

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

BURO STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21

No. W.S. 480

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 480

**Witness**

Mrs. Martin Murphy  
(Eileen Walsh)  
Dunfillan,

Orwell Road, Rathgar, Dublin.

**Identity**

Commandant Cumann na mBan, 1916;

Courier to Mullingar and Athlone, Holy Week 1916.

**Subject**

Father Matthew Hall area, Dublin,  
Easter Week 1916.

Conditions, if any, stipulated by Witness

Nil

File No. 9.1650

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Statement of Mrs. Martin Murphy (Eileen Walsh)

Dunfillan, Orwell Road, Rathgar, Dublin.

The very first night Cumann na mBan was started in the Central Branch at Parnell Square I was present. There was such a big crowd that I and other girls from the South side decided that we would start a branch in that part of Dublin. The Inghini na h-Eireann who had rooms in No. 6 Harcourt Street gave us accommodation for a small charge, and that was why we decided to call our branch Inghini na h-Eireann Branch.

We formed a kind of military organisation and we elected officers. I was appointed Commandant and Miss Rose McNamara Vice-Commandant. Miss Nannie Hampton was Quartermaster. Joe Walsh (now Mrs. Rafferty) got some appointment, but I cannot remember what it was. Marcella Cosgrave was made Treasurer.

We drilled in the Fianna Hall in Camden Street under the instruction of Seamus Pouch, who confirmed the military ranks I have mentioned. Simon Donnelly often came to the hall in Camden Street and drilled us also. We drilled twice a week. We did route-marching and flag-signalling. I do not remember any rifle practice, but we were shown how to load, unload and clean a gun. We learned First-Aid in our own Branch under Dr. Kathleen Lynn and other doctors, but we went occasionally to the Purveyors Hall in Essex Street to lectures given by Dr. Curtin. We also went to No. 2 Dawson Street to make field-dressings so as to provide a store for any emergency that might arise. Girls from all the Branches turned in there periodically to take part in that work. We enjoyed going there very much as it offered a good deal of variety, and an opportunity of chatting with all our friends among the

There was such a fuss about the proposed manoeuvres on

on Easter Sunday that we thought there was something quite unusual about to happen, though I cannot state we expected it to be a Rising. I would not have been surprised if I had been told that it was, the excitement during Holy Week had been so tense. We were very busy making field-dressings all that week in No. 2 Dawson Street. Joe Walsh and her two sisters from the Fairview Branch, Nancy Power, Brigid Dixon and several members of all the Branches were there coming and going. One of those days, it might have been Tuesday or Wednesday of Holy Week, The O'Rahilly opened the door of our room and asked one of us to lend him his tram fare as he had forgotten his money.

On Spy Wednesday evening Bulmer Hobson came into the room where I was working. Evidently my name was suggested to him by somebody. He called me into his own room and asked me did I know Peadar Malinn in Athlone, who was the Captain of the Volunteers there. I said I did. He then gave me three separate despatches in sealed envelopes. He gave me no hint or indication of what was in them, but he told me they were important and I was to show them to nobody but the persons for whom they were intended. One was for Peadar Malinn in Athlone, one for the Bishop in Mullingar and the third for the Captain of the Volunteers in Longford. He gave me money for my fare in notes, I cannot remember how much, and he told me to travel on the morning of Thursday.

I took the train about 9.15 and, arriving in Mullingar, went straight to the Bishop's house. I was brought into his sitting-room. He received me very kindly, and I handed him the envelope. He opened it in my presence. He took some time to read it. He made no comment about the subject of the despatch, he gave me his blessing and I left.

I took the next train to Athlone, arriving about tea-time.

I had no difficulty in finding Mr. Malinn's shop; his name was over the door. He was in and I handed him the despatch. He summoned a few of the Volunteers that night to discuss whatever matter the despatch was about. I have a hazy recollection that they discussed it after tea in the sitting-room, but I cannot remember what it was about. One thing they decided on was that I need not go to Longford, they would send someone with the despatch. I spent the night in Malinn's. They made me very comfortable - himself, his mother and his two sisters. I returned to Dublin the next evening - Good Friday evening. I am sure I was in No. 2 again on Holy Saturday morning, making the bandages and field-dressings. There was considerable excitement but I cannot remember who was there. Some others of the Cumann na mBan, including Joe Walsh.

