

JPL: CATE

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
BURO STAIRE MILEATA 1913-21
No. W.S. 1401

W.S. 1401

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 1401.

Witness

Eoin O'Mahony, K.M.,
Dún Locha,
Douglas,
Co. Cork.

Identity.

Barrister-at-Law.
Knight of the Sovereign Order of Malta.

Subject.

Covering statement by witness to affidavit by
Mrs. Alice O'Grady, in relation to
certain incidents in 1921.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil.

File No S.2591.

Form B.S.M. 2

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DUPLICATE

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
BURO STAIRE MILEATA 1913-21
No. W.S. 1451

STATEMENT BY MR. EOIN O'MAHONY, K.M.

Dún Locha, Douglas, Co. Cork.

Mrs. Alice O'Grady was an old friend and neighbour of my family at Rochestown in the parish of Douglas since 1920. I knew that she and her husband, as Irish Protestants, had rendered distinguished service to Ireland in the Anglo-Irish war. When she told me of her association with Leo Dillon and of an attempt by British military to raid Mount Melleray Abbey, I urged her to make the accompanying statement which she duly swore before a Peace Commissioner.

Leo Dillon belonged to a well known Cork family. His father, Dr. Theo Dillon, was a medical graduate of the old Queen's College, Cork, but practised in England, and was married to the daughter of Mrs. Crofts, the Matron of the Cork Eye, Ear and Throat Hospital, Western Road. His grandfather was Manager of Sir John Arnott's Brewery, now the Sharman Crawford Technical Schools, near St. Fin Barre's Cathedral; and his grandmother, a Miss O'Shaughnessy from the west of Ireland, was of superior social standing, by the social standards of the time.

I have no knowledge of any blood relationship existing between the Healy family and Leo Dillon, but I know that the two families were always friendly, and that Mrs. Maurice Healy's second son, my friend, the late

Mr. Alex M. Healy, solicitor, and Leo Dillon were intimate friends all their lives. However, I am assured by a lawyer of eminence in this country that the Healy family acknowledged relationship.

As Leo Dillon's father and mother lived in England, his secondary education was looked after by his grandmother, Mrs. Crofts, the Patron of the Cork Eye, Ear and Throat Hospital - a hospital largely founded by the family of his grandfather's employer, Sir John Arnott. Before the war of 1914, the boy attended the well known Cork secondary school, the Presentation College, which was only a few hundred yards away from the hospital. I understand that he was subsequently sent to an expensive English Catholic school - it is alleged, Downside - and the Cistercian fathers at Mount Melleray informed me that he told them that he was also a student for the secular priesthood at a well known English college - whether Ushaw or Oscott, I cannot say.

I understand that, as a result of his services in the European War, his medical studies at University College, Cork, from 1919 were assisted by British Government grants. I was then a schoolboy, but I understand that he was regularly to be seen from 1919 and 1920 drinking at the famous Cork public house, cigar divan and billiard room - Fanny O'Grady's - at No. 8 or No. 9 Patrick Street, Cork, which, in his student days, was also frequented by the late Kevin O'Higgins. Everybody looking for information in Cork would be

seen at Fanny O'Grady's, which was a very fashionable place at the time.

In September, 1955, I took Mrs. O'Grady to Mount Melleray. Dom Ailbe Luddy, the historian of the Abbey, received us in the absence, in France, of the Lord Abbot. He said that they had a distinct recollection of having got a warning which was conveyed to them in the usual way from the Post Office at Cappoquin in March, 1920, Mount Melleray not being then on the telephone.

While not confirming Mrs. O'Grady's words verbatim, it seems to me even strong corroboration of her story. As will be seen from her affidavit, the message which she sent was that Dillon had asked her to warn them that Mount Melleray was going to be raided.

All that Mount Melleray remembers is that they received a warning to beware of a man called Dillon. Mrs. O'Grady apparently had no knowledge that Dillon himself intended to visit the Abbey. Yet, in actual fact, this is what occurred, and, as a result of her warning, Mount Melleray was forewarned and took appropriate action.

Dom Ailbe Luddy informed Mrs. O'Grady and me that there were men on the run in the house. As a result of the warning they received, they never allowed Dillon to be alone. For his two days' stay in the Abbey, he always had a priest or a monk in attendance. His first act was to

ask them to transmit a telegram from him to Mr. Maurice Healy, solicitor, a former O'Brienite M.P. for Cork. This they took to be an attempt to establish his bona fides. He also informed them that he had been a student for the English secular priesthood at a well known college in England. When he found that he was being watched night and day, he left after two days.

In actual fact, Mount Melleray Abbey was never raided. Three months later, three lorries, full of soldiers, arrived on the drive, and the three officers in charge asked to be shown over the premises. There was an even larger number of important men on the run in the Abbey at this time. The officers were well mannered and were politely shown over the premises and departed.

