

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
BUREAU STAIRS MILITARY HISTORY
NO. W.S. 805

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 805

Witness

- (i) Mrs. Annie O'Brien } Thomond House,
(ii) Mrs. Lily Curran } Ballyboden Road,
Rathfarnham,
Dublin.

Identity.

Members of Cumann na mBan, Dublin,
1915-1924;

- (i) Adjutant in that Organisation, 1919 - .

Subject.

- (a) Cumann na mBan, Dublin, 1915-1924;
(b) Marrowbone Lane Distillery, Dublin,
Easter Week, 1916.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil

File No. ...S.2122.....

Form B.S.M. 2

STATEMENT BY MRS. DENIS O'BRIEN (Annie Cooney)
AND MRS. LILY CURRAN (COONEY),
Thomond House, Ballyboden Road,
Rathfarnham, Dublin.

I got mixed up in the national movement through people who were visiting our house, Christopher Byrne, who lived in our house for a long time, and was, in 1915, a lieutenant of F. Company of the 4th Battalion, and Con Colbert, who was captain of that company.

It was Con Colbert who proposed me as a member of Cumann na mBan, Inghinidhe Branch, which met alternately at 34 Camden St. and 6 Harcourt St. We had the lectures on First Aid, arms classes, etc. in Harcourt St. and the drill in Camden St. I was then 18 and my two sisters, Lily (now Mrs. Curran) and Eileen (now Mrs. Harbourne) joined the same year and the same branch.

It was in August 1915 I joined Cumann na mBan after the funeral of O'Donovan Rossa. I was selling the commemoration booklet at the funeral.

I attended regularly and obtained my certificate for First Aid and Home Nursing. I took part in the route marches and all the other activities of the unit. We marched mostly with the 4th Battalion when they were on manoeuvres on the Dublin Hills. We used to bring our food on these occasions - we did not light fires as the food we brought was eaten cold.

Our house was a centre of activity for F/Coy. of the 4th Battalion during the weeks preceding the Rising. Con Colbert, Christopher Byrne (who was still living there), Joe McGrath, quartermaster of the 4th, Phil Cosgrave (assistant quartermaster) were very frequent visitors and various other members who would be too numerous to mention were coming backwards and forwards to the house.

On one occasion a car drove up to the house after midnight. It contained square boxes full of ammunition that, I think, had come off the boat. Christy Byrne was in the car and we helped him to bring the stuff into the house. It remained there till they were ready to take it away for the Rising. We also had a bundle of pikes that were made at Inchicore Railway Works. These, too, were taken away for the Rising. I think they were actually used for breaking in the doors of the various places occupied by the 4th Battalion during the Rising.

Nearly every night Con Colbert used to call at our house up to the Monday of Holy Week. On that day he came with all his traps to stay with us. He wanted to be handy for his Company and Battalion because his digs in Ranelagh were rather far away.

I remember particularly one night a couple of weeks before that he came after one of his meetings. He had asked me to make some signalling flags. He took two photographs out of his pocket and asked me: "Would you care to have one of these?". One of the photos was of himself alone and the other of himself and Liam Clarke. I said I would be delighted and he actually gave me both and I have brought in one of them to show you. I was charmed because, to tell the truth, I thought an awful lot of him and, of course, he must have known it. He was not, however, at all interested in girls; he was entirely engrossed in his work for Ireland and devoted all his time to it. He had taken me to a few ceilis and concerts and always brought me home. There would be others in the party. He said, rather significantly: "Would you mind very much if anything happened to me in this fight that is coming on?" I said I would indeed, why do you ask?" He answered: "I might just be the one to be killed".

We all knew a fight was coming on and, when we saw the amount of stuff that was being accumulated in our house, we realised that it was coming very soon. These remarks of Con were as much as telling me about it although no date was mentioned.

Things were getting very lively as Holy Week went on. It came up to Wednesday when things began to hum really. On Good Friday they were very active coming and going to our house and I was very busy finishing my uniform coat to have it ready for Easter Sunday. I had cut it on the pattern of Con Colbert's coat. I was not at work that day and was all the time answering the door for the various Volunteers who were coming with messages and letters and to take ^{the} stuff away for distribution among the various companies of the battalion. Joe McGrath was handing some of this out. Christy Byrne was connected up with this work all the time. It went on all day and well on into the night of Good Friday and again on Saturday, but I was not there in the early part of that day. It was my younger sister who was attending to it then.

I think it was on Thursday or Friday night at a meeting in 6 Harcourt St. that we got our instructions to mobilise on Sunday at that address at 5 o'clock in the afternoon. We all turned up at the appointed time in spite of the countermanding order which was published in the "Sunday Independent". The attitude of the groups of Volunteers we knew was that they would take no notice of that sort of order. They were too anxious for the Rising and they were trained to obey the officers immediately over them and all these were keen to go out. We hung around 6 Harcourt St. for a while; finally our officers told us to go home and await further orders. Eileen Walsh (now Mrs. Martin Murphy) and Rose McNamara were our officers. It was Rose who was in command of my section. Marcella Cosgrove, who is now dead, was treasurer or quartermaster at that time.

When we returned home we had the same experience as during the morning. The Volunteers were in and out moving ammunition etc. There were a number of Volunteers from Dunboyne and we had to provide meals for them and others. We had to stay at home that evening and night to take in any messages coming ^{for ASD} from Con Colbert who was away attending meetings and who was expecting to get any minute the mobilisation order for the Rising. This message would come from Eamon Ceannt who was officer in command of the 4th Battalion. The first message - not, as far as I know, a mobilisation order - came about 10 p.m. by a courier, Tom Doran, who was a member of C/Coy. We passed this to Christy Byrne, who was next in command to Con Colbert. He dealt with it. No further message came until after Con's return. Some time around 2 or 3 a.m. Seoirse Irvine came with a message which Con dealt with himself. Some time about 7 Sean O'Brien, who was also a member of C/Coy., brought the actual mobilisation order, as far as I can remember. I offered to take it and keep it for Con who was then asleep. He would not give it to me but insisted on giving it himself to Con. He went into the room, woke him up and gave him the dispatch. Con got up at once and then the hurry and bustle started. He got into his navy blue suit and went off on his bicycle to 8 o'clock Mass and Holy Communion. He told me to have his breakfast ready when he came back. I did so. He was not back for a while because he went to give a few mobilisation orders. When he came back he sent my brother, who was very young but a member of the Fianna, to Eamon Ceannt to offer his services as dispatch carrier &c. While he was out he went to Mr. Young's house - three of his sons were in F/Company - to mobilise them and send them with mobilisation orders to the company. My sister Lily was sent to Larry Murtagh to mobilise the Chapelized section of F. Company. She went on her bicycle before we got our own mobilisation orders which

came exactly at 9 o'clock. She got back in time and in the meantime we asked my other sister Eileen to go to our Cumann na mBan mobilisation point to make sure that they knew we were coming and to explain that we still had work to do for the Volunteers before going out to Weaver's Hall in Donore Avenue where our section was to mobilise. Lily, when she came back, and myself were feverishly busy filling Christy Byrne's and Con Colbert's haversacks and our own with any food we could find. They were both now in uniform. We helped them to buckle on the haversacks and Sam Brown belts and they were all excited to get out. During the time I was buckling him up Con - who had not a note in his head - was singing "For Tone is coming back again" he was so excited and charmed that at last the fight was coming off. He thought of nothing else.

The pair went off, wheeling their bicycles which were loaded up with pikes, their rifles and small arms. We saw them off at the door and waited till they were out of sight. Then we got ourselves packed up and were not very long after them. When we arrived at the Weaver's Hall most of the section were there - 24 or 25 of us in all. We had to wait there for the word to tell us where we were to go. While waiting we did a bit of Irish dancing and amused ourselves generally. Word came for us to march down to Donore Avenue. We halted head on Cork St. and fell in behind Seamus Murphy's Company (A), which was about to take over Marrowbone Lane Distillery. Con Colbert and Christy had led their Company (F) to Watkins' Distillery in Ardee St. We marched into Marrowbone Lane Distillery after the Volunteers just as the Angelus was ringing. Rose McNamara led us in. We were told off - one squad of us in which I was - to the front of the building and the rest to the rear of the building. We had a full view of the front gate and could see everything that was going on. When our rations were exhausted we had to provide

food for ourselves and the Volunteers. Food that was passing by was commandeered and brought in. There was a butcher among the Volunteers who killed and prepared a beast that was brought in. This gave us food for a few days.