Later on Saturday Joe Walsh and I in accordance with instructions received, probably from Commandant de Valera of the 3rd Battalion, went to his Headquarters in Brunswick Street to find out what position our Unit of Cumann na mBan were to occupy on Sunday in regard to the 3rd Battalion. The Commandant received us and gave us his instructions, which were that we were to mobilise that part of our Branch that was co-operating with the 3rd Battalion, I think at twelve o'clock on Sunday, in our own rooms in Harcourt Street. We were to wait there for orders. The whole Branch met at Harcourt Street on Sunday morning at the appointed hour, but the orders never came. We stayed there for a long time in uncertainty, discussing the situation, and finally dispersed. On the way home Louie Kennedy and I discussed what we were going to do with all the material we had collected and stored in my place, medical supplies of all sorts, enamel buckets, water bottles, etc. We decided that she would call for me in the afternoon and bring as much as we could carry to the

drill hall of the 3rd Battalion in Camden Row, and I have already described what we saw when we arrived there.

We were in a state of uncertainty all through Sunday evening, as were all the Volunteers that we met. They were notified that the Rising was off. I was talking to my fiancé, Martin, and he was sure that everything was off, because he arranged with some of his pals to go to the Fairymouse Races next day. He had two rifles which I stored for him, as he could not keep them in his lodgings. He and his friends went off to the Races. While there he heard that the fighting had broken out in Dublin, and he and his friends took a hackney car and got back as quickly as they could. He reported to the G.P.O., where Pearse told him to try to get to his own Battalion under de Valera. He took another hack which brought him, under threat of using the revolver, as far as the bridge at Ringsend, I think. Anyway, at whatever point it was, the driver could not go further as there was a cordon of soldiers there. He returned to the G.P.O. again and reported to Pearse that he could not reach the 3rd Battalion. Then Pearse suggested that he should report to the Four Courts where his friend, Peadar Clancy, was operating under Captain Frank Fahy. He got down to the Four Courts, where he remained until the surrender. But, of course, he was without his rifles, which, as already stated, were with me. So he asked Frank Fahy whether he should collect them. Frank told him to take somebody with him after dark that night and go by all the back streets to the South side. They did this, and I handed them the two rifles. One was a Howth rifle and the other a Lee-Enfield, I think for .303 ammunition. He told me after that they ran risks getting back safely to the Four Courts with their rifles under their overcoats and the ammunition in the bandoliers.

I stayed at home on Sunday night and on Monday morning early Josie Kelly, now Mrs. Green, came to me on her bicycle with a message from Commandant Ceannt to mobilise all our Branch of Cumann na mBan at the Cleaver Hall in Dolphin's Barn at eleven o'clock. This upset me because the arrangement already made was that only half our members were to co-operate with the 4th Battalion. I decided to go to see the Commandant. Josie and I went to his house in South Circular Road and asked him did he mean me to mobilise all our Branch for the Cleaver Hall. He said no, only those who were already appointed to operate with the 4th Battalion. We proceeded, Josie and I, on our bicycles to mobilise those, and they all turned up at Cleaver Hall. All those went to Marrowbone Lane under the Vice-Commandant, Rose McNamara.

I went back home then, and later the remainder of the Branch met again in 6 Harcourt Street, awaiting an order from de Valera. We did not get it. I told the girls to get into whatever outpost they could. Some of them succeeded. Four or five of them, Elizabeth O'Farrell, Julia Grennan and Joe Walsh and at least one of her sisters were in the G.P.O.

I went back home on Monday evening. I was expecting Martin to call for his rifles, and I wanted to be there to give them to him.

A few of us met again in Harcourt Street on Tuesday morning. I went from there to the Post Office. Bridie Mahon was with me. We were admitted to the Post Office and as far as I can remember it was Desmond Fitzgerald who asked for Volunteers to take some foodstuffs to the College of Surgeons. Bridie Mahon, myself and Mrs. Sheehy-Skeffington, who happened to be in the Post Office, volunteered for the job. We carried a sack of bread and other food between us to the College. We followed the ordinary route, along

O'Connell Street and over the bridge. We were followed by a couple of boys, and I turned around and asked them not to be following us, as they were drawing attention to us. It was then they said they were Fianna boys and were guarding us. One of them took his revolver out of his pocket to confirm his statement. They followed us till we came to the door at the side of the College in York Street. We had some difficulty in getting in there, as we were not recognised. We said we knew Countess Markievicz and I said I knew Jim Hampton, and in this way we got in and delivered our food.

