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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 749.....

Witness

Miss Annie Farrington,
1 Great Denmark St.,
Dublin.

Identity.

Proprietress of Barry's Hotel,
1 Great Denmark St.,
Dublin.

Subject.

I.R.A. leaders who took shelter in
the Crown Hotel and Barry's Hotel, Dublin,
1919-1923.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil

File No. S.2051.....

Form B.S.M. 2

Statement by Miss ~~Anne Harrington~~

Barry's Hotel,
Gt. Denmark Street,
DUBLIN.

I became manageress of the Crown Hotel adjoining the Gresham in 1919. Before that I had been in the Spa Hotel, Lucan. Whenever Sean McKeon came to Dublin he stayed at the Crown under various names, Mr. Brown, Mr. Green, Mr. Black etc. A man called ^{way} Connors, who was afterwards a Colonel in the Army often came up with him. Various other people such as the Connollys, Sean Connollys relatives - visited him regularly. Collins came several times. Dan Breen used to be in there quite a lot.

Sean McGarry and Dan Kavanagh - he was a traveller from Wicklow - used to stay in the Crown too. Dick Cotter stayed regularly. One night there was a raid by the Auxiliaries. Evidently when Bob Price came a short time before Curfew to visit Dick he must have been spotted. I had told Bob that Dick was not in - and I thought he was not - and he left. All the time Dick was in my sittingroom and I found him there and I made him go up to bed. The Auxiliaries visited every room, leaving the light on in each as they left. They visited Dick's as well, but he was asleep and as he was without his teeth and his glasses he was not recognised and they put out the light in this case. One Auxiliary came in off the street and said there must be a secret room as there was one window without light. I went out into the street to see which room it was and I recognised it as Dick's. They went up again and switched on the light. Dick only grunted and they said "We have been here before", and left. The

Auxiliaries were puzzled - it was perfectly clear that they had some definite information about Dick or Bob Price and that they meant business that night and they asked me was there any way one could get out of the hotel except by the front door, as there was no back door. I said it was possible to get across the roof of the Oxford Billiard Rooms underneath and into the Granville next door. I knew that the Granville did not keep any of the lads on the run. The two hotels were owned by the same Belfast Company. The Auxiliaries raided the Granville then to the indignation of the Manageress who phoned her Directors the following day, saying that the Manageress of the Crown was keeping some dirty Sinn Feiners. It was Seán McGarry that told me this piece of news which was obtained by the tapping of the wires. She also came in and abused me for drawing the raid on her premises. Nothing was found in this raid.

Dan Breen stayed in the Crown several times. He had various people with him from time to time, Sean Treacy, Sean Hogan and others whose names I did not know. On one occasion about 6 or 7 of them came and they were in a dreadful condition. They had been sleeping inside the walls surrounding some church for several nights and had a few days growth of beard. Dan begged me to give them some sort of a shakedown. The hotel was full of guests and I went and took some of the mattresses from the beds and placed them on the drawing-room floor, leaving the guests with only the box springs.

They only stayed one night. I fed everyone that came in like that.

Several other wanted men whose names I cant now remember, stayed at the Crown, yet we never had

another raid except the one I have referred to.

On Bloody Sunday morning a few of the British Officers who were staying at the Gresham Hotel were shot and a short time after the porter, William Ingram, was arrested and brought to the Glasshouse prison in the Curragh where he was beaten and generally ill-treated. Possibly they were trying to extract some information from him. He was devoted to the Volunteers and would have done anything for them. He belonged to some battalion. I dont know which. He was released after some time but the Gresham would not take him back. Jim Joyce from Mayo who was a patron of the Gresham previous to this, stopped going there and came to the Crown. He asked me to give a job to William and I took him as a porter, as somebody happened to leave. He came with me afterwards in 1922 when I bought Barry's Hotel and stayed with me till he had to go into hospital to die. His brother-in-law is still with me as head waiter.

Sean McKeon was staying in the Crown Hotel in April 1920. He was probably up to meet Collins and he had a visitor, a young girl from Westmeath or Longford. He took her into the smoke room of the hotel and sat down at a large table that was there. She sat on the other side right opposite him. He told her that he had a message to send by her - I think to some member of his Company in Longford. He took a sheet of paper and started writing out the message and when he had finished he put it in an envelope which he closed and handed to her. He was not aware that she had followed every word as he wrote it and therefore knew the contents of the message.

