

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

BURO STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21

No. W.S. 568

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COSANTA.

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21

STATEMENT BY WITNESS

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 568

Witness

Ellis, Bean Uí Chonail, (Na Riain),  
23 Vernon Grove,  
Clontarf,  
Dublin.

Identity.

Member of Cumann na mBan, Dublin, 1915;  
Later Vice-Commandant and member of Executive  
of Cumann na mBan.

Subject.

- (a) National activities 1913-1921;
- (b) First Aid: Reiss's, O'Connell St., and  
Father Matthew Hall, Dublin, Easter Week 1916;
- (c) The National Aid Committee;
- (d) Funeral of Thomas Ashe.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil

File No S.1846

Form BSM 2

# ORIGINAL

Statement of Eilis Bean Uí Chonaill (Eilis Ní Riain),

23, Vernon Grove, Clontarf, Dublin

BEAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21  
BURO STAIRE MILEATA 1913-21

NO. W.S. 568

Association with the Keating Branch of the  
Gaelic League and Cumann na mBan.

I was in the Keating Branch of the Gaelic League from 1915. In the August of that year I joined Cumann na mBan after the funeral of O'Donovan Rossa at which I was an onlooker. I was very proud to have achieved these two objects which were dear to my heart.

I was in digs in Dublin with a sister of Sean Ó Cuiv's, Mrs. Cleary. My parents brought us up with an Irish outlook. My mother procured all O'Growney's books and got the local schoolmaster in Lenamore, County Longford, to give us Irish lessons outside of school hours. He knew Irish well, being a friend of Seán O Cuiv's, and was an enthusiastic teacher.

Mrs. Cleary, on finding that I was interested in Irish, suggested that I should join the Keating Branch of which she and her brother, Seán, were members. There I met all the well-known personalities of the Gaelic League, Risteard, Micheál, Nora, Brigid and Cáit Ó Foghludha, the Dixon family, Effie Thaffe, Cathal Brugha, Dinny O'Callaghan, Diarmuidh O'Hegarty, Liam Archer, Gearóid O'Sullivan, Fionán Lynch, Greg Murphy, Floss O'Doherty, Micheál Ó Loingsigh, Conn O'Donovan and many others.

All these people were also closely identified with the Volunteer movement and the girls were members of Cumann na mBan which met in the big hall in 25 Parnell Square which was the headquarters of the Gaelic League as well as of the Ard Craobh of the League.

I have a copy of the constitution of Cumann na mBan which

sets out the aims and objects of the organisation. I shall lend it to the Bureau if they require it for copying or photostating.

At the Central Branch we learned First Aid and Physical Drill. We also had a special arms class and a signalling class. Dr. McGrath was my first lecturer for First Aid. He was succeeded by Dr. Ellis. Lieutenant Seamus Kavanagh of the 1st Battalion of the Volunteers was our drill instructor. The two eldest of the Reddin brothers, whose mother was on the Executive of Cumann na mBan and on the committee of the Branch, also gave drill instruction. This Branch was controlled by an active committee consisting of Mrs. Dr. Tuohy, President, Mrs. Tom Clarke, Mrs. Ceannt, Áine O'Rahilly, Mrs. Wyse-Power Min Ryan (later Mrs. Mulcahy), Louise Gavan-Duffy, Mrs. Reddin, Mrs. Joe McGuinness. Miss Sorcha McMahon was Secretary.

An examination for First Aid was held in November and the resulting certificates were signed by Mrs. Tuohy, Dr. McGrath and Miss McMahon. We met twice a week on Tuesdays and Fridays from 8 o'clock until the caretaker put us out.

On Friday nights after the class we usually had a scoruidheacht during which we sang rebel songs and practised Irish dancing. I should mention that we also had a short Irish lesson before the formal First Aid classes began. Different members of the Branch, some of whom were native Irish speakers, taught us phrases.

The first public parade I took part in was the Anniversary of the Manchester Martyrs in 1915, in which all

the other national organisations took part too. We met at the top of Dawson Street on Sunday morning after Mass and marched to Glasnevin Cemetery. I think it was about this time also that Cumann na mBan organised a concert in the Mansion House. The proceeds of this and many other functions about this period went to swell the Defence of Ireland Fund which was used for the purchase of arms and equipment for the Volunteers.

In addition to these functions our duties included the collecting of money in boxes outside the churches at the Masses on Sundays. I took up my position at the church of St. Francis Xavier at Upper Gardiner Street. This was reckoned to be one of the best stands from the financial point of view and incidentally was situated in our battalion area.

As time went on our activities became more intense. The next big parade of Volunteers took place on St. Patrick's Day, 1916. Eoin McNeill took the salute in College Green. Cumann na mBan did not take part in this parade. They were collecting money among the crowd. We even went out to Baldoyle where there was a race-meeting in progress, and we collected a large sum of money there.

#### Portents of the Rising.

As time went on a more serious aspect of the situation became apparent. Rumours of a rising, which were only whispers, were discussed.

At this time I changed my job and my new employer - to my great joy - was a republican. This I learned when he sent me out to the house of O'Rahilly, 40 Herbert Park, with a handsome cheque from himself for the Defence Fund.

He was a Mr. Sullivan who had recently returned from America and was interested in establishing a film industry here at 16 Henry Street. Incidentally, the office and equipment were destroyed by fire during the Rising and Mr. Sullivan was arrested after the Rising and detained for some time, his wife - who was one of the Limerick O'Mearas - not knowing where he was detained.

I remember a concert at 41 Parnell Square a short time before the Rising but all I remember of it is that I was among other Cumann na mBan girls who prepared supper for the artists and their friends and I probably was not in the concert hall at all.

On the Tuesday of Holy Week at our meeting we were told that there would be a special meeting on Friday night and as well as this instruction, arrangements were made for a special mobilisation of all enrolled members for Friday night.

Although I was not officially a mobiliser I helped a member at this work on Holy Thursday. There was a magnificent response to this appeal. The usual routine took place on Friday. We were ordered to report for duty for a route march on Sunday morning at 12 o'clock. As far as I remember the rendez-vous was Parnell Square. No uniforms or brooches were to be worn but rations were to be brought for twenty-four hours. Indication of something very special was apparent.

All the Dublin churches were filled to capacity by the different participating organisations on Saturday night, waiting for confession and on Sunday morning the number at Holy Communion was most impressive. I recognised in St. Francis Xavier's Church the familiar faces of many

Volunteers and Cumann na mBan girls.

Normally I would go home to Longford for the long week-end at Easter. In order to carry out the duties allotted to me, I arranged that my sister, Aine, who was working in Tullamore, should come and spend the week-end with me in Dublin. She was a member of a branch of Cumann na mBan in Tullamore which was organised by Mimi Plunkett at an early stage, and there was also a very active force of Volunteers. I spent a week-end previously with my sister at that town and visited the Cumann na mBan Branch. I met Liam Mellows there, Seamus Brennan and his brothers. Liam was organising the area at the time and he happened to be visiting the Branch the same night to put the girls through their paces.

It was shortly after that, that an event took place which heralded the Rising. The police raided the Volunteer hall in Tullamore and were resisted. A rifle went off - I think it was accidental - and lodged in the thigh of Sergeant Aherne, wounding him severely. The two leaders of the Volunteers, Seamus Brennan and Peadar Bracken, decided to clear out of the town to evade arrest. They went to the Volunteer camp at Kimmage where they remained until the Rising, in which they took part with the rest of the Kimmage garrison in the G.P.O. This took place shortly after St. Patrick's Day.

My sister accepted my invitation and arrived on Holy Saturday evening.

On Sunday morning on our way home from early Mass, we heard a newsboy shouting, 'Stop Press!' and to our amazement learned of Eoin McNeill's order countermanding

the Sunday parade. We naturally felt confused when we read the parade was off. Later Mrs. Joe McGuinness, wife of Joe McGuinness who was a Lieutenant in the 1st Battalion, called at my address, stating the arrangements for the Sunday were off but I was to 'stand to' for further orders.

At about 8 p.m. we went in search of news to the Keating Branch of the Gaelic League at North Frederick Street. I think I mentioned before that most of the members of the Keating Branch were also members of the Volunteers or Cumann na mBan. Here we met some of the Volunteers who, like ourselves, were eagerly seeking information. But no one seemed to know anything definite and after a while we returned home without having got any enlightenment at all. We did not know that any meeting was being held there. Everybody seemed to be on edge and as much at sea as ourselves; the atmosphere was quite abnormal.

Mobilised for Easter Week activities in  
O'Connell Street.

Early on Monday morning a despatch was brought to my digs from Mrs. McGuinness, stating that Cumann na mBan were to report for duty at Palmerston Place, vicinity of the Black Church and the Broadstone at 12 noon. I got instructions to collect some of our members on the way with full kit as previously arranged.

The Branch stretchers were stored at the home of a Volunteer called Flanagan in Primrose Street, who was a brother of one of our members, Mrs. Eileen Parker. I collected the members mentioned - one of them was Emily Elliott who lived at Gardiner's Place.

We remained in this area all day and were very disappointed at getting no work to do. The Volunteers at this stage were in or had taken possession of the posts and outposts allotted to the different battalions, and already firing was heard. This was the first definite indication that the fight was on. Nobody had ever told me that there was to be a Rising, but I was convinced from the general preparations and activities that one was to take place.

Intermittent firing went on during the day and we still had no word of what was happening. At about 6 p.m. we got orders which were brought by a despatch-rider on a bicycle that we were to go home, as our services would not be required. We had no alternative but to obey the orders.

On our way home we were amused by a crowd of women fitting on fancy boots, and doling out loot to one another at the top of North Great George's Street. Emily Elliott accompanied me to Mrs. Cleary's where I was staying and we decided to volunteer at the G.P.O. in any capacity if the Volunteers had sufficient doctors and nurses, as we were given to understand they had. When we arrived at the G.P.O. and interviewed the sentry, he told us they had enough staff and our services would not be required. He suggested we should report for duty to an outpost on the opposite side of O'Connell Street which was occupied by Volunteers. This we did and the Volunteers in Reis's Chambers gave us a hearty C  ad M  ile F  ilte. We were soon busy helping in our small way. In this building was a wireless school and the Volunteers were endeavouring to establish communication with the outside world, particularly America. The Volunteers I remember there were Sean O'Connor (Blimey), Fergus O'Kelly and, I think, Sean McGarry.



There were several others that I can't remember as I did not know their names. There was no food or facilities for cooking in the building. We eagerly awaited daylight on Tuesday morning to go across to the G.P.O. for rations for the men. With great difficulty we crossed O'Connell Street, as it was a mass of barbed wire and barricades. However, we were admitted after detailed interrogation. We explained our mission and were escorted to the food controller. Here the late Desmond Fitzgerald was in charge. I explained our position. We required food for so many Volunteers occupying an outpost in Reis's Chambers. He said he could not supply food without a written order from the officer in charge of the outpost. We again stressed the great difficulty we had encountered in reaching the G.P.O. and I said we could not possibly return without some food. At first he was reluctant to comply with the request but we were so persistent that he ultimately yielded to our appeal.