All I know of the Alexian Brother Darcy is from unofficial current gossip and rumour. He had been an Alexian Brother in England, but had left the Order in about November, 1919.

Although his family lived in Clanmire, he spent a great deal of his time drinking in Fanny O'Grady's and in the Imperial Hotel, and in actual fact slept a great deal of his time, for several weeks, at the Imperial Hotel which was then the most expensive Cork hostelry. He constantly wore clerical garb.

The accepted Cork story, in unofficial circles, is that he conspired with an ex British officer, named Kavanagh, ^{THEN} in the Cork Labour

Exchange, son of a Cork solicitor, and later believed to have been in the Auxiliaries; and Walter Callanan, an undergraduate of University College, Cork, and son of a most respected Cork builder, to rob the Cork G.P.O. which stands beside the Imperial Hotel. It is alleged that they succeeded in stealing eight thousand pounds during curfew hours and that they committed the money, for safe keeping, to a woman of bad character who ran away with the funds. It is believed commonly that it was on the actual night of this robbery that Darcy was taken up by British troops and conveyed to Cork Barracks, not because of this robbery, but merely for being on the streets after curfew, and that he was shot dead while trying to escape from the lorry. In or about the late autumn of 1924 or spring of 1925 Callanan was at a dance in Arcadia Ballroom beside Glanmire Railway Station, Cork, then a very fashionable dance hall. I was myself at the dance. Walter Callanan left the dance hall and entered the tunnel connected with the Dublin railway line and was killed by a down-coming train.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Witness: _____

(Investigator)

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
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(COPY)

AFFIDAVIT OF MRS. ALICE O'GRADY.

I, Alice O'Grady (née Powers) of No. 27 Hyde Park Avenue, Blackrock in the County of Dublin, and late of Norwood, Rochestown in the County of Cork, Widow, aged Seventy-seven years and upwards make Oath and say as follows:-

1. In the Autumn of 1919 (Nineteen Hundred and Nineteen) Mrs. Maurice Healy wife of Mr. Maurice Healy Member of Parliament for the City of Cork from 1910 until 1918 in the O'Brien-ite interest, and an old friend, called on me at my house at Norwood, Rochestown, Co. Cork, and asked me to take in as a paying guest a medical student named Leo Dillon who, I understood her to say, was her nephew, but I may have been mistaken about the exact relationship. She said that he was living with his grandmother, Mrs. Crofts who was Matron of the Cork Eye Ear and Throat hospital on the Western Road, and that he could not study there at night. It was contrary to my custom to take paying guests and I refused to take him.

2. Some months later, shortly after Christmas 1919 (Nineteen hundred and Nineteen) probably in the middle of January 1920 (Nineteen Hundred and Twenty) Mrs. Maurice Healy met my husband the late George O'Grady, J.P. in the City of Cork and persuaded him to consent to take in Leo Dillon as a paying guest, against my wishes. Leo Dillon came to stay with us soon after this, and remained with us for over two months. He had served in the British Army in the 1914 war and I would take him to have been between twenty five and twenty seven years of age when he stayed with us at this time.

3. I gave him a bedroom to himself on the first floor and a sittingroom to himself on the ground floor on a level with our

Reception Rooms and with the Hall Door. He paid weekly, except for the final week. He had no meals in the house, except breakfast and a light supper. He was well behaved and never had visitors. He was always friendly but never discussed intimate things with us. He gave no details of himself or of his family. He generally came down to Rochestown Station from Cork by the last train from Albert Quay (Cork, Blackrock, and Passage Railway), at half past nine or ten o'clock or about that time - whichever would be the latest running at the time, reaching my house at Norwood within three quarters of an hour after the departure of the train from the Albert Quay terminus in Cork. On Sundays he would leave after breakfast for Mass, and remain away for the whole day. He never showed signs of drink, and there was a skull and bones usual with Medical students, in his bed room.

4. Late in February or early in March, 1920 (Nineteen Hundred and Twenty) at about 3.30 p.m. when Leo Dillon was with us for well over a month, during the hatching season, a man in clerical garb whom I took to be a priest, called to order two or three sittings of hatching eggs. I had a standing advertisement at this time for hatching eggs in the "Irish Daily Independent" and made quite a little profit from the industry. He represented himself to be a member of the Barry family who then had the Post Office in the Village of Glanmire, or who had a shop beside the Post Office or who just lived beside the Post Office, I am not sure which but I am sure that he gave a Glanmire Address. It was customary to pay for such sitting in advance but he made no offer to pay. This made me suspicious.

