

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
BUREAU STAIRS MILITARY 1913-21
No. W.S. 339

ROINN  COSANTA.

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 339.....

Witness

Mr. Patrick McCormack,
Tigh Ard Chuain,
Cushendun,
Co. Antrim.
Identity

Representative of Scotland Division of I.R.B.;

Member of Supreme Council I.R.B. 1915-1917.

Subject

- (a) Organisation of I.R.B. Scotland 1893-1916;
- (b) Deportation of L. Mellows and E. Blythe to England 1916;
- (c) Belfast-Tyrone, Easter Week 1916.

Conditions, if any, stipulated by Witness

Nil

File No. S.1059.....

Form B.S.M. 2.

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Patrick McCormick, Tigh Ard a Chusain,

Cushendun, Co. Antrim.

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I knew Mr. McCormick very well in 1920 and 1921 (during my visits on I.R.A. work to Belfast in those years). He received me as an old friend. When I explained to him the purpose of my visit he informed me that he would not co-operate with the Bureau of Military History as he looked on the Bureau as being set up by the politicians in an effort to provide material which could be used at the appropriate time or times "to whitewash the past of certain prominent men who had let down the Republic". After a long discussion on the procedure of the Bureau and an assurance by me that the material we are collecting would not be made available for publication at any time within the expectations of life of any of our present day politicians. He agreed to give me his story on the clear understanding that he would not sign it. He agreed to read and check the completed statement for errors, but would refuse to put his signature to it.

Mr. McCormick is now 72 years of age. Physically, he could pass as 20 years younger. He appears to have a very good memory and an intelligent mind.

I spent 3 days with him taking notes of his evidence. I experienced some difficulty in getting his co-operation as I felt he was trying to give me the impression that he was careless and indifferent about what I was taking down. I got, however, a fairly complete history of the organisation of the I.R.B. in Scotland from the 1890's up to 1916.

I had all the material which I had taken down in manuscript notes typed and I called on him again and spent 4 days with him. When he read the typescript we made of his earlier evidence he expressed his approval, made some alterations where errors appeared and finished his story up to the

year 1917 when he severed his connection with the Supreme Council of the I.R.B.

On this last visit I found that he had become most enthusiastic about getting all details within his personal knowledge dealing with the preparations for the Rising within the I.R.B. organisation recorded. I feel now that he has been very candid in his account of what he remembers about the events he has dealt with. He suggested that I should show Dan Branniff of Belfast a copy of his evidence and ask Mr. Branniff for permission for Mr. McCormick to see Mr. Branniff's evidence. His reason for this request is that either he or Mr. Branniff had been representatives for Scotland on the Supreme Council of the I.R.B. from 1911 to 1921, except in the years 1913-1915 when Charles Carrigan held office, and that between them they should be able to effect a fairly accurate reconstruction of the members of the Supreme Council during all those years.

John Mc Coy.
23/1/50

STATEMENT BY PATRICK MCGORMICK,

CUSHENDUN, CO. ANTRIM.

I joined the I.R.B. in Scotland in 1899. The circle I joined was in Glasgow. In 1899 there were circles in Glasgow, Fife, Stirling, Lanark and Renfrew. In 1901 or 1902 a circle was started in Dumbarton which ceased to exist after a short time. About this time there were 2 organisers for the I.R.B. in Scotland Patrick McAllen of Killarney and Mick Lyons, Caragh Lake, Killarney. Those organisers might have been appointed later than 1902.

John Turley of Clydebank was representative for Scotland on the Supreme Council about 1899 and held office up to about 1901 or 1902. Patrick Beatty of Paisley succeeded Turley. John McGarrity of Hamilton succeeded Beatty. McGarrity was from the west of Ireland and he remained in office up to 1909 or 1910, or thereabouts. He was succeeded by John Mulholland, a native of South Derry. This man was Chairman of the Council in Scotland for some time prior to 1914.

On the outbreak of the 1914-18 war a discussion must have arisen at the Supreme Council about the possibility of a rising and, as a result of whatever happened at the Council meeting, John Mulholland resigned from the Supreme Council. He later called a meeting of his division in Scotland and explained his action and tendered his resignation to the Division and also from the organisation.

