

**ORIGINAL**

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

BURÓ STAIRÉ ÉIREANN 1913-21

No. W.S. 210

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COSANTA.

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. .... 210 .....

**Witness**

Mrs. Phyllis Morkan,  
Strathmore,  
Willbrook Rd.,  
Rathfarnham, Dublin.

**Identity**

Member of Cumann na mBan,  
Dublin.

**Subject**

Events of Easter Week 1916;  
First Aid Duty - Church St. Area.

**Conditions, if any, stipulated by Witness**

Nil

File No. S. 266 .....

Form B.S.M. 2.

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## STATEMENT OF MRS. PHYLLIS MORKAN.

It was Easter Sunday, 1916, and I was expecting to dinner - (my first party since I got married) - Eamon Duggan, Ned Daly, Jim Sullivan, May Kavanagh - (now Mrs. Eamon Duggan), and my sister-in-law, Pauline Morkan. They all arrived sometime in the late afternoon. The men, including my husband, were all looking very worried and took little interest in the dinner we had prepared for them. The men departed early to attend a meeting - a special one - which had been called suddenly. It must have taken hours, as my husband did not return until about 5 o'clock next morning. Ned Daly had left a suit case (which I still possess) containing his uniform, and on Monday morning, about 8.30, he and Jim O'Sullivan arrived. Ned changed into uniform and in about half an hour my husband, Ned and Jim O'Sullivan left the house, all in uniform and fully armed. They did not tell me where they were going. Ned just said I was to stay in the house until I got my orders. I was very worried but not in the least frightened. I felt if I was with the men we would be quite safe. In fact, Ned told me before he left I would be happier in the fight helping, and if there was going to be fighting, they would need all the women they could get. When my sister-in-law returned about 11 o'clock - she had been out mobilising her squad in Cumann na mBan - she told me we were to proceed to the Black Church off Parnell Square and await orders. When we got there we saw members of the C. na mB. about 14 or 15, walking around in twos and threes. The orders were, not to stand around in groups. We were all in mufti - uniform would have attracted too much attention. We could not wear even a badge. All day, or rather all afternoon, we walked about and hearing in the distance a good deal of shooting. During that time all sorts of rumours were going around, people coming and telling us that O'Connell St. was strewn with dead Lancers. We waited on and presently an order came from Daly to dismiss and report again the following morning. It was then about 5 or 6 o'clock.

Pauline and I went from Parnell Square down the back streets

towards Church St.. We arrived at the end of North King St. There we saw familiar faces - men of the 1st Battn. posted at the barricades at all the crossings. At one barricade there was a cab across the street with a volunteer posted at each entrance. We were given permission to go through and we eventually arrived at Church St. and the first one I saw was Pierce Beasley. He told me where to find my husband, Daly and Duggan. They had established a headquarters at St. John's - the French Sisters of Charity - residence, Brunswick St. The Sisters were wonderful. They did everything possible to help and continued to help for a long period afterwards.

That night, we were sent under escort to another member of C. na mB. who lived in Dalymount Tee. Phibsboro. She asked us to remain the night with her. It was a dreadful night and for the first time I got really frightened. We, of course, could not sleep; just listened to the shooting and watching the sky lighting up every moment. The whole city looked to be on fire. I dreaded going back to Church St. next morning, not knowing what we would see or hear. The morning came at last and we got out as quickly as we could. At the railway bridge beyond Phibsboro we again saw one volunteer on guard with Jim O'Sullivan in charge. They had commandeered a house next the Bridge and held all their equipment there. We stayed awhile there and then decided to part, Pauline to look up some other member and I to go back to Church St. I proceeded down Rathdown Road, a short way to North King St. and Church St. When I arrived there I found all our men well and in good form. Eamon Duggan was very anxious to get in touch with May Kavanagh to whom he was engaged. She then lived with her people on Sandford Rd. Ranelagh. He asked would I try and get to her, so I started off walking; no trams were out and no cab or hack would take me. At this time the British military were in the centre of the city, and when I got to College Green there did not seem to be a living soul about. All I saw was a dead horse in the centre of the street opposite the Bank of Ireland. I paused for a minute, then said a prayer - still not in the least afraid - and ran across the street and no one appeared

to stop me and after that I had no trouble getting to Sandford Rd. I had been told that Madame Markievicz was with the Citizen Army in Stephen's Green. I saw no life there either, but felt more comfortable knowing they were near. Again I saw a dead horse outside the Shelbourne Hotel. When I arrived at May's home they all thought I was someone from the dead; the rumours at that time were so bad that people in Ranelagh thought the Volunteers had been wiped out. We both had a quick meal and started back for Church Street and a friendly jarvey gave us a lift to the end of Leeson St. So we got back from there by the same route which I had gone already, still seeing no one. When we arrived, Daly told us to prepare an emergency hospital, so we went around to all the nearby houses with some of the volunteers and asked for material and bed clothes - we had no difficulty getting those things we required as everyone was most willing to help - in a short time we had a big 'ward' ready with the dressings, etc. cut, and waited for our first patient. My first patient was the late Liam Clarke suffering from gunshot wounds in the face. I realised then that we had no stimulants of any description in the place and no change of clothes, so I approached Comdt. Daly, our O/C., and told him. He gave me permission to go to my home at Arran Quay. We, at that time, had two publichouses at the corner of Queen St. May came with me and as the volunteers were in that area, we had little trouble. When we arrived at my home we collected a lot of brandy and whiskey and all the shirts and socks we could lay hands on. We were about an hour or more in the house and when we left we found the British military had taken up positions outside and at all the crossings. I got a shock, because I had in a raincoat hanging on my arm several rounds of ammunition which I had got in the roll-top desk in the diningroom. Again we were lucky. We smiled and chatted with the soldiers at the crossings and they did not question us. I got rid of the ammunition at the top of Brunswick St.. A man named O'Callaghan was posted in one of the unfinished houses there. We were told we could not go down any of the turnings, we must go straight ahead. I never got back to Church St. after that although we seemed to go round the outskirts.