She duly delivered the message to whoever it was for and the next morning early she went to an uncle of hers, a retired R.I.C. man and told him the message that McKeon had sent. I dont know the name of either the girl or her uncle. I never saw her before or since. Probably Seán himself would be able to give the information. Evidently the uncle went to the Tans and told them about the message which gave the clue about the train he intended to travel by. As a result the train was met in Mullingar by the Tans who started to search for McKeon. He made a dash for the gate and drew his gun but was caught after being wounded, and sent to prison. I did not see him again until he was let out of Mountjoy. The Crown was the first house he made for. I dont think he knew anyone as well as he knew us. We were always his friends. *It was Seán himself told me about the girl and the message.*

About a week before the Truce I bought Barry's Hotel which had been run by a Miss O'Dea who also kept some of the lads on the run. Owen O'Duffy and Eamonn Coogan stayed there for a long time and the place was never raided. She then bought Baggot House, much smaller premises. She afterwards married an ex-T.D. from Galway and both are dead since.

I went into residence in Barry's Hotel a couple of weeks before the I.R.A. Convention which took place in March 1922. We had a dreadful crowd of guests for that occasion, a lot of them from Galway and the West. There was terrific excitement. There was great diversity of views and they were arguing it out. They never came to blows. I remember especially a man called Mr. Kennedy from Dunmore, Co. Galway, who spoke very strongly against the Treaty. The discussions

were very heated but I had no time to listen to them as we were so busy trying to keep the meals and the beds going and we did not yet know our way about too well. All the old Barry Hotel visitors continued to come there and about three quarters of the Crown visitors followed me, although I did not canvass them. The Convention visitors remained for a few days. Many of those came back again in May and remained until the fighting started in June. Among the visitors I especially remember Liam Lynch, Moss Twomey, Dick Barrett and Joe McKelvey from Belfast. Joe's mother came to visit him during these weeks and I must say I have never seen a son show so much devotion and respect as he did to his mother. He treated her like a queen. It was wonderful to see it and it has always stuck in my mind. Liam Lynch was a marvellous character and the other lads used to warn us not to say anything flippant before him, as he was very religious and they looked upon him as a saint. After Liam's death, about August or September, his mother came to see us and wanted to find out everything we knew about Liam. She went to see the room he had occupied. She wanted to walk in his footsteps she said. She did not stay in the house. Barret was a very nice boy too and had a good sense of humour. He was a delicate sort of lad. I think he was a teacher from Cork. They were lovely people to have in the house, they were so well-behaved. Moss Twomey and Dick Barrett who were very jolly commandeered Jim Joyce's car and drove us out to Howth and Malahide past Jim's own place. They had commandeered a whole lot of cars as well as Jim's. He was not staying at Barry's at that time. At that time they had their headquarters at Parnell Square. Later they marched to the Four Courts

from Barry's. They formed up outside the hotel. They were accompanied by a Company from Tipperary including Bill Quirke. While the Republicans were imprisoned at a later date, I came in from town one evening. I was told that there was a present waiting for me upstairs. I went up and found Moss Twomey sitting in my room. He had escaped from jail. I understood it was from Mountjoy. He stayed the night and it was too dangerous to stay longer so he found some safer place.

At the outbreak of the civil war the first place attacked in the North side was the Fowler Hall which was occupied by the Republicans and which they had to leave. The morning of the attack William, my porter, went down to the rear of the building and climbed some steps to see what was happening. He poked his head in the door at the top of the steps. We were watching him and we saw him suddenly withdraw his head from a flying bullet. He had a narrow escape. The people inside the building thought he was one of the attacking party. He hastened back to us and within an hour our own hotel was occupied by the Republicans and the Citizen Army. Madame Markievicz was in charge of the Citizen Army and the leaders of the Republicans were there from time to time, including De Valera, Barton. I cannot remember the others. There were other women there too but I did not know them. This was on the Tuesday morning and the leaders were there till Wednesday night. They established their headquarters in the dining room. The first thing they did was to knock all the glass out of the doors and windows. They sandbagged the windows and stuck guns out between the bags. They allotted different rooms to the

