

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21  
BUREAU STAIRS MILITARY 1913-21  
No: W.S. 148

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 148

Witness

James Cr2nigan

Identity

Member of 5th Battn. (Fingal) Dublin Bde. 1916.

Bde. Adjnt. Fingal Bn. 1920-1921.

Subject

5th Bn. (Fingal) I.V. 1913-1916.

Conditions, if any, stipulated by Witness

Nil

File No. S.1006

Form B.S.M. 2.

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913 - 1921.

Statement by James Grenegan, Roganstown, Swords,  
Co. Dublin.

I joined the Irish Volunteers in September 1914 in Swords. This was after the split in the Volunteer Force. I joined the Irish Volunteers because I believed in the freedom of Ireland and I thoroughly disagreed with the policy of John Redmond.

When I joined Frank Lawless of Saucerstown, Swords, and Richard Coleman were present. I did not sign any register or make any declaration. I was issued with a Volunteer Card of membership and we had to pay a small weekly subscription. I cannot remember how much per week we paid. This subscription went towards the purchase of arms, uniform and equipment.

We had parades twice per week and route marches and ~~route~~ exercises on Sundays. Dick Coleman usually did the instruction and officers from Dublin including Paddy Daly and Con Colbert also visited us and gave us instruction. We had Company Battalion and Brigade exercises around Coolock - Finglas - and the Broad - Meadows. On one occasion we went up to the Hell Fire Club with the whole Brigade. We were transported to Dublin and marched from Parnell Square to the Hell Fire and back. We had a good amount of rifles of the Martini Henry type. (I cannot remember how many). We also had shot guns and small bore rifles.

Dick Coleman was the Company Captain. I do not remember who the other officers of the Company were. Captain Coleman had a uniform and a few others had also. We were now "A" Company of the 5th Battalion, Dublin Brigade. Dr. Richard Hayes was the O.C. of the Battalion and Tom Ashe was the Adjutant and Frank Lawless was the Q.M.

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I went to Limerick for the reception to Captain Monteith. We got a very hostile reception there and we nearly had to fight our way out of the city. The R. I. C. were present in strength there, but did not take any action to control the mob. I also paraded with my Company at O'Donovan Rossa's funeral.

We had a good deal of target practice with .22 rifles and some with .303. Firing was usually held at Mr. Lawless's place at Saucerstown or down at the Broad-Meadows river. The ammunition for this was supplied to us free.

Nothing of special note happened until Easter Sunday. The Battalion was ordered to mobilise at Saucerstown on that date. We were ordered to carry all arms and ammunition and equipment in our possession and to bring 24 hours' rations. We mobilised at about 12 o'clock that day and were standing-to until about 12 p.m. that night. I would say there were about 200 mobilised. We were provided with food at Mr. Lawless's place at Saucerstown.

While waiting there that afternoon I first became aware that there was going to be a fight. We were not told this but it was generally understood by all and was talked of amongst the men. At about 12 p.m. that night we were dismissed without any special instructions and we brought our arms and equipment with us. The R. I. C. were around the road a few times during the afternoon but did not interfere with us. I went home and went to bed.

On Monday morning (Easter Monday) about 9 a.m. I was ordered to parade at Knocksedan Cross Roads with my Company at 10 a.m. I was mobilised by a Christy O'Neill of the Rolestown Section who incidentally did not turn out himself. The parade now was much smaller than on the previous day and we now only amounted to about 60 all told. When we got organised in our own Companies we set off for the Glen of Finglas which was our first camp. We all had bicycles. I had a Martini rifle and about 50 rounds which I carried in my pockets. There was no incident en route which was through St. Margarets and Finglas. We had an advance party and scouts moving in front.

We arrived in camp in the early afternoon and sentries were posted and trenches were dug in the high banks overlooking the main road; that evening I could hear shooting in the city. We slept in our clothes in the open that night/previous to which we had been given a good supply of food. I understood at this time that we were moving into the city.

