

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
BURO STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21
NO. W.S. 1948

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COSANTA.

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 648

Witness

Mrs. Catherine Rooney (Byrne),
1 De Burgh Road,
Parkgate St.,
Dublin.
Identity.

Member of Cumann na mBan (Central Branch)
1915 - .

Subject.

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- 'b) G.P.O. Dublin, Easter Week 1916.

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No. W.S. 648

STATEMENT BY MRS. ROONEY

(Catherine Byrne of 17 North Richmond Street)

1 De Burgh Road, Parkgate Street, Dublin)I join Cumann na mBan.

I joined Cumann na mBan (Central Branch) early in 1915. I was then 20 years of age. I followed the usual drill instruction and rifle practice under Seamus Kavanagh, and First Aid. We had Miss McMahon, Mrs. Reddin and others for First Aid. I got my First Aid certificate, but I had to destroy it during the Black and Tan times as our house - 17 North Richmond St. - was used as a sort of headquarters for the squad which was the active service unit.

How I came to be the first Cumann na mBan member in the G.P.O

I was the first member of Cumann na mBan to enter the G.P.O for the Rising. Myself and two other girls, one of them my sister, were rambling round O'Connell St. and we were making for home. When we reached home my eldest brother, Paddy, who had his Volunteer equipment and gun in a back room of the house, had taken them away and left for the fight with his company - C.Coy. 1st or 2nd Battalion. This confirmed the news that Sean Flood had given me on my way home, that the fight was starting that day. Sean's father was an ex-R.I.C. man and he, too, kept his equipment in our house and he had to come to dress there, helped by my mother, and was wearing his uniform when I met him.

My mother told me to get my equipment and to follow them. We tore up two sheets for bandages and I set out, accompanied by my sister Alice. She parted company with me and went on to Liberty Hall to join her friend, Molly O'Reilly, who was a member of the Citizen Army. Molly died last year. I turned into O'Connell St. past Tom Clarke's shop and, glancing back on hearing the sound of marching men, I saw a company of Volunteers led by Captain Michael Staines. I fell in behind them and talked to a few of them that I knew including Michael

Staines, who was a captain in my brother's company. One of them told me the scrap was starting and that they were going to the G.P.O. When they came down to Nelson Pillar Staines gave the order: "Right turn", so I did the "Right turn" too. It was then 12 o'clock exactly. I went over to the footpath outside the Post Office to speak to Michael Staines. I asked him to let me in but he said No, I was to go home. He added: "I'll tell Paddy on you" (that was my brother). I hung around and by this time men had been posted outside the Post Office. I spotted Frank Murtagh at the Prince's St. corner and he recognised me. The Volunteers had broken in the front windows of the office, but the side windows had not yet been broken. I asked Frank Murtagh to lift me up to the side window at the corner where the stamp machine is now. He did this with the aid of another Volunteer and I kicked in the glass of the window. I jumped in and landed on Joe Gahan, who was stooping down inside performing some task. He started swearing at me, asking: "What the bloody hell are you doing there?". I cut my leg and arm with the glass as I jumped and he drew my attention to the bleeding which I had not noticed.

Liam Clarke is wounded:

While we were talking and laughing, an explosion occurred. Joe looked behind him towards the front of the Post Office and the remark he passed to me was "Here is your first case". It was Liam Clarke who was carrying a home-made hand grenade, which exploded as he entered the Post Office. At this time he was lying on the ground and was bleeding profusely from the head. Joe Gahan brought me a can of cold water and I washed Liam's head and I discovered he had a very nasty wound at the side of his head, which I dressed. Afterwards his eye had to be removed and he suffered the consequences of his wound till the time he died. He was a very nice man and I often met him afterwards, although I had not known him before

the incident in the Post Office. Later in the week, on the Wednesday, I think, when I visited the Father Mathew Hall, I saw Liam lying on a stretcher on the floor. I went to him and asked him how he was. He was hardly able to answer me, but he was conscious. I often wondered since why and how he was brought to Fr. Mathew Hall instead of to hospital.

I was the only woman in the Post Office for a considerable time because I had not waited at home for any mobilisation order. As already stated, I left home as soon as I was told by my mother that my brother and Sean Flood had left for the fight. When the Cumann na mBan representative - afterwards Tom Byrne's wife, I forget her maiden name - came to mobilise me, my mother told her that Alice and I had been gone for some time but she did not know where. Afterwards, when applying for my pension, I got very little assistance from the Cumann na mBan authorities, as some of them who were in the G.P.O. did not remember my presence at the place of mobilisation or at the Post Office.

Liam Clarke fell right beside the telephone kiosk which was at the left hand side after entering the door of the Post Office. The Volunteers had pushed a British Officer, whom they had taken prisoner, into the telephone kiosk, closed the door on him and stood on guard over him for some time. Later on, I saw him upstairs and made tea for him.

I prepare food for the Volunteers.

Some of the other Volunteers who had climbed in through the windows received cuts from the broken glass and while I was dressing them my sister arrived. She was brought over in O'Rahilly's car which had been sent to Liberty Hall to fetch ammunition. Joe Cullen was in the car and she asked him to bring her in it. I first advised her to go home, but some of the Volunteers were shouting for food, so I agreed she might as well stay on to help me out. Some of the men

brought us to the kitchen which was upstairs and we started right away to prepare food of which there was a plentiful supply. My sister made sandwiches and I prepared tea. I went down with some of the men with the food, leaving my sister above. I told the men to help themselves and I went back upstairs as I was starving too. It was then I saw three British officers in the dining room having some food. I asked my sister why she had given them food before the Volunteers and she replied that she was told to do it.