When we returned it was necessary to apologise for our long absence and 'Blimey' greeted us with, "Up the Republic! "

After the meal and when we had tidied up, we decided to look up Emily Elliott's sister, Eilís. We went back to their digs and found her. On the way we delivered two dispatches - one to a dairy shop in North Circular Road near Summerhill Corner, which was owned by the Misses Byrne who were sisters of Seán Byrne of the 1st Battalion, and also a message to Captain Weafer's wife in the same area. He was killed later in the day, I think, outside the G.P.O.

We returned to Reis's Chambers and on our arrival word came that members of Cumann na mBan were required at the Four Courts' outpost. We volunteered, said "Slán libh" to our friends and left O'Connell Street for the Four Courts' garrison.

#### Activities in Church Street.

When we reached the Four Courts, after probing our way through high, narrow streets to avoid stray bullets, we were told to report to the Father Mathew Hall, Church Street, which had been handed over for a First Aid station to Commandant Daly by the good Capuchin Fathers. On arrival at the hall Father Augustine of the Order welcomed us. When we entered, several of our members were present, including Mrs. Fahy, Mrs. Conlan, Mrs. McGuinness, all of whose husbands were operating in the area, Miss Christina Hayes, Mrs. Parker, Kathleen Kenny, and Eileen Walsh, afterwards Mrs. Murphy, a member of the Inghini Branch. Later in the day Margaret Martin, Lily Murnane, Dora Harford and Kathleen Martin arrived. The latter were members of Columbcille Branch and were introduced to us by Captain Dinny O'Callaghan who was operating in the area and was responsible for the taking over and destruction of Linenhall barracks. Each member of Cumann na mBan was supplied with a white armlet and consequently became a member of the hospital staff. We realised at long last we were officially attached to a First Aid unit. We were allotted our duties by the senior members of our Branch. The Volunteers supplied the hospital with plenty of food including ham, tomatoes, tea and sugar and, I think, milk. I there sampled tomatoes and sugarless tea for the first time in my life. We helped in the kitchen for the first few days but members

qualified in First Aid were then transferred to the hall which was now fitted up with improvised stretcher beds which had been commandeered. These were ranged in such a way as to avoid stray bullets that might penetrate through the windows.

For the first few days of the fighting, wounds treated were of a minor nature but as time went on the number of more seriously wounded patients increased and we carried them on stretchers into the hall and dressed their wounds. This work and that of carrying food to the men at the numerous barricades in Church Street, continued up to Friday. One such barricade erected beside the church had a cab in the centre and, when passing up to the Four Courts, it was necessary to go through the doors. Fierce fighting took place in this area - Upper Church Street, North Brunswick Street, North King Street and Red Cow Lane which, incidentally, connected North King Street with Richmond Hospital. During the course of this heavy fighting Father Augustine accompanied us on our rounds. On Thursday morning we visited the members of Cumann na mBan at the Four Courts, the two O'Sullivans, Dolly and Mollie, Flossie Meade, Pauline Morkan and Mrs. Morkan, Mrs. McGuinness, (the two latter had been back and forward to our hall) Nellie Ennis, Maire Carron, Brigid Lyons, Rose McGuinness, Maggie Derham who left St. Joseph's on Tuesday morning with my sister and proceeded to the G.P.O. where she too volunteered for the Four Courts where her brother was engaged. There was another girl, Carrie Mitchell, who afterwards married in Wicklow. We also saw Captain Frank Fahy, Lieutenant Joe McGuinness, Captain Eamon Morkan, Con O'Donovan and several other members of the Volunteers. Commandant Daly had been in and out of the hall several times during the week and spoke very

highly of the men of the 1st Battalion. I remember taking off his boots and socks on Wednesday, bathing his feet and giving him fresh socks with plenty of boric powder. He said he felt very comfortable after it.

We also extended our visit to the corner of Church Street, known as Hand's Corner, where we had a word with Peadar Clancy at a barricade, and also with other members of the Volunteers. This was the last we saw of these men until their return from imprisonment or deportation in England.

The officers around Church Street area included Piaras Béaslai, Liam Archer, Diarmuid O'Hegarty, Fionán Lynch, Micheál Ó Loinsigh, Dinny O'Callaghan, Tom Sheeran, Jack and Frank Shouldice, Micheál Ó Foghludha and Paddy McNestry. The last mentioned got a sentence of penal servitude after the Rising. He was an outstanding character. After his return from deportation he could get no job and had to go to Cork to Egan's, the silversmith, where he was employed till his death in 1920. He is buried in the Republican plot there. There were many others but I am able to name these as I knew them in the Keating Branch of the Gaelic League.

Commandant Daly visited us some time each day and he spoke very highly of the Volunteers and their comrades in arms and of the wonderful assistance given by our organisation.

As the week came to a close the fighting became more intensive and it became very difficult to get out to collect the wounded. Some were carried in to our hall by their comrades and some - the more seriously wounded - were carried to the Richmond Hospital close by. As far

as I am aware there was no qualified Doctor with us. Father Augustine was still with us, also Brother Pacificus; patients, nurses and staff alike - all went to confession and received Holy Communion on Saturday morning. Rosary after rosary was recited during the last twenty-four hours as the British military were closing in on the area. The firing was intense on Saturday. The noise of rifle firing was deafening. Soon we learned that the military were closing in on the outskirts of our area and that our dear comrades were vacating their outposts and retreating to their headquarters in the Four Courts. The noise was still deafening. Father Augustine was still on his knees; he consoled the wounded and staff alike and prayed for the success of the men in action.

#### Preparations for the Surrender:

Towards nightfall there came a lull and the military passed along the street towards the Four Courts where by this time all Volunteers, who had manned the outposts and barricades, had taken refuge. It was then decided that all the patients whose wounds were of a serious nature should be removed to the Richmond Hospital before any raiding or investigation took place. We were under the stretchers once more and managed to get the hall cleared in a short period. Some of the slightly wounded managed to escape to safe houses. I think somebody - probably Micheál Ó Foghludha - had previously gone to the Hospital to make these arrangements.

The Doctors were very sympathetic. Sir Thomas Myles was in charge. When we had brought in the last of the stretcherpatients, he put his hand on my shoulder and I thought he was going to have me arrested. But he just asked whether we had got any sleep during the week. I said no and

he patted my shoulder, saying we girls had done trojan work with the wounded. I cannot remember the names of all the wounded but a few with whom I had later contact remain in my mind, Liam Archer who had his toe accidentally shot off, Joe Beggs who had to remain a year in hospital and is still lame, Liam Clarke who had several operations afterwards in the Richmond Hospital, Manus McMenamín who had a bullet wound in the arm, Harry Shiels whose arm had at a later stage to be amputated and a boy whose name I can't remember, who died of his wounds.

Strange to relate none of our patients were arrested although the hospital was raided for Suspects and those wounded who escaped also evaded arrest.

#### The last night in Church Street.

When we returned to the Father Mathew Hall it was now deserted. All our staff and friends had left the building except Father Augustine and Brother Pacificus. Now we were faced with the problem, "Where to go or what do do?" There were only four of us left - the Elliott sisters, Kathleen Kemy and myself. The ever kind and good Father Augustine was most sympathetic and said we could not be turned out at that hour - it must have been now 11 o'clock. He explained their reasons for not allowing us to enter the monastery and suggested we rest in the church in a small room at the back of the high altar. Brother Pacificus fitted up the place with some bedding equipment which he brought in from the vacated hospital. He also heated the room with an electric fire. We gladly accepted this dear friend's hospitality and could never forget his kindness also that of Brother Pacificus. He told us to leave in the morning when the Angelus rang and before the church doors should be opened, to attend the early Mass and then mingle with the congregation when leaving so that we could quietly get away. As far as I

can remember we did not sleep, as the noise outside was still deafening. There was intermittent firing and we had fears as to what was happening or about to happen to our comrades.

Brother Pacificus knocked at the door of our cell before the appointed time and left us a tray with tea and bread and butter. This came as a great surprise and was very welcome as we had not tasted food for a long time. We eventually took up our positions in the church and were surprised to see some of our Volunteer friends also in attendance. They probably had been given shelter too.

#### The return through the ruined city.

We carried out Father Augustine's instructions and by degrees mingled with the congregation. When we came out of the church there were crowds outside, people who had come in search of their dear ones or to make inquiries about them. This was a great help to us in moving off. We wended our way for home back through the narrow streets, up Cuckoo Lane. Every Street corner was now lined with armed British Tommies and after zigzagging from one street to another in order to avoid the soldiers we reached North Frederick Street in the evening, having passed another day without food - except the snack we got in the morning from Brother Pacificus, and hoping we would not be recognised until, at least, we had got a clean-up.

Here we met two members of the Keating Branch who escorted us to the friendly restaurant of the Misses Molloy where we were treated to tea. They were more than kind and sympathetic. We then wended our way to Fleming's hotel in Gardiner's Place or Row where we met Mrs. McGuinness and Miss McMahon, our Secretary. We were welcomed back and told our experiences during the week and also heard the stories of other members of Cumann na mBan.

Here we had a wash and a substantial meal. There was much talk about the surrender but nobody seemed to know anything definite about what was taking place. We heard expressions such as, "They are sure to execute our dear leaders or perhaps deport them for life." These remarks had a very depressing effect on us and we were wondering were their efforts to strike a blow for the Republic all in vain.

Martial law had now been proclaimed and military orders were issued that streets should be cleared at a certain hour - I think it was 10 o'clock. Here our little party broke up. We left the hotel, each one returning to his or her respective home after an historic week. When I arrived at Mrs. Cleary's I was received with open arms. I met my sister, Áine, whose whereabouts during the week I knew not.

I now realised that the city was in flames and rumour had it that "millions" of men and women had been herded in the Rotunda gardens. Only too soon this rumour was confirmed. The Volunteers and Cumann na mBan attached to the Four Courts garrison had been marched to the Rotunda gardens where they joined the garrison from the G.P.O. Then they had all been marched to Richmond Barracks.

We were expecting raiders to call every minute - but luckily we escaped arrest and were spared to help our less fortunate comrades.

People living in this district exchanged views and spoke to one another for the first time. They even went so far as to share their neighbours' supplies of food, as ordinary sources of supply had been cut off for the week.



After the Rising, assisting the families of the  
Volunteers and resumption of work of Cumann na mBan.

Early in the week after Easter Week I went round with one of our members, Christina Hayes, to the different barracks trying to locate Volunteers, of whom no news had reached their relatives. We were footsore and weary but got no results.

