

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

BURÓ STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21

No. W.S. 484

ROINN  COSANTA.

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 484.....

Witness

Brigid, Bean Uí Fheaidh, (Ní Dhiscin),
3 Royse Road,
Phibsborough, Dublin.

Identity

Member of Cumann na mBan Dublin
1914-1916.

Subject

- (a) Cumann na mBan 1914-1916;
- (b) Hibernian Bank and G.P.O. O'Connell St.,
Dublin, Easter Week 1916.

Conditions, if any, stipulated by Witness

Nil

File No. S.1641.....

Form B.S.M. 2.

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STATEMENT OF MRS. FEE (Brighid Ní Dhiscin)

3 Royse Road, Phibsboro, Dublin.

My father, Henry Dixon, was connected with the National movement all his life. He was a member of the Celtic Literary Society, and was associated with Willie Rooney. He took the Parnell side after the split in the Parliamentary Party, and fought like a Trojan for him. He was an United Irishman and he was keenly interested in the revival of Irish; he attended the lectures of Kuno Meyer, the German scholar. Strange to say we learned none of these things from himself, but from others who were associated with him. He had collected a lot of material with the intention of writing his memoirs, but we destroyed them after his death.

Although he did not talk to us of his political activities, he tried from the beginning to make us good Nationalists, making us wear clothes of Irish manufacture and making us learn Irish - which was not then a compulsory subject in the National school. My teacher there was Miss Killeen - afterwards Mrs. Pádraig Ó Broilcháin - and at Muckcross Park Dominican Convent, where we went afterwards, Máire Ní Chinnéide taught me Irish. My sisters and myself attended the Irish College at Ballingearry for several sessions. We joined the Keating Branch of the Gaelic League, where I got to know many people who later took part in the Rising. I can state that it was the atmosphere of the Keating Branch that really aroused the spirit of Nationality that up to then was latent within me.

I joined Cumann na mBan after its foundation. I was a member of the Central Branch, of which Mrs. Tuohy - Dr. Tuohy's wife - was President. I still have my First-Aid Certificate, which was signed by her, and which I will give to the Bureau.

I remember attending First-Aid classes in a room over Crane's music-shop where Aer Lingus now has offices. The Keating Branch also met there for a while, and I recall watching from those windows the Industrial Parade organised annually around St. Patrick's Day. Dr. McCullough gave the lectures and Dr. McGrath examined us for the Certificate.

I think the first time the Cumann na mBan came out prominently before the public was on the occasion of the O'Donovan Rossa funeral. We marched in the procession, those of us who had uniforms wearing them. We carried a stretcher, showing that we took the business of First-Aid seriously.

I should mention that we had gone to Bodenstown the previous June, carrying a Cumann na mBan banner.

I knew that there were manoeuvres coming on at Easter, and I came on Good Friday, I think in the morning, to help make the First-Aid kits, but I cannot remember where it was. While I was there I saw a man I did not know crossing from the stairs. Somebody said that was Captain de Valera.

I think it was on Saturday evening that Nora Foley gave us - my younger sister and myself - our mobilisation order for Easter Sunday. I have not the foggiest idea now where we were to meet.

On Sunday morning the cancellation order appeared in the paper, and also Nora Foley called to the house to notify me of the position. It was on that morning Brigid Foley and myself went to Séamus O'Connor's house in Royse Road to collect a sum of money. I do not know who asked us to go for it, but possibly Brigid Foley will know something about it. We got no answer to our first knocks, but after some time Séamus' sister-in-law, Miss Moran, opened the door and told us he had gone away. She gave us the money, which was

in two white bags. I do not know whether it was gold or silver or how much was in the bags. I cannot remember what was done with the money. I have an impression that it, or portion of it, was distributed towards the end of Easter Week among people who were short of money. I have a vague notion that Seán Ó Seaghdha was in some way connected with the distribution of it.

On Sunday evening my father packed us off to Cliff Cottage, Howth, where my other two sisters had already gone to spend a long week-end.

On Monday morning Jack Cotter and someone else - I think it must have been my young brother - cycled out to tell us to come in, that we were to report to Dominick Street.

