

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
BURO STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21
NO. W.S. 617

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 617

Witness

Mrs. Malone (nee Brigid Breathnach)
247 Merville Estate,
Stillorgan,
Co. Dublin.

Identity.

Member of Cumann na mBan, 1913 - ;
Courier to Dublin, from Galway, Holy Thurs. 1916.

Subject.

- (a) National activities 1913-1922;
- (b) Mobilisation of Irish Volunteers, Galway,
Easter Week 1916.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil

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Statement of Mrs. S. Malone, (*Bright Breathack*)

247 Merville Estate, Stillorgan, Co. Dublin.

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Liam Mellows arrives at the house
for the Rising.

I am not sure when Liam Mellows came first to our house in Killeeneen. It might have been in 1914 or early 1915. My mother was Mrs. Walsh, a national teacher in Killeeneen at the time. I was not at home then. I was teaching in Tipperary since 1913. He did not stay in our house till the Saturday before the Rising. He had come back from England to take part in the fight. He was not dressed in priest's clothes when he came to us. On his way down he went in to the house of a priest, Father Casey of Ballymore in Westmeath, whom he knew and asked for charity to see would the priest recognise him as he had dyed his hair and made other attempts to disguise himself as a sort of beggarman. The priest did not recognise him at first though he thought there was something familiar about him, so Liam went off, but the priest suddenly remembered who he was and ran to the gate after him, but Liam was out of sight.

I am sent to Dublin with dispatches.

Father Henry Feeney of Clarendonbridge sent for me to Tipperary and he told me there was to be a rising. The next day - on Holy Thursday - he sent me to Dublin to fetch a message for Liam Mellows. At Craughwell station Tom Kenny, the local blacksmith who was favourable to the Citizen Army, met me and asked me to take a written message to Tom Clarke and another either to Seán MacDermott or James Connolly: I am not sure now.

I called first to Tom Clarke's in Parnell Street and saw Tom Clarke whom I had not met before. He took the two messages sent by Tom Kenny. Julia Morrissey of Athenry travelled up with me from Attymon. She came by car to that station as she was known to the police in Athenry. She accompanied me most of the way from Tom Clarke's to No. 2, Dawson Street where I was brought into Micheál O'Hanrahan after some questioning by various people, among them Larry Lardner of Athenry. Micheál gave me a parcel - not very large, as I could carry it under my arm. I think the parcel contained either a revolver or ammunition or both.

Somebody told me - I think it was Larry Lardner - that the rising was off but I was told to bring some stuff down with me in a dress basket which I had brought up to give the impression that I was going on a holiday. The stuff was to be brought to the train but it never turned up. I can't exactly say how I got the impression about the rising being off but I overheard some angry remarks about McNeill - from, I think, Larry Lardner. Among others Seán McDermott may have been present too. I had seen him previously in Aran and I have a vague impression that he was there too - and Barney Mellowes whom I had not seen before. There was someone else there too whom I knew well at the time, but I can't now remember the name. I went home that same day by the evening train with the parcel for Liam and I don't know whether it was at Athenry or Attymon I got out. Eamon Corbett met me at the station with a car and drove me home.

Good Friday and Holy Saturday.

The following day myself and Eamonn Corbett drove to Crusheen to see a railway porter - I think his name was Con Fogarty - he was a good fellow. Eamonn had a long talk

with him, but I don't know what it was about. I imagine the reason I was chosen for these journeys was that I was not well known in the place and especially not to the police.

On Saturday I was at home. That was the day Liam came. Nobody knew he was in the house but a few.

News of the Rising in Dublin.

The news of the Rising in Dublin did not reach our house until the evening of Monday. Somebody from Athenry came with it. Pádraig Ó Fathaigh, an Irish teacher in Kinvara, had been arrested - I think on Monday when he went back there with some message, whether it was that the Rising was off or on, I can't now remember though I did know it at one time. My sister, Tess, who is now a doctor in England, will remember all that better than I, as her memory is very much better and she is very interested in those things. I'll ask her to go in to see you when she comes home. I expect her very soon.

The Volunteers Mobilise.

