

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
BURO STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21
I.C. W.S. 88 -

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ROINN COSANTA.

BURO STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21

(Bureau of Military History 1913-21).

26 RAEDH NA NIARTHARACH,
(26 Westland Row),

BAILE ÁTHA CLIATH.
(Dublin).

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Statement by:

Mrs. Kathleen McDonnell,
Castlelack,
Bandon, Co. Cork.

Dated:

23rd December, 1947.

On:

Kilpatrick Coy. I.V. 1913-1916.
Thomas McCurtain and Terence
McSwiney, Easter, 1916.

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BURG STAIRE MILEATA 1913-21

No. W.S. 88

STATEMENT OF MRS. KATHLEEN McDONNELL,
CASTLELACK, BANDON, CO. CORK.

PERIOD: 1913 to EASTER, 1916.

UNIT: CORK BRIGADE I.V.
KILPATRICK COMPANY, I.V.

Immediately after the start of the Irish Volunteer movement in Dublin in November, 1913, Eoin McNeill wrote to my husband, Mr. William K. McDonnell, requesting him to organise a Corps of Volunteers in the Bandon area. My husband and I at once undertook the task - a difficult one in Bandon - where we had to endeavour to break down the hard crust of anti-national influence exercised by the descendants of Elizabethan usurpers who controlled the social and economic life of the district. As Irish Nationalists we were at first almost alone in the fight. One of the first who joined us was the late Dr. Hennessy.

Mr. McDonnell, senior, was then living and he was a Magistrate of twenty years standing. He was the oldest Catholic Magistrate in Bandon and for that reason the family exercised considerable influence. He was a follower of the Irish Parliamentary Party. He was, because of his office, on intimate terms with the local police Officers, and policemen came frequently to the house on official business. They did not discover for some time the nature of the work upon which my husband and I were engaged, but when they did they made every possible effort to induce Mr. McDonnell, senior, to get us to desist. At this time meetings of a number of local men were being held in the Mill at Castlilack at night, the "Irish Volunteer", "Nationality", and other national papers were being read for them, and Irish history was being studied. In 1914 the police patrolled the roads at night in an endeavour to discover who these men were. From the start the men were enrolled as Volunteers and affiliated to Headquarters in Dublin. Mr. McDonnell and I frequently visited Dublin and were in constant touch with Paudeen O'Keeffe there.

On Good Friday night, 1916, about 10 o'clock, Seán Nolan came to Castlelack from Cork. He had been sent by Tomás MacCurtain to ask my husband to drive Tomas and Terence MacSwiney in his car to an unknown destination on Easter Sunday. Tomás had told Seán Nolan to put the responsibility on me of seeing that the car was available in Cork on Easter Saturday evening. My husband was ill at the time and I undertook that the car would be available and that I would make all arrangements. The car was then in Bradley's Garage, Parnell Place, Cork, undergoing some repairs. Tomás knew he could rely on me if I undertook the arrangements.

Next morning, Saturday, I 'phoned Seán MacCurtain, brother of Tomás, at his place of business in Shandon Street, told him the car would be available in the afternoon and that I would 'phone him again later. I then 'phoned Bradley, and, when informed that the car was ready, instructed them to deliver it to someone I would send for it. I explained that I was unable to come up from Bandon myself. They said they could not do that, as there was a rule that the car should have a trial before being handed over after repair. I enquired if they would accept a telegram from me instructing them to hand over the car. They refused on the grounds that anyone could send a telegram in my name. I then asked if they would accept a telegram if it was countersigned by the Postmaster of Bandon, verifying my signature. They agreed to this and I got the Postmaster to counter-

sign the telegram. He did not know, of course, that he was doing something to facilitate a Rising. He was entirely unsympathetic to our aims. The car was a 14-horse-power KRIT of Canadian or American manufacture. Later in the day I rang up Seán MacCurtain to tell him the car was available and everything arranged. He said they had been waiting all day for a message from me, they had been perturbed at not hearing from me and asked why I had not rung up sooner. I mentioned my telephone conversation with him that morning. He said he had never spoken to me on the 'phone that day. Evidently my first 'phone call to him had been intercepted.

However, the car was handed over by Bradley on Saturday evening and was used by MacCurtain and MacSwiney on Sunday and Monday. On Monday night my husband received a despatch from Tomás MacCurtain that on no account was he to come into Cork as he would be arrested in connection with the car. Tomás had secret information from the police to that effect. My husband was to send me with a driver to Cork and take the car out of Sheares' Street.

I went to Cork on Tuesday and collected the car at the Hall in Sheares Street. On reaching Bandon on the return journey I was stopped by the police and ordered to drive the car to the Barracks where the police took possession of it. The car was held for a few days on that occasion, and Miss Healy, my sister, drove us back to Castlelack. Later the car was seized again and retained by the police until it had deteriorated so far that it was useless.

SIGNED:

Kathleen McDonnell

DATE:

Dec. 23. 1947.

WITNESS:

Florence Donoghue.

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