I give First Aid to other wounded Volunteers.

Before I had time to have any food myself I was told by a Volunteer that one of the guard in the storey above had been wounded and required first aid. When I went up to the guard-room I found the wounded man and in the presence of Father Flanagan, who was uncovering the soldier's wound which was near the groin - the bullet had entered there and come out through the back - I applied a large bandage, really a belly-band, and tied it at the side in an effort to stop the bleeding. There was not much blood, as the bleeding was internal. The soldier was taken immediately to hospital where I heard afterwards he died.

There were other Volunteers wounded in the legs and arms as they were entering the G.P.O. mainly by broken glass and some of them had been sent upstairs to take up their positions. They were mostly belonging to the Kimmage Company. Tom Corbally was one of them and he certified that I dressed wounds for Volunteer James Wardrick. Liam Roche was upstairs in the guardroom while I was dressing the wounded soldier and he, too, had got a gunshot wound on entering the Post Office, so I was asked to dress it too. The only seriously wounded Volunteer at this early stage was Liam Clarke.

Other members of Cumann na mBan arrive in G.P.O.

A number of Cumann na mBan members came into the Post

Office in the afternoon between 3 and 4 o'clock, I should think. I saw Statia Toomey and Molly Reynolds coming in with several others. I should have mentioned that after I arrived I noticed Winifred Carney, a member of the Citizen Army, sitting working at a desk in the main hall towards the Henry St. side. I served tea to her among others. My sister was upstairs still and somebody sent up for a drink for the D.M.P. man who was on duty when the Volunteers had entered the building and taken him prisoner. One Corkman - Tom Walsh - had taken off the policeman's helmet and filled it with .303 bullets, saying he would like to put one of them through his head.

Tom Clarke gives orders to pour beer down the sink.

When I had finished serving food on the ground floor I went upstairs to get more. On reaching the kitchen I noticed a sort of bar where beer and minerals were kept. I noticed Tom Clarke as I passed through the dining-room. As I entered the kitchen I asked a Volunteer could I have a drink of minerals. He was in the act of taking up a bottle when Tom Clarke appeared behind me. Tom Clarke asked me did I know anything about "this business" meaning the bar business. I said "No, sir". He said: "The reason I ask you is that I want you to destroy all this stuff" pointing to the beer. He tipped the neck of one of the bottles on the edge of the sink and poured it down the sink. The Volunteer and myself started to do the same and Tom Clarke went away. We were working hard at this job when Joe Gahan appeared and asked us what the hell we were doing that for. I said "Orders". We had to put a sup of the beer in the cup and Joe, who was fond of a drop, sat in a corner drinking it, telling me to stand on watch for fear Tom Clarke would appear again. While I was standing there, I noticed Alice, my sister, coming. She had been sent up to bring down a drink for the policeman prisoner. The Volunteer had the last bottle of beer in his hand and was

emptying it. Alice grabbed his arm saying "don't". I got a pint glass and half filled it with the lemonade and emptied the remains of the last bottle of stout on top of it. Joe Gahan said the policeman would think it was all stout. Alice brought it down and gave it to the policeman who drank it all. She stayed below.

Later on, Tom Clarke came up and examined all the crates to make sure that all the stout was gone. He said he did not want the men to be tempted.

After some time I came downstairs and the Cumann na mBan had disposed themselves.

Confessions are heard.

I forgot to mention that a priest had taken up his position at the back of the main hall near where Mick Collins had an ammunition dump. The men queued up for confession. It was at this time that The O'Rahilly was attending a wounded Volunteer and he asked me for a first aid dressing and some sterilised water. I got the equipment for him and stood aside while he attended to the man. In the meantime the priest had finished hearing confessions, so I missed my chance of getting absolution.

I go to Hibernian Bank.

At this stage Leslie Price appeared in the main hall. Captain Weafer had asked her was she willing to take up duty in the Hibernian Bank and bring somebody with her. She brought me and Christina O'Gorman (afterwards Mrs. Hayes), with her. I am not sure if there was any other girl there. We crossed the street under fire. It was dark by this time. I was told afterwards that the Volunteers were told to hold their fire while we were crossing, but there were bullets coming from the O'Connell St. area.

The men with Captain Weafer in command were upstairs in

the Hibernian Bank barricading windows when we arrived. We prepared food for them. We rested during the night, the three of us lying dressed on the manager's bed.

I return to G.P.O. and am sent with dispatch to the Four Courts.