We - May and I - spent that night in Eamon Duggan's home on St. Brigid's Road, Drumcondra - there were very few houses that week that we dare go near outside the volunteer crowd. On Wednesday I hoped to go to my home. It was near Church St. and there was always a chance some of the men might call, but when I arrived there I found the British military were in possession and for three weeks they remained there and would not admit me. When they eventually left and all our men were either in prison or dead (and up to that time I did not know if my husband was alive or in prison, I certainly never thought of him as dead) I arrived at my home and found they had left nothing only heavy furniture which was hard to remove. My piano we found stuck half way down the stairs. No clothes of any description did they leave. Silver, jewellery, china, even my engagement ring which I had locked away as we could not wear jewellery on duty. The shops were bereft of everything and even the cellars were looted.

The first information I got of my husband was on the 21st May when I saw a list of prisoners in the paper and, to my great relief, his name was amongst those in Knutsford Gaol just outside Manchester and they were being allowed a visitor, so I announced to my friends I was going across to see him. I crossed the following night and word must have gone round that I was going, because at the boat there were about 20 people, all with parcels and letters for me to take to their men folk. I arrived at the gaol gate on Friday morning and was admitted at 10 o'clock and escorted to a waiting-room. I stood at the window looking out on the square and after a short time I saw, marching along in single file, half a dozen men. I could not see my husband at first and the only way I recognised him was by his walk. He was still in uniform, but had grown a beard. We were so pent up at seeing each other again that I think we scarcely spoke at all. The first question he asked me was what the people at home thought of them and he was overjoyed when I told him that the whole country was with them. He wanted me to return home that night as I did not know anyone in Manchester and I felt

so lonely I nearly decided to do as he asked me, but on second thoughts I said I'd pay him another visit, so he told me to stay at the best hotel he knew of and I went back to it and spent most of that day in bed and the following morning I was again at the prison gate at 9.30 waiting for 10 o'clock to be admitted. Also outside the gates were two girls and two priests. The girls looked very closely at me and one came over and said she knew me at school in Wicklow and, of course, the moment she said her name I remembered her. She said she was teaching in Redditch and was anxious to do something to help the men. The priests then came over to me. They were also Irish and wanted to help, but did not know any of the men. I have my list of names, and they picked out a few each and came in with me. Those priests afterwards were simply marvellous. Father O'Hanrahan, who was Parish Priest just outside Manchester, insisted on Miss Harvey and myself coming home with him. He wanted to hear everything. We stayed the weekend visiting the prison each day. Miss Harvey was another lady who arrived. She had crossed from Ireland that morning. She is a nurse now in Australia and is sister-in-law to Comdt. Matt Barry. She lectured to the C. na mBan in 25 Parnell Square for some time before Easter Week.

My husband was released from Reading Gaol in time for Xmas. He arrived with many others on Xmas morning, amongst them being the late Michael Collins. It was some months before my husband was reinstated in the Bank ('National', College Green). We were then transferred to Birr, Offaly, and in a very short time my husband started a company of Volunteers which later became a battalion. He was assisted by Eamon Bulfin and later I met Felix Cronin who was most active. During that period of the 'German Plot' our house was raided and my husband arrested, brought to Maryboro and then to Durham Gaol. He was away one year and during that time I ran Home Nursing classes for members of the C. na mBan mostly in my own house. The membership was small but enthusiastic. When my husband again got home we were transferred to Lismore, Co. Waterford; we were there 15 months and during that time I could do very little as our

movements were very closely watched. It was there we were - especially my husband - very roughly treated by the British military. They made a wreck of our house which was fairly big; they broke everything they possibly could; fired shots at the mirrors and smashed every pane of glass in the house (we had with our two children of 2½ and 3½ years to go to the local hotel for a couple of weeks until the house was again habitable). After that we were both so unnerved that we decided to go to Cork for a weekend for a rest. We stayed in Turner's Hotel. The cure was worse than the disease as, during that first night Cork city was in an uproar owing to the shooting of County Inspector Smith Kenny in the Co. Club. We were glad to get back to Lismore again, but our movements were now more closely watched than ever after that. Just before we were raided my husband had been asked by Ernest Blythe, (then Director of the National Land Bank) to transfer to the Land Bank. He agreed to do so and we returned to Dublin.

Signed: Phyllis C. Inokan

Date: 16 - 3 - 49

Witness: Sm. Crossan

