

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
BURO STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21
No. W.S. 195

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 195.

Witness

Miss Molly Reynolds,
156 Dunluce Road,
Clontarf
Dublin.

Identity

Member of Cumann na mBan Dublin
from its formation 1913.

Subject

G.P.O.
First Aid Duty in/Dublin during
Easter Week 1916.

Conditions, if any, stipulated by Witness

Nil

File No. S.543

Form B.S.M. 2.

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STATEMENT BY MISS MOLLY REYNOLDS

156 Dunluce Road, Clontarf, Dublin.

As far back as I can remember, there was always a good Irish atmosphere in our home. When my three brothers were old enough they joined Na Fianna Eireann and among their other activities learned first aid and fencing, which they practised at home. Watching them I often wished there was a similar organisation for girls. One day early in 1913, I asked Mr. Bulmer Hobson who was, I believe, one of the founders of the Fianna if they would start a girls section in the Fianna and he replied that if I started it, they would give me all the assistance I needed. I had neither the self confidence or initiative to do this and so the matter was dropped.

Sometime after the formation of the Irish Volunteers in 1913, Bulmer Hobson told me that a womens section was being formed and that a meeting was to be held in a room over the Queen's Theatre in Brunswick (now Pearse) Street. That was the inaugural meeting of Cumann na mBan. A Committee was formed and among those whom I remember were Mrs. Eoin MacNeill (who acted as Chairman), Miss O'Rahilly and Professor Agnes O'Farrelly. I cannot remember the names of the other members of the Committee. Among the others who attended that meeting were some members of Inghinidhe na hEireann, who then had a meeting place at 6 Harcourt Street. A number of meetings were held in Pearse Street at which the Constitution of Cumann na mBan was drafted and a uniform and activities were discussed. While these meetings were being held the Inghinidhe members attending them started a branch of Cumann na mBan at their rooms at 6 Harcourt Street, calling themselves - "Inghinidhe na hEireann Branch of Cumann na mBan". I joined this Branch and we learned first aid and signalling (semaphore and morse).

Shortly after the formation of the Branch at Harcourt Street it was decided that we should learn drill and marching. As no room in Harcourt St. was large enough for this purpose, Madame gave us permission to use the Fianna Hall at 34 Lower Camden St. on one or two nights a week. I cannot remember the date we started these activities, but it was probably April or May, 1914, because in June of that year we took part in the Wolfe Tone Pilgrimage to Bodenstown as a Branch of Cumann na mBan.

The Inghinidhe na hEireann was the first Branch of Cumann na mBan to get down to the work set out for the organisation. After we had been working for some time, the Committee which was still meeting in Pearse Street formed another Branch at 25 Parnell Square which was called the Central Branch.

I was getting into trouble at home for being out late at night, as the classes didn't finished before eleven o'clock, so in May, 1915, another member of the Inghinidhe Branch - B. Walsh, now Mrs. T. Slater - and myself founded a Branch at the 2nd Eastn. H.Qrs. in the Father Mathew Park, Fairview. Mrs. O'More (since deceased) was elected President; B. Walsh (now Mrs. T. Slater) was elected Treasurer and I was elected Secretary. This Branch was called the "Caithlin ni Houlihan" Branch and we carried out the usual activities of First Aid, Signalling, Drill and Marching. In addition, we learned to clean, cool and load rifles and revolvers. The idea in teaching us the latter subjects - as explained by our Instructor, Comdt. F. Henderson - was not that we would use arms, but that we could assist the men by being able to carry out these duties.

During the period 1913-1914 my father, the late John R. Reynolds, had an office at 12 D'Olier St. which was shared with Bulmer Hobson who at that time was, I think, working on the paper "Irish Freedom". At the same time I was attending a commercial college and spent some time in the office practising on a typewriter.

Among the many men I met in father's office was Sir Roger Casement, who was very charming. He was gentle in manner, quiet in speech and not at all the type of man one would expect to have anything to do with a revolutionary movement. He used to call me Bulmer Hobson's "Secretary", and on a few occasions brought me in a bunch of violets.

After the Volunteers were formed they rented premises at 2 Dawson Street and Bulmer Hobson went there. We moved from 12 D'Olier Street to No.1 College Street. I am not sure of the date we left D'Olier Street, but I know we were in College Street at the time of the Howth gun-running because we took up the floor-boards and put some rifles under the floor.

My father was appointed Auditor to the Volunteers and in that connection The O'Rahilly was a frequent visitor to our office. He was of a cheerful disposition and you could always tell when he was coming because he sang on his way up the stairs. On Thursday of Holy Week, 1916, he came to the office but this time he did not sing on his way up and when I asked him why he he just replied : "Ah, I am very sad to-day."

We were mobilised for a route march on Easter Sunday and were told to prepare first aid outfits in connection therewith. Some members of the Fairview Branch, as we were commonly called, met at our house and we proceeded to make the outfits which consisted of a small bottle of iodine, a bandage and a safety pin or two.

Early on Easter Sunday morning we got our mobilisation order and then we got the paper and saw that the orders were cancelled. One brother was in the Fianna, two other brothers and father were in the Volunteers and I was in Cumann na mBan. None of us knew what to do, so went to our different Headquarters for instructions and were told to stand-to.

On Easter Sunday night I went to Liberty Hall to see if I could get any information. I met two of James Connolly's daughters, whom I knew, and they told me that they were going to Belfast that night. I got no other information.