In the early morning Captain Weafer said he wanted one of us to volunteer to go across to the G.P.O. for rations for the men. I volunteered. Captain Weafer said: "Don't worry; I'll signal that you are going across so that you will have a safe passage". I reached the Post Office safely and, knowing well where the kitchen was, I went right up to it. It was then I saw Desmond Fitzgerald. I had not seen him on my previous visits to the kitchen. At the time I was not sure who he was. I asked a Volunteer for rations saying I had been sent for them by Captain Weafer. It was then Desmond Fitzgerald spoke, saying: "I'll give no rations until I know how many men he has". I said "There are a few women there too and am I to go back under fire and give that message to Captain Weafer". He said: "Yes, and tell him Desmond Fitzgerald sent that message. I am Desmond Fitzgerald". I returned and Captain Weafer gave me a written message. I rolled up the piece of paper he gave me, put it in my mouth and went back across the street. I went straight up to the kitchen and gave the paper to Desmond Fitzgerald, who said: "That's all right; I'll see to that". I did not want to go back to the Hibernian Bank as there was nothing doing there and I told Fitzgerald that. He said it was all right, that a Volunteer would be going over.

I am sent with a dispatch to the Four Courts.

I was hanging around the main hall and put fresh dressings on two of the lads. I had dressed on the Monday. When I had finished this I stood up to move away when Padraig Pearse asked me would I take a dispatch. I said: "Yes, sir". I did not know where at the time. He called me over to where Joseph Plunkett was sitting. He spoke to Joseph Plunkett. He was

looking very bad, very thin and ghastly, as if he was going to pass out. He wrote the dispatch and I noticed as he was writing that he had a gold bangle on his arm. I said to myself "I wish I had that". I thought it very funny seeing a man wearing a bangle. He handed the dispatch to Padraig Pearse who read it. Padraig Pearse told me it was for Captain Fahy at the Four Courts and warned me to be very careful. In his presence I took off my velvet beret and pinned the dispatch inside my thick hair, pulled hair up over it and tied up the hair again with the pink ribbon and put on the beret. Both Pearse and Plunkett smiled and Pearse gave me a blessing in Irish.

I started out to walk to the Four Courts through byways and alleys. I emerged on the quays at East Arran St. and had to come back to Capel St. Bridge to cross over. I went through some of the tenement houses and had to climb across the dividing walls at the back. One kind soul made me a cup of tea and I did not half relish it. Of course, I had to tell a lot of lies to the soldiers who held me up. I said I was trying to get to my home on the south quays. Eventually I reached Winetavern St. and I crossed at the Four Courts bridge crouching down by the balustrade.

I went to the side gate of the Four Courts where, lucky enough, Sean Flood, a neighbour of ours, was on duty - I have mentioned him already as being in our house earlier on Monday. Before I had time to say anything he asked me where Paddy, my brother was, and where I was going. I told him about the position in the Post Office and that I came with a dispatch to Captain Fahy from Padraig Pearse. He joked me, saying: "Do you not trust me, Kate?" I said: "Orders. I must deliver it to him". Sean then called Captain Fahy who seemed to be somewhere near. - So, when Fahy appeared, Sean said: "Dispatch, sir". I had not yet taken it out of my hair. "Where is it,

Sean?" Sean asked me for the dispatch. I took it out of my hair and handed it through the gate to Captain Fahy. He read it to Sean Flood and that is the first time I knew what the contents were: "We are getting reinforcements tonight. Isn't that great?"

My activities in King St. area.

I made my way back to the Post Office. I need not tell you it took me some time. When I reached Prince's St. I was unable to get into the Post Office. It was all barricaded and although some Volunteers spoke to me from the windows they would not let me in. They told me to get back somewhere else but to avoid O'Connell St. I got out into Abbey St., went up Jervis St. I don't know how I crossed Capel St. I went round by the markets. I went through several tenements and spent the night in one where a kind hearted woman let me sit in an armchair for the night. I did not mention what the purpose of my journey was. I always said that I was trying to get home to my sick mother.

As soon as it got bright in the morning I cleared out and reached King St. Luckily I recognised two Volunteers at the barricade there. I spent the rest of the week there attending to the wants of the men. We had really no casualties. I paid a visit to Fr. Mathew Hall twice. On one of these occasions, as I have already said, I saw Liam Clarke lying on a stretcher. I brought ammunition to the men at the barricades from the house where they had it dumped.

My narrow escape.

Sean Moore occupied a tall house at the corner of Church St. and Brunswick St. He was in a top room watching through field glasses the military garrison at Broadstone station. I asked him to let me have a look. I was half way back in the room looking through the glasses when we heard the whistling sound of a bullet. I turned around to a Volunteer who had

been standing near the door but had jumped aside to avoid the bullet which he pointed out to me embedded in the door. He asked me was I hurt as the bullet went very near my head. I took off my beret and found two holes in it, so it was a narrow shave all right. Mattie Gahan was on duty at the doorway of the house and he said it was Clarke's Dairy.

Later that evening I was sent, I believe, to Monks' Bakery to get some bread. I brought it back and handed it to a Volunteer in Clarke's Dairy.

I went on down to the barricade between Church St. and King St. corner beside Monks' Bakery. I remained there sitting on the ground behind the barricade. Later that night I went into one of the houses, made tea and brought it out to the men at the barricade. The people in the houses were helpful. Some of them had been evacuated, but most of them refused to leave. I slept that night (Thursday) on a sofa in a tenement house. The woman, who had a young family, gave me tea in the morning.

I spent Friday in much the same way, keeping in the King St. - Brunswick St. area all day and during the night. I was the only member of Cumann na mBan up there.