5. As soon as the cleric had given me the order for the sittings of hatching eggs he asked me to see my husband. I asked him why

he wanted to see my husband. He would give no reason but said that he wanted to see him specially. I went downstairs to the basement to speak to my husband whom I heard coming in from the farm by the kitchen or back door. I was not present at the interview between the cleric and my husband but when it was over my husband said to me "He wants to stay the night, and wants to meet Dillon." We both asked him why he wanted to stay and why he wanted to meet Dillon but he would give us no reason. Curfew was on in Cork City at the time if not in Cork County as well and I was afraid that if he stayed to meet Dillon he would not be able to get across the City to his home in Glanmire Village. I told him that there was a train which would soon be leaving Rochestown Station for Cork which would get him up to the City before Curfew and that he had no occasion to stay the night. He said that he wanted to be introduced to Leo Dillon. I said that Dillon would not be in till late that night and that if he left a message I would myself give it to Dillon. He then said in a determined voice "I may as well tell you both that I am remaining for the night." I said to him "You have no business in the house. I wish you would go away". He remained. As he was to outward appearance at least a priest we did not like to take further action, and indeed we were a little afraid of him. He had arrived round 3.30 o'clock in the afternoon and it was now about 5 o'clock p.m.

6. He then said "Mr. O'Grady I'm going to get an introduction to Leo Dillon". My husband said "I'm giving none. You can force yourself on him". We left him alone in the big Drawing Room. At our supper time we invited him into our small sitting room. He did not ask for any food, but we gave him a cup of tea and some bread and butter. Dillon did not come until the late train,

leaving Cork around ten o'clock p.m. When he arrived my husband said to him "There's somebody inside waiting to see you, a priest." Dillon said "Oh my!" and took him into his own Sitting Room. When the interview had concluded the Cleric came out and said to my husband and me:- "Mind you I'm not leaving this house to-night."

7. I made up a bed for him in a big empty bedroom where my elder daughter had left a dress. Leo Dillon never said a word to us when the interview had concluded, and indeed never referred to the matter again. Next morning I knocked two or three times on the Cleric's door and got no reply. I then entered the room to find that it was empty and that the bed had not been slept in. My daughter's dress was gone.

8. At about eleven o'clock a.m. the "Cork Examiner" or the other local paper the "Cork Constitution" arrived and it contained news of the shooting of Darcy an Alexian Brother by the British Military in the Imperial Hotel late the night before or early that morning. I recognised the Glanmire name and address at once. Leo Dillon never once referred to the matter.

9. At about two o'clock a.m. on Friday 19th March (Nineteen hundred and twenty) some weeks after the foregoing events, my son by a former marriage called my husband and me, and said that he was certain that British Military were around the house. He himself had been wounded in the 1914 war as a British Officer. My husband jumped up. We next heard a cry at the Hall Door "Open in the name of the King". My husband pulled on his trousers, and, I think without shoes, lamp in hand, he descended the stairs. I lit a candle beside my bed. He had just time in which to open the Hall Door, before it was battered in. I heard the tramping of feet, on the stairs. Two Soldiers entered my bedroom with guns pointed at me. I asked them to leave the room until

I had put on some clothes. They refused to leave. I put some clothes on over my night dress and went downstairs. My husband was standing in the hall with his back to a mirror surrounded by three officers. I shouted to them "Shoot me, not him". At this stage there were only three officers in the Hall. There were two lorries in the grounds, and one in front of the Hall Door. Leo Dillon had not come home that night, a fact which was quite unusual with him.

10. An officer shouted at my husband and me "Clear into that Room". I said "You have no business here; what are you coming here for? We did nothing". All they persisted in saying was "Clear into that Room". There was then a rush of soldiers up the stairs. My two young children were asleep upstairs. My son by a former husband who was an officer in the 1914 War and was badly wounded was, with them allowed to come downstairs and join us. We were all five hounded into the Small Sitting Room. I then thought of a locked wardrobe in Leo Dillon's Room which was there in addition to the wardrobe used by him. I was afraid that the Soldiers would burst the lock unless I opened it. I said to myself that I must see the officer in charge and go upstairs to find him. I went upstairs.

11. I entered Leo Dillon's bedroom and gave the Officer in charge the key of the wardrobe which contained my mother's jewellery. I wanted to remove the Jewellery. I was refused permission to take the Jewellery. The Officer said "Don't touch anything". I forgot all about the sum of £62. (sixty two pounds) which I had kept under my pillow for Rates - largely made up of Hatching money. I was ordered downstairs. A Soldier followed me downstairs. He was followed by the Officers. I called my

faithful old man servant Keane who slept downstairs in a room of his own. There were three lorries full of soldiers in the House that morning".