On Tuesday (Easter Tuesday) at about 10 a.m. word came from the city (I don't know who brought it) looking for reinforcements. Those of us who were not on duty or resting off night duty at the time were paraded and asked if we would volunteer to go into the city. Nearly all present volunteered. A party of about 20 men including myself, were selected and placed under the command of Captain Coleman. This party fell in and proceeded towards the city on foot, leaving our bicycles behind us. We proceeded via Glasnevin - Doyle's Corner - and the Mater Hospital to O'Connell Street. We met no resistance. We did not see any policeman and only a few people.

On arrival outside the G.P.O. spasmodic firing was taking place and there were a few dead horses in O'Connell Street. We went into the G.P.O. There was a big number of volunteers there and officers; but I did not know any of them at the time. We had a meal there. Things seemed to be well organised in the G.P.O. About 5 or 6 p.m. ten of us were fell in and preceded by a guide who was a Dublin man. We moved out and down Henry Street and through a number of back streets which I did not know, and also through a lot of back yards. We crossed the Liffey at the bridge west of Capel Street Bridge and thence by further back streets and eventually arrived through the back way into the Mendicity Institute. From the time we left the G.P.O. we were nearly always under fire but we got there without any casualties.

We were posted at the windows on both floors, front and back. There was practically no protection in the windows and certainly no sand-bags. Sniping and volley firing was continuous at British troops on the North Quays and coming from the Royal Barracks

There was no relief - you just slept at your post when you got a chance, and food was usually brought to us at the windows. Food consisted of tinned meat, tinned fish, tea, bread and butter. Bread seemed to be very scarce. As well as I can remember there were about 40 men in this garrison. Commandant Heuston was in command here. Firing continued throughout the night.

By Wednesday afternoon the place was just plastered with machine gun and rifle fire and we seemed to be surrounded as we were being fired on from all sides. Commandant Heuston ordered an evacuation of the place. Placing himself at the head we crossed the yard in single file. (One of our men - Volunteer W. Wilson was killed while crossing the yard), in an effort to effect an escape by the rear. When we got out at the back we found that we were surrounded and our only way of retreat cut off. Commandant Heuston then surrendered and we all laid down our arms. The military came in and surrounded us and marched us off to Arbour Hill and placed us in the Gym there under a strong guard. We were issued with one blanket each and the following morning we got a fair amount of food. New prisoners were continually arriving and the place was terribly overcrowded, there being barely a space to lie down. There were no beds - we just lay on the floor in our one blanket.

We remained in the Gym at Arbour Hill until we were tried at Richmond Barracks. I think that was about one week later. After our trial we were brought to Kilmainham Jail and put in the cells. We had one blanket here also and again had to lie on the floors. We were all in single cells and were only allowed out to wash. After about two days we were told the findings of our courtmartial which in my case was 3 years penal servitude, mitigated to one on account of my age (young). Next day we were removed to Mountjoy. It was while out exercising there that Frank Lawless was able to tell me that my brother had been killed at Ashbourne.

We were next marched to the North Wall and placed on a

cattle boat - I do not remember the date. We travelled via Holyhead to Wormwood Scrubbs. We were <sup>well</sup> received by the people when going to the boat in Dublin, and in England there was no interference with us - just curiosity.

I was about nine months in Wormwood Scrubbs. Conditions there were good and after a time when they discovered that we were really human beings they allowed us to work and exercise together and did not associate us with the ordinary criminals. We had of course to wear prison uniform. I was next transferred to Lewes and finished my time there. Conditions here were not as good as in Wormwood.

Most of the higher officers I found, were there, including De Valera, Cosgrave, Frank Lawless, Tom Ashe, Dick Mulcahy, etc. I knew them now. When I had finished my sentence I was released, provided with a civilian suit and a passage to Dublin and came home. I think I was out before some of the men who were only interned.

SIGNED:

*James Brenigan*

29 June, 1948.

WITNESS:

*M. Barry*  
(M. Barry).

Commandant.

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