

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

BURO STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21

No. W.S. 213

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 213.....

Witness

Mrs. Agnes MacNeill,
63 Upper Leeson Street,
Dublin.

Identity

Widow of Eoin MacNeill;
Member of Committee of Cumann na mBan.

Subject

Her husband's national activities
prior to and during Easter Week, 1916.

Conditions, if any, stipulated by Witness

Nil

File No. S.135.....

Form B.S.M. 2.

ORIGINAL

STATEMENT BY MRS. EOIN MacNEILL

63 UPPER LEESON ST., DUBLIN.

My memory is not very good about dates and names, but I will give any information I can remember. My husband left a lot of papers, but we have not had time to go through them. My son-in-law, Mr Tierney, intends one day to use them for compiling a life of my husband.

My husband was associated with the Gaelic League from the start, in fact, with everything connected with Ireland, and that was why he started the Volunteer movement. He published a letter in the Claidheamh Soluis calling a meeting for this purpose. Shortly after, the O'Rahilly and B. Hobson called to the house to ask him did he mean this seriously, and they and others combined with him in starting the organisation and a meeting was held - I am not sure where. Another meeting was held in the Rotunda launching the Volunteers. From that on many persons connected with the Volunteers kept coming to the house.

My husband was not a member of the I.R.B. as he was opposed to joining any oath-bound secret society.

He agreed to taking the Redmondite members on the Executive Committee of the Volunteers because, he, like others, did not wish to cause a split in the National Movement. He knew about the gun-running by the two yachts at Howth and Wicklow. He did not know that there was a rising arranged for Easter Sunday, although, no doubt, the possibility of an armed rising was discussed at the meetings of the Executive. The first he knew about it was when Bulmer Hobson and someone else called on Friday before Easter when we were all in bed to tell him about it. They had a long discussion and then went to Pearse to protest against going on with the rising because the Volunteers were so unprepared and unequipped and they would be simply slaughtered. But Pearse was very much under the influence of Connolly who, with Plunkett and others, had

been making secret preparations for a rising. My husband knew nothing about the arrangement for the landing of German arms in Kerry. In fact, Sean Fitzgibbon, who had come back from there, told him there was no organisation in Kerry.

I did hear that there was a meeting at Dr. S. O'Kelly's - it may have been Saturday - but my husband did not tell me what it was about or who was there. On Sunday morning when going to Mass I met a man from Galway on the avenue coming to see my husband. I don't know who he was, but he told me that the Galway Volunteers had no arms and were quite unprepared for a rising. Tom McDonagh came that day and spent a long time with my husband. Mr. Fitzgibbon came too. It was my husband put the notice cancelling the Sunday parade in the "Sunday Independent".

On the Monday someone - I think it was The O'Rahilly - came and told my husband that the Rising was on. Arthur Griffith came during the week - it might have been Wednesday. Some time after that they were both arrested.

Signed: Agnes MacNeill

Date: Feb March 1913

Witness: S. M. Cousins