Next came news of men killed in action, of soldiers shooting down our innocent people in their homes as occurred in our area in North King Street, execution of the leaders, deportations, raids, arrests and all the mock trials, etc. We seemed helpless at this stage, but only a short space of time had elapsed when we were at work again, helping the dependants of the Volunteers.

There was a fund opened called the National ~~IRA~~ Aid Fund for the purpose of relieving distress among the dependants of persons killed in action, executed, sentenced or deported. There were offices opened at Exchequer Street where a large committee of voluntary helpers assembled and issued an appeal to the whole country, which met with great response. Many of our members helped on that committee. We went around, each in her own area, investigating the cases of distress. We met with great difficulties as through fear the relatives were in many cases at this time unwilling to be identified with those who took part in the Rising, as the military and police were still very busy making raids and arrests.

Here we set to work again with our boxes at the church doors and street corners collecting money to swell the contributions - this time for the National Aid.

It soon became apparent that a change had taken place, as people who had refused to subscribe before now gave generously and sympathetically. This gave us great courage and resulted in filling several boxes on Sundays instead of merely one.

The National Committee included many members of Cumann na mBan. The city was divided into areas so as to make it easier to distribute the helpers. This work continued week in, week out. We visited the homes of the imprisoned or dead Volunteers, bringing a regular contribution to each. Regular Branch meetings were suspended, as the National Aid work took up all our free time. Usually on Sunday we attended Mass for the men who had fallen in the fight or died of wounds. These Masses were celebrated in the Capuchin Church, Church Street, the Franciscan Church, Merchant's Quay, the Passionists' Church, Mount Argus. One such Mass was a month's mind in Church Street for the repose of the soul of Volunteer Burke, killed in action. Incidentally, this was my first visit to Church Street since the memorable week of the Rising. Here we met for the first time many of our Volunteer friends who had also been in action in the area. We acquired on this occasion a few recruits for Cumann na mBan - one outstanding member, Miss Kathleen Boland, whose three brothers, Harry, Gerald and Ned had taken part in the fight.

Shortly after this we again resumed our weekly meetings on Friday night at 25 Parnell Square. Now many members of the Executive were widows and the majority of the married members' husbands were either condemned to death or given long terms of imprisonment. Great sympathy was extended to those members whose dead husbands had been executed or imprisoned. A new committee of the Central Branch was now elected with Miss McMahon still Secretary. Mimi Plunkett,

daughter of Count Plunkett, was elected Captain.

We still continued to organise functions and helped the Ladies' Committee to swell the National Aid funds. The Volunteers were now slowly returning from the English gaols and were going back to their respective Companies.

Assisting the 2nd Battalion.

At this time the 2nd Battalion, Dublin Brigade, had only one Company of Cumann na mBan attached and Leslie Price and myself organised a branch in the Drumcondra area for the purpose of helping out the different Companies of that battalion. We secured accommodation on the North Circular Road convenient to the Dorset Street end. I think the premises were occupied by a Sinn Fein club. We got in a lot of young girl members and fostered the branch for some time. Leslie remained Secretary and I was Treasurer. We continued, of course, to work in the Central Branch. We taught drill, First Aid and the usual subjects and after some time appointed a Secretary, Captain and Treasurer from the ranks. We watched the growth of this unit which developed into a very active branch in the years that followed and during the Black and Tan period.

District allotted by National Aid Committee.

As regards my work for the National Aid Committee, my district was that from the Quay, Beresford Place, Amiens Street and across the North Circular Road up to Summerhill and back down O'Connell Street, embracing all the streets included in that area. Many of the dependants' husbands were members of the Citizen Army and lived mostly around Gloucester Street, now Seán McDermott Street, Gloucester Diamond, Cumberland Street, Foley Street. Naturally these streets also housed a good many families of soldiers of the

British Army - separation allowance ladies, as they were called, and these were very rowdy especially on 'allowance' night. One night when I arrived in Cumberland Street with my contributions for the prisoner's dependant, I found a row in progress, so I thought it prudent to withdraw and await a more favourable moment. Entering a small shop in Gloucester Street - the only one within reasonable distance of the scene of the battle - I conversed with the man behind the counter. He told me he knew my 'dependant' as she purchased her goods there. As I knew her allowance for rent I deducted it from the sum I had for her and left the balance with him to pay for any supplies she might require and I arranged with him to hand over the rent to her in his shop on a certain day. When I had finished my business talk with him he asked me did I know Dolly O'Sullivan and I said yes. He said he was a friend of the O'Sullivan family and if I was a friend of theirs I was also a friend of his. He revealed that he was himself wounded in action in Easter Week, had escaped arrest and was given shelter by the owner of the shop. He told me his name was Paddy Murray of the 1st Battalion. He asked me to contact his friends to say he was all right.

One of the important activities of Cumann na mBan during this period was sending parcels to the prisoners. Coming towards Christmas, 1916, we helped to fill hampers at Exchequer Street. These hampers were never sent to England as the prisoners were released for Christmas and got the good things intended for them at home.

#### The Roscommon Election and after.

Our first big political activity was helping at the Roscommon election. My sister and myself volunteered at the office in Westmoreland Street, as did many other Cumann na mBan girls. We despatched literature, addressed envelopes,

typed circulars, collected money for the fund and gave general assistance.

A short time after Count Plunkett's election, preparations were inaugurated for a big convention to be held in the Mansion House. I helped Mimi Plunkett to send out the literature for it by post; and on the day of the convention I distributed leaflets outside the Mansion House but I was not present at the meeting.

At this time the work in our Branch was in full swing. We still carried on in 25 Parnell Square. Unlike other Branches we were controlled by a committee as well as by the officers. The committee consisted of some of the founder members of Cumann na mBan. Previous to this Miss McMahon had resigned on marriage and Mimi Plunkett also resigned to help her father. She worked night and day during the election.

At our annual Branch meeting in 1917, Mrs. Clarke was elected President and I Vice-President, which office I retained to the end. Mrs. Clarke did not attend very regularly owing to imprisonment and ill-health. Miss Leslie Price was elected Captain, Miss Fiona Plunkett Adjutant. I can't remember who was Treasurer in succession to Mrs. Kitty O'Doherty whose activities were now confined to the National Aid Society. I was elected First Lieutenant as well as Vice-President. These combined duties took up a lot of time. Both Leslie Price and Fiona Plunkett were untiring workers.

#### Dr. O'Dwyer's Letter.

One morning in the beginning of May, 1917, Bob Langford, a Volunteer, who was employed in the Freeman's Journal and who was staying in our digs, came to me at breakfast time with an

important document which he had brought from the newspaper office where he had worked through the night. He asked me to bring it direct to Mick Collins at the National Aid Office in Exchequer Street. I did not know at the time what the document was, but Bob recently informed me, in answer to my inquiry, that it was a letter that Dr. O'Dwyer, Bishop of Limerick, had sent to the Freeman's Journal for publication but that paper refrained from publishing it. Mick Collins had it copied in pamphlet form and distributed by Cumann na mBan at the church doors on the following Sunday.

On my visit to Mick Collins on this occasion he said he hoped I did not mind my address being used as a cover for letters from the country. These had been coming for a considerable time. The outside envelope of each letter, which was addressed to me, contained another envelope marked "M.C.", "G.O'S" or "D.O.H." These initials stood for Mick Collins, Gearoid O'Sullivan and Diarmuid O'Hegarty. I had been delivering these letters to Brennan and Walsh's in Talbot Street, the New Ireland Office in Bachelor's Walk or Maurice Collins's in Parnell Street. I had got no instructions about these and until this visit to Michael Collins had often wondered how the country correspondents happened to use my address. At a later stage these country letters were addressed on the inside envelope, "Chief of Staff", "Adjutant General", "D.I.", "D.O.", etc. I continued to deliver them as before or I would hand them to Joe O'Reilly if I happened to come in contact with him.

#### The Longford Election.

The next big historical event was the South Longford election. I had a particular interest in this election, as the candidate, Joe McGuinness, was a personal friend and,

incidentally, this was my home constituency. In the early stages of the campaign I arranged a week's leave and set off for the country without delay. I made a personal canvas of my native parish and the surroundings and the fact that I knew the candidate was almost sufficient to convince the people to go to the polls. The candidate was in prison and the slogan, "Put him in to get him out" was ringing in everybody's ears. I was obliged to return at the end of the week. I continued to work both in McGuinness's house and at the election office and feverishly awaited the result.

On the eve of the poll another letter from Dr. O'Dwyer, Bishop of Limerick, having first appeared in the Press, was circulated in pamphlet form and had a wonderful effect in bringing to the polling-booths, people who up to this were not sufficiently interested to bother voting. There was a curate, Father Terry Meehan, who did wonderful work for McGuinness in his own parish and defrayed the expenses of transporting the voters to and from the polling-booths. On the Saturday previous to the election, in his enthusiasm, he overlooked the time for hearing Confessions in his parish and he was, as a result, shortly transferred to a parish in the back of beyond.

Our joy was great when we heard of the victory and I think we walked the streets all night in our excitement.

#### Release of the Convicted Prisoners.

We continued to collect money for the needs of the Volunteers, for the dependants as well as for the election funds. After the success in South Longford, rumour had it that the prisoners were about to be released and in a short time, to our joy, the convicted prisoners were set free. We spent our mornings for a whole week going down to the North Wall awaiting the boats. We staged concerts, singing

rebel songs and waving flags while we waited. The morning the bulk of the prisoners arrived, to our disappointment they landed at Kingstown instead of North Wall, as we expected. Many had gone home or to their work, but there was, nevertheless, a considerable crowd at Westland Row to welcome them. At lunch-time I went over to Exchequer Street, the Headquarters of the National Aid Fund, where I met some of the men after their return from the Mansion House, where they had assembled to be photographed with the Lord Mayor. In the Exchequer Street office the travelling expenses and comforts for those who had to make a journey were given to them.

#### Funeral of Tom Ashe.

When Tom Ashe died in the Mater Hospital on the 25th September, 1917, as the result of his hunger-strike in Mountjoy, the Cumann na mBan took part in the public funeral. I helped to mobilise our Branch. We met on the Sunday morning - I think it was at 12 o'clock - in Exchequer Street and we were there a considerable time before we moved off to join the procession in Dame Street en route for Glasnevin. Our section of the parade did not enter the cemetery but we marched along Mount Prospect Road where we were dismissed at 6 p.m.

A number of Volunteers came up from Cork for the funeral and were staying at St. Joseph's Street. As well as being Volunteers they were members of Sinn Fein clubs which were being reorganised. These included Sean Ó Tuama who gave me a letter addressed to Eamon de Valera and marked "Personal", which he asked me to deliver into Dev's own hands. Weary as I was after marching in the funeral procession, I started out by train for Greystones on Monday evening after business.