After Mulholland's resignation some person from Dublin came to Scotland and held an election. I can't be sure now who the person who came was, ~~Mr. Baly, Master John H. Deane, or anyone~~ probably, Denis McCullough. At this election, Charles Carrigan, born in Stirlingshire, was elected. Carrigan was killed fighting at the G.P.O. in Easter Week 1916. Carrigan held office on the Supreme Council up to some time in 1915, when he had to leave Scotland to evade being conscripted for service in the British

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Patrick McGormick

Army. In May 1915 I was elected on the Supreme Council and held office until after Easter Week 1916.

The organisation of the I.R.B. in Scotland at Easter Week, 1916, was as follows:-

	<u>Name of Circle.</u>	<u>Head of Circle.</u>
Lanarkshire, Glasgow	Townhead	Terry Fitzpatrick.
Central	Central	Danl. Branniff, Belfast.
Motherwell	Motherwell	Sean Mills, Mayo
do.	do.	Wm. Diamond, Derry
Hamilton	Hamilton	Joe O'Donnell, Donegal.
Coatbridge	Coatbridge	Seamus ^{Philip} Graham. <i>Yme</i>
Renfrewshire	Paisley	Tom Breslin, Lifford
do.	Renfrew Town	Con Phibbs, Cork
Ayrshire	White Hill	James Canavan
do.	Portglasgow	Patk. McAuley, Derry

Tom Breslin from Lifford, Co. Donegal, the Centre for Paisley, was the man who procured the gun and gave it to Patrick O'Donnell for the shooting of James Carey.

James Canavan was treasurer of the Scottish Division from 1915 up to after the Rising in Easter Week, 1916. Paddy McElroy of Co. Tyrone, was Civil Secretary for Scotland.

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In my early days in Scotland we had the Young Ireland Society and the ~~Glan~~ ^{Compan} na Gael. Later those organisations were merged into the Sinn Fein organisation.

The Republicans in Scotland had three special celebrations each year. Emmet Commemoration on 4th March; Smashing of the Van in Manchester Commemoration, 18th September, and the Commemoration for the execution of the Manchester Martyrs on 23rd November. It was customary to get a lecturer from Dublin to give an address at those commemorations. After the start of the Boer War in October 1899, Madam Gonne McBride came over and gave a lecture in the Albion Hall, College St. Glasgow. The

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date of this lecture was probably the 4th March 1900 - Emmet Commemoration. Amongst the people we had over as lecturers were the following - O'Donovan Rossa, Madam Gonne McBride, Countess Markievicz, Major John McBride, Sean McDermott, Arthur Griffith, James Dolan, P.T. Daly from Dublin, Bulmer Hobson, Dr. P. McCartan, P. Rafferty and a Father Harper from Wexford.

Fr. Harper was the first priest who openly identified himself with the Sinn Fein organisation. There were a number of others came whom I cannot now remember. Whenever an election in the I.R.B. was held in Glasgow, we invariably arranged that the delegate from the Central Council for the election would be utilised to give a lecture - Cumann na nGael or later the Sinn Fein members.

We had in Glasgow an old Invincible - Denis Cannon - who was out with the Fenians in Tallaght, Co. Dublin, in 1867. He joined the Invincibles after 1867. The Invincibles were formed as a result of the younger men of their day disagreeing with the Fenian organisation or, more properly speaking, the I.R.B. of 1867. The Chief Organiser of the Invincibles was known as "No. 1" and was John Walsh, Middlesboro - a Mayo man. In 1912 when I was organising South Shields, Tyneside, I stayed with John Walsh's son, Anthony Walsh. I started a circle in this district - Tyne ^{Dock} ~~Bay~~ - in which Bill Heron and his 5 sons comprised the circle. I organised a circle at Consett, Durham, of which Pat Brawley, Tyrone, was Centre. A circle had been started at North Shields which, on the advice of the organiser, I once visited. This circle was dropped. I started a circle at Jarrow of which a man named Munroe was Centre. This man was recommended by P. Brawley. This circle did not function for any length of time and I got no further reports from it.

