

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

BURO STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21

No. W.S. 248

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 248.....

Witness

Liam O Flaithbheartaigh
364 Kimmage Road, Dublin.

Identity

Member of Irish Volunteers,
'B' Company, 4th Battalion Dublin Brigade
1913-1916.

Subject

Preparations for Rising Easter Week 1916;
South Dublin Union " " "
Imprisonment and Release.

Conditions, if any, stipulated by Witness

Nil

File No.S. 997.....

Form B.S.M. 2.

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STATEMENT BY LIAM Ó FLAITHBHEARTAIGH

364 Kimmage Road, Dublin.

I joined the Irish Volunteers at the inaugural meeting in the Rotunda in 1913. I was allotted to "B" Company, 4th Battalion, and notified to attend at the Fianna Hall, Camden Street, for drills. Drilling transferred afterwards to Larkfield Green Lanes. After the split caused by Redmondites etc. remained in old Company although at first few in numbers.

As Secretary of Craobh an Ghliabhraigh, Connradh na Gaedhilge, provided welcome to a big number of volunteers stationed at Larkfield (men who had returned to Ireland prior to the Easter Week Rising, 1916). These Volunteers attended the Branch's social functions each week. This same Branch (Craobh an Ghliabhraigh), 25 Donore Ave., S.C.R., was in fact the meeting place for learning Irish and enjoying Irish dances for the Volunteers in Dolphin's Barn district. Nearly every male member of the Branch was an active Volunteer, while many of the cailíní were in Cumann na mBan. Practically every man and boy in the Branch took part in the 1916 Rising, likewise many of the cailíní in Cumann na mBan. Two - Seán Traynor and Seán Owens - were shot dead in South Dublin Union on Easter Monday, 1916.

On Good Friday night, 1916, I was one of a party detailed by Commandant Eamon Ceannt to escort munitions and war material from Larkfield to Dolphin's Barn Street.

On Easter Sunday night, 1916, while running a

sgoruidheacht in the Cleaver Branch, 25 Donore Avenue, at 11.30 p.m., Captain Thomas McCarthy gave me an order from Commandant Eamon Ceannt to Giarán (Kieran) Kenny and myself to be at his house, S. C. R. Dolphin's Barn, at 6.45 a.m. on Easter Monday morning. Both of us assisted at 6 o'clock Mass in Mount Argus and arrived at Commandant Ceannt's house at 6.40 a.m.

Commandant Ceannt had the appearance of having been up all night. After our arrival, Commandant Ceannt instructed me to write mobilisation orders for the Captains of all the Companies in the Battalion and to secure dispatch cyclists for their delivery. Kieran Kenny contacted Seán Ó Briain, 8 Dolphin's Barn, for the cyclists. The mobilisation orders were duly written and dispatched by the cyclists.

At 7 a.m. Commandant Ceannt stated that he was going to a meeting in Liberty Hall and left the house. He gave me orders to carry on until his return. He returned at approximately 8.30 a.m.

The 4th Battalion was mobilised at Larkfield, Kimmage, and at Emerald Square. We left Larkfield at about 11.30 a.m. and marched across the Tongue Fields to Emerald Square, Cork Street. The full mobilisation at Emerald Square afterwards was divided into different parts - one party under Captain Liam Cosgrave marching off to enter the South Dublin Union by the front gate in James's Street. Another party, under Captain Tom McCarthy, proceeded to enter Roe's Distillery, Mount Brown. Commandant Ceannt led the remaining party to the back gate on the South Circular Road and led his men into the South Dublin Union. Some of the Volunteers were sent to hold the galvanised sheds in the Infirmary near the entrance. More of us were ordered to go to orchard

overlooking Mount Brown and stop the British military coming up Kilmainham towards the city. I was in this section. Just as we entered the South Dublin Union, Commandant Ceannt told us to expect an explosion in the Magazine Fort, Phoenix Park, at 12.30.

After a considerable time British military appeared in Old Kilmainham at the foot of Mount Brown. Rifle fire was opened immediately on them. The British replied and afterwards retired and went around by the South Dublin Union Master's House towards the back gate at Rialto Bridge.