When I got to Greystones I did not know the exact address as it was not on the letter. I knew the name of the road and took a cab to one end of it. I got out and dismissed the cab and examined the names on all the houses, until at last I found a name in Irish. I went in, asked for Mr. De Valera, and his wife, whom I knew, came to me and said she would guarantee to deliver the letter to him.

It also happened that about October, 1917, I, as well as several other members of the Central Branch of Cumann na mBan, went to the funeral of a Volunteer who died at Lispopple, Swords. We walked there and back wearing our uniforms.

The Annual Convention of Cumann na mBan was held in October. The previous night we had a reception for the delegates. I did not attend the Convention, not being appointed a delegate.

I do not remember being present at the Sinn Fein Convention in October; I was not a member of any Sinn Fein club.

Harry Boland's Shop in Middle Abbey Street.

About October, 1917, Harry Boland opened a tailoring establishment in Middle Abbey Street. It was not long until this address was used for leaving and collecting despatches. I remember calling there on several occasions at lunch-hour. His sister, Kathleen, (now Mrs. O'Donovan) worked in the shop. She was a member of our Cumann na mBan Branch and also a member of the Keating Branch of the Gaelic League. She was utilised by everybody as a liaison between country callers and headquarters of the Volunteers and Cumann na mBan. The shop was very convenient to all of us and was used for odd meals when time and pressure of despatch work prevented us from going to our usual places for meals.

Assistance for Prisoners' Dependants in 1918.

We continued our work for prisoners' dependants during 1918 whenever fresh arrests took place and even in the case of released prisoners their families had to be looked after until the breadwinners had obtained lucrative employment.

Cumann na mBan's part in opposing Conscription.

The next important event that stands out in my memory was the threat of conscription in the spring of 1918. Cumann na mBan took a very active part in the fight against conscription. The Mansion House Conference, in consultation with the Hierarchy, having decided to launch a nation-wide collection to carry on the fight, we co-operated with the organising committee in collecting funds. My stand was at Phibsboro' Church with a collection box during all the Masses on Sunday. I think we were also on the streets on Saturday. The full boxes from our area were then brought to Mrs. Wyse-Power's shop in Henry Street where the money was counted and made up ready to be handed over to the Treasurers.

When the announcement to extend the Bill to Ireland was made in the British House of Commons, the Volunteers decided immediately to resist and preparations were made to take to the hills. The members of our Branch met night after night at Count Plunkett's, assembling emergency rations which consisted mostly of biscuits, cheese and meat preparations.

We were kept busy in this way until the threat of conscription had passed. The seriousness of the situation did not prevent us having an odd joke among ourselves. For instance when a ration turned out bulky we always said it was for a particularly fat Volunteer. At this time also we prepared a store of first field-dressings and replenished our first-aid outfits, and provided a quantity of triangular bandages.

The 2nd Battalion asks for Assistance.

When the Conscription scare was over the 2nd Battalion asked us to come to their aid to make a little money for them. It was Jack Cotter - afterwards Major in the Free State army - that came to me with his tale of woe and asked us to run some céillís for them. They took over the hall at 25 Parnell Square for a series of Saturday night céillís which were a great success and produced a lot of money for the purchase of arms. The Cumann na mBan did all the catering. The Battalion was so grateful to us for our co-operation that they gave us an outing to the Scalp. We also gave them field-dressings and helped them generally. This was outside the normal scope of the activities of our Branch, as we were officially attached to the 1st Battalion.

National Organisations proclaimed by the Government.

On the evening of 3rd July, 1918, when all the national organisations, including our own, were proclaimed illegal, we were assembled at the Keating Branch of the Gaelic League in 46 Parnell Square. There was great excitement as the assembly consisted of people from all the different organisations. Different aspects of the position were discussed, certain lines of action were proposed, but no concrete decisions were arrived at, as, of course, the member of each organisation had to follow whatever line of action their body would take. Some humorous proposals were put forward such as that the Cumann na mBan should parade with hurleys. At that time we were not daunted by the threats of the enemy.

Shortly after this there was a scare that Parnell Square was surrounded and an important meeting of the Volunteers was in progress in No. 46. The meeting broke up and those present decided to leave. Pearas Beaslai, Liam Archer,

Frank Thornton, Greg Murphy, Liam Tobin and, I think, Tom Cullen were there. We were in the hall discussing the situation when the warning despatch was brought to the meeting, I think by Joe O'Reilly. Just at that moment Hugh Thornton entered the premises and he asked me did I know whether Frank was on the premises and at the same time they all emerged from the meeting which was in progress in the front room inside the door. They all scattered at once and Liam Archer handed me the minute book and other documents and also a pocket book which, he said, was a matter of life and death. I left then, taking the documents home with me. The next night I went down to 46 with my precious bundle and awaited the arrival of Liam. After some time a strange man arrived and asked for me. I interviewed him in the hall. He spoke with a Rathmines accent. He said Liam Archer sent him to me for the documents and mentioned that the meeting was in progress at Blackhall Street. I said I had no documents and if Liam Archer wanted anything from me he had plenty of Volunteers of my acquaintance to send to me. He went away and Paddy Howard, whom I knew, came in a short time and I handed him the books, etc. By a curious coincidence I afterwards heard that the first messenger sent was subsequently suspended from his battalion for some irregularities. I had, in the meantime, found out who he was.

Cumann na mBan volunteer to nurse 'flu victims:

Incident at No. 6 Harcourt Street.

In November, 1918 the 'flu epidemic or "Black 'Flu", as it was called, was rife in the city and country alike. Doctors and nurses were taxed to capacity and the death rate was very high. It was not unusual for whole families to be stricken down together. Cumann na mBan volunteered to nurse patients during this awful calamity. At least the members who were qualified in home-nursing were asked to help and

responded magnificently to the call. There were two depots opened, one at No. 25 Parnell Square where we met on the north side of the city and one at No. 6 Harcourt Street. There was a notice put in the press announcing and setting out the hours at which members would be available. This was necessary as most of our members were at business during the day. As I was qualified in home-nursing, I was on duty on the north side of the city during the week-end, i.e. Saturday afternoons and Sundays. We visited the patients at their homes in response to messages received at the depots. I reported for duty at No. 6 Harcourt Street on the evening of 11th November. When I arrived Máirín McGavock was there on the same mission. This happened to be Armistice night and as we awaited the call we suddenly realised that a hostile mob were attacking the building.

There were many Volunteers in the building at the time including Harry Boland and Simon Donnelly who took over command. They immediately started to barricade the front door and windows with chairs and other furniture. Soon we found ourselves hauling chairs, etc., and stacking them up against the windows and helping the Volunteers generally. Shots rang out, mingled with vile language and shouts of "God save the King!" A state of terror reigned over the whole neighbourhood until a late hour when the crowds dispersed.

Máirín McGavock lived on the south side of the city and had not the same problem as I was faced with, of getting across to the north side. It was coming up to midnight and Harry Boland, equipped with knuckle-dusters, escorted me out through the rear of the building, beating his way through the hostile mob, through alleys and laneways until we eventually reached a point somewhere near Kelly's Corner in South Circular Road where I fortunately got a No. 17 tram which took

<sup>me</sup>  
 /over to Dorset Street corner, North Circular Road. The excitement spread all over the city on this particular night as the Armistice mob were celebrating their so-called victory.

#### The General Election.

Our next big victory was the General Election in 1918. We still helped at the collection and distribution of the moneys of the National Aid Fund. Our organisation fell in with the plans of the Sinn Fein Executive and soon we were out canvassing in our own areas, collecting money, distributing literature, attending meetings and swelling the audiences at the election speeches. We suspended branch operations during this critical period as our members wanted to throw all their weight into election work. It was customary for two people to go together canvassing and arrangements were made to facilitate members who did not wish for private, business or other reasons, to canvas or collect in their own districts. I might mention that we were not so popular and we went on our mission prepared for any rebuffs or disappointments that might arise. Before we left the Cumann na mBan headquarters we were coached on suitable replies to be given to questions that were likely to arise.

When our canvassing and collecting were finished we assembled at 44 Parnell Square to prepare meals for the election workers. The polling took place on the 14th December and we were busy that day preparing such meals. Leslie Price was in charge of that station. We assembled at our stations at 7.30 on Saturday morning. I remember going to my place of business for 9 o'clock and resuming activities again at 1. We worked there until a late hour as there was a continual stream of people coming in for meals. When the meals were finished we went to the polling booths looking for

more work and anxious for news of the day's proceedings, I regret to say that a certain number of dead people were shown to have voted.

The following day - Sunday - we attended the funeral of Richard Coleman who had died in Usk Prison. The remains were removed from Westland Row for Glasnevin. We assembled at St. Stephen's Green before noon and the day turned out very wet and as we were standing before getting our allotted position in the procession we were drenched to the skin before we reached Glasnevin. It was dark night when we dispersed.

The results of the elections were eagerly awaited and only came in dribs and drabs. My recollection is that our waiting was prolonged over the Christmas period. I was once more down in Longford rejoicing over Joe McGuinness's re-election as well as the success of many other friends and colleagues.

Established new Branches of Cumann na mBan  
and became Captain of Central Branch and  
Vice-Commandant.

In the winter of 1918-1919 there was a branch of Cumann na mBan organised in Rathfarnham in a disused mill and I was sent by the Executive to give instruction in First Aid and Bandaging. When the course was finished I went to Balbriggan on the same mission. About this time Leslie Price resigned as Captain of the Branch, as she was going to the South as organiser. I was elected Captain by the members to take her place and was also elected Vice-Commandant of the Dublin Area at the next meeting of the District Council, Lou Kennedy being Commandant. The District Council consisted of the officers, namely Captains and Adjutants of the seven city branches, equivalent to the Dublin Brigade of the Volunteers. Mrs. Parker, a member of our branch, took over control of the

lectures in Balbriggan branch, as I was unable to continue.

We met on Sunday mornings - as far as I remember at 12.50 - at No. 25 Parnell Square where, after general routine work, we received occasional instruction in the use of firearms and military drill - I think it was Paddy Houlihan gave it. During the summer months we went on several outings or route marches as they were called. On a few occasions the whole district turned out together. We also went on the annual pilgrimage to the grave of Wolfe Tone where all the national organisations were represented. Here wreaths were laid on the grave and orations delivered by prominent men.

Work continued for the prisoners and the collections for arms. As our organisation was one of those banned by the military, the police had us constantly under observation, and we were dodging them just as constantly. We would go in by one door of a Church and get out by a door on the other side. Flag days were banned but we defied the ban. They even went so far as to ban the Vincent de Paul flag-day. Mr. Cleary, who was interested in this charity, asked me to get a squad of Cumann na mBan to come to their aid on the north side, which appeal was responded to willingly and successfully. They were very grateful to us as they had incurred a good deal of expense in advertising, purchase of boxes, etc.