Saturday was a busy day. There were a lot of rumours going round. I had no First Aid to do at all, all the wounded being brought to Fr. Mathew Hall. The men were all keyed up saying "We are not going to surrender; we'll continue to fight. Would you be game, Kate?" they said to me. I replied: "Of course, whatever you do, I'll do".

The order to surrender.

In the early hours of Sunday morning the order to surrender came to our particular area - it may have come earlier to other places such as the Four Courts. We always heard that our area was the last to surrender. Mattie Gahan brought me into Monks' Bakery on Sunday morning and gave me a bag of bread to help me to escape. I carried it on my back

and he told me not to go up that way, pointing to Brunswick St. That was the way the Volunteers were going for the surrender. I made my escape passing along Bolton St. where I was halted by British soldiers. One of them took the bag of bread and emptied it on the path. He probably thought that I had arms and ammunition in it. The next stop was in Dominick St. I got on pretty well until I came to Findlater's Church. I was halted there again and one of the soldiers felt the bag all round with his hands. I arrived safely home where my family were glad to get the bread. There were ten younger than me. At that time I was just 21.

I take up work in Glasgow.

At the end of 1916 my sister, Alice, and I were compelled to go to Glasgow to work. I knew nobody there. About January or February 1917, we got to know some of the Irish Clubs and we joined Cumann na mBan. Mrs. Mooney was our Captain. We attended the ceilis regularly there and at one in March we were approached by Alec Carmichael who said he wanted to talk to us. I asked him how did he know us. He was able to tell us about our Easter Week activities and where we lived. Later on in the evening he made an announcement from the platform that he wanted all the members to give us a hearty welcome.

We were staying with some people from Dublin called Duggan. We met them by chance one day.

Alex Carmichael introduced us to various people who were in the Volunteer movement - Joe Robinson, James Corbett and Mrs. A. Mooney, who was a great Gaelic speaker.

We were approached at a ceili by Joe Robinson some time in 1918 and he made an appointment with us for the following night at another ceili as he wanted to see us urgently. The next night Joe Robinson and another fellow, whose name I can't remember, left the ceili and walked along Sauchiehall St. with

us, each pair arm in arm to throw off suspicion. We stopped in a doorway chatting and Joe passed over to me and Alice two parcels - one containing about one pound of gunpowder and the other a couple of pounds of .303 ammunition. He told us to be careful of it. We were to meet some of the ^{other} boys the next night to get more.

The following day one of the chaps of the Scottish Brigade came into the shop where I worked and told me that after Joe had parted with his pal, and us, Joe was arrested.

I am sent to Dublin with gelignite and ammunition.

Previous to that Alec Carmichael had asked us would we make a trip to Dublin and warned us it would be a very risky business. We were very glad of the opportunity to visit our home as we had not been able to afford a trip to Dublin to see our mother since we left. About three weeks elapsed and during that time we were collecting the stuff from Alec Carmichael. It was gelignite and .303. We spent our nights sewing the gelignite on to a canvas sugar bag, sewing each stick in separately between the sides of the bag. We did the same with the .303. Our landlady, finding that we were keeping the light on nearly all night, objected to the waste of electricity and we had to leave the digs. We went to Mrs. Mooney, who lived in a bed-sitting room, for a few nights while we looked for other digs. Carmichael came one night and told me to call down to his house the following night to collect some fuse which was urgently required in Dublin. He had previously handed us our tickets for the journey.

The night before leaving Glasgow I went to Central Station to board a tram to take me to Carmichael's house. The conductress pushed me off the tram saying "Car full up". I fell on my back and was knocked unconscious. When I wakened up I found myself - of all places - in the police station. After some time I recovered sufficiently to be brought back in

a police car with a woman policeman to Mrs. Mooney's.

When I did not arrive at Carmichael's house he came with the parcel of fuse. Alice and I were already in bed. I was stiff and sore the following morning, but decided all the same to travel as arrangements had been made at the Dublin end to meet us.

We made preparations to dress up; that meant loading up the "stuff" on our persons. The fuse was wound around my left arm and a pad of cotton wool placed over it. In order to give the whole thing the appearance of a genuine surgical case, Mrs. Mooney put a drop of some strong smelling stuff on the cotton wool. The other stuff was lying on the bed ready to be strapped on to us when a knock came to the door. Mrs. Mooney opened it and a policeman stepped in to take a statement about my accident. I told him in brief what had happened and Mrs. Mooney hurried matters by saying I was not well and would call.

It seemed a couple of passengers on the tram, who had seen my accident, made a complaint at the police station.

We were leaving before lunch and we had a lot to do; of course I never went to the police station again.

At the station we found that the train we were to travel by was turned into a troop train and would not carry any civilians. However, I told a very pathetic story that I had only just come out of hospital, had no place to go, and must get home where I would be looked after. My arm was in a sling and the bandage of fuse and cotton wool was really paining me. Also I was still suffering from the effects of my fall. We were allowed to board the train and got seats in a carriage full of soldiers. I was terrified that the soldier sitting on my left hand side would knock against me. He kept asking me was my arm paining me and I replied quite truthfully that it was very much.