various purposes. They cleared out all the visitors - about forty - giving them barely time to pack their bags. They cleared out the staff, but I refused to go and Miss Keogh and William the Porter stayed with me. The Headquarters Staff left on Wednesday night and took over the Hamman but they left a garrison in Barry's. The I.R.A. brought in oceans of food but I thought it queer that they did not want to give us any of it. We were not allowed to pass through the rooms they occupied. I cant remember how we put in our time during the occupation. I was half out of my mind thinking of all the money I owed the bank which financed the purchase of the hotel and I now saw the possibility of the whole place going up in smoke. This was the reason I refused to leave although they pointed out the risk I was running by staying. I cannot remember anything about those days because I was so distraught. They had the doors barricaded with my good tables and furniture. They did not use the door opposite Rutland Place for fear of being fired on but they opened up the door of the second house. At each side of the inner hall which this door led into they bored holes for guns for the protection of this door. They did all their cooking in the kitchen. I never went near it. Miss Keogh or somebody else used to bring me up a pot of tea.

When Moran's hotel which was also occupied by the Republicans was being shelled the garrison in Barry's began boring holes in the walls of the houses at each side of the hotel to assure a way of escape in case of an attack. As I went up the stairs I saw them at this work but when I came down a short time afterwards they had got word to leave the hotel and

they cleared out advising us to go with them as they were leaving land mines - one under the front door and another under the roof in the top storey. They left guns sticking out the window when they were going. However, the three of us stayed and I asked the man who was preparing the mines to cut the wires if that was humanly possible, but that if he had to do his duty, he could do it, but that we were staying. We knelt down to pray and I believe I said prayers that were never heard before or since. The man at the mines touched me on the shoulder and said "It is all right, Miss, I have detached them." Before they left, they went very hard on us to throw in our lot with them and take our chance with the other women of Cumann na mBan who were with them. I said "If the house is going up I will go up with it. We have nowhere else to go."

When they left our place William bolted all the doors and I went round all the rooms, switched on the lights and pulled in the guns - about a dozen of them - from the windows and stuck them up the chimney in the smoke-room. They were found by the Free State soldiers when they came - I think on the following morning. William protested at my putting on all the lights saying that it was asking for trouble.

When the garrison left, either Miss Keogh or William suggested putting out a white flag to save us from being shelled, but I refused, saying I would rather be blown up. We were not attacked by the Free State Army, although they searched the place and took away any arms etc. that were left. I had gathered up various papers containing lists of names of the whole garrison and instructions etc.

issued during the occupation. I am giving these to the Bureau. A lot of such papers have been already given away to souvenir hunters. I should have mentioned that one of the garrison was shot by a sniper on the Wednesday night on the way down to the Hammam and his body was brought back to our hotel. It was left for the night behind a screen on the landing. It was removed - probably for burial.- on the following day, but I never saw them bringing in a coffin or anything.

The night after the garrison left a couple of fellows, probably thinking there was nobody in the house broke in to loot. Miss Keogh, myself and the cook who had returned, had brought our beds downstairs to the dining room where there was a lift to the kitchen. We heard a noise and I went to the lift where we distinctly heard voices. We were afraid to go down so we called William and Miss Keogh opened the front door and asked a passerby for help. He said he would send somebody up from the corner. Four or five Free State soldiers came with a machine gun. Some of them went down the kitchen stairs and called upon the intruders to come out. Instead they retreated to the scullery under the area steps. The soldier with the machine gun took up his position on the steps of the other house and fired. We heard a most awful scream and the soldiers went into the scullery and brought out the three looters. One of them was wounded by a bullet which entered through the mouth into the brain. They brought him to the Mater - I think, in an ambulance - where he died almost immediately.

The Republican garrison left a large quantity of food behind them. A party of them called a day or two afterwards with a van and took a good deal of it.

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They left the bread and we were bringing this up from the kitchen for days and throwing it out the door to people on the street who looked half starved. We could not open the door wide to give it to them, as we were afraid they would rush in and mob us.

As a result of this experience I got neurotic rheumatism and had to get treatment in Harrogate twice. It was while I was there that my case for compensation came and it was Miss Keogh who had to represent me. I got the compensation but it barely covered what the contractor charged me. There was so much work of this kind to be done that the contractors were able to charge whatever they liked. I started to take visitors before the glass was put in the windows. I kept the shutters shut.

I have nothing more to tell you.

SIGNED: Annie Farrington
(Annie Farrington)

DATE: Nov 14 1952.
(Nov. 14th 1952).

WITNESS: S. Ni Chiosain
(S. Ni Chiosain)

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