We were not long in the building when we heard the firing from the direction of the Union. Our captain was busy placing his men in position. I cannot remember whether our men had started any shooting that day. We had our quarters up in a barley loft and there was a sniping post just beside us, and the firing from there went on the whole week and our business was to look after the men who were there. There were other sniping posts in other parts of the building.

On Tuesday night a small band of C/Coy., who had vacated Roe's Distillery after their captain had left, joined our garrison. Among them were the three O'Brien brothers, Larry, Paddy and Denis (whom I afterwards married). I only knew their names at that time. They were brought up to our loft to rest. They had spent the night (Monday) trying to reach our post, having failed to get into the Union. We had been told that Con Colbert and his company were coming to join us as soon as they could and when I heard the footsteps on the stairs I thought it was they. I was quite disappointed when I saw the C/Coy. boys. They were all very young, most of them under 18.

At dawn on Wednesday morning the part of F/Coy. 4th Battalion under Colbert who had been in Watkins' Brewery arrived. They came in their stockinged feet to avoid detection by the British. The arrival of Con and his company put new spirit into the atmosphere of our post. Up to this the Volunteers' activity had been confined to the interior of the building; sniping from the different points had been kept up intermittently. One British soldier had been killed at the corner of Forbes Lane by one of our snipers who were posted on the bridge leading to the part of

the distillery on the other side of the road. From the snipers' post at the back of the distillery there had been intermittent shooting towards the back of the Union and there was certainly one soldier killed there and possibly more. Immediately Con Colbert placed an outpost in an open position on the green sward near the bank of the canal. There was a public road between their position and the canal bank and they lay on the ground. From there they were able to pick off any British soldiers that attempted to enter the Union grounds from the back. The members of this outpost were changed from time to time and the place was regularly visited by Con. My late husband, who was an occasional member of this outpost and any of the others that I knew spoke highly of Con for having thought of this strategical plan. They admired him as a great soldier.

That outpost remained active for the rest of the week until the surrender.

The members of Cumann na mBan had very little First Aid work to do. Mick Liston, who occupied a post at the back of the building commanding the back of the Union, was slightly wounded during the week. We bandaged his head and he went back to his post. He was very keen and a very good sniper. Our main activity was preparing food and generally looking after the welfare of the men.

My father visited us on Tuesday to see how we were getting on and to see if we wanted anything and to bring us a change of clothing. Someone had told him we were seen going into the Distillery. He came again on Wednesday, On that day he took messages from the Inchicore men of the company to their people who were probably worrying about them. He was seen coming out of the Distillery by one of the "Separation" women and she trailed him up along until he came as far as Kilmainham Police Station - he did not know this, She reported him to the police who arrested him and kept

him in the station for the night. The next day the police handed him over to the military in Richmond Barracks. He was removed from there to Kilmainham Gaol where he was detained until he was ^{A.C.B.B.} reported to Wakefield with the other prisoners after the surrender. We three wondered why he did not visit us again and we only found out about his arrest on the Sunday of the surrender as we were forming up outside the gate of the distillery. Somebody shouted the information to us.

On the Sunday things seemed to have quietened down and the shooting had diminished. It was so quiet in comparison to the rest of the week that we decided to relax, and we were to have a ceillidhe that night. Seamus Murphy had given us permission for it if things continued to be all right.

We had no Mass on Sunday. Earlier in the week we had a visit from ^{Fr Joseph A.C.B.} one of the Mount Argus priests who heard all our confessions and gave us his blessing.

On Sunday afternoon a message came from Ceannt in the Union to Seamus Murphy telling him to be ready to surrender. The news was received very badly and there was great disappointment. There was dreadful grousing; they were saying "Was this what we were preparing for and living for all this time? Is this the end of all our hopes?" They were flinging their rifles around in temper and disgust. Then word went round the whole distillery that we were to assemble in front of the building for the surrender. There were a few who refused to surrender and they cleared off. It took some time to gather them from all points of the building and to persuade them to obey the order. It was finally brought home to most of them that as soldiers it was their duty to obey the order of their leader.

While we were trying to get some of the last of them down I was standing at the window of the barley loft and saw the gate being opened by Sergeant O'Neill who had been in charge

of it all the week - it was barricaded on the inside. When it opened who walked in but Eamon Ceannt who had come down from the Union. He was like a wild man; his tunic was open, his hair was standing on end and he looked awful. He evidently hated the task of asking the garrison to surrender. He put his two hands on the barricade, with his head bent, and presented a miserable appearance. With Ceannt was a British military officer to whom he had already surrendered. There was a third person, but I can't now recall exactly who it was.

Then the garrison surrendered through Seamus Murphy and prepared to leave. Ceannt had already gone away with his escort. I had a good view of the whole proceedings from the window at which I stood. Having induced the last unwilling man on the loft to obey orders, I was going down to assemble with the others when I met Lieutenant Sean O'Broin. I had a little set-to with him about his attitude towards the surrender and, while we were talking, Con Colbert came up to see whether the order had been obeyed and to ensure that nobody was left behind. He ordered O'Broin to go down and I asked Con what was going to happen to himself. He said he did not know, whatever the British authorities liked to do with him; but if he came through he would come back to our house. He went down to take his place with the others and I followed Seamus Murphy and he gave the order to move off. We Cumann na mBan fell in behind the Volunteers. They had tried to persuade us to go home, but we refused, saying that we would stick it out to the end. I certainly have the impression that we could have gone away home if we wanted to.

We marched from the Distillery to Ross Road beside St. Patrick's Cathedral. When we got there the whole 4th Battn. was lined up there and also the men from Jacob's. The British troops were there in force lined up on each side of Ross Road.

We took up our positions behind the rest of the 4th Battn. and the surrender took place there. The Volunteers had to lay down their arms and they had to take off their bandoliers and Sam Brown belts. The British officers asked us had we any arms or ammunition. We said no, though a few of us had small arms that some of the Volunteers had given us to keep safe for them, thinking that we would not be arrested or searched.

Thinking the men would be taken away and we would not see them again, I went forward to where Con Colbert was standing to see whether there was anything he wanted me to do for him and also to get some souvenir in case I should never see him again. He was standing in rank with the other Volunteers with one sock in one hand and a piece of my mother's brown bread in the other. I asked him for a souvenir. "Here" he said, "these are all I have". He had, like all the others, been stripped of all his accoutrements. I did not take either of the articles he offered me, as I thought he might need the brown bread and the sock. He abominated holes in his socks and I mended a pair for him during the week and this was probably one of them.

The Volunteers were marched off and we were in ranks of four behind them, keeping step. There were two lines of armed soldiers marching at each side of us, for which we were presently thankful, as we would have been torn to pieces by the "separation" women who followed us shouting out abuse and obscene language at us. They were kept at bay by the soldiers. The men asked us to sing all our marching songs in which they joined. They said this kept their hearts up. This went on the whole way till we reached Richmond Barracks. We marched right into the big square, where we were halted. There we were separated from the men who were put into a separate building. We were all - 22 of us - brought into a large building up the stairs and we were first put into a rather small room, where we were divided up for the night, eleven of

us in each of two rooms. A British military sergeant had charge of us and brought us tea in a bucket and some hard biscuits which we called dog biscuits. We ate and drank what we got, as we were hungry. The sergeant apologised for the sort of food he had to give us.

We spent the night there - not sleeping, as we had no mattresses or any sort of sleeping accommodation. In any case we thought it safer to remain awake, as we did not know what the soldiers might be like. We spent the night saying the rosary and talking. We wondered what was happening to the men.

There was a small, rather primitive lavatory attached to our room, for which we were thankful; we had not to go out at all to the corridors.

I should mention that we still had the guns in our possession that were given to us by the Volunteers to keep. During the night the sergeant asked us if we had any guns on us as we would be likely to be searched by the soldiers at some later stage. We foolishly said we hadn't, thinking we would be sent home and could hold on to them and not be searched. When he had gone out Miss McNamara, who was in charge of us, became a bit worried about the position. Eventually she decided we would say the Rosary for guidance as to what we should do. We noticed a fireplace in the room and somebody suggested that we should put them up the chimney. We found a couple of ledges at the side of the chimney and stuck them up there. We felt satisfied that we had not handed them over to the British anyway, and we had some faint, if silly, notion that they might be recovered in some time.