We travelled by Crewe and when we came to Holyhead I had the same experience as in Glasgow. They did not want to let us on the boat, but I trotted out the same story and we got on. We were met at the station in Dublin by a Citizen Army man who had a cab and we were driven straight home where we handed over the stuff to my father who dumped it safely in a hideout he had

A doctor - Dr. Daly, I think he was only just qualified - examined my arm which was getting more and more painful. He told me that the smelly stuff that had been sprinkled on the cotton wool was carbolic acid. It had eaten into my skin and my arm, which then as now was very thin - was in a bad way. However, after some time it healed. The doctor told me I was very lucky that it had not to be cut off. I have the marks on it to this day.

Within a week we were back in Glasgow and I turned up at the Co-operative store where I worked, explaining that I had to take home my sister who was very ill. She spun the same yarn with greater truth, as my arm was still bandaged.

We carried on for some months until we got the same task to perform again - bringing .303 and fuse back to Ireland in the same way except that this time we attached the stuff to our shoulders by straps. I was so thin that my hips had been skinned the first time by the heavy weight. We came by the North Wall on this occasion to avoid being spotted. Captain James O'Neill of the Citizen Army asked us who had thought of this ingenious way of bringing over the ammunition and I told him it was a brain wave I had myself. We lost our jobs after this trip because the managers thought that we were going home too often. We got other jobs, however, of the same kind in a grocery firms. They were very handy because if the fellows wanted to see us about anything, all they had to do was to come in for something and slip us a note.

I remained in Glasgow till January 1919. I was asked to make another trip to Dublin to bring over gelignite and .303. We were brought at night to a suburban place near Glasgow, - Parkhead - to meet a man who had been supplying the gelignite. He was James Corbett, who was foreman in a mine there. When I inquired why I had to go for the stuff instead of having it brought to us, I was told that there had been an explosion a few days before in Corbett's house due, I believe, to the dump of gelignite he had stored awaiting removal. The newspapers had reported it as a gas explosion. This had created confusion in the arrangements and Corbett considered it safer to fetch the stuff which he had hurriedly hidden away in a place that was probably not too safe.

I resume my Cumann na mBan work in Dublin.

We brought the stuff safely via the North Wall to our house in Richmond St. I remained at home. My mother was ill. Alice went back to her job in Glasgow where she continued to work for the I.R.A. She married in 1922, as I did myself. I looked after my mother and I rejoined Cumann na mBan - Central Branch, 25 Parnell Square.

We had the usual meetings, First Aid, drilling, collecting money for the Volunteers, &c.

The Squad (Guards) use our house.

About 1919 a group of Volunteers who were called the "Guards" used to meet at our house - Paddy Daly, Joe Leonard, Charlie Dalton, Bill Stapleton and Tom Ennis are the members that I particularly remember. They used to store any stuff they were able to collect in our house. My father had made a dump for arms at the side of the fireplace. In fact, it is still there but covered with wallpaper. I don't know exactly whether that was in 1919 or 1920.

They were called guards. From them were picked the Squad

which became the Active Service Unit. They were constantly coming back and forth between our house, No. 17, and the dump in Pearse St. We used to collect ¼-lb cocoa tins, or any tins of a similar size, to make grenades in the dump. Alex Thompson was one of the principal men connected with the making of the grenades. He had been in the 1916 Rising in Boland's Mills. Instead of surrendering then he had made his escape by swimming the canal.

My mother was always known as the mother of the "Guards".

The escaped prisoners come to our house.

We were warned by Paddy Daly days before the escape of the 21 prisoners from Mountjoy that they would want our help. The night before the escape we were told to be ready to receive a number of prisoners and to have the back and front doors open. There was one chap we used to call 'Cock Robin' who lived in Richmond Place, among the people who came to the house. I cannot tell you the names of the others. They were all gone next day.

The Thompson gun is brought to our house.

When the first Thompson gun was brought into Dublin, it was transferred to our house to be examined and assembled. Those present were Michael Collins, Emmet Dalton, Paddy Daly. I am not sure whether Charlie Dalton and Bill Stapleton were there. My task was to go out on the street and keep watch and one of my brothers was posted at the back door. After some time the men left and went out to the Casino in Marino where they tried it out. Some of the Christian Brothers warned them that they could be heard all over the place. They said they did not care - they had a Thompson gun.

Raids.

The peculiar thing about our house was that although we always had stuff in our house we were only raided twice in a

rather casual way. Nothing was got. In one raid at an early hour of the morning the Black and Tans, led by a British officer, came. We were not expecting any of the lads back that night - they had been on a stunt somewhere else and dumped the guns in the house. So, instead of my father waiting to put them in a secret place, he said we should bring them up to the bedrooms. When the knocking came my father went down to open the door after handing his gun to my mother. My mother had three of the guns, my father had one and I had one. They were not loaded. Some of the men were downstairs and demanded of my father to be brought upstairs. I had got a long stocking to tie the gun around my body and when they came to the room they told me to get up but I said I would not until they left the room, pretending to be frightened and shy. My two young sisters were in another bed in the room, but they slept on and were not disturbed. The raiders went to the door while I got up, putting a blanket around me. My mother hid two of the guns on her person in the same way and she put the third under the baby in the cot. I don't know whether it was in this raid or in the other my father was taken away to the Castle where he was questioned for some days. He came back raging about 10 a.m. because they had kicked him in the back-side and he told us he would all have to do our bit from that on.