The Volunteers assembled on Monday night in the old school in Killeeneen where my mother taught. I think it was only the Volunteers of Clarenbridge that turned up there, because I don't think Larry Lardner and the Athenry Volunteers were there. The Volunteers remained mobilised and the next morning about 5 o'clock they went on to Clarenbridge. They had only pitchforks and a few shotguns, and very few of them - I think only Eamonn Corbett and Liam - had uniforms. Father Tully, the Parish Priest, prevented them from taking the barracks at Clarenbridge. He spoke to them and told them the curse of God would be on them if they used any violence. They made prisoners of a number of the police that were on the street of Clarenbridge. A couple of Connemara men who were working with

Mattie Niland were among the Volunteers. Mattie asked the Connemara men were they coming. They said, "Where are you going?". He replied, "To fight for Ireland". "If you are going sticking peelers we are with you", said the Connemara lads. They were put in charge of the police prisoners whom they would not let sit down. They said, "If you caught us at the potheen you'd tell us to keep stirring".

The Volunteers prepare for a siege
at Moyode Castle.

The Volunteers then went on to Oranmore. I don't remember if anything happened there. They went to Athenry Farnyard (Agricultural College) for a night and then went on to Moyode Castle - but not through Athenry - bringing the police with them. The Athenry Volunteers were there too. They prepared for a siege there as they were in great strength. The Castle was empty except for a caretaker and the rooms were not furnished. They stayed there some nights, I think 'till Friday.

When the Volunteers left our house on Tuesday I did not go with them, but a sister of mine, Gretta, and another girl, Mary Corbett, did. On Wednesday a number of us girls of Cumann na mBan collected provisions in a cart and brought them to Moyode. We stayed there with the Volunteers until they left. Liam, on the Thursday, made a speech telling the Volunteers if they did not wish to stay they should go home. He pointed out the dangers that were facing them and said that anyone who might not wish to remain should go home. Some went home but none of the Clarenbridge Company went. Father Feeney stayed with them to the end and the girls stayed until they decided to leave Moyode.

The Volunteers move on to Lime Park
where they disband.

Somebody said the British were coming from Ballinasloe to attack us and they thought there was no point in getting themselves wiped out. They went on to Lime Park and perhaps they brought the prisoners with them. Father Tom Fahy of Gloves visited them there and exhorted them to go home. He was in Maynooth at the time and is now in University College, Galway. The Volunteers all disbanded and went home except Liam Mellows, Frank Hynes and Alf Monahan who went on the 'run' towards Clare. Eamon Corbett and Pat Callanan - better known as the "Heir" - went in that direction too.

I don't know how long they were "on the run" there but Eamon and Pat said they saw me and Father Feeney passing one night along the road near Carron barracks on our bicycles on our way to Enistymon where we took the train for Limerick and Tipperary. I think Liam and the other two were there a good while until Liam got away to America. I think it was a man called Moloney who gave them shelter. He was a Volunteer himself. Another Volunteer called McNamara was helping them too. Alf Monahan and Frank Hynes are still alive and should be able to give a good account of all this. In the beginning of August I visited Eamon Corbett and Pat Callanan who were still on the 'run' in a district called Boston. They asked me for revolvers which I brought to them.

Father Feeney.

Father Feeney was the only priest that went out with the Volunteers and he was sent to America for five years for his part in the Rising. That time that he came with me to Tipperary he was in plain clothes and stayed around Drombane

where I was teaching. He was some time with ^{Fu} ~~the~~ McCormicks of Holy Cross. Then he went to Roscrea Monastery where he was given refuge by the monks. While he was there the soldiers raided the Monastery but it was not for him they were looking. The monks were all rebels. I happened to be visiting the Monastery and Father Feeney brought me into the prohibited part of the building to which the police did not penetrate.

I do not think it was Dr. O'Dea - who was one of the two bishops who were not opposed to the Volunteers - that banished Father Feeney to America. Dr. O'Dea had a sort of nervous breakdown at the time, brought on, people said, by worry over the things that were happening - executions and arrests, etc. It was probably Monsignor Considine who was then doing duty for the Bishop.

When Father Feeney came back from America he seemed to be afraid to speak to anyone. However, he did go to McNeill's funeral when he died on hunger strike but that was probably because he was his parishioner.

How I got involved in the Rising and bought bandages for the Volunteers.

