

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
BURO STAIRE MILITIA 1913-21
No. W.S. 1,752

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 1,752.

Witness

Mrs. McCarvill (Eileen McGrane),
8, Fitzwilliam Square,
Dublin.

Identity.

Captain of University Branch,
Cumann na mBan, Dublin.

Subject.

Cumann na mBan activities
1916-1920.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil.

File No 1,434.

Form B.S.M. 2

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
BURO STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21
No. W.S. 1752

STATEMENT OF MRS. McCARVILLE (EILEEN McGRANE),

8, Fitzwilliam Square, Dublin.

In 1916 I was a university student living in Loreto Hall. I was a student of Tom McDonagh's and I never had such intimate conversation with him that he would talk about what he was doing outside the university. I remember a significant phrase of his during a discursive lecture to the effect that the spirit of a person can remain after the person was gone, adding that his spirit would be here when he was no more. We were discussing one day with him what our ideas of romance were and he said the most romantic experience in his life was marching along the Dublin road carrying a rifle after the gun-running at Howth.

I was on holidays in Kildare during Easter Week. When I heard of the Rising I came to Dublin by train on Easter Monday. I had an idea of getting in touch with Tom McDonagh who was the only one I knew that would be in the Rising. I did not succeed and went back to Kildare getting a lift in a lorry.

On our return to College after the Rising our first act was to have a month's mind Mass said in University Church for Tom McDonagh. We put a notice in the paper and the Mass was attended by many others outside the student circles, including Rory O'Connor. The notice we sent to the papers included a verse about McDonagh's having died for his country, but that part was omitted.

I felt out of things through the unfortunate circumstance of living in a convent hostel and I thought I would make sure that other girls would not suffer from the

same disadvantages. Therefore, I with other students made inquiries and joined the Central Branch of Cumann na mBan. We shortly determined to form a branch of our own in order to recruit and train university women who would not find it convenient to attend meetings at late hours. The Executive of Cumann na mBan disapproved of the idea, thinking we just wanted to be exclusive. We made further representations as a result of which we were permitted to become a half-branch of Inghiní na hÉireann with our own officer with the rank of lieutenant under Captain Loo Kennedy. Our hours of training were Sunday mornings when everyone was free. I was elected 1st Lieutenant of the university half-branch. Rose McNamara was Lieutenant of the Inghiní half-branch. We continued to form part of this branch and went through a course of training under Captain Kennedy and some officers of the Volunteers. Simon Donnelly was one of these. Captain Loo Kennedy gave us our chief training. She was extraordinarily good and inspired us with a rigid sense of duty and discipline. We looked up to her with respect. She always wore uniform. Some of us got uniform. I bought mine from Harry Boland who had his business in Middle Abbey St.

In September 1917 our branch took part in the funeral of Ashe and marched to Glasnevin. That was our first public parade after the release of the prisoners. It shows that we were determined to demonstrate our sympathy with the cause for which he died.

Some time in 1918 - probably about the conscription time - Capt. Kennedy recommended to the Executive that our branch should get the status of an independent branch. Then we became the University College Branch of which I was elected Captain and Beatrice Brady Lieutenant.

We were very active during the conscription period, making bandages and generally training with a view to a possible conflict. When with other national organisations Cumann na mBan was proclaimed by the British military - I cannot now state whether it was in 1918 or 1919, as there was a prohibition order issued against the organisation in both years, and about the same period, the Executive sent me to inspect the Clonmel Cumann with a view to encouraging them to carry on their activities in spite of the prohibition. I found they were in no way perturbed by the order which they were quite determined to ignore. Their spirit and morale were very high. I cannot now remember the names of the officers.

When I graduated in 1918 I got an appointment in a Protestant school in Armagh. While there I immediately got in touch with the national group in Armagh and I helped to organise Cumann na mBan. Then the Armagh election took place. Liam Ó Briain was the Sinn Féin candidate and I helped at the election by speaking at meetings at Middleton and Keady. I spoke at the Town Hall in Armagh at which Mrs. Wyse-Power also spoke. After that I was dismissed and had to leave my job before the end of term. I returned to Dublin.