In the other raid my brother Jack was taken to the Castle for questioning. The Black and Tans put a grenade into his hand and asked him did he know what that was. He said he didn't. The Black and Tans fiddled with the pin and asked him what would happen if he pulled the pin out. Jack said he didn't and must have convinced them of his innocence. They let him go and we were not troubled again.

British Forces are ambushed.

In connection with some of the ambushes that were taking place Paddy Daly asked my father could he take me out for a

walk. We were supposed to be a courting couple. We sat down among the bushes in Whitehall leading out to Santry. Paddy was making rough drawings of the layout of the place and noting what cover there would be for the boys. A few days afterwards the ambush took place. There were two or three lorries coming that morning from Baldonnell and they threw grenades at them. I can't remember how many of the British forces were injured or killed, but I don't think any of our lads were. I had gone to the place on my old bike and the Volunteers were already in position. I had asked permission of Paddy Daly, saying that if any of them fell I could take their guns and chance saving their lives that way. I got into a field on one side of the road and had a view of the boys clearing away. I rode like hell back home on two flat wheels arriving about 9.30. The reason I remember is there was a girl I knew waiting for the tram at the junction of N.C.Road and Dorset St. to go into business. My brother Jack, who was on that job, came home a couple of hours after me.

The Dump in Denzille Lane.

The boys had a dump in Denzille Lane. Jackie Dunne, who was in the army afterwards, and Paddy Daly put their names over the door as contractors - Dunne and Daly. Paddy Daly was a carpenter. I was there only once.

One morning a raid took place on that dump and the whole area. When Jackie Dunne saw the area being surrounded he had his overalls on and he and Sean Doyle got a bucket of whitewash, put his gun into it and was allowed to pass through the cordon after a short conversation with the Black and Tans. That was the morning after Bloody Sunday. On Bloody Sunday night - I think it was that night - Paddy Daly, having parted with some of the lads, had reached Butt Bridge when the Tans arrived. Paddy, who was going to meet Peadar Clancy, was carrying his gun and ammunition and some grenade moulds. He stood awhile thinking

what he should do with them. A voice addressed him asking him was he in trouble. He turned round and saw a friend who was working in Butt Bar beside where he was standing. It was Paddy Moran - probably a Volunteer - he was not the Paddy Moran who was afterwards executed. Paddy Daly went into the bar altho' he never smoked or drank in his life; he asked for a pint and handed over his "stuff" to Paddy Moran. A couple of Black and Tans came in and called for drinks, but did not delay. Paddy Daly told his friend that he would send Splash - that was my nickname - which was known to Paddy Moran - for the stuff. I went for it a day or two after with a shopping bag containing cabbage and brought it to Denzille Lane.

Our house is used for wounded men on Bloody Sunday.

The week prior to Bloody Sunday - I should mention that Bloody Sunday was the first job the Squad was on - Sean Russell approached Paddy Daly to ask him could he get help at 17 (our house) to provide a sort of First Aid station in case some of the boys got wounded. Usually if there was an ambush on the south side they always had a refuge in the north side and vice versa.

I was told on the Saturday afternoon that they wanted the back parlour and we had to put a few mattresses on the floor and clear out some of the furniture. Mother was warned to have some grub ready. We had to go to a very early Mass that Sunday morning as my father was told that this job would take place early in the morning. The first wounded man who arrived was Billy McClean, who was wounded in the trigger finger. I dressed him. He was greatly shocked and was accompanied by another man who had a wound in the ankle. He had been in the action in 22 Mount St. I dressed Billy and my mother dressed the other man. Then Tom Keogh arrived, but he was not wounded. We gave them all food. After Dinner I went to Croke Park with my boy friend to see the lads. We were up in the dump

near where the Hogan stand is now. Father Potter was near us trying to console three women who had become hysterical when the Black and Tans made their attack on the crowd. The crowd had cleared out, or been swept out, and we were the only five people left sitting on the dump. Hogan was standing at the goal-post near the canal end. The Black and Tans, having shot him, kicked him and emptied their guns into him. We waited until it was safe to get away. The Black and Tans searched my boy friend - now my husband - and the priest, and made me put my hands up and felt my pockets.

When we arrived back in No. 17 we found my father - on account of the Croke Park shooting - had removed the two men to a place in the Richmond Cottages for safety.

Hugh MacNeill arrived that night and with Tom Keogh and Paddy Daly went through the papers that had been found on the bodies and in the luggage of the British officers who had been killed. They found a queer collection including many love letters and took away anything of importance to show to Collins. Evidently instructions had been given that these papers were to be brought to our house. My mother and father and I had the job of sorting the papers and putting aside anything of importance. We put the rest in the fire.

Any of the loose guns in our house had to be removed to a place of safety. The safe dump near the fireplace we did not disturb.

The raids on the Castle mails.

Things were quiet for a while after that. When the I.R.A. started raiding the mails the letters were brought to our house and we still have a portion of a leather mail bag that contained mail for the Castle. The rest of the bag was taken away in pieces by souvenir hunters. Only a short time ago I gave one of the handles to Brother Allen of North Richmond.

Street Schools. These letters were dumped in our house until they could be brought to Michael Collins.

My mother plays the part of a dying woman.