The Volunteers in McCaffrey's Orchard withdrew in the afternoon to the Nurses' Home (except Seán Owens, R.I.P.) who lay dead on the ground. Commandant Ceannt then ordered some of us to hold the passage running back towards the Children's Hospital and to take over the Hospital ward overlooking the roadway. The ward was full of old invalids who were quietly taken away by the attendants. After a long interval a sudden call to surrender came from the top corner of ward. The seven Volunteers in the ward were taken by surprise, as they did not know of this particular entrance. They had been guarding the passage on the right. However, a reply from the Volunteers' rifles sent the British soldiers back. They did not attack again, but we found afterwards the ward door locked and had to force an exit by blowing open the locks. That evening we again made contact with the main garrison at the Nurses' Home, which was the H.Q. until the surrender on the following Sunday evening.

The Nurses' Home was under fire from the Old Men's House, Kilmainham, during the whole week and the back windows on the stairs were cut away by bullets. Frank Burke was shot in the throat early on Tuesday morning by a sniper in a hospital ward. He died immediately. On Tuesday evening, at about 8 p.m.,

Commandant Ceannt and Captain Cathal Brugha sent Seán Murphy and myself out by the wicket gate at rear of Nurses' Home to try and make contact with Captain Tom McCarthy's men in Roe's Distillery. Seán and myself travelled up and down Mount Brown and Cromwell's Quarters. Eventually we had the caretaker's house opened and we were told by the caretaker that the Volunteers had all left by that evening as they had no provisions and could not hold the building.

On Thursday the two sections of the garrison had by boring effected contact. Holes were pierced in the walls from the front gate around to the Nurses' Home. While the majority of the garrison were assembled in a room beside the Bakehouse, a silence was followed by a shower of bombs and rifle fire. We seemed trapped and a terrific barrage was opened on the building. It was then that Cathal Brugha received the wounds. At this time also Eamon Ceannt went in view of the porch of the Nurses' Home and shot a North of Ireland Constabulary man who was in the van of the attackers. He also questioned us re surrender. But we resolved to die where we were facing the enemy. The attackers withdrew in the night and did not attack again that night.

On Tuesday of Easter Week a Carmelite Priest visited the garrison and heard their confessions. On Sunday a Capuchin Priest accompanied Commandant McDonagh to speak to Commandant Ceannt. That afternoon our Commandant told us of the Order. We marched out of the South Dublin Union with our full equipment across to Marrowbone Lane, where we joined that garrison; thence to Bull Alley Street where we were all assembled. Our names were taken by a British Officer, our rifles and revolvers and all equipment left on the ground. That evening we were marched back by the South Dublin Union up to Richmond Barracks. We lustily sang "God Save Ireland"

as we passed by our old fortress and on arrival at Richmond Barracks were put in groups of forty in a barrack room, without lavatory accommodation.

On Monday morning I saw Pádraig Pearse marching under escort to his courtmartial. On Tuesday Éamon de Valera marched into the Barrack Square with his men, his height and stature making him conspicuous among his captors.

The prisoners were gathered into the Gymnasium for inspection and identification. The Dublin policemen were officious in picking out the Volunteers known to them. It was a matter of separating the sheep from the goats.

In the evening the prisoners were marched out of the Barracks down Kilmainham through the Royal Hospital (where a great field of artillery was gathered for battering down Dublin) down the Quays (a fire was still burning at the end of Bridge Street) to the North Wall. The crowds who lined the route did not seem very fond of us (the exceptions were our own immediate friends). That night we travelled by cattle boat to England and eventually reached Knutsford Gaol. After a few weeks solitary in the cells we were allowed out for exercise in the compound and were allowed to write home and receive letters and parcels. Thence to Frongoch. After 'trial' in Wormwood Scrubbs, return to Frongoch. For refusing names - letters and parcels banned. Thus to Christmas Eve when we were sent home again.

Remained in Volunteers in B. IV. Delegate to Volunteer Convention in Croke Park, presided over by Éamon de Valera. Ordinary member of Company. House raided by British Military in Autumn 1920.

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No. W.S.	248
WITNESS	<i>Sean Pinnar. Comdt.</i>

SIGNED

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DATE

9 Bealaghe 1949