The next morning - probably after another bucket of tea and biscuits were given to us - we were brought out to the square again, lined up and marched off to Kilmainham. The

first thing that caught our eyes was an inscription inside the big gate "Sin no more lest worse shall come to thee". This struck us as very humorous. We were searched by wardresses from Mountjoy. We were glad then that we had got rid of the guns. We were put three in a cell, the majority on the ground floor. They were dreadful, filthy places, not having been used for years before that. We got two palliasses - which the soldiers called biscuits - between every three prisoners. Miss Lou Kennedy and Agnes McNamee - since dead - were with me. We took turns at night on the palliasses, not sleeping very much, of course. After a couple of days and a row which some^{us}/of kicked up, the number in each cell was reduced to two. All our food was dished up to us by soldiers, the same as they got themselves. We got no cutlery. It was all in mess tins, cocoa and skilly. The same tins were used all the time for all the meals. The taste of the skilly was in the cocoa. My sister, Lily, never ate or drank anything the whole time she was there.

There were other women prisoners in Kilmainham when we arrived and others arrived during the week, among them Countess Plunkett. We got out for exercise for an hour every day and were locked up in our cells the rest of the time. The lavatory was outside and the wardresses accompanied us to and from it. We were allowed to wash at a pipe at the end of the corridor. Having no toilet requisites, we asked for a towel and basin. One of the wardresses, whom we called the sergeant-major, replied: "You must remember it is in a prison you are, not in a hotel". I luckily had a triangular bandage in my pocket and I used that, sharing it with the others.

We had the same routine every day until the Sunday. On that day we were all brought to Mass in the prison church. We were on the gallery from which we had only a view of the altar and the front seat. We were able to see Eamon Ceannt,

Michael Mallin, Con Colbert and Sean Heuston, who were kneeling in the front seat. They were the only ones to receive Holy Communion, which we thought significant. That affected us all and I began to cry. We craned our necks to try to see more, but the wardresses pulled us back.

When the Volunteer prisoners were leaving the church those four were the last to leave and they looked up at us and we waved down to Con Colbert, who waved his hand in reply shaking his head up and down as if in farewell. They evidently knew what their fate would be. They were all four executed next morning,

My father, who was also a prisoner in Kilmainham at the time, although we did not know it then, afterwards told us that he stood back at the door to have a word with Con as he passed out. Con ran over to him, shook hands and said goodbye to all at home.

All the prisoners were brought to their respective cells. My father afterwards pointed out to us the cell in which Con was imprisoned.

That Sunday night Con sent for Mrs. Seamus Murphy, who was a prisoner with us. A soldier came along to fetch her and accompanied her to Con's cell. He told her he was going to be executed at dawn and, according to what she told me when she came back, gave her a letter for me. The guard said that the letter would have to be censored and Con took it back and would not let the guard have it while she was there. He must have torn it up, because the letter which I afterwards got from him and which I showed to Mrs. Murphy was much shorter - so she said - than the one he was giving her for me.

Mrs. Murphy was brought back to her cell and was not able to contact me until the next morning in the exercise ground, when she told me that I would get a letter from Con. He was executed at dawn on 8th May. We all heard the

volleys on that morning as on the previous mornings of the other executions. Myself and my cell mate knelt down and said the Rosary for whoever had been executed. We did not then know who it was. We knew it, of course, a few hours later when we saw Mrs. Murphy, and it upset us very much,

On previous days after the volleys, a soldier prisoner who was chopping wood in the yard on to which our cell window showed, slipped a piece of brown paper in through our window on which was written the number of "our men who are gone today" and any other information that he thought might interest us. He did it on this day, too, but of course he did not know the names.

On that Monday, while we were all locked in our cells, Father Albert, who had attended the doomed men that morning before and during their execution, came to visit the women prisoners in the cells which were opened to him by the wardresses. We were very glad to see him, especially because we immediately felt his sympathy for us, whereas the prison chaplain, Father Ryan, whom we knew, had quite disapproved of us, and showed it very definitely, refusing even to take a message to our mother.

Father Albert showed his sympathy so plainly that we cried on his shoulder and he consoled us, gave us his blessing and heard our confessions. He took the names and addresses of every one of us and promised us to contact our people and give them our messages. He must have delivered our messages very promptly because in the evening my brother Tom, who was the only one at home besides my mother, came to us with the sweets and biscuits we had asked for.

There was curfew at 8 o'clock or 9 o'clock and during curfew we, prisoners, were ordered to assemble in the central hall. We thought we were being shifted. There were a lot of British officers there and a priest, Fr. McCarthy, who was,

I think, chaplain to the British army there. We were wondering what our fate was going to be and where we were going to. The officers replied - probably to annoy us - "off to Jamaica to pick oranges" adding that the boat was due to sail. We were lined up and our names were called from a list that one of the officers had. After a period of awful suspense he announced that the persons whose names he had called were to be released. I can't say whether all the women prisoners' names were on that list, but certainly all our garrison were on it. He also announced that curfew was on and that if we chose to go that night we would have to take the risk of passing the barricades and being arrested again, or we could wait till morning. Some of the girls who had long distances to go chose to wait till morning, but we decided to go. Fr. McCarthy, although by no means sympathetic, told us that he would escort us through the barricades. The three of us eventually got home, having parted with the others at different points. There was no one on the streets and the tramp of our feet could be plainly heard and was recognised by our mother at a considerable distance from the house.

When we got in the first thing we said to our mother was: "Mother, Con is gone". We thought she did not know it, but she had seen it in the paper that morning. She thought we did not know and was not going to mention it at first.

Before we left Kilmainham an English sergeant, who worked in the office and was very sympathetic, told us that he had something to give us and that if we came back the next morning he would give it to us. Lily and I went to Kilmainham early on Tuesday. Of course, we were also to locate my father who, we thought, might be a prisoner in Kilmainham too. The sergeant gave us the letter from Con, his watch and his prayerbook. The prayer book was for Con's sister, Lila, and the sergeant asked us if we could deliver

it to her. We undertook to do so, although we did not know her address at the time. Con, with all his intimacy with us, spoke to us very little of his family. She eventually came to our house and we gave her the prayerbook and all Con's clothes.

You might like to copy the letter which shows his wish about the watch.

Kilmainham Gaol,
7.5.'16.

My dear Annie and Lily,

I am giving this to Mrs. Murphy for you; she'll not mind to hear of what is happening, and she'll get you all to pray for those of us who must die. Indeed you girls give us courage, and may God grant you Freedom soon in the fullest sense. You wont see me again, and I felt it better not to have you see me, as you'd only be lonely, but now my soul is gone and pray God it will be pardoned all its crimes. Tell Christy and all what happened and ask them to pray for me.

Goodbye, dear friends and remember me in your prayers.

Your fond friend

(Sgd.) C. O Colbáird

Mrs. M. will give you Christy's watch.

Of course, we gave the watch to Christy Byrne.

We inquired - but not of the sergeant - if my father was in Kilmainham, and we were told to try Richmond Barracks. He was not there, and we were told to go to Portobello. He was not there. We came home and told my mother that. She then suggested we should try the Kilmainham Police Barracks, which we did. They told us he had been taken to Kilmainham Prison. We went back there and found that he was there all the time. They let us in to see him in the exercise ground where he was in the company of many other prisoners. We spent some time talking to him and the other prisoners, some of whom we knew. We visited him every day after that until he was sent to Wakefield.

During the summer when the prisoners were being released from England we used to go every morning to the North Wall to meet the boat at 6 o'clock, and one fine morning my father stepped off the boat with a few other prisoners. He was surprised and delighted to see us. He told us that when they had been put out of the prison in Wakefield, having been given travel vouchers, they marched through the town, singing patriotic songs, and that the inhabitants of Wakefield had shown them the greatest sympathy.

After the Rising the Inghinidhe Branch of Cumann na mBan reorganised its activities. These consisted chiefly of looking after the prisoners and their dependants. The organisation of the National Aid for prisoners' dependants had been set up immediately after the Rising and its chief object was the collection and distribution of money to aid the dependants of the thousands of prisoners who were deported to England where they were held until the end of the year. The part of Cumann na mBan, our branch included, was to collect money at the church gates, holding flag days on the streets, organising different functions such as ceilidhthe and concerts. We did the collecting and others were organised as distributors, who brought the money to the houses of those who were in need of it. This continued not only to the end of the year when the bulk of the prisoners came home, but also afterwards until the released men were in a position to support their families. There were also, of course, many families whose breadwinners were executed or killed in the Rising, which had to be helped for many years after.

We were fully/organised all this time, attending lectures in First Aid and Home Nursing at No. 6 Harcourt St., which were given by Dr. Kathleen Lynn, Paddy McCarvill, who was not yet qualified, and Dr. Geraghty, who lived in Westland Row at that time.