I should have told you that when Tommy Kilcoyne and Paddy Swanzy had been arrested in May 1920, both under the assumed name of Lewis, Tommy got word that his mother was dying. He sent out word to Paddy Daly to inquire if he could give any assistance. Paddy reported to Oscar Traynor. Having discussed the matter Paddy said to leave it so and he would approach Mrs. Byrne (my mother). She agreed to do whatever was necessary. There was a further meeting somewhere and Daly told my mother she would have to act the part of a dying woman and a friendly doctor would call and examine her. A message was sent to Kilcoyne and Swanzy to that effect. So we were warned to be on the alert for the next few days as a policeman was expected to call to see Mrs. Lewis. Bill Stapleton had a lot to do with this. My father fixed a mirror so that anybody who approached the door could be seen from the scullery - that mirror is still there.

About the third day, when my mother was as usual baking cakes - all the boys used to love her apple tarts - a rather loud knock was heard. My father looked up at the mirror. To our horror a D.M.P. man was at the door. My father and I pushed my mother, who was then about 16 stone, out of the scullery upstairs to the top of the four-storey house. I had only time to pull off her shoes and blouse and roll her into bed with the floured hands. By that time she was a real hard case panting for breath, just suited to our purpose.

Meantime, my father had gone to open the door and let in the policeman who spoke rather rudely to him for having delayed so long. He asked was there a Mrs. Lewis there. My father said "Yes, she was only lodging there. He came up to

see for himself. He evidently reported back. That night, Paddy Daly ordered her to be removed to the Mater Nursing Home where she was examined - still as Mrs. Lewis - by a friendly doctor who said she was a bad case and had not long to live. The two boys were let out on parole and Tommy's mother did die in the country. The two never went back to gaol. The following day my mother - the dying woman - walked out of the nursing home and into a car provided by the I.R.A. lads. That night we drank the health of the 'dead' woman.

In February 1921 we were notified of plans that were being prepared for the escape of Frank Teeling, Paddy Moran and some others. The night before the escape my father was asked to post some members of the family on guard inside the front door to await a certain kind of knock. I happened to be the person chosen and when the knock came I opened the door and admitted Sean Russell and Frank Teeling. What Sean said was "I believe there is some carpentry work to be done here". Frank was carrying a saw and some other tools and was supposed to be the workman, and he was dressed in the dungarees, and Sean the boss. Sean Russell went off after a few moments. Frank Teeling remained with us until that night when some of the lads came to fetch him and he went off again in his dungarees.

Plans for the attack on the Custom House discussed in our house.

The next important incident was the attack on the Custom House. We had the usual Volunteers who were familiar with the house discussing plans under the leadership of Paddy Daly. Of course, they had to report back to Collins for his approval before they undertook any of these jobs and they certainly made some plans that he would not allow them to carry out, some desperate proposals. I often heard them discussing "jobs" that they would like to do but the "big fellow" would not allow them.

The night following the night of the meeting in our house we were informed that there would be an attack on the Custom House - I think at 1.15 or 1.30 on a Wednesday in May 1921. I remember the day of the week because I hadn't to report for work. Some of the lads collected guns and ammunition from No. 17. Paddy Daly was the last to leave the house and his last remark to my mother was "Have a nice apple tart ready for us". I did not think it was going to turn out so tragic.

Some of the boys reported back that night to No. 17 to leave their guns. Daly came in late that night with the report of those who were missing. It was not till the following day that we got the true story of the rest of those dead and missing. The O'Reillys were among these. Those used not to come to our house.

I am asked to assist in Sean McKeon's escape.

After Sean McKeon's arrest, the boys decided to do something about his release as they were sure he'd be hanged if left in prison. I remember their remark about making him well to hang him but "they wont hang him if we can help it".

A meeting took place in Gardiner St. (opposite Moran's Hotel). Daly called to 17 and asked me would I be willing to do a job. My other sisters at home were not old enough for this sort of work - I agreed. I was told to come down to a meeting in Gardiner St. where Michael Collins was. Tom Keogh, Charlie Dalton, Jim Slattery, Vinnie Byrne and others were there. My job, which was discussed at the meeting, was to go to Mountjoy Gaol to see a prisoner - I can't even think of his name. I did not know him. I went in and was brought up to see the prisoner. The warder was evidently friendly, because he turned his back while the prisoner slipped me a note.

I think it was Joe Leonard came that evening after tea to collect the note which was brought to the meeting that night.

I was told to do the same thing the following day, Thursday, at dinner hour, under a different name and with different clothes. This time I wore a pair of glasses as a disguise and carried two bottles of whiskey and some sweets. The sweets were for the woman searcher. I had the bottles inside my knickers (my mother's) with straps on the end of the knickers to keep the bottles from falling. She asked me had I anything. I said: "No, except some sweets; would you like them?" She took them and told me to go ahead. I saw another prisoner - again I don't know his name. He gave me another letter and I passed him the whiskey. The warder again stood with his back to us while I released the bottles and handed them to the prisoner. The whiskey was to dope the guards.

On the Friday I went through the same procedure, bringing in more whiskey, but it was later in the evening and I was told not to go in until I saw the warders being changed.

This time, unfortunately, the note slipped to me by the prisoner - which he told me to read in case it might be discovered and taken from me - was to call off the whole thing as Sean McKeon was too ill to do what was expected of him.