#### Association with Tomás MacCurtáin.

At No. 15 St. Joseph Street there were always visitors from Cork, many of them Volunteers, members of Sinn Fein or Cumann na mBan. These included Tomás MacCurtáin, the then Lord Mayor. His visit on this occasion was in connection with a little factory that he proposed to start in Cork for the manufacture of children's wear. He mentioned to me that he was anxious about his family and wished to leave



them some means of livelihood in case anything happened to himself, as he was so much watched by the police. He had the factory actually going when he was murdered by the British in March, 1920. At the time I mention he was very much on the 'run'. He contracted 'flu during his stay and was nursed in the house by Mrs. Cleary. He was pursued even in Dublin by Cork detectives and decided to return home.

Arrangements were made for him to travel on a Sunday. Mr. Cleary and I escorted him on part of the journey, first by tram to Inchicore tram terminus, thence on foot to Clondalkin where we joined the train. We travelled as far as Lucan with him and got out there, returning to Dublin by the Lucan tram. As far as I remember MacCurtáin was to get out at Mallow where he was to contact someone who had arrangements made for the remainder of the journey. We were relieved to hear that he arrived safely in Cork.

Inauguration of Dáil Éireann. Increasing activity of Detectives.

After the General Election the first meeting of Sinn Fein representatives was held in the Mansion House on the 7th January and the first meeting of Dáil Éireann on the 21st January at the same venue. One of my proud possessions is a copy of a photograph taken on that momentous occasion of the members in session. The meeting was presided over by Count Plunkett, the member for Roscommon.

Raids and arrests were now taking place. There was an Extraordinary Ard-Fheis of Sinn Fein held on the 8th and 9th April in the Mansion House and a Dáil Éireann meeting on the 10th and 11th.

The Dublin detectives were very active about this time and some of them were tied up and warned in Dublin. There was a raid for arms by the Volunteers in Collinstown Aerodrome. Paddy <sup>H</sup>Loohan was concerned in it.

#### Change of Address.

Mrs. Cleary, who had a young and increasing family, now found it difficult to cope with boarders and my sister and myself were obliged to leave 15, St. Joseph's Street and went to reside at 118, North Strand Road. Our new landlady was a Miss Mary Quinn who kept house for her brother, Joseph, a professor at Castleknock College. The Quinns were old residents in the area and were very popular. Miss Quinn insisted on us calling her by her Christian name. I immediately notified Mick Collins of this change of address, not that any correspondence coming to No. 15 would not be safe, as arrangements were made for Joe O'Reilly, "Cripes", to call there. The "Republican Outfitters", Talbot Street, was now more convenient for delivering correspondence. Here I met Peadar Clancy and was one of the few who had the privilege of calling on him after business hours with messages.

#### Cottage acquired in Howth for Cumann na mBan.

At the end of May, 1919, when the weather got very hot and stuffy, my 1st Lieutenant, Máire Deegan, Fiona Plunkett, my Adjutant, my sister, Áine, Quartermaster, and myself discussed one evening after business the possibility of taking a cottage in Howth, or, failing this, hiring a camp for a while. Máire and myself went out to Howth and made a survey of the district. We were walking along Kilrock on our way to Miss Carmody's for a cup of tea - I should mention that Miss Carmody's Tearooms were well known to the Gaels and we had been there on several occasions before - when we came across a farmer named O'Brien who was engaged

at milking cows in a field not far off. We approached him and made inquiries about a cottage. He replied that he had a cottage to let "just round the corner" which might be suitable. When he finished his work he proceeded to the cottage and showed us over it. It was very simple but we decided to take it for the month of June, although he said we could have it for the season at a nominal rent. The cottage was a bit small but bright and airy, one large room and kitchen with a fireplace but the garden was very well fenced and secluded and most suitable for the proposed camp. We decided, without consulting any of our members, that we would accept responsibility for this undertaking. When we reported to our Committee - we had a Committee as well as the officers - they were very pleased at our great luck and decided to pay out of our funds for the hire of tents and any other equipment necessary and recover the money from any members utilising the accommodation.

We were in occupation in a few days, going out every evening and returning by train to business every morning. The Committee decided that any members who wished could spend their summer holidays at the camp. Many availed of the opportunity of spending a few weeks at the seaside. Fiona and myself were obliged to attend the District Council on Sunday mornings as usual. We reported on our camping expedition and it was the unanimous decision of the officers present that the cottage should be kept on for the summer months and that all the Branches should avail of it during the holidays. The late Mrs. Brooks (Chrissie Stafford) and Mrs. Barrett (K. Connolly) were the last two of our members to hold possession until September. In that month Máire, Fiona and myself returned to Howth to arrange about getting the tent and equipment back to Dublin. One of our members (Miss Lucy Fleming, Inchicore Section) was responsible for placing

transport at our disposal and we also returned to Miss Doyle the kitchen equipment she so kindly lent us. Luck was on our side, as we met very good friends and were well treated by everyone.

Shooting of Detectives and Spies:

Suppression of Dáil Éireann.

A special squad of the Volunteers was formed in July. In the end of that month also Detective-Sergeant Smith was shot in Drumcondra and shortly after that Dáil Éireann was suppressed. There were more Detectives shot, including Dan Hoey (well-known to Cumann na mBan) and Wharton.

Towards the end of the year an attack was made on Lord Ffrench as he was returning from Boyle, County Roscommon. Martin Savage was shot dead in this attack. Martin was an assistant in a shop on the North Strand, quite convenient to where we were residing. He was a very dear friend of ours and used to be with us going to and coming from the Céilís. His untimely death gave us a great shock. We were advised to show no visible sign of any connection with this affair.

We still continued to collect money and help the Prisoners' Dependants who were becoming more numerous every day and this entailed more work. Our Branch work also continued on the same lines.

Shortly after Christmas there was another Detective Chief - Redmond - shot in Harcourt Street and also a man named Alan Bell was shot at Ballsbridge. The latter was travelling in a tram when he was told "his time was up". About the same time two Secret Service Agents were shot, i.e. Jameson and Molloy and Privy Councillor Brooks was shot at Westland Row.

Every day brought news of shootings and there was a raid on the B. and I. at the North Wall for ammunition which resulted in shootings taking place in the city.

Curfew was introduced in Dublin in February, 1920, which resulted in the streets being cleared from 10 p.m. to 5 a.m. There were various raids being made by the Volunteers, one on the mail van in Dominick Street. The Income Tax Offices were destroyed, also many R.I.C. barracks.

#### Hunger Strike in Mountjoy:

#### Another change of address.

There was a big hunger strike in Mountjoy gaol in the spring and the Labour organisations declared a one day strike in sympathy with the prisoners. Cumann na mBan assembled outside the prison and relays of them stayed there all night and recited the Rosary continuously.

As letters and messages continued to come from various parts of the country and men called from time to time seeking to get in touch with some of the leaders, our landlady began to get curious and puzzled by all this activity. Moreover, she started to talk about it outside the house, so much so that we thought it wise to look for other accommodation. It was not easy to find anything suitable. Peg Flanagan, one of our members, got us into her digs at 54 Blessington Street.

#### Appointment to position in Dail Eireann

#### Working for Minister of Labour:

Some time previous to this Michael Collins sent me a note asking me to meet him at the Keating Branch at a certain time. This interview resulted in my taking up a position in Dáil Éireann. This came as a big surprise to me. I could not refuse the offer although I had just got promotion in my own job and had bright prospects. I mention this

because the firm I worked for - Shirley, Spence & Bedford Ltd., 55 Mary Street - never bothered about the outside activities of their staff, provided they performed their duties satisfactorily.

My first Dáil appointment was in the Finance Department in Mary Street over Hogg & Robertson where the Dáil Bonds were dealt with. This was after Easter 1920. Incidentally, all the members of Cumann na mBan subscribed to these Bonds by small weekly contributions. Countess Markievicz or Madame, as she was affectionately called, had in April, 1919, been nominated Minister for Labour, but she was shortly after arrested and imprisoned in Cork gaol. Some time after her release she set up an office to carry out the functions that she planned and I was assigned to her staff.

One morning Mick Collins gave me a note with an address in Lower Abbey Street where I was to meet the Countess. This address was the official office of Thomas Johnston of the Labour organisation. Madame was our Cumann na mBan President and the only woman member of the Dáil. She had been appointed Minister for Labour in the First Dáil Cabinet. Madame welcomed me in Irish and offered me a cigarette. She talked about her great plans as Minister and said that she had been discussing staff with Mick Collins and that her decision was to confine same, as far as possible, to actual members of organisations who had taken part in the struggle. She asked me would I like to work in her Department and said she had appointed Dick Cotter, who was a member of the 2nd Battalion of the Volunteers and had fought in Jacob's factory in 1916, as her Secretary. She also said that Dick had rented offices at 14 North Frederick Street under the name of J. Kennedy. Madame sent me to this address to meet him. Dick, whom I knew well, gave me a hearty Céad Míle Fáilte. He was the sole occupant of the

premises which were either owned or rented by Harry Clarke, the stained-glass window artist. The rooms were minus furniture or office equipment of any kind. He said our first duties were to put our house in order and suggested he should spend the rest of the day in the auction rooms down the Quays in search of a few tables and chairs and that I should procure curtains for the front windows which could be looked through from the top of the passing trams. Dick said he was anxious to make the premises as business-like as possible and in keeping with the new brass plate he was about to have fixed to the front door, bearing the name of J. Kennedy & Co., Agents.

In the course of a few days it certainly was in keeping with an agent's business. Traveller's samples were procured and headed stationery ordered.

There was a vacant flat at the top of the premises and fears were expressed as to who the new tenant would be. Only a few days had elapsed when furniture arrived and another brass plate appeared on the front door - Miss O'Higgins, Music Teacher. We were wondering who she was and one day when I ran into her on the stairs, I recognised her as a Cumann na mBan member, Annie Higgins, who had taken part in the Rising. (This poor girl had afterwards a tragic fate as she was burned to death in a top flat in 13 or 14 Parnell Square). The recognition was mutual and, when I talked over the coincidence of our occupying the same house, she said she would do all she could to help us. Our relief at having her as a co-tenant instead of a doubtful stranger was great and the fact that she had a number of young pupils calling throughout the day was a further help to us.

Despatches were still pouring in to my lodgings from all over the country, to get in touch with the particular

leaders required, but a new arrangement was made for Joe O'Reilly to call for all messages to my office instead of the usual call offices.

Our branch of Cumann na mBan met as usual and more dependants had to be looked after. We collected comforts for men on 'the run', organised safe houses, First-Aid stations in our area. These duties required great tact and our members carried them out with marked efficiency.

In a week or so we had our new premises in order complete with curtains, brass plate on door and the necessary office furniture. Madame had not visited her Department and we were anxious to give our Minister a warm reception. Dick expressed a wish one morning and immediately there was a terrific knocking - three times - at the door and Dick answered the door himself. It was Madame. She congratulated Dick on the magnificent appearance of the premises and the general atmosphere of the surroundings and said she looked forward to splendid work being done in her Department.