These activities went on over a number of years - in fact up to the period of the Black and Tan war. We also resumed our military training, acting more closely in co-operation with the Volunteers. This training consisted of all kinds of drill for which we had instructors who were supplied from the 3rd Battalion. The principal one I remember was Simon Donnelly, who was adjutant of that battalion. When he did not come himself he sent substitutes from the battalion. Our Branch took part in all public funerals, such as those of Ashe, Coleman and Pierce McCann. We had some manoeuvres and route marches up the hills, and test mobilisations. Our captain was still Miss Lou Kennedy, who was a very strict disciplinarian insisting on prompt and constant attendance and administering a sharp rebuke to anybody who was slack or unpunctual. This kept us up to the mark.

In the early stages of the organisation each Cumann na mBan branch was governed by a President, vice-President, Secretary and Treasurer. This continued even after the Rising. It was arranged prior to the Rising that our Branch should be divided into two sections - one, under Miss Eileen Walsh, the President, to operate with the 3rd Battalion which was to be located in Boland's Mills. We learned after the Rising that this Section as a body did not, in fact, take part in the Rising because the 3rd Battalion had no members of Cumann na mBan with them, and I have already covered the activities of our section.

Some time during 1918, during the autumn as far as I can remember, it was decided to re-form each branch of Cumann na mBan into a semi-military organisation governed by a captain, first and second lieutenants, an adjutant, quartermaster, section leaders and squad leaders. Our branch had four sections. Each section was subdivided into two squads.

At the annual general meeting of our branch in October,

1919, I was elected adjutant, in succession to Miss Quigley. That entailed keeping the roll of members - their names and ~~addr~~ addresses - which was done entirely in Irish. At every meeting the roll was called and answered - in Irish. I answered all correspondence and in fact generally did the work of a secretary. The captain and the adjutant generally attended the District Council which was held weekly, generally on Sunday morning, at 25 Parnell Square. All branches sent their captain and adjutant to these meetings to report on the week's work. On a Sunday morning in September 1918, we attended with the rest of Cumann na mBan, a meeting in Foster Place to protest against the continued detention of the women who were in English prisons. These were Mrs. McBride, the Countess Markievicz and Mrs. Clarke. The speakers were all women and they spoke from a jaunting car. The speakers I remember were Mrs. Sheehy-Skeffington and Helena Molony, who continued to speak in spite of interference by the police. Finally the police dispersed the meeting with their batons.

I should mention that we were still collecting money, now chiefly for arms for the I.R.A. as the Volunteers were now called. We assembled outside Mountjoy Prison during the hunger strike and took part in any demonstrations of that kind that took place, as well as any public meetings of a political nature.

I have not referred to the fact that I and my sisters were members of the Inchicore Branch of the Gaelic League which was started immediately after the release of the 1916 prisoners. We met at Emmet Hall, Inchicore, which belonged to the Labour organisation. Michael Mallin's widow and children had apartments there. Although Irish language and dancing classes were held there, the Branch really became a meeting place for the I.R.A. and Cumann na mBan. The building was close to Richmond Barracks and one night after some anti-British activity we got word from somebody in the barracks that the military were going to attack

and burn down the hall. The men, under their O/C., decided they would defend it and sent some of our members, including my sister Lily, to procure guns. Everybody was ready for the attack, but it did not come off. This would have been ~~before October 1919~~ *in the autumn of 1918 A.O.P.*

Some time in 1920 there was an ammunition factory in a bicycle shop in Parnell St. and some of the produce of the factory was brought to our house chiefly by Tom Young and Gabriel MacGrath, who were workers in the factory. My father who was a fitter in the Dolphins Barn Brick Works, transferred the stuff which mainly consisted of bomb cases, to his workshop with the connivance of the manager, Mr. Cassidy, who was favourable to the cause. Very often we would carry the parcels to the dump if my father did not happen to be at home. Christy Byrne was the prime mover in the matter as he was friendly with Mr. Cassidy, and he used to distribute the stuff to his battalion. That dump remained there till the end of the activities and although the Black and Tans, whose suspicions must have been aroused, raided the Brick Works several times, the dump was never discovered. My father, who had pride in having it there, took every precaution to safeguard it.

Our ordinary Cumann na mBan activities went on during all this time and we never missed any of them. We took part, for instance, in the anti-conscription campaign, attending protest meetings, church-door collections, flag days, making field dressings and, in fact, all the regular activities that membership of Cumann na mBan entailed. For instance, on the 9th June, which we called Lá na mBan, the women of Dublin marched to the City Hall to sign the anti-conscription pledge and we members of Cumann na mBan took a prominent part in this activity.

n At the end of 1918, when the 'flu epidemic raged,

the members of Cumann na mBan went to nurse the poorer victims in their homes which were mostly in the slum districts. We also nursed them in St. Ultan's Hospital which had just been opened.

As members of Cumann na mBan we paraded around Mountjoy during the hunger strike of 1920. While that was on we used to be there every night until summer time singing national songs and praying for the prisoners some of whom told us afterwards that our presence was a great support to them. On the day of the general Labour strike in sympathy with the prisoners we spent the whole day outside the prison.

At the suggestion of the O/C. of the 3rd Battalion, Joe O'Connor, an official First Aid station was started in a house at South Frederick St. early in 1920, where Gus Connolly, another member of the 3rd Battalion, lived. Our sister Eileen, who was not at business, was on duty there from time to time, taking her turn with other members. On occasions after a street ambush wounded Volunteers were treated there, or girls on duty there were sent for to attend the wounded at other parts of the city. This station remained open until the Truce. I think there was another similar station somewhere else.

When Kevin Barry was in Mountjoy under sentence of death in the autumn of 1920, we paraded around the prison on the day before the execution praying and singing hymns, and on the morning of the execution we arrived at the prison at 6 o'clock and remained there praying until the warder posted the notice of his death outside the gate. We then went to Gardiner St. Church for Mass before proceeding to our business.

On the Saturday night before Bloody Sunday, about 11.30, we were approached by Christy Byrne, who was O/C. of F/Coy. of the 4th Battalion. He told us that we were wanted to be ready at 6 o'clock the next morning, as there was a big job on

and they wanted the three of us to be at the University Church at 6 o'clock and to wait there till he and the two others, namely the 1st and 2nd lieutenants of that company, James Donnelly and Eddy Bennett, would arrive and hand over their guns to us.

We were at the Church at the appointed time and, to avoid attracting attention, we went into the church in turns, two at a time, and attended Mass, while the third remained in the porch and watched. We heard the shooting quite near, as the operations were in progress in that area, and, after waiting during what seemed to us an eternity, the three fellows came along walking pretty smartly and handed over their guns to us, one each, in a laneway between the church and Harcourt St. corner. We put the guns in our pockets and proceeded home via Cuffe St. and other lanes, avoiding the main roads. The three fellows walked some distance behind us. One of them came the whole way to our house. When we reached a comparatively safe distance from the scene of operations, we entered an open hallway in a slum district and I handed over the gun I had to Jimmy Donnelly and he went on his way. My sisters brought the other two guns home and Christy Byrne came with us. We parted with Eddy Bennett on the journey.

Later that day my sister, Eileen - now Mrs. Harbourne - was asked by a nun in the Sisters of Charity, Basin Lane, who was a sister of Joe McDonagh, T.D., to go and see her. When Eileen arrived she found Joe McDonagh in the convent parlour. Sister Francesca, Joe's sister, wanted Eileen to make arrangements to get a safe place for Joe to go. Eileen came back and brought Christy Byrne to the convent to discuss the matter with Joe. Eileen kept guard in the hall to prevent any inquisitive nuns butting in. Then she was called in and given some letters to be delivered in Moyne Road at Joe's house. The people there would know what to do with them.

My sister Lily was also sent to deliver an urgent letter to Father Albert in Church St. She thought it had to do with Joe McDonagh's safety.

We were fortunate enough to escape raids during all that period, although our house was constantly used by the men on active service. The first raid we had was on the 2nd February 1921. It was on a Saturday. It was the military who came one morning in two lorries. My mother and my sister Eileen were alone in the house. The military did not say what they were looking for, but they searched the house from top to bottom for three or four hours. When we came home to dinner they were there and, of course, we got no meal except a cup of tea. The only thing they found was an area map in which they said certain houses occupied by British soldiers or officers were marked. We did not know the map was there at all. Eileen was alert enough to save my Cumann na mBan records by taking them out of their box and bringing them into the nextdoor neighbour's house.