Since I saw you last my sister, Tess, was here. She went to the West to-day, and will be back again. She says it was Mellows' uniform I had in the parcel. She also said I could not have heard on Thursday anything about McNeill calling off the Rising as he did not do that until Saturday. But I am practically certain I heard criticism of McNeill about interfering with the Rising. I did not know of the Rising until Spy Wednesday. I was going to spend my holidays with my grandmother near Thurles but Father Feeney wrote to me to be sure to come home, that he wanted me. My sister, Gretta, met

me in Limerick and told me that there was going to be a war in Ireland. "What war?" said I. "War with England" she rejoined. I did not believe her until she produced a £10 note. She said, "I got this from the boys for you to buy bandages". I went to a chemist's shop. I don't know the name but I could go there. He was surprised and rather suspicious when I asked for so many bandages and I had to tell him some lies 'though I did not like doing it. I said I wanted them for a lady that wished to donate them to a Red Cross Hospital in France. He had not enough of them for me but said he would send them on after me by post. They came on Saturday to my home in Killeeneen, having been opened in the Post Office by the Postmaster who was a special constable for the British in Easter Week. That was Spy Wednesday that I came home from Tipperary and bought the bandages and it was on account of this that the Head Constable and police from Craughwell came to arrest me on the Friday, I think, of the second week after Easter. The Head Constable mentioned about the bandages and the lads in Athenry barracks overheard the police saying they were to arrest me. But I had left for Tipperary with Father Feeney by bicycle. We had started about 11.30 at night.

Liam Mellows' journey from Dublin.

Liam Mellows was not in our house when I arrived home. He did not come to our house until the Saturday. He spent a night on the way down from Dublin in Ballinasloe Diocesan College. It must have been Father Connolly - afterwards head of the Maynooth Mission to China - that got him put up there. He went from there to Loughrea and could not get into Sweeney's but got into Flaherty's. Flaherty was a Fenian. I think he stayed there for a couple of nights.

My brother, Paddy, and Dominick Corbett went part of the way across country towards Loughrea to meet him and bring him to the house.

Alf Monahan in Galway for the Rising:
A Policeman shot in Claregalway.

I should have mentioned that a short time - about a week - before the Rising Alf Monahan, who was evidently organising Volunteers in Galway, was served with a deportation order by the police. Jack Fleming of Clarenbridge at the suggestion of Father Feeney went to the house where Alf was staying, dressed as a priest and exchanged clothes with Alf who walked out of the house in priest's clothes and went to Brockagh about ten or twelve miles away, where he remained until the Rising.

Pat Callanan was in Claregalway during Easter Week with the Volunteers and they shot a policeman. I don't know whether he came to Moyode or Lime Park at all.

We help Eamonn Corbett and the "Heir"
to go to America.

In August late when I was home on my summer holidays I went to Lisdoonvarna and Father Meehan and Father Bourke and myself took a car from there to Flagmount, Feakle, where Pat Callanan and Eamonn Corbett were on the 'run' in a priest's house, and took them all the way, by by-roads, to Cappoquin, avoiding Limerick City and crossing the Shannon at Killaloe. We spent the night in Cappoquin and took them the next day to Mount Melleray. I don't know how they got from there to Cork, but they did and Captain Collins, who was a coal merchant there, took them in his coal boat to Liverpool, from where they worked their passage to America. Eamonn went

to California but the "Heir" stayed in New York. I don't know how long they were there. Eamonn came home and the "Heir" was sent for - I have not an idea when that was. They both took part in the fight later for independence. The "Heir" eventually joined the Free State Army and became a Captain. He is still alive but Eamonn died a short time ago.

After my trip to Melleray I returned to my school. By that time there was a complete change in the outlook of the population of Ireland. Everyone was a Sinn Féiner except the spies who in Tipperary were called "Stags".

I get married.

Eamonn Dwyer of Goold's Cross started Irish classes in the villages round about and suggested that the best teacher we could get was Séamus Malone, if he was still unemployed. He was and took the job. I attended the classes and married the teacher on the 30th October 1917.

My husband and brother-in-law are arrested;
my husband escapes.

