

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

BURO STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21

No. W.S. 455

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 455

Witness

Mrs. Margaret Keady (née Macken),  
15, Waltham Terrace,  
Blackrock, Co. Dublin.

Identity

Courier for Michael Collins, December 1920.  
Courier for Republican Party during Civil  
war, 1922.

Subject

- (a) Dispatch from Michael Collins to His Grace  
the Archbishop of Perth, in London,  
December 1920.
- (b) Dispatch work in Republican Party during  
the Civil War, 1922.

Conditions, if any, stipulated by Witness

Nil

File No. .S.1608.....

Form B.S.M. 2.

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

BURO STAIRE MILEATA, 1913-21

No. W.S. 455

STATEMENT OF MRS. KEADY (MARGARET MACKEN)

15 Waltham Terrace, Blackrock,  
Co. Dublin.

I belonged to Cumann na mBan, but that was during the Civil War. As well as I can recollect I was not a member before that. At that time I lived in 25 Newtown Avenue, Blackrock, which was a receiving centre for dispatches.

My sister was married to Dr. Farnan of Merrion Square and I was at the time a member of the staff at Carysfort Training College. One day my sister came out and told me that Michael Collins wanted a reliable dispatch carrier to go to London and, as I knew London and was used to travelling, she thought that I could fill the role. She found me in bed suffering from a cold. She said that as I had a normal temperature I could get up without risk and undertake the journey. I was not feeling very well, but I consented.

I took the dispatch, which I understood/<sup>was</sup> concerned with the peace proposals brought from Lloyd George to Michael Collins by His Grace, the Archbishop of Perth.

I arrived in London in the middle of a pea-soup fog at 6 a.m. I took a taxi to the Jermyn Court Hotel where the Archbishop was staying. He was up and preparing to say Mass in the hotel which had a chapel. I had to wait a considerable time which I filled in by having breakfast. His Grace eventually arrived and I handed him my dispatch, asking him whether I could return home that night. He said no, that I would probably have to stay a couple of days to bring back the reply. I think I spent about two days and two nights there. It was, I think, on the 7th December that I travelled, arriving on the morning of the 8th.

I asked for accommodation at the Jermyn Court Hotel and

was refused as it was full up. Eventually, however, through the intervention of His Grace, I was given a room which was merely a cubbyhole. During my stay I was entertained by Father McMahon, His Grace's secretary, now Monsignor McMahon, P.P. of South Perth. I was informed by His Grace that he would have to discuss the matter with Lloyd George. I gathered from my first interview with him that the Archbishop was impressed by Lloyd George's sincerity who, he considered, was genuinely anxious to arrive at a settlement with Ireland. He was taken in by his plausible manner and did not know him as well as we did.

I think it was on the 10th that His Grace handed me the reply to bring back and I probably returned immediately with it to Ireland. I brought it to 5 Merrion Square, my brother-in-law's house. I did not see Michael Collins there.

Dr. Clune cancelled his sailing to Australia and paid a second visit to Ireland. Both he and his secretary, Father McMahon, who visited me on this occasion, seemed very hopeful of a successful issue to the negotiations. They stayed about a week in Dublin. I had no further connection with the matter.

When Dr. Fogarty of Killaloe was on the run he stayed at my brother-in-law's, No. 5 Merrion Square.

When the Civil War broke out I went to offer my services to the Republicans in Suffolk St. Miss Lily Brennan was in charge. Kathleen O'Connell was there too. They asked me to carry a dispatch to Liam Lynch. I was accompanied by someone else; I think it was Brigid O'Mullane. We travelled first by train as far as Waterford, where we spent the night. The bridges had been destroyed and the Republicans provided us with a motor car which brought us a considerable distance. The last part of our journey to Mourne Abbey which was our objective was performed on bicycles. A car brought us from

there to Liam Lynch's headquarters which was some distance from there. We delivered our dispatch to Liam personally and were told to await his instructions at Creedon's, a house nearby. I parted company with my companion there.

The next day I started out with one of the Creedon girls on bicycles with the dispatches. I think Blarney was our next objective - Tadhg Twomey's house. We had to spend the night there and we had to cycle from there to Cork next day. Tadhg was with us. Miss Creedon parted with us in Cork to stay with her sister. Tadhg accompanied me by train to Youghal where he procured a car to bring us as far as Dungarvan. I pretended I was a teacher trying to get home. I got a train at Dungarvan and succeeded in bringing back my dispatches which I delivered to Miss Brennan in Suffolk St.

I was later employed in carrying propaganda literature, which could not be entrusted to the post, by the mail boat to England. I took it to Cambridge where my sister lived and posted it there. At the station I had to employ a porter to carry it, as it was too heavy for me. One of them asked me what was in the basket that made it so heavy. I said 'music'. I made this journey on two occasions.

I forgot to mention that when de Valera was staying at Glenvar, Blackrock, where I think he spent a couple of months I visited him regularly, as I had the honour of being admitted as a friend and was getting Irish lessons from him. One evening, while in the grounds, we suddenly saw British Tommies advancing across the field with their guns at the ready. At this time the place was completely surrounded by the military and there was no possibility of escape. When we saw them approaching us we retired back to the house where Mr. de Valera was immediately placed under arrest. An officer ordered a search of the premises. They found a lot of

valuable papers, although Kathleen O'Connell succeeded in hiding one file of papers under a hearthrug and it was not discovered. Mr. de Valera said to the officer that I did not belong to the household and happened to be visiting him. Nevertheless, I was brought with Kathleen O'Connell and Mab McGarry to the Castle where we were searched. All three of us were released immediately and de Valera was released next day.

Glenvar had been bought some time previously in Mrs. McGarry's name as headquarters offices, the Dail providing the funds. Afterwards there was some controversy as to the ownership, with a threat of legal proceedings, but it finally became the property of Mrs. McGarry.

Signed: Margaret Reedy

Date: 1<sup>st</sup> Dec. 1950

Witness: *P. J. Keenan*