Christy Byrne happened to be in the house when the military came and he tried to escape but he found the house was surrounded. They put him in the sitting room with a guard and Eileen in another room similarly guarded. We arrived while the military were upstairs and came into the house to find this state of affairs. We were asked our names which we gave. We went upstairs and found an officer reading a letter he took from a box where we usually kept our Cumann na mBan papers and personal letters. The letter began "Dear Cissy" which was what I was called at my place of business, so the officer accused me of lying to him about my name and I was told to stand aside and not to leave the room. He went to Eileen and asked her her name again. He told her to get ready as he was arresting her. He came back to me and said: "You come too". My mother was very worried about Eileen, who was very young, being taken, and I told her it was all

right as I would be with her. But then the officer went out to the yard. We watched him through the window and saw him take out of his pocket a piece of paper which he read carefully. He came in again and said to Eileen: "You can stay", and to me: "I am taking you". All this time we were certain that Christy, who did not know what was going on, would be arrested. To his great surprise the guard was taken off him and sent out to the lorry. Christy was left and I was taken.

I was brought to the Bridewell; my mother was very relieved that Eileen was left at home. I was between the driver and the officer. There was a hostage in the lorry too, a good-looking chap out of C/Coy. I was not allowed to talk to him. At the Bridewell I was searched by two women searchers. Of course they found nothing on me. I was put into one of the cells where there was another Cumann na mBan girl who had been arrested earlier in the day. Her name was Miss Kelly. We became acquainted. Later on that evening there were four more girls thrown into the cell. They were all teachers in Dominican Convent, Eccles St. which had been raided earlier in the day by the military, who went to arrest Margaret Brown (now Mrs. McEntee). Margaret Brown was, in fact, teaching there at the time, but they did not succeed in identifying her. All their teachers were asked their names, but these four, Máire Cotter, Kitty Costello and two others, whose names I don't remember, refused to give them and they were all arrested as the military were probably convinced that Margaret Brown was among the four. Those four were, I think, let go on Sunday evening.

Miss Kelly and I were brought on Monday night from the Bridewell to Mountjoy. When we got there we were put into the reception wing until morning. I was surprised at the cleanliness in Mountjoy after my experience in Kilmainham. The next morning we were brought upstairs and put into our

cells. There was an empty cell between us. We were let out for exercise each morning and evening for two hours each time. When we got out the first day we were allowed to associate with the other political prisoners. Eileen McGrane, Ethna Coyle, Máire Rigney and Lily Dunne were there. As far as I remember, that was the first time Ethna Coyle was in Dublin. After a couple of weeks the two Sharkey girls and Peg McGuinness from Roscommon arrived at the prison together from, I think, Athlone Barracks. Peg McGuinness was a courier for Sean McKeon's column. There was also a girl called Toolan from the same direction, I believe. Two or three months later Miss Keogh from Gorey was brought. That was when I had been transferred to the tried wing. Some time after that Frances Brady and Molly Hyland came and Linda Kearns also.

I was in Mountjoy about three weeks when the authorities decided to do something about us. I was brought one day to the governor's office and then I was brought unaccompanied by any woman in a canvas covered military van to Dublin Castle into the presence of Lieut.Colonel Spooner. I was questioned about signing a form for my release. He did not show me the form but told me that if I signed it I would be released immediately. I asked him first what I had been arrested for. He was quite embarrassed to have to admit that he did not know, so I said I did not see the fun in signing a form for my release when they did not know what I was arrested for. He tried to coax me into signing by referring to the misery of being locked up in that lovely weather when I could be enjoying myself outside. I refused, saying that if he produced a charge against me, I would know where I stood. He said he would try to find out and went off. He came back after some time and said it seemed to be a charge of spying, that a map had been found in my house with certain houses marked on it. He suggested that I knew the penalty in such a case was a serious one and asked me would I sign now.

I refused. Then he said angrily: "You can go back and rot in Mountjoy". I was brought back by the same men to Mountjoy where I was clearly not expected, because my cell had been cleaned out and made ready for the next visitor. The other prisoners were out in the exercise ground and were surprised to see me. I told them what had happened. Eileen McGrane was O/C. of the prisoners and I made my report to her.

Some short time after that I was called into the governor's office again to meet an official who held some papers in his hand - it was the form again which I was asked to sign. I again refused and after further pressure on me he went off. He was more good-humoured about it than the Lieut.Colonel. After another short period the governor informed me that I was going to be tried and he produced a charge sheet which I still have and which reads as follows:

CHARGE SHEET

The Accused, Annie Cooney, of 16 Upper Basin Street, Dublin, in the County of Dublin, Ireland, civilian, is charged with:*

Failing to comply with the requirements of an order made by the Competent Military Authority under Regulation 79A(1) Of the Restoration of Order in Ireland Regulations in contravention of Regulation 79A(2) of the Restoration of Order in Ireland Regulations,

in that she,

on the second day of March, 1921, at Lower Castle Yard in the County of the City of Dublin, Ireland, did, contrary to an order of the Competent Military Authority dated 28th February, 1921, fail to enter into recognizances with sureties to keep the peace

and be of good behaviour.

Statement of Evidence in the case of Annie Cooney,
16 Upper Basin St., Dublin.

Witness "A" states: - At Dublin about 11.00 hours on 2nd March, 1921, I was present at Headquarters, Dublin District Lower Castle Yard when the accused Annie Cooney, whom I identify, was ordered to enter into Recognizances by the Competent Military Authority. I can identify the "Order" which was given to Miss Annie Cooney.

(Signed) "A"

I was tried on the 27th April. I remember that because my husband's sister was married on the same day. I was able to inform my family that the trial was to be at the North Dublin Union. Untried prisoners were allowed two visits a week. I told Eileen McGrane that I should not on principle be allowed to go to my trial without being accompanied by a wardress. She agreed and had it arranged accordingly. On the appointed day my two sisters were outside the Union, waiting to see if they could get any sign of me. They succeeded in getting in to the building. I was brought with a wardress in the front of a military lorry, which was filled with soldiers, to the Union. There were crowds of Black and Tans stationed in the place. As I passed through the waiting room I saw my sisters and I said a few words to them. I did not feel any way perturbed. When I was brought into the trial room, I was put sitting on a bench with a wardress behind me. She was very nervous lest I might say or do something that might prejudice my case. She was very friendly and nice. I think her name was O'Loughlin and she was always willing to do various little services for us. After a short interval the members of the Court - about four of them - who were all

and
in civvies, came in and took their places at the table. One of them read out the charge against me and I was asked had I anything to say in my defence. I said I did not recognise the authority of the Court to try me, that the only authority to do so was a Court of the Irish Republic. I had memorised a few such stock phrases the night before with the help of Eileen McGrane. So one looked at the other and they all grinned. One of them was busy writing down everything I said I said no more and was shortly brought out to the waiting room where I was allowed to talk to my sisters. There was a Press representative there also - I think from the Freeman's Journal - I handed him the statement of what I said, I had been warned to do that to prevent any misrepresentations of what occurred at the trial. I was brought back to Mountjoy to await the result of the trial. Shortly after I was sent for to the Governor's office one night after being locked up. He told me I was sentenced to six months' imprisonment reduced to four, so that I would have to spend only one month in the tried wing, as the sentence was to date from my arrest. The next morning I was shifted to the "tried" wing, where Countess Markievicz and Miss Rigney were. The latter had been tried and sentenced to, I think, twelve months. It was there I met Miss Keogh for the first time. She was called the "gun woman". She was then middle aged, at least we thought her much older than the rest of us.

I did my month in that wing. I saw no visitor during that time and we were not allowed to mix with the other women prisoners. During that time Ethna Coyle was also tried and transferred to our wing. The treatment was good, except that we were not allowed parcels. We got plenty of books from the library. These were brought to us by the wardresses. I was released on the 27th May and when I came out things were very much quieter.

