

W.S. 798

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
BURO STAIRE MILEATA 1913-21
No. W.S. 798

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS

DOCUMENT NO. **W.S.** 798

Witness

Martin Conlon,
342A, North Circular Road,
Phibsborough,
Dublin.

Identity.

Centre I.R.B. Circle, Dublin, 1916;
Member of Supreme Council of I.R.B.
later.

Subject.

Detention of Bulmer Hobson by
Irish Volunteers in Martin Conlon's house,
Easter 1916.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

N11

File No. **S.71**

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Statement by Mr. Martin Conlon,

342^A, North Circular Road, Phibsboro,

Dublin.

In 1916 I was the Centre of an I.R.B. Circle - one of the Dublin Circles. It was not until much later that I became a member of the Supreme Council of the I.R.B. I hope to make a statement relating to that later period on a future occasion. At the moment I am confining myself to the episode of Mr.

Bulmer Hobson's "imprisonment" in my house in Phibsboro.
- 11 Altitude Terrace, Cabra Park, subsequently changed to 76, Cabra Park.

I had nothing to do with the actual arrest of Mr. Hobson, nor with any discussions leading up to the decision to arrest him. I acted under orders, as it were, to give the prisoner and his escort accommodation in my premises. As an I.R.B. man it sufficed, to ensure my co-operation in the matter, to have learned through I.R.B. channels that higher authority had decided on Mr. Hobson's arrest and to be asked through the same channels to participate on the lines indicated. This request to me would have been the procedure rather than a formal order, verbal or written.

In the event, Mr. Hobson was taken into custody on Good Friday 1916 and brought to my house. A Volunteer and I.R.B. member named John Tobin - accompanied possibly by another Volunteer - came with the prisoner. Tobin was a great friend of mine, but I have now lost

track of him. A brother of his - Jim Tobin - was one of those who acted as guards over Mr. Hobson during the next few days. These Tobins were no relations of Liam Tobin who later became prominent in association with Michael Collins and the Intelligence Department of the I.R.A.

I do not wish to convey that Mr. Hobson was actually made a prisoner before he arrived at my house. I believe the position was that he was given to understand that he was on his way to attend a meeting. It was on his arrival at my premises that he was actually informed that he was a prisoner. This was done by two or three men - I.R.B. men, of course - who were awaiting him there. The names of these men I cannot now recall with certainty, but I do remember that Maurice Collins and Murt O'Connell were the principal men engaged in carrying out the task of keeping Mr. Hobson in custody. They may also have been the men who were waiting for him and actually took him into custody, but of this I cannot be certain.

On and off in the course of his confinement in my premises, Mr. Hobson was inclined to be obstreperous, protesting against his arrest and so on, all of which was quite natural in the circumstances. I did what I could to calm him down, making clear to him my position in the matter as being that of merely carrying out orders.

I also had occasion to calm down the Volunteers in charge of the prisoner. By Easter Monday when it was known that the Rising was taking place, they had begun to bemoan the fact that they were engaged on this job

of prisoner-guarding and so would be out of things now that the fight was on. They felt so keenly on the point as seriously to contemplate drastic action to rid themselves of the prisoner. They were even suggesting he should be executed and dumped on the railway line which runs at the back of my place, but, possibly, they were not really in earnest about this. In any case, I made it clear to the Volunteer guards that I would not countenance any unauthorised action and that I had the means to oppose it - I had my revolver and indicated that it would be used if necessary. I succeeded in carrying my point that they would have to await orders as to what was to be done with the prisoner.

Such orders did in fact arrive in the course of the afternoon of Easter Monday. They were brought by Mr. Seán T. O'Kelly, who is now President O'Kelly. By then I was no longer in the house, having "mobilised" for the Rising and taken up my post in Church St. with my Volunteer Unit. The orders which President O'Kelly brought were in writing and came from Seán MacDiarmada. I have a facsimile of them which I hope to locate some time and to give to the Bureau of Military History for copying. They were to the effect that Mr. Hobson could now be released. These instructions were given effect to by whoever was in charge when they reached my house.

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Signed: Martin Conlon
(Martin Conlon)

Date: 9th July 1953

9th Feby. 1953

Witness: Bernadette Synnott
(Bernadette Synnott)
10 1/2 North Brook Ave
North Strand.