I went back to the Post Office. I cannot remember whether Mrs. Skeffington did, but Bridie Mahon went home and tried later to get into some post. I reported the success of our expedition. I was then asked to take a written message, I think from Pearse to Commandant Daly in the Father Mathew Hall area, which I did. When I got to the Father Mathew Hall there were some wounded, and I was asked to stay on to help. I think it was one of the Miss Elliotts, whom I knew, that asked me. That is how I happened to be serving in that area instead of being with the 3rd Battalion with which our section was to co-operate. As far as I can make out there were no Cumann na mBan with that Battalion during the whole of the fighting.

My chief activity was rendering first-aid to the wounded as they were brought. There were from twelve to sixteen beds ranged round the sides of the hall, and from the Wednesday they were practically all occupied. One badly wounded Volunteer called Beggs was not attended to by the girls but by the men of the Red Cross, Martin Conlan and others. Beggs was soon taken to the Richmond Hospital, as were all the badly wounded, as quickly as a lull came in the fighting. Eilis Ryan (Mrs. Seán Ó Conaill) was there and many others. We were kept busy the whole time. During the



week Father Augustine, O.F.M., heard our Confessions and gave us Holy Communion. We did a little cooking - tea chiefly - in a little bar place off the Hall. The Volunteers brought us bread from Monks' Bakery, and one day Donnchadh Ó Ceallacháin commandeered a huge piece of beef for us and said he would get it cooked also at the Bakery.

One day in the middle of the week word came that ten thousand Germans were marching along the Naas Road towards Dublin. I saw Ned Daly and Fionán Lynch studying the map, with particular attention to the Naas Road. There was terrible disappointment when nothing came of it.

There was one day during the week that we ran short of bandages and I suggested that if I could get a message to Miss Hampton of Mary's Abbey - one of our members - I would be sure to get something from her. She sent me a whole lot of old sheets, pillow-slips, etc., that helped us a lot in dressing the bad wounds.

We worked away until Saturday. There was a lull in the fighting on Saturday afternoon and word went round that Pearse had surrendered. We all got worked up and started to cry. The men around our quarters were terribly disappointed. A few of them remained on that night at the Father Mathew Hall and thus avoided the surrender, and probably kept their arms.

Father Augustine came to Mrs. Fahy and me and said that if we could get a bed from the caretaker we could spend the night in his quarters. He and his daughter gave us a good room and a nice comfortable bed, where we slept the night. We went to early Mass in the Church next morning, and after Mass I parted with Mrs. Fahy.

I succeeded in getting as far as Hamptons' in Mary's

Abbey and stayed there for a day or two until things quietened down and I was able to get home.

The following week was a sad one with the executions and deportations of the men. Martin, my fiancé, was among the latter. Johnny Barton took his overcoat from him in Richmond Barracks, and afterwards said it was looted. Martin told me how two friends of his, Seán Byrne and Jack Twomey, gave him the shelter of their coats. He was at Knutsford and Frongoch, and did not come home till December.

After the Rising we still met in 6 Harcourt Street and kept dodging the police. I was on Section 5 of the National Aid Committee. We investigated the need of the dependants of the deported and gave them weekly allowances.

On our section Mrs. Wyse-Power was the Treasurer. Mrs. Paidín O'Keeffe, Lou Kennedy, Pansy and Kitty Corrigan were also in it. We submitted a weekly list of our needs and Mrs. Power drew the money and doled it out to each of us for our particular clients. This went on for a long time.

Meanwhile, in September, I got married and lived in South Richmond Street, where my husband started business on his own.

Our Branch of Cumann na mBan was amalgamated with the University Branch. I resigned and Lou Kennedy became Commandant in my place.

My husband continued to be an active worker for the Volunteers. He was in the I.R.B. and attended their meetings. He had a whole lot of rifles and revolvers in the cellar of our house. These were removed from time to time and we were glad to see the last of them, as we were always expecting raids. Strange to say, we never were raided.

After my marriage I was mostly taken up with the affairs of my family and house, giving also any help I could to the National movement without being an active member of Cumann na mBan.

SIGNED *Eileen Murphy*

DATE *26.9.51*

WITNESS *S. M. Cusack*

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