We had in one of our Glasgow Circles 2 men - one named McCann and the other named McCullough - who took part with Tom Clarke in the general plan of campaign of Clarke's day. Both

of those men, for their part in an attempt to blow up the canal bridge at Port Dundas and other other activities, served 14 years' penal servitude with Tom Clarke and John Daly. From McCann I heard that the men who fired the shot that killed Sgt. Britt in the Manchester van attack was Peter Rice, a native of Dundalk, Co. Louth. I also had this matter verified later by Major Sean McBride, who had direct touch with those early days.

From the famine years in Ireland when the first big influx of Irish first came to Scotland and the north of England, the Irish in North Britain kept their revolutionary organisations alive and there were in these areas many direct links amongst Irish emigrants of the various revolutionary attempts in Ireland. When the 1867 Rising failed, a lot of men who had some part in the attempt came to Scotland, some on the run, or forced by hunger. Those men were fertile ground for recruiting whenever an organiser for the I.R.B. appeared in any of the industrial towns of Britain. When I joined the Central Circle in Glasgow most of the members were old men in our eyes - around 60 years of age or thereabouts, and the majority of them were members of the I.R.B. when they came to Glasgow.

I was appointed District Centre of the I.R.B. in 1908 by general convention of all Scotland. I was not a centre of a circle at the time. As District Centre I was responsible for the periodical visiting of each circle at least once a year and to supervise all circle elections.

About 1910 or 1911 there were about 300 men enrolled in the I.R.B. on the Clyde. As a result of the migratory nature of the work of the Irish in Scotland it was very difficult to keep the circles together. A circle might almost disappear in a few months and efforts had to be made to keep the circle alive by dividing a large circle and assimilating the remnants of the depleted circle and again recruiting in an effort to bring both circles up to full strength.

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In 1912 I was appointed Civil Secretary for Scotland and held this position up to 1915. This position, whilst technically promotion, did not change very much the nature of my work. I had more responsibility as Civil Secretary as I had to take action where expulsions were necessary, circles becoming inactive or members not meeting their obligations in respect of cash contributions to I.R.B. funds.

In 1915 I was appointed a member of the Supreme Council. My Civil Secretary for Scotland in 1915 was P. McElroy and his duties were similar to mine for the previous 3 years.

Liam Mellows and Ernest Blythe were deported to England in the early months of 1916. Both men were staying in some village in the Midlands or Southern England. Miss Nora Connolly came to Glasgow with a message which originated from the I.R.B. Council in Dublin. This message probably came from Sean McDermott and Miss Connolly had instructions to call at my address in Glasgow (Mrs. Eakin, 339 Cathcart Road), bringing Mellows and Blythe with her.

When Miss Connolly and Liam Mellows arrived at the above address, Maggie Eakin, daughter of Mrs. Eakin, called out to me where I worked at Motherwell and told me about their arrival. I immediately left my work and met them in Glasgow. I inquired from Mellows where Ernest was and he replied that Ernest would not break his word to the British Government and that he remained in England.

We next contacted a man named Tom White - "Tomás a Ban" and when he arrived we discussed plans to get Liam across to Belfast that night. Maggie Eakin suggested that we should consult Father Courtney, a native of Kerry, who was then C.C. at Crosshill. Father Courtney arrived and we told him about the job of getting Liam across to Ireland. It was decided that he should go in clerical clothes. Fr. Courtney volunteered to get Liam one of his suits. As the suit when tried was much too

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big for Liam, the priest immediately got over the difficulty by going to his P.P.'s house and "borrowing" pants. Father Courtney was over 6 ft. in height and his P.P. was a much smaller man, so, with the smaller pants, Liam's outfit made a respectable looking priest of him. Fr. Courtney also gave Liam an old breviary and instructed him on when and how he should read it. The next item was Fr. Courtney giving Liam his blessing on his journey and telling him that he was Fr. Courtney's first ordination.

As Tom White and I did not wish to attract attention to Liam, we sent Maggie Eakin with him and Nora Connolly to the Booking Office at the station. Miss Connolly was well able to take care of her charge in Belfast.

