacDermott and Tom Clarke were, with about thirty guns before we were told to disperse.

Sometime after the Howth gun-running and before the Rising in 1916, I transferred from 1st Battalion to 3rd Battalion. At the time I joined the 1st Battalion, I was living in Phibsboro. They assembled in Blackhall Place. Monteith was drill instructor.

When the split came in the Volunteers, between Redmond's section and MacNeill's section, I took MacNeill's side. Monteith was, at the time, working in the British Ordnance Survey, and when he opted to go with MacNeill, he lost his job. He became organiser, and was sent throughout the country. I then transferred. At that time, I was working in the Corporation as a Storekeeper.

Joe O'Connor, who was a pal of mine, was elected Captain of 'A' Company, 3rd Battalion, and he asked me to transfer to the 3rd Battalion because he wanted to have somebody with him that he knew. I transferred to the 3rd.

While I was in the 1st Battalion, I bought my rifle, and paid £4.5.0 or £4.10.0 for it, not in a lump sum but on the easy payment system. I owed £1.0.0. on the rifle when I transferred to the 3rd Battalion, and the 1st Battalion tried to claim it, but they did not get it. I paid the £1.0.0. for it. These rifles, I think, were got through the I.R.B., and it was I.R.B. men got preference when they were given out. They were long Lee Enfields.

After that, we got busy for 1916. Things got lively. We were all given to understand that we were no longer playing at soldiers. Now, we were real soldiers, and anybody who was not prepared to die had no right to be there, and to get out. That was Monteith speaking.

We had manoeuvres all over the county, around the hills. We had target practice in Camden Row, where we paid a penny for five shots. De Valera used to come in, the same as myself, and pay his penny for five shots.

Coming near to the Rising in 1916, the officers got orders to have a guard with them, as they were not to be arrested, so to speak. For a few weeks before the Rising, I was bodyguard of Captain O'Connor of 'A' Company.

On Good Friday, 1916, Captain O'Connor was at his work, and I was down with him. He gave me orders to go to Mick Staines, the Brigade Quartermaster, to get some ammunition. I got whatever was to be got.

On Easter Saturday, we were again at the job, and a detective who was watching O'Connor passed by his place of business. When he had gone off, I told O'Connor. We then went to Confession. I went home for two boxes of .22 revolvers.

I will tell you how I came to get these two boxes of revolvers. A couple of weeks previously, there was a threatened raid on the house of a man attached to the 1st Battalion. Another man of the 1st Battalion asked me would I take two boxes of revolvers. I said, "Certainly". There were four boxes altogether. He took two, and I took the other two, and brought them home.

I distributed the revolvers at the parade on Easter Saturday evening. O'Connor and I slept on the floor that night, in his home.

On Easter Sunday, according to the newspapers, the special parade for that day was called off. We had been given to understand beforehand not to mind any notices that

would appear in the press. Some of the parades assembled, and were then called off.

On Easter Sunday evening, Captain O'Connor and I went to the Catholic Club in Pearse Street. It was headquarters at that time. A meeting of officers was held there that night, but I don't know whether they came to any decision. Captain O'Connor just came out, and said to me to keep my heart up, that it was not all up. However, I felt that it was, and I went home to bed.

On Easter Monday morning, Joe Guilfoyle (a younger brother of Major Seán Guilfoyle of the Defence Forces) mobilised me, and informed me that the fight was on. I got up, dressed, collected my equipment, and left the house for the place of mobilisation at Earlsfort Terrace. It is now University College.

When I left the house, I met a Volunteer - I cannot now recollect his name - and he asked me to accompany him to Lennox Street, while he collected his equipment, so that he could go along with me to the place of mobilisation. We were half-way up Stamer Street when he said to me, "Wait here! I won't be five minutes!". While I was waiting, Alderman Tom Kelly came along. He said, "Good morning!" I said, "Good morning!" "Well", he said, "you are at it!" "Yes", I said, "Thank God!" "God bless you all", he said, and walked across the road to the house where Ted Sheehan lived. The other Volunteer came along then, and we proceeded to the place of mobilisation.

We then moved off to the railway in Grattan Street. We went down Grattan Street, and in on the railway. We took over the railway works in Grand Canal Street, and from that, out towards Merrion.

O'Connor told me to go into the office, get the keys, and find where the stores and all the inflammable stuff were, and all that was in the stores. I proceeded to do so, and found men working in the fitter's shop. I told them the position, and to get out. They packed up and went off.

I proceeded then to make things as comfortable as possible for the men when they would be off duty. I think there were only twenty-five members of the company mobilised, at the most. Some men were sent out to break the locks on the gates in Merrion. They went out, broke the locks of the gates, and had our first casualty, with one of my .22 revolvers, when a man put a bullet through his wrist.

We manned the bridges crossing the canal and Bath Avenue, where we took over some houses running from the railway line to Grand Canal St. which gave us a clear view of Beggars Bush Barracks.

From the roof of the workshops we also had a good view of the barracks. There were two large water tanks which gave us some cover. This position afterwards became very dangerous when the enemy found the range.

On Tuesday we were all very happy after working very hard to fortify our position. Then the enemy arrived from Dúnlaoghaire and got a very warm reception from Carisbrook House, Clanwilliam House, the schools and railway line. That night we expected an attack from Lansdowne Road, so with some men from 'B' Company we dug in between the sleepers and waited, but nothing happened.

On Wednesday evening there was an attack on the workshops which was beaten off.

The battalion also occupied the granary on the Canal Basin and barricaded all windows with sacks of grain to draw enemy fire, and then withdrew. The battalion also occupied the distillery in Pearse St., where they hoisted a flag.

The enemy by this time had occupied Lansdowne Football Ground, from where they kept up a continuous machine-gun fire.

On Saturday evening a lady came to the bridge at Bath Avenue and asked for the O/C. I directed her to the mill. That night Capt. O'Connor was sent for. He came back on Sunday morning and told me it was all over and to go up the line and bring the men in. We had to run a gauntlet of machine-gun fire along the whole line. The battalion assembled in the mill and marched out to Mount St., from there to the R.D.S., Ballsbridge, where we were lodged in the cattle stalls.

On Monday we were marched to Richmond Barracks, and the following day, Friday, we were deported to Wakefield Jail, and from there to Frongoch. I was released on the last Saturday in July, and arrived home on Sunday morning.

Well, we got in touch with each other again, and the Commandant (de Valera) was released in 1917. We had a re-union in 41, York St. as he had asked for it.

We started to organise again and J. O'Connor was made Commandant. I was on his staff, and we went up the mountains to organise the county, taking in Dundrum, Ticknock, Barnaculla, and Glencullen. When organised it became the 6th Battalion under A. McDonnell.

During the Tan war the stores where I worked (which was in Tara St.) were availed of by some companies to store some ammunition, grenades and other articles, also company reports of activities which I brought along to the Commandant. Thus it continued to the Truce.

Signed: *Henry Banks*

Date:

*18<sup>th</sup> June 1957*

Witness:

*James Cash*

(Investigator).

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