#### Activities of Labour Department.

As far as I can remember our first job was to send out typed circulars to all the County Councils in Ireland pointing out the functions of the Department in relation to labour disputes and suggesting the setting up of Conciliation Boards in important centres. At this time there was a strike on of the employees of Master Hairdressers' and I think it was one of the first, if not actually the first time that employers and employees were brought together to a conference at a Dáil Éireann Labour Court, presided over by a chairman appointed by the Department. In this connection my address, 54 Blessington Street, was given for a reply to the invitation



to both parties concerned. The following evening at about 6.30 when I arrived at my digs there were four or five strange men waiting for me. At a glance I knew they were not detectives. Their spokesman stated they had called in connection with the Hairdressers' strike and handed me the letter which had been sent out from my office and they wished to discuss same with me. I expressed surprise and stated that on this occasion my address was used for correspondence only and suggested that they put their case in writing and promised to take it to the proper quarter the following morning.

The conference took place in due course and an amicable settlement was arrived at.

On the Castle Black List:

Further changes of address:

In or about the time of this incident the Volunteers raided the Post Office Sorting Office at the Rotunda Rink and took possession of the correspondence for Dublin Castle. This raid revealed that "Miss E. Ryan, 54 Blessington Street, Dublin, was on the Castle black list". On my way to the office that morning I was met by a Post Office official from the Rink and given this news. I told Dick Cotter and he advised me not to return to Blessington Street and that address was withdrawn as no longer safe and the Meath Hotel, Parnell Square, substituted, and my name changed to Mrs. Talbot. I passed on this information to Mick Collins. The house next door to 54 was raided and I was obliged to go on 'the run'. This incident was kept very quiet. One day at lunch hour on my way from the National Aid Office I ran into Neans NíBhroin, a member of the Keating Branch of the Gaelic League, and one of the trusted active workers. She said Mick had told her he had to ease off activities at her address and mine as both our names

ranked high on the Castle black list.

Miss Hanratty, who owned the Meath Hotel, 40 Parnell Square, was a member of our branch of Cumann na mBan. I stayed with her for a short time under the name of Mrs. Talbot and we now used this name and address for all correspondence up to the Truce.

Some time in August there was another raid on mails this time in Westland Row which resulted in raids and arrests by British Forces all over the city in search of the stolen mails. 40 Parnell Square was searched from attic to cellar but nothing of importance was discovered. My trunk was there but the raiders accepted Miss Hanratty's statement that it belonged to a resident student who was absent visiting relations in Galway.

#### Work in co-operation with Intelligence

##### Section of G.P.O.

Crossing Abbey Street one morning I ran into the Misses Heffernan on their way to the Post Office where they were employed. <sup>I should have as a matter of fact in 1916, ~~the~~ <sup>found them carrying</sup></sup> ~~the~~ previously mentioned <sup>^</sup> They were members of the Keating Branch and incidentally attached to the I.R.A. Intelligence staff of their office. As they were aware of my circumstances they invited me to stay in their home at Halliday Square off North Circular Road quite convenient to Arbour Hill. The back garden of their house faced King George V. Hospital - now St. Bricin's - and the residents in this area were regarded as loyal citizens and they were not known to be exceptions.

I was greatly indebted to the Misses Heffernan for looking after me in such a sympathetic manner and thus enabling me to carry on my work. These ladies, in addition to their intelligence work for the I.R.A., collected

through kind friends and the Post Office, quite a lot of sovereigns and half-sovereigns which at that time were becoming fairly scarce and were being kept by people as interesting souvenirs. I did this work too for the Dáil Loan gold collection and brought the coins to Daithe Ó Donnchadha, who gave me the equivalent in notes and silver which I handed to the donors.

I wish to add here that I had been closely associated with the Intelligence Section of the Post Office, both of letter and telegraph sections, and was one of the links between both of these sections and G.H.Q. from about 1918. Joe and Eugene Kelly, Martin Ryan and others on the sorting side and Liam Archer, Jack Brénnan, Sean Ó Conaill (later my husband), Eugene Smith and others on the telegraph side. Documents received from this source were transmitted to G.H.Q. by me with as little delay as possible. Most of these messages were in cipher but, of course, the Intelligence members were able to decipher them. The volume of this work increased with the increasing number of enemy forces throughout the country, principally Black & Tans and Auxiliaries. Their communications from their county headquarters to their G.H.Q. in Dublin Castle practically all fell into the hands of our Intelligence Agents who deciphered them and forwarded them to the proper quarters.

#### The working of the Arbitration Boards.

Work at the office of the Department continued as usual and many labour disputes were settled by arbitration under the chairmanship of a person appointed by the Minister. The chairman was selected from a panel of prominent citizens who had agreed to act in this capacity; Mrs. Eamonn Ceannt, Darrell Figgis, Miss Louisa Nolan of Morehampton Road, Mr. P.J. Little, Mr. McAuliffe of Cork.

Some of the firms I recollect that appealed to us to arbitrate in disputes with their employees were George Archer & Co., butchers, Marlboro' Street and Talbot Street; Fergusons', Motor Traders, Baggot Street, Cleeves' Condensed Milk Co., Limerick, Mitchells, rosary-bead manufacturers and others. These disputes were not confined to the city. Mrs. Ceannt travelled as far as Listowel and Castleconnell on this work. The dispute in Listowel was between the road-workers and the Council and in Castleconnell between Anthony Mackey, fishery owner, and his workmen. In Castleconnell Mrs. Ceannt unfortunately broke her ankle and Mr. Mackey wired Dick Cotter (Mr. Kennedy) for a car to bring her home and I was sent down in the taxi to accompany her back. Máire Deegan came with me. We just arrived at her address in Oakley Road as curfew rang out and we had to spend the night there. During our journey back we were interrogated by the military at various places and the car searched. We had placed the files of the cases Mrs. Ceannt had dealt with as pillows to support the patient in the back of the taxi and in that way they escaped detection. These journeys took place in October 1920. There were other such disputes dealt with as they arose.

#### Setting up of Employment Bureau.

Another side of the activity of our Department was the setting up of an employment bureau for Cumann na mBan. Lily O'Brennan, sister of Mrs. Eamonn Ceannt, was placed in charge of this by Madame. She had been up to then Acting-Secretary of the Executive of Cumann na mBan. Lily opened workrooms at Denmark House, Great Denmark Street, the headquarters of the Women Workers' Union, and it was not long until a hive of industry started. Through our Dublin branches we compiled a list of unemployed members and news of the project spread rapidly. All the unemployed members

were absorbed in this new venture. The work of dress-making, embroidery and turning out all sorts of garments went ahead. A senior member of the dressmaking staff was put in charge and our well-wishers brought their materials to be made up. This gave Lily more time to devote to other duties.

After some time when the Co-Operative Clothing Company set up in Middle Abbey Street, all the employees in our workrooms were absorbed into its different sections.

#### Finding a parlour-maid for the Castle.

One morning about June, 1920, when Lily arrived at North Frederick Street she exclaimed, "I have an urgent message from Mick. Could you get a reliable parlour-maid for Mr. Alfred Cope in, Dublin Castle? She must be young and good-looking; the matter is very urgent". This request required deep consideration. We knew from the list of unemployed that we had no member available and were unable to locate anyone among our own crowd to suit the job. Maire Gleeson, one of our members, was an employee of the late Dr. Donnelly of Haddington Road and the parlourmaid there - though not a member - was sympathetic. The Bishop had just died and this girl had obtained employment in one of Maurice Collins' shops. We decided this girl would be more than suitable if only she would accept the offer. I immediately went down to the shop and discussed the matter with her, stressing the importance of the opportunity. She there and then accepted the offer, provided her employer agreed. Before I left the shop Maurice arrived and I told him my mission. He said if Miss McDonagh agreed - this was the girl's name - he'd get in touch with Mick immediately. She was installed in her job in the Castle in a few days. Arrangements were also made regarding her

visitors. I was debarred from even recognising her in the street. Maire Gleeson, who was staying with Mrs. McDonagh's married sister on Drumcondra Road, my sister, Áine, and Áine Malone were selected as suitable visitors. It was arranged - by the Intelligence Department - that her lady visitors would call on her at times which coincided with the exercising of prisoners in the Castle Yard and when they were on identification parades. At this time many Volunteers were captured and brought to unknown destinations and the visitors' job was to endeavour to identify them on parade together with general observation at the Castle.

Mick expressed to Maurice his satisfaction at our success which, incidentally, we all regarded as part of the day's work. Needless to say, Lily O'Brennan was also delighted.

Routine work for Cumann na mBan continues.

Our Branch meetings were carried out as usual and the work of First Aid and general home-nursing practiced. Owing to all the new arrests the work of collection and distribution of money to prisoners' dependants was increasing and involved more time, as all the fresh cases had to be investigated. We had a visit from an officer of the Battalion and general area work had to be discussed and perhaps recommendations made in connection with our First-Aid outpost. The First-Aid stations established by our organisation under the control of selected members in each Battalion area were running smoothly. Parcels and gifts were also collected for prisoners and members subscribed generously towards same. Orders were left in sympathetic shops in our area to send the parcels into Mountjoy and the Bridewell which were in our area. Such shops were

numerous and included O'Hannrahans's, O'Brennan's, Mrs. Scullon, Máire Ni Raghallaigh's.

#### The Deegan and O'Neill Shop.

Two members of our branch of Cumann na mBan, Máire Deegan and Máire O'Neill, opened a grocer's shop at 95 Upper Dorset Street right across the street from our office. The name over the shop was Deegan and O'Neill. This shop was now one of the ports of call and one of the most important dispatch centres on the north side, partly because of its situation and partly because both girls were actively engaged in Cumann na mBan activities. They looked after important dispatches and were always able to get contacts when Volunteers or other persons called at their address, making inquiries as to how they could be put in touch with any of the leaders. Neither that house nor our office was ever raided notwithstanding the fact that several ambushes took place in that street which became known as the Dardanelles of the north side.

#### The Ministry of Fisheries.

Sean Etchingham, who was Minister of Fisheries, was now sharing the office with us. His only staff at this time was his Secretary, Dick King, and I did his typing for him. He, too, had to avoid the office for safety reasons and it was necessary for me to go wherever he was staying. This was mainly Mrs. Wood's house, St. Enda's, Morehampton Road, and another house in Heytesbury Street. The only conference I can recall attending in connection with Fisheries was at Plunkett House. A. E., Aodh de Blacam, Dr. Kennedy-Cahill, the Minister and Mr. King were present. I took shorthand notes of the proceedings and brought the typed copies in due course to the Minister at St. Enda's, Morehampton Road. I should mention that Seán Etchingham was a writer of short stories under the non-de-plume of Patsy Patrick, which he had

published in Ireland's Own, The Irish Packet and the Emerald.