The first meeting of the Supreme Council after I was elected to that body was held in Farnell Square - I think in the Foresters' Hall - on the 1st Sunday in August 1915 (evening of O'Donovan Rossa funeral). Only the elected members attended this meeting and all the elected members were not present, as some of them were in jail at the time. Alex McCabe was one and I don't remember seeing Denis McCullough or Sean Tobin being present.

The elected members who were eligible to attend this meeting were :-

Leinster	Sean Tobin
Munster	Diarmuid Lynch
Connaught	Alex. McCabe
Ulster	Denis McCullough
North England	Joe Gleeson
South England	Dick Connolly
Scotland	Pat McCormick

The main purpose of the meeting was the co-option of four members to the Supreme Council as set out in the constitution. The co-options were as follow: Thomas Clarke, Sean McDermott, Patrick Pearse and Dr. Patrick McCartan.

The next meeting of the Supreme Council was held in or

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about Oct. or Nov. 1915, as far as I can remember. All elected co-opted members were present. The business of this meeting was the election of an executive. The executive elected were

Chairman	Denis McCullough
Secretary	Sean McDermott
Treasurer	Thomas Clarke

At this meeting was also discussed the question of the military committee. I cannot now remember what was done in connection with this matter. I am certain that the question arose in some form. It may have been brought up to get the Council's ratification to the appointment of the military committee. The constitution of the I.R.B. provided for both a civil and a military committee and the appointment of a military committee was no new departure; at this time Patrick Pearse was the direct representative of the Irish Volunteers on the Supreme Council and was in addition in close touch with the I.R.B. Executive, especially Thomas Clarke and Sean McDermott, who all then lived in Dublin, and I think that those 3 men were then the military committee. There may have been others on the military committee at this time.

My special contributions to those Supreme Council meetings were reporting on the general working of my Division - Scotland, membership, finance, etc. My memory of what discussions took place at this meeting on the question of the Rising is that the decision to fight depended on 3 future possibilities:- The arrest or attempted arrest of all the leaders, the enforcement of conscription on Ireland, or a German landing in Ireland. There did not seem to be any doubt about the Council's agreement on armed action in the event of any of those possibilities.

From Jan. 1916 up to near the date of the Rising I did not get any further instructions of any importance. Liam Pedlar came to Glasgow about the first days of Holy Week or the last days of week preceding. He was sent to Glasgow by Sean

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McDermott and came direct to me and instructed me to call a meeting of the Scottish executive and give certain orders. I called a meeting of the Division and gave the following orders:- All the men that could get to Ireland were to travel by boat on Holy Saturday night to Belfast and, on arrival in Belfast, to proceed to Co. Tyrone and join up with the Belfast men. I told the executive that the impending Rising was to take place on some day soon and that all who could do so should travel to Ireland for it.

I travelled to Belfast, arriving there on Holy Thursday morning. I contacted Dan Branniff who then worked in Belfast. Dan and myself came to an arrangement that I should travel with the Belfast men on Saturday to Dungannon and that Dan was to remain in Belfast and meet the Glasgow boat due to arrive there on Sunday morning and put the Glasgow men travelling on it in touch with a Belfast contingent due to leave Belfast on Sunday morning for Tyrone. As it turned out, none of the Glasgow men travelled to Belfast on Sunday morning. There was about 40 to 50 young Glasgow men already in Dublin with the Kimmage garrison

I travelled by train to Dungannon on Saturday evening. In the carriage with me was Ned Gilmore, brother of George. On arrival in Dungannon I met Seamus Dempsey, He did not know I was a member of the Supreme Council as, when he was over in Scotland some time previously, I was on the Scottish executive. I asked Dempsey to put me in touch with either Denis McCullough or Dr. Patk. McCartan and, after a fruitless search in Carrickmore, Gorteen, Greencastle and back to Dr. McCartan's mother's house, our final call was to Barney Rogers' house Six Miles Cross, about midnight on Saturday or early on Easter Sunday morning. Later and early on Sunday morning McCullough and McCartan arrived at Rogers' house. I was then informed that Mary McCartan - the Doctor's sister - was sent to Dublin on Saturday to get in touch with Tom Clarke or Sean

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McDermott and that she had returned late on Saturday night. I then got the impression from both McCullough and McCartan that the Belfast men would be disbanded and sent home. This disbandment was implemented on Sunday when the Belfast men returned home via Cookstown by train. Seamus Dempsey and myself remained around Six Mile Cross until Thursday when he left me to go to Dublin. I remained in Rogers' house until Wednesday morning.

