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COSANTA.

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 539

Witness

Bean Mhicil Ui Fhoghludha,
(nee Smartt)
5 Cabra Road,
Phibsborough, Dublin.

Identity.

Member of Cumann na mBan, Dublin,
1914 - .

Subject.

- (a) National activities 1913-1921;
- (b) Cooperation with Irish Volunteer leaders
1919-1921.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil

File No. S.1812

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

BURO STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21

STATEMENT BY

No. W.S. 539

Bean Mhichíl Uí Foghludha (Máire Smartt),5 Cabra Road, Phibsboro, Dublin.

I joined the Keating Branch of the Gaelic League in Gardiner's Row in 1911. At that time Cathal Brugha was President. I knew all the members of the Branch who were prominent in the Volunteers - Con Collins, who taught my class; Gearóid O'Sullivan, Diarmuid O'Hegarty, Tom Ashe, Seán McDermott, Fionán Lynch, Colm Ó Murchadha, Micheál Ó Loinsigh, all the Foleys - Brigid, Kate, Nora, Micheál - whom I afterwards married - Risteárd (Fiachra Éilgeach) who was one of the founders of the Branch; Con Keating, who was killed at Ballykissane Pier, Floss Doherty, Murt O'Connell, Seosamh McCanna, Tomás Breatnach, Piaras Beaslá, Tadhg Ó Scanaill and Michael Cremin.

During 1916 there was a great influx of new members, also Volunteers, such as Con Colbert, Seán Heuston, Garry Houlihan, Martin Savage, ~~and others~~, McNestry, who was after the Rising sentenced to penal servitude; Con Ó Donnabháin who was similarly sentenced; Fergus O'Connor, ~~and others~~, Maurice Brennan and many others. Mick Collins had joined the Branch as soon as he arrived from London. Ned Daly used to attend the Keating Branch.

In the spring of 1914 when Cumann na mBan was founded, most of the girls of the Branch joined it - the three Dixon girls, Eilís Ní Riain, who was always with her fiancé Seán Ó Conaill. These were very regular attendants at all the activities of Cumann na mBan. I was at business in Findlaters in George's Street and did not attend the First Aid classes, but I went on the route marches and marched in

all the funerals, the first being the O'Donovan Rossa procession to Glasnevin.

In 1916 my family moved from Botanic Road to Sandymount.

The Rising was to be on Sunday and Micheál Ó Foghludha to whom I was engaged, called for me on Saturday night to Findlater's and came home with me. The first I heard of a Rising was from Tom Ashe at the 1915 Oireachtas in Dundalk. That was the time that Douglas Hyde was ousted from the Presidency of the League. ^{Many members of the} ~~The~~ Keating Branch went ^{vote for} down to Dundalk to ~~ensure that~~ their candidates for the Coisde Gnótha, ^{many of whom were} ~~who were all~~ Volunteers, ~~would be elected.~~

All these fellows used to meet at Micheál Ó Foghludha's office at the corner of Lower Abbey Street and O'Connell Street. The building was called Reis' Chambers - the Munster and Leinster Bank occupies that position now. These Volunteers discussed all their plans in Micheál's office. He was on the Coisde Gnótha of the Gaelic League from the time he came back from Manchester in 1906. ^{He worked there with the} ^{of the Coisde Gnótha} Dunlop Company. ^{He remained a member until the} ¹⁹⁵⁰ ~~last~~ election. He has been and still is President of the Keating Branch since the death of Cathal Brugha in 1922.

At Dundalk, Tom Ashe was leaving the day before we did. I asked him why he did not wait for the last day's functions. He said: "I must go, we might have the rising any time". At the time I thought he was pulling my leg, but Micheál told me he was quite serious and that preparations were being made for a Rising. From that on I knew it was coming and I realised the significance of the preparations.

On Easter Sunday, Micheál came out unexpectedly to see me and told me the Rising was off and that he would come out

the next day, Monday. He did not come out and I did not see him again for a long time.

My two sisters went into town early on Monday afternoon while I stayed at home waiting for Micheál to come. Of course, he didn't. They had the greatest difficulty in getting home late in the afternoon and they told me that the city was in a tumult. They saw a group of soldiers gathered around College Street Police Station, evidently taking shelter from the flying bullets.

We had a charwoman who used to come out on Mondays to us and she came that day as usual. Mrs. Doyle, the charwoman, was in a state of panic, so I took my bicycle to leave her home to Prospect Avenue, ^{Blasnewan} We had to take all the back streets. The journey took us hours and we were frequently held up, the charwoman having a hysterical fit on each occasion. I managed to get home on my bicycle intending to come back and go into the G. P. O. or anywhere I could get. I was in charge of the household as my mother had died the year before.