One fellow-prisoner that I forgot to mention was Mrs. Llewelyn Davies. I thought her a mysterious character. I never could quite place her. Very often she mixed with us young girls and asked us quite a lot of questions. She seemed so curious that I got on my guard. Her questions were too pointed to my mind. She wanted to know all we knew about the leaders. She questioned me closely about Bloody Sunday. She was very anxious to know who were responsible for the events of that day. She asked me was it the Dublin people or the Tipperary people who were responsible for them. I gave her no information and said I knew nothing about it. She spoke to me about her husband, told me what his position was and that he was very well in with some members of the British Cabinet - I think she mentioned Lloyd George. She said he used to write some of their speeches for them. I don't know whether she was boasting, but I did not think she was that type of woman. She was able to get in letters and we were always wondering how she managed that. Also she had other little facilities that were denied to us. I don't think she bothered very much about religion. She always came out of the church before the Consecration. A wardress followed her out. She was never done talking about Michael Collins. She said constantly she was crazy about him. She seemed to know him very well or at least she said so. It is quite possible that he was using her as he used so many people for his own purposes. She also talked about Bob Brennan, but in disparaging terms. She did not seem to like him at all. She was released some time in June and she was deported to England, but she came back almost immediately because when I was back at work in Clery's one day, a messenger came from her to invite me to the house she had taken in Mespil Road. I think it belonged to the Gavan Duffys but that could be checked. To my amazement, I recognised the messenger as a prisoner - criminal, not political - who used

to clean out our cells in Mountjoy. I did not pretend I recognised her. She was accompanied by Mrs. Llewelyn Davies' two children. When I arrived at the house in Mespil Road this woman brought in the meal and Mrs. Llewelyn Davies asked me did I recognise her. When I said I did she explained that she had taken quite a fancy to her in Mountjoy and had taken her into her service.

During the evening Mrs. Llewelyn Davies re-opened the question of Bloody Sunday, but I professed complete ignorance.

In fact, her persistence made me very suspicious. I was glad to get away as I felt very perturbed, and I made a vow that I would not go there again. The next time I heard of her was in 1922. She had then gone back to the house she had previously occupied in Raheny. At that time the Republicans raided it and they were not received too kindly by her. That must have been after Mick Collins's death and I think the house was used by Desmond Fitzgerald. She had taken the Free State side.

After my release I went back to Mountjoy to see some of the prisoners and I found that the prison discipline had relaxed considerably. I asked for Ethna Coyle and all the others ran in with her to see me. Also, things had quietened down outside. There was a feeling of things happening in connection with peace negotiations.

I went back to the Cumann na mBan branch and resumed my work.

While I was in prison my two sisters were active outside. I'll let Lily tell her story of events during my imprisonment in her own words:

"Eileen and I were asked by Christy Byrne, the O/C. F/Coy. 4th Battalion, who was still staying at our house, to go to Kilmainham, I think on the night of 19th February, where Frank Teeling, Simon Donnelly and

Ernie O'Malley were imprisoned. We were to accompany two Volunteers, Sean Harbourne - who is now Eileen's husband - and Andy Healy, who was a adjutant of F/Coy., to the vicinity of the prison and take up our position in the open space at the side of the building where the three prisoners were to come out. It was usual for courting couples to frequent that place after nightfall. Most of the men were soldiers. We were to play the part of courting couples. We did this three or four nights in succession as, of course, the prisoners had to await a suitable opportunity. We remained in our positions for some hours each night. We would be called off then as the people outside decided that the opportunity had not yet come. I believe there were other Volunteers accompanied by girls at other points. All were armed in case the courting soldiers would be alerted by the escaping prisoners and start a rumpus. On the night of the escape before we arrived on the scene to ensure that the soldiers and girls would not interfere with the plans, the Volunteers arrested them and took them to a safe house - I think it was Flood's, - and kept them there until morning. We were a good while in our position when we noticed three shadowy figures coming out the gate quite close to us. I recognised Simon Donnelly; he was the only one of the three I knew. I said to Andy Healy: "I think those are the prisoners" and he replied: "Don't budge". We remained there for some time after that. Those were our orders. Nothing happened, but we were in great suspense for fear there might be some hitch. Then we casually strolled out and there was no sign of anything happening. We went away, and the following day we read about the escape in the papers and listened to all sorts of accounts from people who knew nothing about it.

I don't think there was anything else of importance until some time, I think, towards the end of April when our house was raided by the military. It happened about midnight.

They were looking for Christy Byrne. He had not been staying with us for a few weeks as he had got uneasy owing to the many raids that took place in the district. He had gone to stay at Sean Nolan's house in Thornville, Dolphin's Barn. That house has since been knocked down. On this particular night, however, he had come back to our house to get a good night's sleep, as he said he could not sleep at Nolan's on account of Sean's violin playing. He often got up in the middle of the night to play.

Christy had gone to bed. We never heard the lorries and knew nothing till there was a terrible rat-tat at the door. We guessed what it meant and my sister Eileen and myself were in the kitchen and were going to run upstairs to warn Christy, but we saw the soldiers looking in the kitchen window, and realised the house was surrounded. We did go up and warn him, but told him at the same time he could do nothing about it. We let in the soldiers - we could not do anything else - and they went upstairs and arrested him. They took him away to Richmond Barracks, from there to Collinstown, and later to Kilmainham, In both places he was O/C. of the prisoners. There was a soldier in Collinstown who acted as contact between the prisoners and the Brigade. ^{Christy R.C.} ~~He~~ was released at the general amnesty before Christmas. During the Truce we saw him once through the kindness of Captain Webber, who was in charge of the prisoners in Kilmainham. ^{Christy R.C.} ~~He~~ brought him parcels every week. Captain Webber, on the advice of Christy, went to the Abbey Theatre so as not to seem to be involved in admitting visitors, which was against the regulations. There was a British corporal also in Kilmainham who acted as contact between Christy and the Brigade.

Kilmainham was in the parish of St. James, and the chaplain who went on Sundays to say Mass at the prison was accompanied by a clerk called Hubert O'Keefe - since dead. He also brought letters in and out for the prisoners.

.. On the 5th February 1922, an extraordinary Convention of Cumann na mBan was held in the Round Room of the Mansion House. It was called for the purpose of taking a vote on the Treaty. Delegates attended from all branches of the organisation throughout the country. Each branch was allowed two delegates. I was one of the delegates from our branch; I can't remember who was the second. All the Executive were there. Sheila Humphreys was secretary at that time. She appeared in uniform, as did many others. During a very heated discussion delegates from very many parts of the country got up and gave their views on the Treaty. It was clear from the trend of the debate that the majority of the meeting were opposed to accepting the Treaty. Mrs. Mulcahy, who was on the platform, spoke in favour of the Treaty. During her speech a small incident, which seemed to us younger people very significant, happened. The Republican flag which hung as usual at the back of the platform fell to the ground and caused a bit of a flutter among the assembly. Mrs. Mulcahy had not noticed the flag and looked round her to see what was the cause of the excitement. I think Beatrice Brady - now Prioress of Tranquilla Carmelite Convent; Mairin McGavock - now Mrs. Sean Beaumont - and Sheila Bowen - now Mrs. F. Dowling - spoke against the Treaty. I can't remember any others, but there were many others, both on the platform and among the delegates, who expressed their opinions. I think Nancy Wyse-Power, who was also one of the secretaries, spoke.

Eventually the vote was taken and it was Sheila Humphreys who was marking down "For" and "Against". Each delegate's name was called and we stood up then saying "For" or "Against". I can't remember what the numbers were, but the vote was predominantly against the Treaty. The meeting ended with the determination to continue the fight for the Republic.

There was some kind of a pro-Treaty demonstration at College Green about a month after that. The platform was decorated with Republican flags and we were instructed to attend and make a protest. Certain members were deputed to capture the flag. They did this. I think Sheila Humphreys was one of these.

Feeling grew more and more tense and things seemed to be working up to a climax. I think it was on Good Friday, which was in March, that the Republicans occupied the Four Courts. Now Annie can take care of the story again".

I know there is great reluctance to speak about the painful differences of the post-Treaty period and I know there were very good men on both sides who lost their lives. I feel, too, however, that I ought to set down everything I know about that time; else there is danger that justice will not be done to those on the Republican side who carried on the fight after the Treaty.