I was present at the official opening of the Dáil on 21st January, 1919.

I was asked by Cumann na mBan to take up some active organising. I went to Armagh, Down and Louth and organised in any centre where I could get a group of girls. My credentials were a letter from Mick Collins to Frank Aiken who commanded the Volunteers there at the time. I handed it to him at Newry. There were already some

branches in existence; a good one in Newry where I stayed some time and gave them some training. The Captain was a Miss Boyd. I think it was there I knew Andy O'Hare who started to drill Cumann na mBan under my direction. As far as I can recollect, I probably had a letter of introduction from Mick Collins to Mr. P. Rankin who was chief Volunteer officer in Newry. I think it was at Camlough I met Roisín Ní Bheirn, a sister of Donn Byrne, the novelist, and also Nano Aiken. These were both prominent in Cumann na mBan. At Banbridge I met Dr. McKee and had breakfast with him in his house. He was a prominent republican. I think he was afterwards interned in the Argenta. He subsequently came to Dublin to live, where I imagine he is still practising in Phibsborough. His brother - also a doctor - set up practice in Russell St., Armagh. At Armagh town the chief person I met was Eamon Donnelly. He had great driving power and was the chief political leader in mid-Armagh which was very Protestant. Other places that I visited were Cullyhanna, Culloville in Armagh, Newcastle and Castlewellan in Co. Down. I don't know whether it was there or in Warrenpoint that I interviewed Annie Keelan, afterwards Mrs. Maguire. She was a very good person. I went to Manorhamilton and Downpatrick. Our organisation was flourishing in all these places. When I was engaged about two months at that work I became ill and was attended by Dr. Moore, dispensary doctor of Strangford. He was afterwards imprisoned in the Argenta for a couple of years. He was a very good patriot, keen on Irish and wanted to speak it all the time. He used to teach it. He and his wife were very kind to me.

I came back to Dublin at the end of March or beginning of April. I got a temporary appointment at University College in lieu of Austin Clarke who was ill. I carried on as substitute for about a year and a half. When he recovered we were both appointed.

I resumed my work with Cumann na mBan in Dublin and carried out the routine training.

On the 8th August, 1919, Co. Clare was declared a military area and I was sent to West Clare to visit all the Cumann. I went first to Ennistymon, having a letter of credence from Mick Collins to Art O'Donnell at Tullycrine, who was, I think, Brigadier. I brought my bicycle. It was while I was there that a young boy called Murphy was deliberately shot by British forces through the window as he sat by the fire. I called to sympathise with his parents.

I went to Kilkee where I met the Misses Griffin and to Carrigaholt where I stayed at the Irish College with Brian O'Higgins and his wife. I went to the branch in Kilrush. I visited Cooraclare where the captain was a Miss Liddy, and Doonbeg, where I met Padraig Aghas and his wife. I think they were teachers. At Spanish Point I met Ignatius O'Neill. In all these places I found the nucleus of an organisation. I went through some training exercises with all these branches and found them efficient. I did a good deal of propaganda to encourage the old members of the branches and to attract new recruits.

We had a Cumann na mBan Annual Convention, I think in October 1919, in 25 Parnell Square. At that Convention

I put forward the proposal that we should reorganise Cumann na mBan on military lines in view of the fact that we were co-operating with the Volunteers. Up to then each branch had a president, vice-president and secretary. The proposal was to abolish that system and substitute a captain, lieutenant and adjutant. The proposal was well received by the younger delegates who showed a desire for the reorganisation, and although some of the older members were reluctant to change the existing organisation, the vote being taken, it was carried by a large majority.

The governing body of Cumann na mBan was called the Executive, which was elected annually. At the time that I was elected a member which was, I think, at the Annual Convention held in October, 1919, the Executive consisted of a president, four vice-presidents, eleven other members residing in Dublin and twelve provincial members, three from each province.