Association with leader of Listowel

Police Mutiny, Jeremiah Mee.

Madame was staying with the Misses O'Byrne - Máire and Eithne - at 61 Highfield Road, Rathgar. They had been assisting her with the good work at this address and eventually Máire was appointed on the staff of the Department and Eithne on the staff of, I think, Foreign Affairs. Activities all over the country were at their height and strange happenings were reported from all parts of the country.

In July 1920 the Irish Bulletin published details of a police revolt in Listowel barracks, County Kerry, where fourteen R.I.C. men challenged the authorities and refused to obey an order to hand over the barracks to the military. One morning our Minister entered the office in her usual dramatic fashion with a strange man. He was tall and robust and wearing a moustache. She introduced him to Dick, Lily and myself as Jerry. This name conveyed nothing to us until she proceeded to explain who he was and his mission to the office. Our new colleague, Jerry, was Jeremiah Mee, the constable who had led the revolt in Listowel R.I.C. barracks. I think she decided to call him Mr. Maguire. Madame explained that she was setting up an employment bureau with Jerry in charge with the object of getting work for R.I.C. men who were dismissed or had resigned for political reasons. He had escaped to Dublin and was a much wanted man. Some of the other members who had participated in the revolt had also escaped to the city and they too were on the 'run'. Efforts were being made by G.H.Q. to assist them in getting out to America to join Harry Boland and



other friends working out there. I was sent to interview two of these men at O'Brien's Hotel in Parnell Street and within a short period when arrangements were complete, was sent again to them with their passages. They reached their destination in due course. Other members linked up with Flying Columns in various parts of the country. Mr. McNamara and Mr. Kelly are the only two names I can remember. They were the two that went to America.

About this time Madame had allotted a room on the premises at No. 14 to Barney Mellowes of the Fianna. She suggested this room could be shared with Jerry who now had the bureau in progress in an effort to help his fellow-patriots. Jerry, too, was staying at O'Brien's Hotel and the next move was to get him safe digs. This job fell to my lot. On account of the importance of this much wanted man it was no easy job as all our safe houses and addresses were used up. The Misses Heffernan with whom I was staying very kindly interested themselves on his behalf and secured accommodation with a Miss Walsh, another sympathetic Post Office official who had a private residence in North Circular Road convenient to the Cattle Market. I escorted him to this address and introduced him as Mr. Walsh by arrangement. He resided there up to the Truce and was lucky enough to avoid raids and arrests which were constantly taking place in the neighbourhood. I also interviewed people who were anxious to meet him, as it was necessary to pave the way before he could or would appear in person. This, too, was a big responsibility but fortunately turned out right.

Jerry mentioned several times how he appreciated the fact that coming direct from the camp of the enemy with a price on his head, he was given employment, boarded and lodged in a safe house without a hitch.

The Labour Ministry inaugurates Belfast Boycott.

All this excitement coincided with the declaration of the Belfast Boycott which activity was allocated to the Labour Department. After a while a new staff was recruited for this work and the names I recall are Mr. Geraghty, Miss J. Kissane, Miss Margaret Brown, the Misses Brady, the Misses Power, Miss Katty Barry. Miss B. Clyne was typist. Their work was kept apart from our work, but failing other accommodation we were housed together for a long period until permanent accommodation was secured for the Boycott Section in Harcourt Street. All the documents connected with it were stored in a 'dump' in Dartry Road and eventually brought to Harcourt Street.

Arrest of successive Labour Ministers.

On the 27th September, 1920, our Minister, Madame Markievicz, was arrested and early in October Joe McGrath was appointed Acting Minister. Like Madame he was debarred from attending the office. He got in touch with our Secretary, Dick Cotter, and invited him to meet him together with Lily O'Brennan and myself in a basement restaurant convenient to Liberty Hall. Dick reported on the work of the Department and the progress made during Madame's term of office. Joe discussed plans for the expansion of the work which was to include insurance etc. Before any of the suggested activities could be put into operation our Acting Minister was also arrested early in December and was interned, I think, in Ballykinlar until the Truce in July, 1921.

Some time later another Acting Minister, Joseph McDonagh, brother of Tom McDonagh who was executed in 1916, was appointed. Like his predecessors he did not attend at the office and sent most of his work through the usual channels. He sent for members of the staff when necessary

and drafted most of his correspondence which was typed at the office. It was he who really organised the programme for the Belfast Boycott.

The Restaurant at No. 40 Parkgate Street.

Peg Flanagan, another of our members - who later married Dinny O'Callaghan, a Volunteer Captain who took part in the 1916 fight in the Church Street area - was employed in the Red Bank Restaurant, D'Olier Street, which was much frequented by the Dublin Brigade, including Liam Tobin, Frank Thornton, Piaras Beaslai and Tom Cullen. When they learned she was a member of Cumann na mBan, they entrusted her with important dispatches and other work such as making appointments for them at that venue. Some time in August, 1920, on the suggestion of Liam Tobin, she took over a restaurant with living accommodation at 40, Parkgate Street. These premises were - and still are - called the West End Restaurant and were now added to our list of safe despatch centres. They were convenient to the R.I.C. Depot, Phoenix Park, the G.H.Q. of the British Army, the Royal (now Collins) Barracks and next door to the Soldiers' Home near Kingsbridge Railway Station and the main road to the South and West of Ireland. Its customers consisted mainly of police and soldiers from the surrounding enemy headquarters. The catering business was highly successful and Peg rented it as a going concern with financial assistance from her mother.

With the influx of the Black & Tans as customers much information was secured and passed on to General Headquarters. I hope to induce Peg to give the Bureau a statement about her activities in this regard. Railway despatches and Post Office information were collected and distributed from here. I kept in daily touch with her as my residence at Halliday Square was convenient to this address.

One night in October, 1920, I called to Hughes' Hotel - now O'Brien's, 38 Lower Gardiner Street, where Máire Gleeson was at this time employed. While in conversation with her Joe O'Reilly arrived with a despatch and said it was for the "boys" who were staying there. The "boys", who were having their tea in a small room off the dining-room, were introduced to me as Dan Breen, and <sup>Danny Lacey</sup> and <sup>P. W. C.</sup> Seán Tracy. They said the despatch stated the hotel was to be raided that night and it was decided they would have to leave immediately as curfew was on and there was not much time to look for alternative accommodation. I took the three men to Mrs. Cleary's house, 15 St. Joseph's Street, where they remained a few nights. This was a short time before the raid on Professor Carolan's house, Fernside, where the Professor was shot and Dan wounded. Hughes' Hotel was raided as forecast in the despatch and thoroughly searched from top to bottom. The raiding Auxiliaries discovered nothing. During the raid Máire Gleeson was kept locked in a small room. After the tragic death on 14th October of Sean Tracy, whose body she went to identify in King George V. Hospital, Máire left her position in Hughes' Hotel and went as assistant to Peg Flanagan in 40 Parkgate Street. This facilitated the Volunteers travelling to and from Tipperary and Máire herself made frequent journeys by rail to Limerick Junction with despatches and ammunition. She was well known to the I.R.A. members of the Railway staff both in Dublin and Tipperary. No. 40 Parkgate Street was now the centre of much activity by the I.R.A. Intelligence. The enemy forces who frequented the place for meals often demanded admission during curfew hours when returning from raids. Much valuable information was heard and overheard from

conversations in the restaurant and they frequently discussed where the next raids were to take place.

Máire Gleeson died about two years ago. A short time before she died I helped her to prepare her case for the Military Service Pension and accompanied her to the Board and her Pension file should disclose some important aspects of the activities associated with this address. I attach to my statement a short appreciation of Máire's work written by my sister who was more familiar with her activities than I was. (Appendix A)

On the morning of Bloody Sunday - 21st November, 1920 - I called at 40 Parkgate Street where a crowd of us had arranged to go en masse to Croke Park to see the football match. Máire Gleeson said that Jimmy - this was one of the Auxies who frequented the house - told her they were going to raid Croke Park. There was a note for me from Mick Collins at No. 40, asking me to go to the Meath Hotel to meet anyone who might possibly call there from the country with despatches. I was naturally disappointed that I could not join the company going to Croke Park but I went to the Meath Hotel and while there heard the shooting. I found there two despatches awaiting delivery to Headquarters. I have an idea that either Joe O'Reilly or Paddy Howard called for them before I left.

Increased activities of Cumann na mBan:  
Work for the wounded.

Cumann na mBan activities were increasing from day to day. More Volunteers were being arrested which resulted in investigating the condition of their dependants. We still kept collecting money for the funds and subscriptions came pouring in from all over the country. The duties of looking after wounded men both from Dublin and from various parts of

the country also increased. Many Volunteers who were wounded in action had to be cared for. Special arrangements were made by G.H.Q. with the already selected houses and with the friendly city hospitals. Mr. E. J. Toomey, a chemist with premises at Great Denmark Street, was in charge of arrangements on the North side of the city for the removal of wounded men from houses or hospitals which were no longer "safe". E. J. was in daily touch with Lily O'Brennan and myself and when an urgent case for removal arose he got in touch with us at No. 14. We agreed to take the patients in our turn but sometimes the exceptional circumstances of the case made it necessary for the two of us to go. We called at the premises of Mr. Toomey who explained the nature of the case and the procedure to be adopted. A friendly cabby round the corner also a taxi owner who had a stand in Hill Street nearby, were made available to take us to where the patient was being cared for, for removal to a new place. Sometimes it might be to the Mater Hospital from a house that had become unsafe or vice versa. This work was most important and the strictest secrecy had to be observed as in all other duties. When the transport men got to know us we just walked round the corner and they opened the door of their vehicle to us.

One such case that I remember was that of an officer of the Offaly Brigade, whom we carried on a stretcher from the Mater to a safe house in St. Anthony's Place at the back of Temple Street Hospital, which was owned by a Mr. and Mrs. Burke. This man was very badly wounded in action and died shortly after.

There was also the case of Mr. Peter Hunt of Sligo who had severe facial injuries as the result of an explosion and

was  
 /one of the most "hunted" men of the time. This removal was effected in a taxi by Máire O'Byrne and Lily O'Brennan between dusk and curfew and involved breaking the journey at Monkstown Church where I waited with a cab to pick him up and bring him to a safe house in the neighbourhood, which was owned by the Misses O'Flanagan. I brought several men on and off to that house before the Truce.

Another removal in a cab brought the patient from a house in Prussia Street area to the house of Dr. Fleury in Richmond Asylum.

We never knew when we would be called upon to do jobs like this and, of course, our meals, if we got them, were very irregular, so it was lucky that Molloy's restaurant was next door to the office and we could always get a meal there even in 'off' hours. The Molloys - Nellie and Nora - also took in despatches and letters for us, as did the staff in their absence. There were many other sympathetic people in the neighbourhood who were ready to lend a hand, if needed.