During the Truce there was intensive training organised so as to be able to continue the fight for the Republic if the negotiations should fail. A big shooting lodge in the Glenasmole Valley, called Cobb's Lodge, was taken over for a headquarters training camp for the I.R.A. of the Dublin area. Groups from each battalion went out there in turn for a week or more and were trained there. Paddy O'Brien, my fiancé's brother, who was O/C. of C/Coy. 4th Battalion, during part of the Tan war - as such he had taken part in the Teeling escape - was O/C. of this camp. My fiancé, Denis O'Brien, had succeeded him as O/C. of C/Coy. The training at Cobb's Lodge went on all through the Truce period. After the Treaty the I.R.A. took over the various military barracks according as the British evacuated them. Paddy O'Brien went into Beggars Bush. There were some

I.R.A. there before that and gradually others came in including my fiancé and Sean Harbourne, Eileen's fiancé. Things in Beggars Bush were not going to their liking in so far as the attitude to Britain was noticeably changing. All they had fought for was being given away and all the sacrifices seemed to be in vain. When after the Army Convention held in March by the anti-Treaty section it was clear that the split was inevitable, all these and other sympathisers left Beggars Bush for good, bringing out their arms and lots of other equipment that would be useful for a fight. These men then took over the Four Courts on the Good Friday which fell in the month of March that year, and remained in occupation until the building was attacked by Free State troops on Wednesday the 28th June.s

It happened that I and my sister Eileen had gone down to Kildare on the Monday before the attack thinking and hoping nothing would happen till we got back. It was some time late on Wednesday night a friend came to the house we were staying in and told us that there was trouble in Dublin and there was a big fight on during which the men had been 'blown out' of the Four Courts. It was too late for us to do anything that night as he also told us that all the trains had been stopped. We had to content ourselves for that night. The next morning we decided to go to the first Mass and then see how we could get back to Dublin. After Mass we cycled to the Curragh to try to find out how we could get home. When we got as far as Eason's we saw a number of Free State soldiers collected around Eason's. Although we recognised one of them we did not approach him, but we got the confirmation of the statement that there were no trains running so we were badly had. We went back to the house we were staying in to tell them we were going to try to get back to Dublin. I held on to the bicycle I had borrowed from them - Eileen had her own - and we brought just a few extra things on us, leaving the bulk of our luggage behind.

We came down on to the main road and saw a flour lorry coming along. We thought this was a godsend and we hailed it. We asked the driver how far he was going. He said as far as Naas. We said "that will do us fine". We put the bicycles on the lorry and got into the cabin with the driver. When we told him we were going back to Dublin to take part in the fight he said we were mad and ought to stay down there where it was so quiet. He had a pass as far as Naas where there was a Free State military post. As the pass would not include us he let us out a little distance before the post and we made our way on the bicycles through the post at Naas and all the others on the main road until we came to Clondalkin. There the military post would not let us through in spite of all the pathetic stories we told them. They warned us that we might be shot accidentally on the way.

We left the main road and got on to the canal bank where there was a track good enough for bicycles and we reached the drawbridge at James St. Harbour at 6 o'clock as the Angelus was ringing. My mother and Lily were ever so thankful when they saw us and weren't we glad that we were only a day late! We didn't bother waiting for a meal. We wanted to contact our comrades and see where we could take our place in the fight. Lily and her squad had already made an effort to find a post to get into, but up to that had not succeeded. She just happened to come into the house with a number of her squad shortly after our arrival and we all started out together. Finally we reached Cumann na mBan headquarters at the top of Dawson St. - No. 27, I think - where we found a crowd of our comrades including Mary Twamley, who was in charge there and organising different groups for the different posts.

From there Eileen was sent with others to the Ice Store in Mill Street where there was a company of 3rd Battalion. They remained there the whole time of the fighting. Lily and I with another group were sent to the Dispensary in ^{South a. O'P.} Earl St.

which was occupied by a Cumann na mBan First Aid Post to serve a company of the 4th Battalion who had gone into Marrowbone Lane Distillery about the same time. We remained on duty there all night, but we were not called upon, although a few of us were sent over to the Distillery to tell the I.R.A. we were at their disposal if they wanted anything. They said they wanted food and we went to a shop in Cork St., commandeered whatever they wanted and brought it to them. Nothing happened in our area during the night. The next day - Friday - we decided we could not stick the inactivity any longer. We had been listening to the firing all night and had got impatient. Four or five of us got permission to leave our post and we made for the Four Courts. Although we tried all the bridges, there was not a hope of getting across. As we came down Winetavern St. in sight of the Four Courts we saw an 18-pounder gun manned by Free State soldiers covering the Four Courts building. We watched a soldier putting in the shell and we asked him what he was going to do with that. He expressed himself in very strong language about the people who were in the Four Courts, saying he would soon get them out of it with this. We argued with him about killing other Irishmen, but of course it was no use and we were ordered out of the danger zone. We went along the south quays as far as the Metal Bridge, but it was manned also. Just then the shell was fired at the Four Courts and we saw the dome collapse and our hearts nearly collapsed too when we thought of all our friends there. We saw a shower of papers rising from the building. We thought none of the garrison could have survived. The shop where we were standing shook from the terrific blast. We went back one of the side streets to a height to see what damage had been done. We had a look and our thoughts were for the men inside.

We went back to our First Aid Post and reported. We were not long there when we heard a report that Paddy O'Brien had been brought home wounded to Pim Street. The girl in charge

of the post - Miss Williamson - sent Lily and me to see whether we could do anything for him and, when we arrived, he was there all right in bed with his head swathed in bandages. He was very glad to see us. He had told us he had been wounded before the building had been blown up and had been taken away in an ambulance by Joe Connolly - a brother of Sean Connolly - to Jervis St. Hospital where his head was dressed. They wanted to keep him in the hospital, but he would not stay. Joe Connolly got a cab which brought him home. Being O/C. of the Four Courts garrison his idea was to organise help to relieve pressure on the building and he felt sure he would have no difficulty in this task. He asked us to try and get a message to the Four Courts:- he told us the best way to get there - advising the garrison not to surrender as he was getting them help. We thought the task hopeless, but we set out again..

When we got on to the quays we heard the men had already surrendered and all had been taken away to Bow St. Distillery in Smithfield. We then went to Smithfield - we had no difficulty now in crossing the bridges above the Four Courts - and when we got to the Distillery the men were at the windows talking through the bars to the crowd that had collected outside. Some of them recognised us and brought along others who knew us. They were wondering about Paddy and we told them all we knew. They had a little consultation - Liam Mellows, Joe McKelvey, Denis O'Brien, Sean Nolan and others - and Joe McKelvey wrote a despatch to Oscar Traynor who, as we told them, was in the Hammam Hotel. We stood on the railing, reached up for it and I stuck it into my stocking. Joe warned us not to let it fall into enemy hands. We proceeded by byways and alley-ways up as far as Parnell St. and, as the firing was going on in O'Connell St., we eventually got to the back of the Hammam and succeeded with the help of Garry Holohan in getting in right up to the

the table where Oscar Traynor was working and we handed him the despatch. He said: "What is this?". We said: "A despatch from Joe McKelvey". He seemed very doubtful and suspicious as he did not know us. We spotted Barney Mwillows who knew us and called him over. He vouched for us and then Oscar accepted the despatch, saying he would see about it.

I don't know what the despatch contained. We went back by the same route to Smithfield to report the safe delivery of the despatch.

Meanwhile the Cumann na mBan had collected and the prisoners threw down a lot of their equipment, asking us to keep them until they came out. We brought home all the equipment and set to and got some grub ready. We brought it back to Smithfield and handed it up to the windows to the prisoners. That night they were moved to Mountjoy.

We went back to report the whole situation to Paddy O'Brien who was bitterly disappointed and upset.

My brother Tom, who was at this time about 18 or 19, had been with his unit, F/Coy, 4th Battalion, in the Corporation Workshops, Stanley St. , which the unit had taken over. I think they must have evacuated that on the Friday and then they tried to get in wherever they could. Most of them made for the centre of the city where the real fighting was. They were only admitted if they had guns and Tom had none. He came home while we happened to be there on one of our visits, to try to procure one. We got him one - I can't remember where - and decided to go with him to the Hammam Hotel, carrying the gun for him. When we got there we were able to vouch for him and he got in easily. We returned then to the headquarters of Cumann na mBan in Dawson St.

A. W. B. *After*
At some stage before the evacuation of the Four Courts
from Bowe & Seftlers,
a few of the garrison had escaped, Sean Lemass, Paddy Rigney,

Ernie O'Malley and someone else, and they were with Paddy when we arrived. They had been discussing plans about carrying on the fight and, realising there was no chance for them in Dublin, they had decided to go south. Wexford was the first point they aimed for. They had no arms, but knew where they could procure some, so they wrote a despatch and asked us to go back with it to the Hammam - of all places. They knew two girls - Kit Bulfin, now Mrs. Sean McBride, and Madge Clifford, now Mrs. Comer - who had a case full of small arms in their digs. We duly found Kit Bulfin and we gave her the letter. She went and got her hat and coat and we went on bicycles with her to her digs - somewhere on the north side, and we got the heavy case of arms and ammunition which we loaded alternately on our bicycles. We felt desperate with the heavy load and the anxiety to get it safely back. We boldly came down O'Connell St. and I burst the tyre of my bicycle. We heard 'halt' every few seconds and the soldiers fired at us, the bullets knocking pieces off the setts on the streets. We crossed O'Connell Bridge, went up Gra Grafton St. and along the back streets after that. We reached Pim St. safely with our load of stuff and weren't they charmed to see us! They did not care as long as they had something to defend themselves with. Paddy got up out of bed and they all packed up and prepared to leave the city one by one. They met somewhere outside the city. Paddy Rigney had made arrangements for a car while we were collecting the guns. They were for some time in Enniscorthy, where Paddy O'Brien was killed in the street on the 11th July.