The Annual Convention was held at various places. I remember one at No. 6 Harcourt St., another at 25 Parnell Square and one at the Carmelite Fathers' premises in Whitefriars St. The Executive had power to co-opt three Dublin members in addition to those elected by the Convention. A notice of motion was necessary for this and the votes of two-thirds of those present, in favour of the person proposed.

There were two honorary secretaries, a director of organisation, a director of publicity and a director of training elected each year from among the members of the Executive residing in Dublin. The President was always Countess Markievicz, the four Vice Presidents were Mrs. Pearse, Mrs. Ceannt, Madame O'Rahilly and Mrs. Clarke.

Miss Nancy Wyse-Power was secretary in 1919 and until the 2nd November, 1920, when she had to go to Berlin. Miss Frances O'Sullivan, Miss Máirín McGavock and Mrs. Gordon (afterwards Mrs. Stack) were co-opted members in November 1920. Other Dublin members in 1919 and 1920 whom I recall were: Leslie Price (now Mrs. Tom Barry), Mrs. Mabel Fitzgerald, Áine Ní Rathaille, Mrs. Mulcahy, Lily O'Brennan, Mary O'Reilly and Eilis Ryan (resigned in April 1921). Miss O'Rahilly and Mrs. Wyse-Power were the Treasurers.

Some of the country members of the Executive were Miss Bloxham of Wexford - she resigned because she disapproved of the shooting of policemen - Miss Mullen of Monaghan, Miss Róisín Ní Bheirn of Camlough, Miss Brighid Ní Mhulláin of Connaught, Miss Una Sharkey of Strokestown, Dr. English of Ballinasloe, Miss Kate Breen of Killarney, Miss Mary MacSwiney of Cork, Mrs. McKeon of Longford, Miss Liddy of Clare, Miss Bridget Lyons of Longford, Miss Keelan of Dundalk, Miss Connolly Leinster.

While a member of the Executive and acting as Director of publicity and doing whatever I was called upon to do in connection with Mick Collins's office in 21, Dawson St., I had to continue as Captain of the University Branch, attended parades every Sunday morning, organising special training for the medical members of the Branch. I also had to attend, with the Adjutant, the District Council meetings once a week. This Council was presided over by Comdt. L. Kennedy.

After the re-organisation on military lines our Branch was attached to the 3rd Battalion of the I.R.A. and our officer was Joseph O'Connor.

As all the members of the University Branch have since distinguished themselves in various ways I should like to mention them by name. (Appendix)

Shortly after I took my flat at 21, Dawson St. which was shared by Mary McCarthy and Margot Trench, the Republican government headquarters seemed to have great difficulty in getting suitable rooms for their work. I offered to Michael Collins the use of a small room in the centre of the flat which he was very glad to accept. Of course there was no question of rent. He put into it some office furniture and files of various kinds were deposited in the office. No official personnel were located there. Mick Collins, Tom Cullen, Arthur Griffith and others came from time to time for conferences or to collect or deposit papers. The principals had a key to the door of the flat and access to the key to the office which was in my custody. The only servant we employed was a cleaner, Mrs. McCluskey, whose husband was caretaker in the National Land Bank. He often did guard on the street outside when Mick Collins came to the office and on one occasion at least gave warning of a raid in the neighbourhood.

Sometime about November of 1920 we had to have the chimney of the sittingroom swept and as there was a cowl on the chimney outside, the sweep asked me to get him a ladder to go outside. I borrowed a ladder from Mr. Ashmore, chemist, now Dr. Ashmore of Monkstown, who had a flat below us and a chemist's shop on the street level. We had found him an agreeable neighbour.