Such was our life during the autumn and winter of 1920-21 and, in fact, up to the Truce. In December, 1920, my Cumann na mBan activities and my work in the office became so heavy that I found it necessary to ask one of our senior members - Mrs. Parker - to take over my National Aid area as I was no longer able to cope with it. She had, as already stated previously taken over the task of the lectures to the Cumann na mBan Branch in Balbriggan.

Elected to Executive of Cumann na mBan:

It was at the Annual Convention in October, 1920, that I was elected on the Executive of Cumann na mBan.

Arrangements were made to hold this Convention in the Mansion House, but the existing circumstances did not permit this. Raids and arrests were numerous and a close watch kept by the enemy on the Mansion House, so permission was obtained from the Carmelite Fathers to hold it in a large room attached to the Church in Whitefriar Street. Here we assembled as a ladies' sodality and got through the two days' work without a hitch.

At this convention Madame Markievicz, still a prisoner in Mountjoy, was elected President and the following were elected on the Executive:-

Vice Presidents: Madame O'Rahilly, Mrs. Kathleen Clarke, Mrs. Pearse and Mrs. Ceannt.

Other members for Dublin: Mrs. Wyse-Power, Mrs. Desmond Fitzgerald, Mrs. Mulcahy (Min Ryan), Leslie Price, Miss Eileen McGrane, Miss Ellis Ryan (myself), Miss Lily O'Brennan, Miss Phyllis Ryan, Miss Máire O'Reilly, Miss Nancy Wyse-Power, Miss Lou Kennedy. Later in the year six others, Mrs. Gordon (Mrs. Stack), Miss O'Sullivan, Miss McGavock, Miss M. Deegan, Miss B. Aughney, Miss S. Humphreys, were co-opted; three of these to replace members who resigned for various reasons. (Miss McGrane was arrested on 1st January, 1920, Miss Power had to go to Germany and Miss O'Brennan and myself were obliged to devote ourselves entirely to the work of our office).

Munster Members: Miss Kate Breen, Miss Madge Daly and Miss Mary McSwiney.

Connacht Members: Miss Una Sharkey, Dr. Ada English, Miss Brigid O'Mullane.

Leinster Members: Miss Considine, Miss Mathews, Miss McKeon.

Ulster Members: Miss Mary O'Doherty, Miss Roisin O'Beirne, Miss Ward.



The Executive met one afternoon each week and switched round to various addresses, sometimes at the home of Mrs. Seán T. O'Kelly in 19 Ranelagh Road, Madame O'Rahilly's house, 40 Herbert Park and perhaps at the office of the Prisoners' Dependants' in Westmoreland Street.

Cumann na mBan assembled outside Mountjoy on the morning of the execution of Kevin Barry, where we knélt and prayed.

#### Raids, Arrests and Shootings.

Raids and arrests were more frequent and the work for the Dependants increased accordingly and the shooting of Secret Service agents of England in their lodgings in and around Mount Street on the morning of November 21st resulted in the enemy going to Croke Park and shooting down as a reprisal players and spectators who were attending the match.

The next shock was the murder of Dick McKee and Peadar Clancy who had been arrested on the Saturday night, 20th November at a house in Lower Gloucester Street, now Seán McDermott Street. Conor Clune, who had been arrested the same night at Vaughan's Hotel, was killed also. He was a Volunteer from Clare and had been previously employed in the Raheen Rural Industries in Lower Baggot Street. He had returned to Clare when the Baggot Street Depot closed down and was active in the Volunteers there. I knew these three Volunteers very well and had introduced Clune to the Keating Branch some years previously. Peadar Clancy had his office - I think he was Quartermaster - over the Republican outfitters in Talbot Street and I was one of the few privileged people who had access to his office. Incidentally, he was a member of the firm, the Republican Outfitters.

Ten o'clock curfew was introduced about this time and I think the street ambushing started to take place. North Frederick Street was on the main route between Dublin and Mountjoy Prison. When raids were taking place it was the habit of the Government forces to place a cordon round a whole area and sometimes it was necessary to evacuate the office. In one of these raids there was a sentry actually posted outside our office and we were obliged to make a hasty exit through the back. It was necessary to break the window of the lavatory on the first landing to get on to the glass roof of an annexe, slide down into the garden taking with us the precious files of the Department, and make an exit into the lane at the back. We arrived at the back entrance of the public house of the late Paddy Hogan who admitted us - Dick Cotter, Jerry Mee, Lily and myself - and guided us through the various back-ways until we eventually arrived at Temple Street Hospital where Mother Polycarp received us with open arms and allowed us to deposit our files in a chest in the laboratory. We used this refuge on many subsequent occasions. We walked all round the area to divert any official couriers that might be coming towards the office.

Resignation from Executive of Cumann na mBan.

During our period as Dáil employees Lily and I made special efforts to attend Cumann na mBan Executive meetings which, incidentally, were held in the afternoon. About March, 1921, owing to increased office work and general activities connected with the wounded Volunteers, we decided to go week about to the Executive meetings, but eventually we were compelled to send in our resignations. We took this course to enable the Executive to co-opt members who could devote more time to the work. Our wounded men had to have constant attention, as it was frequently necessary to transfer them from one safe house to another.

Another of these raids I remember, Lily and I were going to lunch when we discovered that the area was surrounded. We did not return but proceeded to the shop of Máire Ní Raghallaigh to issue a warning to Piaras Blaslais who had an office over her shop. Máire mentioned that Piaras, who was Director of Publicity, had left for lunch and she was worried about his documents. We discussed what we should do and eventually decided to take the documents with us. We walked round the streets carrying the parcels until the raiders were gone which was not until about 4 o'clock, so that everyone thought we had been arrested. We handed back Piaras Béaslai's files to Máire and returned to our own office. We had many such miraculous escapes due mainly to the fact that the Auxies and Black & Tans did not search women on the streets. Enemy activity was now a daily occurrence and we had to be on the alert.

In this connection I should like to mention that I was coming from an address in Inchicore with a heavy parcel - I think it was revolvers. I got off the tram I was in and got into No. 19 at <sup>Samuel St. etc.</sup> ~~Jervis~~ Street. The No. 19 was held up in Westmoreland Street and the Auxies jumped in and up the stairs, shouting, "Ladies out" and "Men hands up". I was not long obeying the order and thus escaped with my parcel. I walked the rest of the way home and just arrived as curfew was ringing out, exhausted from the weight of the parcel.

#### Publicity work.

Cumann na mBan Publicity section worked in conjunction with I.R.A. Publicity. Piaras Beaslai, Director of War Publicity, G.H.Q., supplied our organisation with I.R.A. bulletins which we posted up in public places and in the vicinity of city churches. Owing to the early night curfew

at 8 p.m., this activity was carried out in the early hours of Sunday morning. We set out on the job immediately curfew finished at 5 a.m. and had it completed before the early Masses. It was not possible to avoid coming under police notice when doing this work and as a precaution we ceased wearing uniform hats and badges.

#### Death of Archbishop Walsh.

Archbishop Walsh died about this time. The morning after his death when I went into the office, Dick Cotter said he wanted me to go to Greystones. There was only one train out - at 10.30 a.m., and one that returned at 6 p.m. The object of the visit was to deliver a letter to Mrs. De Valera. She told me the letter was from her husband, asking her to attend the funeral of the Archbishop as he could not attend himself. The children were all laid up with measles and Brian, who was afterwards killed in the Phoenix Park, got up in the afternoon and sat with me by the fire while I waited for my train. We saw the funeral pass our office next day.

On the Friday morning before the 1921 Wolfe Tone Anniversary, I received a note from Seán Ó Muirthile which read; "Mick says you are to go to Bodenstown on Sunday next to lay a wreath on the grave of Wolfe Tone. A taxi will be waiting at 10.30 at 41 Parnell Square. The wreath will be left with the caretaker: you are to collect it. There will be seating in the taxi for five people and you can bring who you like". I selected my four section leaders in Central Branch, Fiona Plunkett, Maire Comerford, Margaret McElroy and Emily Valentine. We proceeded to Bodenstown churchyard, laid a wreath on the grave and recited the Rosary in Irish. While we were on our knees enemy aeroplanes circled over our heads.

On the return journey we lunched in Naas and reached Dublin without incident. I reported back to Seán Ó Muirthile who had the facts published the following morning in the press, that members of Cumann na mBan had made a pilgrimage to Bodenstown churchyard, even though it was prohibited by the British, who caused aeroplanes to be flown overhead to prevent it.

We were now approaching the Truce and I cannot now recall any specific incident of importance that took place after the pilgrimage to Bodenstown.

Signed: Patrick M. Conaill.

Date: 7th August 1951.

Witness: P. Conaill

## Tribute to the Late Maire Gleeson.

I first met Mollie Gleeson in June 1916. She was not very long in Dublin, but I would say, her coming was opportune. She lost no time in securing for herself a niche in the national work on hand. Mollie was a very colourful person. Her work for the S. Tipperary Brigade has been mentioned more than once but not sufficiently to do justice to her resourcefulness. I recollect on one occasion her entraining at Kingsbridge en route for Tipperary. At the last moment Sean Hegarty arrived on the platform carrying a parcel not too well disguised, considering there were military on duty. Mollie, seating herself, laconically told Sean to put her golf sticks on the rack. She got through all right. On another journey she had occasion to change trains at Limerick Junction, being as usual laden down with "stuff". There were British military travelling by the same route, and they gallantly offered to carry her baggage to the Tipperary train. Mollie accepted their services and had her usual good luck.

Maire Gleeson's work for "the Rads," as she affectionally styled the South Tipperary Brigade, was not confined to that area. She threw herself heart and soul into the activities around her. During the year preceding the ~~break~~<sup>truce</sup> she worked at a restaurant in Parkgate Street where the clientele were mainly Crown Forces. In the course of her duties she was able to elicit much information, and eventually made personal contact with members of the Crown Forces whom she judged would be of service. Her methods had no formula. She was on the qui vive at all times and acted immediately on every clue. Thus, her Black and Tan customer would tell her if an order issued for a proposed raid; she would immediately pass on the information, and perhaps documents, arms, or even lives would be saved. I had the dubious distinction of being known to some of Mollie's Black and Tan friends in those days. Some years afterwards, one of them, an Englishman on leave from Palestine, paid us a friendly visit. He told us that his occupation there was something similar to that of the Black and Tans here. He never gave us away. ~~is~~<sup>is</sup> only a brief outline of some of my reminiscences of Mollie Gleeson. Is it too much to hope that some of the contributors to the proposed military history will see to it that her name will not be crowded out by less worthy participants of both sexes?

Signed  
Aine O'Riain

(1916 Garrison)  
G.P.O

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