

**ORIGINAL**

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21  
BURO STAIRE MILEATA 1913-21  
No. W.S. 256

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

**STATEMENT BY WITNESS**

**DOCUMENT NO. W.S. ....256.....**

**Witness**

Mrs. Nellie Donnelly (nee Gifford)  
39 Carlingford Road,  
Drumcondra,  
Dublin.

**Identity**

Member of  
Irish Citizen Army

**Subject**

(a) Anti-conscription work 1915-16.

**Conditions, if any, stipulated by Witness**

N11

File No. ...S. 1350.....

Form B.S.M. 2.

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

BURO STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21

No. W.S. 256

STATEMENT OF MRS. NELLIE DONNELLY  
(NÉE GIFFORD),

39, Carlingford Road, Drumcondra,  
Dublin.

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During 1915, economic conscription was being used among all shop assistants, particularly in the drapery trade, and young men were given no option but to go back to their own homes, or join the British Army. Hearing of this, I planned to give some alternative to those young men of national spirit, and, although I was living in my father's house, a couple of us, including Miss Perolz, visited the main shops, and asked the young men serving if pressure was being brought to bear on them to join the British Army. As a result of this, an increasing stream of young men came to my home, and in such numbers that my parents objected. I brought the matter before the Countess Markievicz. She was extremely interested, and offered me a room on the top floor of No. 6, Harcourt Street, the Sinn Féin rooms.

At this time also, the Volunteers were receiving large numbers of men from England and Scotland. These men came over in a great hurry, as the result of a question asked in Parliament, regarding conscription of Irishmen. The British Parliament was to meet on a Tuesday. On the previous Sunday, myself and a few companions were going out to the home of Mrs. Reddin - the mother of Justice Kenneth Reddin (author of book, "On Another

Shore", which was filmed) - at Clontarf, where we had been invited. Social gatherings were held there on most Sundays. On the way out to Clontarf, we talked of the possibility of conscription being applied to Ireland. My companions said they felt confident that it would not be applied. As I had not seen the papers, I bought a paper, and read the news as I went along. I stopped abruptly when I read the expression, "Ireland to be exempted". For the first time, it struck us that Irishmen would be trapped by concluding that "Ireland" meant Irishmen, wherever they were. We discussed the matter. Miss Molony suggested that the only method, in the time at hand, would be to have a question asked in Parliament, as to whether "Ireland" or "Irishmen" were to be exempt. The only M.P., who had not already gone over to London, was Alfie Byrne. After some delay, we located Alfie Byrne, and asked him if he would put the question, which he did. In consequence, numerous Volunteers from England and Scotland came to Ireland, and among them was Mick Collins. They came to my Bureau, which was run as a public employment bureau.

My brother-in-law to be, Joseph Plunkett, came in to the Bureau. He was looking for a secretary. Michael Collins seemed to have good references. I suggested he should take a chance on Collins; and he took him away in his car. Collins proved invaluable to Joseph Plunkett, who found him hard-working, very intelligent, and that he went about his business quite quietly.

My connection with the Rising in 1916 is recounted in an article, which I wrote, in "An Poblacht", dated April 19th, 1930 - (APPENDIX "A").

Previous to Easter Week, 1916, continual messages were passing from No.2, Dawson Street, to Mr. Connolly at Liberty Hall, trying to get employment for the Volunteers that were crowding my Bureau. He got plenty of them work - unloading ships, etc. - and, being who he was, the Trade Unions raised no protest.

Mr. Mallin came in to my Bureau one morning, and said: "It is all fixed now". We had been discussing an article in the "Irish Volunteer", which was answered by an article in the "Workers' Republic", where the writer quoted the song, "The Volunteer" - "They paraded and paraded, till all their glory faded; thus died the Volunteers". Mr. Mallin told me the exact date then for the Rising, and that was for Easter Sunday. That was certainly over a month before the Rising. There was nobody listening to our conversation, which took place in my Bureau. A few days later, possibly, I remember passing Tom Clarke's shop, and seeing James Connolly and, I think, Mr. Partridge, hanging over the counter, talking to Tom Clarke and Seán MacDermott.

I was introduced to Miss Skinnider, who had just come over from Scotland before the Rising. She had come over often before that, to Surrey House. She was a great friend of Seamus Robinson (Senator, 1928 - 1935) and his brother, Joe Robinson. Mr. Mallin mapped out the area around Stephen's Green and Leeson Street, and

asked me to bring Miss Skinnider over the route, on the day before the Rising; that would be Holy Saturday.

After the Rising, I was imprisoned, first in Richmond, and then in Mountjoy. Before my release from the latter prison, I was given the attached paper (Appendix "B"), containing a list of places in England to live in, although I had not the slightest intention of living in England.

SIGNED:

*Helen D*  
*Helen Sifford - Donnelly*

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DATE:

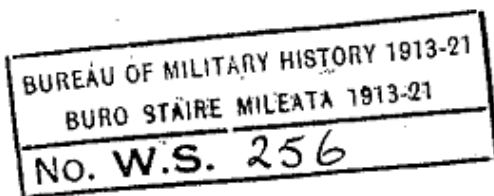
*24<sup>th</sup> May 1949*

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WITNESS:

*S. ni Cuáin*

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W. Gifford

AREAS IN WHICH PERSONS ORDERED TO REMOVE UNDER No. 14  
OF THE DEFENCE OF THE REALM REGULATIONS MIGHT BE  
PERMITTED TO CHOOSE PLACES OF RESIDENCE.

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The towns of HARROGATE, PATELEY BRIDGE, SETTLE, KNARESBOROUGH,  
and WETHERBY only in the West Riding of Yorkshire.

The County of Gloucestershire, excluding the area within  
10 miles of BRISTOL City and of the Rural District and County  
Borough of GLOUCESTER; the County of Oxfordshire; the County  
of Worcestershire, excluding the area within 10 miles of the  
City of BIRMINGHAM.

The County of Hereford; the County of Radnor; the County of  
Shropshire, South and West of the Railway Line from WELSHPOOL  
to BRIDGENORTH, via SHREWSBURY, but excluding the Municipal  
Borough of SHREWSBURY, and South of the main road from  
BRIDGENORTH to WOLVERHAMPTON.