

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

BURO STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21

No. W.S. 717

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21

STATEMENT BY WITNESS

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 717

Witness

Sister Francesca (Mary McDonagh),
St. Mary's Hospital,
Cappagh,
Finglas,
Co. Dublin.
Identity.

Sister of Thomas McDonagh, who was
executed in 1916;

Member of Irish Sisters of Charity,
Cappagh Hospital, Dublin.

Subject.

Historical background of
her family.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil

File No S. 2029

Form B S M 2

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Statement of Sister Francesca (Mary McDonagh),
St. Mary's Hospital, Cappagh, Finglas,
Co. Dublin.

I was stationed in Basin Lane Convent at the time of the Rising. Tom, Pearse and Plunkett visited me, accompanied by Dr. Houston, a Professor of Trinity, some time before the Rising. I had no idea about the Rising and I asked Pearse why he would not join a monastery. Dr. Houston was a great friend of that trio and used to visit me often after the Rising.

There were nine children in our family but three of them died in childhood. My mother was a musician, in fact she was a trained concert singer before she got married. Her name was Mary Borroughes-Parker and she was a Protestant but became a Catholic at the age of 19 but not in order to get married. Her father and mother were English. Her father had a position in the Greek Press in Trinity College. He too was a musician. She married my father at the age of 23. He was living in Tipperary. His father was a farmer there and had been a Fenian. He had built a school in his own lands, so that the children of the locality could be educated. His two uncles - McDonnell - on the maternal side were classical scholars. One of those also was a Hebrew scholar and his pupils were always admitted to Maynooth without an examination.

My father's mother had to sell out her place as she found it impossible to keep it. Then he took up teaching as a profession and his sister got married to Manus O'Donnell whose grandson is now a Major in the

British Army and who has a son studying at Trinity.

My father's school was in Cloughjordan where we were all born and brought up, and he tried to place his students and got many of them into the Civil Service. He taught Latin to those who wanted to be priests.

Four boys of our family and two girls survived - Tom, John, James, Joe, my sister Mrs. Bingham who died in America, and myself. Mrs. Bingham's sons were fighting in the Black and Tan War and George was imprisoned in Dartmoor for a long time. My brother Tom was executed after the Rising. John is still alive and married to Eileen Coyne. Jim who was a great musician died a couple of years ago. He played the viola and the oboe, was examiner for the Trinity College of Music in London and he was a member of several orchestras. He had three children who are all alive. Joe's three children are all alive too, two boys and a girl. Joe was our stand-by and when he went everything went. Tom's son, Donagh, is a Justice and his daughter Barbara is married to Liam Redmond, the theatre and film actor. Tom's wife, Muriel Gifford, was a darling and I was very fond of her. She was drowned a year after her husband's death. It was Noel Lemass and poor Rory O'Connor who came to tell me about it. They were out searching for her all night.

Tom was born on 1st February 1878. From Cloughjordan school he went to Rockwell College for a few years. He might have thought of going to be a priest but he went for teaching. He studied for the exams of the Royal University and became an M.A. He taught first at St. Kieran's College, Kilkenny. From there he went to Fermoy and then with P.H. Pearse he founded St. Enda's. I think

it was in 1910 he took a lectureship in English in the University.

After the death of Tom and his wife my brother John took charge of their two children. During their married years Tom and his wife went often on holidays to France. She was a relative of the Duke of Abercorn; she was a gentle quiet creature and never put on side.

Signed:

Date:

Witness:

J. Curran

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