In January, 1919, our house in Killeeneen where we were spending the Christmas holidays - my brother-in-law, Thomas Malone, was there too - was raided and the two were taken to Athenry Barracks. It took the police four days to identify them and it was only when Sergeant Wallace - who was killed a couple of months later in Knocklong - came from Tipperary (Roskeen Barracks) that their identity was fully established. He said to Tomás - "You can go away, if you like, we have nothing against you but your brother, Séamus, will not be let off so lightly. We have a charge against

him of attempted murder in connection with the rescue of a prisoner, ^{Jimmy} Paddy Leahy, at the Ragg. The Athenry police decided to hold Tomás 'till the following morning.

However, during the night - Seamus escaped with the aid of Tomás who, owing to the extra width of his shoulders, was not able to get through the hole in the wall that the two of them had been working on during the preceding four days. My husband will be able to give a better account of that.

A previous raid.

Before that, during 1918 about the spring the house - Dunne's of Drombane where we were lodging - was raided by the police and military. They were looking for my husband to arrest him for having assisted in the rescue of a prisoner, Jimmy Leahy, whom the police had arrested at a hurling match at the Ragg, County Tipperary. My husband happened to be away at Nenagh and I remembered that there was a revolver in our room. So I rushed down to the kitchen with it and hid it among the coal in the range which was not lighting. The raiders never got anything at Drombane. The police took over the hall there and the military were in camps all round it. Drombane is about nine miles from Thurles. I was teaching in Newtown near Drombane. I gave it up about a year after getting married.

Constable Collins follows me to
Tyrells Pass.

My husband was on the 'run' all this time. The summer after my marriage I went to my husband's place in Tyrells Pass. A Constable Collins from Roskeen Barracks followed me in the same train. I had no idea he was following me - I thought he was going home on holidays as he too came from Tyrells Pass - until one night shortly after the Sergeant of

the barracks, Sergeant Morris - a protestant - sent word to my mother-in-law that there was going to be a raid on our house. We took it as a joke. My husband was in the house sitting on the bed talking when some children ran in to say the peelers were coming down the road. My husband got out by the back and went up the field. When the police came in Constable Collins was with them. It was then I put two and two together and came to the conclusion that he was sent to follow me to Tyrells Pass. My husband came back again but he used not to stay in the house.

I stayed with my people-in-law until after my eldest child was born. Then I went home to Killeeneen. Nothing particular took place there as far as I remember. I should mention, however, that my mother's house was raided 132 times before the split, but I was not there for them. She lost count of the raids after that.

I take up residence in Cork:
Death of Tadhg Sullivan.

My husband had got a job in Cork under the name of Forde and I went to him there with my child, Máirín. I am not sure whether that was the time I was staying in Hennessy's in Douglas Street, where Tadhg Sullivan of Rathmore was afterwards killed. At the time he was killed I had left Hennessy's.

The Volunteers were holding a meeting at Nellie McCarthy's in Douglas Street and a squad of police or Black & Tans in plain clothes went to raid the place. I had seen them pass the house where I lived at the time but had no idea where they were going. I don't know now whether the Volunteers got out before the raid but I think they must have because the police grabbed Tadhg as he ran, but he freed

himself and ran into Hennessy's past Máire Malone, my sister-in-law, who was standing at the door: it was she told me all this. He jumped out through a back window in the landing on to a shed in Woods' yard and he was shot dead by one of the police who followed him up the stairs to the landing window.

The burning of Cork.

We were in Cork four years. We were there the time it was burnt. I think we were in Hennessy's that time. The way I know it was: Brian Martin, who was married later to Noel Harnett's sister, and someone else were sleeping in Hennessy's. We had the house then as the Hennessy's were gone to Liverpool for a year or so and we used to put up an odd fellow on the 'run'. They saw the fire and told us about it. We thought it was Peg Duggan's that was burning. She was a Cumann na mBan girl and had a shop near Parliament Bridge. It was Cork that was burning. At about 5 or 6 o'clock in the morning Jack Maher - one of the Mahers of the Ragg - who was working at Ford's came in covered with grime and sweat after - as he said himself - pulling people out of bed in the burning houses. Brian Martin's brother's (Frank) wife and her two children were dragged out like that. Jack said looting was going on at a great rate and that the soldiers' wives were going around in fur coats. Only one side of the street (Patrick) was burnt. The English-owned firms escaped on the whole.