We started on our journey by tram as far as Raheny - we had to walk the rest of the way. We went into Dominick Street Church and stayed there until we were disbanded - probably some time after seven o'clock. Mrs. English, Mrs. Frank Fahy, Mrs. Morkan, Pauline Morkan (I think), Nora Foley, Mary Hanley, Miss Heron and others were at Dominick Street with us.

When we went home to 19 Cabra Road, bringing Mary Hanley with us, the house was in the possession of the Volunteers. We stayed there that night, and the following morning someone of the Volunteers advised my father to take any valuables he had out of the house and that we ought not to remain, as they were going to blow up all the bridges in the area. We collected what we thought the most important possessions. I carried the bust of Fintan Lalor down to the house of Mr. John Murphy of Clonliffe Road. My mother and father stayed there then, and Mary Hanley, my sister Grania and I went to Mrs. Cotter's house in St. Anne's Road. We spent Tuesday night there, and on Wednesday morning after seven o'clock

Mass in St. Alphonsus' Chapel we met one of the Miss O'Reillys of Drumcondra, who told us that Cumann na mBan were in the G.P.O. and were looking for helpers in the Hibernian Bank. After breakfast we went down to the Hibernian Bank, where we remained until that afternoon, when the firing became so severe that we had to abandon it by making a hole in the next house north of it. We went across to the G.P.O., somebody carrying a white flag as we had a wounded Volunteer on a stretcher.

I should mention here that Captain Weafer, who was a cousin of Mary Hanley, was killed very shortly after our arrival in the Hibernian Bank, and Captain Breen was sent over to take his place. It was he led us out. Leslie Price, now Mrs. Tom Barry, and Máire Mapother and a few others were with us. We remained in the G.P.O. and we helped in the kitchen upstairs for a while. Louise Gavan-Duffy was in charge there and had a lot of helpers who were busy preparing food.

On Wednesday night Leslie Price and I were sent out on a despatch to the Father Mathew Hall in Church Street. We each carried a brown paper parcel of ammunition, which we succeeded in delivering. We were talking to Ned Daly, Martin Conlon and his wife, Frank Fahy, Ned Morkan and probably some others. I cannot remember who sent us on the despatch, but I think we got the parcels from Michael Staines. I imagine we got back to the G.P.O. about 1.30 or 2 a.m. We lay down on some sort of a couch for an hour or so.

I think it must have been on Thursday morning that I copied out the notice that Headquarters were sending to the country. I had to do it in longhand because I was not familiar with the sort of typewriter that was there. Miss Carney was typing something at the same time.

I think it was not long after that a number of us girls - I would say about twenty - were asked if we would be prepared to leave the building and make our way home, as some of the houses on the other side of the street were on fire. Someone, it may have been Seán McDermott, addressed us and explained why it was thought advisable for us to leave. I cannot remember how we got out of the building, but I know that we arrived at Jervis Street Hospital in daylight, and somebody in front of the procession was carrying a white flag. My recollection is that they were not too keen to keep us and we pursued our journey homewards. Leslie Price, Mary Hanley and my sister Grania were walking with me, and I think a Miss Twomey.

At the first barricade we were halted by a British tommy. We were sent from there under a military escort to an officer in Summerhill. He sent us on to Broadstone, where we were questioned by two officers. Eventually we were given passes which brought us to our destination. My sister, Mary Hanley and I went to Mrs. Cotter. My sister and myself stayed there for a fortnight, if not more, but Mary Hanley went home to the South side.

After the Volunteers had left our house in Cabra Road, the British took possession of it and remained there till after the surrender. We did not go near the place for some time.

My father was arrested on the 5th May. At the time he was out on St. Vincent de Paul work. He was deported to Wandsworth, then he was sent to Frongoch and later on to Reading. He was not released until Christmas Eve.

He was again arrested in November, 1920. It took us two days before we located him in the Royal Barracks. He

was handcuffed to Dick Davis and they were both brought to Ballykinlar, where he remained until September, 1921.

During the whole of the periods he spent in prison he refused on principle to accept parcels from home or anywhere else. He said, "As they have arrested me they will have to keep me."

SIGNED Colin Dwyer
(Colin Dwyer the friend)
DATE 6th March 1951

WITNESS S. C. Wilson

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