The position in Co. Tyrone from Monday was as follows:- On Monday night a mobilisation of the Six Mile Cross Company was held in a hall in Six Mile Cross. Hugh Rogers seemed to be in charge. The position here was that the Company was standing to awaiting orders.

I received on Monday sealed orders signed by P.H. Pearse. I can't now remember from whom I got them. Those orders were intended for delivery to McCullough or McCartan. As neither of those two men were available when the orders were handed to me I told Seamus Dempsey that as I was a member of the Supreme Council I intended opening the orders and I did so. The orders, as far as I can remember, read something like this: "Keep men mobilised to Friday and be ready for action". McCartan turned up later on Monday and I gave him the document. McCartan and I started on Monday night or Tuesday morning by motor car to Broughderig and collected some rifles from a house where they were stored and we dumped them somewhere near Carrickmore. I then went with McCartan to his own house and there met Herbert Moore Fin, a Ryan from Dublin and some others. During my visit I met a Fr. Short who seemed sympathetic.

On Wednesday Dr. McCartan took me up to the mountains at Clogher. The Captain of Clogher Coy. was Hugh Bogue. Whilst there I met Fr. James O'Daly. He seemed a nice man and most sympathetic. The place I was billeted in in the mountains was, I think, Ballymagann. The house used was either the property of the Bogue or Shevlin families. At this camp I met Miss Ina

me

Connolly and Miss Kathleen Walsh. There were about 40 to 50 Volunteers mobilised there every night. This camp broke up on Friday night or Saturday morning when word arrived about the cease fire in Dublin.

Later I started on my return journey to Belfast and I called with an Hibernian named George Corry, Cornakinniger, who kept me for some time until I got in touch with Dan Branniff in Belfast and was able to return safely to the city.

I was not arrested after 1916. About August 1916 I heard in an indirect way that Mrs. Tom Clarke and Madge Daly, her sister, were the custodians of funds left over from Easter Week. I heard that some persons engaged on re-organisation work had approached Mrs. Clarke for some of those funds. So I decided to call on her. She lived then in Dundrum. I travelled there to see her and I got a promise from her that she would not give any funds away to persons posing as organisers until such time as a proper authority was set up to undertake such work. I then got in touch with Dr. McCartan and, through him, got in touch with Michael Collins and Dermot O'Hegarty who were then engaged in National Aid work. I visited Dublin 3 or 4 times during the Autumn of 1916 and in the early months of 1917. I got in touch with Dermot Lynch after his release from imprisonment. This must have been at the earliest mid-1917. Shortly after Lynch's release a move was made to reform the Supreme Council of the I.R.B. Elections were held in each of the four provinces and in England and Scotland. Sean McGarry went with me to Glasgow for the election in Scotland. I was selected as the representative for the Scottish Division. A short time after the elections the Supreme Council met. The personnel of the Council at this meeting, as far as I can remember, was as follows:-

Chairman	Thomas Ashe
Secretary	Sean O Murthuile
Treasurer	Michael Collins or Dermot Lynch
Munster	Dermot Lynch
Leinster	
Connaught	Alex McCabe ?
	Andy Lavin ?
	Ulster, Liam Gaynor.

North England
 South England
 Scotland

Joe Gleeson
 Pat McCormick

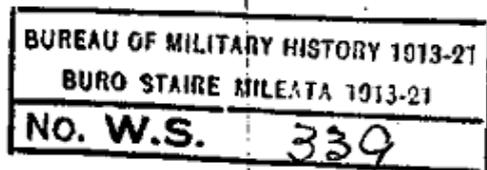
After Thomas Ashe's funeral I resigned from the Supreme Council. On my resignation I was asked my opinion as to who should take my place as representative for Scotland until such time as an election would take place. I recommended Dan Branniff who was then co-opted on to the Supreme Council.

Signed: Pat McCormick

Date: 19/1/50

Witness:

John Mc Boy
 19/1/50



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