I think Hennessy's was only raided once after Seamus went to East Limerick. The police and military combined in that raid. The military were very nice but the police were very aggressive. They ransacked everywhere. They took away all sorts of lists such as

football teams, etc. They were sure they had a find in those. They also took away an "Imitation of Christ" belonging to Seamus, in which the names of all the Lewes prisoners had been written by themselves.

Donal Hannigan brings "Stuff" from England.

Donal Hannigan, who now lives in Fairbrothers' Fields and has got some job in the Four Courts and is a native of East Limerick, was a seaman in some boat travelling between Cork and Liverpool. He used to bring ammunition and guns for the East Limerick fellows. Donal Hannigan's wife stayed in our house (Hennessy's) for a while and Tomás Malone was down that time. I don't think Seamus had gone away then. Tomás and Donal, I think, went down to the boat to collect the stuff. On their return they were held up by the police Tomás ran but the police shot at him and he was arrested. I forget whether the stuff was taken or not but Seamus will be better able to tell you as his memory is better than mine, and it was on account of that incident he left Cork and went to East Limerick to join the Volunteers. He stayed there 'till the Treaty. He took part in the post-Treaty fight there.

My brother, Paddy:
(Padraig Breathnach).

My brother, Paddy, was at school in St. Enda's in 1916 before the Rising. Padraig Pearse gave him a message to bring home with him on the Easter holiday. I don't know whether it was verbal or written or to whom it was sent. It might have been to George Nicolls in Galway. I don't know whether it was during those holidays or some preceding ones that Dominick Corbett was going on horseback to the

forge and Paddy was with him on the bicycle. They swapped and Paddy got the horse. When they came to Craughwell bridge they saw a recruiting poster and Paddy gave it a flick of the whip and knocked it down. Immediately two policemen jumped out from under the railway bridge, arrested them and brought them to Craughwell barracks. The police wanted Paddy, who was less than 15 years of age, to say that it was Dominick knocked down the poster because they would have preferred to charge Dominick who was a couple of years older. But Paddy refused to say it was Dominick. In fact he was quite proud of having done it himself. Dominick was put in the 'black hole', but Paddy was put in one of the policemen's beds. I don't know how long they were kept there but they were eventually brought to Athenry for trial and I think the police blamed Dominick Corbett, but Paddy told the whole story - how he had changed mounts with Dominick and had torn down the poster. In Court he described how the police had tried to make him say that it was Dominick had done it. He also raised a laugh describing how the police got into the beds and were tied in. The Magistrate treated the whole affair in a jocular way, asking him did his mother tie him in the same way into the bed. He dismissed the case.

Paddy went out in the Rising with the Volunteers and was arrested after the Rising and was sent to whatever prison in Scotland that the Galway prisoners went to. I think he was let home in August - one of the first releases.

He was arrested during the Civil War. He was in Mayo for some time with the Volunteers. He had something to do with Tom Carney. Tom had been a policeman in Roskeen Barracks but had resigned when Dwyer of the Ragg was shot.

Tom came home and joined the Volunteers and was officer-in-command of a Column. Paddy was serving under him in Ballyhaunis. When he came out of prison in the general release after the Civil War he was staying with my sister, Mrs. Mullins, in Lariganboy near Ballyhaunis, her husband's old home. He and some friends went out duck shooting in a boat on Mannion Lake and seeing a duck flying past, he reached for his gun which was lying in the bottom of the boat. The hammer of the loaded gun got caught in something. It went off and the shot entered his body. He lived about twenty minutes. He did not have time to have a priest but he had been at Confession the day before and at Communion that day. He was to have come home the following day. The poor boy-who was my only brother-was brought home dead. He had been wounded three times in the fight and was only 23 when he was killed.

I am afraid I have not been much help to you. My memory of the things that happened so long ago is not too clear. All the same I remember more than I thought I would.

Signed: *Brigid Breathnach*
 (Brigid Breathnach)
 Date: *29 Samhain 1951* ¹⁹⁵¹ *Smic*
 29 Samhain 1951.

Witness: *S. Ni Chiosain*
 (S. Ni Chiosain).

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