

W. S. 712

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21  
BURO STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21  
No. W.S. 712

ROINN  COSANTA.

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.  
STATEMENT BY WITNESS

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 712

Witness

Mrs. George Gavan Duffy,  
10 Riversdale Avenue,  
Terenure,  
Dublin.

Identity.

Widow of the Hon. George Gavan Duffy.

Subject.

Biographical note on  
Mrs. Llewelyn Davies  
(née Moya O'Connor).

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil.

File No. S. 515.

10 Riversdale Avenue

~~81, BUSHY PARK ROAD,~~

TERENURE,  
DUBLIN.

July 4<sup>th</sup> 1952

Dear Miss Kissane

I have been thinking  
over "the past" and I cannot remember  
anything of the slightest importance  
I was away in Dorset in 1916, and  
in Italy and Germany during  
the Treaty and debates. So it is  
quite useless to come again.

With kind remembrances

Yours sincerely  
Margaret Gavan Duffy

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Statement by Mrs. Gavan Duffy,

10, Riversdale Avenue, Terenure, Dublin.

I have been thinking over the "past" and I am afraid I cannot remember anything of the slightest importance.

*the coast-guard station*

I was in Donegal from 1915 having taken ~~a house~~ at Glenvar, Co. Donegal, as my husband was anxious that the children should learn Irish <sup>as their first language.</sup> After the Rising I went to London and was there during the trial of Casement. We continued to live in Donegal, my husband having given up his work in London and established himself in Ireland.

When he was sent abroad as representative of Dáil Éireann I accompanied him and when he was recalled to Ireland after the Treaty I continued to live in Italy and Germany to enable the children to acquire the languages and did not return to Ireland until after the Civil War.

As regards Mrs. Llewelyn Davies, I knew her very well in London. She was Moya O'Connor, the only surviving daughter of James O'Connor, who was a Fenian and a member of Parliament. The rest of her family, mother, brothers and sisters, died somewhere near Dublin of food poisoning from eating shell-fish. She did not partake of the shell-fish because she had a pet cat which she always fed before she took her meals and when she gave some of the shell-fish to the cat it got violently sick and Moya took it down to the maid who kept the child who was very young at the time, with her. When the father returned he found only Moya alive. He married again later. This was the story as I heard it in London.

The first time I met her in London she was organising for the Women's Liberal Association. It was the time Lloyd George was going to bring in the Single Tax Bill. Miss O'Connor mastered the clauses of that bill and was able to answer all questions on it. She was very clever and also very good-looking. I doubt if she knew Lloyd George at all personally, though she may have. I don't think that bill ever became law. It was that bill that brought her and <sup>Crompton</sup> Mr. Llewelyn Davies together. As organiser for the Women's Liberal Association she was working in Scotland and explaining the Bill. ~~Mr. Crompton~~ Llewelyn Davies heard her speak and was very much impressed by her. It was almost love at first sight and they married shortly after. They were the most devoted couple I ever saw.

I just knew her slightly as Miss O'Connor, when I reported the Annual General Meeting of the Women's Liberal Association. She spoke at it and spoke very well.

It was in 1916 that I really got to know her. She came in with Lady Byles who was Chairman of the Women's Liberal Association, to my husband's office. She wanted to know all about Roger Casement. The next morning my husband received from her a cheque for £100 for Casement's defence and she said, when I praised her generosity, that she did not want her name mentioned. She was very retiring at that time.

Crompton Llewelyn Davies was the finest man I ever knew and George thought the same. He was splendid and courageous in 1916 and although he was Solicitor to the Post Office he did not hesitate to express his opinions. He wrote a wonderful letter to my husband after Casement's

execution. He was a Positivist and his standard of life was very high. I never met higher. The tragedy of her life was that she had given up her religion. Once when I was staying with them at Three Bridges and went to Mass at a neighbouring church she told me she would give the world to have the faith.

They were a very happy pair. I often said to George that they were too happy.

She told me several times that the 1916 Rising had a profound effect on her. I honestly think it unbalanced her mind. She was staying at the time near Holyhead, and she told me it was the first time she really realised she was an Irish woman and that she had a country. She wanted to rush over to Ireland to do something for those who were fighting for their country. She was beside herself with excitement and distress at the sight of the British troops being drafted over to Dublin to suppress the rebellion.

When I knew her and her husband first they led the quietest possible life - too quiet in fact. They did not seem to want to meet anybody, although they could have had a very full social life, as Crompton Llewelyn Davies <sup>belonged to a</sup> ~~know~~ *to a most distinguished family* a lot of influential people and he was quite well off.

She changed very much in the course of her life. When I was abroad I lost touch with her a good deal, although I corresponded with her occasionally. On my return I found her completely changed. I told her so and that absolutely broke our friendship. Her talk was fantastic. She had an absurd opinion of her own importance. She thought she was the centre of the revolutionary movement. She was, in fact, quite silly

in her new-found idea of her own importance and when I expressed my opinion of her she did not like it at all.

I am positive she was never a spy and she was always anti-English since 1916. She did like to know everybody of importance in Ireland/<sup>and</sup> spoke of them all intimately, calling them by their christian names.

She had a most attractive personality and I was very much attracted by her when I knew her in London. I was not surprised that Crompton fell in love with her.

I felt the change that took place in her character during the few years I was away, was a tragedy and Gertrude Parry who also knew her well in London felt the same about her. She said she was quite a different person from the one we knew in London. In fact I had nothing more to do with her, although she continued to live in Ireland.

I had nothing whatsoever to do with her coming to Ireland. The approximate date of her coming is impressed on my mind. A day or two <sup>before</sup> ~~after~~ Bloody Sunday in November 1920 George, who had been asked by Cardinal Mercier - a man of remarkable courage in his outspoken sympathy for Ireland - to invite Archbishop Mannix to give the annual lecture in connection with some important ecclesiastical event in Brussels, sent me to London to see the Archbishop personally. The Archbishop said he was greatly honoured but regretted very much he could not lecture in French.

On that occasion I saw Moya who informed me that she was going over to Ireland to work for the cause. I was quite taken aback and suggested that her duty was to stay to look after her family and she could work for the cause in London. I pointed out that Art O'Brien found it

difficult to get trusty workers and would be glad of her help in his office. She replied that she would have to be in the middle of things and take an active part in the movement. I assume that she came over about that time. She brought her children with her. There was not, as far as I am aware, any breach between herself and her husband, who came over to stay with her whenever he had holidays. She died in Newtownmountkennedy where she had taken a house. Her husband predeceased her. After her death her son Richard who had gone to live in London, took back his sister with him.

Signed : \_\_\_\_\_

*Margaret Gavan Duffy*  
(Margaret Gavan Duffy)

Date : \_\_\_\_\_

*August 7<sup>th</sup> 1952*

Witness:

*S. Ni Chiosain*

(S. Ni Chiosain)

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