On Tuesday, my sister who also worked at Findlater's, got up to go to the R. D. S. about 8.30 where the Spring Show was due to begin. Findlater's supplied all the drink to the Show restaurants, and, of course, there was nothing doing at the Show, although the exhibitors had assembled their cattle, etc. there. She stayed there all day until 5 p.m. or so, but the kitchen staff had to stay all night as they lived in the north side of the city.

On Wednesday, a friend of ours, ^{Mabel} ~~Ma~~ Gorman, came to see us and when she set out to go home to Newbridge Avenue, a short distance away, she was stopped by the military who, having arrived from Kingstown, established themselves at

Ballsbridge and formed a cordon which cut off our district from the city. She had to spend the night with us, but on the following morning, with the aid of tears and entreaties she got a couple of the soldiers to escort her to her own door.

In the course of the week - Wednesday or Thursday - an old friend of my father's, called Cox - the father of O'Connor-Cox, who was deported after the Rising, came to the house with a parcel and asked me would I be afraid to go as far as Bolands Mill with it. I was terrified but I went and succeeded in getting there. When I reached the bridge at Barrow Street, I saw a woman lying dead on the bridge. A woman ran out of a neighbouring house and told me that the dead woman had been lying there since the day before and warned me not to go any further. But I had to go and reached the gate of the Mill in Barrow Street. A Volunteer, who was posted at the gate on some stand, lowered his rifle and asked me to hang the bag on it, which I did. The bag which was very heavy must have contained ammunition and possibly food. I arrived back home safely. I was able to do no more. We haunted the barriers which were manned by soldiers, but could not pass them.

At the end of the week the soldiers made a thorough search of Newgrove Avenue where we lived. I had a big bundle of notes which Micheál had given me to mind. I think it was about £500. I had it in the safe at Findlater's, of which I had the key. I must have brought it home during Holy Week when I knew the Rising was coming off. I ripped a feather bolster and put the bundle of notes among the feathers. I was trembling in fear lest the soldiers would find it during the raid, but they did not. Micheál, with whom I discussed this matter recently, told me that this

money had been given him by Tom Clarke some time before the Rising and having collected the money from me, when he saw me after the Rising, he handed it over to Mrs. Clarke subsequent to her release from Kilmainham (or Mountjoy).

The "G" Division of the D.M.P. which at that time was stationed in College Street, had a mess account at Findlater's, and a mess man used to come every week to pay the bill. This mess man was changed every six months and in that way I got to know a number of the "G" men, including Eamon Broy. I can't remember exactly when I met him first, but finding out that I was interested in the Gaelic League, he always talked Irish to me and always warned me when there was going to be a raid on the Volunteer houses.

One day in January, 1919, he came in on some excuse to my cash office. He pretended to be settling up a bill and wrote in Irish on a piece of my blotting paper that some Volunteers had escaped from Usk. I think I still have that piece of blotting paper and if I can find it I shall give it to the Bureau (Appendix A). I telephoned the news immediately to Micheál ^{clan} who had his office in ^{25 Bachelors Walk,} ~~Beis' Chambers~~. Broy had been giving me information for at least six months at that time.

When I was getting married on February 14, 1919, I left Findlater's a couple of days before that and from that on he ^{Broy} used to come to our house in No. 5 Cabra Road, to meet Mick Collins who slept in our house for a couple of months at a time until it was no longer safe to do so, as the house became too well known. Piaras Beaslai, Tomás McCurtain, Tomás Breathnach, Maurice Brennan used to sleep there. Later about 1921 Brennan and Breathnach took a flat in the top of the house and ^{many volunteers} ~~everyone~~ used to

sleep there from time to time. At this time Mick Collins did not sleep there as raids were frequent.

Broy used to bring another "G" man called McNamara, sometimes to meet Collins. There was no one in the house that time but myself and Micheál and of course we never knew, nor did we inquire, what they were discussing.

Broy was a great athlete and so had Collins been, but the latter was getting rather soft for want of exercise and Broy used to take him out to give him running exercise at Romel Park in Sandymount. Broy was a member of the Amateur Athletic Association to whom the Park belonged. He was very fond of Mick Collins and he even went as far as to bring him to the Headquarters of the "G" Division. It was at our house that the plans for this venture were made. He showed him everything - letters that had been captured, notices offering rewards for the capture of prominent Sinn Féiners, etc. It was a very daring thing and should be remembered for Broy who risked his life in the undertaking. I always heard that only for the Truce he would have been shot, as a copy of a letter he had typed was found in a raid on Dick Mulcahy's office. Broy was the official typist in the Castle and whenever he was typing anything that concerned the Volunteers, he always made a second copy and had it delivered to Mick Collins or someone else.

SIGNED

Maire SmarttSean MacLiamáin

DATE

June 21st 1951.

WITNESS

P. McCann

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