12. When they were gone I discovered that they had taken my two boxes of Jewellery and my sixty two pounds in notes. They did not leave until after half past five a.m., when they came downstairs. They did not disturb anything downstairs, on the ground floor but they turned everything inside out and upside down upstairs on the first floor. Leo Dillon's room alone was untouched. When the three lorries departed after 5.30 A.M. as aforesaid they took my husband with them. He was then a British Justice of the Peace for Cork County of thirty years' standing. The Officers in departing produced two bullets and asked me what they were. I said "Bullets". They said that there were more than that, that they were expanding or Dum Dum Bullets and that they were found in a bag in my hall. I denied this indignantly. They then took with them the bullets and a pen-painted cushion with designs of shamrocks and an Irish flag. My husband was told to come away with them. Two soldiers went upstairs with him, while he dressed. He was conducted down the drive and put into a lorry.

13. I went straight to Cork Barracks to see General Sir R.P. Strickland, Officer Commanding Cork Command and saw him just after nine o'clock a.m. He gave me no satisfaction. He said that the Officers concerned had just gone off duty at nine o'clock a.m. He knew nothing. During my interview with him two soldiers pointed revolvers at me. I said "Put down those revolvers." General Strickland said that if my house at Norwood had been raided information must have been given which caused it to be raided. He then told me that he did not know where my husband was. This was on Friday morning 20th March 1920 (nineteen hundred and twenty).

14. When I reached the Barrack gate a sympathetic crowd of about one hundred had collected. I asked them to go away quietly. I got up on a side car and drove straight into the city. The Jarvey refused to accept his fare. I went to Fitzgerald's tea shop near the General Post Office where I met my friend Miss Peg Duggan. She informed me that Mr. Kelleher the Merchant of Washington Street was a Visiting Justice of Cork Gaol and that if my husband were there Mr. Kelleher would be able to get food sent in to him from outside. Later I saw Mr. Kelleher who informed me that my husband was in Cork Gaol. The Prison Doctor was very kind to my husband and put him into the Prison Hospital and ordered him one glass of Whiskey per day. Alderman Fred Murray was also a prisoner with my husband in Cork Gaol. My husband was detained in Cork Gaol for five days.

15. I sent a telegram at once to my friend Sir William Bull, Solicitor, London, and he put all the facts of the case as supplied by me before Commander the Hon. J. M. Kenworthy, Liberal Member of Parliament for Hull, now Lord Strabolge, who immediately tabled a series of questions in the House of Commons. But for this I am certain that my husband would never have been released so soon, if at all. Lord Mayor MacCurtain was murdered on the night of Friday/Saturday 19/20 March 1920.

16. As aforesaid Leo Dillon did not return to Norwood on the night of Thursday 18th March 1920. In fact he did not return until the 3 p.m. train on Monday afternoon 22nd March 1920. I travelled down on the same train from Cork but we did not meet until he had arrived at Norwood. I met him on the Staircase of the house. He said that he did not know what had happened to my husband. I said to him, "I must ask you to leave. My husband is in gaol".

He said, "You were always kind to me". I then said to him, "If you don't pack up I'll do so for you, and have your luggage sent to the Station". He said, "If you wont have me, I suppose I'll have to go". I said, "Keane is there to take your things to the train". Neither he nor I said anything about payment and in fact he never paid for that final week. I said to him, "Your room was never touched by the soldiers. Your bed was untouched". Leo Dillon then said to me, "Will you do me a favour? You were always very kind to me". I said, "It is finished between us".

17. Leo Dillon then said "Please phone Mount Melleray and tell them-someone in authority that they are going to be raided by British Military". I asked him when and he said "Next morning". On Tuesday 23rd March 1920 (Nineteen Hundred and Twenty) I went to the General Post Office in Cork and phoned to the Cappoquin Post Office who I understood would deliver a message to Mount Melleray Abbey, which was not then on the telephone. There was some delay in getting through. They asked me who was phoning. I said "A friend". The message I asked them to transmit to someone in authority at Mount Melleray was to the best of my recollection as follows:- "A man named Dillon asked me to phone to say that Mount Melleray Abbey was going to be raided by the British Military". I certainly did not call him a friend because I believe that I saw him with the Soldiers at Norwood on the morning of the raid on Friday 19th March. Leo Dillon did not tell me that he himself would be visiting Mount Melleray in the near future.

18. A few days later I met my friend Mrs. Maurice Healy. She said "You've had a terrible time. You sent Leo away".

I said that I would never have anybody in the house again; that I had made a mistake in taking him in. I never heard of Leo Dillon again until the Spring of 1925 (Nineteen Hundred and Twenty Five) when he figured in a Dublin Murder case. He was then an Inspector in the Garda Síochána.

SWORN by the said Alice

O'Grady at Youghal

(Signed)

Alice O'Grady

this 20th day of September 1955

before me

P.J. O'Gorman (Senator)

Commissioner for Oaths.