The shooting of Harry Boland:

At the time I was living in 21, Dawson Street and I was acting on the Republican side. During the fight I had been in the Gresham Hotel and other places in O'Connell St. up to the order for the evacuation. When I got orders to leave the Gresham it seemed to me that as a member of the garrison and being under military orders, there was no course left but to obey without question. I went to 21, Dawson St. and some other evacuees came with me. I remember these people crying out some slogan like "Red Cross" to indicate that they had abandoned the fight and to avoid the danger of being shot as combatants. I stayed the night at 21 and went back again the next day to the Gresham where Cathal Brugha was. I discovered then to my surprise that the order to evacuate had not been obeyed by all and that in fact a few of the garrison including Mrs. Stack and Katty Barry who - I was told - had protested against the evacuation order, had stayed behind, although the garrison as such had evacuated leaving their arms behind as stated further on. I went in by the back door and saw Cathal Brugha standing there in the hall armed - I think - with a small machine gun. I had a conversation with him. I always had a great regard for Cathal. I had known him for some time having met him at Mrs. Gordon's (later Mrs. Stack) with Austin Stack who had shortly before that escaped from Strangeways Prison, Manchester.

The order the night before had been to evacuate, leaving all arms behind. These had been stacked in a room in the Gresham near the back entrance. I saw there several machine guns, such as Lewis guns and I thought it was a pity to leave everything behind, so I and two or

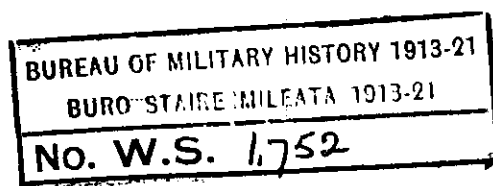
three other girls, one of whom was Máirín Power - since dead took a machine gun each, wrapped them in paper and took them away. We walked openly through the lines of the attackers, carrying our parcels along Westmoreland St. and back to 21 where we deposited the guns.

After this I went to Blessington. I was taken there in a car in which de Valera was also a passenger. We stopped the night at the Sanatorium in Blessington. From the time of our arrival I did not see de Valera. I was put up for the night by the Matron, who I think was Miss Sarah Buckley. It was announced after in the Official Bulletin that de Valera had gone to the south to join the Republican forces as a private. The war was continued there. In a short time the order was given to evacuate Blessington. On the way back with Mr. Charles McAuley I was arrested by Hugo McNeill and kept some time in custody in a house on the roadside, during which we were provided with breakfast by Gen. McNeill. Then we were allowed to proceed unconditionally. When we heard the news of the raid in the Grand Hotel, Skerries, and the wounding of Harry Boland, we were in great distress. After a short time his death in hospital was announced. He was lying in state in the front room on the ground floor of 60 Stephen's Green. Cumann na mBan provided a guard. I saw the remains in a coffin with a glass square over the face. His face was black.

At the funeral Cumann na mBan took charge as the men did not appear. Sheille Humphreys and I were in charge and walked at the head of the cortege to Glasnevin. There were several bands playing the Dead March on the route. It was very solemn and sad and left on me an unforgettable impression. This was aggravated by the

fact that at the top of Parnell Square standing in the shadow of the pillar box outside No. 15 was the British Officer who had acted as Prosecutor at my courtmartial in the North Dublin Union in May 1921. He was in mufti. The encounter left me with a sinister feeling and was in keeping with our conviction that the British were strongly at the back of the civil strife that had shattered our boasted national unity.

A short time afterwards I met Billy Boland whom I knew to have been in the company of Harry Boland, Joe Griffin and others in the hotel in Skerries on the night of the raid. Billy is no relation of Harry's. We discussed the matter. Billy told me that the raiders came to him, asked him his name and when he said 'Boland' they stuck a gun into his body but did not shoot. His impression was that they were looking for Harry. They evidently discovered their mistake but I can't say for certain if Billy told me that another member of the raiding party intervened saying "That's not him". It would be well to have this story confirmed by Billy himself. As Harry had been very active trying to bring about a reconciliation between the two sides and had been meeting Mick Collins for that end, we felt that his death which seemed to be purposely brought about to prevent reconciliation, put an end to our hopes.



APPENDIX.