My father belonged to a Company or Battalion of Volunteers who through age or other reason could not take part in drills or marches and met, I think, at 41 Parnell Square. Whether father commanded this Company or Battalion I am not in a position to say, but I do know that early on Easter Monday morning - about 5 or 6 a.m., he got mobilisation orders and my brother Percy and I set out to carry them out. At that time we were living at the North Strand and Percy went citywards; among those whom he mobilised was Major Sean McBride - by wire. I went Clontarf direction. I had got no mobilisation orders before I left home. On my return I found they had arrived in my absence and my sister had mobilised as many of my members as possible.

Our instructions were to parade at St. Stephen's Green at twelve o'clock noon, but by the time I was ready to leave home it was almost twelve o'clock. A member of my branch who lived close by joined me and ^{when} we arrived at the Green we could not contact any member of the Volunteers or Cumann na mBan. So far as we could make out there were only Citizen Army men and women there.

After a little time Margaret Skinnider arrived at the Green and said there were no women at the G.P.O. and she had been sent to look for volunteers for that post. The other member of Cumann na mBan and myself volunteered.

We met the O'Rahilly outside the G.P.O. and he welcomed us. He took us over the building to select the most suitable place for a first aid casualty station. We eventually decided on a big open space at the back of the main hall. I do not know what it would have been used for as there was nothing in it except a huge table, unless it had been cleared of its

rendered to him. Another serious wounding was James Connolly. He got a bullet wound in the left ^{LEG} which shattered, I would say, roughly from one and a half to two inches of his shin bone. There is a laneway running from Prince's Street to Middle Abbey Street, and Connolly left the Post Office to visit some outposts in Abbey Street, using this laneway to reach them. After he had been gone a short time we heard a shout for a stretcher. Another girl and myself picked up a stretcher but were not allowed to go out. We handed it to some men and they brought Connolly in. His leg was dressed, set in splints and a waste paper basket was cut in two to make a cage for it. A bed was procured and Connolly was placed on it. He refused to remain a patient in the Casualty Station and his bed was moved to the main hall where the headquarters were. The rest of the casualties were only minor ones.

The late Fr. Flanagan, who was then attached to the Pro-Cathedral at Marlborough Street, was with us most of that week.

After the first day or two things more or less settled down and we were getting used to the sound of the guns. My father was in the Post Office and on Thursday morning he told me that the top portion of the building was on fire, that the men had it under control, but there was danger that the British would cut off the water supply. That night the barrage was terrific, it was bad any night, but that Thursday night is beyond description. It was the night the Helga shelled us from the Liffey.

On Friday morning most of the girls working in the kitchen and acting as despatch carriers were sent out under a Red Cross flag. They were to go to their homes, but were arrested and brought to the Broadstone for questioning. Friday evening it was apparently decided that it was time to leave the Post Office, because we got instructions to move the wounded to Jervis

Street Hospital. During the week the Volunteers had been making a way through the buildings down Henry Street by breaking holes in the walls. They got as far as Arnott's. In some places the holes were near the floor, in others they were a couple of feet high. Through these holes the Red Cross men and women, wounded, excepting Connolly, and prisoners, accompanied by Fr. Flanagan moved off. We got as far as the Coliseum in Henry Street which was a place of entertainment. We halted here while some of the Red Cross men went forward to open an exit door which would let us out into Prince's Street. Here we were confronted with a barricade some feet in height at the opening of the laneway leading into Middle Abbey Street. We crossed the barricade and got into Middle Abbey Street, crossed over and walked down the opposite side of the street to where a public-house juts out at the corner of Liffey Street. Here we waited while Fr. Flanagan, the British Medical Officer and British soldiers went forward to make arrangements for the reception of the wounded at the Hospital. Fr. Flanagan, accompanied by a British officer in charge of a number of British soldiers, came back and we were escorted down to the Hospital. Here the British military arrested the Red Cross men and men with the minor wounds. The Hospital authorities took charge of the seriously wounded cases and allowed us to use a waiting room to the dispensary.

Late on Friday night, Fr. Flanagan came into the hospital and handed me a ring which he said father had given him for me. I asked him if the men had left the G.P.O. and if father was alright. He made an evasive answer which left me under the impression that father had been wounded or killed.

We remained at the Hospital all Friday night and portion of Saturday. Towards Saturday evening Fr. Flanagan came in and told us the fight was over, the men had surrendered and that we could go home. Most of us lived in the same direction and we

us she had got a certificate from Fr. Flanagan saying we were in Jervis St. Hospital at his invitation and that the officer did not look at it but directed her on to our house.

On the Friday following my return home, father was released from Kilmainham Jail. He told me that while he was in jail it was arranged that when he was being courtmartialled he would say that I had gone into the G.P.O. for stamps, that he came in to look for me and both of us were held there for the week. Next day, Saturday, a policeman called with a taxi and said I was wanted at Kilmainham Jail. On arrival I was shown into a room in which a number of high ranking British officers were seated at a table. They questioned me about the G.P.O. and asked if I knew any of the men who were there or if I could recognise any of them. They brought in a man named Shouldices, whom I knew, but I said I had never seen him before. They brought in some other men whom I did not know. I was then sent out into a passage and a man in plain clothes spoke to me and said there was a man there who was lame, that he had been in the G.P.O. and was anxious to send a message to some relatives and would I see him. I replied that I knew no one in the G.P.O. I had an idea he was referring to Sean MacDermott, but could not imagine why he should want me to see him, it could hardly have been for the purpose of identifying him as by that time all the signatories to the Proclamation must have been known. I was then taken to a room in another building where I was left for a few minutes with a couple of men in plain clothes. Suddenly there was a flash and whether my photograph had been taken or not I don't know, but I was brought back to the first room and told I could go home.

SIGNATURE Molly Reynolds

WITNESS Fr. John Wally Captain

DATE 3rd February, 1949

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