After we had seen them safely on the road we went home before we reported back to our headquarters in 27 Dawson St. The next place we were sent to from there on the Saturday was to the United Services Club on St. Stephen's Green, where a company of the 3rd Battalion under Noel Lemass was stationed. They were glad to see us and we set to to prepare a meal for them from the beautiful food that was in the kitchen of the

premises. We remained there with them till Sunday morning. We cooked a wonderful breakfast of rashers and eggs for them. Some time during the forenoon they told us they were leaving - I am sure they got instructions to do so - and we, that is the two of us, Marcella Cosgrove, Sheila Grennan, Rose McNamara and, I think, Sheila Meagher - reported back to Dawson St. for further orders. While we were there waiting, word came in from a sniping post, a publichouse called Bowe's at the corner of William St. and Coppinger Row, that the two snipers at that post had evacuated it, leaving their arms behind them, and they sent word to Dawson St. to have their arms collected and put into safe keeping. The two of us, one of the Walshes and two others - I don't remember who they were - went to the post and found the house locked up. We went to the house next door, round in William St., where we found a friendly man who showed us up to the skylight which we got through and on to the roof of the publichouse. Its skylight was a bit small and only my sister, who was small, was able to get through. She went down and opened the door of the publichouse for the rest of us. We had to search the whole of the house for the arms and at last we found the two loaded rifles in an office under some travellers' samples. The owners of the pub did not live there and the other floors of the building were let out in offices, apparently to commercial travellers.

We unloaded the rifles, took two raincoats - the cheapest looking we could find among the travellers' samples. We put one on the tallest girl - Chrissie Walsh - and sent her off, carrying one rifle, with another girl - Vera O'Looney, I think - as escort. I put on the other coat and followed after an interval, carrying the second rifle, with Lily, my sister, as an escort. Although it was bright daylight, the 1st July, we reached the headquarters in Dawson St. safely, and handed over the rifles and coats.

We felt quite squeamish about having taken the coats, but we were told it was all right, that they would be sent into some of the prisoners.

As well as I remember, the rifles and ammunition were sent over to Eileen McGrane's flat on the opposite side of the street for safe keeping until they could be returned to their owners.

In the meantime headquarters had been informed that there were /some grenades also in the same publichouse and my sister, Lily with Rose Mullally and Lil Coventry were asked to fetch these. They did so, but this time a man who had arrived in the meantime opened the publichouse door for them. They brought them to Dawson St. and from there they were sent with them to some garage in Donnybrook. They returned to Dawson St. That brought us to Sunday night. We all remained in Dawson St. until about midnight when the headquarters was closed up and everyone sent home. That was the first night we were home to sleep since the start of the fight.

When the fighting in the city ceased, we had to turn our attention to the prisoners in the different prisons. They were allowed parcels. We attended Cathal Brugha's funeral from the Mater Hospital.

The next shock we got was when we heard of the shooting of Paddy O'Brien in Enniscorthy. His body was brought to Dublin and we attended his funeral to Glasnevin. His brother Dinny, afterwards my husband, was in Mountjoy at the time, and we had to break the news of Paddy's death to him. We got word into Sean Harbourne, asking him to break the news as gently as he could to Dinny. They were all very upset when they heard it as he was a great favourite.

We decided to try and get Dinny out on parole for the funeral. The prison authorities refused, but we got active on the job and eventually, in spite of Dick Mulcahy and

others refusing, Emmet Dalton, acting on his own in Portobello Barracks, gave him parole for a week because he admired Paddy very much as a soldier.

We were in close touch with the Four Courts garrison who were imprisoned in C. Wing in Mountjoy. We were one of their lines of communication with the I.R.A. outside. They were going to try and stage an escape with the sanction of the I.R.A. authorities outside. They sent us out a letter telling us to co-operate with them, and later they sent us the details of what they wanted us to do. The main point was they we were to send in to them at the appointed time the necessary arms and ammunition. These letters, the procuring of arms and getting them into the prison took up at least two months. We got in eight .45 Webley revolvers and the necessary ammunition for them. They told us exactly what to do. At intervals we made a soda cake, wrapped the gun in oilsilk paper inserted it in the dough, and baked it. The cake was, of course, frightfully heavy. At the same time we made up another parcel containing butter with the bullets in the middle of it - cigarettes, jam. etc. We did this on eight different occasions. All the parcels arrived safely, addressed to different persons whose names were supplied to us. We did not post the parcels but handed them in at the gate. When the different parcels were expected, the prisoners had some of their own men on the lookout for them. They had fought for and obtained the concession of being present at the arrival of and opening of parcels. As a test, they had first asked for Andy Cooney's officer's uniform which he had left in his digs, to be sent to him. We collected it and sent it in several parcels. There was a misunderstanding about the time for the first containing a part of the uniform. It was caught, so they told us to hold off until things quietened down before they thought it safe to send in the remainder of the uniform and the guns.

It was in October that the planned escape was attempted.

Unfortunately, it was a failure and resulted in the death of Peadar Bréslin and the wounding or killing of a military policeman. Sean Harbourne was wounded in the forehead by a ricocheting bullet. I think there were other attempts at escape from Mountjoy, but we had nothing to do with them. As far as I remember, Andy Cooney took full responsibility for the attempted escape I have described and he was sent to solitary confinement.

During the period of the Civil War, while the Four Courts men were imprisoned first in Mountjoy and later in Newbridge Barracks, we continued sending them parcels and looking after their dependants outside for which we had to organise functions as up to this we had spent all our money on the prisoners' parcels. There was a general dependants' fund, but it had to meet so many claims that many remained unprovided for. Our Inghinidhe Branch used to run raffles and jumble sales to gather up a few pounds from time to time. A certain number of us used to give a fixed sum each week to relieve some needy cases that we were personally aware of. There was also my brother's column, the A.S.U. of the 2nd Battalion, that we helped as well as we could.

This state of affairs continued until the releases, which started some time before Christmas 1923, were completed some time during February 1924. We used to meet the prisoners at the station and look after them generally, providing clothing, money and food for their journey home.

During the period of the Civil War our house was constantly raided. The object of the raids was the capture of my brother, Tom. In one particular week the house was raided every day and some days twice. These raids were much worse than those of the Tans. Eventually he was caught in town while he was waiting to meet me at O'Connell Bridge. Fortunately he was unarmed at the time as otherwise he would have been surely killed, as there was a lorry load of Free Staters against him

and he would not have allowed himself to be captured without losing his gun. One of the officers in the lorry recognised him and they just pounced on him before he saw them at all. The soldiers gave him a right good hammering in Oriel House before taking him to Mountjoy.

After the cease fire in April 1923, a gloom spread over our movement. Long before that we realised we were fighting a losing battle as all our best men were imprisoned and the struggle was being carried on by the more or less inexperienced younger men of the rank and file who very gallantly went into the breach and in many cases paid the supreme penalty, such as Richard Tuohy, Jim Fisher, *Sean O'K* Gaffney and Cassidy. My brother Tom was engaged in the same attempted ambush in Thomas St. at which the first two were captured, but at the opposite corner of the street and he was able to fight his way out, not knowing that the other two were captured.

Signed: *Annie O'Brien (Cooney)*
Lily Curran (Cooney)

Date: *17th February 1953*

Annie O'Brien (Cooney)
Lily Curran (Cooney)
17th February 1953.

Witness: *J. M. Curran*

S. Ni Chiosain.

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| BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21 |
| BURO STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21 |
| No. W.S. 805 |

SUPPLEMENTARY STATEMENT.

3/5/63.

Military History Bureau.

On re-reading the Joint Statement made by my sister the late Anne O'Brien (née Cooney) and myself Lily Curran (née Cooney) for the Military History Bureau, I realise that in the paragraph on page 14 relating to our release from Kilmainham after Easter Week, one item does not appear on the list of articles we collected from the Sergeant at Kilmainham the morning following our release, I think this is an important item, as it was the Rosary Beads belonging to Con Colbert, and he said he wanted Anne to have them. I would like to have this recorded, and would be obliged if you would have it inserted now.

Signed. Lily Curran.