Members of University Branch Cumann na mBan:

- (Dr.) K. McColgan - Section Leader
(now Dr. McColgan Barry, M.O.H.
Kilkenny).
- Katty Barry (Mrs. Moloney) - Squad Leader.
- Elgin Barry (Mrs. O'Rahilly).
- Connie Murphy (Mrs. Desmond Murphy).
- Eva Montgomery (Mrs. J. O'Leary).
- Nora Walker (Mrs. Austin Clarke).
- Anna Whelan (deceased).
- Dr. Maud Timoney (Mrs. Micheál Ó Cléirigh).
- Dr. Joe Stallard (Mrs. Liam Clarke).
- Joan Savage (Mrs. Cotter).
- Eddie Crilly (Mrs. Niall McNeill).
- Dr. Bridget Lyons (Thornton) - Assistant M.O.H.
Dublin.
- Dr. May Moloney (Mrs. Ignatius O'Neill).
- Dr. Girda Ward (Mrs. Merrin).
- Tessie Power
- May McPhillips (Rev. Mother Mercy Convent,
Carrick-on-Suir) - Squad Leader
- M. Corbett.
- Dr. Annie Stafford, Wexford.
- Dr. Molly Finnegan (Mrs. McMahon) T.C.D.
- Dr. Jane Carragher, - Section Leader.
- Dr. Honor Aughney, M.O.H. Wexford.
- Eilis Aughney
- Dr. Mary Donaghy (Mrs. Kelly).
- Cis Nolan
- Sinéad Robinson
- Robinson
- Mary McCarthy (Mrs. George Plunkett).

E. O'Neill (Mrs. David Barry).

Dr. Mary Flood

Nora Brick (Mrs. Bulfin).

E. Reddin.

Máirín Buckley (Mrs. Connolly).

Anna Jordan (Mrs. Kennedy).

Dr. A. Keogh (Mrs. Eamonn Kissane).

Vera O'Donnell.

Annie Browner (Mrs. O'Tierney).

L. Woods (Mrs. Duffy) (deceased).

Una Durean.

Bridget Lalor.

Margot Trench, T.C.D. (deceased).

Dr. Dorothy Stopford (Mrs. Liam Price) (deceased).

Dr. Drum.

B. Hickey.

B. Joyce.

R. Sheehan.

M. Farrington.

Alice White.

A. McQuade.

M. Quane.

- Toal

F. Whelan)
) 65, Eccles St.; sisters of Leo Whelan.
 L. Whelan)

Joe Power, now Inspector Dept. of Education.

Kitty Costello (Mrs. Pat Dowling).

Eileen Davitt (daughter of Michael Davitt).

Maria Moloney.

May Casey (Mrs. James Carty).

Maggie Bowden.

Eileen Shelley - Squad Leader (deceased).

Flo O'Sullivan.

Annie O'Farrelly

Rita O'Farrelly (Mrs. P. Fleming).

M. Scanlon.

Eileen McGrane (Mrs. P. McCarville) - Capt. until
arrest in December 1920.

(Dr.) Kathleen Murphy (Mrs. Paul O'Farrell).

(Dr.) J. Nagle - Adjutant (now gynaecologist
Women's Hospital Wolverhampton)

K. O'Donnell.

C. Crane.

L. Adamson.

May Brady (Mrs. H. McAuley) (Q.U.B.).

Beatrice Brady, B.A., B.Comm., (now Prioress of
Carmelite Convent, Tranquilla.

Kathleen McGilligan.

Eileen McGilligan (Mrs. O'Sullivan)

Máirín McGavock (Mrs. Seán Beaumont).

Josephine Aherne (Mrs. James McNeill) - now Irish
Minister at the Hague.

B. Murphy.

Pat O'Mara (Mrs. Dick Lavelle).

Sheila Murphy (now Sec. Irish Embassy Paris).

The Branch was divided into three sections and each section into two squads, right and left. J. Carragher was Leader of Section I with F. O'Sullivan Right Squad Leader and E. Shelly Left Squad Leader. I think S. Nolan was Leader of Section II with Katty Barry Right Squad Leader and H. Murphy Left Squad Leader. J. McColgan was Leader of Section III with M. Buckley Right Squad Leader and M. McPhillips Left Squad Leader

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