

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

BUREAU STAIRS M. H. 1913-21

I. C. W.S. 1,081

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COSANTA,

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 1,081

Witness

Michael Murphy,  
Duagh,  
Kilmorna,  
Co. Kerry.

Identity.

Valet to Sir Arthur Vicars,  
Kilmorna House, 1918-1921.

Subject.

Shooting of Sir Arthur Vicars by I.R.A.  
and burning of Kilmorna House, 14th  
April 1921.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil

File No. S. 2399

Form B.S.M. 2

W.S. 1,081

# ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21  
BURO. STAIRS MILITARY 1913-21  
No. W.S. 1.081

STATEMENT OF MICHAEL MURPHY,  
Duagh, Kilmorna, Co. Kerry.

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I was born at Kilmorna in the year 1888, and was sent to the local National School until I was 14 years of age. When I left school I got employment in the Post Office at Kilmorna until I was 18 years of age.

I joined the R.I.C. in July, 1908 and left in November, 1914, when I joined the Irish Guards and served in France for four years part of which was under Lord Kerry, Colonel of the Regiment. One of my Company officers then was Captain Alexander who is now Field Marshal Alexander. I was discharged in December, 1918, and returned to Kilmorna.

After returning to Kilmorna I was employed as companion and valet to Sir Arthur Vicars at Kilmorna House.

Sir Arthur Vicars, Knight Commander Victorian Order, was a step-brother of Prince Mahony, Grangecon, County Wicklow, who was M.P. at one time and sat in the House of Commons. Vicars had been in charge of the Crown Jewels at Dublin Castle and at the same time was Ulster King-At-Arms. His home address at the time was 44, Wellington Road, Dublin.

The Crown Jewels were stolen from Dublin Castle in the year 1910 and were never recovered with the result that Vicars was dismissed. He and his wife, Lady Vicars, subsequently came to live as guests of his sister, Madam Jansz, who owned Kilmorna House. His sister had married a Pole.

After the death of his sister - Madam Jansz, and of her husband in England some years later, Vicars and his wife continued to live at Kilmorna House right up to 1921 when he was shot dead by the I.R.A. outside the door one morning.

On the 14th April, 1921, a party of military from Listowel, under a Captain Watson, came on a fishing trip to Kilmorna. They fished in the River Feale which runs through the area. They did not visit the 'great house' as it was called, nor did they meet Vicars. As they were returning to Listowel they were ambushed by a party of I.R.A. One soldier was killed, two were wounded. The I.R.A. had one man named Galvin killed.

It would appear that the I.R.A. were of opinion that Vicars had entertained the military and had also warned them of the impending ambush. This, in my opinion, could not be correct, otherwise the Military would not have cycled into the ambush position.

I could not understand why Vicars was shot. He was a thorough gentleman who mixed freely with the tenants on the estate which comprised 650 acres.

On the morning of the shooting the I.R.A. visited the house, broke open the windows on the ground floor through which they entered the house. They took in with them cans of paraffin and petrol which they sprinkled all over the ground floor. Vicars and his wife were in bed, in separate rooms at the time at the top of the building.

I had discovered that the house was on fire. I went into him and told him the house was on fire and was surrounded by armed men. I warned him to get up. He got up and dressed at once. In the meantime I went into Lady Vicars and warned her. She also got up and dressed.

Vicars went down stairs and left the house by the main entrance. He had gone about 150 yards from the door when he ran into a second party of I.R.A. who held him up and shot him dead on the spot. I had followed him close on his heels. He was not questioned in any way. While this was happening Lady Vicars and the household staff escaped through the back doors. That morning my life's savings and personal belongings, including medals and discharge papers, were destroyed in the blaze which enveloped the house so quickly that everything within was burned to ashes. If the attached photo of Kilmorna House is of any value for historical reasons I willingly present it to the Bureau. (see attached photo).

The news of the burning of the 'great house' and the shooting of Vicars was received with dismay throughout North Kerry. I do not believe he was a spy or got the benefit of a fair trial.

That night I was arrested by the Tans. They held me while the subsequent inquiry lasted which was for a period of three weeks. At the inquiry I failed to identify anyone, saying I knew nothing of the men who had taken part in the shooting. I was then released.

From the time of my discharge from the Irish Guards I was associated with the I.R.A. and had a brother who was an active member of that body. After the Truce I joined the National Army with the rank of Captain. I was discharged in September, 1924.

Signed:

Michael Murphy  
(Michael Murphy)

Date:

8 Feb 1955

Witness:

John J. Daly  
(John J. Daly)

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
BURO STAIRE MILCATA 1913-21
No. W.S. 1081