That particular prisoner told me to tell the boys that the plans were going on fine only that unfortunately McKeon was too ill to cut the bars. He had previously asked to be moved to a higher ward. This was part of the plan.

Paddy Daly told me that Mick Collins was in an awful state of disappointment when he heard it. It was the only time he saw him lose his temper.

The only other time I was inside Mountjoy was when the hunger strike was on; a whole lot of Cumann na mBan pushed in after the warders who were going in the gate. I was second from the gate and I shouted "Come on, girls, push". We all fell in a heap inside, but we got up and gripped the bars of the second

gate, refusing to leave and asking to see the prisoners. We kicked up such a row that they brought down the Governor, but we didn't leave for him either. We repeated that we wanted to visit the prisoners. A whole bunch of us including Molly O'Reilly (Mrs. Corcoran) and Annie Malone - pals of mine - were admitted and brought in to see Peadar Clancy, Tom Hunter and many others. Peadar and Tom were not bad, but we spread the rumour that they were dying and would be dead by morning. We gave this information to some of the pressmen and the whole city was in commotion the next day and crowds went to Mountjoy clamouring for the release of the hunger strikers.

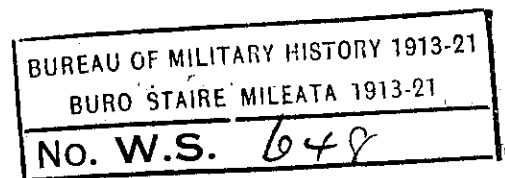
Catherine Rooney (Byrne)
 (Catherine Rooney (Byrne))
 1st February 1952

1st February 1952.

Witness

S. Ni Chiosain

(S. Ni Chiosain).



ADDENDUM TO STATEMENT
BY

MRS. CATHERINE ROONEY (BYRNE)

1 De Burgh Road, Parkgate Street, Dublin.

I forgot to mention my trip to Belfast in 1918 . On my second trip after bringing the "stuff" from Glasgow, James O'Neill of the Citizen Army sent a message to our house that he would like to see Alice and me. We called down to Liberty Hall where we saw James O'Neill. He asked us would we do a job in Belfast - collect stuff - in the near future. I don't know whether I mentioned that we had dumped one lot of the stuff we brought from Glasgow in Liberty Hall. Years afterwards, I heard that that was an arrangement made between James O'Neill and Joe O'Reilly. We agreed to come home via Belfast on our next trip, but could not give a definite date as we were not sure when we would be returning again from Glasgow. I still had severe headaches from having carried the gelignite so close to my body which had - Dr. Daly said - absorbed some of the poison. It was also on that account that I had to get my first pair of glasses; my sight was affected and I have had to wear glasses ever since.

When we went back to Glasgow we told one of the lads about the interview with O'Neill - I think Alec Carmichael had died in the meantime, and I am not sure who the other fellow was - it probably was Seamus Reader who was in charge of the Scottish Brigade while Joe Robinson was in jail. He agreed that when they had more stuff to send he would let us know and we could come back through Belfast. Unfortunately we were both dismissed from our jobs in Glasgow as our employers thought we were getting off too often. On Sunday night we went to the usual ceili hall and told Seamus Reader about our trouble. He told us he would try to get some little quantity of stuff to take home. All he was able to procure was three revolvers. We left for Dublin on the Tuesday or Wednesday. They bought us tickets out of the funds.

We left for Belfast, arrived at Miss Carney's house - we had sent her word to expect us. In the afternoon we went for a walk with Miss Winifred Carney. The idea was to bring us down to the Docks to a certain publichouse where we were to collect the 'stuff' that night. We went in and were brought upstairs.

That night we went back without Miss Carney - whom the police were watching since 1916 - to the publichouse and were introduced to Sean Cusack - he was afterwards a colonel in the National Army. Sean was known in Belfast as the "white man" because he had pure white hair. He used to leave the 'stuff' in the publichouse. We brought a quantity of .303 to Dublin to Liberty Hall, having promised we would come again for more to Belfast before returning to Glasgow. Within a few days we did the same run and delivered the same type of stuff to Liberty Hall where we met O'Neill again. It was then we returned to Glasgow and took up the new jobs.

At Christmas my employers asked me did I want to come home, but I said I would wait till the New Year. I wrote to Miss Carney telling her when to expect me; that was before the beginning of 1919. Alice did not come home. I duly arrived in Belfast, called on Miss Carney and went on to the publichouse that night, collected some more .303 and left for Dublin the following morning. It was then I decided not to go back to Glasgow and, in a short time, I picked up a job at home of which I was very glad as I did not like living in Glasgow. Alice was better fixed there than I was and she married and settled down there afterwards.

The Cumann na mBan knew nothing about all these activities of mine, as I did them on instructions from the boys with whom I was in touch. That is why I got no help from the Organisation when I came to apply for my pension. They would not even certify my claim for 1916 as they did not see me in the G.P.O.

Fortunately, I was able to get certificates from the different fellows that knew of my work. I got none from Sean Cusack, although I wrote to an address I got from the Department of Defence. I can't even say whether he was alive then. He would be quite old now if he is still alive.

Signed: Catherine Rooney (Byrne)
Catherine Rooney (Byrne)

Date: 19. 2. 52
19.2.52

Witness: S. Ni Chiosain
(S. Ni Chiosain).

